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Educational Metaphors: High School Students' Perceptions of Schools in Kyrgyzstan

Abstract: Focusing on the case study of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, this article examines high school students' perception of their schools and education by using metaphors. A total of 1433 high school students participated in this research. Based on the data that we collected from 9th and 10th grade students during field research (January – February 2020) in various regions of Kyrgyzstan and analysed students' answers about their schools. The findings show that the study's participants produced 178 metaphors about their schools. The participants used 102 positive, 108 negative metaphors and 32 metaphors for both positive and negative metaphors. These metaphors were categorised into seven main and 18 sub-themes according to their associated meanings. This study shows that some school students perceived school as peaceful and comfortable places and used positive words to describe it: home, family, nest, sky, sun, star, moon, ocean, mountain, garden, flower, book, library, key, candle and road sign. However, some of them described their schools as crowded, boring, regulated and restricted places and used more negative words to describe it: prison, criminal world, factory, hospital, laboratory and, barn. They also used metaphors, such as Wi-Fi, internet, night club, the ceremony hall, supermarket and the names of Kyrgyz and Russian television show programs like *Tamashow* (*Humorous Show*), *Modnyi prigovor* (*Fashion Sentence*) and *Pust govoriat* (*Let Them Talk*).

Keywords: Kyrgyzstan, education, schools, students, metaphor, students' perception for school.

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Introduction

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that »person's perceptions of concepts are based on metaphors« (p. 5), and they define that the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another. Cook-Sather states (2003) »Every metaphor assumes or generates a lexicon, a vocabulary, a way of naming within the conceptual framework of the metaphor, which embodies and reflects certain underlying values, and which has the potential, if taken as totalising, to eclipse other ways of thinking and behaving. Because metaphors not only foreground certain qualities but also obscure or eliminate others, they can lead people to assume or accept that one particular way of thinking is the only way to think and one set of particular practices the only possible set« (p. 949).

Sometimes metaphor is used to approve an action or strengthen its peculiarities, which cannot be described directly with words. Some scholars argue that metaphors can differentiate the »not understandable« from the »understandable« and confirm the »unknown, opposite and doubtful« situations (Konstantinovski et al. 2013, p. 22).

Educators use metaphors as one of the main elements to explain the educational system in general. They use metaphors as a way to attract the students' attention through comparing objects, reflecting on them in their mind and teaching them. According to the social, cultural and economic conditions of the society, different metaphors emerged in the field of education, such as the school as a figurative factory, a plant, a social centre, a welfare agency etc. To compare the school to a factory or plant implies that it is a place of production that produces educated students. The student, viewed as »raw material« or worker who needs to be more an efficient, or needs to be moulded into an efficient part of society, implying that the student has an intrinsic defect, or at least they must be moulded or assembled on a conveyor belt (Bishop 2019, p. 54).

Marshall (1990, p. 94) explained that metaphors are so ubiquitous in our everyday language that we rarely pay attention to the ones we use when we describe or think about what happens in classrooms. Nevertheless, these metaphors shape our understanding of classroom processes. According to Marshall, the most frequently metaphor used to depict what goes on in classrooms is that of a workplace, usually a factory-type workplace. Classrooms are commonly conceptualised as work settings where student/workers are supervised by teacher/managers. Marshall argued that the dominate metaphor in many schools is »school as work«.

In this context, we understand that students should work as hard as workers do.

Some researchers focused on negative metaphors — such as the school as a jail house, that is, »a free educational prison« which present schools as restricting, standardising and alienating places (Lahelma 2002; Inbar 1996). Giroux portrayed schools as restricted, limited places that act as a pipeline to prison. According to Giroux, schools have more in common with military boot camps and prisons. As schools become militarised, they lose their ability to provide students with the skills to cope with human differences, uncertainty, and the various symbolic; schools also have institutional forces that undermine political agency and democratic public life itself (Giroux 2006, p. 167).

Some scholars argued that school administrators also developed new metaphors about schools. Viewing the schools as factories, school administrators stressed standardisation and uniformity of instruction. Efficiency administrators compared themselves to factory managers, in which power flowed from the top of the organisation to the bottom. Just as administrators should control and dominate teachers, teachers should control and dominate students (Spring 1989).

Metaphors not only structure the way we think about schools but also help create a world of the school. Some researchers (Sergiovanni 1993; Wincek 1995; Jordan 1996) identified several powerful metaphors for schooling and school improvement that dominate the thinking of policy-makers, scholars and practitioners (Demir 2007, p. 92).

Schools are considered one of the main important institutions of the post-Soviet Kyrgyz society. Some students positively perceive their schools, and they still think that they are one of the main institutions in which they can improve themselves intellectually. However, some of them associate the educational spaces of schools with the industrial space of government, wherein high school students linger and aimlessly spend their valuable time.

In Kyrgyzstan, there are a few studies on education which have focused on metaphors. Dündar (2015) conducted a metaphorical study that focused on how university students perceive their universities. Gök (2017) examined Bishkek-Turkish elementary and secondary school students' and teachers' perceptions of the concept of school. In his research, participants used positive metaphors, such as home, family, book, nursery school and negative metaphors such as prison, dungeon, hell, ghost train and notebook for their schools. The current study focuses on analysis of schools through metaphors. The main aim of this study is to understand how high school students conceptualise their school metaphorically and how they explain their school experiences. Analyses of school metaphors can also reveal how students feel about their school and their attitude towards education in Kyrgyzstan. In this context, we tried to answer the following questions. What are the metaphors students produced about their schools? Which kind of metaphors had positive or negative meanings?

Materials and Methods

This research is a descriptive study aimed at determining students' perception of their schools through the use of metaphors. Metaphors are used as data collecting instruments mostly to reflect on the connection between the »subject of metaphor« and »source of metaphor« of the words »like« and »as« (Gordon and Lahelma 1996; Saban 2008; Dündar 2015). For example, school is like the sun. In this sentence, school is the metaphor's subject, and sun is the metaphor's source. In this study, a convenience sampling was used, which is an applicable, accessible and widely used method in the research. Convenience sampling is affordable and easy, and the subjects are readily available. The main objective of convenience sampling is to collect information from participants who are easily accessible (Etikan et al. 2016, p. 2). A convenient sample group is one that aims to obtain in-depth information about something, provides an opportunity for in-depth analysis and contains maximum variety (Şimşek 2005, p. 107).

Study Group

This study was conducted among 15- and 16-year-old high school students in the 9th and 10th grades from 27 schools in Kyrgyzstan between January and February 2020. The questionnaire was applied by the authors¹ and university students². A total of 1433 school students, 1052 (73.4%) from rural areas and 381 (26.6%) from cities, participated in this study. Participants were given 20 minutes to fill out the sheet. The table below indicates the regional distribution of the participants:

No.	Schools according to Regions	Number of Students
1.	Batken city	100
2.	Batken region	77
3.	Bishkek city	239
4.	Chui region	285
5.	Issyk-Kul region	141
6.	Naryn region	104
7.	Osh city	42
8.	Osh region	193
9.	Zhalal-Abad region	252
Total		1433

Table 1: Regional distribution of students

1 Authors applied this study in Bishkek and Chui region.

2 Students of Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University, Department of Pedagogy. First of all, these students were given special training on data collection. They then collected data from their schools in the regions during the semester break.

Date Collection and Analyses

During the date collection, the purpose of the study was explained to students who wanted to participate in the research. In this research, 1433 students were participated. Interpreting the students' metaphors consisted of the following stages:

The participants were asked to fill in the blank in the following sentence »*School is like because*« and through this, they would associate their school with a particular word and the reason for that. We asked them to use only one metaphor for the school and write the reason for their choice.

Each sheet obtained from the students was numbered.

We did not analyse the sheets in which the sentences were not full or understandable or appropriate for the purpose of the study. We marked 25 papers of 1433 as invalid because the students wrote words like »good«, »we love« and »warm«, which are not metaphorical. Metaphor symbols of the remaining 1408 students (i.e. 98.26% of all; $f = 1408$) were analysed.

Their answers were categorised according to the meaning of the sentences and the type of the metaphors they wrote down. In the metaphor categorisation, we used code like »S24«, the meaning of this code is the 24th student.

The valid metaphors were categorised in seven main and 18 sub-themes according to metaphor's meaning and closeness to the real meanings. Then their frequency (f) and percentage (%) were calculated.

Findings

Our findings show that the 1408 participants used 178 different metaphors about schools. In this study, participants used 102 positive, 108 negative metaphors and 32 metaphors for both positive and negative metaphors. These metaphors were categorised into seven main themes and 18 sub-groups according to their associated meanings. The table below shows a metaphorical categorisation of this study.

№	Distribution of metaphorical categorisation		
Themes	Sub Themes	Positive Metaphors (f)	Negative Metaphors (f)
School as a home	Home $f = 180 + 58 = 238$ (16.90%)	Home-92; my home-58; our home-17; big house-8; sacred house 5. ($f = 180$)	Home-43; my home-8; our home-2 big house-5. ($f = 58$)
	Second home $f = 240 + 54 = 294$ (20.88%)	Second home-59; my second home-130; our second home-51. ($f = 240$)	Second home-28; my second home-23; our second home-3. ($f = 54$)
	Family $f = 81 + 4 = 85$ (6.03%)	Family-45; parents-25; father-1; mother-8; relative-2. ($f = 81$)	Family-4. ($f = 4$)
	Nest $f = 35$ (2.49%)	Nest-35. ($f = 35$)	-
School as a place of knowledge and information	Knowledge, information $f = 119 + 44 = 163$ (11.58%)	School-37; knowledge source-14; knowledge nest (house)-11, kindergarten-3; educational institution-33; university-7; educational center-10; internet-1; library-3. ($f = 119$)	School-32; kindergarten-7; educational institution-1; internet-2; information source-2. ($f = 44$)
	Book, magic world $f = 78 + 8 = 86$ (6.11%)	Letter-2; book-33; treasury-8; treasury of knowledge-5; mine of knowledge-6; treasure-3; wealth-2; fairytale-2; sacred place-4; sacred house-2; magic place-5; magic chest-2; paradise-4. ($f = 78$)	Letter-6; book-1, magic house-1. ($f = 8$)

School as a public place	Public place $f = 37 + 45 = 82$ (5.82%)	Golden palace-3; golden cradle-3; working place-4; construction-4; building-5; public place-9; camp-1; mosque-4; stair-2; entertainment place-1; place where friends meet-1. ($f = 37$)	Palace-3; building-4; working place-5; construction-2; sport centre-1; hall-1; theatre-2; camp-1; stair-1; resting-place-4; entertainment place-4; place where friends meet-9; night club-1; boarding house-1; game zone-1; Tamashow (TV show program)-1; place for spending time-2; hall of celebration-2. ($f = 45$)
	Country, motherland $f = 11 + 11 = 22$ (1.56%)	Prosperous country-2; motherland-7; beautiful country-1; big country-1. ($f = 11$)	Motherland of capitalists-1; undeveloped country-2; undeveloped state-5, white house-3. ($f = 11$)
Bazaar, restaurant $f = 4 + 16 = 20$ (1.42%)		Food-1; meal table-1; cafeteria-2. ($f = 4$)	Supermarket-1, bazaar-9, chaikhana-1, restaurant-1; cafe-1; food-3. ($f = 16$)

School as a universe and a place of nature	Universe, celestial bodies $f = 73 + 3 = 76$ (5.40%)	Sky-4; sun-35; brightness-5; beam-5; moon-5; space-6; air-1; cloud-1; warm-1; star-1; world-8; place which can change the world-1. (f = 73)	Space-2; world-1. (f = 3)
	Nature, beauty $f = 82 + 4 = 86$ (6.11%)	Spring-5; water-8, lake-2; sea-4, ocean-4, mountain-7; plants-1; environment-2, tree-10; flower-8; garden-6; root-2; forest-1; fruitful tree-22. (f = 82)	Mountain-1; forest-1; garden-1; tree-1. (f = 4)
School as a gate to the future	Future, hope $f = 37 + 2 = 39$ (2.77%)	Future-13; life-6; love-2; childhood-5; brain, mind-2; good person-5; good time-4. (f = 37)	Love-2, (f = 2)
	Object $f = 17$ (1.21%)	Key-9; thing-5; candle-3. (f = 17)	-
	As transport $f = 19 + 6 = 25$ (1.78%)	Airplane-1; ship-4; ship of knowledge-6; road-6; road sign-2. (f = 19)	Airplane-1; ship-3; minibus-2. (f = 6)

School as chaotic or useless place	Different $f = 5+5 = 10$ (0.71%)	Something that is close to my heart-1; anthill-1; great play-1; television-1; ventless-1. ($f = 5$)	Salt-1; ourselves-1, film-1; horse-1; cow-1. ($f = 5$)
	Nothing $f = 2+3 = 5$ (0.36%)	Nothing-2. ($f = 2$)	Nothing-3. ($f = 3$)
	Negative place $f = 42$ (2.98%)	-	Chaos-1; inconvenient, strange place-5, rubbish box-2; old candle-1; continuously opening and closing door-1; dirty bathhouse-1; potboiler center-1; Siberia-1, Antarctica-1; winter-1; pit-1; casino-1; old museum-1; <i>Pust govoriat (Let Them Talk)</i> -1; gipsy house-1; useless cramming-1, gulf with no bottom-1; hollow with no teacher-1; heartless person-1; jungle-1; indecent children house-1; chicken coop-1; barn-13; noisy place-1, workshop-1. ($f = 42$)

School as a place of discipline and control	Discipline, control place f = 83 (5.89%)	-	Orphanage – 2; court – 1; <i>Modnyi prigovor (Fashion Sentence)</i> – 1; limited place – 1; home region – 2; madhouse – 7; hell, compel – 1; nursing house – 1; circus – 2; zoo – 2; factory-4; hospital – 6; maternity hospital/pregnancy – 3; laboratory-1; prison – 1; totalitarian regime – 2; tax inspection – 1; criminal world-1; army – 4; cell-1; prison – 39; torture place – 1; (f = 83).
	Total: 1408 (100%)	Positive: 1020 (72.44%)	Negative: 388 (27.56%)

Table 2: Distribution of metaphorical categorisation

School as a home

The first category includes four sub-themes such as home, second home, family and nest and nearly half of the participants of the research (f = 652; i.e. 46.30%) used these metaphors. According to the general view, students spend an important part of their time (i.e. 9 or 11 years) in schools. They viewed the school folks as »family, relative« and they found similarities between school and home and between teachers and parents. Some students believed that their school was like a home environment for them, which is important for their development. However, most of them said their school was like a second home because their teachers put pressure on students, which was not the case in their real home. Besides, 17.79% of students were of the opinion that home or family is a controlled place that restrains their liberty. In both positive and negative metaphors, students focused on similarities between family/parents and teachers, between home and school. Positive and negative metaphoric descriptions of the participants can be seen in the following examples: Metaphors with a positive meaning: *School is like my home because teachers give us education as my parents do. I feel free at school (S654). School is like my second home because we study and receive knowl-*

edge at school for 11 years (S1285). School is like my second home because I spend most of my time there, and I have many friends and I receive knowledge there (S1297). School is like a bird's nest because school feeds us with knowledge like a bird feeds its baby. If we learn more, we fly higher like birds (S9). School is like my family because school helps me to obtain knowledge, and I receive education there, as my parents help me to develop myself (S1293).

Metaphors with a negative meaning: School is like a second home because teachers scold us as well as parents (S 852). School is like a big house because there are my friends, and we have fun every day, but teachers always yell in the class (S687). School is like an edgy family because most students are afraid of their teachers. They can't ask a question when they do not understand the lesson. The quality of education is at an awful level (S1148).

School as a place of knowledge and information

School is perceived by students as a source of knowledge and information, as an educational institution, as well as a kindergarten, library, book and the internet. Students get access to knowledge, expand their horizons and learn many things at school. Generally, 17.69% (i.e. $f = 249$) of students emphasised schools as an educational institution and 79.12% (i.e. $f = 197$) of them used positive metaphors. However, 20.88% (i.e. $f = 52$) of student in this categorisation used the same metaphors in a negative meaning, which can be seen from the following examples: Metaphors with a positive meaning: School is like a source of knowledge because we go to school to get knowledge and education (S1063). School is like a book because when you open it, you get good knowledge, and it is a source of knowledge (S725; 1015). School is like a book because to get knowledge is like to dig a well with a needle (S1151). School is like a book because we learn how to write and read (S1014). School is like a library because we can get knowledge there (S904). School is like a computer because it works with the special education programs and materials. (S591). School is like an information device because it delivers information (S586).

Metaphors with a negative meaning: School is like a kindergarten because till the end of third grade of my school life, I scored the verses (verselet/poetry) where I learned it at kindergarten (S1193). School is like a kindergarten because most students' attitude is like that of a child. Teachers spend their time with them (S1057). School is like an internet club because most students play games on their phones during the lessons (S677).

School as a public place

Another group of metaphors used by the 8.8% (i.e. $f=124$) of 1408 participants is school as public place, such as working place, camp, mosque, building, country, entertainment place, bazaar, supermarket and chaikhana (i.e. a teahouse

or a place to eat). According to this study, 58.06% (i.e. $f=72$) of the participants of this category indicated that they have negative feelings and experiences in their school life, whereas 41.94% (i.e. $f = 52$) of them associated it with positive emotions. Students explained their feelings as follows: Metaphors with a positive meaning: *School is like a public place because we get knowledge there. We have equal rights. Teachers are our second mother. We study there for 11 years* (S752). *School is like a working place because we learn and do many things like workers* (S702). *School is like a camp because I have friends and it is very interesting to be with them, even though there some negative things* (S762). *School is like a flourishing country because there are a lot of smart and educated students. We have really good teachers who help us* (S601).

Metaphors with a negative meaning: *School is like an entertainment place because I only go to school to spend my time with my friends. We don't care about our teachers' lessons* (S624). *School is like a theatre because it seems to me that every day, I watch 'new spectacles' there* (S209). *School is like a night club because there are always concerts and discos* (S803). *School is like a bazaar because there is no discipline. Students bargain with their teachers for grades (marks)* (S900, 1274). *School is like a beauty salon because girls dress up and put make-up on. Everybody sits in the classroom holding their cell phones in their hands* (S1241). *School is like a bazaar because most of the teachers are women, and they shout at students* (S724). *School is like a capitalist country because teachers strive for money, and students strive for grades* (S562).

School as a universe and place of nature

95.68% (i.e. $f = 155$) of 162 students of this category used positive metaphors such as space, sky, sun, star, moon, ocean and mountain. The image of universe indicates that most students perceived their schools as a world-like place where they can receive knowledge. A student who used the metaphor of school as a sun explained their feelings as follows: *School is like a sun because the sun shines everywhere equally. Likewise, school gives knowledge to students equally* (S1430). Other students used such metaphors as plant, garden, forest, tree and flower to depict the school as a natural organism, which is a symbol of growth. In this context, students perceived themselves as a continuously growing biological organism through acquiring knowledge and education, which can be seen in the following examples: Metaphors with a positive meaning: *School is like a world because it is very interesting like a world* (S993). *School is like a sea because knowledge is as deep as a sea* (S1105). *School is like a sun because it gives life to students* (S80). *School is like water because there is no limit of water, and everybody needs it. Likewise, there is no limit of knowledge, and we need to get knowledge as learners* (S103). *School is like a rose because it is very beautiful and blooms flower* (S593). *School is like a garden because we are growing there and getting knowledge* (S1426).

School as a gate to the future

In this category, students focused on the future using such metaphors as future, life, key, candle and road sign. Most students, 90.12% ($f = 73$), used positive metaphors, hoping that the knowledge they receive at schools provides them the opportunity to have a wealthy life in the future. A small group of students, 9.88% ($f = 8$), aimlessly used the negative metaphors. These metaphors can be seen in the following examples: Metaphors with a positive meaning: *School is like a key to future because we create our future through acquiring knowledge (S135). School is like a key because we open everything through education, and we get education in schools (S1363). School is like a bright candle because our knowledge we get at school shines as a candle in our life forever (S543). School is like life because school and life teach us (S36). School is like a ship because the ship sails to unknown places. Furthermore, every student chooses their own way (S107). School is like an airplane because thanks to knowledge, we can fly wherever we want (S139).*

Metaphors with a negative meaning: *School is like a minibus because there is no relationship between the driver and the passengers. Likewise, I can't see any relationship between the teachers and students. The teachers do not pay attention to the educational background and future of students (S507).*

School as a chaotic or useless place

87.7% (i.e. $f = 50$) of 57 students described their school using negative metaphors, such as chaos, a strange place, a noisy place, a rubbish box, a casino, an old museum, the television program *Pust govoriat (Let Them Talk)*, Antarctica and Siberia. These metaphors associate school with an uncomfortable and annoying place in which students feel themselves responsible to depict the problems of education in Kyrgyzstan schools. Some students complained about bad physical conditions of schools, and others were not satisfied with the quality of the education system. Students explained their experiences and feelings as follows: Metaphors with a negative meaning: *School is like a rubbish box because it is full of rubbish, and teachers are not qualified (S51). School is like the television program Pust govoriat because if anything happens in school, all teachers and students discuss it all day (S121). School is like a chaos because the education system is old (S739). School is like Siberia (exile) to me because they make me go there. I do not like the way teachers treat students. It makes me angry when they scold us with bad words (S916). School is like a palace because it is big and has a big garden and servants. Teachers are like the king's family (S359).*

School as a place of discipline and control

In this last category, 100% (i.e. $f = 83$) students perceived their school as a place of discipline and control. Using such metaphors as court, army, laborato-

ry and prison, students described themselves as a victim of the school regime. They were neither satisfied with their schools nor with education systems of Kyrgyzstan in general. Some students felt themselves as a part of the controlled and disciplined world and were almost rebellious. They especially remarked and underlined their limited freedom at schools. Students stated the following: *School is like a prison because there are strict rules, and everything is controlled. Forty-five minutes last like 45 years in the four-walled room. The quality of education at school is very low (S740). School is like a court because teachers ask questions non-stop (S279). School is like an atelier because it raises children, prepares them to join society and gets them in 'shape' (S198). School is like tax inspection because teachers collect money for cleaning and security services, repairing classrooms, books, celebrations, and educational materials. Older students racketeering younger students by threatening them (S926). School is like a factory because it produces educated people (S1007). School is like a colony because sometimes some teachers use students as an instrument for revenge (S238). School is like a prison because I don't like teachers' old methods. We use books that were published 10 to 20 years ago (S427). School is like the television show Modnyi prigovor (Fashion Sentence) because teachers and students dress up; they pay more attention to their clothing than teaching. Teachers restrict our confidence and judge us according to the clothes we wear (S968). School is like a criminal underworld because teachers and students quarrel with each other. We have racketeering in schools (S171).*

Students who associate school with a place of discipline and control said that they do not want to go to school; teachers and parents force them to study. The students said classes are difficult and not easy to grasp; there are too many rules, and they are strict. They also underlined that they aimlessly attend classes. Unfortunately, it is common at schools that senior students miss classes, as they do not want to go to school, and they do not find the lessons interesting. Thus, they do not obey the rules, as they disliked teacher-student interactions and being controlled by others. In addition, some students stated that teachers should use new methods to make the lessons more interesting.

Discussion

In this study, metaphors were used as a tool for understanding students' perceptions of schools and their experiences. The findings indicated that students used positive and negative metaphors with positive or negative meanings. In this research, a total of 178 metaphors were used by students. Students produced 102 positive metaphors, and they expressed their opinions about schools through such metaphors as family, parents, house, golden palace, golden cradle, flourishing country, motherland, beautiful country, camp, mosque, nest, place for changing the world, magic place, place of knowledge and information, book, universe, sun, sky, water, flower, tree, root, stair, tableware, kitchen, plane, future, hope and paradise. In this context, these metaphors showed that school is one of the main institutions that students can receive knowledge and improve themselves.

In the literature (Marshall 1990; Inbar 1996; Gordon and Lahelma 1996; Çuhadar and Sarı 2007; Saban 2008; Dündar 2015; Gök 2017), we can see that students describe their schools with positive metaphors, such as family, home, living place, beautiful place, place of socialisation, place of solidarity, nest, source of knowledge, book, future, hope, sun, sky, star, tree, forest, water and flower. The participants of this study also used some similar metaphors.

Some students used positive metaphors when discussing schools, such as a place of knowledge, a universe, a place of nature and a nest. They perceived their school as a source of knowledge, where they felt comfortable. They believed that school can prepare them for the real world. Students also used other positive metaphors to describe their school, such as a plant, a fruitful tree, a flower, a star, a candle, a key and a road sign. These metaphors show that students are satisfied with their schools and the education system.

The analysis of the participants' metaphors indicates that school is also perceived as a home or second home or a family that psychologically provides them with confidence and solidarity. These findings are in line with the findings of a study conducted by Gök (2017), which emphasised that students perceive their schools as a home that is a place of solidarity and love. The metaphor »school as family« is commonly used by US educators and policy-makers in their attempts to suggest ways of improving schools (Demir 2007, p. 101). However, our findings show that some students used the same metaphor negatively; they described schools as a controlling and restricting environment. Besides, most students perceived their school as their home or second home. According to the students' answers, teachers used these kind of metaphors for school when they started to attend schools. That is why, they also used the same metaphors. In this sense, it is difficult to understand the real feelings of students about their schools.

Some students criticised their schools for failing as an educational institution. They produced 108 negative metaphors such as the school as home, factory, building, entertainment place, land of capitalists, undeveloped country, white house, circus, zoo, prison, army, madhouse, hospital, court, criminal world, dirty bath, casino, old museum, barn, workshop, totalitarian regime, laboratory, minibus, food, café, restaurant, bazaar, jungle, salt, Siberia, and Antarctica.

Using these kind of metaphors, participants emphasised that students grow up in a restricted and controlled environment in which they should learn how to survive. Students were not satisfied with the education system. This finding complies with Çuhadar and Sarı's (2007) study, which found that participants saw the school as a mistrustful and unfair place. Participants in this study also described the school as a chaotic, crowded and noisy place. Participants said the school system is underdeveloped with few modern attributes. Demir (2007, p. 101) noted that participants used such metaphors as maze, jigsaw puzzle and circus to describe their schools, indicating that they perceived the school environment as chaotic, complex and challenging.

Students in this study also used the metaphors of school as prison, madhouse, hospital and orphanage used to emphasise its disciplined and controlling nature. The participants expressed that they feel themselves as restricted; they

had little freedom not only in relation to space but also in terms of what they learned. In other studies, students used similar metaphors, such as prison and dungeon (Inbar 1996; Lahelma 2002; Saban 2008; Nalçacı and Bektaş 2012).

Participants also used other type of metaphors, such as Wi-Fi, internet and night club. One student used the metaphor or *Tamashow*, a humorous show in Kyrgyzstan, and others used the names of Russian television show programs, such as *Modnyi prigovor* (*Fashion Sentence*) and *Pust govoriat* (*Let Them Talk*). They produced such as metaphors in negative meanings. These metaphors associate with the contemporary transformations in the Kyrgyzstan society. In this context, it is very important to underline the new transformed metaphors which are produced by students.

Along with positive and negative metaphors about school, students also used such metaphors as prophet, president, deputy, king's family, judge, punisher, janitor, mullah, doctor, psychiatrist, psycho, money collector, driver, shepherd and hen for the teachers, and people, sycophant, prisoner, servant, ill, foolish, psycho, insane crazy, foundling, sheep and chicken for students.

Conclusion

As implied from the above discussion, we have indicated that metaphors used by high school students provide us with a useful tool to understand schools in Kyrgyzstan. The findings show a thematic variety among the metaphors which were used by students. The results reveal that whereas 72.44% of the participants perceived their school as a positive place, 27.56% of them described their schools as a negative place. Participants used 102 positive, 108 negative metaphors and 32 metaphors for both positive and negative metaphors. According to the results, some metaphors were only used in positive sense, such as nest, paradise, sky, star, sun, flower, key and future. Some metaphors, in contrast, were only used in negative sense, such as orphanage, *Modnyi prigovor* (*Fashion Sentence*), madhouse, hospital and casino. However, some metaphors such as home, forest, food, and mountain had both a positive and negative sense.

A large number of participants considered their schools as an important institution where students can develop themselves. It is clear that the participants used their metaphors to share their feelings and experiences about schools in general and their own school, in particular. However, it is difficult to generalise it for all students in Kyrgyzstan.

Some participants' approach to their schools and education system in general was more critical and questioning. They tended to criticise their teachers, the administrators, the school materials and books, the physical appearance of the schools and the limited liberty they experienced as students in schools. They used various, unconventional and new metaphors in describing their schools. They were aware of school problems, including the quality of education system, teaching methods and school rules. Other participants considered schools not as institutions that can contribute to their self-development but as places that shape

and control students physically and mentally. These students used controlling metaphors, such as prison and madhouse, to describe their schools. Since some participants described going to school as being arrested, we feel that schools, for some, are only seen as places to create a certain kind of individual.

Keeping in mind that metaphors are only one of the many tools that may be used to approach the concept of schooling, additional data should be gathered through other methods, such as surveys, observation, or document analysis in order to create a broader picture of school actors' perceptions of school (Demir 2007, p. 104). In this context, more detailed and extensive research is needed to better understand the role of schools and their effects on students in Kyrgyzstan.

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IZOBRAŽEVALNE METAFORE: KAKO DIJAKI V KIRGIZIJI ZAZNAVAJO ŠOLE

Povzetek: Članek na primeru postsovjetske Kirgizije proučuje, kako srednješolci dojemajo šole in izobraževanje s pomočjo metafor. V raziskavi je sodelovalo 1433 srednješolcev. Podatke smo zbrali med dijaki 9. in 10. razreda med terensko raziskavo (januar–februar 2020) v različnih regijah Kirgizije in nato analizirali njihove odgovore. Ugotovitve kažejo, da so sodelujoči v raziskavi prispevali 178 metafor o šolah. Udeleženci so uporabili 102 pozitivni metafori, 108 negativnih metafor in 32 metafor, ki so lahko tako pozitivne kot negativne. Te metafore smo razvrstili v sedem glavnih tematskih sklopov in 18 podskupin, in sicer glede na njihove pomene. Raziskava je pokazala, da nekateri dijaki dojemajo šolo kot miren in prijeten kraj ter zanjo uporabljajo pozitivne besede: dom, družina, gnezdo, nebo, sonce, zvezda, luna, ocean, gora, vrt, roža, knjiga, knjižnica, ključ, sveča in prometni znak. Drugi pa svoje šole opisujejo kot prenatrpane, dolgočasne, nadzorovane in utesnjene prostore ter za opis šole uporabljajo različne negativne besede: zapor, kriminalni svet, tovarna, bolnišnica, laboratorij in hlev. Uporabljajo tudi metafore, kot so brezzični internet, splet, nočni klub, slavnostna dvorana, supermarket ter ime na kirgiških in ruskih televizijskih oddajah, kot so *Tamashow* (humoristična oddaja), *Modnyi prigovor* (Modna obsodba) in *Pust govoriat* (Prazno govorjenje).

Ključne besede: Kirgizija, izobraževanje, šole, dijaki, metafora, srednješolska percepcija šole

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