Teaching the Poor in Turkey: A Phenomenological Insight

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze how primary school classroom teachers experienced teaching poor students. This study was designed in a phenomenological approach. To fulfill the aim of the study, in-depth and focus group interviews were held as well as clasroom observations. The data gathered through interviews and observations was firstly transcribed and then content analyzig technique was embraced to be able to reach meaningful themes. As a result of analyzing process, two main themes were emerged. One of these themes was identified as 'education and poverty', and the other theme was identified as 'effects of poverty'.

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Introduction

One of the greatest sources of educational inequalities perhaps, is poverty which is an inevitable result of capitalist social formation. As Apple (2006) states, it is not possible to understand what happens in schools, without relating education with evergrowing poverty. First, it is crucial not to forget that poverty is an political economy circumstance, rather than a circumstance due to scarcity of resources, or to the individual, and is caused by the injustice of the wealth-distribution policies in a society (Books, 2004). In a society with distribution inequalities, one should actually search for the source of the educational inequalities in the economical system, not in educational system itself (Condron, 2011). The division of labor, the authority, and the structure of prize in education reflects the economical system it is within (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Therefore, justice in economy could be considered as a prerequisite of educational justice (Anyon, 2005).

For the schools aim to integrate the new generation with the social order; to provide an open, objective, and meritocratic mechanism, reinforcing the belief that economic success merely depends on technical and cognitive abilities; and thus to justify economical inequalities in the society by directing individuals to economically inequal positions (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Particularly in the meritocratic educational systems, in which the advancing opportunities in the system of education such as advancing through grades, advancing to a next level institution, admission to higher education institutions, the success of students, teachers and school are determined mostly by standardized exams and the curriculum is standardized in all schools, the direct effects of inequalities strengthening with poverty can be observed clearly. In systems of education, in which aforementioned exams are strictly practiced, ethnical identities and class inequalities are re-produced by standard tests, and the burden brought in by these exams, while affecting all of the students, is mostly loaded on the shoulders of students from low-income families (Au, 2009). In other words, in educational systems where students advance depending on their test scores, such as Turkish educational system, children of poor families are much more disadvantageous than their wealthy counterparts.

Poverty does not deem a student ineducable, but the experiences regarding to school of many poor students are in the status of being obstacles for them rather than aiding them (Books, 2004). Many of them come to school in various ability levels they have acquired from their environment, and they stay in their economically inequal environments longer than they stay in the school; thus, the increase in social class-based differences in students' cognitive abilities, in periods the schools enter summer holiday is in a manner to support this claim (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, ve Greathouse, 1996; Downey, Hippel, & Broh, 2004; Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007). While children belonging to middle-class families improve in a lot of abilities through opportunities offered by their families, children of families in a lower socio-economic level lack these opportunities and fall behind (Berliner, 2013). For in school performance, non-school factors such as poverty, political and financial power are in a more influential position, compared to in-school organizational features (Apple, 2006). Berliner (2013) too, has stated that non-school factors describe almost 60% of a kid's success in school. The children of relatively wealthy families become more successful in school also, due to access to material resources, the time reserved by their families for them and the support they receive from them, and their higher attendance to extra-curricular activities (Evans, 2004). Condron's (2011) work with 2006 PISA data is also in a manner to support these arguments. The researcher, in the study, has reached to the result that PISA scores in societies having high-level economic equality, are higher with respect to countries with lower inequality levels.

Students living in poor regions face with many problems in a social sense. For example, there exists evidence that, one of the greatest predictors of depression in adolescents is poverty; relative to middle-class students, poor students are more exposed to both physical and psychological sources of stress; and the cronical stress they experience is on higher levels and they have many behavioral disorders due to this stress (Evans & English, 2002; Denny, Clark, Fleming, & Wall, 2004; Almeida, Neupert, Banks, & Serido, 2005; Jensen, 2009).

The effects of poverty upon students reflect also on the relations they develop in classrooms. Calarco (2011) has stated that students belonging to middle-class get more help from their teachers relative to poor students, interrupt their teachers when required, and benefit more from teaching activities, and thus create their own advantage. On the other hand, it is also known that poor families are forced to make a selection between the education of their children and economic insurance, that they are less interested in the education of their children with respect to wealthy families, and that even if they want to be they couldn't, because of the limitations which are economical and are regarding time, that they couldn't support their children academically, and that this situation affects the child's cognitive and socio-emotional abilities negatively (Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007; Lister, 2010; Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2010; Cooper, 2010).

It is also required to discuss the relation of education with poverty, demographically. Poverty varies with respect to locality, as well. It also comes into prominence that the concept of urban poverty which emerges in this sense, is evaluated according to education. Urban poverty may be defined as a continuous and unorganized supply of labor, not demanded to be formed by the industry, this labor condensing according to locality, and the marginalization of this structure of population (Kaygalak, 2001). In other words, the urban poverty is the poor population in cities to concentrate in certain areas. Turning into an unchanging state, for poor urban areas, brings out hard-to-overcome problems for those who whish to escape, despite many individual movements occuring in such areas (Giddens, 2013), and such decomposition of the structure of population in the city is therefore also observed in the area of education. Students living in poor regions happen to go to schools in which poor students like themselves are condensed. The poverty observed in cities to be condensed in certain regions, in turn sets along foundation for poverty to be condensed in certain schools. And poverty, which is a continuous indicator of failure academically, raises its influence even more, when condensed at the level of region, school and even classroom (Moore, 2011).

With poor population concentrating in a region, the schools of that region suffer problems of financial resource and the poor students became obliged to attend schools having less resource, compared to the wealthy students (Condron & Roscigno, 2003). Anyon (2005), as well, has stated that the schools in those regions were funded insufficiently, their number of qualified teachers were less and their curriculum was simple, many students of them had low academic success, the physical structure of school buildings was in a bad condition and the classes were crowded; and that therefore such schools offered much less opportunities, and schools in these regions posed an obstacle to high quality education. This description would vary according to which country and what kind of educational system is discussed, however for many schools in poor regions, it is possible to state that it generally fits.

Role of the Teacher in the Relation of Education and Poverty

Poverty too is one of the inequalities ocurring in classroom, as in society, and at this point, the approach of the teacher in the classroom toward these inequal circumstances also gains importance. The teacher, in particular when it comes to poverty and social class, while being able to transform these inequalities, has the possibility to re-produce these. The behaviors in the classroom, the expectations from the students, and the adopted pedagogy of the teacher, determines this most of the time. For instance, Anyon's (1980) identification that the kids of the working class learn in lectures the most basic things and mostly others' knowledge, that the teachers lecture in order to keep the students occupied, on the other hand that students of the middle-class, to prepare them for higher-education, are assured to be actively involved in the lecture and that they produce knowledge on their own, takes place in the literature as a striking finding. In other words, the lecture attended by students refletcs the class status of the students, and therefore the teachers may contribute to re-produce the class status of them. And teachers are able to perform it, in increasing the feeling of inadequacy of the poor students, by the assignments they give and the experiences they provide to the students, and when the number of poor students in their class increases, the sensitivity towards the quality of the education they give decreases (Pianta, Carollee Howes, Clifford, Early, & Barbarin, 2005; Ullucci & Howard, 2015).

Certainly many teachers do not say they intentionally view their students this way, and actually the teachers are also unaware in doing this, however the matter of actual importance is how they reify the hierarchies in the society upon the students (Mills, 2008; Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Haberman (1991) names the pedagogy adopted and the conduct followed in this point by the teacher towards the poor students, as the "pedagogy of poverty", and states that in this approach which can be observed more in the schools in poor regions, the teachers could not get beyond giving information, asking questions, giving assignments, controlling the seating arrangement, helding examinations, evaluating the exams, intervening student fights, punishing inappropriate behavior, and grading. For the teachers having poor students, to adopt an approach as described agrees with Anyon's (1980) striking findings, and with the discussion held by Bowles and Gintis (2011).

Behind teachers' adopting such an approach lies the falsity of their understanding of poverty and the bias they have for poor students due to this falsity. The teachers, even unaware, might keep their expectations of their poor students low. Therefore it is known that the social class of the students shapes their teachers' expectations of them, and that the teachers to be in a low expectation, while affecting the academic performance of the student negatively, also can cause the student to experience social and emotional difficulities. (Rist, 1970; Jussim & Harber, 2005; Ullucci & Howard, 2015). At this point, the teacher's expectations of the students realize a self-proving prophecy, and the teacher, in addition to the obstacles laid before them by their social class and poverty, comes up as an element dissociating the poor students from their wealthy peers. On the other hand, when the teachers label students as "poor", they justify the academic failure of the student and happen to blame the victim (Ullucci & Howard, 2015).

The teachers to make a false conceptualization regarding poverty also lies under this situation in their approach towards poor students. It leads the students to see themselves, or their families as the ones responsible for problems rooted in poverty which they experience that the teachers consider poverty in a single dimension and mostly in isolation from the political and economic structure of the society they live within. For example, it is quite striking that Robinson (2007), in his research, reaches the result that teachers who thought poverty is caused by the social and economic structure ignored many problems in poor regions but teachers who believed poverty is individualized prefered to work in wealthier regions to get away from these. Since many current teacher training programs do not include a study addressing this matter, many teachers evaluate the students and the families deficiently, since they begin their careers with insufficient knowledge regarding poverty and poor students (Amatea, Cholewa, & Mixon, 2012). Ulucci and Howard (2015) who consider this false judgement of the teachers toward poverty and poor students as pathologic, have listed these "myths" the teachers have as follows: (1) the idea that the individual, if tries hard, can get rid of poverty; (2) that the individual to be poor is own fault and mostly caused by his/her own laziness and incompetence; (3) the belief that poor children aren't sufficiently intelligent and their readiness levels are low; (4) the idea that the poor maintain their own poverty and share a certain "culture of poverty".

Context and the Purpose of the Study

Education, certainly can not be thought as a mean of resolution for the inequalities in society. Since, the influence of society on education precedes the influence of education on society. In short, inequalities in the field of education will not be removed unless inequalities in the society are removed (Anyon, 2005; Berliner, 2013).

The teacher in this inequal system plays an important role. The teacher has the potential to reduce the impacts of poverty at least in his/her classroom, whereas s/he can re-produce poverty which is a cause of this inequality. But it can be told that the function to be performed by the teacher will be determined by the convictions they have regarding poor students. In this context, the problem of this research consists of the analysis of how teachers experience teaching poor students. The purpose of this study is to analyze experiences of primary school teachers working in poor neighborhoods, through their own statements.

Methodology

Research Design

Qualitative research approach has been adopted in this research. The aim of the qualitative research approach is based on examining research object in its context by approaching it holistically (Punch, 2005). This approach rejects determinism as opposed to quantitative research because the probabilities can be known but the exact results are unknown and unpredictable (Balcı, 2015). The main source of data for researchers who conduct qualitative research in social sciences is man himself, and the researcher reconstructs the research data together with the research subject rather than aggregating data from an already existing resource (Kümbetoğlu, 2005).

This research was carried out in the pattern of phenomenology, which is intended to reveal how a concept or a phenomenon is experienced and understood by individuals (Creswell, 2007). Although poverty has a material and objective basis, it is also a socially and mentally constructed reality, and a lived experience in the context of schools and classrooms. For this reason, "poverty" is tried to be revealed by understanding when, how and with which processes the information about poverty is formed. According to Patton (2002), phenomenology focuses on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and a shared meaning. As this research aims to understand how poverty in the context of schools and classrooms is experienced and conceptualized by teachers, phenomenology is the most suitable qualitative research design to fulfill this purpose.

Participants

In this research, purposeful sampling method was adopted. In qualitative researches, sample selection is based on research purpose, not on methodoligacl requirements, and purposeful research technique enables researchers to be able to chose the most suitable participants for the research purpose (Creswell, 2007; Marvasti, 2004). Qualitative researchers use purposeful sampling because they do not work in large groups as meaningful as random selection and because they do not intend to make generalizations, purposeful sampling enable them to be able to select rich situations for information, which allows the researcher to learn a great deal about important issues (Patton, 2002).

The participants of the study, all of whom are primary school classroom teachers, were selected in accordance with critarion sampling method, one of the most common types of purposeful sampling. According to Patton (2002), the logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meets some predetermined criterion of importance. As Creswell (2007) stresses, criterion samplimg works well when all individuals studied are people who have experienced the same phenomenon. According to Maxwell (1996), criterion-based selection is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can not be gotten as well from other choices.

To be able to guarantee that all of the participants are selected in accordance with the research purpose, the criteria of this study were determined as being a classroom teacher, and working in a poor district. Because this research adopts a phenomenological approach, teachers' lived experiences are important. Furthermore, class teachers know their students and their families better than any other subject teachers. As a result, participant group of this research consists of seventeen (N= 17) classroom teachers who are teaching in poor districts of Istanbul, Turkey. 10 of these participants were interviewed individually and two focus group interviews, one of which was held with 3 teachers while the other was held with 4 teachers, were conducted. 9 of the participants were male and 8 of them were female teachers. All of the participants have been teaching poor students of Turkey for at least five years.

In Turkey, primary school teachers are appointed by the central administration body, which is Ministrate of National Education. As there is teacher shortage in Turkey, especially in disadvatageous regions, newly appointed and young teachers start their teaching careers in poor regions. They are mostly appointed either to schools of southeast region, which is the poorest region of the country, or poor districts of crowded metropols such as Istanbul where almost 15 million people live. Istanbul is one of the Turkish cities where poverty is highly condensed (Açıkgöz & Yusufoğlu, 2012).

All of the participant of this study were teaching in Istanbul's primary schools as classroom teachers. Participants' being classroom teachers were important for the study because any other field teachers such as mathmetics or science teachers could have limited contact with poor students so they could have a limited understanding of teaching the poor.

Data Collection Process and Analysis

The data of the study was formed by triangulation method, which employs three different data gathering technique. The research data was gathered with semi structured in-dept interviews as well as focus group interviews and observations. The triangulation of data enables researchers to be able to produce more accurate results (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As Creswell (2007) indicated, the most suitable data collection technique for phenomenological researches is semi structured in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007). This technique is a very useful data construction tool that enables the researcher to be able to analyze phenomenons, processes and social relations deeply and holistically rather than describing only visible facts (Kümbetoğlu, 2005). Thus, the researcher tries to construct a holistic image of experiences and viewpoints of participants (DeMarrais, 2004).

In order to construct research data, 10 individual interviews and 2 focus group interview sessions with different participants were conducted, as well as classroom observations. Both focus group and individual interviews were held in accordance with semi-structured interview protocol prepared by the researcher based on related literature and research purpose. In phenomenological researches, participants are asked two main open ended questions, which are as general as possible, and these two main questions are supplemented with other open ended questions (Creswell, 2007). The interview protocol was revised by six different experts in the field of educational sciences. The questions in the interview served to open further discussions about poor students' education and teachers' experiences in teaching the poor. After revisions of the experts, interview protocol was finalized and two pilot interviews were conducted with appropriate participants in order to ensure reliability and validity of interview questions.

Actual interviews lasted approximately 30 to 75 minutes, and each interview was audiotaped. Both individual and focus group interviews took place at teachers' schools. Before starting interviews, each participant was informed about the main purpose of the research and was asked to read and sign the consent form. Furthermore, each one of the interviwee was notified that they could withdraw from the interview at any time or they did not have to answer any question they did not want to do so. They were also notified that any personal information about them would be confidential. Thus, pseudonyms were used to protect participants' confidentiality.

Four of participants were also observed in their clasrooms. The main purpose of the observation was to be able to witness and analyze teachers' behaviours in their natural settings (Patton, 2002). Observations were conducted in accordance with the observation checklist which was prepared by the researcher beforehand, and notes were also taken during observations. Notes taken during observations supported the data gathered via focus group and individual interviews.

After data collection process was completed, all the notes taken during observations and audiotaped recordings of interviews were transcribed. The transcription text was read several times and coded to construct themes. The codification and analysis process of the data were handled by the researcher himself manually. In order to analyze the data, firstly the general sense of the data was

explored; secondly the data was encoded; and finally themes were specified as Saldaña (2009) and Creswell (2007) indicated.

In order to ensure reliability and validity of codification process, different experts were asked to examine interview transcriptions and observation notes. Research report including analysis and interpretations of data were returned to research participants for member checks, in order to ensure credibility and confirmality of the data and to strengthen it (Maxwell, 1996; Creswell, 2007).

Findings

In most of the accounts by primary school teachers that participated in the study, it was seen they had discussed the points about families of poor studuents. In addition to this, education has been considered by the participants as an element eliminating poverty. It was one of the things pointed out by the teachers working in poor regions that poverty has different aspects affecting both the teacher and the student. As a result, two themes have been found by the analysis of the research data. These themes were conceptualized as 'education and poverty' and 'effects of poverty'. In this section, these themes are presented and supported with the opinions of the participants.

Theme 1: Education and Poverty

It was seen that the teachers considered education and poverty as two closely related phenomena. That one of the most prominent elements in this relation being family was among the highlights by the participants, and it was stated that the attention and support by poor families to their children's education influence directly the training and education process of the children. Alper, for example, has stated his views about students who were unable to get attention and support from the family, with the statements "*The permanence of learning, the prevalence of learning, the application of a learned information wouldn't be stable*". Emrah has stated the problems he has with the students who don't receive attention and support from their family by saying "*...there are such kids in first grade that, as I said, since there is no family support they can not proceed even in the first group of letters, that is in ten months*". Mustafa has expressed the importance of the support and attention received by the kid from the family, in education and training process with his following statements:

> *Well, at some point whatever you do, the education, according to me, consists of three pillars. The teacher, the family, and the student. I mean, the teacher may give his attention however s/he wishes. When received no support from the parent, unless they want it, doing something is hardly possible. I have tried this in the southeast many times. The kid does not want to come to school. He hardly cares. The family doesn't care. It doesn't happen if both the family doesn't care, and the kid doesn't want. I was teaching there, in weekends also. The parents were saying me this. They were saying 'Will you make professors out of our kids', etc.*

Besides family support, it has been expressed by the teachers that cultural capital possessed by the family was also a factor negatively influencing the education process of poor students. Fatma, for example, has pointed out that most of the poor families are uneducated, therefore having low cultural capitals, by the statements "*In general, our poor parents are mostly our illiterate ones. As a matter of fact, one who has read a little, who has seen some books does not reflect her poverty on her child.*" Similarly, Mustafa has also expressed in the context of education of poor students, low cultural capital possessed by the family as follows:

> *I think, when you examine a poor and a wealthy class, there will be a difference. In the end, not in the sense of intelligence but in the sense of social environment of the kid, I think the wealthy student has a wider social environment, a wider opening. For, in that sense and in the sense of producing new things, the wealthy kid had seen more. I mean,*

I had students who haven't seen the airplane. I had a student who didn't know what an airplane is. And I had a student who had flown with it. I don't expect the two classes to produce same things. And actually, it does not happen. They also view life differently. They give different examples. And naturally, this affects our lecturing style. We had been trying to explain white from yoghurt and etc. I mean, I can give such an example, for instance when introducing colors. I always give such examples, that they have before their eyes, from the things they can find. While explaining others differently, in Urfa, I explain much more differently.

While the education process of poor students is one that is affected by poverty negatively, the education has been considered, by some teachers, as the means to escape poverty. Ruhan, for example, points out that education for the poor is a chance to level up through social classes, with the statements, "*The education has a relation with poverty, for sure. I think if education increases, poverty decreases.*" Similarily, Hatice also expresses her views that educated individuals can escape poverty, as follows:

There surely is a relation between poverty and education. People who complete their education, cultivate themselves, and come to good positions, live in welfare. They may take place in an upper layer of society as an attorney, a doctor, or a teacher. But when levels of education decrease, you see it also happens that people go into dire straits.

According to opinions of the participants, education while allowing individuals to escape poverty by offering them a chance to level up through classes, also causes them to gain awareness against poverty. In this context, Murat has pointed out that education provides an awareness against poverty, in saying "*In my opinion, the greatest cause of poverty is lack of education. After all, if people educate themselves just a little bit, would there be such various types of poverties?*" Similarily, Hatice has also expressed the awareness which may occur with education, with her following statements:

Education, in the end, alters our viewpoint. Education alters our way of thinking. It causes us to think widely. We have a look at our uneducated state, and we have a look at our current state, oh my god, we have made it so far. Would these be possible without education? They wouldn't. So, education should be there, that is, moreover it must be there, all over. If there are people who think one-way, we loop in a vicious cycle, struggling, like this. We end up in the same place in the end. There should be people who are comprehensive, troubleshooting, and who come up with problem-oriented solutions, in this struggle against poverty.

To summarize the findings reached about the first theme of the research, it is found that the teachers who participated in the research and has been working in poor regions try to explain the relation between education and poverty, mostly as related to families of the students. It has been stated by the participants that families who were poor, were unable to attend to their children, and therefore that this situation reflected on education process of the children negatively. In addition to this, the view that cultural capital possessed by poor families, in some circumstances, negatively affect the education of their children, also stands out. On the other hand, the teachers, in the relation of education with poverty, has also stated that education allows poor individuals vertical mobility in terms of social mobility. Finally, in elimination of the effects of poverty, or in the struggle against poverty, the awareness through education has also been considered to be important by some teachers.

Theme 2: The Effects of Poverty

It is seen, the assumption that poverty affects many processes and actors related with education in distinct ways is reflected on the narratives of the teachers working in poor regions. Teachers who participated in the research have pointed out the effects of poverty on themselves and on

their careers. In this context, the most prominent of the teacher views is that working in a poor school is providing the teacher with power over both the parents and the students. For example, it is quite striking in this context that Alper identifies being a teacher in a poor neighborhood with the statements, *"You feel yourself as the superhero of the deprivation zone. The families would have so much expectation from you."* Similarly, regarding this experience Fatma too has pointed out the power provided to herself by being a teacher in a poor neighborhood, saying "*A good teacher is his* [the poor student's] *only chance.",* and has added following statements:

> *I would definitely be shaken if I worked in a rich school. I'm good in such places. I made a comparison like this. The wife of my elder brother is a teacher. She is a teacher in Thrace, I'm a teacher here. We now did this, er.. I'm now making parents buy that, etc. But she says I sometimes get mad at parents, they expect too much from us. She says for example, why is my child sad today. I mean, the one saying this, is public school. But teacher, we have donated so much this school. Why must we still complete assignments with our kid, at home. He inquires like this. All of the parents have occupations. Doctor, teacher, judge, district attorney... Then I turn to me, I inquire the parent. Here, I hold the parent accountable. I say, why haven't you train him in the evening. Even though I had warned you, why haven't you done that. She can not act before the parent like this. That parent would shred her into pieces, there. But I, can rebuke the parent here. I am the authority, that is, in my class. I am the authority over the parent too. If I say do that, that parent must do that. I think so. Here, I am in power.*

It is clearly seen from the statements of the participants, to have been working in a poor neighborhood may provide the teacher with a status of epistemological authority, over both the families and the students. In addition to this, it is possible to see the effects of poverty, also in the professional practices of teachers. It seems that poverty, particularly in material sense, is an element which affects professional practices and development of teachers. Emrah, for example, has highlighted the negative effects of poverty upon his professional development with his statements, "*…not having materials, blunts us a bit."* Mahmut has approached to the situation from another perspective, and has stated the satisfaction he might get from teaching in a wealthy neighborhood with the statements "*A student with a good financial state and who takes education seriously would be much entertaining. All of your needs are ready."* And Kemal has stated possible effects of working in a school, which has non-poor students, upon his professional development as follows:

> *Now, when looked from the perspective of the teacher, in my opinion, being in a wealthy school forces me into personal improvement a little bit. The expectation from the teacher increases too much. It enforces personal improvement. Let me exemplify from another school in Bakırköy. Let me give example from this mind games of the teachers in Bakırköy. When the parent says, such a game has come out, why don't you use it in the classroom, the teacher has no luxury to say we can't get this game in this class. Or he has no luxury of telling, is that so, I'm not aware. He is obliged to learn that the next day. Because the parents have a request like this, teacher such a game has come out, fifty liras each, for example. Fifty liras each, there are thirty students, 1500 liras, let me either give the money, or buy the game and come to classroom and give it. But let us start it tomorrow. This teacher is obliged to learn it. Therefore, when one looks from the perspective of personal improvement, working in a wealthy school is, I think, a greater advantage, all the time. Here, maybe there are conscientious dimensions and basic skills to be taught. Reading, writing, addition, and subtraction. There, since the targets get higher, I think, in the sense of teaching, your condition is obliged to get higher. For in those places where parents of that kind exist, the utmost priority, he says teacher, is assignment, he would learn the lesson, addition, and subtraction actually in high school. If he doesn't, I would send him to a private learning institution, if again he doesn't learn, I would make him get private tutoring. But when this kid comes here, he ought to complete his personal improvement, he ought to socially spend time with his*

friends. Because in primary school, until the ages 10-11, it is the same if the kid learns the lesson, and if he doesn't. And because of this, many teachers would be obliged to be actively involved in the drama. Because they would have to apply in the classroom. But here, blunts us, in some sense. Because, I, for example, begin to forget those particular games I had played three years ago. But since I will use these kinds of things in such a place, you will have to force the limits, in the sense of personal improvement.

Even though it has been stated by some participants that poverty has negative effects on the professional development of teachers, there are also statements that poverty, at the same time, leads teachers to search for ways to use the facilities they have most effectively. Hatice has expressed this situation with her statements "*Since the financial status of the students are insufficient, you think different things. You get creative, for once. Your aspect of creativity improves. You produce different alternatives.*", and pointed out she tried to overcome the obstacles rooted in poverty with her creativity. Mustafa also has pointed out to same situation, with his statements, "*You become the inventing teacher. You should do brand new things. Because you can't get anything materially from the students.*" Similarly Hüseyin has expressed his struggle to overcome the obstacles rooted in poverty as follows:

For example if there are no tools in the course, we build our tools ourselves, we create the tool of the course. For example, well, tools of mathematics, whatever, this or that, whatever you look for, we build all by ourselves. The occasion comes, we utilize everything. For example, well, from A to Z, whatever is needed in classroom, we make it ourselves. The occasion comes, and we make it. We look for the ways to make best use of the opportunities at hand.

As can be understood also from the accounts of the teachers, poverty provides an advantage in terms of status in their relations with the parent and the student. In addition to this, some teachers have pointed out that working in a poor region have effected them negatively in proffessional sense. And the existing opportunities to be limited causes some teachers to seek alternative ways to make best use of the opportunities at hand.

In addition to professional practices of teachers, it is also prominent among the points they have stressed out that in terms of material and extra-curricular activities, poverty affects students cognitively, behaviourally, and socially, in a negative manner. And the most frequently highlighted of these is the deficit suffered by students in terms of material and extra-curricular activities. In poor regions, poverty limits students from the perspective of both materials needed for their education-training and social activities. Yaşar, for example, has pointed out poor students were not able to attend extra-curricular activities, and therefore their performance decreased with the statements, "*The kid couldn't improve himself with merely reading and writing. He wouldn't be able to enjoy activities such as music, theatre, swimming, basketball and volleyball. Therefore, the level inevitably drops.*" And Murat has pointed out with his below statements, the negativities posed by poverty to both materials and extra-curricular activities:

For example, if I ask for something, an extra item or material, I always think this. Now, she is there who can buy, he is there who can't buy. For instance, earlier we would go to a school trip. They told it was thirty five liras or something. I said I wouldn't go. For I know, if I were to attend that thirty-five-lira trip, five people from my class would come, at maximum. But see, tomorrow we're going to go to movies for ten liras. Twenty people are coming. Was I able to explain? A trip as cheap as possible. Now, if I were to buy test books, a marvelous set maybe, I see, the price is sixty liras. Two people in my class would buy that. Coerciblely, you cut some of the stuff. Maybe trips, maybe resources. Getting assignments done, is as I said. I couldn't make them do a different research. Maybe, I am to ask a research in a different dimension. Maybe I am to say, come and make a presentation on the computer. I can't. Actually, if I were to, it would

be great. Maybe, I would see all kinds of things. I would like to teach the children to use powerpoint on computer. But I can't. Because if I say I will teach, half of the class will be disappointed."

Another point which the teachers point out regarding the effects of poverty upon the student is related to self-reliance. Some teachers have pointed out that poor students experience confidence problems. Cem, being one of these teachers, has highlighted this situation, relating it to the incidents of violence experienced by poor students, as follows: *"They are shy towards the teacher, for my students who are poor are usually the students who already suffer violence at home."* Similarily, Fatma too has pointed out poor students have low confidence, with her striking statements below:

For example they can't dance. The poor student can not dance. They can't write on whiteboard with great letters. They write tiny, much tiny. Do you know why? See, when you're dancing, you become much free, you extend your arms extremely, you jump, and etc. I have seen this, for example, you know, when they come before the board. He holds his pants. For his pants, certainly are ripped somewhere. He pulls his pants as such. Next, his shoes are his elder brother's, probably too large. You know, his shoes are large. A shoe belonging one of them had flown while playing. Since he experienced that. He wouldn't ever play again. And one of his friends says, teacher look, says it is ripped, for example. Since his friend saw that. He couldn't do that again. Others too, oppress him as such. They really become meek. And they have no courage as to say let me get out, jump, do freely. They have no such thing. There is always a state of cringe for them. There is a state of staying oppressed.

Besides confidence problems, that poor students experience behavioural problems is also among the elements pointed out by participant teachers. Emine's statements that *"Some are too combative. They express themselves by fighting with their friends."* remarks poor students might exhibit contentious behaviours. Sadullah, similarily, has also expressed that besides their tendency to fight, they also swear when they talk, as follows:

While the children of poor families spend time at street, the children of good financial status spend time with social activities. This of course, directly affect their behaviour. Of course they have no self-control, while they tend to all, from foul-mouthedness to violence, when you look at the children of wealthy families, they act a little more conscious. If one harms her, for example, she knows she should first speak to her friend, and then to her teacher. She acts like that. But the kid who grows at street, because of the street logic, when somebody does something to him, can directly respond and fight with them. And also in behaviours of poor families, a thing like this might be in effect. A friend sitting next to one student might come with a distinct clothing, or pair of shoes, or notebook, book, bag, etc., for instance, everyday. The student who comes with the same bag from first grade till the fourth, might interpret this with jealousy or lack, and trying to cause an incident from a different direction, apply violence.

It has been highlighted by the participating teachers that the groups in which poor students socialize and the experiences they gain from their social environment have negative aspects both socially and academically. Emine for example, expresses this situation as "*In general, it is too few that poor students are successful students, for it is being social that influences success. And since they couldn't socialize, they aren't able to become very successful students.*" Huriye similarily has pointed out social relations of the poor student and its reflection on the academic success, saying "*The poor student doesn't even have a socialization to continue his life. You won't expect much from that kid academically. You cast him aside.*" Similarily, Murat has also stated that the environment in which poor students socialize, consists of children like themselves socio-economically, as follows:

They generally experience trust issues. You know, in blending in society and such. For when you look, other kids say I have been here, been there. The man has gone to picnic,

he has ridden bicycle and gone swimming too. He knows different things, has different traits. The other one who is poor looks, and sees he has none of these traits. Therefore factions inevitably occur. You look and see that the kids having a particular level of income are together, and the poor are together. In my own class, I say clearly. I have three illiterate parents, for example. They also are very poor. And actually they haven't been in school regularly. He has been there one year, and he has left. Some haven't been ever. They have emigrated from the east and come. You see that their kids play together. For they also play at street together. Because the children of the parent of that kind play at street too. But the other one goes, for example, to the swimming course. When that ends, for instance, at weekends he takes our courses. He takes the course of mind games. He takes drama classes. He goes to picnic. The child of the poor man plays in front of the door of his house. And inevitably, factions occur.

Finally, the teacher opinions that poverty is an element affecting students cognitively in a negative manner, thus limiting learning has been reached. Ebru for example, has highlighted the difficulties in learning, experienced by poor students, with her statements, "*In general, they are a bit behind. They have lower perception. And it is caused by the stimulants not being much. That is, other kids are provided with much more stimulants, but since these are not provided much stimulants, their perception is lower. And they are intelligently dispersed.*" Murat has also pointed out a similar situation, saying "*You sometimes can't get understood. That is, there is a very clear, simple thing, you ask for something, the kid doesn't get it. Rich students, however, are cognitively stronger.*" And Mahmut has used following statements to stress the cognitive effects of poverty:

Poverty has a cognitive effect also. The abilities of the kid who has good financial status, who has grown in an educated cultured family becomes much different. Her perception is clearer. Since in her life, in different places, she has participated in trips, and a lot of things, she can place the thing you said, the thing she learned in a lot of places. There is a place where she can connect that. But in the poor kid, there isn't. In particular, for example, the expression skills in Turkish language. In composing essays, in self-expression, they have a bit difficulty in them. Due to vocabulary. Because the family doesn't read, they have no such period. Their level of conception is different. If the family doesn't spend such time, if they don't do such things with them, both reading and conception are too difficult for them.

To summarize, it is prominent in the opinions of teachers that in relation to education process, poverty is an element affecting both the teachers and the students. Poverty, while on one hand providing teachers with power upon the parent and the student, on the other hand it can be an element that handicaps the professional development of the teacher. However some teachers have also stated that poverty led them to being creative, and have expressed they tried to overcome these problems.

As for students, poverty becomes apparent from many perspectives. While poor students can't receive necessary materials to maintain their educational process, the attendance of these students in extra-curricular activities also get limited. Teachers, on the other hand, have also stated that poor students experience confidence and behavioural issues, and that poverty determines their socializing environment, and effects students cognitively in a negative manner.

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

This research was conducted for the purpose of analyzing experiences of primary school teachers working in poor neighborhoods, through their own statements. The research data collected through 10 in-depth interviews, 2 distinct focus group interviews, and observations has been analized by means of content analysis, and two main themes has been established. The first one of these was named as education and poverty, and the second one as effects of poverty.

In the first theme, whic is identified as education and poverty, there are statements regarding how participant teachers comprehend the relation between education and poverty. Participant teachers usually establish that relation through families of the students. In this context, the two mostly highlighted elements by the teachers are the attention and support of poor families to their children and the low cultural capital possessed by them. Most of the teachers have pointed out that poor families fall short in supporting the education process of their children and in showing necessary attention to them. And therefore this situation has been evaluated as an element affecting eduaction process of poor students negatively. Indeed, Evans also (2004) relates the children of wealthy families being more successful relative to the poor, to the support received by students from their wealthy families and their participation in extra-curricular activities. Since poor families can happen to have to make a selection between the education of their children and making money; and therefore they pay less attention to the education of their children and fail to support their children academically (Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007; Lister, 2010; Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2010; Cooper C. E., 2010). In addition to this, Diamond and Gomez also (2004) have stated that working class families gave less value to education and therefore they paid less attention to the education of their children. And, Lee and Bowen (2006) have remarked that families with a low-income failed to pay attention to the education of their children, due to not being able to access to child care services, transportation hindrances, and working circumstances.

Another point highlighted by the teachers regarding families of the students is the low cultural capital possessed by poor families. It has been pointed out by the teachers that due to low cultural capital of their families, poor kids were in a disadvantageous position. Here, the cultural capital has been considered, through Bourdieu's (2006) definition, as the accumulation based on education and family experiences. Cultural capital, in other words, manifests as the pleasure and consumption patterns which are culturally valued, and is defined as the competencies acquired in family and through education. Thus, it can be stated that school education is established on the cultural capital received from the family (Bourdieu, 2006). Sullivan's (2001) study, at this point, brings out important evidence. According to the research, students obtain linguistic abilities and cultural accumulation from their parents at home rather than at school, and the cultural capital of the student obtained from their family predicts mostly their academic success. Considering that cultural capital too varies among social classes, and therefore leads to the failure of the children in lower classes (Sullivan, 2001), the teachers to point out that poor parents had low cultural capital is tought to be an important finding. Again, in accordance with the previous finding, families with low cultural capitals pay attention to the education of their children much less, and therefore their contribution to the academic success of their children happens to be much less (Lee and Bowen, 2006).

Even so, teachers view education also as gaining awareness against poverty and escaping it, and as an element which opens poor students the gates of vertical social mobility. Some teachers argue that the students and families gaining awareness through education could ease the effects of poverty. Similarly, education has also been considered as an element providing vertical mobility, and therefore saving from poverty.

The second theme coming out through analysis of the data has been identified as the effects of poverty. The teachers' views regarding the effects of poverty has been included in this theme, and the teachers have expressed that poverty had various effects both on themselves and on their students. The most prominent element, when its effects on the teachers themselves were investigated, is that poverty provided the teachers with power over both the parents and the students. Therefore, some teachers have stated that working in a poor region provided them with more satisfaction professionally. And it can be stated that this situation was due to class differences existing between the families and the teachers. It is possible to state most of the parents of lower socio-economic levels than teachers, have lower cultural capitals as well. Therefore, families might happen to view the teacher as more competent in decisions regarding the education of their children. Indeed, the findings referring to that families who are poor and who belong to disadvantageous groups trusted in the expertise of the the teachers rather than trusting in themselves in their relations with the educational system, are in a

manner to support this argument (Lareau, 1994; Reay, 1999). Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler and Brissie (1987) too, have stated that families of high socio-economic levels gave more value to education, rather than considering themselves lower as poor families did, could consider themselves as a peer who contribute to the execution of the curriculum. Horvat, Weininger and Lareau also (2003) have demonstrated that in situations where the teacher applied violence to the students, while middle-class families could act collectively and held the teacher responsible for his behaviour, worker-class families considered such circumstances individually, and that they could choose to accept them.

The power provided by having been working in a poor region to the teacher, considering with the higher cultural capital possessed by the teachers relative to parents, is possible to be more important than many other material incentives. At this point, the findings of Tamir (2009), which he obtained by his study in which he sought answers to the question that why the alumni of the elite universities in the USA, rather than choosing more prestigious and more income promising professions, chose teaching profession are quite striking. According to findings of the study, the teachers graduating elite universities view their profession as an opportunity which could change the lives of poor students, and which they could decrease social inequalities. Therefore, according to Tamir (2009), the teaching profession for these teachers, gives them the chance to be a person who can leave a mark on the society and who is prestigeous, and provides a considerably high symbolic capital. Teaching, therefore, may happen to be as satisfactory at least as other prestigeous professions. If Alper's, one of the participant teachers of this study, statement, *"You feel yourself as the superheroes of the deprivation zone."* is visited once more, what kind of a power and a symbolic capital working in a poor region provides to teachers is much better understood. For instance, Byrd-Blake and others (2010) to reach in their study the finding that teachers felt a great satisfaction being able to create a difference in the lives of poor students, may also be considered in this context.

In some statements, on the other hand, it has also been highlighted that due to various impossibilities, working in a poor region negatively affects teachers in a professional sense. Teachers who work in poor regions stated they didn't need professional development, due both to financial problems and to the demands coming from the parents and the students not being high. For instance, one of the teachers to state that working in a rich neighborhood would compel them to self-improve professionally is quite striking in this sense.

Some teachers stated that to overcome material obstacles due to poverty, they forced the limits, and thus had to use their creativity. And this can be explained by the sense of responsibility felt by teachers toward poor students. Indeed, Halvorsen, Lee and Andrade (2009) have pointed out in their study that the teachers who said they felt responsibility towards poor students made more effort, and therefore were able to obtain positive diffferences in students' learning. In other words, as much as teachers don't feel the need of professional improvement working in a poor region, when they take responsibility to overcome obstacles due to poverty, they might be able to positively contribute to the success of their students.

The element most pointed out regarding the effects of poverty upon the students is that the students couldn't access to much educational materials and couldn't participate in extra-curricular activities. In addition to this, teachers who stated poor students were less confident relative to the rich have also pointed out that poor students had behavioural issues, as well. Calarco (2011), similarily, has pointed out that students belonging to middle-class could be more confident and active in classroom relative to poor students, and thus might obtain advantage against poor students. Farid, Anwar, Iqbal, Jan and Khattak also (2014) have reached in their study where they investigated the effects of poverty on education, the finding that students might experience confidence issues due to poverty.

That poverty led students to socialize in other student groups which were poor like themselves is also among the highlights teachers made regarding poor students. Poverty, particularly in big metropolises such as Istanbul, concentrate locally, and the ghettos forming with this concentration may generate hard-to-overcome problems for individuals (Kaygalak, 2001; Giddens, 2013). Therefore,

poor students are led in a situation where they socialize with other students just as poor as they are. Horvat, Weininger and Lareau (2003) also stating that middle-class families have wider social relations, however the social networks of poor families usually consists of kinship and neighborhood relations, is also in a manner to support this result obtained in the study. Farid and others (2014) too, similarly, have reached the finding that poverty has influence on the socialization patterns of students. On the other hand, poverty, as Moore (2011) expresses, may concentrate in certain locations and perpetuate academic failure of the students.

Finally, some teachers have stated that poor students were cognitively on a lower level and experienced difficulty in learning. Indeed, while it is known that cognitive abilities possessed by poor students are lower relative to their wealthy peers and that poverty negatively affects the cognitive development of students, the further they progress in the educational system the more this difference increase (Garmezy, 1991; Brown & Pollitt, 1996; Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007; Ayoub, O'Connor, Rappolt-Schlictmann, Vallotton, Raikes, Chazan-Cohen, 2009; Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2009; Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir & Zhao, 2013).

Considering teacher views that poor students may experience cognitive or behavioral problems, in the context of cultural capital, it is possible to come up with different interpretations. One of the striking findings of this study is that poor families at the same time possess low cultural capital. Cultural capital, considered in the simplest form, can be defined as being knowledgeable about the values of which are thought highly in the society (Palabıyık, 2011). Cultural capital is the structure injected by the ones in power to families and thus to individuals through education; in other words, knowledge capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2016). The primary function of education, according to Bourdieu and Passeron (2015), along with maintaining and promoting prevalent cultural heritage, is also procuring socialization in a certain cultural tradition. The cultural heritage maintained and promoted through education includes cultural codes possessed by higher classes rather than cultural codes possessed by poor classes. And education, at this point, makes a distinction between those having prevalent cultural capital and those who don't, and re-produces prevalent cultural capital through the relation between the strategies of families and specific logic of the school institution (Bourdieu, 2006). Therefore the result is while the child of a family belonging to middle-class gets equipped with a better education and successful, the child of the worker family fails (Palabıyık, 2011). In evaluation of this research, the possibility that students having behavioral codes, knowledge obtained from their family, and conception that are incompatible to prevalent cultural capital might have been seen as problematic by the teachers, should be taken into consideration.

Based on the findings reached in this research, some recommendations were developed. Investigating the narratives of participant teachers, it has been found that none had considered poverty in a context that is political economic or social. Participant teachers have established the education and poverty relation mostly through poverty of families, and have not placed poverty in a context such as distribution injustice. At this point, Robinson's (2007) finding that teachers who consider poverty in an economic and social context struggle against this problem more, but those who take it individually avert the fact of poverty, also is in a manner to explain the importance of how teachers consider poverty. Therefore, among the recommendations which can be suggested from the results of this research, teachers to be made aware about the identification of poverty and its sources comes first. Considering, currently many teacher training programs don't include such study and therefore teachers might evaluate students and families falsely (Amatea, Cholewa & Mixon, 2012), it comes first among the recommendations which may be suggested, to form both the pre-service and in-service trainings of the teachers in a direction to discuss the fact of poverty in a political economic and social context.

The recommendations developed for further research is as follows: As can be understood from the results of this study, obstructions of communication and cooperation might emerge due to differences of status, existing between the parents and the teachers. Therefore, research which discuss the relation of poor parents with the teachers and the schools may be designed. Although they follow the same program, studies which comparatively examine courses in poor and wealthy neighborhoods

may be conducted. Research that discuss the direct professional practices of teachers working in a poor district may be carried out.

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