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## An Interview with Buket Yakmaci-Guzel

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*MFS: Professor, first of all, could you tell us a bit about what you are currently doing and a bit about your education and experience?*

**BYG:** I'm a researcher and teacher educator from Istanbul, Turkey. I'm working at the Department of Secondary School Science and Mathematics Education in Bogazici University in which top 1-3% students are admitted as a result of a very competitive central university entrance examination. I received my B.S. degree on "Teaching Chemistry" from Bogazici University. During my graduate education in "Educational Sciences", I had studied on giftedness. I carried out a research study on Dabrowski's overexcitabilities. After completing my graduate education, since 1998, I have been working as a chemistry teacher educator. My current research interests are; identifying and improving conceptual understanding in science/chemistry, science/chemistry teacher education, professional development in science/chemistry teaching. During my career, I offered many undergraduate and graduate courses such as Applied Research in Science Education, Text Analysis in Science and Mathematics Education, Teaching Methods in Science and Mathematics, Teaching Methods in Chemistry, Practice Teaching in Chemistry, etc.

*MFS: Now, what first got you excited in the topic of overexcitables, and the theory of Dabrowski?*

**BYG:** I first encountered with the concepts of "OEs" and "TPD" while I was doing my Ph.D. coursework. When I read the article "Identifying gifted adolescents using personality characteristics: Dabrowski's overexcitabilities" by C. M. Ackerman (1997), I was so excited and found it so interesting. Then I read more and more on this "personality theory" and I was influenced with the idea that "conflict and inner suffering were necessary for advanced development". It was very similar to the ideas from well-known learning theories which emphasize the importance of "conflict" and "disequilibrium" as a prerequisite for further learning. When I was first interested in "OEs", there was no study carried out in Turkey about the issue, so it was another driving force for me to choose that topic to study further in my dissertation and contribute to the existing literature by collecting and analyzing data from my country.

*MFS: In your study, you identified students according to the Raven's Progressive Matrices. Why this test?*

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**BYG:** I chose this test, because it was easy to administer to a larger sample and easy to score (practicality). It was one of the most widely-known, and valid tests measuring “general intellectual ability” (quality). Also, since it consisted of items with figures (non-verbal), it’s one of the tests free from cultural bias (culture-fair).

**MFS:** *You also looked at students with high motivation, high creativity and high leadership scores. What did you find?*

**BYG:** I didn’t want only to rely on “general intellectual ability” but also other variables (like motivation, leadership, creativity as suggested by Renzulli (1978) and Marland (1972) which might be related to giftedness. I thought that instead of administering some tests to measure these variables, asking teachers rating their students on these might be more practical and more informative. So I wanted home room teachers to evaluate and classify their students in terms of these variables. I explained teachers what I mean by each variable and asked them to group their students accordingly. According to these classifications, I compared different groups of students in terms of their OE scores.

As a result of analysis I found that:

- In all OE dimensions, high intellectual ability students scored higher than low intellectual ability students and in Imaginational and Intellectual OEs these high intellectual ability students scored significantly higher than low intellectual ability students,
- Imaginational and Intellectual OE scores of students who have labeled as “highly motivated students” by their teachers are significantly higher than the scores of those who labeled as “low motivated students”,
- Imaginational and Intellectual OE scores of students who are categorized as leaders by their home room teachers are significantly higher than those who are classified as non-leaders.
- All five types of OE scores (Psychomotor, Sensual, Imaginational, Intellectual, Emotional) of students who have high creativity are significantly greater than those of low creativity.

**MFS:** *What did you find in terms of boys and girls in this research?*

**BYG:** There is no difference in terms of any OE scores of male and female students according to the analysis of my study.

**MFS:** *I have been to Turkey, and am by no means an expert on your culture. But in terms of cultural issues- what are the important issues in this regard?*

**BYG:** When intellectual ability is concerned, the elevated OE scores on Imaginational and Intellectual areas are frequently seen for highly intelligent individuals in many research studies in the literature. My findings are very similar to those and so provided additional support to the literature. In my study, when the data were analyzed also in terms of motivation and leadership, it was again observed that Imaginational and Intellectual OE scores of high

and low groups differed in favor of high groups. This implies that high intellectual ability group students quite coincide with high motivation and leadership groups in my sample.

On the other hand, in the literature, high intellectual ability group is frequently found to display high Emotional OE whereas it was not the case in my study. This is also similar for motivation and leadership variables in my study in terms of Emotional OE score. This shows that Emotional OE doesn't differentiate high intellectual, highly motivated and leader individuals from their lower counterparts. It was one of the interesting findings of my study and it was difficult to explain. The Emotional OE scores of whole sample in my study was relatively low when compared with Ackerman's study (1997). This difference shows that Turkish students have either lower Emotional OE or cannot reflect their Emotional OE in their responses to the Overexcitability Questionnaire.

A possible explanation for this might be that in Turkish culture, from earlier ages children learn to hide their feelings because exhibiting them might be considered as a sign of weakness. Additionally there is no formal training integrated in school curricula about increasing emotional awareness, making empathic relationships with others or overcoming negative and positive feelings. These might be factors for Turkish population for not being able to express OE in emotional dimension.

*MFS: What do you see, in retrospect in terms of the importance of your study?*

**BYG:** I think, my study was important for being the first study on this issue carried out in Turkey. There were studies comparing OEs of gifted and non-gifted individuals by mainly taking account the intellectual ability factor and sometimes creativity factor. In my study, besides these two factors, I also tried to add the variables of motivation and leadership and I found similar results with intellectual ability factor on OE scores. So, this might imply a positive relationship between high intellectual ability, and motivation and leadership.

I know that OEs caught the attention of different researchers from around the world in later years and some comparisons across countries and cultures in terms of OEs were done as well later.

*MFS: Thank you for your interest in my research.*