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### Views of Educators about Organic School Which is an Alternative Model in Education

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## Views of Educators about Organic School Which is an Alternative Model in Education

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to identify the general opinions of the educators on the Organic School Model (education inspectors, academicians, school administrators, primary and preschool teachers). The research was designed within the framework of qualitative research approach and phenomenology method, which is one of the qualitative research designs. As the means of data collection semi-structured interview technique was used. Before stating their opinions about school model, participants were watched a package. The necessary information and visuals about school are available in that video. Especially there was given information about that school model focusing on the four components of education program; objectives, content, education process and evaluation. And then four questions in the interview form were asked to the participants. As a result of the research, an alternative school model peculiar to Turkey was developed and that model was approved by the educators. It is thought that this school will prepare students for real life, involve them in nature, provide them with learning through experience and improve their affective and psychomotor skills besides cognitive ones. In short, this school model was considered to be an important study contributing to education if could be adopted.

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### Introduction

In contrast to being static, information and science are changing, transforming and evolving concepts. Today, In contrast to being static, information and science are changing, transforming and evolving concepts. Today, with the expansion of opportunities and resources, there is a much faster development and change (Yılmaz, 2007). People follow the developments that progress with a dizzying pace and immediately set themselves up with new knowledge and transfer the new knowledge they learned into their own lives. While humanity is competing to be one step ahead in the technology race, on the other hand a great danger awaits: Separation of humans from nature and unhealthy life.

When we observe the environment, unfortunately, the number of our children who spend most of their time playing outside with their friends playing in the streets, get dirty with soil and mud, running on the streets and returning home tired and sleeping early in the evening are getting less and less, especially in urban areas. Instead, we face children who do not want to go out from the house, do not see any sun, become distant from nature, alienated from creatures living in the wild, have no handcraft, have never had the experience of planting seeds or saplings in life, often immobile and becoming obese by eating unhealthily, addicted to digital world, only thinking of virtual ones when thinking about a game, with bad eyesight due to long time staring at a screen, spending most of the time by surfing on social networking sites and playing games, never leaving the smartphone, sleeping even later than adults at night, confining themselves to their rooms. Especially with the introduction of internet to our lives, many lives are spent in front of a monitor, affecting health with harmful radiation, reduce the time spent by people in the society, therefore turn people into asocial entities, and make them baits to the frauds and human hunters in the virtual world. In this study, opinions of the educators on the applicability of "Organic School Model" developed by Turan and Çalışkan in Turkish Education System were taken. The main purpose of this research is to identify the general opinions of the educators on the Organic School Model (education inspectors, academicians, school administrators, class and preschool teachers).

### **Sub-Objectives**

In accordance with the main purpose of the research, answers to the following sub-problems were sought within the scope of the research.

1. What are the opinions of educators on the effects of information and technology on children?
2. What are the positive / advantageous aspects of the Organic School according to the opinions of the educators?
3. What are the limitations / disadvantageous aspects of the Organic School according to the opinions of the educators?
4. How are the opinions of the educators on the applicability of the Organic School Model in the Turkish Education System according to age groups?

### **Conceptual Framework and Relevant Researches**

Education, which the beginning is handled in conjunction with the history of mankind, is one of the most important areas of study of humanity (Çıkılı, 2012). Firstly, encountered in family and then in schools and other social institutions, education has always been a constantly questioned concept in human history. As a result of these inquiries and researches, many definitions have been made on education. Büyükkaragöz (1994), reporting that education is a social change process, defined it as a concept that encompasses an elite, controlled environment and school activities for the best possible development of individual talents.

When the definitions of education are examined, it is possible to say that there are three characteristics of education that are predominant in general terms. First, changing the behavior of the individual in the intended direction; Second, behavioral change happening in the individual taking place through his own experience; third, the education being a process happening in a planned process takes place within a program.

The more accepted view in today's information society about places where education is conducted is that education cannot be limited to only the classroom and school environment. The school now forms a very limited dimension of the individual's education process and is an intermediary in the differentiation of individuals (Özdemir, Yalın & Sezgin, 2012). In this respect, various alternatives have been created education and educational environments from past to present.

### **Alternative Schools and Educational Practices**

In today's information society, countries that are aware of the developments in information technology are constantly producing ideas, plans and scenarios on their future understanding of education and school systems. Parallel to technological developments, it is inevitable that educational institutions, programs, methods, teachers, students, parents and social relations are affected. It is also discussed how schools will take shape in the 21st century. There are also those who say that the structures called "school" will be removed altogether, and that they will become cultural centers (Gürol, 2002). New discourses on education and schools such as this are being discussed under the heading of alternative education.

In education, the questions "what is a human being / what should it be?" are transformed into answers that reproduce the education systems. Alternative education models are faced like this (Akdağ, 2006). Jean Jacques Rousseau and the Naturalist Education Approach being important among alternative education models, there are also include many alternative school models such as Home Schooling, Montessori Schools, Waldorf Schools, Reggio Emilia Schools and Magnet Schools.

### **Today's Changing Student Profile**

#### *Digital World and Education*

Technology is a word that we hear very often today and its usage is getting widespread. It is encountered as a concept that it is not possible for everyone to respond easily to what it means at first glance, but that takes place directly or indirectly in everyone's life.

The concept of technology is basically expressed as "the ways and methods used by people in production activities" or "the application and use of scientific knowledge to serve human life". According to a different definition, technology is control over the whole of the rest (people, events, machines, etc.) with the help of an organizational hierarchy of a basically technically competent small group in concrete and experimental terms (Nichols, 1993; Trnsf. Erdoğan, 2011).

Technological advances surely contribute positively to health, education, communication and every field. Erdoğan (2011) stated some of them briefly: "With printworks, many books have been published in Europe and the Age of Enlightenment has begun. With the internet network, information on the other side of the worlds can be reached. The development of technology increases the standard of living and offers a more comfortable life to human beings. Thanks to technology, people have more comfortable living conditions and make their jobs quicker and easier, so their lifespan is longer. Today, thanks to the internet, newspapers, television, radio and various communication tools, more people can express their feelings and thoughts, what they want to do, and they are informed about the opinions of the people in the world." It is possible to list hundreds of such contributions on the possibilities provided by the technology. However, the main issue we will be addressing here is the reflections of the technology on education.

### *Technological Addiction*

After the industrial revolution, with the machines started to be used in production, mankind gradually began to fall under the dominance of the object which it used as a tool. Within the social structure formed by the machine, the individual appears to be included in the understanding of social production and the understanding of individual ownership. The incompatibility between these two schemes makes the person alien, overwhelming, insecure. The individual loses personality from day to day, falls into objectivity, moves away from society, becomes lonely and confused. In a sense, the individual is faced with a sense of nothingness (Sartre, 1996, Trnsf. Kozlu, 2009).

The fact that with the introduction of computer and internet, which are the most important technological developments in today's world which is called as the information age, into our lives, being able to reach all kinds of information easily and uncontrollably in a very short time leads to some negative results and addiction. The addictions of computer, internet, mobile phone, television, virtual games, etc., which we can also refer as digital addiction, can also be used in the same sentence with addictions of alcohol, cigarettes, drugs. Because of not being able to control behavior at all, despite the negative consequences, continuity of behavior is a common feature for the concept of addiction. (Gürcan, Özhan & Uslu, 2008).

Particularly because the internet is becoming more and more popular in life, its impacts are more important than other information and communication technologies. The Internet is an important communication and information sharing medium and contains many activities that change our daily life in the home and work environment. Besides the benefits of the internet, problems arising from being open to everyone's use can also be discussed. Some of those can be listed such as discrimination of information on the internet, excessive information uploading, and the possibility of insecure information. Moreover, IT crimes committed on the internet and internet addiction are also serious problems caused by the internet (Yellowlees & Marks, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2002; Günüş & Kayri, 2010).

In the socialization of children, the development of their personality, the effect of mass media cannot be ignored besides family, school and social circles. Today, mass media, and especially television, play an influential role in shaping the child's social identity, and therefore its socializing, by presenting messages from so many different sources. Television weakens children's relations with peer groups and causes them to become introverted people. Thus, the lives of children become organized by television programs. For children, television is a one-way socializing tool. Because children cannot ask questions while watching television, they cannot ask for explanation and cannot object (Özkan, 1994, Tezcan, 1994, Yeşiltuna, 1999).

It is the result of technology addiction that people are not only alienated against each other but also by themselves. Alienation to society is at a much graver point. With technology, the world has become a small village. We are witnessing that people are following up on what is going on in the world moment by moment, and that they are so individualized that they do not even know who their neighbor is. Families who know the families living in their neighborhood and aware of their situation (condolence, wedding, illness, etc.) are replaced by families who do not even know their next door neighbors, living in the concrete houses, locking their steel doors and closing themselves completely to outside world. Yes; technological tools facilitate many of

our work as well as eliminate many habits, traditions and customs. On the other hand, face-to-face conversation rates are decreasing due to the spread of virtual communication, and purchases are made via virtual channels, via smartphones and via the internet. It cannot be denied that this is practical, but the social deterioration it brings also cannot be ignored (Şahin & Tuğrul, 2012).

We also spend our business life for a very long time in front of a screen. We pay the cost of staying a long time in front of the computer both with the decline of our business performance and the deterioration of our mental and physical health. The recent increase in the number of patients with waist and neck diseases and glass wearers can be considered as a manifestation of this. As a matter of fact, it has been determined with the researches made that this also lead to new diseases. For example, Kanat & Girgin (2013) stated in their research: "There are a number of diseases in which the indispensable element of our age that is the computer has created and are now among the etiological factors. When pilonidal sinus patients who have applied to outpatient clinics in recent years are asked about their profession or occupation in their stories, it is understood that these persons are spending time long-term in the office environment or computer at home. "

Parlak & Çetinkaya (2006) pointed out to obesity, one of the important diseases of digital age. In the study they did on the factors that affect emergence of obesity in children, it has been emphasized that excessive consumption of fat and carbohydrates in the nutritional habits of modern life and children becoming distant from physical activity and turning to television and computer games.

## **Organic School and Education**

### *Organic School and Education as a Concept*

The word "organic", used as an adjective in the Turkish dictionary (Turkish Language Institute, 2014), has been given three different meanings: "made naturally, related to organs-limbs, live-strong relation." In this context, it is understood that the meaning of the word organic is understood according to which the field it is used in the sentence. If you look at its meanings in the areas used; There are organic compounds in chemistry, containing carbon (with a few exceptions). The word organic is related to fertilizer and pesticide in organic agriculture, farming and gardening. These must absolutely be of animal or plant origin. Because of the natural nature of the products used, it is called organic farming. Organic food gives information about natural nutrition. These are products that are offered or sold under the name of organic products. There are also uses in the form of an organic lifestyle in the meaning of organic restaurant or being close to nature. Organic cosmetics are cosmetic or dermocosmetic products produced by using organic hydrosols of certified organic plants obtained by organic agriculture. Organic-made goods mean that petrochemical and man-made materials (plywood, vinyl, fiberglass) are not used. Also, the term organic is used to mean one of the integral parts of a whole. The use of word organic in the military can be seen as organic arms, organic armor and so on. (Interactive whiteboard, 2014).

As can be seen, the word "organic" is used more as natural, not mixed with chemicals. How can training be organic? The answer to this question is seen in observations made on the way children learn. Children learn what they are curious about. They learn by concentrating on what they are curious about and having fun (Bülbül, 2013).

Organic education can be expressed as such by combining three different meanings in the Turkish dictionary: "It is the period of educational and instructional activity in order to acquire the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary for individuals to have strong relations between natural teaching materials and vital experiences, school and life in a natural environment and to maintain their lives in a healthy way."

As for Organic School; it can be defined as an alternative school model in which educational and instructional activities are carried out to acquire the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary to enable individuals to have strong relationships between natural teaching materials and vital experiences, school and life in a natural environment and to ensure that their lives can be maintained in a healthy manner.

The first use of word organic in education was by Marietta Pierce Johnson, founder of the Organic School. This training model we are trying to build in Turkey was made using a certain part of Johnson's education model. Before moving on to how this school will be structured in Turkey, it will be useful to give information about the life, school history and practices of Marietta Johnson, who formed this model in America.

### *Marietta Johnson and the History of the Organic School*

The Organic School was founded in 1907 in the United States by Marieatta Louis Pierce Johnson. Johnson, the founder of the school, was born on October 8, 1864, as one of eight children of Rhode Morton and Clarence De Sackett Pierce, who were farmer in the state of Minnesota, USA. She finished her primary and secondary education in normal state schools in Minnesota. After graduating from the normal state school (now St. Cloud State College) in 1885, she began teaching, a profession she always dreamed of as a child (Fairhope Organic School, 2014).

M. Johnson closely followed the work of early theoreticians of progressive education, such as the theorizing philosophers who are considered educational reformers in child development, enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, Nathaniel Oppenheim, Friedrich Froebel, and John Dewey (Interactive whiteboard, 2014). In 1903, M. Johnson was invited to Fairhope/Alabama, a small community on the eastern shore of Mobil Gulf, founded by followers of Henry George's single tax theory to open an experimental school thought to discover some educational ideas. Marietta Johnson considered the invitation of this community as an opportunity for herself and accepted their offer. She moved to Fairhope, where the Organic School of Education was headquartered and she worked as principal from 1907 to 1938, and permanently settled there (Fairhope Organic School, 2014).

The Organic School lists its educational principles in the following order:

- ✓ The child's individual learning style and development model is respected.
- ✓ The child is encouraged to identify the world by experimenting with new tasks and ideas, using all its senses.
- ✓ A teaching approach has been adopted that will meet the individual needs of children, rather than achieving the goals set for classical tests, exams and adults.
- ✓ An atmosphere creating a desire for learning in children is tried to be created with the flexible, libertarian and adaptable to children's needs structure of the school program (Fairhope Organic School, 2014).

The research conducted by Lin (2001) on Charter Schools in California, Arizona and Michigan; the studies of Pearson, (1996), Rudner (1999), Aydın, (2002) on home schools; Reggio Emilia schools study of Edwards, (2002) and Amus (2006); the study of Inger (1991), Denis Doyle & Marsha Levine (1984), as well as Blank (1987) in Magnetic Schools, are some of the research conducted for using alternative schools in teaching. In addition, the article study of Bayhan & Bencik (2008) called 'An Overview of the Waldorf Approach from Early Childhood Programs'; the study of Kotaman (2009) called 'The Rudolf Steiner and the Waldorf School'; the study of Balım, Çeliker, Türkoğuz, & Kaçar (2013) in TÜBİTAK supported Science Reflections on Nature projects; the study of Sözer (2013) on the effects of activities of math summer camp held in nature on the students; the Charter Schools study of Al (2014) which is an alternative school In the article called 'Seeking Governance in Presentation of Education Services: Charter Method'; studies of Lillard and Else-Quest (2006), Aydın, (2002), Mutlu, Bütün & Aral, (2012), Koçyiğit & Kayılı (2008) and Toran & Temel (2014) based on the Montessori approach; Tasdemir & Bulut (2015) Home School application; Turan (2014) Organic school in Values Education, and Turan & Çalışkan (2015) 'Organic Schools and Organic Games' based on literature review are some of the studies carried out domestically.

Organized School Model organized by Turan & Çalışkan (2015) consists of 6 parts as Organic Educational Area, Mini Zoo, Water Life Center, Organic Farming Area, Organic Playground and Travel, Observation and Inspection Areas. The opinions of the educators on the organic school model created in this research were tried to be determined.

## **Method**

### *Model of the Research*

The research was designed within the framework of qualitative research approach and phenomenology method, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was used. According to Cropley (2002), phenomenological studies focus on phenomena that we are aware of but about which we do not have a deeper and elaborate understanding. In these studies, data sources mainly include interviews to reveal experiences and meanings by selecting individuals or groups that can express the phenomena focused. Interviews provide an interactive and flexible atmosphere, and It is only in such an environment that individuals can demonstrate the experiences,

ideas and meanings that they are not aware of or have not thought of before. Precise and generalisable findings may not come out in phenomenological studies; however, samples, explanations and experiences can be revealed which help us better understand a phenomenon. In this regard, phenomenological design was adopted to identify educators overall views on the phenomena of "organicism in education" and "organic school" while developing an alternative instructional model.

Qualitative research are types of research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are used and the process is followed in order to reveal perceptions and events in a natural and realistic way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this context, as an alternative education model studied on, a phenomenology study was conducted to determine the general opinions of the educators for the Organic School.

### *Study Group*

The study group of the research has a total of 25 educators, consisting of 5 education inspectors, 5 academicians, 5 school administrators, 5 preschool teachers and 5 class teachers working in Elazığ, Muş and Van provinces. The data about the participants are presented in table 1.

### *Demographic Data Obtained On the Study Group*

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distributions of demographic characteristics of the participant group

Variables		f	%
Gender	Female	5	20
	Male	20	80
Professional Seniority	0-5	9	36
	6-10	5	20
	11-15	5	20
	16-20	3	12
	21 and above	3	12
Professional Duty	Education inspector	5	20
	Academician	5	20
	School administrator	5	20
	Classroom teacher	5	20
	Preschool teacher	5	20
Total		25	100

The reason why these educators are chosen is that they can make the most contribution to the Organic School Model. Since the Organic School covers the preschool and primary school periods, opinions were received from the primary school and preschool administrators and teachers. In addition, the purpose of receiving opinions from the education inspectors who supervise these schools is to learn the opinions and attitudes of the inspectors, to make use of their opinions and suggestions and to establish a more solid ground on this model. These educators were determined by sampling methods referred as snowball or chain sampling, from purposeful sampling methods.

This sampling approach is effective in determining the individual or circumstances which may be a wealth of information about the problem of the researcher. In snowball sampling, firstly a unit of the population is interviewed. With the aid of this person, a second unit is approached, and then a third unit with the aid of the second unit. In this way, the size of the sample expands like a snowball grows (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013; Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2004).

When participants were identified in this study, the most successful teachers and managers were tried to be determined in order to obtain the best efficiency. Firstly, interviews with national education inspectors were made for this. Then a school with a high success rate was selected. The head of this school was interviewed. Afterwards, interviews were held with the teachers recommended by the schoolmaster. In this way, other units have been reached with advice and direction.

### *Collection of Data*

During the process of creating the Organic School Model, data were collected from educators (education inspectors, academicians, school administrators, preschool and classroom teachers) to get various ideas and suggestions about the school together with the literature review. As a data gathering tool, a semi-structured interview technique was used which provided an in-depth and detailed examination of the subject. As a frequently used method in qualitative patterns, interview technique is an effective method to obtain information about the experiences, attitudes, opinions, complaints, emotions and beliefs of individuals (Çavuş, 2013).

Before the opinions of participants on the school model were taken, they were made to watch a 14-minute package program, " Introduction Video of Organic School ", that introduced the school model. The necessary information and visuals about the Organic School are available on this video. For example The aim of the school, the fields in the school, the course activities to be held in these areas, the methods and techniques to be used in the lessons were introduced in detail on this video. In particular, information about this school model was given to educators by emphasizing the four basic elements of the educational program: purpose, content, educational status and evaluation. Later, if there are other questions they want ask about the school were received by the researcher and answered. In this way, 25 educators who participated in the research can be said to have reached sufficient level of knowledge about the organic school. Then the participants were given the questions in the semi-structured interview form and data were collected.

In order to increase the validity of the interview, a question form has been prepared by consulting the experts for questions to be asked to the participants. Then, as a pilot application, 2 educators were interviewed and the question form was finalized. The interview made with the participant educators are recorded with the recorder with the permission of the participants and then transferred to writing via package program.

### *Analysis of Data*

In qualitative research, the preparation and organization of data for the correctness and validity of healthy analysis information, the reading and review of the complete data, the coding, the description and the creation of themes, and finally the interpretation of the results and findings are necessary (Demir, 2013).

The interview was recorded with voice recorder with the permission of the participants and then written and content analysis was made. The purpose in content analysis is to reach concepts and associations that can help explain the collected data. The basic process in content analysis is to bring together similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes and to organize and interpret them in a way that readers can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In this context, the statement belonging to each educator are transferred to writing in electronic medium and carefully read, and the general ideas about the question asked are noted and appropriate coding are done. At this stage, the answers given to the questions in the interview form were evaluated by two researchers, the similarities and differences between the coding were categorized and the themes were determined. It has been found that 96% of the themes formed by two researchers independent of each other were equal. A consensus was reached for the remaining 4%.

From time to time, different topics were also expressed in the interview. However, in accordance with the purpose of the research, the researcher tried to process the subject on the basis of the data required after the interview notes were classified. In the findings part, the opinions of the participants were chosen to be transferred by direct citations. The actual identities of the participants were kept confidential from the educators and the inspectors were specified as M 1, M 2, M 3..., academicians as A 1, A 2, A 3..., school administrators as Y 1, Y 2, Y 3..., classroom teachers as S 1, S 2, S 3..., and preschool teachers as O 1, O 2, O 3... The opinions of the participants have been tried to be described in accordance with ethical rules, without prejudice.

## **Results and Discussion**

In this section, the opinions of the educators about the organic school model were taken with semi-structured interview form and the collected data about the questions which are answered in line with the sub-objectives of the research were solved on the basis of the questions, and the obtained findings and the interpretations reached based on these findings were presented.



*Opinions of Educators on the Influence of Information and Technology (IT) on Children*

In the first question, the question "What are your views about the influence of IT on the children?" was directed as a factor that particularly affects the changing student profile especially today, and the results obtained as an analysis of the answers were given in Table 2.

Table 2. Opinions of educators on the influence of it and technology on children

Themes	f	%
Deranging the health	15	60
Asocialization	13	52
Creating addiction	13	52
Misuse	12	48
Estranging from reality perception	10	40
Feeding negative tendencies	8	32
Useful if used correctly	6	24
Facilitating human life	6	24
Increasing the education quality	5	20
Accessing information in a short time	4	16
Total	92	-

According to Table 2, a large part of the participants declared that there are some positive and negative effects of the tools of IT and technology according to the purpose and duration of use. In this context, as positive effects of IT and technology; 24% stated that they were useful when used correctly, 24% stated that the technology tools used in education increased the quality of education, 20% reported that they achieved a lot of knowledge within a short period of time, and 16% made human life easier in various fields. As the negative effects of IT and technology on children; 60% of the educators stated that they derange the physical and mental health of children, 52% of them stated they created addiction in children, and 52% of them reported they turned them into asocial people by separating them from their family and their peers.

Tüzün (2002) points out in the article researching that the influence of developing communication tools on the development of children and teenagers, Internet addiction that is encountered as an important problem of the present day deranges the relationship with people they interact with similar to other addiction type disorders. In addition, he stated that many people being able to find social support, meaningful relationship and enjoyment in this communication network can be a source of conflict and guilt feelings in people. Therefore, it can be said that there is a need for research and projects to reduce these addictions.

In addition, when Table 2 is examined, participants stated that digital equipment were used unnecessarily and out of purpose (48%), children were estranged from perception of reality (40%) and strengthened negative tendencies such as aggression, egoism, sexuality, etc. (32%). When the work done in this context are looked at, it is seen that the effects of IT and technology overlap with the answers given by the educators. For example, Büyükbaykal (2007) also stated in his article addressing the influence of television, which is a technological tool, on the children that increased violence and aggression in the children watching television, not being able to express themselves correctly, estranging from reality by putting themselves in the place of the hero on TV, having difficulties in social relationships and various health issues caused by staying too long in front of the television are results of the negative effects of television. Some of the opinions of the educators for this question are given below as examples.

*"There are studies on this subject we have made as child development experts. For example, it was seen that the media was effective on aggression by about 15-16% as a result of our study on what kind factors influenced aggression in children." (A 1)*

*"... children move less, speak less, and socialize less. The number of obese and fat children is increasing." (A 3)*

*"IT and technology cause attention deficiency, hyperactivity, aggression, dissatisfaction, intellectual negativity, especially in children." (M 2)*

*"Rapid development in social media and easy access to technology, unfortunately, are taking the time to we are to commit for ourselves and our loved ones. This, in turn, leads to children's communication to decrease with their parents and creating a virtual world for themselves. The lonely lives of children in their day-to-day life*

cause spiritual and physical distress that is not noticed at the beginning of the process but develops over time. "(Y 3)

"When IT and technology are used correctly, they provide incredible convenience and savings to human life. However, when used incorrectly and long term, they cause many negative consequences. "(S 4)

"The positive aspects of IT and technology in our lives are indisputable facts. But we can talk about their benefits as long as they are used in the right place, at the right time, and in right amounts. Today, unfortunately, information and technological tools are used more than necessary. Especially children spend almost all their time at the computer. This seriously affects their physical and cognitive properties negatively. "(S 1)

"As a result of the increasing misuse of IT and technology in recent years, my opinion is that the children directly learn the wrong behavior, the programs made, tv shows watches, social networking sites, computer games, smartphones, etc. influence children negatively. "(O 2)

#### *Opinions of Educators on Positive Aspects/Advantages of the Organic School Model*

In the second question, the question "What are your opinions about the positive aspects/advantages of the Organic School Model?" is directed to educators and the data resulted as a result of the analysis of the answers were presented below.

Table 3. Opinions of educators on positive aspects/advantages of the organic school model

Themes	f	%
Natural education environment	16	64
Learning by doing and experiencing	13	52
Providing versatile development	8	32
Permanent learning	8	32
Socialization	7	28
Personality shaping	6	24
Self-confidence	4	16
Caring for national culture	4	16
Healthy eating habits	2	8
Total	68	-

When the data in Table 5 is examined, almost all of the educators (92%) think that the Organic School Model can be implemented in the Turkish Education System from the preschool days. And 68% of them expressed that it can be applied in primary school period. These rates are also in line with the age group Organic School Model caters to. Because children have more desire for curiosity, research, inquiry and discovery at an early age, they learn more easily with learning opportunities by doing and experiencing (Ünal & Akman, 2006). Therefore, it is thought that the practices and activities planned to be realized in Organic School can attract the interest of children in preschool and primary school period. It stated by participants that this education model could be applied; 52% to middle school level, 48% to high school level and 32% to all age levels by making some changes and developed.

Koçan (2012), in his research on the sufficiency of children's playgrounds, stated that children are generally observed to use streets for playing due to the lack of sufficient number of playgrounds. In the study, it has been proposed to create playgrounds based on natural elements in urban areas with the help of planning strategies built with human and nature as an integrative approach in the world, especially in recent years. It is aimed to organize original and qualified playgrounds in the field of work, to increase the number of playgrounds that will respond to children's education and expectations, and necessary importance to the fields is given. Therefore, it is necessary to give importance to creating natural education methods and natural education environments. In this context, it is seen that the Organic School Model bringing the children to natural, safe educational environments and the Organic Play Area being established and the organic play education being performed are considered as the most important advantages of the school.

When Table 3 is examined, 52% of the educators think that the lessons providing learning by concrete experiences, practice based, with activities, by doing as a great advantage. 32% think that it will make permanent learning, and 32% think that it will contribute to the development of cognitive, emotional and mobility skills of children as versatile. 28% think it will help children to socialize, 24% that such a school model

would shape the child's personality, 16% that infusing self-confidence in the child and transferring such values to children by emphasizing cultural values in the Organic School are among the positive aspects of the school. Apart from this, 8% of the participants considered gaining healthy eating habits to the children among the advantages of the school.

These opinions that participants consider among the advantages of the Organic School Model are the problems that appear in our country's education system. For example, in the paper of Anil & Acar (2008) which they examined the opinions of classroom teachers on the problems encountered by them in the assessment and evaluation process, it is expressed that the way to make behavioral changes permanent in individuals is by raising individuals who can adapt to changing and developing world, respond to the expectations of the times, learn by living and experiencing, integrating the knowledge gained to real life, creative, developed problem thinking skills, researching, inquiring and who realized themselves, with developed self-confidence. In this respect, it is thought that the advantages of the Organic School, according to the views of the educators, may be effective in bringing permanent behavior changes. Below, the citations of the opinions on this question are given.

*"Gaining virtue of being a human that will prepare individuals to life, in the real environment, gain-focused, in knowledge-skill-value spiral..." (M 4)*

*"The biggest advantage lies in its purpose. A natural education environment. They have positive aspects in terms of gaining cooperation and socializing." (A 4)*

*"Learning is both easy and permanent due to child learning from living and experiencing in an organic school model. In this educational model, mind and body actively take part. This has important effects on health." (Y 5)*

*"One of the most important advantages of the organic school is that it helps children to learn by removing them from virtual environment and virtual relationships and friendships, and placing to their natural environment, namely earth, sand, water, mud, greenery and clean air are present" (S 1)*

*"The positive aspects of the Organic School model, both on the child and on society, are too much to be discussed. It is a distinct advantage of its beauty that reflects our culture that has been forgotten nowadays. By seeing and experiencing our what pasture livestock breeding has brought to us with the fabricated ready-made foods and the products obtained from fed animals, will enable them to raise generations who know the value of life." (O 5).*

#### *Opinions of Educators on Limitations/Disadvantages of the Organic School Model*

As the third question of the interview, the question of *"What are your opinions about the limitations/disadvantages of the Organic School Model?"* was asked to the educators and the following data was resulted as a result of the analysis of the answers:

Table 4. Opinions of educators on limitations/disadvantages of the organic school model

Themes	f	%
Costly	12	48
Area for school	12	48
Limited to summer	9	36
Finding a qualified trainer	8	32
Security measures	5	20
Limited student participation	4	16
Classroom management difficulty	3	12
Total	53	-

According to Table 4, educators expressed the greatest limitation of the Organic School Model is that it was difficult to find a wide area with adult trees, in touch with the nature, required to establish such a school and that a high budget was required for the establishment of such a school (48%). Education-instruction activities being limited to summer due to school being a summer school (36%), finding adequate and qualified educators to provide training in accordance with the structure and program of the school (32%), taking the necessary security measures in order to prevent the risks in different areas of education in the school (% 20) and the difficulties faced by instructors in classroom management due to the fact that the courses will be held outdoors and in large areas (12%) were also counted among the limitations. They also pointed out that it will load an economic burden to families who would want to send their children to such a school and therefore prevent them from

being able to send their children, so a limited number of children may study in Organic School (16%) as a limitation of the school.

The limitations of being costly, finding qualified teachers, and so on, counted among the limitations of the Organic School by the educators are also important problems addressed for alternative schools in some studies made. For example, Taşdemir & Bulut (2015) pointed out that in a case study on the Home School practice, that the part that could be used as an alternative to home education should be determined very well, and the problems due to inadequacies in factors such as cost, family contribution, providing a teacher, materials make it hard to be a viable alternative for undeveloped or underdeveloped countries that are probable to experience problems.

As seen in Table 4, the Organic School Model also has the problem of finding a qualified teacher in top spots. It can be said that this problem is always on the agenda of the Turkish Education System. Abazoğlu (2014) recommends a Lesson Study model for professional development of teachers and indicates that professional development of these model-based teachers will increase in Japan, America, Thailand and Singapore. This model is recommended in terms of developing classroom practices and providing alternative professional development of the teachers, but it can also be suggested in terms of training of organic school instructors. Below, citations of the opinions of the trainers are given.

*"Measures at security points in the school should be taken. Because, for example, there is a pool. There must be a lifeguard or something. This is what increases the cost of the school. Such natural environments with trees in order to create such a school environment may not be available in every province. Besides, the fact that the school is open in summer is also a limitation. Because in summer, people make plans about summer vacation."* (A 1)

*"It is very difficult to train teachers with equipment to practice this model."* (A 2)

*"The areas of such schools must be very large. In addition, the excessive number of staff to be employed, consumption of water and electricity, high difficulty of converting our existing schools for this education, establishing authority over children because of the wide area being difficult..."* (Y 4)

*"There is not many negative aspects. However, we must be careful about the factors that can threaten the health of the students in the natural environment. There may also be risks to the safety of children."* (M 1)

*"Not all students can be provided with transportation, but only certain groups of students can receive this education"* (O 4)

#### *Opinions of Educators on the Applicability of the Organic School Model by Age Groups.*

In the fourth question, the question *"What are your opinions about the applicability of the Organic School Model in the Turkish Education System according to age groups?"* was asked, and the data resulted as the result of the analysis of the received answers are presented below.

Table 5. Opinions of educators on the applicability of the organic school model by age groups.

Themes	f	%
Suitable for preschool period	23	92
Suitable for primary school period	17	68
Adaptable to middle school level	13	52
Adaptable to high school level	12	48
Adaptable to any age group	8	32
Total	73	-

When the data in Table 5 are examined, almost all of the educators (92%) think that the Organic School Model can be implemented in the Turkish Education System from the preschool days. And 68% of them expressed that it can be applied in primary school period. These rates are also in line with the age group Organic School Model caters to. Because children have more desire for curiosity, research, inquiry and discovery at an early age, they learn more easily with learning opportunities by doing and experiencing (Ünal & Akman, 2006). Therefore, it is thought that the practices and activities planned to be realized in Organic School can attract the interest of children in preschool and primary school period. It stated by participants that this education model could be

applied; 52% to middle school level, 48% to high school level and 32% to all age levels by making some changes and developed.

When the educational program is examined according to age groups, it is observed that the care was taken to make the program is suited to principles of being from concrete to abstract, easy to difficult and being suitable for children. It is seen that the goals and achievements in the textbooks have become more abstract and complicated towards the later periods. It should be taken into consideration that the goals and achievements perceived as very simple or difficult, not catering to the child's level may not attract the attention of the child and may cause their attention to disintegrate and become bored. As it is seen in Table 5, the educators also think that Organic School Model can be improved according to age groups. Sample citations from the answers to this question are given.

*"I think that this kind of an application can be applied in every age model. But first of all, it is necessary to reconsider the education programs in a very detailed way on the basis of these types of applications, and a new program should be developed and tested in pilot schools." (A 2)*

*"I think this school, the preschool and the primary school are the most appropriate levels. It can also be adapted to the middle school part. In high school and college, it can be adapted as hands-on training rather than organic school." (A 3)*

*"It may be a problem to get permission from the parents of preschool children, especially because it is a model that no clear knowledge of its effectiveness is available. I think for starters it would be more appropriate to start at middle school level for 6-7-8. grades." (A 4)*

*"Applicability to young children is much easier, but for children who are studying at high school level, these applications need to be shifted to science, chemistry, biology, mathematics, and scientific studies, and active learning must be achieved by involving more sensory organs in the teaching process." (M 3)*

*"... should be limited to those for children in the pre-school and primary school years. This is because curriculums of older individuals are required to have a more academic environment." (Y 2)*

*"I think that such a school should be planned at pre-school and primary school levels. It can also be adapted to the middle school part by improving a bit more. I do not think it can cater to periods after middle school." (S 4)*

*"I think that it can be applied to all grades if the developmental characteristics of each age group are taken into account." (O 3)*

*"I think it would be appropriate to address age groups from 48 months in preschool to high school level." (O 5)*

*"I think that it can be applied easily in preschools and primary schools also in middle schools, however I doubt for high schools. This is because it seems difficult to give the information that is necessary for secondary school students, that is, in the high school age, with the methods in the organic school environment." (M 1)*

## Conclusion

In this study called "Opinions of Educators about an Organic School which is an Alternative School Model in Education", an introduction package program was watched to the educators and given information, opinions were obtained by semi-structured interview form and the feasibility of such a school was discussed. The results obtained according to the data of this study are as follows.

Technology is not only in the laboratory environment, but in our homes now that we are in a race to transfer the most up-to-date state of technology that develops at a dizzying pace to our lives. It influences us, our parents and children and changes our lives. Unfortunately, the number of our children who spend most of their time playing outside with their friends playing in the streets, get dirty with soil and mud, running on the streets and returning home tired and sleeping early in the evening are getting less and less, especially in urban areas. Instead, we are faced with children who do not want to leave the house, do not want to see the sun, eating junk food and becoming obese, getting red eyes in front of computers, playing computer games, surfs in social networking sites or engages with smartphones, sleeps even later than adults, became lonely and imprisoned to their rooms.

Especially with the introduction of internet to our lives, many lives are spent in front of a monitor, affecting health with harmful radiation, reduce the time spent by people in the society, therefore turn them into asocial entities, and make them baits to the frauds and human hunters in the virtual world. In this sense, digital tools take over our homes, our families, our children, push us away from the sincerity of real life and direct to the coldness of the virtual world.

As educators cannot remain insensitive to any adverse situation in the community, they also have an obligation to find educational solutions to these problems. Alternative policy developments in education are needed to prevent children from breaking away from nature, being alienated from animals, becoming addicted to digital tools, and preventing them from growing asocial and unhealthy.

The most prominent problem seen for the education of our country as a result of the exams like PISA and TIMSS, which are organized internationally with the participation of OECD countries, is that students having problems in transferring the information they learn to daily life (Çelen, Çelik, & Seferoğlu, 2011). As an alternative educational model developed in this context, the Organic School Model is a summer school model designed to provide individuals with the basic knowledge and skills necessary to maintain strong relationships between school and life and maintain their lives in a healthy manner in a natural environment, with natural methods and life experiences. Organic School Model which has six education fields is designed for preschool and primary school students. It is anticipated that children will be able to demonstrate their potential without competition and without anxiety. In this educational model, which the cognitive domain skills as well as emotional and dynamic field skills are considered extremely important, a training program is developed in which children can learn while having fun.

The results obtained from the analysis of the opinions of the educators on the developed Organic School Model are as follows:

- ✓ When IT and technology tools are used correctly and in a controlled way, they provide many benefits to the individual. The use of technology tools in education increases the quality, and it is seen as the most important advantage that knowledge can be reached in a short time. But, unfortunately, IT and technology tools are often misused by children. According to the educators, Long-term and uncontrolled use of tools such as television, computer, internet, virtual games, playstations etc. causes addiction in children, and keeps them away from their families and friends and asocializes. Also, according to the opinions of educators, excessive use of these products causes damage to the physical and mental health of children, problems in discriminating between virtual and real perceptions, feeds negative tendencies in children such as aggressiveness, sexuality, selfishness, laziness, etc.
- ✓ The Organic School Model addresses the important problems of today's children. In this respect, educators find the purpose and objectives of the model necessary and important. The aims and objectives of the school are thought to play a role complementary to our current education system by providing children with experiences, preparing them for real life, introducing children to a natural and healthy education environment, saving them from the concept of learning by memorization, developing not only cognitive field skills but also affective and psychomotor skills and reducing negative effects of technology.
- ✓ The fact that the Organic School Model has a natural educational environment is described by the educators as the greatest advantage of the model. Learning of the lessons by activities, fully based on practice and doing by living and experiencing, development of cognitive, emotional and dynamic skills in a versatile way, contributing to socialization of children, providing children with self-confidence and personality, healthy eating habits and national cultural importance are seen as positive aspects of Organic School Model.
- ✓ It may be difficult to find a large area of adult trees in touch with the nature required for the establishment of the Organic School. In addition, land, the number of staff, the establishment of various training areas requires a high budget. Besides, it is also necessary to take security measures to be available in various educational areas of the school. The education period of this school model is limited to the summer season and the number of students that can be trained in this school is among the limitations of the model. The instructors who can provide training in the Organic School need to have serious knowledge about how the school education situation will be and in their fields.

It was concluded that Organic School Model can be applied at the preschool and primary school levels in line with the opinions stated according to the applicability by age groups in the Turkish Education System. It can be adapted to middle and high school levels if it can be developed to appeal to these levels.

## Recommendations

- ✓ Alternative education policies can be developed to prevent children from breaking away from nature, being alienated from animals and nature, becoming addicted to IT tools, and preventing them from growing asocial and in an unhealthy way.
- ✓ As in the Organic School Model, alternative education practices can be developed that will enable children to learn all through learning by experiencing and preparing completely for real life.
- ✓ Awareness-raising conferences, seminars etc. on the importance of learning by doing and experiencing in the natural environment can be conducted.
- ✓ Research and projects can be done to increase opportunities for children to contact nature and strengthen relationships with nature.
- ✓ Especially in cities, the number of vegetable-fruit areas such as organic agriculture and hobby gardens can be increased in order to give healthy eating habits to children and avoid unhealthy food, and families can be encouraged in this context.
- ✓ An Organic School can be established in every province on the basis of municipality, NGO or private sector.
- ✓ Curricula and teaching programs for Organic School can be developed.
- ✓ Scientific research can be done to influence the physiological, psychological and cognitive development of the students who are trained in the Organic School.

## Notes

This study was prepared by utilizing the master thesis made in Fırat University Institute of Education Sciences Department of Primary Education Classroom Teaching Department.

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