



## Being an Expatriate Teacher in Turkish Private Schools: Opinions on Education, Teaching, and Administration Processes \*

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### Abstract

The employment of expatriate teachers in educational organizations increases each day under the influence of globalization. Accordingly, a significant increase is observed in the number of expatriates. This study aims at determining the opinions of expatriate teachers who serve in private schools in Turkey in the areas of education, teaching and administration processes and parent-student relations. In this study, a phenomenology design based on qualitative research methods was used, and semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted with 25 teachers. The collected data were analyzed using a content analysis method. Within this scope, the statements collected from the teachers were thematized as views on education, teaching, school administration, students and parents. According to the results of the research, expatriate teachers stated that the education program is heavy, though they expressed that it is not up to date, there are deficiencies in the assessment and evaluation dimension, and Turkish teachers do not use differentiated teaching methods. In addition, the teachers stated that the centralist structure of the education system creates difficulties for them and that although coordination is high within the school and there are positive relations with the administration, the administrators are insufficient in terms of their competence. The teachers identified injustices concerning the employment of expatriate teachers, in those teachers from the United States of America and Europe are in general preferred. The teachers stated that although the students have a high level of motivation about learning languages; in particular, they have a tendency to be results-oriented, focusing on memorization. The expatriate teachers expressed that they have friendly relations with parents but that they sometimes experience difficulties due to the language barriers and the interfering behaviors of parents.

### Keywords

Expatriate Teachers  
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## Introduction

It has become commonplace to see employees from different cultures and nations in organizations as a result of globalization. Developments in technology and communication have affected the business market between countries throughout the world, and employees have started to prefer different countries. The education sector has become one of the fields in which employees from different countries are intensely employed, and they have started to migrate to various countries throughout the world. In fact, according to Bunnell (2017), the number of expat teachers teaching in international schools is expected to reach 700,000 by 2026. According to Miller (2008), even though international migration prompts discussions on “brain drain” or “brain gain”, employment created by international migration will continue to increase.

The term “expatriate”, which may also be called a kind of immigration, is used to define people who work in a country other than their own. This concept is divided as an organizational expatriate and self-initiated expatriate. Those who are sent by their corporations to provide global development of the corporation are called organizational expatriates, whereas persons who go abroad based on their own decisions are called self-initiated expatriates (Peltokorpi & Froeseb, 2009). According to Thompson (2017), an expat teacher, a teacher’s intention to work in another country arises from reasons such as better wages and working conditions, collaborating with students who are different, better facilities, improving their qualifications, traveling around the world or making a contribution to their personal development. Thus, Burke (2017) states his reason for working as an expat teacher in the Caribbean Islands as an English person as “learning new things”. In Bailey’s (2015) research, the reason most expat teachers prefer working in another country is their desire to experience a change. This desire for a change arises from seeking adventure and the wish to gain experience. As stated, the reasons teachers desire to work in a different country vary depending on their country of citizenship or country of destination.

The employment of expat teachers may be through direct applications as teachers as well as one-to-one interviews conducted between school directors and teachers at job fairs. According to Anderson (2010), administrators generally carry out a rapid process while recruiting teachers. This process is sometimes insufficient in terms of understanding whether the teacher is appropriate for the culture of the country. Thus, expat teachers who go to another country with different expectations and hopes may experience a “culture shock” in the country of destination. The concept of culture shock, defined as the status of boredom and anxiety, has emerged from the failure to know how to act in a new culture, is also defined as “the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment” (Pedersen 1995, p. 1). Culture shock arises through anxiety experienced as a result of losing familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse (Oberg 2006). The fact that a teacher has experienced an insurmountable culture shock causes adverse individual consequences for the teacher and adverse organizational consequences for the school and students. Expat teachers are obliged to fight with individual problems, such as their spouses not being able to get used to the country, having concerns about the future of their children and organizational problems, such as being unfamiliar with the educational program and the administration style (Halicioglu, 2015).

Expat teachers have long been employed at schools in Turkey. One of the most important reasons for this is foreign language education. According to Heyward (2002), language competency is important in terms of reaching an intercultural understanding. The individual’s integration with native speakers is needed to provide language competency. Accordingly, this fact is given much importance by the countries. According to Maley (1984), expat teachers, besides bringing along language competency, share with their colleagues new learning and teaching theories, strategies or research results in the area of language education. This helps teachers’ interaction by creating a multicultural corporate environment. In addition, according to Thompson (2017), expat teachers have positive effects on the school culture. These teachers bring along their own cultural norms and make cultural interaction

possible. At the same time, the very existence of expat teachers has a positive contribution on the interaction at schools and students' learning. In addition to the aforementioned reasons, employing expat teachers is seen as a way to establish a good and to attract more students to the schools throughout the world. For instance; according to a Chinese understanding, any school or university without expat teachers has no reputation (Porter, 1990, as cited in Sheng Li, 1999). However, expat teachers' field of work is not only language education. Expat teachers are needed to maintain international programs such as International Baccalaureate (IB) and International General Certificate of Secondary Education, and the employment of expat teachers at such schools is deemed obligatory for providing bilingual education.

Expat teachers are employed as classroom teachers or specialists in national and international private schools, besides being employed for language education. The rights of expat teachers are guaranteed in Law No. 18916, "1985 Principles of Employment of Foreign National Teachers to Be Assigned under Contract at Some Schools Affiliated to the Ministry of National Education [MoNE]". Accordingly, it is seen that the fundamental rights held by such teachers are under the guarantee of the state. A relevant Council of Ministers Decree from 1985 indicates that the perception of expat teachers who are regarded as a part of the Turkish Educational System has a long history. It is stated under the mentioned Principles that the selection of expat teachers shall be determined through regulation. The qualifications are declared in Law No. 19012, "1986 Regulation on the Qualifications and Election of Foreign National Teachers to Be Assigned under Contract at Some Schools Affiliated to the MoNE". In addition, regulations related to expat teachers may be seen in Law No. 28239, "2012 Regulation on MoNE Private Education Institutions".

In the global age, Turkey has become an important choice for expat teachers, and the number of expat teachers in the country is increasing each day. According to the reports of the General Directorate of the International Labor Organization's Work Life Statistics (Ministry of Family, Work and Social Services 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017), the number of foreign people working in the area of education in Turkey was 2049 in 2013; 2453 in 2014; 2670 in 2015; 3128 in 2016; and, last, 3446 in 2017. In this respect, it can be stated that the number of expat teachers in the area of education in the last five years has significantly increased. It is possible to analyze the reason for this increase in two different dimensions: First, Turkey's policies aimed at increasing the number of qualified foreigners working in the country; and second, expat teachers working in good conditions in Turkey. As Bozlağan, Yılmaz, Daoudov, and Callet Ravat (2015) state, Turkey is transforming its migration policies to attract qualified foreigners to the country and is presenting them with suitable conditions. For instance, Turkey is seeking to increase a qualified foreign workforce to support the development of the socioeconomic structure of the country in the 10th Development Plan (2014-2018) which is published by Ministry of Development (2013). Increasing knowledge-based competition in the global level is in line with turning Turkey into a center of attraction by providing suitable terms and conditions. It is focused in particular on the number of foreigners working in education and research institutions and that there is a need to facilitate residence and work permits. In addition, internationalization in education is regarded as an important educational policy. In this context, The Higher Education Institution (2017) has given place to activities in this area (e.g., The Bologna process, Erasmus and Erasmus+ programs) in the Higher Education Strategy Document (2018-2022) and underlined the importance of international mobility. Similarly, the MoNE (2015) has determined an objective in its Strategic Plan (2015-2019) such as "To increase the foreign language competency of individuals and international student-teacher mobility by using innovative approaches in education" (Strategic Objective 2.3). This objective shows that the MoNE supports international teacher mobility. In addition, it is frequently seen that private schools regard employing expat teachers as a matter of prestige and consequently promote this.

In addition to Turkey's policies designed to attract a qualified workforce, expat teachers prefer Turkey in part due to the conditions they are presented with. For instance, Law No. 18916 states that

expat teachers can be given holidays on their religious and national days with the condition that they do not hinder education and teaching. In addition, these teachers have better financial conditions. The schools that employ expat teachers must provide the plane tickets for the spouses and children of these teachers when they come to and leave Turkey upon the termination of their work contracts. In addition, the salaries expat teachers receive are higher compared to Turkish teachers; however, Law No. 18916 states that the salaries of expat teachers cannot exceed the salaries of teachers working in Ankara with 20 years of seniority and are in the 4th level of 1st degree and the quadruple of gross total of all other payments. Expat teachers receiving greater pay than local teachers is not a situation unique to Turkey, though. As Hayden and Thompson (2011) also state, expat teachers generally have high wages and facilities are provided by schools (two-way plane tickets, private health check-up plans, etc.). According to the findings of Carson's (2013) study on expat teachers in the United Arab Emirates, these teachers are motivated by the high standards provided by this country, besides being exempt from paying tax and high salaries. In addition, the additional expenses of these teachers working in this country such as plane tickets, boarding, health insurance, and visa payments are also provided by the schools employing them. Therefore, it can be stated that increasing the motivation of expat teachers in terms of working in other countries is dependent on presenting them with high standards. The wellbeing of expat teachers affects their likelihood of remaining in the country (Braun, 1998, as cited in Zimmermann, Holman, & Sparrow, 2003). As Sharif, Upadhyay, and Ahmed (2016) note, there is a positive relationship between expat teachers choosing to work in other countries and salaries and social status. Similarly, in studies carried out in countries such as Kuwait (Mulridge, 2009), Malesia (Bailey, 2015), Botswana (Brown & Schulze, 2007), Saudi Arabia (Sharma, 2013) and South Korea (Froese, 2012), the conditions and high salaries provided for expat teachers are sources of motivation. In fact, as Sürgevil, Mayatürk, and Budak (2009) state, the salaries of expat workers need to be at a level that motivates them to remain in the country.

The main focus of this study is questioning the experiences of expat teachers employed in Turkey in the areas of education, teaching and administration processes and parent-student relations. This study will make a significant contribution to the field in terms of providing data to researchers on education, teaching and administration processes in schools where expat teachers are employed in different countries of the world, along with making many comparisons. According to Froese (2012), despite the importance of self-initiated expatriates, there is a limited number of studies on the topic. Therefore, it is important in this study to analyze expat teachers who are defined as self-initiated expatriates. In addition, the fact that there are no empirical studies on expat teachers can be regarded as a unique characteristic of this study. What is more, this study also makes it possible for the Turkish education system to be evaluated by expat teachers, or, in other words, from a different point of view. Therefore, it is possible that the evaluations of these teachers can contribute to policy makers and implementers in terms of remedying the deficiencies, making improvements while developing positive aspects. Moreover, in terms of internationalization in education, which is a strategic objective, it will be possible through these improvements for Turkey to become a more attractive country.

This study seeks to determine the views of expat primary and middle school teachers who work in private schools in Turkey on the processes of education, teaching and administration processes and parent-student relationships in Turkey. In line with the general aim of the study, the answers to the following questions were sought. What are the views of expat teachers on:

1. Process of education-teaching in Turkey?
2. Process of school administration in Turkey?
3. Turkish students?
4. Turkish parents?

## Method

### *Research Design*

Since the study seeks to determine the opinions of expat teachers on education, teaching and administration processes and parent-student relationships in Turkey based on their experiences, a phenomenology design has been used in this research. According to Patton (2014), phenomenology studies focus on how people interpret experience. In other words, it is attempted to define the reactions and perspectives of persons who share a common experience on any phenomenon through in-depth interviews about this pattern (Fraenkel & Wallen 2009).

### *Participants*

In this context, a total of 25 expats teachers (15 primary school teachers and 10 secondary school teachers) who work in private schools in Turkey constitute the study group. The reason for the interview with 25 teachers is to see that the data is replicated and that saturation is reached. For this reason, data collection has been ended after 25 participants. As a matter of fact, according to Merriam (2018), the data collection process ends when qualitative research shows that saturation is achieved due to the repetition of the data and the new data cannot be reached except for the obtained data. Since interviews have been conducted with persons who met certain characteristics of the study group, the criteria sampling method has been used to determine the study group. The criterias of the study are: 1) The teachers are expats; (2) These individuals have come to Turkey from their countries to work at schools in Turkey (therefore, people who come to Turkey by forced migration are not included); and (3) These teachers are actively working at private schools in Turkey. The criteria of coming from different countries and giving lectures in different class levels have been taken into account in the selection of teachers to provide maximum variation. Participants' gender, age, country, education, teaching and information for the teacher seniority in Turkey are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Participants by Various Variables

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education status	Teaching Seniority	Teaching Seniority in Turkey
T1	Male	30	Colombia	Master's Degree	5	3
T2	Male	30	Spain	Master's Degree	3	2
T3	Female	43	Russia	Bachelor's Degree	21	19
T4	Female	31	Romania	Master's Degree	8	4
T5	Female	39	United States	Master's Degree	17	2
T6	Female	63	United States	Master's Degree	40	2
T7	Male	35	United States	Master's Degree	12	3
T8	Female	65	United States	Master's Degree	32	3
T9	Female	56	England	Associate Degree	24	12
T10	Female	41	United States	Master's Degree	9	3
T11	Female	39	United States	Master's Degree	6	2
T12	Female	39	Jamaica	Master's Degree	17	6
T13	Female	24	United States	Bachelor's Degree	2	2
T14	Female	34	United States	Master's Degree	12	4
T15	Male	40	Jamaica	Master's Degree	17	6
T16	Female	35	United States	Bachelor's Degree	11	2
T17	Female	33	Canada	Bachelor's Degree	8	6
T18	Female	46	United States	Master's Degree	22	17
T19	Female	52	United States	Master's Degree	25	3

**Table 1.** Continued

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education status	Teaching Seniority	Teaching Seniority in Turkey
T20	Female	46	Philippines	Bachelor's Degree	22	2
T21	Female	59	United States	Master's Degree	36	5
T22	Male	36	Australia	Bachelor's Degree	12	9
T23	Male	25	United States	Master's Degree	2	1
T24	Female	25	Lithuania	Bachelor's Degree	3	2
T25	Female	40	United States	Master's Degree	9	2

As shown in Table 1, 19 of the participants were female and six were male. The age of participants ranged between 24 and 63; teaching seniority between 2-40 years; teaching seniority in Turkey between 1 and 19 years. 14 teachers from the United States of America [USA], two teachers from Jamaica, and one teacher each from Colombia, Spain, Russia, Romania, England, Canada, the Philippines, Australia, and Lithuania were included in the study group. One of the participants has an associate degree, seven participants have bachelor's degrees and 17 participants have master's degrees.

#### *Data Collection and Analyses*

Data was collected through the semi-structured interview form which drafted by the researchers. The draft interview form was submitted to obtain the opinions of seven educational administration and supervision field experts to ensure the validity of the scope of the study. The interview form was drafted in Turkish and translated to English and then checked by two bilingual – Turkish and English – experts to guarantee that the questions on the interview form had the same meaning. A pilot interview was conducted with an expat teacher (female, age 42, USA, Master's Degree, 16 years of seniority, 14 years of seniority in Turkey) to test the comprehensibility of the questions on the interview form. Data was collected through interviews with the expat teachers in line with the purpose of the study. Interview requests were sent via e-mail and face-to-face interviews were conducted. Each interview lasted for approximately 25 – 45 minutes. All participants allowed the voice recording of the interviews; accordingly, all data were recorded through voice recording. The data have been analyzed through the content analysis method. Voice recordings were uploaded to the computer and transcribed. Afterward, the codes, categories, and themes were articulated. Strauss and Corbin (1990, as cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011) state that there are three different types of coding. The first is done according to concepts that are not predetermined; second, coding according to the concepts extracted from the data; the third is the coding made in a general framework. In this study, the second coding type, which is based on the concepts extracted from the data of the research, was used. As authors stated, this type of coding is used when there is no conceptual structure to be used in the analysis of the data. Then, the data was separated into certain categories based on the codes; last, the categories were thematized within the framework of the sub-objectives of the study. In the analysis of the collected data, the NVivo software program was used. The teachers were successively coded as T1, T2... T 25 during the analysis and presented in this manner in the study.

#### *Validity and Reliability of the Study*

To ensure the validity and reliability (trustworthiness) of a qualitative study, the strategies of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are used (Shenton, 2004). Credibility is related to the internal validity of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). For credibility, the interview forms were presented for expert opinion after they were prepared, and the form was given its final shape after the necessary changes were made as a result of these opinions. In addition, some of the views of the participants were given directly in the findings part as quotations. Transferability is related to the external validity and generalizability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). To provide external validity within the scope of this study, purposeful sampling was used, and at each stage of the study such as information about the participants, collection

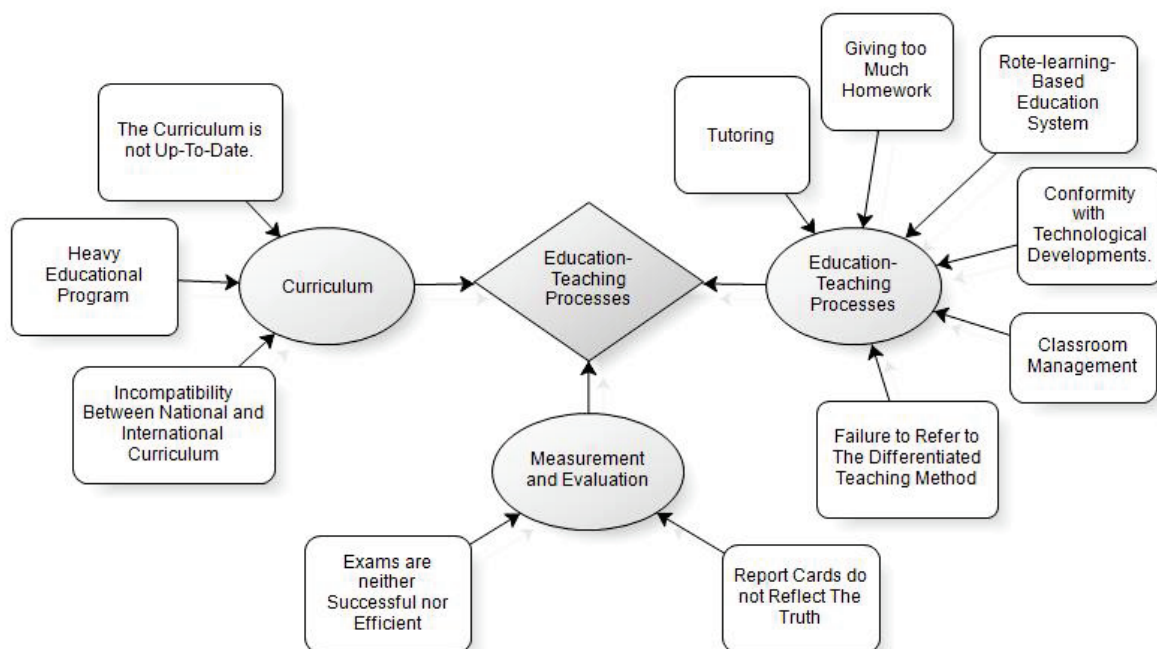
and analysis of data was explained in a detailed manner (Lincoln & Guba 2013). Dependability is related to the reproducibility and reliability of research (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). First, the interview forms were personally analyzed by each researcher; then, analyses were checked together and the common themes were determined for dependability (Creswell, 2012). It is also recommended that more than one researcher be included in the study in order to ensure reliability in qualitative research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In this respect, in the process of the study, all researchers came to an agreement on data collection, analyses and the results of the study. Therefore, the in-depth analysis process has spread to a quarter-month period. Accordingly, it is possible to state that the findings obtained at the end of this process are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2018). Confirmability emphasizes the objectivity of the study. Accordingly, creating diversity and contrast (Merriam, 2018) has been sought in selecting the study group, and interviews have been conducted with teachers from different continents working in different schools (four private schools), with different work experience in terms of years, who have taught at different class levels as previously mentioned.

## Results

The findings from the study have been submitted taking the questions into consideration for which responses have been sought under the general aim of the study.

### *Opinions on Education-Teaching Processes*

The opinions of the expat teachers on education-teaching processes are presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Opinions on Education and Teaching Processes

As it can be seen in Figure 1, the views of the participants on the theme of the education-teaching process in Turkey were evaluated under three subthemes, namely, curriculum, measurement and evaluation, education-teaching processes. These subthemes are explained below.

**Curriculum.** Schools in Turkey are obliged to follow the educational system determined by the MoNE. Therefore, schools providing international education apply both national and international programs. The lecture books distributed to schools by the MoNE are used under such programs. The Ministry distributes teachers' and students' books as free of charge, regardless of public or private school status. Expat teachers have been using such books (even if they are Turkish) to follow the gains achieved from the program and the annual plan. While some teachers state that gains are appropriate with the level of the students, some stated that they have been experiencing challenges in relation to

educational problems. The categories specified by teachers related to the educational program are briefly stated below.

*The curriculum is not up-to-date.* Expat teachers are obligated to follow the curriculum defined by the MoNE in Turkey. The majority of teachers have stated that the educational program was not up-to-date and that it has been structured in accordance with a teacher-oriented understanding. A teacher has expressed this situation as follows: *"I feel that the test systems and curriculum required by the Turkish Ministry are antiquated and out of date compared with the best current practices."* (T7)

*Heavy educational program.* The expat teachers have stated that there is a more intense education program in Turkey compared to other countries they have worked in. The teachers stated that the educational program accordingly has many gains and that there are too many things to teach. Since the period to teach the gains is short, they have emphasized that the things learned were far from being deep and were mostly superficial. A teacher (T11) has expressed this opinion: *"I feel that the MoNE wants us to teach really good things. But sometimes the materials are repetitive, they repeat themselves... And I feel that it is just scratching the surface."*

*Incompatibility between national and international curriculum.* The teachers stated that national and international programs could not be implemented in harmony since the MoNE educational program is not up-to-date. For instance, according to T3, *"The disadvantage of the two systems is that they cannot coincide, they do not go in parallel. They do not meet together"*. According to the teachers, it is very difficult to teach in conformity with the educational program in Turkey and educate students at the same time for international exams or international educational programs. In addition, trying to meet the national and international expectations highly increases the workload of teachers. The following may be given as an example for this issue: *"One of the main problems I witnessed was the workload required of teachers teaching an international curriculum connected to the national curriculum."* (T7)

**Measurement and evaluation.** Expat teachers noted the measurement and evaluation system in Turkey. They were critical that the exams used to assess the gains are not efficient and the school reports fail to reflect the actual status of the students. These categories are explained briefly below.

*Exams are neither successful nor efficient.* Students are not given written exams below the level of fourth grade in primary schools in Turkey. However, written exams are required under the MoNE requirements from the fourth grade onwards. T14, who has not found this appropriate, commented on the process as follows:

I think it [measurement and evaluation] is incredibly outdated. I disagree with only giving a few grades per term and not also including formative assessment along the way. I disagree with the amount of control the MoNE has over how we are allowed to test our students. For example, only a certain number of tests could be scored with rubrics; most had to be paper and pencil tests. There were no oral assessments and very few written assessments.

On the other hand, the participants asserted they had a fault regarding the fact that the students throughout Turkey are measured by the same exams and the equality of opportunity in education cannot be achieved. The opinion of one teacher is as follows:

Equal opportunities are an important part of the school ethos, education and curriculum and infiltrate every area of school life in my country. There is no such thing in Turkey. In my country, most schools have an Equal Opportunities Coordinator and/or a designated teacher to make sure that there are equal opportunities for all students, teachers, and staff in the school. (T9)



*Report cards do not reflect the truth.* Expat teachers have stated that the report cards given in Turkey do not reflect the actual status of students. Therefore, the teachers have stated that students should be compared with students in other international schools in the world through standardized exams instead of domestic standards. One participant has stated his/her opinions regarding the matter as follows:

Report cards could be beneficial if the teacher could be honest on them, but I see some students who fall far below grade level expectations and get average grades when they aren't able to write their name correctly in 3rd grade and not able to write 4+7. But we have to give them good grades, which is not fair. (T25)

**Teaching methods and procedure.** Expat teachers have emphasized that they had different perspectives than the teaching methods applied in terms of teaching methods and procedure, giving homework, the understanding of embraced education, use of technology and class management and tutoring. Categories related to differences on this subject are explained briefly below.

*Failure to refer to the differentiated teaching method.* Expat teachers initially stated that Turkish teachers fail to refer to differentiated teaching methods. A participant, who stated that this has affected the attitudes of students in terms of educational activities, gave the following opinion:

When I attempted to change around the grouping, do partner work or group work, or do hands-on activities or problem-based learning, students quickly reached the limit of their self-management skills. They were not used to cooperation and lacked the decision-making or creative skills that are needed to complete such activities. (T17)

*Giving too much homework.* Many expat teachers stated that Turkish teachers give too much homework. The problem of this issue has been explained by T4: "You know it is like a lot of quantity but less quality. This is the reality..."

*Rote-learning-based education system.* Expat teachers have stated that their Turkish colleagues have an education approach based in rote learning. The opinion of T21 is as follows: "I felt the average Turkish teacher is more structured and more prone to teach formulas and memorization rather than strategies and thinking skills".

*Conformity with technological developments.* Expat teachers think that Turkish teachers are in conformity with technological developments. One of the teachers with this view stated that the technological developments have not been that widespread in his/her country:

You have to keep in touch with the latest methods and technology here in Turkey. My country is not better, as they are far behind in technology. They aren't rooted in the modern technology. They are very systematic and, what do you say? A bit old fashioned... (T3)

*Classroom management.* According to expat teachers, while Turkish teachers have a more traditional classroom management approach, they are more flexible in disciplinary actions. T6 gave the following opinion:

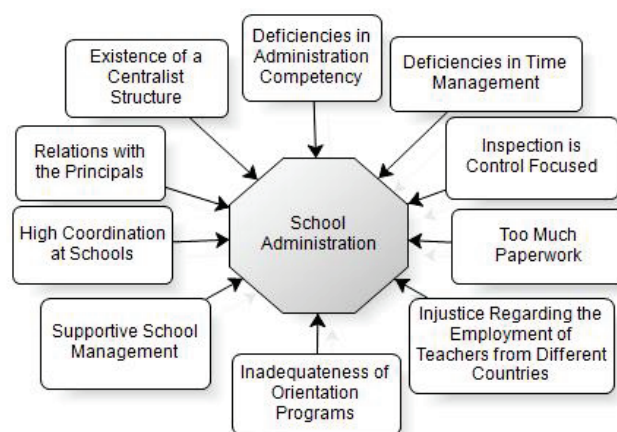
I am not saying all teachers are like this, I am just talking based on my experience. At other places it is just about making sure that all students are organized when you set up the structure for them, this is what you need to do now. It is just like a flow chart. These are your steps throughout the day. And so you know when I come in the

mornings, students need to line up, to do things, etc. What teachers are doing in Turkey is not consistent, or only sometimes consistent. Because with teachers there is a lack of consistency. Sometimes Turkish teachers feel they have to be friends with this kid instead of following the procedure. The child still respects you when you have agreements. If you are consistent with the rules, then they follow them. Otherwise, we are confusing them.

*Tutoring.* The participants have stated that there were many tutors in Turkey and this has been affecting the perspectives of teachers towards students and lessons. A teacher offered this opinion: *"The students generally had tutors. In my country, I did not work with wealthy students, so no one had tutors."* (T6)

### **Opinions on School Administration Processes**

Expat teachers have both positive and negative opinions regarding school administration process in Turkey. The opinions of expat teachers on the school administration process are summarized in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Opinions on School Administration

As can be seen in Figure 2, there are 10 subthemes under school administration processes with the following categories: existence of a centralist structure, deficiencies in administration competency, deficiencies in time management, inspection is control focused, too much paperwork, injustice regarding the employment of teachers from different countries, inadequateness of orientation programs, supportive school administration, high coordination at school and relations with the principals. Subthemes are briefly explained below.

**Existence of a centralist structure.** Expat teachers believe the centralist structure in Turkey has affected the autonomy of schools; therefore, this affects certain aspects of the educational program being implemented in school routines. The opinion of a participant regarding the matter is as follows: *"I think Turkish schools have less autonomy in determining their style in this area."* (T21) Some of the opinions on this issue are below:

In [my country] it seemed to be more independent. Teachers were able to use their initiatives and make decisions alone. Things get done quicker because there is accountability. Here, with everyone asking someone else, the accountability is lost. T13

I did find it difficult to make some decisions or changes to the school because there were often things that we wanted to change, but couldn't because "the MoNE policy said...," or "MoNE won't let us do that," or "MoNE says it has to be this way." In comparison to [my country], there is a lot more flexibility for making decisions that affect a school. T14

**Deficiencies in administration competency.** The teachers find the administrators in schools where they serve inadequate in terms of guiding, being experts in their field and being leaders in teaching. Accordingly, some expat teachers have stated that school administrators do not adopt a "management by walking" approach and that this situation has caused challenges at schools not to be evaluated accurately. A teacher has explained this as follows:

I have great respect for administrators, but I would like to see them around the school more. I was a school administrator in the States and believed in getting out to recess and being at lunch, in the halls, and in the classrooms as much as possible. (T6)

**Deficiencies in time management.** The teachers have stated that they have been aware of school administration or changes based on reasons arising from the MoNE generally at the last minute; therefore, they have had difficulties in adapting to these changes. A teacher offered this opinion: *"The most difficult cultural difference for me is to adjust to the lack of forward planning. Everything seemed to be very last minute and reactionary, rather than making decisions ahead of time that made sense."* (T10)

**Inspection is control focused.** Expat teachers have stated that inspections in Turkey have been different from the other countries they have worked in. According to the teachers, most of the school inspections in Turkey are conducted to determine conformity of physical features such as the cleanliness of the classrooms and schools and of documents with the standards. The teachers, on the contrary, have stated that the inspections focus on the quality of education/teaching. The opinions of some teachers regarding inspections are as follows:

I haven't seen the inspectors in the classroom but I have heard they were going to come and check the cupboards to see if they are clean and see the classrooms to see if the desks are clean. I think that cleanliness is wonderful, and we need to be clean, but as an inspector your greatest and formal focus should be seeing the class and making sure that we are actually teaching the students and making sure that they are learning. (T12)

There is less observation of actual teaching and students' response to that teaching and the results as to how well students are doing, how well students are performing on particular tasks. Here, it is more to see if certain requirements are followed. (T15)

**Too much paperwork.** Expat teachers have stated that the perception of management is based on a strict bureaucratic approach and that this bureaucratic structure has caused teachers to mostly deal with paperwork. A teacher gave the following opinion: *"I felt like the Ministry required more paperwork in one year in Turkey than I have submitted in all seven of my years in the States combined."* (T14).

**Injustice regarding the employment of teachers from different countries.** The participants stated that school administrators prefer any native speaker as long as English is their mother tongue while recruiting teachers regardless of whether such a person has received education in teaching or has improved himself/herself in the field of education and supported this situation. At the same time, the teachers have stated that working with teachers who have not been educated in pedagogy has been highly difficult. The opinion of a participant regarding the matter is as follows:

I have a master's degree in English teaching from Cambridge. This is my job actually. But you know many Americans or British people whatever, real natives if I call like that, we have chefs becoming in here or don't have a university degree. He is a foreigner top of everything. (T4)

**Inadequateness of orientation programs.** The participants stated that the orientation trainings in Turkey have been organized generally to introduce physical structures of the school and the city; however, trainings should be directed towards introducing the characteristic features of Turkish students. The opinions of a teacher regarding this matter are as follows:

I don't know how, but seminars should tell you something about the culture. Really... For example, it is about the culture not about school. We can go find a place to scan, we can go to touristic places. But the points that how are the kids in Turkey, their expectations, their ways. It should be very good to give something like this to a foreign teacher. (T2)

**Supportive school management.** The teachers have stated under this subtheme that they generally work in a supportive environment. It was particularly emphasized that there has been positive communication both between the employees and the parents at schools. One participant noted this opinion:

In my country, I am sorry to say that if you do something wrong, you will be blamed for that. If there is a misunderstanding in the classroom between you and the other teacher or students or parents or administrator, this is something you have to apologize for. This is something very serious. You will be doing your best to correct the situation to something positive way, spend your time and manage everything. But here all colleagues and the people in the administration are very polite people. (T1)

**High coordination at schools.** Grade level meetings at schools and teachers' collaboration in an efficient manner under this direction have been evaluated as a positive circumstance for expat teachers. A teacher, who has found this interaction high when compared with other countries, states the following:

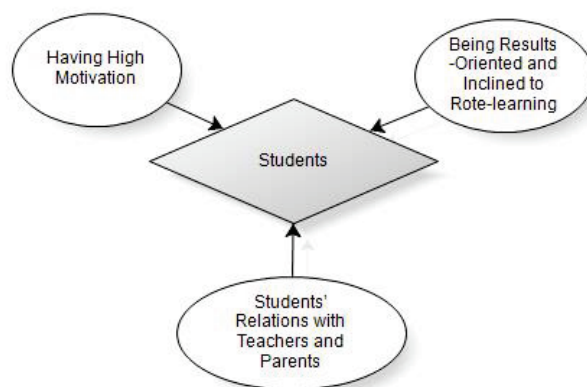
We plan everything as a grade level, assessments, pre-assessments, projects, etc. The time to plan is a part of our schedule. It is great because we are all on the same page and the students were being taught equally. This means that, as they are moving on through their school life, they will have equal lessons, etc. This is a problem in my country. (T16)

**Relations with the principals.** Expat teachers have evaluated human relations in Turkey as generally positive and warm. Likewise, teachers have emphasized that they have close relations with administrators. A participant has stated that they have close relations in Turkey;

I see big differences in terms of that... In the States, there is level of respect is almost kind of military-like for the administration. And the things like kissing, hugging or calling my leader dear, darling. It is to me just like a sleepover day. We should be respectful and have that authority somebody who's hugging and kissing. In the States, I always call my principal rather than their title; Mr., Ms. and then their formal name. (T25)

### Opinions on Students

The opinions of the expat teachers on the behaviors of the students are presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Opinions on Students

As can be seen in Figure 3, the participants stated their opinions around three subthemes: having high motivation, being results-oriented and inclined to rote-learning and students' relations with teachers and parents. The opinions regarding the subthemes have been explained below.

**Having high motivation.** Expat teachers in Turkey stated under this subtheme that students have finish projects, homework or any assignment without any promise of reward. They also stated that Turkish students are eager to learn a new language and their attendance is high. Opinions of some participants regarding this category are below:

*"In general, I found the elementary population more motivated than my former American students, and far more motivated than my current student population." (T7)*

*"Students in Turkey have a strong work ethic. They were eager to learn and come to class in a prepared manner." (T16)*

**Being results-oriented and inclined to rote-learning.** Expat teachers consider Turkish students more results-oriented compared to others in other countries where they have worked. One of the participants described this as follows: *"Student attitudes are much more 'results' focused than my US students. In Turkey, scoring on the exam was more important to the students and parents than the learning that took place."* (T21) Accordingly, the teachers stated that Turkish students are interested in subjects or lectures for the exams and are not interested in learning subjects which were not asked in the exams.

Another observation of the participants related to Turkish students is the fact that students are inclined to rote learning more than learning to acquire good scores. A teacher has explained this situation as follows: *"... [Turkish] students tend to memorize. Memorizing, memorizing, memorizing... I would sometimes tell them to block out anything they had learned so far."* (T1)

**Students' relations with teachers and parents.** Expat teachers stated that the interaction between teachers and students at schools in Turkey is strong and stated their opinions as follows:

For example, in America, we are not allowed to hug or kiss kids. Here, if you don't hug them they feel as if you don't like them. This is the thing I really like in Turkey. You can hug them and be more expressive with them. (T11)

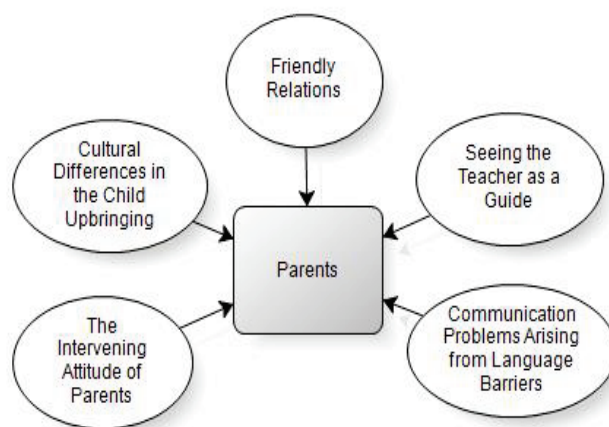
“The relationships were valued and were strong.” (T10)

The participants stated that students in Turkey are more parent-dependent in their relations with their parents compared to students in other countries, as reflected in the games students play and even their classes. A teacher explained this situation as follows:

I see cultural differences, but for the most part, I really like them. The only thing that has been a challenge was this: in America, we can let the kids get up by themselves, but in Turkey when a parent sees a child fall down, they pick them up and say, “Oww, the poor baby”. But in the USA, a parent stands next to a child and says, “Ok honey, get up, it doesn’t hurt that bad. You are going to be ok. You can do it, come on.” (T25)

### *Opinions on Parents*

The opinions of expat teachers on the relationship with parents in the process of education are summarized in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Opinions on Parents

As seen in Figure 4, the opinions of the participants regarding this theme have been divided into five subthemes: friendly relations, seeing the teacher as a guide, communication problems arising from language barriers, the intervening attitude of parents and cultural differences in the child’s upbringing. Subthemes have been briefly defined below.

**Friendly relations.** The participants stated that relations in Turkey were closer and friendlier than in other countries and that parents establish open communication with teachers. Opinions of some of the participants regarding this matter are as follows:

Parents in Turkey were welcoming and friendly, and I became quite close with many of them. In my country, there are no relationships between parents and teachers – especially not Western teachers. (T14)

**Seeing the teacher as a guide.** The fact that relations in Turkey, according to teachers, are close and warm causes differences in expectations of the roles of teachers. According to them, parents prefer to see teachers as a friend or guide rather than figures of authority. A participant described this situation as follows:

You know here the policy in private schools is that you are not a teacher. You are a friend. I adapted to it. I come from a different country with a serious educational system. I mean the teacher in the classroom is God. When you enter, everyone will stand up. Everyone respects you, even if you’re a stupid teacher. They will respect you. You know it isn’t happening in Turkey. It cannot, unfortunately. So you try to be not a teacher, more like a mentor. You know, to try to guide them. (T4)

**Communication problems arising from language barriers.** According to teachers, Turkish parents usually do not use English efficiently, which causes problems in communication. One teacher stated this through these words: *“The main difficulty regarding the relationship between teacher-student and parent is generally the language barrier with communication”* (T8). Some participants have stated that the burden of language arises from the fact that expat teachers have no intention to learn Turkish. Therefore, the participants have stated that expat teachers who come to work in Turkey have to spend more effort in learning Turkish and the schools should provide various opportunities and facilities to teach Turkish to them. The statements of a teacher are as follows:

The first problem that I had was the language. If you know the language, are able to talk, you get respect and learn a lot about the culture... If you don't learn the language, it will not lead you anywhere... If you know a word in Turkish, it will always help you, either during the lessons, before the lessons, in building your relationships with your colleagues, teachers, and parents; so the language is a must. You also need to be open to learning everything. (T3)

**The intervening attitude of parents.** According to teachers, Turkish parents have an intervening attitude against teachers. The participants stated that parents question homework and interfered with their business. A teacher expressed his/her views on this situation as follows: *“Parents interfere with our work. I am the teacher here, and as a parent you can of course come and talk to me or send a message if there is a problem. But don't tell me how to do my job. Generally, Turkish parents are doing this”* (T12)

**Cultural differences in the child upbringing.** Teachers consider that some cultural differences in the child upbringing can cause problems in relations with parents. The participants have stated that the parents cannot say “no” to their children; in other words that they provide everything children ask for. The teachers underlined this has adverse effects on the educational environment. The opinion of one teacher is as follows:

The countries that I previously taught in displayed the attitude that it is normal to love your children, show them how to correct their mistakes and have boundaries and to say “NO” when necessary... Because in life you are not always going to hear a “YES”. Parents do not allow us to say no, but we [as teachers] are saying no and trying to let them obey the rules because we care for them. (T11)

### Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Expat teachers stated that the teaching approaches of Turkish teachers are more teacher-focused, a view that is supported by other studies as well (Geçer & Özel, 2012; Yıldız Feyzioğlu, 2012). In his study, Özpölat (2013) reached the conclusion that there are some barriers for teachers in terms of using student-focused approaches. According to this finding, teachers focus intensely on the educational program and thus, by forcing students to be information-focused, provide them with insufficient knowledge and skills in terms of student-focused applications, which is the reason for their teacher-focused understanding. In addition, although expat teachers believe the use of technology in Turkey is at a better level compared to other countries where they worked, they prefer activities with pen and paper rather than applied activities in their lessons. Therefore, the reason Turkish teachers do not use student-focused approaches or use them relatively less might be their insufficient knowledge and skills in this area. In addition, as Tatar and Ceyhan (2018) state, Turkish teachers received education in a system that is teacher-focused, which may have shaped their understanding of teaching in this direction. Expat teachers finding Turkish teachers' teaching approach more teacher-focused shows similarities with Bailey's (2015) study related to Malaysia. In that study, expat teachers define the

teaching styles of Malaysian teachers as old fashioned. The similar findings show that expat teachers think that having different experiences contributes to their occupational development and steers them towards a more student-focused approach. This can be the reason why expat teachers find Turkish teachers more teacher centered.

According to the findings of the study, Turkish teachers embrace the rote-learning education approach. This arises from extremely competitive placement exams, including written exams starting in the fourth grade to enter a high school or a university. Likewise, according to Titiz (2013), rote learning is the biggest problem of educational systems. Akgün (2005) and Korkmaz (2009) state that this has affected the mental growth of students in the country. Students become more insecure and addicted to the environment due to rote learning. Accordingly, it may be stated that the efficiency of exams should be increased and efforts should be spent to improve the creativity of students in the critical period of primary school.

Expat teachers find the administrators in their schools inadequate in terms of management skills such as proactive discipline, democratic decision-making, time management and management by walking. According to the teachers, this adversely affects the works of expat teachers. According to the findings of Şahin and Gümüş (2016), school administrators give more priority to administrative work such as filing, written correspondence and meetings; however, they allocate relatively less time to determining long term objectives and making plans. The findings of this study overlap in particular with the view of the expat teachers that school administrators leave planning to the last minute.

According to the study, expat teachers are generally selected from the USA and England for recruitment, which adversely affects the recruitment of teachers from different countries. Anderson (2010) explains that parents prefer their children to be educated in foreign languages by teachers whose mother tongue is English and who have been raised in Western culture. For the study group of the study, a majority of the expat teachers are from the USA. This also supports the views of the writer. Similarly, in Carson's (2013) study on expat teachers who teach 4th and 8th grades in private schools in the United Arab Emirates, 90% of the teachers are Westerners and only 10% are from the Middle East. In Mulridge's (2009) study within the context of Kuwait, the expat teachers are all from the USA and Canada as well. Therefore, these findings show that expat teachers are usually employed by schools to teach a foreign language (mostly English).

Expat teachers state that the orientation programs given to them are inadequate. This causes them to more intensely experience cultural shock from living in a new country. According to Halicioğlu (2015), teachers who do not undergo cultural adaptation training and think that teaching is the same everywhere will experience difficulties. In addition, expat teachers who teach in IB schools in Turkey experience difficulties balancing their own philosophy of education and the philosophy of the Turkish education system. Therefore, according to Hamdan (2014) and Burke (2017), teaching in a different country as expat teachers requires changing point of views about the expectations of students, their interaction in classes and their own teaching approaches. Wu and Ang (2011) emphasize that the best way to make for expats to adapt quickly to the place where they live in is to provide orientation training to teachers about cultural differences and to ensure adaptation. However, some teachers emphasized in their interviews that the orientation training given by schools is highly superficial. Likewise, many expat teachers in the study of McNulty and Carter (2017) described the orientation trainings as highly superficial and stated they never had an induction about the culture, the ethos, the language. Accordingly, providing comprehensive orientation training to expat teachers would provide huge benefits to facilitate personal and organizational adaptation.



Some of the participants stated that expat teachers are not eager to learn Turkish. According to Halicioglu (2015), although language is an important way to break communication barriers, knowing a language is not only learning symbols but also understanding how language is used and its conformity in terms of culture. Therefore, it is important for expat teachers to be eager in learning Turkish and for schools to provide support for them to learn to communicate with their students, colleagues, parents, administrators and persons they are connected within their social lives. Thus, according to Lee and Fradd (1998), successful teachers should know grammar at a level to be aware of experiences students bring to class which are unique to their language and culture, besides being dominant in their disciplines.

According to expat teachers, Turkish students are eager to have language lessons. Acat and Demiral (2002) describe this motivation as the fact that knowing a different language makes it easier to find jobs. Additionally, the fact that parents, who are aware of this, showing more interest in expat language education, increases the motivation of students to learn a different language. Özerk, Ada, and Özerk (2018) state that, due to private schools employing expat teachers, these schools' success in teaching foreign languages is higher compared to state schools. Therefore, foreign language classes taught by expat teachers can also be stated among the reasons for preferring private schools. In addition, expat teachers have stated that they have been content about the attitude of their students towards their classes; their students came to their classes in a prepared manner and have been academically successful.

Expat teachers believe they are welcomed by parents and that they have friendly relations between them. This shows similarities with Bailey's (2015) study conducted in Malaysia. It is also possible to state that expat teachers have high reputations in the country. Thus, schools employing native speaking teachers in Turkey are deemed as more preferable schools; private schools use this as a means to promote themselves. On the other hand, a few teachers consider parents have an intervening attitude. They question everything, since they spend a significant amount of money for private schools in Turkey. Some parents consider it a right to interfere with everything. As seen in the study conducted in Singapore and Shanghai by McNulty and Carter (2017), expat teachers perceive parents as 'bossy' and 'demanding'. In general, this is because the schools where expat teachers are employed are private schools, and these schools serve parents with high status and a good education.

It is very important for expat teachers to have a place in educational systems. Expat teachers bring their multifaceted perspectives to educational organizations, given their different professional and personal histories; thanks to this, they help enrich the educational experiences of schools. Teachers from various countries ensure cultural interaction and assume a cultural ambassador role. Without a doubt, the way to raise up students as "global citizens" is related to knowing and understanding different cultures. Accordingly, it is required to see expat teachers as a way to globalize the aim of education and to gain international educational standards instead of seeing them only as a tool to learn a foreign language. Therefore, it is important to offer facilities, motivate and support teachers for them to work in different countries. As in this research, determining the opinions of expat teachers regarding educational systems of the countries they work in, determining their problems and obtaining recommendations from them is valuable in the development of educational systems. In addition, carrying out studies to determine the levels of meeting expectations of expat teachers is considered as a way to decrease the labor transfer of expat teachers.

As a result, according to expat teachers, educational programs in Turkey are quite intense for students and not up to date. In addition, there is no harmony between national and international educational programs. This disharmony is rooted in the fact that the current educational programs in

Turkey forces students to memorize information. According to the teachers, the availability of private tutoring in Turkey is an important problem in the processes of education-teaching. Other common criticisms are that Turkish teachers do not deploy differentiated teaching practices, give too much homework and have an understanding of teaching based on memorization. Moreover, Turkish teachers also experience difficulties in solving problems related to discipline. According to the expat teachers, Turkish teachers have a more flexible understanding concerning class management. Expat teachers think that school administrators are insufficient in terms of issues such as proactive understanding and time management. Despite these views, expat teachers think that coordination within schools in Turkey is high, relations with the administration are good and there is a supportive school environment. The centralist structure of the education system in Turkey creates problems such as too much paperwork. The supervision system is control-focused rather than developing education-teaching. According to the expat teachers, there are injustices as well in terms of the employment of teachers from different countries. They think that schools in Turkey prefer employing teachers from the USA and Europe. Expat teachers think that although the motivation of Turkish students is higher in terms of learning, they have a tendency to mostly memorize and study in an exam-focused manner. There is a friendly relationship between expat teachers and Turkish parents. Parents respect the teachers. However, communication problems are experienced between parents and the expat teachers due to the language barrier. The interfering attitudes of parents is criticized by the expat teachers. The expat teachers think that Turkish parents display a more protectionist attitude in terms of raising children. This is associated with the cultural structure of Turkey.

### *Suggestions*

The expat teachers shed light on some of the problems of the Turkish Education System through a different point of view based on their experiences working in other countries. This study and many others show that the educational programs in Turkey are not up to date, overly burdensome and based on memorization. Therefore, it has become a necessity for the MoNE to review and restructure the existing programs of all grades and the development of students. In addition, the intensive and exam-focused nature of the educational programs might also be contributing to the preservation of the teacher-focused structure in the education system. Not using differentiated teaching methods and techniques is an important problem in terms of student learning. Therefore, teachers should use training or applications that can bring them up to date in terms of teaching methods, which can contribute to solutions to this problem. Expat teachers have different experiences from working in different countries, which helps them acquire different points of views. Therefore, providing Turkish teachers with opportunities where they can observe different education systems will help develop their point of view. For this reason, providing teachers with travel opportunities to observe different education systems and teaching methods at certain times might be useful. It is apparent that important responsibilities concerning this issue fall to institutions that educate teachers.

The expat teachers stated that orientation trainings in Turkey are insufficient. Therefore, providing an extensive orientation program to expat teachers will yield great benefits in terms of facilitating these teachers' individual and organizational adaptation. For this reason, extensive orientation programs for expat teachers in which the Turkish culture, family structure and educational programs are introduced need to be prepared in schools. Studies on which subjects will be given place to in these programs will shed light on the preparation of these programs. In addition, studies that identify the expectations of expat teachers can be a solution for decreasing the turnover of expat teachers.

The expat teachers stated that school administrators lack sufficient management skills. Therefore, Turkish and foreign school administrators should have a multicultural understanding and an international point of view. It will be beneficial to give training to current school administrators in these areas and help them gain awareness. Therefore, the MoE should organize seminars at certain times for school administrators who have expat teachers or students in their schools and make it possible for them to acquire a multicultural and international point of view.

This study only involves expat teachers who work in private schools in Ankara. Therefore, it consists of the views of teachers who have similar socioeconomic opportunities. In this respect, it is suggested to expand the study to different contexts and different expertise areas.

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