METAPHORICAL PERCEPTIONS OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS OF CURRICULUM

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine prospective teachers' metaphorical perceptions of curriculum. In line with this purpose, we tried to reveal how they perceive curriculum. The study was carried out with prospective teachers who studied at pedagogical formation department at Faculty of Education at Firat University in 2015-2016 academic year. For participating in the study, the ones who were willing and volunteer were chosen. For choosing the sample, easily accessible case sampling method was used. In this context, 153 prospective teachers participated in the study. The pattern of the study is phenomenology, which is of qualitative research methods. The data were collected with sheets on which there were participants' personal information and a sentence saying "Curriculum is like a/an ……..., because, ……………..". These data were then analyzed using content analysis in accordance with pattern of the study. At the end of the analysis, 81 metaphors about the curriculum were gathered under 9 different categories. These categories are comprehensiveness, training-shaping the individual, being a guidebook, being indispensable, being target-driven, making a progress, being inevitable, being complex and being changeable. In line with the results of the study, some suggestions were made.

Key Words: Prospective teacher, curriculum, metaphor

Introduction

Curriculum is educational conditions organizing students' experiences. At the same time, it is the whole planned activities for both in-school and out-school (Demirel, 2003: 3-4). Curriculum involves both teaching and lesson plans. Moreover, under the roof of curriculum are club activities, additional courses, trips, meetings, activities on certain days and weeks, and anything about health or counselling (Karagoz, 1997: 2).

In order to have an efficient education process, a good planning is needed. What guides us and what helps to determine content, method and materials, and to evaluate all these is curriculum. However, it is certain to reach the goals with well-prepared curriculum. Well-prepared curriculum may not be always sufficient on its own. Application of curriculum is rather important as well, because even the best curriculum is ineffective with insufficient application. At this point, the role of teachers, who are the practitioners, becomes evident. If teachers know about the curriculum they will use, then the curriculum will reach its goals. So, teachers' perceptions they have about curriculum during their pre-service period are crucial. Determining these perceptions will contribute to pre-service training, and they can be revealed via metaphors.

Metaphor is "using a word or a term in a way that is out of its actual meaning" (Turkish Language Association, 2016). Metaphors are described as "making connections between abstract and concrete concepts (Saban, 2004). Metaphors are seen as tools of explanation and concretization in order to comprehend concepts using analogy (Aykac and Celik, 2014). According to Eraslan (2011), metaphor is the process of understanding a concept according to a label, meaning or a term an individual has. That is, it is not only to explain a concept with another one, but also to reveal the depth and experiences about that concept. So, metaphorical images are said to be the best way of revealing our perceptions (Church, 2013:139). In recent years, there have been a lot of studies about metaphorical perceptions in educational sciences (Meral, Küçük and Gedik, 2016; Nartgün and Özen, 2015; Gültekin, 2013; Gömleksiz, 2013; Özdemir, 2012; Eraslan, 2011; Saban, 2009). With these studies, it was tried to reveal metaphorical perceptions about several terms. In this study, we tried to reveal prospective teachers' perceptions about curriculum.

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to determine prospective teachers' metaphorical perceptions of curriculum who are studying at pedagogical formation department. In line with this purpose, we tried to reveal how prospective teachers perceive curriculum. In this context, there are two sub-purposes: These are:

1. What metaphors do prospective teachers have about curriculum?
2. What conceptual categories can be created when these metaphors are taken into consideration?

Method

The pattern of the study is phenomenology, which is of qualitative research methods. In this pattern, the phenomena which are known but cannot be comprehended completely are examined, and perceptions, tendency or terms about these phenomena are revealed. The data are collected from those who experience that phenomenon or who can provide information about it. And in this method, the data is analyzed using content analysis. In this way, the themes that will reveal the phenomenon deeply are reached (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

Working Group

The working group of the study is prospective teachers who are studying at pedagogical formation department at the faculty of education at Firat University in 2015-2016 academic years. For participating in the study, the ones who were willing and volunteer were chosen. For choosing the sample, easily accessible case sampling method was used. So, a group with whom it is easy to make a contact was created (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). The personal information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal information about the participants			
Department	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
Turkish Language and Literature	23	9	32
History	19	12	31
Theology	15	8	23
Geography	5	10	15
Health	12	-	12
Radio and TV	5	6	11
Sociology	7	3	10
Philosophy	3	3	6
Conservatory	3	2	5
Mathematics	2	3	5
Physics-Chemistry-Biology	-	4	4
Business Management-Economics	-	2	2
Public relations	1	1	2
	90	63	153

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that there 153 prospective teachers in the study. While 90 of these are female, the rest 63 are males. And it is clear that most of these prospective teachers are from Turkish Language and Literature and Theology departments. In addition to this, the participants from Public Relations, Business Management-Economics, Physics-Chemistry-Biology, Mathematics, Conservatory, Philosophy, Sociology, Radio and TV, Health, Geography, History departments were also consulted.

Data Collection and Data Collection Tool

The data were collected with sheets on which there were participants' personal information and a sentence saying "Curriculum is like a/an ………., because …………….." With these forms, first of all, information about participants' gender and departments were gathered. Then, the participants were asked to create a metaphor about curriculum and write their justifications. In this sense, after providing them enough time, the forms were recollected. The forms collected from 200 prospective teachers were pre-assessed and 47 forms which had no a metaphor or whose metaphors did not go with their justifications were eliminated.

Analysis of the Data

The recollected forms were analyzed using content analysis in accordance with the pattern of the study. First of all, the metaphors were sorted and then grouped. That is, they were categorized by taking their justifications into consideration. The validity of data collection tool was provided by fully-reporting the data and explaining how the results were reached clearly (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005:257). Moreover, an expert was consulted whether the metaphors represent the related conceptual categories.

Findings

This table includes the findings about prospective teachers' metaphorical perceptions about curriculum. In this sense, the metaphors they used and their justifications were presented using their direct speeches. Their opinions were presented using some codes hinting their personal information. In coding the participants, the first phrases (PT1) indicate his/her number and that /she is a prospective teacher, the following phrases (TLL-F) indicate his/her gender and department. In this way, their conceptual images about curriculum were revealed. Table 2 presents these metaphors.

No	Metaphor	No	Metaphor	No	Metaphor	No	Metaphor
1	Trunk	22	Young Plant	43	Penny bank	64	Technology
2	Family	23	Film Scenario	44	Labyrinth	65	Seed
3	Mother	24	Ship	45	Machine	66	Clasp
4	Car	25	Sky	46	Mathematics	67	Bud
5	Baby	26	Sun	47	Clamp	68	Society
6	Brain	27	Map	48	Dough roller	69	Soil
7	Computer	28	Air	49	Fashion designer	70	Hodgepodge
8	Column	29	Weather Forecast	50	Model	71	Transportation vehicle
9	Building	30	Life	51	Kitchen	72	Three meals a day
10	Plant	31	Law	52	Oxygen	73	Production lane
11	Farmer	32	Human	53	Bus	74	Homeland
12	Cement	33	The Internet	54	Cobweb	75	Life
13	Soup	34	Skeleton	55	Cake mold	76	Scratch pad
14	Jug master	35	Woman	56	Bond	77	Cooking Show
15	Circle	36	Universe	57	Compass	78	Way
16	Vessel	37	Pencil sharpener	58	Guidebook	79	Fingerpost
17	Lighthouse	38	Heart	59	Clock	80	Manager
18	Tomato	39	Blood	60	Rucksack	81	Summit
19	World	40	Door	61	Water		
20	Factory	41	Book	62	Umbrella		
21	Fetus	42	Instruction book	63	Agriculture		

Table 2. Metaphors prospective teachers related about curriculum

When this table is examined, it is seen that prospective teachers created 81 metaphors about curriculum. Moreover, it is evident that most of these metaphors are concrete.

These metaphors were analyzed according to their common features and justifications. At the end of this, these metaphors were collected under nine categories. These categories are *comprehensiveness, training-shaping the individual, being a guide, being indispensable, being target-driven, making a progress, being inevitable, being complex* and *being changeable*. Information about the categories and number of metaphors is presented in Table 3.

Categories	f (Created metaphor)
Comprehensiveness	14
Being a guide	14
Training-shaping the individual	13

Table 3. Distribution of metaphors according to categories

Being indispensable	12
Making a progress	10
Being target-driven	8
Being complex	4
Being changeable	4
Being inevitable	2
Total	81

According to Table 3, prospective teachers created the most metaphors in "comprehensiveness" and "being a guide" categories. Along with this, it is clear that they created a high number of metaphors about curriculum in "training-shaping the individual", "being indispensable", "making a progress", and "being target-driven" categories. The categories in which there are less metaphors are "being complex", " being changeable", and " being inevitable" categories.

The category in which prospective teachers created the most metaphors was determined as "comprehensiveness" category. The metaphors of this category and their frequencies are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. " Comprehensiveness" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Universe	4
Building	3
Cobweb	2
Society	1
Book	1
Cement	1
Sky	1
The Internet	1
Rucksack	1
Soil	1
Circle	1
Column	1
Umbrella	1
Trunk	1
Total	20

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that there are fourteen metaphors in that category. These categories are "universe, building, cobweb, society, book, cement, sky, the internet, rucksack, soil, circle, column, umbrella and trunk." The most used metaphors are "universe, building, cobweb" metaphors respectively. Some examples of these metaphors and their justifications in this category are as follows:

"*Curriculum is like universe, because it includes teaching and lesson plans, and its content is broad.*" (PT4-HIS-M).

"*Curriculum is like a building, because there is a plan for constructing a building. Within this plan, the workers do their jobs and form a wholeness.*" (PT6-HIS-M).

"*It is like sky, because there is a case of eternity. It includes all in-school and out-school activities. So, curriculum is sky to me.*" (PT2-GEO-F)

"*It is like cement, because one of the needs for a building is cement. And basic need of education is curriculum.*" (PT3-PHI-F)

"*It is like a circle, because you can put anything in it, like students, teachers, rules, academic information, punishment, homework, etc.*" (PT1-TLL-F)

In Table 5, there are metaphors in *being a guide* category.

Table 5. "Being a guide" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Sun	6
Guidebook	4
Compass	4
Instruction book	3
Vehicle of transportation	2
Lighthouse	1
Manager	1
Ship	1
Way	1
Model	1
Door	1
Brain	1
Map	1
Fingerpost	1
Total	28

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that there are fourteen metaphors in this category. According to this, the most stressed metaphor is "sun". And this metaphor is followed by "guidebook, compass, instruction book, a vehicle of transportation, lighthouse, manager, ship, way, model, door, brain, map and fingerpost" respectively. Moreover, it was determined that twenty eight prospective teachers created metaphors in this category. Some examples of the metaphors and their justifications in this category are as follows:

"Curriculum is like a guidebook, because in a guidebook, you can find anything blow-by-blow. And curriculum meets students and teachers' needs at all points." (PT48-HIS-F)

"It is like a compass, because it guides teachers in line with the targeted objectives." (PT59-HIS-M).

"It is like fingerposts, because people cannot find their ways without them. And without curriculum, teachers cannot find their ways to go." (PT53-TLL-F).

"It is like a brain, because the brain controls and guides the human body. It directs us how to use our hands or arms. And curriculum organizes and directs random learning." (PT45-THEO-F).

In Table 6, the metaphors in "training-shaping the individual" category are presented.

Table 6. "Training-shaping the individual" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Factory	12
Family	11
Mother	6
Agriculture	4
Farmer	2
Life	1
Machine	1
Production line	1
Pencil sharpener	1
Dough roller	1
Jug master	1
Cake mold	1
Fashion designer	1
Total	43

When Table 6 is examined, it is evident that there are thirteen created metaphors in this category. It was determined that the most stressed metaphors by the prospective teachers are "factory and family" metaphors. The other used metaphors are "mother, agriculture, farmer, life, machine, production line, pencil sharpener, dough roller, jug master, cake mold and fashion designer" metaphors. In this category, forty three prospective teachers produced metaphors. Some examples of these metaphors and their justifications are as follows:

"Curriculum is like a factory, because there is a mechanism that is always running. Productivity is a need in both curriculum and in a factory. We can shape outputs as we want." (PT81-TLL-F).

"It is like a factory, because all the workers in a factory work for a good product. And curriculum is formed to prepare the people to improve. " (PT94-HLTH-F).

"It is like a family, because curriculum, just as families, aims to change children in a desired way. Both curriculum and a family try to get children have behaviors within certain rules. " (PT126-HIS-M).

"It is like a dough roller, because a dough roller shapes dough. And curriculum shapes human behaviors." (PT89-THEO-F).

"It is like a jug master, because a jug master shapes a jug as s/he wants. So curriculum educates and shapes students in line with its aims." (PT86-THEO-M).

In Table 7 are the metaphors in *being indispensable* category.

Table 7. "Being indispensable" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Water	5
Clock	2
Law	1
Vessel	1
Life	1
Heart	1
Oxygen	1
Air	1
Homeland	1
Blood	1
Skeleton	1
Three meals a day	1
Total	17

When this table is examined, it is seen that the most stressed metaphor by prospective teachers is "water" metaphor. However, they also created "clock, law, vessel, life, heart, oxygen, air, homeland, blood, skeleton, three meals a day" metaphors for curriculum. Furthermore, there are seventeen prospective teachers who highlighted that curriculum is indispensable. The examples of these metaphors and their justifications are as follows:

"Curriculum is like water, because a person needs education just like s/he needs water. Once water is directed, it flows in its that way; just as this, when education is programmed with curriculum, it makes academic life productive. Water brings life where it goes, so curriculum is like this." (PT24-THEO-F).

"It is like clock, because clock is something that we always have in our lives. We cannot manage time without a clock. And without curriculum, it is not possible to regulate our academic life positively." (PT39-TLL-F).

"It is like a skeleton, because skeleton keeps humans up, and it is essential for us. So, curriculum is essential for education." (PT25-THEO-F).

"It is like a homeland, because lack of homeland jeopardize people. Just like this, lack of curriculum jeopardizes education process." (PT27-HIS-F).

"It is like law, because a state without law or education without curriculum is impossible to imagine." (PT38-HIS-F).

In Table 8, there are metaphors in *making progress* category.

Table 8. "Making Progress" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Baby	3
Human	2
Young plant	2
World	2
Plant	1
Bud	1
Fetus	1
Tomato	1
Seed	1
Technology	1
Total	15

According to Table 8, the ten metaphors in *making progress* category were produced by fifteen prospective teachers. This finding shows that they mostly used "baby" metaphor. However, they also created some different metaphors like "human, young plant, world, plant, bud, fetus, tomato, seed, technology". The examples of these metaphors and their justifications are as follows:

"Curriculum is like a baby, because it is born, grows up and develops. That is, curriculum always makes progress just like a baby." (PT164-RTV-F).

"Curriculum is like a human, because humans always renew themselves according to the conditions they are in. So, like humans, curriculum improves itself depending on changing conditions." (PT155-SOC-M).

"It is like a plant, because a plant needs water, soil or sunlight in order to grow. So, curriculum needs certain materials and necessities in order to develop. It develops and changes within time." (PT160-CONS-F).

"It is like technology, because it always changes and becomes better." (PT147-TLL-F).

The table below presents the metaphors that are in "target-driven" category.

Table 9. "Target-driven" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Car	1
Computer	1
Film scenario	1
Penny bank	1
Kitchen	1
Bus	1
Cooking show	1
Summit	1
Total	8

In this category, there are eight metaphors. According to this table, the created metaphors by prospective teachers are "car, computer, film scenario, penny bank, kitchen, bus, cooking show and summit" metaphors. Some examples from this category are presented below:

"Curriculum is like a car, because when you step on gas pedal, it moves and you can stop it whenever you want. So you can go wherever you want to go to. And curriculum is like this, it depends on our goals." (PT71-THEO-F).

"It is like a summit, because it is necessary to overcome the obstacles to reach your goals." (PT73-TLL-F).

"It is like a kitchen, because there are any kinds of materials in a kitchen for cooking, and you cook according to these materials. Curriculum has some goals to be reached. (PT77-RTV-M).

"Curriculum is like a penny bank, because small amount of money gets bigger within time and you have sizeable investment. In curriculum, there are your goals to reach within time." (PT80-TLL-F).

In Table 10 are the metaphors that are in *being complex* category.

Table 10. "Being complex" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Labyrinth	2
Mathematics	2
Hodgepodge	1
Soup	1
Total	6

If we examine Table 10, we can see that there are four metaphors in *being complex* category. According to the table, the prospective teachers try to express their feelings about curriculum using these metaphors: labyrinth, mathematics, hodgepodge and soup. When their justifications are considered, it can be said that this category is a negative one. Some example are as follows:

"Curriculum is like a labyrinth; because once you enter it, it is hard to go out. Curriculum has several stages and factors." (PT139-HLTH-F).

"It is like mathematics, because it seems simple, but actually it is very complicated. It needs good practice." (PT140-THEO-M).

"It is like soup, because it has anything in it." (PT78-THEO-M).

In Table 11, the metaphors in *being changeable* category are presented.

Table 11. "Being changeable" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Weather forecast	1
Woman	1
Clasp	1
Scratch pad	1
Total	4

This table shows that there are four different metaphors in this category. The metaphors are respectively: "weather forecast, woman, clasp and scratch pad". These metaphors also display prospective teachers' negative perceptions about curriculum. The metaphors and the justifications are as follows:

"Curriculum is like weather forecast, because it always changes." (PT135-THEO-M).

"It is like a woman, because it is always changeable just like a woman. When authorities change, they will change too." (PT125-THEO-M).

"It is like a scratch pad, because any new authorities change it" (PT95-HLTH-F).

In the last table, which is the twelfth table, there are metaphors in *being inevitable* category.

Table 12. "Being evitable" category and the related metaphors	
Metaphors	**f**
Bond	1
Clamp	1
Total	2

If the table above is examined, it is seen that there are two metaphors in this category. While one of the prospective teachers used "bond" metaphor, the other one used "clamp" metaphor to explain how they see curriculum. The examples of these metaphors and their justifications are below:

"Curriculum is like a bond, because we act according to it. We can go neither right nor left." (PT131-TLL-F).

"It is like clamps, because we have to teach or learn what it says us to do. I never feel free because of it." (PT138-THEO-M).

Results and Suggestions

In this study, we tried to determine prospective teachers' metaphorical perceptions of curriculum. In this context, 153 prospective teachers who study at pedagogical formation department at the faculty of education in Fırat University took part in the study. 90 of these prospective teachers are female, while the rest 63 are male. These prospective teachers are from thirteen different departments, which are respectively History, Turkish Language and Literature, Theology, Conservatory, Mathematics, Business Management-Economics, Radio-Television, Sociology, Philosophy, Public Relations, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Health departments.

At the end of the analysis, it can be said that curriculum is seen as a basis of education and it is effective in shaping or training people. Another result of the study is that prospective teachers see curriculum as a guide for education process. Suchlike, in a study by Gultekin (2013), prospective teachers' metaphorical perceptions about curriculum were gathered under categories like a milestone, a hand-held fan, a guide and moulder.

In the study, it was stressed by prospective teachers that curriculum is an indispensable part of education, it works according to the targets and it develops within time. Alike with these results, in a study by Özdemir (2012), which he carried out with prospective teachers, he found that prospective teachers see curriculum as a necessary factor, a running organization and something through which we reach our goals.

In this study, it was revealed that there are some negative perceptions about curriculum along with positive ones. However, the number of negative perceptions is less than the positive ones. The negative perceptions about curriculum are that it is compulsory, complex and changeable. So prospective teachers think that curriculum is hard to understand or practice, and it always changes and it is used enforcedly. In another study which was carried out with teachers, it was revealed that they also have some negative perceptions about curriculum (Aykaç and Çelik, 2014). In this study, teachers said that curriculum is something hollow and problematic and it limits people.

In the light of the results of the study, these suggestions can be made:

1. A similar study can be done in different departments or universities.
2. **Studies considering different variables can be done.**

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