

## Teachers' Cognitive Constructs on Democratic Education in Schools: A Case Study<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the cognitive constructs of teachers on democratic education in schools. For this purpose, the study was modelled as a case study. The study group was 20 teachers and determined by using maximum variation sampling method. Repertory grid technique was used to collect data. Data were analyzed using descriptive analysis technique. The participants produced 200 valid cognitive constructs related to the democratic education in school. The most frequently mentioned cognitive constructs were respectively: (1) motivation increases, (2) confidence/self-confidence, (3) job satisfaction increases, (4) tolerance, (5) participative management, (6) employees feel precious, (7) organisational commitment, (8) new opinions, (9) human rights, and (10) freedom of ideas/impressions. The cognitive constructs were classified considering functionality and the similarity of them. As a result of classification, 14 main groups were determined according to the 200 valid cognitive constructs. Democratic participation should be encouraged by the school administrators. Besides, school society should display democratic attitudes for democratic education. In addition, the school administrators should appreciate students, teachers and parents in terms of success of school they manage.

**Keywords:** *democratic education, cognitive construct, teacher, repertory grid.*

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## **Introduction**

Democracy, is a form of governance and mode of coexistence, participation in public decision making process, distributing resources, resolving conflicts, and planning for the future. In other words, democracy is a political system and a way of life that is based on active participation of individual in the decision-making process and the implementation of responsible actions for the well-being of the individual and the community. Therefore, each individual must have some specific knowledge, skills, and values that will allow him/her to take part in to the best of his/her ability. Consequently, democratic education can be expressed as the process that includes the principles such as to educate society by means of the human rights principles, integrate the rules of democracy in educational activities, and thus transfer the explicit and implicit democratic functions and structure into education programmes.

In a democratic society the institutions and practices create the political space in which the citizens' identities form and they experience their rights (Mathé, 2016). Therefore, under true democratic political systems due to the accountability, the government has to protect human rights and the rule of law. After all, an open and conscious discussion is vital for a healthy democracy, because open-minded flow allows people to be fully informed as much as possible (Singh, 2014). Democracy, more than a form of government, is primarily a mode of sharing a conjoint communicated experience (Dewey, 2001). In the same way, democratic education enables the faith in the students and reveals collective capacity of them. In a democratic education atmosphere the students are concerned about the welfare of others and the common good (Apple & Beane, 2007; Eryaman & Schneider, 2017; Eryaman & Bruce, 2015). This collective capacity creates possibilities for resolving problems by using critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, issues, and policies. The students are also concerned about the dignity and rights of other individuals and minorities in this atmosphere (Beane, 1990).

In a democratic country, formal education needs to be democratic for three reasons: democracy is a form of government, democracy is a lifestyle, and citizens have a right to join democratic life (Korkmaz & Erden, 2012). Consequently, the school as a social institution should promote and reinforce the democratic way of life (MacBeath & Moss, 2004, p.163). A heterogeneous student population with different backgrounds and perspectives has a chance to discuss current social issues, and interaction with each other enables them to understand the common values in the school environment. (Doğanay, 2012; Eryaman, 2009). In accordance with age and maturity of a student, teachers should give this student the opportunity to participate in school life including involvement in the creation of student councils, peer-mentoring programs, and the creation of curriculum materials to be both meaningful and relevant to their interests and experiences (Lee, 2013). The students can also bring into significant relationships with adult role-models and so they can have an important citizenship experience that gives them an insight into real social life.

Democratic school should be based on improvement the school climate or enhance students' self-esteem (Apple & Beane, 2007), democratic culture (Işıkgöz, 2016) motivation for democratic participation (Bindewald, Tannebaum & Womac, 2016), democratic attitudes and behaviours teaching (Duman & Koç, 2004), democratic teaching practices and social justice (McDermott, 2012), student centered organization (Şişman, Güleş & Dönmez, 2010), democratic principles and practices in school management (Morhayim, 2008), democratic decision-making and participative management (Levis, 1994), democratic curriculum and teaching methodologies (Riedler & Eryaman, 2016), democratic policies and organizational structures (Alshurman, 2015), democratic awareness, reflection, dialogue (Hyde & LaPrad, 2015).

In a democratic education environment inter-personal relations should be established on democratic values, including the following characteristics: tolerance, cooperation, mutual trust (Arabacı, 2005), interdependence (Noddings, 2011), mutual respect, mutual responsibility, recognition of human dignity (Kubow & Kinney, 2000; Riley, 2011), respect for human rights (Moswela, 2010; Riley, 2011), responsibility, cooperation, concern for others, critical thinking, freedom of expression (Cappa, 1956), sharing, collaboration, active participation (Hotaman, 2010; Print, Ørnstrøm & Nielsen, 2002), equality, cooperative learning (MacMath, 2008), cooperativeness, loyalty (Guerney & Merriam, 1972), respect, mutual peace, and human rights (Korkmaz & Erden, 2014), and democratic participation (Lowry, 2002).

Fundamental democracy values can only be achieved at schools implementing a democratic management model that carries out democratic education practices (Alshurman, 2015). Democratic school needs democratic school administrators who enhance the members' skills to be respectful to the views of others and to help them examine their impact upon each other to understand themselves better (Hayes, 1982). The school should have a positive climate for democratic governance. As a matter of definition, a school with a positive climate is one that promotes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe; and that this climate supports a sense of unity and cohesion at school, promotes a culture of respect, and encourages students to consider themselves stakeholders in the school's success (Gould, 2003). A democratic school management is required to carry out the goals and vision of democratic education. Ultimately, it is the management of the school that is responsible for creating an organisational culture of school ethos which encourage democratic participation (Van der Merwe, 2016).

There is an increasing attention among the researchers to understand internal factors leading some schools' education to be more democratic than others (Apple & Beane, 2007; (Bindewald, Tannebaum & Womac, 2016; Hyde & LaPrad, 2015). These researchers benefitted from many theories to understand these factors. This study was conducted based on 'Personal Construction Theory' which developed by Kelly in 1955. In this constructivist theory, Kelly tries to explain the individual's beliefs and views employing 'personal constructs' in cognitive dimensions formed by two opposite poles. The repertory of an individual's constructs and relationships between these constructs provide a basis for predicting his/her beliefs and

judgments (Paszowska-Rogacz & Kabzińska, 2012). Over the years, Kelly's Personal Construction Theory has been thoroughly revised and improved, and it has also been successfully applied to many research fields and practices (Pervin & John, 2002).

The basic starting point of the personal construction theory is cognitive structure. Cognitive structure is a mental state as a consequence of many repeating cognitive processes (Cüceloğlu, 1991, p. 201). The cognitive processes are deeply rooted in an individual's interactions with the milieu because the cognition is a conscious process of individual's mind including different aspects such as awareness, perception, reasoning, and judgment (Wilson, 2002). Cognitive structure system embraces the total network of a person's constructs, and it includes tacit as well as verbal constructs (Bussis, Chittenden, Amarel, & Klausner, 1985). The personal constructs assume that they are created and structured, individually.

In the previous studies, it is focused on democratic education environments, at classroom level, at primary schools (e.g. Büyükkaragöz & Kesici, 1996; Çakmur, 2007; Demir, 2003; Genç, 2006; Karatekin, Merey & Kuş, 2012; Riley, 2001; Toper, 2007), secondary schools (e.g. Kesici, Pesen, & Oral, 2017; Özdaş, Ekinci & Bindak, 2014; Yalçın, 2007), and at higher education (e.g. Duman & Koç, 2004; Elkatmış & Toptaş, 2015; Gömleksiz, 1988; Samancı & Yıldırım, 2015; Saracaloğlu, Evin & Varol, 2004) through the democratic behaviour, democratic attitudes and beliefs of teachers according to teachers' and students' perception. But the studies on democratic education at school level are limited. Therefore, in this study it is focused on the teachers' cognitive constructs on democratic education in the school environment. For this purpose the following questions were sought:

1. What are the cognitive constructs of the teachers' on democratic education in schools?
2. What are the relative priority levels of teachers' cognitive constructs?

## **Method**

Case study model, which is a type of qualitative research design, was applied in this study. The qualitative research design is used to obtain in-depth and comprehensive information on a topic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2014; Singh, 2007). The key philosophical assumption upon all types of qualitative research is that the reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds (Merriam, 1998, p.6). Case is defined as a specific, complex, functioning integrated system which has a boundary and working parts and purpose in social sciences and human services (Stake, 1995, p.2). The case study model allows to investigate and reveal the holistic and meaningful features of real life. The case study also ensures researchers to examine the data closely in a particular context (Fidel, 1984; Yin, 2003; Zainal, 2007). 'A democratic education' promoting the achievements of school was assumed as a 'case' and so this study was designed on that case.

### **Study Group**

The study group were 20 teachers working in Ordu city centre during 2016-2017 academic year. The study group was determined using maximum variable sampling method. A maximum variation sample is constructed by identifying key dimensions of variations and then finding participants with various demographic qualifications as much as possible. Maximum variation sampling can be utilized to construct a holistic understanding of the phenomenon by synthesizing studies that differ in their study designs on several dimensions (Suri, 2011). Heterogeneity for a small sample might be a problem due to variety in perceptions of participants. The maximum variation sampling strategy turns that apparent weakness into a strength by applying the following logic: Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program (Patton, 1990, p.172). Therefore, the democratic education as ‘a case’ was investigated as possible as on participants having different demographic qualifications.

In this study, nine participants were male and 11 were female. Five primary school teachers, five secondary school teachers, five academic high school teachers, and five vocational high school teachers were recruited. The average age was 33.5. Five participants were primary education teachers, three were psychological counsellor and guide, two were philosophy teachers, two were social sciences teachers, two were science teachers, two were geography teachers, one was mathematics teacher, one was literature teacher, and two were history teachers. The average professional seniority was 12.7.

### **Procedure**

This study was conducted in four stages: (i) definition of the problem (ii) preparation of data collection tool (iii) data collection, and (iv) data analysis and interpretation (Mayring, 2011; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). Details of these stages are presented below:

*(i) Definition of the problem:* In this stage, the concepts related to the problem were defined. A conceptual framework was established to define and classify the opinions of teachers on democratic education at school.

*(ii) Preparation of data collection tool:* A structured grid form was used as the data collection tool in the study, and it was prepared by the researchers based on national and international literature. The grid form is a cognitive mapping technique that attempts to describe how people think about a phenomenon in their life (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004; Tan & Hunter, 2002). Moreover, it can be used to reveal the democratic education qualifications in school. In this study, data was obtained by using ‘triad repertory grid’ technique (Adams-Webber, 1996; Jankowicz, 2004; Bell, 2005). The structured grid form includes two parts. The first part includes five questions determining the demographic variables of participants such as gender, age, and

professional seniority, teaching field, and the school type they work. In the second part, participants were asked for writing three qualifications on democratic education and then, ten impressions according to these qualifications they assume as the necessities for democratic education at school. The repertory grid form used in the study is shown in Figure 1.

Cognitive Constructs	Democratic Qualifications			Non-Democratic Qualifications			Cognitive Constructs
Positive Impressions							Negative Impressions

1. Write your answer as two words, two parts of sentence or two identifications which separated by dashes (-).
2. Imagine that the two impressions in each trio in a similar manner but third is different.
3. The figure has been named as the similar pole (democratic) that two impressions are similar.
4. The figure has been named as the averseness pole (non-democratic) that two impressions are different from third.

**Figure 1.** *The triad repertory grid*

(iii) *Data collection:* We obtained the data through face-to-face interviews with the participants. Firstly, we asked the participants to think about democratic education at school. Secondly, we asked the participants to write three qualifications for democratic education in each section of the grid form and then, to write ten impressions considering them. Thirdly, we asked each participants to grade positive impressions from four to six, the two impressions in each trio are in a similar manner but the third is different. Fourthly, we asked each participant to continue the same process for negative impressions. Then, we asked each participant to grade negative impressions from one to three, the two impressions in each trio are in a similar manner but the third is different. Every interview lasted about in 25-30 minutes. As an example of this process a repertory grid form completed by a teacher is shown in Figure 2.

Cognitive Constructs	Democratic Qualifications			Non-Democratic Qualifications			Cognitive Constructs
	Politeness	Communication	Transparency	Mobbing	Favouritism	Domineeringness	
Positive Impressions							Negative Impressions
Tolerance	△5	△5	4	2 △	1	2 △	Tolerance decreases
Employees feel precious	△5	4	△5	2 △	2 △	1	Job-satisfaction reduces
Participative management	4	△6	△6	1 △	3	1 △	Favouritism increases

1. Write your answer as two words, two parts of sentence or two identifications which separated by dashes (-).
2. Imagine that the two impressions in each trio in a similar manner but third is different.
3. The figure has been named as similar pole (democratic) that two impressions are similar.
4. The figure has been named as averseness pole (non-democratic) that two impressions are different from third.

**Figure 2.** The repertory grid form completed by a teacher

(iv) *Data analysis and interpretation:* Data were transferred to computer and analysed by using descriptive analysis method. This method includes four stages namely, characterising constructs, identifying core constructs, assessing relationships, and analysing data (Jankowicz, 2004; Creswell, 2015, p.197). In the first stage, a total of 200 constructs were characterised related to democratic education. In the second stage the constructs were classified into groups considering similar qualifications. In the third stage, the constructs were grouped, no construct was left out. In the fourth stage, the scores were added and the first produced cognitive construct score was multiplied by ‘10’, the last cognitive construct score was multiplied by ‘1’ and thereby the relative importance scores were obtained.

Interpretation of findings was carried out in seven different stages namely, (i) counting step: separation of the data to main groups and determination of frequencies, (ii) sampling step: notation of the constructs occurred as a result of repetitions, (iii) classification of similarities: separation of constructs with similar characteristics, (iv) categorisation: grouping of constructs in accordance with the purpose of research, (v) association of constructs: identification of the relationships between constructs, (vi) establishment of cause-effect relationships: establishment a connection between constructs, and (vii) association of data with the research’s theory: explanation for the reasons of specific data occurrence and general suggestions (Karadağ, 2011).

### Validity and Reliability

To ensure the internal validity: (i) In finding presentation process, we interpreted the data considering the position which they are associated with (ii) We supported the internal consistency of sub-theme groups considering internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity measures. Besides, we determined the sub-themes based on the theoretical structure, and presented all findings after the data

analysis, without comment to ensure internal reliability (Creswell, 2015, p. 250-254). Additionally, we asked for expert opinion in order to verify whether the opinions represent sub-themes given under four different main themes. For this purpose, we gave the lists containing teachers' main cognitive construct groups and constructs to a faculty member in educational sciences then, asked the expert to compare the opinions with the sub-themes in lists. Consequently, we compared the expert's matches with our matches. Then, the formula 'Reliability= Consensus / (Consensus + Dissidence) × 100' was applied to determine the reliability of the coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.64). We calculated the agreement between the coders as  $192 / (192 + 8) \times 100 = .96$ . In method section, we gave the research model, study group, data collection tool and data analysis processes in detail to ensure the external validity of study. Besides, to ensure the external reliability we specified procedure with details in related sections: (i) the procedures include data collection, data analysis, consolidation and presentation of results, and (ii) topic and the method.

## Findings

### *Teachers' Cognitive Constructs Related to the Democratic Education in School*

Teachers produced 200 valid cognitive constructs related to the democratic education in school. The most frequently mentioned cognitive constructs were namely, (1) motivation increases [ $\eta=8.4\%$ ] (2) confidence/self-confidence [ $\eta=7, 3.5\%$ ], (3) job satisfaction increases [ $\eta=7, 3.5\%$ ], (4) tolerance [ $\eta=7, 3.5\%$ ], (5) participative management [ $\eta=5, 2.5\%$ ], (6) employees feel precious [ $\eta=5, 2.5\%$ ], (7) organisational commitment [ $\eta=4, 2\%$ ], (8) new opinions [ $\eta=4, 2\%$ ], (9) human rights [ $\eta=4, 2\%$ ], and (10) freedom of ideas/impressions [ $\eta=4, 2\%$ ]. The constructs were analyzed and then similar cognitive constructs were classified. As a result of classification, 14 main groups were determined according to the 200 valid cognitive constructs. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *The Opinions Cognitive Constructs and Groups ( $\eta=20$ )*

<b>(1) ATTITUDE</b>	
• <b>Respect for ideas [9] 240</b>	• Democracy culture [12] 100
• Democracy culture [13] 210	• Respect for ideas [14] 90
• Human's value [8] 210	• Human rights [15] 84
• Freedom of ideas [10] 190	• Freedom of expression [4] 84
• Freedom of ideas [1] 189	• Freedom of ideas [6] 80
• Respect to individual [15] 176	• Human rights [14] 72
• Democratic attitude [14] 170	• Human rights [16] 69
• Democracy culture [19] 144	• Human rights [4] 57
• Respect for differences [20] 140	• Democratic attitude [2] 38
• Free thought develops [2] 138	• Respect for differences [19] 36
• Democratic attitudes [17] 114	• Democracy culture [15] 21
• Respect to views [1] 105	
<b>(2) APPRECIATION</b>	
• <b>Awareness [18] 190</b>	• Awareness increases [14] 119
• Feel precious [17] 189	• Respect for profession [11] 110
• Individuals feel precious [11] 176	• Employees are valued [10] 95

- Employees feel precious [6] 171
- Employees feel precious [3] 168
- Respect for employees [3] 162
- Employees feel precious [2] 152
- Students gain personality [15] 132
- Employees feel precious [12] 126
- Students feel precious [10] 126

- Respect for personality [18] 90
- Employees feel precious [18] 76
- Respect for speciality [13] 60
- Students gain personality [16] 40
- Students feel precious [4] 30
- Feel precious [19] 21

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**(3) PARTICIPATION**

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- **Co-decision [5] 230**
- Participative management [4] 220
- Participative management [16] 220
- Co-decision [20] 210
- Shared decision making [12] 210
- Participation increases [15] 210
- Cooperation in practice [6] 200
- Participative management [12] 192
- Participative management [5] 176

- Participation voluntarily [6] 164
- Common goal [9] 162
- Common goal [5] 162
- Co-decision [1] 147
- Common sense [7] 133
- Participative management [19] 102
- Participation increases [3] 76
- Active participation [10] 60
- Shared attitude [9] 38

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**(4) COLLABORATION**

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- **Co-operation [7] 171**
- Teamwork [18] 162
- Division of workload [11] 154
- Responsibility [18] 152
- Solidarity [19] 147
- Co-operation [11] 132
- Solidarity [20] 120
- Mutualisation and solidarity [15] 105
- Interdependence [8] 85

- Teamwork [3] 85
- Team spirit [2] 69
- Teamwork [19] 68
- Team spirit [20] 54
- Team spirit [18] 34
- Mutualisation and solidarity [17] 24
- Mutualisation and solidarity [4] 21
- Co-operation [14] 19
- Mutualisation and solidarity [16] 17

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**(5) TRUST**

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- **Trust-based work [13] 168**
- Confidence [4] 147
- Trust-based school [16] 126
- Confidence [6] 120
- Feel safe [9] 105
- A peaceful environment [17] 100
- Fear goes off [16] 95
- Fear reduces [4] 85
- Self-confidence [13] 84

- Organisational trust [5] 76
- Confidence [2] 72
- Trust-based school [15] 66
- Confidence [7] 63
- Confidence [3] 42
- Confidence [20] 40
- Resilience [11] 36
- A peaceful environment [6] 34

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**(6) COMMUNICATION**

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- **Mutual communication [13] 189**
- Everyone gives feedback [1] 168
- Reconciliation [5] 161
- Positive communication [2] 154
- Constructive criticism [20] 144
- Human relations [13] 126
- Effective listening [3] 126
- Positive communication [1] 126

- Avoid conflicts [9] 92
- Effective communication [19] 90
- Organisational communication [10] 84
- Effective communication [18] 51
- Avoid conflicts [8] 40
- Empathy [2] 19
- Manager-employee interaction [7] 18
- Positive communication [20] 17

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**(7) TOLERANCE**

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- **Non-violence [16] 207**
- Tolerance [3] 190
- Tolerance [15] 189
- Non-violence [4] 180
- Non-prejudices [1] 170
- Tolerance [16] 160
- Tolerance [4] 152
- Mutual respect [4] 120

- Mutual respect [16] 120
  - Tolerance [18] 108
  - Non-discrimination [2] 105
  - Tolerance [20] 85
  - Mutual respect [17] 84
  - Non-violence [12] 72
  - Tolerance [5] 22
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<b>(8) COMMITMENT</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong belongingness [17] 220</b></li> <li>• Faithfulness [14] 171</li> <li>• Organisational commitment [17] 168</li> <li>• Responsibility [14] 144</li> <li>• Organisational commitment [5] 126</li> <li>• Organisational commitment [7] 105</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational commitment [6] 95</li> <li>• Belongingness [1] 69</li> <li>• We-feeling [13] 20</li> <li>• Responsibility [10] 19</li> <li>• Belongingness [12] 18</li> <li>• Belongingness [6] 18</li> </ul>
<b>(9) CREATIVITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>New opinions emerge [11] 216</b></li> <li>• New opinions [19] 180</li> <li>• New opinions [10] 171</li> <li>• Different opinions [20] 153</li> <li>• Original opinions [15] 147</li> <li>• Original opinions [12] 126</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different opinions [13] 110</li> <li>• Creativity increases [13] 108</li> <li>• Original opinions [16] 96</li> <li>• New opinions [1] 92</li> <li>• New opinions [9] 63</li> <li>• Creative thinking [11] 21</li> </ul>
<b>(10) JUSTICE</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accountability [7] 240</b></li> <li>• Fairly division of labour [18] 140</li> <li>• Fair management [8] 126</li> <li>• Impartiality [8] 120</li> <li>• Fair management [7] 68</li> <li>• Equality of opportunity [14] 57</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability [3] 54</li> <li>• Equality strengthens [15] 44</li> <li>• Empowerment of justice [14] 36</li> <li>• Organisational justice [3] 18</li> <li>• Accountability [9] 18</li> </ul>
<b>(11) EFFECTIVENESS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>School aims [9] 192</b></li> <li>• Student success [2] 189</li> <li>• Qualified education [7] 168</li> <li>• Efficiency [8] 160</li> <li>• Student success [9] 147</li> <li>• Achievement of purposes [10] 126</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School success [11] 92</li> <li>• Focus on objectives [11] 72</li> <li>• School improvement [17] 63</li> <li>• Achieve to purposes [12] 38</li> <li>• School success [8] 21</li> </ul>
<b>(12) SOLUTION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Effective problem solving [17] 154</b></li> <li>• Reduction of problems [6] 126</li> <li>• Easy problem solving [7] 120</li> <li>• Easy problem solving [14] 108</li> <li>• Problem solving skill [3] 102</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve problems [19] 63</li> <li>• Problem solving skill [10] 38</li> <li>• Solution-focused management [5] 34</li> <li>• Resolve problems [1] 34</li> <li>• Resolve problems [18] 17</li> </ul>
<b>(13) MOTIVATION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Motivation increases [11] 240</b></li> <li>• Motivation increases [12] 180</li> <li>• Motivation increases [9] 108</li> <li>• Ensure motivation [8] 76</li> <li>• Motivation increases [20] 72</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivation increases [5] 54</li> <li>• Motivation increases [17] 44</li> <li>• Tendency for success [7] 42</li> <li>• Motivation increases [13] 40</li> </ul>
<b>(14) SATISFACTION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Job satisfaction increases [2] 210</b></li> <li>• Happiness of employee [8] 153</li> <li>• Job satisfaction increases [19] 153</li> <li>• Stakeholder satisfaction [10] 152</li> <li>• Job satisfaction increases [5] 85</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job satisfaction increases [8] 54</li> <li>• Job satisfaction increases [6] 51</li> <li>• Job satisfaction increases [12] 51</li> <li>• Job satisfaction increases [1] 23</li> </ul>

In Table 1, 14 main groups are seen. The main groups and dominant cognitive constructs are follows:

*Attitude:* This group includes 23 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) respect for ideas [9, 240], (2) democracy culture [13, 210], and (3) human's value [8, 210].

*Appreciation:* This group includes 20 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) awareness [18, 190], (2) feel precious [17, 189], and (3) individuals feel precious [4, 180].

*Participation:* This group includes 18 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) co-decision [5, 230], (2) participative management [4, 220], and (3) participative management [16, 220].

*Collaboration:* This group includes 18 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) co-operation [7, 171], (2) teamwork [18, 162], and (3) division of workload [11, 154].

*Trust:* This group includes 17 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) trust-based work [13, 168], (2) confidence [4, 147], and (3) trust-based school [16, 126].

*Communication:* This group includes 16 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) mutual communication [13, 189], (2) everyone gives feedback [1, 168], and (3) reconciliation [5, 161].

*Tolerance:* This group includes 14 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) non-violence [16, 207], (2) tolerance [3, 190], and (3) tolerance [15, 189].

*Commitment:* This group includes 12 cognitive constructs. According to the relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) belongingness [17, 220], (2) faithfulness [14, 171], and (3) organisational commitment [17, 168].

*Creativity:* This group includes 12 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) new opinions [11, 216], (2) new opinions [19, 180], and (3) new opinions [10, 171].

*Justice:* This group includes 12 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) accountability [7, 240], (2) fairly division of labour [18, 140], and (3) fair management [8, 126].

*Effectiveness:* This group includes 11 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) school aims [9, 192], (2) students' success i [2, 189], and (3) qualified education [7, 168].

*Solution:* This group includes 10 cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) effective problem solving [17, 154], (2) managerial problems diminish [6, 126], and (3) easy problem solving [7, 120].

*Motivation:* This group includes nine cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) motivation increases [11, 240], (2) motivation increases [12, 180], and (3) motivation increases [9, 108].

*Satisfaction:* This group includes nine cognitive constructs. According to relative importance level the three dominant cognitive constructs are, respectively: (1) job satisfaction increases [2, 210], (2) employee happiness [8, 153], and (3) job satisfaction increases [19, 153].

The cognitive constructs were classified in 14 different groups. Some constructs were produced by different participants more than once in the same group. These repeats were assumed as only one construct. The frequency and percentage grades for participants in each cognitive construct group are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** *The Frequency and Percentages of Participants in Main Groups*

Main Categories	$\eta$	%
1. Attitude	13	11.8
2. Appreciation	12	10.9
3. Communication	12	10.9
4. Participation	10	9.1
5. Trust	9	8.2
6. Justice	9	8.2
7. Creativity	8	7.3
8. Collaboration	8	7.3
9. Effectiveness	7	6.4
10. Solution	6	5.5
11. Commitment	5	4.5
12. Tolerance	5	4.5
13. Satisfaction	3	2.7
14. Motivation	3	2.7

In Table 2, the first three construct groups are, respectively, attitude [ $\eta=13$ , 11.8%], appreciation [ $\eta=12$ , 10.9%], and communication [ $\eta=12$ , 10.9%]. Besides, the last three cognitive construct groups are, respectively, tolerance [ $\eta=5$ , 4.5%], satisfaction [ $\eta=3$ , 2.7%], and motivation [ $\eta=3$ , 2.7%].

***The Relative Priority Levels of Teachers' Cognitive Constructs***

The relative importance level of cognitive constructs was obtained according to the sums. The sums were procured by multiplying each cognitive construct's score with the descending numbers, respectively, 'from 10 to 1'.

The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Relative Importance Level of Cognitive Construct Groups**

Teachers	1. Attitude	2. Appreciation	3. Participation	4. Collaboration	5. Trust	6. Communication	7. Tolerance	8. Commitment	9. Creativity	10. Justice	11. Effectiveness	12. Solution	13. Motivation	14. Satisfaction
1	294		147			294	170	69	92			34		23
2	176	152		69	72	173	105				189			210
3		330	76	85	42	126	190			72		102		
4	141	210	220	21	232		272							
5			568		76	161	22	126				34	54	85
6	80	171	364		154			113				126		51
7			133	171	63	18	105			308	168	120	42	
8	210			85		40				246	181		76	207
9	240		200		105	92			63	18	339		108	
10	190	221	60			84		19	171		126	38		152
11		286		286	36				237		164		240	
12	100	126	402				72	18	126		38		180	51
13	210	60			252	315		20	218				40	
14	332	119		19				315		93		108		
15	281	132	210	105	66		189		147	44				
16	69	40	220	17	221		487		96					
17	114	189		24	100		84	388			63	154	44	
18		356		348		51	108			140		17		
19	180	21	102	215		90			180			63		153
20	140		210	174	40	161	85		153				72	
<b>Total</b>	<b>2757</b>	<b>2224</b>	<b>2912</b>	<b>1619</b>	<b>1459</b>	<b>1605</b>	<b>1784</b>	<b>1173</b>	<b>1483</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>1268</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>932</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>183.8</b>	<b>158.8</b>	<b>224.0</b>	<b>124.5</b>	<b>112.2</b>	<b>133.7</b>	<b>162.2</b>	<b>130.3</b>	<b>148.3</b>	<b>131.6</b>	<b>158.5</b>	<b>79.6</b>	<b>95.1</b>	<b>116.5</b>

In Table 3, the data were analyzed in two different ways. Firstly, the relative importance scores of cognitive constructs for each participant were calculated and shown on each line. Secondly, the highest scored construct group was shown in grey on each line as the main construct group for each participant.

According to the relative importance level, the first three cognitive construct groups ensued as follows; (1) appreciation [ $\eta=4$ , 20%], (2) participation [ $\eta=4$ , 20%], and (3) attitude [ $\eta=3$ , 15%]. However,

any main construct was created by one of the teacher in some construct groups such as trust, creativity, solution, and motivation. In Table 3, total and average scores in the last two lines represent the relative importance level of each cognitive construct group. According to the total scores the first three cognitive construct groups ensued as follows: (1) participation [ $\Sigma=2912$ ], (2) attitude [ $\Sigma=2757$ ], and (3) appreciation [ $\Sigma=2224$ ]. According to the average scores the first three cognitive construct groups emerged as follows: (1) participation [ $\bar{X} =224$ ], (2) attitude [ $\bar{X} =183.8$ ], and (3) tolerance [ $\bar{X} =162.2$ ].

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this study, it is aimed to determine the cognitive constructs of teachers on democratic education at schools. 200 cognitive constructs were produced by teachers related to democratic education at schools. The cognitive constructs were collected in 14 different groups considering functionality and the similarity of them. The participants frequently emphasized some constructs such as motivation, confidence/self-confidence, job satisfaction, tolerance, participative management, preciousness, organisational commitment, new opinions, human rights, and freedom of ideas/impressions. The teachers emphasized that the democratic education ensures democratic attitudes such as respect for ideas, democracy culture, and human's value at schools. The teachers also emphasized on appreciation: including awareness and feeling precious.

Similarly, Alshurman (2015) argues that democratic education system encourages the integration of a person in a democratic society, and ensures to give value to people. Noddings (2011) states that democratic education strengths to respect for different perspectives, encourages respect every form of honest work and cultivates a deep appreciation of interdependence. Hyde & LaPrad (2015) asserts that democratic education promotes teachers and students mindfully to democratic action.

Teachers emphasize participation: including co-decision and participative management, and collaboration: including co-operation, teamwork, and division of workload in democratic education. Participation and collaboration are two key factors in democratic education. Similar determinations are seen in previous studies. Moswela (2010) and Riley (2011) stresses on cooperation and concern for others. Hotaman (2010), Print, Ørnstrøm & Nielsen (2002) highlights sharing, collaboration, and active participation.

Participants prioritize the trust: including trust-based school and confidence; the communication: including mutual communication, giving feedback, and reconciliation for democratic education. It is clear that the schools cannot transform into democratic schools without effective communication and organisational trust. Similarly, Arabacı (2005) emphasizes mutual trust; Cappa (1956) freedom of expression; Alshurman (2015) a sense of confidence for democratic education.

Furthermore, the teachers emphasized tolerance and commitment in democratic education. In this context, tolerance, faithfulness and belongingness are key factors in democratic education environment. In previous studies conducted by Bindewald, Tannebaum & Womac (2016) it is suggested that tolerance and faithfulness are important components of democratic education.

Teachers have produced principal cognitive constructs such as accountability, fair management, school aims, students' success, qualified education, problem solving, motivation and job satisfaction related to the democratic education. Actually, in current educational institutions the accountability, qualified education and fair management are seen essential qualifications for democratic education management. In addition, problem solving, motivation and job satisfaction are accepted as the basic components of democratic work environment. Furthermore, similar expressions were frequently mentioned in previous studies. Indeed, in previous studies it was emphasised accountability (MacMath, 2008), fair management (Işıkgöz, 2016), school aims (Levin, 1994), students' success and qualified education (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2008), problem solving (Beane 1990), motivation (Bindewald, Tannebaum & Womac, 2016), and job satisfaction (Alshurman, 2015).

According to the relative importance scores, the first three cognitive construct groups were participation, attitude, and appreciation. According to the average scores, the first three cognitive construct groups were participation, attitude, and tolerance. These results indicated that teachers give more importance to democratic participation, democratic attitude and appreciation in terms of democratic education. In addition, average scores indicated that the teachers give more priority to democratic participation, democratic attitude and tolerance.

Based on the results, it can be asserted that the school administrators should encourage democratic participation. Besides, school society (teachers, students, parents) should display democratic attitudes towards democratic education. In addition, the school administrators should appreciate students, teachers and parents regarding success of the school they manage. The stakeholders of the school should take initiative to ensure that the school's learning environment is tolerant. School administrators should give priority to ensure effective communication, collaboration, organisational trust, commitment, motivation and job satisfaction. Education activities should promote creativity and problem solving. Top managers should be eager to ensure democratic education foundations in school environment. Further studies can be conducted using different research models. Moreover, further studies can be conducted on different study groups such as students, parents and school administrators.

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