

# Educational Programs and Student Opinions About the Future

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## Abstract

*This study aims to determine students' opinions about the extent to which activities concerning the future are included in primary and secondary education programs, the factors that affect the way they think about the future most, the future of their country and of themselves and the positive or negative factors that influence the future of the world. The study was conducted in 2001 on the pupils of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades of three primary schools at low, middle and upper socio-economic levels and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade high-school students in randomly picked classrooms – 313 students in total. A questionnaire form was used as the data collecting means. Frequency and percentages were used to analyze the data collected through the questionnaire form and the correlation between dependent and interdependent variables was tested through chi square. According to the findings gained through this study, the students state that some activities that are related to the future and promote thinking about the future are performed at schools, there are subjects within lessons that are related the future and promote thinking about the future and teachers establish a connection among "yesterday, today and tomorrow" and they provide activities to make them think about the future. They state that what affect them most in their thinking about the future are the people in the family and immediate surrounding, teachers and the mass media among which computers, television and books are the most influential ones. Also, while the students think that the future of the world and of themselves will be better, they think that nothing will change concerning the future of their country. According to them, the major negative factors affecting the world's future are wars and arms race followed by fatal diseases spreading rapidly (cancer, aids etc.), terror incidents, hunger, (famine, waste of resources etc.) and natural disasters (earthquake, flood, fire etc). Positive factors, on the other hand, are the rapid advances in science and technology and developments in medicine.*

**Keywords:** education, the future, the factors affecting the future

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## Introduction

The 20<sup>th</sup> century left many things behind for the intellectual horizon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Globalization points out possible worldwide economic conflicts. Regional wars will likely be inevitable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Material affluence brings forth a psychological gap both in developed and developing countries; basic social institutions – traditional marriage, family bonds – begin to collapse. Environment pollution threatens the health of human being. The imbalance in global-ecological system causes climate changes, and the climate changes cause frequent floods and drought (Zaho, 1999).

On the other hand, Bell (2001) indicates that authors are concerned about the equality of opportunity and basic material requirements of each individual. They aim to help creating a just society that will continue to develop. They give importance to sufficiency rather than excessive affluence and production. They deem poverty as a bad situation. In lieu of the growth in the capacity of the world, they believe in development, creativity, and learning from mistakes. They value many concepts such as joy, love, understanding, generosity, friendship, accepting the accuracy of something, and achieving difficult tasks.

Though unclear, the developments in the 21<sup>st</sup> century present some hope. Therefore, we can be hopeful about our future. However, we should keep in mind that what will happen undoubtedly depends on our efforts.

There are two points of view regarding the future, which can be defined as optimistic and pessimistic (Eckersley, 1999). Some optimistic views concerning the future hold that the world left the cold war behind. According to this view represented by Francis Fukuyama, the world is leading to an order in which there is a universal struggle and alliance after the U.S.A. model. On the other hand, there is a pessimistic point of view represented by Samuel Huntington which holds that ideological discrepancies in the civilizations of the post war world will cause the third world war between the West and the rest of the world (Zaho, 1999).

Considering the views of optimistic Fukuyama and pessimistic Huntington regarding 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is apparent that they share a common thought that people should be sensible of the future and the future should be analyzed very well so that a comprehensive understanding of the future can be gained. Therefore, people had better be sensible of the facts and events occurring around them no matter whether they emerge as the new inventions and advances that will make people happy or the changes that threatens the earth and life of human being. It can be said that both two perspectives optimistic and pessimistic have reasonable foresight for the future.

Now seems to be the right time for a research to examine integration of educational programs and future studies since future studies have rapidly developed and they provide solutions for the problems affecting many disciplines particularly in social sciences (Bell, 2000). In fact, as a result of globalization in an era in which economical and political power is a matter of primary importance, economical or political priorities of current issues prevent people to evaluate facts by their long term effects. Homogenous cultures, which emerge due to globalization and result in identity lose, are also an issue of great importance (Masini, 2002). Societies cannot perform at acceptable level that they can reach if the issues put forth in future studies are not thought in detail. From the worst perspective, extremism and disorder that will prevent the system and order from running will likely be observed more (Eckersley, 1999).

The will to make thinking of the future a part of education derives from the belief that future studies will have significant contributions to bringing people to a better condition (Bell, 2000). Also, individuals' image of the future shapes their behaviours in the present. Since young people will have an important role in the society in the future, determining their images of the future is significant (Ono, 2003). To shape the future, young people should be educated about future. This must be the responsibility and mission of the studies concerning the future (Masini, 2002) because the studies concerning the future introduce the necessary ways and instruments to be able to become more successful in a rapidly changing world for individuals and develop their points of view.

## Education and the Future

Futurism in education is a subject of interest of all educators about which many institutions also conduct commission studies and research. Curriculum designers should be aware of the projects related to the events occurring in community which can be a resource and guide for the integration of future studies with education program. A slight hesitation in considering this critical question would mean to abandon a major responsibility and to choose indecisiveness (Wiles & Bondi, 2002).

Future conception is not only used in education but also in other fields. Therefore, it possesses an interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional characteristic. Inayatullah (2002) states that future is used in six different forms:

- Strategic: To help individuals make better decisions
- Educational: To increase students', employees', and administrators' knowledge
- Capacity development: To make individual learn how to learn for individual and institutional development
- Memetic change: To improve social life
- Emergence: To improve an organization that is on the brink of a chaos
- Microvita change: Providing institutional improvement creating a change in the inner world of an individual

It is a stark fact that the world of future will be much more different from that of the present. Future world will require individuals with more distinct qualifications, and time will not be long enough to prepare next generations. Thus, it takes great effort to develop aims/objectives that are appropriate to meet the need. Among the program models regarding what to teach, futurist model includes following techniques and steps (McNeil, 1985):

- Interdisciplinary seminars: Educators and political scientists, economists, psychiatrists, and other experts gather to discuss a future that may possibly affect the curriculum design.
- Assessment of planned trends: Most unexpected changes are determined in terms of possibility and importance to society. Problems caused by the changes related to time, money, and energy are considered. Potential social effect of these changes is evaluated carefully and unanimously.
- Educational acceptance to form the future: After putting forth the social results of trends, how schools may respond to them is considered.

- Scenario writing: At least two scenarios are prepared. The former is the clarification of what students will like in an activity that will be carried out by the school decided in the third step. The latter is the explanations of the changes related to subject matter, learning activities, and approaches.

Scenario writing or forming is a technique commonly used in future studies. It is mostly used to predict the future. Generally, two scenarios are used by describing two opposite items in the form of "and / or". Multiple choices are not very common. In addition, many scenario studies are not long-term, but are the projection of only 5-10 years later. However, few changes occur in such a short time. Therefore, by creating scenarios towards 50 or even 100 years later, a more qualified future can be formed than it is today (Stevenson, 2001). Scenarios give path to opportunities to fulfil many purposes such as information gathering and improving imagination and creativity. There are many questions concerning how information era will develop and how this will affect societies. Scenarios are effective ways to study a series of choices (Bezold, 1999).

Prediction has a significant role in future studies. The concepts of sensing, inferring, foreseeing, envisioning, and prophesying have undoubtedly similar meanings with predictions. However, it has some distinctive features. For example, foreseeing means drawing conclusions about the future based on available data. Even though there are some exceptional situations, most futurists reduce the role of prediction to a minimum level or they totally exclude it. Many futurists agree that the purpose of future studies include the concepts of consciousness raising, arranging, evaluating, and supporting in addition to description, understanding, and explaining the alternative future models (Bell, 2000). It can be said that future studies should consist on foresight and predicting later implications of current events.

Since predictions are not certainly the acceptance of what will happen in the future, the plan is done to practice the predictions. Therefore, strategic planning and systematic thinking have an important place in planning the future. Systematic thinking encourages individuals in understanding and defining the powers affecting life. There is no doubt that controlling and choosing the powers affecting life completely is not possible, but understanding these powers is possible, so strategic planning is necessary because strategic planning contributes to possibility planning. It is useful to choose different possible futures and plans according to these futures rather than choosing a single prediction and situation since the powers influencing the life are various and complicated, and the plans must be towards the desired future (Dalton, 2001).

Every school feels a need to make short and long term plans. Therefore, schools have to conduct future studies that form an important dimension of education. The schools that do not have such plans and attempts is bound to have difficulties. Educators and students should keep alternative futures in mind as the world is changing rapidly. Schools must play a leading role in creating a more exciting and hopeful future and educate their students and societies (Marx, 2001) because the future studies:

- Enable students to become ready for unexpected events.
- Help students associate the decisions or choices they make with their long term results.

- Enable students to be aware of the skills they have in shaping their future.
- Introduce students to the necessary instruments and ways to be able to adapt to the rapidly changing world.
- Help students see many known dimensions of the future.
- Enhance the world knowledge systematically.
- Develop a sense of responsibility towards future generations (Burchested, 2003).

## **Educational Programs and the Future**

If the aim is to train students to gain a positive point of view regarding the future, the activities that will reinforce this must be thought seriously (Gidley, 1998). In order for students to look at the future from a positive perspective, they must be supported and persuaded at school that shaping the future and taking such a responsibility is in their own hands (Eckersly, 1999). Slaughter lists the educational approaches that need to be developed concerning the future as follows:

- Introducing the concepts and tools of future in programs
- Integrating the future thinking into teacher training and professional development of teacher.
- Relating curriculum frameworks to program infrastructure and the wider and longer term contexts.
- Using future methods in strategic planning of school systems.
- Revising the concept of educational leadership for a proactive approach (Gidley & Hampson, 2004).

Focusing on the perceptions and attitudes of students at schools will not only have a great contribution to them to develop time concept and thought concerning the future, but also will help to develop strategies to prevent negative and optimistic attitudes towards the future because it is claimed that it is generally difficult for the students who perceive the future as something threatening, far, and variable to compromise with the future. Keeping in mind that little children think more positively concerning the future than elder children do (Page, 1998), there is great advantage starting studies regarding the future from the early ages.

The foundations of the future are grounded on qualifications such as problem solving, initiative, decision making, and communication skills (Schurr, 1989). In order for these qualifications to be developed, reconciliation of yesterday, today, and tomorrow in educational activities is of great importance. Children's understanding and interpretation of today by evaluating past and leading to tomorrow will be effective in the realization of social dynamism as intended (Varis, 1996). For the last ten years, some prominent futurist educators have put forth a critical approach to the thoughts of Western youth whom they consider as an educational output. On the one hand, these futurist educators are concerned about the needs of future generations, but on the other hand, they give some advice in order to prepare the young for a rapidly changing world that is full with uncertainties. These researchers advocate more integral and unified teaching methods by implementing creativity, visual aids, social skills, and special future methods (Gidley, 1998).

Education by nature is future-originated and should be presented to individuals through this way. Individuals should now start learning the knowledge and skills that will be necessary in the future (Schurr, 1989). Therefore, the future must be the major subject of education in schools. Chess players anticipating the move of their opponents, business executives making long term plans, students who look outline before the whole content are candidates to be successful, so the students' sensitivity to the possibilities in future should be promoted and their future perception should be enriched in order for them to grasp the speed of change (Gultekin, 1990).

It can be said that most of the learning in Turkey until 2000 were related to past. Likewise, in the study conducted by Gultekin (1990), the units and subjects covered in the courses of the programs of the first step (1-5 years) of primary education, the second step (6-8 years) of primary education, and secondary education (high school) were analyzed in three time dimensions as yesterday, today, and future. The study had revealed that the subjects studied in the first step of primary education were related to today; whereas, the units and subjects in the second step of primary education and high school programs were related to past. No units or subjects were found in terms of future especially in the second step of primary education and high school programs. Undoubtedly, radical changes were done until coming to 2001. There were some reflections in the programs towards today and future. It should not be neglected that the teacher can make connections between today and future in teaching the units and subjects. In this regard, this study emerged from the need of determining whether the activities regarding the future are included in educational programs and what the reactions of students regarding the future are.

## Aim

The main purpose of this study is to determine to what extent the activities regarding the future are emphasized in primary and secondary schools and what the reactions of students about the future are. In order to achieve this, the study posed the following questions:

1. To what extent are the activities regarding the future included in primary and secondary schools? Is there a correlation between students' opinions on this subject and the grades they are in?
2. Which factors are influential in students' thinking about the future? Is there a correlation between these factors and the grades they are in?
3. What are the opinions of students concerning the future of the world, their country, and of themselves? Is there a correlation between the opinions of students concerning the future of the world, their country, and of themselves?
4. What are the opinions of students concerning the positive and negative factors affecting the future of our world? Is there a correlation between the opinions of students concerning the positive and negative factors affecting the future of our world and the grades they are in?

## Limitations

This study is restricted to the educational activities conducted in 2000-2001 academic year and to the responses of participating students gathered through the data collection instrument.

## Method

This is a survey study aiming at determining the reactions of students concerning the future based on a data collection instrument administered to primary and secondary school students.

The population of the study consists of the students at primary and secondary schools of Ankara in Turkey. Sampling method was conducted since the population was quite a large one. In order to achieve this, three primary schools and three secondary schools in the city centre of Ankara were determined according to the socio-economic levels most of their students come from through "cluster sampling method". In Turkish educational system, the first five grades are considered as the first stage and the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades are considered as the second stage of the eight-year primary education. Accordingly, Cankaya Primary and High School, Kurtulus Primary and High School and Mamak Primary and High School were selected randomly as representatives of upper, middle, and low socio-economic levels respectively. In order for the research to represent all socio-economic levels of the population, those three schools were selected from upper, middle and low socio-economic levels.

As the second course of action, one classroom from each fifth and eight grade of primary schools and one from each eleventh grade of high schools were randomly selected and the students from these classrooms constituted the sampling of the study. Thus, one classroom from the fifth, eighth and eleventh grades of primary and high schools at three different socio-economic levels participated in the study. The information about the students constituting the sampling of the study is presented in Table 1.

As presented in Table 1, of the students participating in the study, 35,5% are 5<sup>th</sup> graders, 31,6% are 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 32,9% are 11<sup>th</sup> graders. 50,2% of the students in the study population are male and 49,8% are female. It can be inferred from the table that the students were evenly distributed in terms of grade and gender.

## Data Collection Instrument

A questionnaire form prepared by the researcher was used as data collection instrument in this study. The questionnaire form was prepared after searching the studies concerning education and future thoroughly. The questionnaire form consisted of two parts. The first part included personal information. The second part included the opinions of students regarding the future. The following procedures were followed in the preparation of the study:

1. The questions aimed at finding out the students' opinions regarding the future were determined.
2. The first 8 questions among the determined ones were scaled as 'yes', 'partly', and 'no' after necessary revisions and analysis.

Table 1  
*Personal Information of the Study Population*

Grades	Schools	Socia- Economic Level	f/%	Female	Male	Total	
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Kurtulus Primary School	Middle	f %	14 35,9	25 64,1	39 100,0	
	Mamak Primary School	Low	f %	21 67,7	10 32,3	31 100,0	
	Cankaya Primary School	Upper	f %	21 51,2	20 48,8	41 100,0	
	Total		f %	56 50,5	55 49,5	111 100,0	
		Kurtulus Primary School	Middle	f %	15 51,7	14 48,3	29 100,0
		Mamak Primary School	Low	f %	27 69,2	12 30,8	39 100,0
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Cankaya Primary School	Upper	f %	16 51,6	15 48,4	31 100,0	
	Total		f %	58 58,6	41 41,4	99 100,0	
		Kurtulus Primary School	Middle	f %	12 33,3	24 66,7	36 100,0
		Mamak Primary School	Low	f %	18 45,0	22 55,0	40 100,0
	Cankaya Primary School	Upper	f %	12 44,4	15 55,6	27 100,0	
	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Total	f %	42 40,77	61 59,23	103 100,0	
General Total			f %	156 49,8	157 50,2	313 100,0	

- The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> questions of the study were prepared to determine to what extent the students consider the positive and negative factors affecting the future of our world as important. In order to determine this, the students were asked to rank the mentioned factors according to their importance.
- The questionnaire was initially analyzed by the professors in the field and, in the light of their feedback, necessary revisions were made. Then, the revised questionnaire was piloted to the students of a primary and secondary school out of the scope of the study.

The data collection instrument was administered to the teachers in the schools determined in May, 2001 by the researcher.

## Data Analysis

Prior to the analysis of the data, the questionnaire forms were scrutinized one by one and those not properly filled out were considered "invalid" and not evaluated. The valid responses in the questionnaire were processed through computer.

In order to calculate the responses given for the first 8 questions, each question was assigned 1, 2, and 3 points. The frequencies and percentages of answers given for each question by the students were calculated by entering the points into the computer

for each question item.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> questions of the study, the total scores given for each item by the students were calculated to determine to what extent the students consider the positive and negative factors affecting the future of our world as important.

In the analysis of the data, in addition to the score and percentage, whether there was any correlation between the grades attended and their opinions regarding the future was examined through chi square test. The significance level was determined as .05 in the analyses.

## Findings

### **The opinions of students concerning the extent to which the activities regarding the future are included in the programs implemented at primary and secondary schools**

With regard to the first 4 research questions of the study, the students were asked the following questions: "Are There any Activities Carried out Regarding the Future and Promoting Thinking about the Future in Your School?", "Do Your Courses Include Subjects Regarding the Future and Promoting Thinking about the Future?", "Do Your Teachers Make a Connection between Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow while Teaching?", and "Do Your Teachers Carry out Activities Promoting Thinking about the Future?" The answers given for these questions by the students are presented in Table 2.

As presented in Table 2, the students think that the activities regarding the future are conducted in their schools. Compared to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students think that the activities regarding the future and promoting thinking about the future are covered more in their schools. Likewise, the chi square analysis carried out between the grades of students and their views on the inclusion of the activities regarding the future in their schools revealed a statistically significant correlation.

The students are in the opinion that their courses include the activities regarding the future and promoting thinking about the future. According to the obtained data, the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students think that the subjects regarding the future and promoting thinking of the future are covered more in the courses compared to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. The data indicated that the more the grade level increased, the less the students thought that their courses include subjects regarding the future and promoting thinking of the future. Similarly, the chi square analysis conducted between the grades of students and their views on the inclusion of the subjects regarding the future and promoting thinking about the future revealed a statistically significant correlation.

The students stated that their teachers make a connection between yesterday, today, and tomorrow while teaching. The obtained data suggests that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students think that their teachers make more connection between yesterday, today, and tomorrow while teaching in comparison to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. This indicates that the more the grade level increases, the less their teachers make a connection between yesterday, today, and tomorrow while teaching. The chi square analysis conducted between the grades of students and their views on to what extent their teachers made a connection between yesterday, today, and tomorrow also supported the result by revealing a statistically significant correlation.

Table 2

*The Opinions of Students Concerning to What Extent the Activities Regarding the Future Are Included in the Programs Implemented at Primary and Secondary Schools*

<i>Are There Any Activities Carried out Regarding the Future and Promoting Thinking about the Future in Your School?</i>						
Grades	f / %	Yes	Partly	No	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	39 35,1	53 47,8	19 17,1	111 100,0	
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	40 44,4	39 28,9	20 20,2	99 100,0	X <sup>2</sup> =39,712 sd=4
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	11 10,7	43 41,7	49 47,6	103 100,0	C=0,292
<b>General Total</b>	f %	90 28,8	135 49,1	88 28,1	313 100,0	
<i>Do Your Courses Include Subjects Regarding the Future and Promote Thinking about the Future?</i>						
Grades	f / %	Yes	Partly	No	Total	X
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	67 60,4	36 32,4	8 7,2	111 100,0	
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	48 45,8	38 38,4	13 13,1	99 100,0	X <sup>2</sup> =29,232 sd=4
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	26 25,2	54 42,2	23 25,2	103 100,0	C=0,292
<b>General Total</b>	f %	141 45,0	128 40,9	44 14,1	313 100,0	
<i>Do Your Teachers Make a Connection between Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow While Teaching?</i>						
Grades	f / %	Yes	Partly	No	Total	X
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	87 78,4	19 17,1	5 4,5	111 100,0	
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	69 69,7	27 27,3	3 3,0	99 100,0	X <sup>2</sup> =17,436 sd=4
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	56 54,4	35 34,0	12 11,4	103 100,0	C=0,230
<b>General Total</b>	f %	212 45,0	81 40,9	20 14,1	313 100,0	
<i>Do Your Teachers Carry out Activities That Will Enable You to Think about the Future?</i>						
Grades	f / %	Yes	Partly	No	Total	X
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	66 59,5	32 28,8	13 11,7	111 100,0	
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	51 51,5	39 39,4	9 9,1	99 100,0	X <sup>2</sup> =26,330 sd=4
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	35 34,0	36 35,0	32 31,0	103 100,0	C=0,279
<b>General Total</b>	f %	152 48,6	107 34,2	54 17,3	313 100,0	

The students think that their teachers carry out activities enabling them to think about the future. The obtained data suggests that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students think that their teachers carry out the activities enabling them to think of the future more in comparison to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. This indicates that the more the grade level increases, the less the teachers carry out activities enabling students to think of the future. Likewise, the chi square analysis conducted between the students' grades and their views on the extent to which their teachers carry out activities enabling them to think of the future revealed a statistically significant correlation.

### **The opinions of students regarding the factors affecting their thinking concerning the future**

As related to the second research question, the students were asked the following questions: "What is most Influential for You in Thinking about the Future?" and "Among the Mass Media Tools which one is most Influential for You in Thinking about the Future?" The answers of students to the question "What is more influential for you in thinking about the future" were presented in Table 3.

The data in the Table 3 suggests that the major factors affecting the students in thinking about the future were people in the family and close contact, teachers, mass media tools, and subjects in the courses. Different activities carried out at school and friends were the minor factors for the students in thinking about the future. The data in the table indicates that the factors affecting the students in thinking about the future and their grades were different. Likewise, the chi square analysis conducted to test the correlation between the grades the students attended and the factors affecting the students in thinking about the future revealed a statistically significant correlation.

The answers of students to the question "Among the mass media tools which one is most influential for you in thinking about the future?" are presented in Table 4.

As presented in Table 4, the answers of the students indicate that the mass media tool affecting the students in thinking about the future most was computers. Television and books also seemed quite influential. The data indicates that students' grades and the mass media tools affecting them in thinking about the future were different. Similarly, the chi square analysis revealed a statistically significant correlation between the grades they attended and the factors affecting them in thinking about the future.

### **The opinions of students regarding the future of the world, their country, and themselves**

As related to the third research question of the study, the students were asked the following questions: "What do You Think about the Future of Our World?", "What do You Think about the Future of Your Country?" and "What do You Think about Your Own Future?" The answers of the students to these questions are presented in Table 5.

As presented in Table 5, generally speaking, the students think positively about the future of the world. The data indicates that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students think more positively about the future of the world than the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students do. This implies that as the grade level of students increases, they think more negatively about the future of the world. The chi square analysis conducted between the grades of students

Table 3  
*The Opinions of Students Regarding the Factors Affecting Their Thinking Concerning the Future*

Grades	f / %	Activities in School	Subjects in Courses	Teachers	Mass Media Tools	Friends	People in Family and Close Contact	Other	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	8 7,2	22 19,8	33 29,7	12 10,8	9 8,1	24 21,6	3 2,7	111 100,0	
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	6 6,1	10 10,1	22 22,2	16 16,2	2 2,0	39 39,4	4 4,0	99 100,0	X <sup>2</sup> =48,537
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	2 1,9	4 3,9	11 10,7	14 13,6	7 6,8	56 54,4	9 8,7	103 100,0	sd=12 C=0,366
<b>General Total</b>	f %	16 5,1	36 11,5	66 21,1	42 13,4	18 5,8	119 38,0	16 5,1	313 100,0	

and their views regarding the future of the world revealed a statistically significant correlation and supported the data.

The students generally think that nothing will change about the future of their country. The data obtained suggests that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students are more positive about the future of their country. This indicates that as the grade level of the students increases, they think more negatively about the future of their country. Likewise, the chi square analysis conducted between the grades of the students and their views regarding the future of their country revealed a statistically significant correlation.

Table 4  
*The Opinions of Students Regarding the Question Among the Mass Media Tools which One is Most Influential for You in Thinking About the Future*

Grades	f / %	Radio	Television	Computer	Books	Newspapers	Magazines	Movies	Other	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	- -	14 12,6	45 40,5	29 26,1	7 6,3	3 2,7	11 9,9	2 1,8	111 100,0	
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	1 1,0	29 29,3	33 33,3	18 18,2	2 2,0	5 5,1	7 7,1	4 4,0	99 100,0	X <sup>2</sup> =38,164 sd=14 C=0,330
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	6 5,8	26 25,2	35 34,4	16 15,5	14 13,6	1 1,0	3 2,9	2 1,9	103 100,0	
<b>General Total</b>	f %	7 2,2	69 22,0	113 36,1	63 20,1	23 7,3	9 2,9	21 6,7	8 2,6	313 100,0	

The students generally think quite positively about their own future. The data obtained suggests that the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students think more positively about their own future than the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students do. The data indicates that the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students think more negatively about their own future than the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students do. It could be suggested based on the obtained data that as the grade level increases, they think more negatively. However, the chi square analysis conducted between the grades of students and their views regarding their own future did not reveal a statistically significant correlation.

### The opinions of students regarding the positive and negative factors affecting our world.

Related to the last research question of the study, the students were asked to determine the positive or negative factors affecting our future in order of importance. The

Table 5  
*The Opinions of Students Regarding the Future of the World, Their Country, and of Themselves*

<i>What Do You Think about the Future of Our World?</i>						
Grades	f %	Will be better	Nothing will change	Will be worse	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	77 69,4	28 25,2	6 5,4	111 100,0	X <sup>2</sup> =17,466
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	54 54,5	22 22,2	23 23,2	99 100,0	sd=4
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	51 49,5	31 30,1	21 20,4	103 100,0	C=0,230
<b>Total</b>	f %	182 58,1	81 29,5	50 16,0	313 100,0	
<i>What Do You Think about the Future of Your Country?</i>						
Grades	f %	Will be better	Nothing will change	Will be worse	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	43 38,7	42 37,8	42 37,8	111 100,0	X <sup>2</sup> =15,628
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	28 28,3	51 51,5	51 51,5	99 100,0	sd=4
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	17 16,5	52 50,5	52 50,5	103 100,0	C=0,218
<b>Total</b>	f %	88 28,1	145 46,3	145 46,3	313 100,0	
<i>What Do You Think about Your own Future?</i>						
Grades	f %	Will be better	Nothing will change	Will be better	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	95 85,6	7 6,3	9 8,1	111 100,0	X=3,973
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	81 81,8	12 12,1	6 6,1	99 100,0	sd=4
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	f %	80 77,7	12 11,7	11 10,7	103 100,0	C=0,112
<b>General Total</b>	f %	256 81,8	31 9,9	26 8,3	313 100,0	

scores of students' answers concerning the negative factors affecting our future in order of importance are presented in Table 6.

The data in the table 6 indicates that the students considered the "Wars and arms race" on the top of the negative factors affecting our future. This factor was followed by "Hunger (famine, extravagance, waste of resources)", "Terror incidents", and "Fatal diseases spreading rapidly (cancer, aids, etc.)" respectively. Considering the grades of students, it is seen that the views of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> students regarding the negative factors affecting our future were close to each other, but the views of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students were a little different. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade students considered the "Violations of democracy and human rights" as the second important negative factor affecting our future.

The answers of the students regarding the order of importance of the "Positive Factors Affecting Our Future" are presented in Table 7.

The data in the table indicates that the students considered "Rapid advances in science and technology" and "Developments in medicine" on the top of the negative factors affecting our future. These factors were followed by "Space research", "Growth of environmental awareness" and "International cooperation studies in every field" respectively. Likewise, considering the grades of students, it is seen that the views of the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students regarding the positive factors affecting our future are close to each other.

## Results and Discussion

Within the scope of this study, the views of students regarding future revealed significant and interesting results. It can be said that these results are closely related to the socio-cultural structure of the country and to the program practices implemented in educational institutions, as well. In addition, it was understood that the educational step that students attend, in other words, their ages also influence their views regarding future.

Research findings suggest that students think that their schools conduct activities regarding future and their courses include the subjects regarding future and that will make them think of future. The findings also suggest that teachers make a connection between yesterday, today, and future in conducting their lessons. However, the find-

Table 6  
*The Opinions of Students Regarding the Negative Factors Affecting our Future*

Negative Factors Affecting Our Future	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	General
Wars and arms race	606	407	485	1498
Pollution (noise, soil, air, water pollution etc.)	441	361	400	1202
Globalization	371	236	356	963
Hunger (famine, extravagance, waste of resources etc.)	518	384	413	1315
Natural disasters (earthquake, flood, fire etc.)	512	320	348	1180
Fatal diseases spreading rapidly (cancer, aids etc.)	557	368	306	1231
Terror incidents	526	338	396	1260
Violations of democracy and human rights	394	361	418	1173

ings reveal that students think negatively as their grade level increases. The reason for this can be the less inclusion of the subjects and activities regarding future in the programs. Similarly, Gultekin's (1991) study had revealed that the first step of primary education included the subjects that make students think of future more, and the second step of primary education and the secondary education programs included these subjects less.

Table 7  
*The Opinions of Students Regarding the Positive Factors Affecting the Future of the World*

Positive Factors Affecting Our Future	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	General
Rapid advances in science and technology	693	561	596	1850
Developments in medicine	671	539	488	1698
Developments accomplished in transportation	378	258	306	942
Space research	542	318	335	1195
Developments in communication	374	297	323	994
Advantages that industrialization has brought about	313	224	307	844
Growth of environmental awareness	459	367	259	1085
International cooperation studies in every field	446	372	319	1137

According to the research findings, the individuals in the family and close surrounding are the leading factor affecting students' thinking regarding future. Family life has an important role in Turkish culture. Families take absolute responsibility on the every aspect of their children's lives. They may wish to be a key factor in shaping their children's future. This point of view may lead children to look at future with confident and not to become worried especially among early age groups. However, since children's tendency to become independent increases in puberty and post puberty periods, the trustworthy effect of families may leave itself to an aim that holds with an idea of creating a future on their own. In addition, education is considered as the means of socio-economic development. Low socio-economic level families wish their children to come to a better position in society through education and high socio-economic level families care their children's education in order to maintain their social status. Kin ties are also strong in Turkey and individuals from the close proximity consisting of family friends and neighbors are in close relation with families. These groups pay close attention to children's education.

On the other hand, as individuals who shape students' future, teachers guide students too. Teachers' asking students about what they are going to become, emphasizing that the future is in their own hands, mentioning that their country expect them a lot in future etc. lead students to think about future.

Mass communication tools have also an important place in students' thinking most regarding future. Computer is the mass communication tool that affects students' thinking. Television and books also seem very influential. There is no doubt that computer is the tool that affects the future most its extraordinary functions. The use of computer and Internet is increasing rapidly. The common use of Internet directs students to future by enabling them to communicate more and contributing their creativi-

ty and imagination. On the other hand, television leads students to think about future with its programs including and connoting the future. For example, Ono's (2003) research shows that, electronic media such as movies and television programs, and news were the major message sources impacting images of the future of the individuals. In Turkey, which is one of the countries that watch T.V. a lot, television seems to be an influential tool on students.

Research findings showed that students think positively about future of the world and of themselves. However, research findings also revealed that as students' grade level increases, they think more negatively about the future of the world. Similarly, 11<sup>th</sup> grade students think more negatively than the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students do. Especially, the students of secondary education in Turkey are greatly worried about the university entrance exam because their future is dependent on a three-hour-central exam. Approximately, two million students take the exam, but only five hundred thousand students accomplish to have a right to enter university. This situation leads students to disappointment about their future. Likewise, Gultekin's (1991) study had revealed that on the top of the reactions of secondary education students towards future comes university exam. Additionally, university entrance exam can be seen a negative factor for teaching about future in high schools. Ono's (2005) research shows that education in high schools focuses on providing students the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the university entrance exam. And the knowledge thought in schools is facts and theories in the past and the present, but unfortunately does not include knowledge in the future. He also emphasizes that without future dimension, it is impossible for youth to know how to make use knowledge in the future.

Students think that nothing will change in terms of the future of their country. The most obvious reason of this can be seen as the fact that the country has not been able to progress for years in terms of advancement and development. The governments' inabilities to meet the needs of people and every new government's not doing anything new differently from the previous governments cause a common feeling of 'Nothing will change in this country.' This view reflects on the views of students too.

Similarly, the research findings indicate that as the grade levels of students increase, they think more negatively about the future of their country. Likewise, the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students think more negatively than the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students do. The reason for the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students' views regarding the future are more negative than the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students' views can be correlated with the transition exams to one step above that 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students are faced with. The 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students undergo an important process since the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students take the high school entrance exam and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students take the university entrance exam that will shape their lives. Therefore, students may not pay necessary attention to the studies related to future. This situation may affect the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade teachers. Preparing students to those exams and the worry for catching up with the program content can be accepted among the factors affecting the teachers. The teachers may not be emphasizing the connection between past, today, and future due to having different priority studies.

While the research findings match with the finding that 'the youth are optimistic about their own future' that Lynell Johnson' study revealed in U.S., they do not match

with her finding that 'they are pessimistic about their national and international future.' This finding was supported by the studies conducted in England, Finland, and Australia (Gidley & Hampson, 2004). Similarly, a study conducted in Australia revealed that the youth do not think that the national and international life will be better in 2010 (Eckersley, 1999).

According to the students, wars and armament race is on the top of the factors affecting our future negatively. This factor is followed by 'Hunger (famine, waste of resources etc.), 'Terror incidents', and 'Fatal diseases spreading rapidly (cancer, aids etc.)' respectively. The studies conducted in West in 1980s and 1990s emphasized that young people feel profoundly sorry and powerless when the health problems such as drug addiction and aids are taken into consideration besides especially environment, economy, and unemployment and some other studies in different parts of the world also supported these findings (Gidley & Hampson, 2004).

According to the students, the major factor affecting our future positively is the 'Rapid advances in science and technology.' This finding of the study matches with the finding of Hicks and Holden that '19 % of the females and 40 % of the males wish for a technology dominant future.' This finding of the study is also supported by the finding of Hutchison that the males hold with the idea that technology is a magic power and females dream of a science giving importance to green environment (Gidley & Hampson, 2004). According to the research findings, the other factors affecting our future positively are 'Developments in medicine', 'Space studies', 'Development of environment awareness', and 'International cooperation in every field' respectively. The data suggests that students credit science and technology in terms of the factors affecting our future positively. Students' emphasis on 'Development of environment awareness' among the factors affecting our future positively strengthens the optimism towards the future of the world where global warming is rapidly increasing.

One of the most important findings of this study is that the views of students regarding future become negative with the age. Similarly, the studies conducted with the young indicate that the optimism regarding future decreases with the age. Jane Page indicates that the children at the ages of 4-5 belong to the qualities that the futurists attempt to give. Hicks's and Holden's basic studies also indicate that seven-year-old children are quite optimistic, however, they perform a more inquisitive attitude gradually (Gidley & Hampson, 2004).

As a result, this study shows that it is not surprising that the young feel powerless if their views regarding future are negative and include fear as Gidley (1998) pointed out. The way to overcome this is leading the young to find and imagine alternative positive future models. In this respect, the development of creativity effectively as an important part of educational process can have a long-term effect. In brief, when it is kept in mind that the young are exposed to a negative opinion that includes violent and is broken into pieces, an imagination developed strongly will be beneficial in preventing and reducing the effects of negative future models and negative opinions. If it is aspired to teach students with a positive point of view regarding future, the activities that will strengthen this must be thought seriously.

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