

A Qualitative Analysis of School Concept on Primary School Students

S. Armağan YILDIZ^a

Istanbul University

Abstract

Child drawing, known as language of thinking, is as an effective tool of expression as written language. The use of paper, composition, and colors are meaningful for professionals. In this research, it is intended to determine the primary school students' perception of the school and schemas with their drawings of school. Case study which is one of the qualitative research methods is used in the research. Within the framework of this aim, 5 girls and 5 boys, totally 10 participants, whose ages change between 6 and 12, have taken part in the study. As data collection techniques, drawing a picture, observation, and interview methods have been used. The data gathered are analyzed through content analysis. According to the results of the research, participants perceive the school as a formal structure. As a concept, school is drawn with its rules and physical qualities. Personal differences between participants are reflected in terms of the composition and colors of the drawings.

Key Words

Drawing, Child Drawing, School, Perception of school.

Drawing is one of the communication and interaction ways such as words and letters. Being unique, pure and natural, it makes the child drawing different and valuable. Pablo Picasso says "It takes me a lifetime to paint like a child." (İşler, 2004) Children can reflect their feeling by picture and express their sense and thought about actions. Drawings done by child are accepted as a mirror. While a child is painting, it has to be free as much as while it's playing game (as cited in Altınkaş, 2007). Drawing is a way to get information about a person like psychological tests. Being uncensored and simple, drawing process makes

the child drawing stronger. Veltman and Browne (2000) thinks that drawings show children's pessimistic sensations such as pressure and fear. Thomas and Silk (1990) thinks that drawings show children's sensations and thoughts. Hopferstad (2008) thinks that drawings only show children's thoughts. Drawings give information about children's "cognitive" and "psycho-motor" development. Also, they give important information about children's personality, relationships, manners, perception (Yavuzer, 2000), sensations, and thoughts (Arıcı, 2006).

Some lines and signs are really important. They show us, children's worlds simply and directly (Artut, 2004). Most of the time, subjects are family, death, environment, sports, immigration, war, violence, and technology (as cited in Selwyn, Boraschi, & Özkula, 2009). In Turkey, they are some researches about classroom, and school environment at preschool grades (Aksoy & Baran, 2010), role of the teacher (Dağlıoğlu, 2011) or metaphor (Saban, 2008), art education and creative art (Artut, 2006; İşler, 2004; Kırıçoğlu, 2002; San, 1979) frequently examined the child drawings. Clinically, psychology is interes-

- a S. Armağan YILDIZ, Ph.D., is currently an assistant professor at the Department of Educational Sciences, Guidance and Psychological Counseling. Her research interests include child delinquency, violence and bullying, child drawings as a psycho-pedagogical instrument, thinking styles, parents and teachers education. Correspondence: Assist. Prof. S. Armağan YILDIZ, Istanbul University, Hasan Ali Yücel Faculty of Education, Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, 34134 Istanbul/Turkey. E-mail: armagany@istanbul.edu.tr Phone: +90 212 440 0000/26073 Fax: +90 212 513 0561.

concept, school is drawn with its rules and physical qualities. Personal differences between the participants are reflected in the composition and colors of the drawings. Academically successful, adaptive, social, and outgoing participants' drawings show that they could form emotional bonding with school. The compositions include classrooms, teachers, classmates and ceremonies in the garden. The drawings are more colorful, and they study more planned in a careful way. The participants, being academically unsuccessful, impulsive, forgetful, irresponsible, have concentration disorders, study planlessly, and complete their work randomly in a short time. They draw more colorless things and sometimes completely colorless ones. School was shown just like an object in their drawings.

The symbolic interpretations of drawing themes show that symbolic expressions change depending on the composition. There are personal differences between participants' use of colors on the drawings. Sometimes realistic, sometimes decorative painting, sometimes hot (red, pink or yellow etc.) or cold (black, blue etc.) colors are preferred by the participants.

The developmental interpretations of drawing themes reveal that participants who are gifted, talented or academically successful have more figures, symbols, details on paper and study planned in their drawings; however, impulsive, inpatient or unsuccessful participants have no plan or detail. They complete their drawings in a short time as soon as possible without thinking on them. In this research child's intelligence, personality, attitudes and relationships with other people mostly are mirrored in the school drawings. Composition, use of paper, and choice of colors affect these factors.

The data also show that family's interpretations vary from family to family. Parents have positive or negative comments about children's emotional development, personal characteristics, and academic achievement. Some parents say "practical, fast, friendly, quiet, calm, successful" about their child, some parents have negative thoughts related to their child like "naughty, lazy, asocial, aggressive etc." Besides, teacher's interpretation is similar to that of parents. Teachers have positive or negative thoughts about their students. Teachers' thoughts are affected by students' behavior in the classroom. They say frequently "listen to the lesson, naughty, irresponsible, the most hardworking student, clever, lazy etc." and also, teachers' and parents' comments about participants focus on personality traits, attitudes, and behaviors.

Discussion

In this research, it is intended to determine the first level of primary school students' perception of school and schemas through their drawings of school. Case study which is one of the qualitative analysis methods has been used in this research. In the direction of the purpose of the research, 10 participants have been examined. In this research, child school drawings, interviews, and observation techniques are used as the main data collection method. Thematic content analysis technique is used to analyze the data.

As a result of the research, it can be said that participants have a negative or positive image with regards to school. As a concept, school is drawn with its rules and physical qualities. Personal differences between participants are reflected in the composition and colors of the drawings. The school is described as a formal structure in most of the drawings. The majority of the concepts described by drawings are school pictures, school building, garden, flag pole, and school gate. Academically successful, adaptive, social and outgoing participants' drawings show that they have emotional bond with school. Compositions include classrooms, teachers, classmates, and ceremonies in the garden. Drawings are more colorful and they study more planned and carefully. The participants who are academically unsuccessful, impulsive, forgetful, irresponsible have attention deficit disorders, study planlessly, and complete their work randomly in a short time. They draw more colorless things and sometimes completely colorless ones. School is shown like just an object in their drawings.

Wu (2009), specifying the schemas, which are reflected in children's drawings, form the social structure that speak of mental schemas. Environment and relationships both establish concepts and concept formation is an important factor which is determined (Ergün & Özsüer, 2006). Positive or negative figures and symbolic expressions take part in pictures (Burkitt, Barrett, & Davis, 2003). Color is reflected in drawings as well as attributes of personality and individual differences in family composition.

The findings of the research show that developmental differences in children's drawings according to the developmental stages. Pictures of children begin to be common day by day (Kırıçoğlu, 2002). Lowenfeld and Brittain's (1967) classifications are widely accepted in the literature. Child drawings can be seen as an expression of cognitive and conceptual maturity.

