

STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS, WISHES AND PREFERENCES IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: This study has analyzed the following topics; 1-The expectations of the students from the Ministry of Education, school principals, teachers, parents. 2-Future expectations of the students; the activities mostly liked by them; their career preferences; the factors influencing them. The sample of the study includes the senior students attending public secondary schools in the central districts of the Ankara province. The sample was identified randomly includes 512 students. However, the data of 498 students have been taken into account because of various reasons. The data that were collected through use of a questionnaire were assessed in form of frequency and percentage distribution. Some of the findings could be stated as follows: The students wish to have the content of the subjects revised, wish to see more tolerance regarding school uniforms, and have no instruction that is heavily based on memorisation. The students regard the following topics important; being healthy, conversations with friends. They are mostly influenced by their parents. They prefer having future education in the fields of engineering and law.

KEY WORDS: *Secondary education, reorganization, student expectations, student wishes, student preferences.*

ÖZET: Bu araştırmada ortaöğretim öğrencilerinin 1-Milli Eğitim Bakanlığında, okul müdürlerinden, öğretmenlerden, ailelerden neler bekledikleri. 2-Hayattaki dilekleri, sevdikleri eylemler, tercih ettikleri meslekler, etkisinde kaldıkları etkenlerin neler olduğu araştırılmıştır. Araştırmanın evrenini Ankara'nın merkez ilçelerindeki ortaöğretim okullarında eğitim gören son sınıf öğrencileri oluşturmuştur. Random yöntemi ile belirlenen 512 öğrenci örnekleme meydana getirmiştir. Ancak bazı nedenlerle 498 öğrencinin verileri üzerinde değerlendirme yapılmıştır. Anket ile toplanan verilerin analizinde frekans ve yüzde dağılımlarından yararlanılmıştır. Bulgulardan birkaçı: Öğrenciler ders içeriklerinin yeniden gözden geçirilmesini, okul kıyafeti konusunda hoşgörü, ezberci eğitimden uzak durulmasını beklemekte; sağlıklı olmaya, arkadaşlarla sohbet etmeye önem vermekte, anne-babadan etkilenmekte, mühendislik ve hukuk eğitimi sıklıkla tercih etmektedirler.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER: *Ortaöğretim, yeniden yapılanma, öğrencilerin beklentileri, dilekleri, tercihleri.*

1-INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological developments affect the educational system. To make the community an information community in the 21st century, education which is one of the most influential tools in the development of countries is required to be regarded as the most significant problem.

In Turkey, secondary education seems to be one of the most problematic educational areas. At this level, students are prepared both for the university education and for their future careers. However, the secondary education in Turkey seems to be unsuccessful and young people leave school without being prepared for their future (1): But if an educational system does not prepare young generation to life, then inevitably many critical problems will appear.

In Turkey there are many secondary schools of numerous types that provide general, technical and occupational education attached to the Ministry of Education and to other Ministries. The high schools providing general education form the majority of the secondary education institutions and such high schools usually prepare the students for their university education. A study regarding this topic concludes that children of families with higher academical ability and with more advantageous social-cultural conditions attend the high schools that provide general education whereas other children mostly attend vocational and technical high schools (2). Another study indicates that achievement rates in the general highschools are less than those of both the Anatolian highschools and the private high schools (3). There are many students who could not give just one right answer in the University Entrance Exams (4).

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Young people who have got general academical ability must be educated according to their ability. Education does not mean that, finding classrooms and teachers for children. Now high quality educational opportunities are sought (5). In this respect, Turkish secondary education needs to be restructured. The basic ideas of this needed restruction and change must be that everyone must be such offered opportunity to develop himself/herself and that everyone working in the field of education should be held responsible for change (6). Many countries regard the consolidation of general and vocational education as the basic of their efforts towards change. They form a new model comprising the strengths of both types of education. Programs used in the vocational educational are weak in terms of higher mental skills. On the other hand, the contents of courses in the general high schools are more comprehensive but the students attending such highschools cannot apply their knowledge into daily life (1,7). Students can not develop creative skills, those methods in which teachers deliver lectures and students listen to these lectures are adopted. However creative skills play a significant role in life (8,9).

The focus of all educational activities within an educational system is the learner. However in Turkey those individuals who assume role and responsibility in life are not trained, instead those individuals who submit are trained (10). Some factors that cause underachievement among students are specified by the related literature as follows: Teachers' attitude, environment of classroom, influence of peers, adaptation problems, students' inability to recognize their roles in the school and to know their ability level (11,12). To be successful, students must be familiar with such factors as school principal, teacher, family and express themselves comfortably and also they must recognise their ability levels (13). This fact also affect the success of overall educational system.

The culture of organization which is created by school principal and other staff together indi-

cates the quality of the school. School principal's leadership and his/her sharing the responsibility with others in the school are two important elements of any cultural organization. It is commonly agreed that school principals play an important role both in the quality of school and students' achievement levels (14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25). Teachers' role cannot be denied in education as another important figure. Teachers who are in direct interaction with students must be trained well and take part in educational decision-making process to realize what they are expected to do (26, 27, 28, 29). Thus, the teacher-training programs of several educational sciences faculties have been reorganized in the 1998-1999 school year. Former teacher-training model provided mostly those teachers who had a good subject knowledge but who could not communicate with students effectively and who could not teach efficiently. In the new organization, teaching techniques and teaching practices are emphasized heavily (30).

Another problem to be solved is the participation of teachers in the decision-making process. Furthermore, before implementing an innovation, teachers' support must be gained. For instance in USA, teachers' views are collected through closed votes. At the rate of 80% is required before any innovation is accepted (31). The more the teacher knows his/her students, the more he/she can help students regarding their problems.

Today another important educational agent is the family. Students need the family is support to be successful in school. It is evident that schools spend both time and efforts to correct the misbehaviour of students (32). Therefore, families must also participate in the decision making process (33,34). Furthermore it should be recommended families to value their children and not to adopt a gender discrimination (35).

A new organization is needed to avoid criticisms toward the secondary education. Thus, following topics must be studied to shape such a new organisation toward the secondary educati-

on system; students' expectations from various persons at varied levels, their interests, abilities and the forces that affect the students.

1.1 Aims

This study has attempted to answer the following questions;

1-What are the expectations of the students from the followings?

- a-The Ministry of Education
- b-School principal
- c-Teachers
- d-Family

2-What are the a) wishes, b) liked actions, c) preferred careers, of the students and d) the factors that influence them?

METHOD

2.1. Sampling

The universe of the study includes students attending general highschools attached to the Ministry of Education in the central subdistricts of Ankara in the 1997-1998 school year. The number of highschools in the district is 71 not including the Anatolian highschools, vocational highschools, and those high schools in which foreign language education is dominant. 32 high schools from 8 subdistricts were determined randomly. Then considering it will represent the universe 8 female and 8 male students attending the third grade from each high school were chosen again randomly. Therefore, the sample includes a total of 512 students (256 female and 256 male students). However, data obtained from 498 students. Others did not respond the items in the questionnaire. Table-1 shows the distribution of the participants in terms of their gender.

Table-1. Distribution Of Students In Terms Of Gender

	n	%
Female	255	51,20
Male	243	48,80
Total	498	100,00

2. 2. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through the use of a questionnaire with 78 items that were developed by the author as mentioned below. While developing the study tool, related literature was reviewed and a draft form of the questionnaire was submitted to specialists and study subjects. The final form of the questionnaire contains eight parts. The first four parts deal with the students' expectations from the Ministry of Education, school principals, teachers and their family respectively. The last four parts voice the students' wishes, liked actions, preferred careers and the factors influencing them. This latter part was developed mostly based on the study of Bursalıoğlu (13) carried out in the Gölçük High School. The questionnaire developed was firstly applied to an experiment group to test its validity and reliability. Questionnaires were administered by the interviewers. Data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques which are frequency (f) and percentage (%).

3.FINDINGS

3.1. Expectations from The Ministry of Education

Students expectations from the Ministry are given in Table-2. Because of publication limitations, all tables presented includes only the first four answers with the highest frequency. As seen in Table 2- 82,3 percent of the students expect the Ministry to revise the subject contents. 81,5 percent expect their teachers to deal with practice. 77,6 percent of the students wish to use the knowledge acquired in school in their daily life. And 74,6 percent of the students think that the programs used in schools and those used in the university preparation courses must be parallel.

3.2. Expectations from School Principals

The first four answers of the students concerning their expectations from school principals are given in Table-3.

Table-3 indicates that 76,1 percent of the students want the school principal to be tolerant regarding their dressing and 60,5 percent of them want their school principal not to be strict and 52,8 percent of the students expect their school principal to organize social activities in the school. Lastly 52 percent of the students

wish their school principal to know themselves personally.

3.3. Expectations from Teachers

Table-4 presents the first four important behaviours that the students expect from their teacher. Table-4 indicates that 58 percent of the students want their teacher to avoid memorisation and 49,8 percent to present the knowledge in order to employ it in daily life; 40,8 percent to be tolerant and patient. On the other hand, 39,9 percent of the students wish their teacher not to threaten them with low marks.

Table-2. Expectations from The Ministry of Education

		Not	Less	Mean	Very	Most	Total
1- Revision of the subject contents	f	9	12	67	256	154	498
	%	1,8	2,4	13,4	51,4	31	100
2- Classroom teacher must consider the application of knowledge.	f	---	15	77	169	237	498
	%	---	3.	15,5	33,9	47,6	100
3- Use of knowledge acquired in the school in the daily life	f	---	---	111	205	182	498
	%	---	---	22,5	41	36,5	100
4- The programs of school and university preparation courses must be parallel.	f	5	20	101	210	162	498
	%	1.	4.	20,2	42,1	32,7	100

Table-3. Expectations from School Principals

		Not	Less	Mean	Very	Most	Total
1-Tolerance regarding dressing	f	---	---	119	206	173	498
	%	---	---	23,9	41,4	34,7	100
2- Not being strict	f	55	45	97	121	180	498
	%	11.	9.	19,5	24,2	36,3	100
3- Inclusion of school activities	f	826	588	156	107	498	
	%	16,5	13.	17,7	31,3	21,5	100
4-Knowing students personally	f	6748	126	135	122	498	
	%	13,5	9,6	25,3	27,1	24,5	100

Table-4. Expectations from Teachers

		Not	Less	Mean	Very	Most	Total
1-Avoiding memorization.	f	---	---	13	198	287	498
	%	---	---	2	40.	58.	100
2- Presenting knowledge so as to be used in daily life.	f	5	3	27	213	248	498
	%	1.	0,6	5,4	43	50	100
3- Being tolerant and patient.	f	---	---	98	197	203	498
	%	---	---	19,7	39,5	40,8	100
4- Not threatening them through marks	f	12	21	71	195	199	498
	%	2,4	4,2	14,2	39,2	40	100

3.4. Expectations from Family

Table-5 states the first four expectations of the students from their family.

Table-5. Expectations from Family

		Not	Less	Mean	Very	Most	Total
1- Putting importance on their needs	f	—	3	18	369	108	498
	%	—	0,6	3,6	74.	21,8	100
2- Being sensible	f	4	6	90	157	241	498
	%	0,9	1,2	18.	31,6	48,3	100
3- Not being forceful while choosing a career	f	41	33	76	265	83	498
	%	8,2	6,7	15,2	53,3	16.	100
4- Developing a permanent dialogue	f	—	51	31	193	169	498
	%	—	1.2	6,3	38,7	34.	100

As Table-5 shows, 95,7 percent of the students want their family to regard their needs as important; 79,8 percent want them to be sensible; 72,7 percent want to have a permanent dialogue with their family. 76,2 percent of the students want their family not be forceful while choosing their career.

3.5. Their Wishes

The first four wishes of the students having the highest frequency is presented in table-6. As seen, females and males preferred more or less the same things. However, there is one difference between them regarding their wishes: Females preferred to be successful in the school whereas males in their life.

3.6. Liked Actions

Table-7 shows the most liked four actions by the students.

Table-6. The Students' Wishes

Female (n:255)		f	%	Male (n:243)		f	%
1- Happiness		84	32,9	1- Being healthy		973	9,9
2- Being healthy		823	2,1	2- Happiness		652	6,7
3- Being successful in school		351	3,7	3- Being successful in life.		401	6,4
4- Having a high quality education		26	10,1	4- Having a high quality education.		10	4,1

As seen in Table-7, both males and females preferred chatting with friends as the most liked activity. (35,6 percent of females and 25,1 percent of males). The other liked activities by females are as follows; going to the cinema (20,7 %), listening to music (16,4 %), reading books (11,3%). On the other hand, males' liked activities with higher frequency are; dealing with sports (23,8 %), watching a football match (23 %), listening to music (11 %).

3.7. Preferred Careers

The first four preferred careers by the students having the highest frequency are shown in Table-8.

As seen in Table-8, females want to be lawyers (27,4 %), teachers (64,25 %), public relations specialists (22,3 %), druggists (14,5 %). On the other hand, males preferred the following careers; engineers (50 %), managers (27,9 %), doctors (11,1 %), teachers (14,4 %).

Table-7. Most Liked Activities

Female (n:255)		f	%	Male (n:243)		f	%
1- Chatting with friends		91	35,6	1- Chatting with friends		61	25,1
2- Going to the cinema		53	20,7	2- Sports		58	23,8
3- Listening to music		42	16,4	3- Watching a football match		56	23.
4- Reading books		29	11,3	4- Listening to music		27	11.

Table-8. Careers Most Preferred by Students

Female (n:255)		f	%	Male (n:243)		f	%
1- Lawyer		70	27,4	1- Engineer		73	30.
2- Teacher		64	25.	2- Manager		68	27,9
3- Public relations specialist		57	22,3	3- Doctor		35	14,4
4- Druggist		37	14,5	4- Teacher		27	11,1

3.8. Factors Influencing the Students

Table-9 shows the first four factors with the highest frequency that influence the students.

Table-9. Factors Influencing the Students

Female (n:255)		f	%	Male (n:249)		f	%
1-Mother		79	30,91	1- Mother		69	28,3
2- Father		73	28,6	2- Father		65	26,7
3- Friends		34	13,3	3- Their own experience		60	24,6
4- Other elders		19	7,4	4- Friends		19	7,8

Table-9 indicates the fact young people participated in the study are mostly influenced by their mothers and then by their fathers. Females are also under the influence of their friends (13,3 %) and of other elders around them (7,4 %). On the other hand, males are affected by their own experience (24,6 %) and by their friends (7,8 %). It is noteworthy to state that 30,9 percent of females and 28,3 percent of males regarded their mothers as the most influential force in their life.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The secondary education institutions must prepare students for their lives. Thus, the students at the secondary education level must be educated according to their ability levels (36) and they also must recognise their ability. Furt-

hermore, school administrators-teachers and families must take into account the expectations of the students.

The questionnaire used in this study was administered to the senior highschool students (255 females, 243 males; total 498 students). The study attempts to answer the following questions: What are the expectations of the students involved in the Ministry of Education, school principals, teachers, families? What are the wishes of the students connected with their lives? What are their mostly liked activities? What are their preferred careers? What are the influential forces over the students participated in the study? The results obtained indicate that the students' expectations from the Ministry of Education are as follows: Revision of the subject contents; making teachers more close to practice in classroom; presenting knowledge in a from so

as to use the knowledge in their daily lives. Such findings about the students' expectations are also regarded as very crucial by several scholars: "In education, theoretical knowledge must be supplemented by practice"(37), primary schools' textbooks provide more knowledge. In contrast, highschools' textbooks provide less knowledge (38).Therefore, the secondary education institutions must be reorganized to allow such goals as preparing students for their future and while reorganizing these educational institutions, the principles of life-long education must be considered as the basis of the secondary education (1, 39).

Among other findings, it is possible to state that the students involved in the study want the school principal to be tolerant considering dressing and not to be so strict. They want their teachers to avoid memorization and to present knowledge in a form to be used in their daily life. They also want them to be sensible. This expectation is clearly important. Therefore, teaching the ways to reach knowledge is much more important than just teaching certain knowledge and facts (40). A learning environment in which only certain knowledge is taught, it is hard for students to develop their thinking skills (41). Furthermore, the students involved in the study want their families to care about their needs and to be sensible to them.

They wish to be happy and healthy in their lives; they enjoy chatting with their friends; and they are mostly influenced by their parents. Female students mostly prefer to be lawyers, and male students to be engineers. When these findings are compared with that of a study conducted 39 years ago (13), some apparent changes in the expectations, wishes and preferred careers of the students can be witnessed. Certainly, it is a natural change. The only fact that has not changed is the influence of parents over their children. This finding suggests that family relations in the Turkish society are still powerful.

Innovations regarding the secondary education must take into consideration the students'

expectations, wishes, likes and their career preferences as well as the forces that influence them.

Today it is commonly accepted that the secondary education must be reorganized. Therefore, the following ideas are suggested based on the findings of this study. The relation between what is taught in school and what young people come across in their daily life must be revised. Classroom learning must be directed to practice. Teachers, families and school principals must be more sensible towards students. In secondary education institutions, students could dress freely. Since parents are very influential over their children, they must be educated as well. Young people must be informed regarding career options and the related higher education programs must be expanded. Thus, young people must be directed according to their interests and abilities. Such a study must be also carried out regarding vocational high schools.

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