

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Primary school teachers' perceptions about character education

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Received 1 March, 2016; Accepted 9 August, 2016

The aim of this study is to determine the perceptions of primary school teachers about character education. In this descriptive study, data were collected by using a survey questionnaire which required descriptive analysis. Based on the findings, it was revealed that primary school teachers (n=60) defined the character education as moral values necessary to be taught to individuals and behaviors for their personality development. According to the teachers, the most important responsibility of them is to be a model for their students and in order to be a good model they should have the desired characteristics. Some of the teachers think that students who do not get enough support from their parents can have positive characteristics thanks to intense communication and collaboration among school-parents and teachers. On the other hand, some teachers do not think that such kind of students can change. However, the majority of teachers think that students having negative characteristics such as telling lie, cheating and showing disrespectful behaviors can be changed through support. Almost all teachers think that nowadays students lack of respect and responsibility, and they believe that character education conducted at schools is not enough for students.

**Key words:** Character, character education, teacher training, primary school teacher.

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary societies, the deterioration of the institution of the family, violation of the human rights, drug addiction, theft, corruption, sexual abuse, violence and the increase of social problems raise the issue of producing virtuous individuals and making the values coming from the past a current issue again. As the values cannot be only transfer by means of parents and society, day by day virtue, value, character education

have gained importance. Accordingly, schools have the responsibility of transferring both academic objectives and values which are believed to be right to the students.

### Character education

In the current Turkish dictionary, character is defined as

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"individuals' distinctive features, basic characteristics of a person that separates him from others and the superior key feature of a person shaping a person's character, character, being in a harmony with himself, being consistent in terms of his thoughts and behaviors and all features that enable a person to survive" ( TDK, 2014). Ryan and Bohlin (1999) described the concept of character as making rational decision and as a result feeling yourself well. Besides, Yıldırım (2007) described character as bringing positive characteristics to a person in his thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Moreover, Cevizci (2003) described character as a person's behaviours, habits, strengths and abilities, values and his way of thinking that separates him from the other people. In general, character is doing the right thing without being seen. The most important reason that makes people to follow the rules is not the fear of punishment or the desire of getting an award, it is the respect to the truths and the necessities of others. In general, having a character means to show right and virtuous behaviors, thoughts and feelings (Vessels, 1998). Another definition emphasizes that character starts to take shape from the childhood with the effect of family, friends and school of a person (Zel, 2006). From the given definitions, it can be deduced that character is a concept that is related to one's ethical and moral values.

Character education has the dimensions of child education, social affective learning, affective learning, community service and citizenship education that help young people to gain responsibility and make contribution to the society. Character education is defined in different ways in literature. The National Character Education Committee established in 1997 in the USA defined character education as "the education that is planned by the school personnel and requires frequent communication between families and society, enables children to be careful and principled (Williams and Schnaps, 1999; Vess and Halbur, 2003).

In another explanation, character education is defined as providing character development by using all aspects of school life and form a virtuous behavior (Battistich, 2005; Nucci, 2005). Similarly, Bakioğlu and Sılay (2011) emphasized that society should adopt some values such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, respect to themselves and others, being a good citizen and etc. Moreover, they emphasized that character education helps people to come up with these values. Kamarruddin (2012) talked about six different characteristics while defining character education. These are trustworthiness, fairness, susceptibility, respect, citizenship and responsibility. Parlar et al. (2010) handled character education as an assurance of students' present and future, they also indicated that by means of character education they become responsible and character education should be a part of curriculum.

Lickona (1999) emphasized that the purpose of character education is to bring good individuals, schools

and societies up. On the other hand, Battistich (2005) focused on individuals more and he defined the purpose of character education as raising children who are understanding, caring and have moral values and to raise teenagers who use their potential to do their best, do right things and have purpose in their lives. Character education is related to what type of person and how they should be raised. Accordingly, it has activities which support the children's development and it aims to raise individuals having virtues (Ekşi and Katılmış, 2011). In general, character education is the common term of adopting basic human values, gaining awareness to these values and helping to turn these theoretical knowledge into practice by means of hidden curriculum or curriculum (Ekşi, 2003). Milson (2000) defined character education under six themes:

1. Schools indicate value crises in a society.
2. Exemplifying is a big part of character education.
3. In a part of character education didactic learning can be conducted.
4. Young people need opportunities to develop their character in a good way.
5. Schools should create a positive atmosphere.
6. Society based behavior list can help the curriculum of character education.

To conclude, although there is no common definition of character education and having different aspects of character education, character education can be defined as to gain basic values to be a good person by means of education.

### **The role of parents in character education**

In literature, the moral awareness of children has been shaped with their parents, and accordingly parents are the most influential factor in children's cognitive, social and moral development (Ekşi and Katılmış, 2011). As it is known, the basic education of children is taken place in family (Pala, 2011; Brannon, 2008). Berkowitz and Bier (2005) emphasized that parallel to the role of parents in the development of a child, they have to participate in character education curriculum. Haynes et al. (2001) indicated that the first responsibility of parents is to provide character development however this responsibility should be shared with school and environment and in our age as most of the children do not see good examples from their parents sometimes schools can be the only institutions for the development of character.

Similarly, Berkowitz (2002) emphasized that parents should be positive about children's needs, while taking decisions they should be democratic and be a friend for them, only by this way they can contribute to their children's development. According to him, parents should actively take part in their children's character education

and the prerequisite of the success of character education parents and schools should work collaboratively. While Brannon (2008) is talking about the role of parents in character education he indicated that teachers should inform parents about the issues that they can help, by this way parents and schools can work in collaboration in order to change the behavioral disorders. According to Kuş (2008) research based on both teachers and students opinions, the factors out of school (parents, media, social environment) have the most important factors that help students to gain values. When the researches about character education are analyzed, a successful character education is based on school, teacher and parent collaboration, providing a moral environment in the school and forming values accepted by the society.

### **The role of school and teachers in character education**

Many researches about character education showed that the positive atmosphere in the classroom and inside the school has an effect on children's character education (Lickona, 1993, 1997; Ryan, 1986; Ryan and Bohlin, 1999). Wynne (1995) by citing an African proverb as "raising children is the responsibility of whole village" indicated that only with the help of all people in a society teenagers and children can gain all virtuous behaviors.

In this respect, notably school managers directing team work and teachers, everyone in a school and parents should be take part in conducting a character education curriculum and this has a great importance (Yıldırım, 2007). Ryan and Bohlin (1999) think that there are seven competencies that a teacher needs to have to be a good educator in terms of character education.

1. Teachers should be a role model for good character and forming a good character
2. Students' character development should be a professional responsibility and priority for teachers.
3. Teachers should talk about the rights and wrongs in life.
4. Teachers should describe themselves ethically but should not put pressure on teachers about their opinions and thoughts.
5. Teachers should help children to understand other people's lives and help them to be interested in others' lives as well.
6. Teacher should create an atmosphere that has positive values, high ethical standards and respect.
7. Teachers should provide activities to give experience about self-sacrificing and ethical behaviours and create a democratic atmosphere.

Similarly, Lickona (1997) indicated that teachers should know what character education is, and when they

understand its meaning they can understand how character education is conducted, he also explained the responsibilities of teacher in character education in detailed. According to him, teachers should be role model for students to teach values. An understanding classroom environment should be created. If teachers can teach values in the class, students have a chance to learn the values learning by experience. What is indicated by moral discipline is to gain moral critical thinking ability, provide respect to other people and provide self-test. The important thing here is neither awarding nor punishment, it is obeying the rules. Identifying rules provides students to understand the rules themselves and the benefits of rules for other people. Besides, teachers should create a democratic atmosphere in the class, provide cooperative learning and teach how conflicts can be resolved.

According to Nucci and Narvaez (2008) by means of education, schools may be the most important factor that shapes students' character. Character education has some aspects of moral education, citizenship education and character development and being a versatile concept makes character education a difficult concept to deal with in schools. School decides the basic values in character education and tries to gain these values to students through learning by experience. A consensus is necessary about which characteristics are necessary to be gained. These characteristics should take part in a whole learning environment such as in sport center, canteen or dinin. These characteristics are both a part of society, and people are required to be models (Otten, 2000).

Undoubtedly schools are not the only places responsible for students' character development but when the spending time in a school by students is considered the role of schools becomes prominent (Ryan, 1993). Berkowitz (1999) claims that, the purpose of education is "to help individuals to be a better person". The responsibility of school is to help students to become good citizen and have good character (Ryan, 1993). Similarly, Elias (2010) emphasized that character education creates a safer learning environment, reduces the level of violence, disciplinary problems and cheating, and for a humanistic environment it connects ethical and moral values. In this respect, it is related with creating a positive classroom environment, being fair while establishing rules, asking in class questions about ethics, providing a balance between competition and division of labor (Ryan, 1986). Within the scope of character education, Lickona (1991) talked about twelve strategies three of which are taken place out of the class, nine of which takes place in the class.

The strategies including whole school are; creating positive values, protecting students out of the class and including character education to their life. On the other hand, the strategies used in the class are modeling,

creating an environment in which people respect and take care of each other and providing moral discipline (Aslan, 2011).

Teachers should show love and respect to the students, be fair, find appropriate ways to solve problems, avoid favoritism, humiliation, painting them into a corner, avoid behaviors that damage students' self-esteem and respect, reducing their fear of making mistakes, creating an environment that enables students to show their abilities and thoughts, and show students how valuable their decisions are (Ekşi, 2003). Lintner (2011) emphasized that all teachers -especially teachers of social sciences- should bring their students who are respectful to other people's ideas and they should create environment to show their character. In this respect teachers should be aware of their own abilities. This awareness helps teachers in implementing character education (Bakioğlu and Silay, 2011). Based on the research conducted by Demirel (1999), it was revealed that teachers and managers have higher competency belief related to character education. Besides, being experienced as a manager has a positive effect on self-competency belief about character education.

The necessity of guidance and education of students to have a strong character is not a new idea. There have been a lot of researches related to this topic through the history of character education and recent researches about this topic in the USA. With the rise of violence in schools- especially with leading of schools- character education has become an important issue. Although recent researches have indicated the importance of character education in institutions of teacher education (Jones et al., 1998; Milson, 2000) there is no consensus about how to reach this aim in terms of curriculum and methods (Milson and Mehlig, 2002).

According to Lickona (1993) teacher training about character education is a more complex topic than "learning math or reading and it requires the development of both ability and personal development". Besides, teachers get less or no education about the "ethical aspects" of their job.

As a result of the lack of education, most of the teachers do not feel themselves competent and relaxed about the field of values (Lickona, 1993). Beachum and McCray (2005) claim that in order to support and direct character education, past researches about value education should be taken into consideration with the concepts of character education. Undoubtedly not only parents and educational institutions have a role within the scope of character education but also religious and peer groups, media and cultural groups believes have effect on it (Kılınc, 2011).

### **The aim and the importance of the research**

Recently, among the social problems nearly in all

countries moral corruption has been mentioned. This situation makes discussions about how character education should be conducted a current issue. When the conceptual structure and literature are analyzed related to character education, primary school is the first basis for students' character. The primary school teachers' both positive and negative opinions are valuable. With the aim of determining the perceptions of primary school teachers about character education, the conceptualization of teachers about character education, experiences and observations, their perceptions about students' characteristics and their experiences during the implementation process tried to be given in both positive and negative ways.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The model of the research is general scanning model within the scope of descriptive research. The researchers having scanning the model try to reflect the reality as it is (Karasar, 2006). Question sentences are used while mentioning the aims according to this model. These are "What was it?", "What?", "What about?" and etc. The aim of this research is to find an answer of "What is the perception of classroom teacher about character education?" question.

#### **Study group**

The study group of the research consists of 60 classroom teachers who participated in professional development seminar conducted by in service Education Institute of Ministry of Education. 41 of the teachers (%68) are female, 19 (32%) of them are male. Teachers' education level is divided into four groups; they have associate degree (n:2, 3%), bachelor degree from education faculties (n:32, 54%), bachelor degree (n:24, 40%) and master degree (n:2, 3%). 42% (n:25) of teachers have between 1 and 5 years' experience, 20% (n:12) have between 6 and 10 years' experience, 8% (n:5) have between 11 and 15 years' experience, 10% (n:6) have between 16 and 20 years' experience, and 20% (n:12) has 21 and more than 21 years' experience in their profession.

#### **Data collection tool**

The data collected by the answers given to the 12 open ended questions by the teachers. The reason why open ended questions were chosen is the freedom of choice while answering the questions (Mertens, 1998). The questions are about the meaning of character education, the factors affecting character education, the role of school and teachers in character education, the competency of character education at schools and the structure and basic characteristics of desirable curriculum. An expert's opinion was sought in order to establish the appropriateness of the study aim, and the scope and understandability of the questions. As a pilot study, an interview was conducted with four teachers who were not within the scope of the study. When the last version of the questions was ready, teachers were asked to answer the questions. The implementation lasted nearly 25 minutes.

#### **Analysis of data**

The raw data gathered from the answers were transferred to the

computer, and a 78 page data set was formed. The gathered data were analyzed descriptively. In descriptive analysis, the gathered data are described systematically and clearly according to themes and these descriptions are explained, interpreted and cause and effect relation is criticized and finally conclusions are gathered (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). For this aim, based on research questions data analysis frame was formed, data gathered from themes were selected as sub themes and they were defined and formed in a meaningful way. In order to increase internal validity, findings gathered according to the data were analyzed by two different experts to check whether they were categorized correctly or not and comparison was made accordingly, irrelevant data were omitted from the scope of the research. In order to support the findings, detailed citations were made from the data of questionnaire. To increase external validity for the generalizability of the results, all information was given about how the research was conducted, how the data were gathered and which method was used while analyzing the data. To increase external reliability, an expert was asked to check data collection instrument, gathered data and findings of the research. Categories were formed from the answers of the teachers and the frequencies of the answers were calculated accordingly and tables were formed. Findings supported with the impressive quotations of the teachers were explained were made, and connections between the data were tried to be made. Findings were presented with literature and sub-themes.

## FINDINGS

### Findings about the meaning of character education

When the opinions of teachers related to the meaning of character education were analyzed it is revealed that nearly half of the teachers (n=28) think character education is the behavior needed to be gained by an individual during his personality development, some of the teachers (n=13) defined it as moral values an individual needs to gain. Other identifications according to the answers of the teachers are the process providing an individual's adaptation to society (n=6), the process providing an individual's adaptation to the society (n=3), the process developed by the corporation of families, school and environment (n=3), the process helping an individual to recognize himself (n=2), the education process conducted according to the personality of an individual (n=2) and the process of making behavioral changes (n=1). The sample quotations are:

*"There is a saying: "Life is like an alphabet. Whether be a vowel or a consonant in an alphabet you should have a good character". Character education is the process of developing and improving one's character in morally."* (T.34) (Moral values an individual needs to gain.)

*"For me character education is to develop students or individuals personally. To develop characteristics which need to be accepted by society."* (T.26) (Behaviors needed to be gained by an individual during his personality development)

Opinions of the teachers on the meaning of character

education are presented in Table 1.

### Findings about the factors affecting character education

When the opinions of teachers related to the primary factor affecting the character education almost everyone (n=50) indicated parents as the primary factor. They think that children's first model are their parents so they act as a requirement of the characteristics of their development period, parents are the ones with whom children interact most. Minority of the teachers emphasized some factors such as environment, peer groups and teachers affecting character education. A sample quote is as below:

*"The primary factor affecting character education is parents. Characteristics of a father and mother are a model for a child, an individual reflect the character of his parents. Positive or negative characteristics of an individual can be shaped later with the effect of environment, school and teacher. It is possible to observe that during the basic character education individuals accept the characteristics of their parents."* (T.2) (Parents)

The factors affecting character education is presented in Table 2.

### Findings about the role of the teachers on character education

The major concept related to the role of teachers and school on positive student traits development is "being a model" (n=34). Teachers, under the "being a model category", given these opinions like being a role model by presenting positive behaviors (n=20), being a role model with their characteristics (n=13), being a role model with clothing style (n=10) and being a role model with a fund of knowledge (n=7). In addition to these, teachers think that they can act effectively on students' character development by the ways such as communicating, guiding, authorization, making them feel as an individual and awarding. One of the teachers' opinions chosen is:

*"It is presenting model behaviors. Rules should be taught, positive behaviors should be reinforced, and reasons behind the negative behaviors should be investigated and found solutions. In order to fulfill the needs, we should give them responsibilities and observe them without being noticed. Also it is important to love and appreciate them".* (T-8) (Being a role model)

The opinions about the role of teachers and school are presented in Table 3.

**Table 1.** Opinions of teachers on character education.

Categories	Frequency
Behaviors needed to be gained by an individual during his personality development	28
Moral values an individual needs to gain	13
Behavior change as a result of the interaction with environment	6
The process providing an individual's adaptation to the society	3
The process developed by the corporation of families ,school and environment	3
The process helping an individual to recognize himself	2
The education process conducted according to the personality of an individual	2
The process of making behavior changes	1

**Table 2.** Opinions of the teachers on the factors affecting character education.

Categories	Frequency
Parents	50
Peers	2
Teacher	2
Environment	1

### Findings about the negative traits of students

When the answers of teachers are examined, it has been seen that the most frequent answer is concept of "respect" (n=33). Teachers think that today's children show disrespectful behaviors to their teachers and friends, and also lack respect.

Following this, teachers (n=15) mention that students don't have a sense of responsibility and present irresponsible behaviors. Generally, the other negative traits of today's children indicated by teachers are respectively, being far from helpfulness, selfish and separate (n=8), being inconsiderate and lack of empathy (n=4), being different (n=3) and lack of communication skills (n=2). Some of the teachers (n=8) think that actually these negative traits of students are caused by the deficiencies of the education system so they are educated far from the expected behaviors. Besides, they (n=6) think that the deficiency of parental education is also influential on students having negative traits. Some of the teachers' opinions chosen are:

*"When I compared to my pupilage, I think the first deficiency is "respect". Besides, I can say the second one is students do not want to have responsibility". (T-8) (Respect)*

*"Among the most essential deficiencies are honesty, responsibility, discipline, sharing and empathy. Students lack of these subjects". (T-42).*

According to teachers' opinions, the negative traits of

students are given in Table 4.

### Findings about the ways to lead students having unsupportive families into positive behaviors

Some teachers (n=17) stated that students who are not supported by their families can develop positive behaviors by dealing with them individually. Besides this, 9 teachers emphasized that teacher, school and parent corporation are necessary to achieve this. The other opinions are necessity of student eagerness (n=4) and teachers being a role model (n=4).

On the other side, some of the teachers (n=20) do not believe that students who are not supported by their families can gain positive traits at school. They emphasize that in order to develop positive traits, students should be supported firstly by their families. Some of the opinions of teachers are:

*"To achieve this is really difficult. It is important to deal with students individually and gain their trust and love. In this way, maybe we can achieve. (T-20)*

*"Some students who are not supported by their families can gain some traits from school. For example, one of my students used to steal by initiating his father. I made him give up that habit by continuously talking to him. (T-58) (Teachers dealing with students individually)*

According to teachers, ways to lead students having unsupportive families into positive behaviors are given in Table 5.

### Findings about the ways to change undesirable student behaviors

Most of the teachers believe that students who have negative traits like lying, cheating and behaving disrespectful can change. Some of the teachers (n=7) think that this can be done by spending a lot of time with such students through the cooperation of their parents,

**Table 3.** The opinions about the role of teachers

Categories	Frequency
Being a role model	34
Being a role model by presenting positive behaviors	20
Being a role model with their characteristics	13
Being a role model with clothing style	10
Being a role model with fund of knowledge	7
Positive communication with students	13
Guiding students positively	11
Making students feel an individual	8
Awarding positive behaviors	7
Authorization of students	7

**Table 4.** Opinions of the teachers on the negative traits of students.

Categories	Frequency
Lack of respect	33
Lack of responsibility	15
Deficiencies caused by the education system	8
Being selfish and separate (lack of helpfulness)	8
Lack of education from parents	6
Lack of empathy and understanding	4
Lack of self confidence	3
Lack of communication skills	2
Students having different characteristics	2

**Table 5.** Ways to lead students having unsupportive families into positive behaviors.

Categories	Frequency
Dealing with students individually	17
Teacher, school and parents cooperation	9
Students being eager	4
Teachers being a role model	4
Teachers who do not believe this statement	20

the teacher and the school. In addition to these, some of the teachers (n=5) believe that they can change the undesirable behaviors by caring for them, behaving positively and some of them also (n=3) believe in being a role model and giving examples for them, showing empathy and awarding positive behaviors. One of the quotations chosen from teachers' opinions are:

*"Well, yes the negative behaviors like lying, cheating, being disrespectful can be changed by behaving them positively, patiently and telling them the harms caused by them. In the end, I believe these behaviors will decrease*

*and disappear".* (T-7) (Positive communication with students)

The ways teachers used to change undesirable student behaviors are given in Table 6.

#### **Findings about the teachers' opinions on the efficiency of character education at schools**

Most of the teachers (n=48) believe that the level of character education in school is not sufficient enough.

**Table 6.** According to teachers the ways to change undesirable student behaviors.

Categories	Frequency
To change undesirable student behaviors by spending a lot of time with them	7
Teacher, parents and school corporation	7
Teachers caring for students	5
Teachers showing positive attitude to their students	3
Teachers guiding to students	3
Teachers giving examples	3
Teachers showing empathy	3
Teachers awarding correct behavior	3
Teachers preparing supportive environment	2

**Table 7.** The efficiency of character education at schools.

Categories	Frequency
It is not efficient because of the education system	19
It is efficient because of teachers	15
It is not efficient because of parents	8
It is not efficient because of student	6
It is not efficient because of teachers	7
It is not efficient because of teaching-learning process	2

According to them, the basic reason of this situation is education system. This is because the education system is highly cognitive. The aim of the education is to prepare students for exams and although the theory is taught but the practice is not enough. On the other side, some of the teachers (n=15) think that the inefficiency is because of teachers. This is because the behavior and characters of some of the teachers are not good enough, some of the teachers are not good role models and do not exhibit what they teach in the character education. Also, some teachers do not allocate sufficient time for the subject. On the other side, few teachers (n=9) believe that character education is taught in an efficient level. Some of the quotations chosen from teachers' opinions are:

*“Unfortunately, rather than personal development, cognitive development is emphasized in our schools. So, students have knowledge in some areas but they lack of character and unbalanced. A person in order to be a good engineer, artist or a teacher should have gained some values and individualize them.”* (T-12)

*“No, I do not think so. The program of the school and academic success expectations is so heavy that they prevent this kind of education.”* (T-45) (Reasons because of education system)

*“No. Firstly, the affective needs of students are always ignored. Secondly, students cannot be always fair, forgiving, honest and steady. Thirdly, teachers are not*

*responsible enough. Fourthly, for students' academic success is more important than being respectful and honest (as for teachers and parents) So, students can be selfish (they can cheat because grade is more important)* (T-6) (Reasons from education system, teachers, students)

According to teachers, their opinions of the character education efficiency at schools are given in Table 7.

### **Findings about the characteristics of the ideal character education program**

When the opinions about aims and basic characteristics of the effective character education program are examined, teachers (n=28) mostly agreed that the main aim is to raise students who are honest, respectful, able to empathize, patient and students having strong communication skills. Some of the teachers (n=15) think that one of the aims of character education is enabling students to realize themselves. In addition to these, the other stated aims are raising students who are sensitive to their society; developing desired behavior modification, raising them with universal and national values. One of the quotations chosen from teachers' opinions are:

*“The basic aims of the effective character education are*

**Table 8.** Characteristics of the ideal character education program.

Categories	Frequency
Raising individuals having positive characteristics	28
Enabling individuals to realize themselves	15
Raising helpful individuals who are sensitive to the problems of society	14
Raising individuals with the values of their society	10
Raising individuals along with the universal values	7
Making students adopt the values to be applied to daily life	6
Developing desired behavior modification	2

*raising more responsible individuals and raising them as respectful to themselves, environment and society. In addition to these, raising students honest and respectful to themselves and their history is important” (T-13) (Positive characteristics)*

The opinions of the teachers about the characteristics of the ideal character education program are given in Table 8.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In today's world, all nations regard education as an effective instrument to have good characters. In literature, when the role of the teacher and school is examined, it can be said that following parents, school and teachers which students first experienced have essential effects on children character development. It can be also said that teachers being a good role model and schools creating positive environment contribute to student's character education.

According to the results of this research, primary school teachers have the correct conceptualizations related to character education. It is seen that teachers generally define character education as necessary behaviors to be taught to individuals for their personality development. According to a research done by Orhan (2013), teachers generally mention character education by looking at different aspects in literature and although they do not have enough knowledge about it, they emphasize the main characteristics of character education. Parallel to the teacher's definitions, Ryan and Bohlin (1999) defined character education as the development of knowledge, skills and abilities that enable students to make reasonable choices. Similarly, Karaca (2008) while defining character education emphasized the moral education and he defined it as an educational process enabling to develop student character in specific moral insight. According to the findings by Üstünyer (2009), educators generally regard character education as transferring the national values to students. It can be said

that teachers have such conceptualizations like personal development, gaining moral values, behavioral change and orientation process to society.

Almost all of the teachers regard the most effective factor in character education is parents. This finding overlaps with other literatures. Ekşi and Katılmış (2011) stated that parents are the primal and basic institution which enables children to develop good characteristics, and the behaviors and attitudes of children in their family life would be effective in their future work life. Children learn almost all new behaviors and values firstly from parents. The base of the moral sensibility in adulthood is the relationship based on respect, love and trust between parent and child (Hökelekli and Gündüz, 2007). Family, especially parents has a great role on character development. Families being steady, their attitudes towards their children's opinions, being model, teaching the values and being honest and respectful to children all guide the development of character development. Following family, school has an important role on this process (Berkowitz, 2002).

According to the other findings of this research, the most important responsibility of teacher in character education is being a role model for students. In the research of Uysal (2013), all of the teachers evaluating themselves as a teacher stated that they are really important for students and agreed that they should contribute to character education. Antes and Nardini (1994) advised that teachers should be role model for students when they are deciding in class and also they should encourage students to participate in decision making. At the same time, teachers need to be model in order to encourage the desired behaviors and they should make them communicate with others and be supportive for students to have positive behaviors. The findings of Şahin (2011) indicate that appearance of teachers is a requirement in order to be an effective teacher. According to Pişkin et al. (2011), developing the support for positive behaviors is very important. In order to achieve this, teachers should develop their efficiencies on problematic issues and bring students positive behaviors. Also, the conditions should be provided for

their career development which is important for student communication.

Almost all of the teachers think that today students lack respect and responsibility. Respect and responsibility are essential traits for a good character. Haste (2001) emphasized that respect consists three dimensions. According to him, the first one is to realize the individuals 'responsibilities and obligations for society, second one respect for other individuals in society and communicate in terms of values, the third one is application of beliefs and values correctly.

Most of the teachers think that character education is not enough at schools. A study conducted by Lee (2008) similarly, benefited from the opinions of teachers and directors at schools. One of the important results of the study is that the character education programs at schools are not sufficient. In the findings of a study by Gündođdu (2010), teachers realize the importance of character education but they cannot use this efficiently in their classes and the level of this education is medium in students. Akbař (2004) stated that the conditions for an effective value education cannot be provided in his findings.

Some of the teachers believe that they can impart positive behaviors to students who are not supported by their families by being role model, communicating with them, and having parents-school corporation. Similarly, one of the important findings of the study by Baysal and Korucu (2005) is that teachers communicate with students individually in order to overcome problems. On the other side, some of the teachers do not believe that they can help students who are not supported by their families. In a study by Akbař (2004), he stated that values at school are not reinforced by parents and social life, there is no corporation between school and parents and the values from families and that from school could coincide.

Most of the teachers believe that students who have negative traits such as lying, cheating, being disrespectful can be changed. Bakiođlu and Silay (2013) states that the characters of young are not completed yet, so they can be changed, it is not late and there is hope. Most of the teachers in order to develop positive behaviors prefer ways like awarding. Similarly, İpřir (2011) emphasized that in order to overcome the negative behaviors of students, teachers should have good communication skills and ability to create positive environment. He also added that teachers can communicate by listening to students effectively, using body language well and having a good eye contact. On the other side, Brannon (2008) emphasized that teachers need to inform families about the roles of parents and by this way there should be corporation between families and teachers in order to fix student behaviors. In the study of Yůksel (2005), in order to overcome undesirable student behaviors, teacher prefer the ways such as warning students, talking with

students after lessons and sometimes communicating with the parent of students.

Most of the teachers believe the efficiency of character education programs but they think that the programs at school are not sufficient and the reasons of this situation are education system and shareholders of this system. Uysal (2008) according to his study concluded that character education programs mostly have statistically positive effect on student behaviors and academic success. Almost all of the teachers think that character education programs should be applied by using different techniques and by specialists. In addition to this, Ŭstůnyer (2009) found that teachers regard character educations as a necessity and because of their workloads teachers are not efficient. Along with this, teacher in the study think that in order to have an effective character education the exam system should be changed and students need to be guided to social life. In this study, according to the findings, in the character education, experience is very important and the techniques such as drama, theatre and cinema are very effective. Creasy (2008) stated that teacher integrate character education with their daily plans. According to ađatay (2009) study, teachers regard themselves very important in character education but they do not have opinions about how to apply character education.

It can be said that teachers agree in the opinion that the basic aims of character education is to raise honest, respectful, communicative and forgiving individuals. These opinions of teachers coincide with other literatures. Similar to the answers of teachers, White and Warfa (2011) stated that character education is a planned learning experience in order to develop social success and cooperative students. Gosset (2006) emphasized that in order to develop positive and ideal behaviors character education is very important. Battistich (2005) is focused on individuals and stated that the aim of the character education is to raise individuals who are sensitive, caring and having moral values in childhood, also doing best using their capacity, presenting correct behaviors and living their life with aims at adulthood. According to the study aimed to reflect opinions of the American and Turkish students about some values by Balođlu (2014), the American students think that character education programs are not sufficient, boring simple and repetitive. For this reason, in order to see the positive results of character education, effective techniques should be used at learning process.

In the light of the findings of this study, in order to imbibe student's national and global values, it can be said that character education programs should be developed and applied with effective techniques. Also, all the shareholders especially parents should attend the planned character education programs. The number of affective objectives in the primary, secondary and high school programs should be increased and teacher should

be taught the ways of teaching practically. This research mainly focused the opinion of teachers and recommends that further study on the opinions of directors, parents and students on character education should be attempted.

### Conflict of interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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