Students' Perceptions Related to Equality of Chance and Opportunity in Secondary Education According to School Types

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Abstract

Equality of chance and opportunity in secondary education is about availing students of educational services according to school types towards their needs. In this research, it has been aimed to determine exam-conditioned Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high school and exam-unconditioned regular high school students' perceptions related to the equality of chance and opportunity in education. The research is a benchmark study in descriptive and predictive model in which student perceptions are specified according to school types. During the research process, "Equality of Opportunity and Chance Scale" was developed by the researcher and approved as multi-perspective, valid and reliable because of performed analyses. Study population includes 4788 students from Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high schools connected with province of Erzincan central district in 2011-2012 Academic Year; and study sample includes 990 students chosen with random sampling method from this population. According to research findings, exam-conditioned Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high school students get more qualified educational service during the elementary education process than examunconditioned regular high school students. Research results show that regular high school students cannot benefit from secondary education in accordance with their educational needs.

Key Words: Secondary education, equality of chance and opportunity, social justice, exam-conditioned schools, exam-unconditioned schools.

Introduction

During the process of using resources reserved for education, one of the most important issues that must be taken into consideration is to provide students chances they will meet their needs in terms of their socio-economic features. Within this context, basic function of public auditing is to make students benefit from educational services in a way that they do not gain an advantage over each other in terms of their social status or profession. In secondary education, educational services provided by the state must be in accordance with social justice in "science, social sciences, Anatolian, Anatolian teaching, Anatolian fine arts and sports, Anatolian technical, Anatolian vocational and exam-unconditioned high schools' (Berberoglu and Kalender, 2005; ERG Education Reform Initiative, 2010; Gewirtz, 2006; Goksen, Cemalcilar and Gurlesel, 2008; Gur and Celik, 2009; OECD, 2007; Polat, 2007).

Equality of opportunity in education includes decision processes and implementation policies that are critical to make students benefit from educational services as far as possible. Equality of opportunity implementation policies are about students' availing of educational opportunities indiscriminately for becoming entitled to take place without precondition in fundamental niches such as "education, culture, economy and politics". Such kind of equality of opportunity is also called "equality of access" (Aylar, 2007; ERG, 2009; Karatay, 2002; Ozbaş, 2010; Ozsoy, 2002). Equality of opportunity does not make any sense with its own without equality of chance. What is important is to provide students educational opportunities proper to subjective and social conditions. It has been noticed that in educational systems, students are not provided opportunities in accordance with their needs and their subjective conditions; and they are perceived as being abstracted from their social and economic features. This situation clearly reveals whole problems related to inequality of opportunity (Bilgin, 2002; Onen, 2003; Ozbas, 2010).

'Inequality of opportunity and chance in education' is one of the basic problems of educational systems aiming at actualizing implementations in accordance with social justice. Social justice can be defined as not allowing inequality and discrimination to happen under no circumstances in management of human and physical resources reserved for education and in distribution of educational opportunities to service units and individuals. In educational system, within the context of inequality and gaining advantage over the others, the ones that will prevent emergence of discrimination are mainly Ministry of National Education, then provincial and district national education directorates and school managers. On the other hand, ministries that render educational service can also be evaluated within the same context. Briefly, whole units of the state that are responsible for educational services' management and auditing are supposed to secure social justice. The ones who cannot benefit from social justice are "disadvantaged families and their children". Inequality of chance in education is in fact a result that inequality of opportunity reveals. Equality of opportunity does not happen to be provided to students giving them the same learning experiences only during the time when they are at school. Equality of opportunity is the "process of providing educational services" that covers the living environment of the student along with the school and continues constantly starting from the registration date of the elementary school until graduation. Since notion of equality of opportunity covers the educational process for student's living environment, it is more essential in elementary education rather than other educational grades. Because educational services restricted only with school experiences of student in elementary education ignore their families who form the background of their subjectivity as real individuals, those cause inequality of opportunity instead of the equality of chance (Gur and Celik, 2009; Ozbas, 2010; Polat, 2007; Prais, 2003).

Basic Variables that Affect Equality of Opportunity and Chance in Secondary Education

The key feature that differentiates secondary education from pre-school teaching, elementary education and higher education is secondary education's comprising of 'general, professional and technical teaching' grades (MEB National Education Basic Law, 1973: Item 26). This feature necessitates students' multi-perspective recognition in elementary education and their undergoing from a qualified teaching process and especially their getting an efficient professional counseling and guidance service as from the 5th grade of elementary education. Students whom those services are not provided are obliged to have a less qualified and adequate secondary education process than the ones whom necessary educational services are provided. Admitting to secondary education with one of the transactions such as 'open admission, aptitude test, or Secondary Education Placement Score' can be implemented as an evidence of inequality of chance in terms of students and inequality of opportunity in general terms as from the elementary education. Students are classified based only on their academic success level variable ignoring factors such as the quality of the elementary education services and socio-economic conditions and are placed to secondary education schools. So that the student has been accepted as the unique responsible of having not education in a more qualified school type; and schools have been put in order according to students' success levels and preferable. Schools differentiate from each other in a diversified amount of issues such as classroom sizes, quality of teachers, context of teaching service and its presentation, personal and social opportunities (Buyruk, 2008; Gumus, 2001; Gur and Celik, 2009; Gurbuz, 1999; Ismailoglu, 1991; Onen, 2003; Ozbas, 2009; Temur, 2005; Zoraloglu, 1998). This situation can be evaluated as being not suitable to the fourth Item of National Education Basic Law that has been stated as "No one, no family, community, or class can be privileged in education" (MEB, 1973).

Socio-Economic Variables Caused by Students' Characteristics

Recognition of students in terms of their subjective features regardless of their education level is the pre-requisite for school's actualizing its functions (Aydagul and Sasmaz, 2009; Gurbuz, 1999; OECD, 2009; Tuzun, 2009). Those features are the variables such as family's social status, parents' especially mother's educational level, income statue, income continuity or discontinuity, importance given to student's education, etc. (Bilgin, 2002; Dohn, 2007; Ozbas, 2009; Temur, 2005). Socio-economic features of students are thoroughly recognized with a multi-perspective approach as from the date they start the school. This recognition is necessary for secondary education along with being very important during the compulsory education. It is important to make students benefit from sources reserved for the compulsory education in a way that they do not gain advantage over each other. In secondary education, as well, services rendered for higher education and professional and technical education are regarded as being proper to social justice (ERG; 2009; Ismailoglu, 1991; MEB National Education Basic Law 1973: Item 26-28; Onen, 2003).

Data that provide recognition of students have been updated at regular intervals and shared among teachers and school management. Within this process, coordinated efforts have been exerted with families. Families' providing necessary support to children in terms of both academic and physical areas and teaching technologies are always taken into consideration. When family features are not taken into consideration during the child's education, those children fail the academic race even at the beginning of the process because family support loses its function especially in terms of disadvantaged students. So that "student success level factor" which is the unique determinant of admission to secondary education acts in favor of advantaged students; and schools are degraded according to their socio-economic features. Disregarding equality of chance in education makes school learning centers that maintain current socio-economic status of advantaged students for generations as from the pre-school education. Under this circumstance, democratic education system cannot cause a change that provides mass community development even there have been individual starts (ERG, 2010; Polat, 2007).

Basic Variables Related to the Quality of Elementary Education Services

Although the basic determinant of access to secondary education must be the quality of elementary education, students' cognitive performance is given prominence as the unique factor within this process. Even though students get education in similar features at school, they differentiate from each other in terms of acquired benefits and outputs. The reason of this is disorganization of extra-scholastic learning experiences supportively. Since elementary education is a grade of basic and compulsory education, in this grade for student's acquiring the highest-level benefit from the school, it is important to be supported in a way that family environment, extra-scholastic experiences will contribute to school experiences. Students who have necessary chances in their family environment are academically more successful than the ones who do not have. This case reveals in the same way in terms of total development services that provide the personality development with social activities. Students who possess ample means in terms of factors that provide personality development with social activities are trained as better appointed than the ones who are deprived of those chances (ERG, 2010; Ozbas, 2009; Slavin, 1998; Young, 2006; Zanten, 2005).

Factors Related to the Quality of Secondary Education Services

Secondary education students gain right to be a student in any school type depending on their performance levels they display in their elementary education. Student's performance in elementary education or the quality of educational services provided to the student in the elementary education is the determinants of the school type that the student will maintain his/her education in secondary education. Within the process of access to secondary education, quality of elementary education case in terms of student has been evaluated as student's success during his/her school experiences and student's cognitive, affective and psychomotor success performed in 'Placement Tests' rather than the quality of educational services given to the student. In addition, in terms of education economy, students' level of success has been accepted as one of the most important effectuality indicators of training investment. However, quality in educational services should be perceived as integrate common performance of Ministry of National Education central and provincial organizations starting from classroom and school management (Aydin, 1998; Berberoglu and Kalender, 2005; Gur and Celik, 2009; Turan, 2007).

In a democratic educational administration, services rendered via the resources reserved for education show a totally open system feature. In open system, success, or failure are not accepted as an educational output that can be directly counted to student's success credit by personalizing. The thing that is measured via the traditional evaluation instruments such as Placement Tests is student's cognitive academic performance. Student's cognitive academic performance has been evaluated as only 'student success or failure' abstracting from whole variables such as 'quality of education given at school, family's socio-economic features, etc.'(Buluc, 1997; Zobar, 2006). It has been understood that the most important fact in secondary education is the differentiation created in quality of educational services according to school types when it has been looked from equality of chance and opportunity perspective. So much so that according to student level of success factor, schools that admit with exams are guaranteed in terms of the quality of educational services through legal and administrative regulations. Schools are degraded according to the socio-economic features of students and have been transformed into public organizations where social status has been maintained for generations. Schools, as from the the secondary education grade of the educational system, highly differentiate bith in type and quality in contrast to pre-school teaching and elementary education; students are put in order in terms of their level of success according to schools, regions, provinces and even neighbourhoods.

Students are made use of educational chances according to their level of success, not according to their 'social, personal, and academic needs' (ERG, 2010; MEB, 1998; MEB, 1999a; MEB, 1999b; Ozbaş, 2010; Polat, 2007; Turhan, 2007). Schools are the places where young generations will be given insight and comprehended about supremacy of law and social justice at behavioral level. Within this context, schools must not be artificial models of life created in laboratory conditions, but exactly must include the life's itself. Students are prepared to an occupation, life or higher education via the secondary education. Within this process, providing better educational opportunities to some students only considering their elementary education performance and more inadequate opportunities than the others can be evaluated negatively in terms of supremacy of law and conformity to social justice. For this reason, it has been aimed to emphasize upon quality of educational services provided to students among school types in terms of chance and opportunity equality in secondary education in this paper. Research problem has been stated as below: What are the students' perceptions related to chance and opportunity equality implementations among the regular secondary education schools that require admission with exam and the others they do not are their differences among the perceptions?

Method

In Turkey, general secondary education schools consist of exam-conditioned Anatolian, Anatolian teaching, social sciences and science high schools and exam-unconditioned regular high schools. The research is a benchmark study in descriptive and predictive model in which student perceptions are specified according to school types. Descriptive statistics include techniques with which current situation are tried to be explained with measures of central tendency such as frequency (f), percentage (%) and arithmetic mean (\overline{X}). And predictive statistics include techniques which are benefited so as to prove hypothesis such as t-test, variance analysis and chi-square oriented to test whether the difference observed between sample scores exist in the population along with measures of central tendency or not (Buyukozturk, Cokluk and Koklu, 2011; Yildirim and Simsek, 2006).

Population and Sample

This research has been carried out in regular secondary schools depending on province of Erzincan central district in 2011-2012 Academic year. Research population includes exam-conditioned Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high schools, and exam-unconditioned regular high schools. There have been 2703 students at Anatolian, Anatolian teaching, and science high schools and 2085 students at regular high schools that create the study population. According to study sampling, it has been decided to include 480 students from regular high schools and 510 students from Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high schools with simple random sampling benefiting from sampling determination schedules (Balci, 2005; Erkus, 2005; Karasar, 2005; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). At the end of research's implementation process, number of scale returned from Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high schools is 490, and rate of return is 96.1%; number of return from regular high schools is 454, and rate of return is 94.6%.

Collecting Data

'Equality of Chance and Opportunity in Secondary Education Scale' used in the research was developed by the researcher with a multi-perspective approach. Within the context of scale's development, national and international literature review including studies related to the 'equality of chance and opportunity in education' were carried out. They were asked for suggestions and criticism from academicians; legal and administrative regulations about secondary education were analyzed; moreover, there were carried out analyses concerning academic and socio-economic features of secondary education students as from 2008-2009 academic year. After those studies, "Equality of Chance and Opportunity in Secondary Education Draft Scale Form" including 35 items was created; academician critiques were asked for in terms of form's content properties. In line with criticisms brought by academicians, eight items proved were removed from the draft scale form. Then, pre-implementation was carried out for research sample in order to determine the level of 27-Item draft scale form's reliability and content validity. 112 students from exam-conditioned schools and 96 students from exam-unconditioned schools were included into pre-implementation.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test has been performed to data obtained as result of the pre-implementation; and KMO value has been determined as 0.89 after the implementation. It has been seen that it fulfills 0.60 conditions that is the required minimum value in order to make factor analysis to data of this result (Buyukozturk, 2011).

Upon data acquired as result of the pre-implementation, Principal Components Analysis was performed; and then Varimax Orthogonal Rotation Method was performed. At the end of these processes, 5 out of 27 items which were proved not to be reunited to three factors based on draft scale form's preparation were removed from the form. The remainder 22 items after the carried out analysis have reunited in three factors; explained variance was 47.46%. There was shown alpha coefficients and variance ratio explained according to factors in Table 1. It was decided to use the form as "Secondary Education Equality of Chance and Opportunity Scale" proved as expedient after the carried out validity and reliability analyses.

Table 1: Variance Ratio and Alpha Coefficient of Equality of Chance and Opportunity Scale Factors

Factor	Explained Variance %	Alpha (α)
Student Socio-Economic Features	15.157	.81
Quality of Elementary Education Services	16.169	.86
Quality of Secondary Education Services	16.129	.87

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Research scale was prepared with 5-point Likert scale. In the scale, "always" was given 5 point, "mostly" 4, "medium" 3, "seldom" 2 and "never" 1. In evaluation of scale points, "always" was accepted as 4.20-5.00, "mostly" as 3.40-4.19, "medium" as 2.60-3.39, "seldom" as 1.80-2.59 and "never" as 1.00-1.79. Arithmetic means were used in descriptive data analysis and t-test was used in comparison of perceptual differences among the groups. For interpretation of findings, level of significance was accepted as .05.

Findings and Comment

In interpretation of findings obtained from the research, firstly descriptive and then statistical analyses were benefited starting from the first factor of the scale.

Perceptions Related to Socio-Economic Features of Students

According to perceptions of exam-conditioned school students, in 'socio-economic features factor' the highest level of performance related to equality of chance and opportunity in secondary education was displayed about "democratic communication with parents (Item 6)". As it can be seen in Table 2, perceptions of examunconditioned school students were similar about this matter. This finding indicates that in communication with family, there has been created a trustful, democratic and natural environment. According to the perceptions of both exam-conditioned and exam-unconditioned schools, secondary education schools perform the lowest level of performance in 'socio-economic features factor' about introduction of school's administrative functioning to the family (Item 3 and 4)". Those findings reveal that schools do not adequately adapt and perform a democratic participatory management approach that covers families. Findings also indicate that schools are inadequate about using educational opportunities proper to student characteristics.

Table 2 Student Perceptions about School Implementations Regarding Socio-Economic Features

	Exam-Con- Schools	ditioned	Exam-Unco	nditioned	
Items	N	\overline{X}	N	\overline{X}	
1. Learning of social surrounding chances the family live in	1 490	3.30	454	3.18	
2. Stating the purpose/functions of secondary edu. to family	490	3.06	454	2.95	
3. Introducing school'sadministrative process to family	490	2.82	454	2.70	
4. Introducing school's educational chances to family	490	2.79	454	2.78	
5. Parents' having right and authority to speak at school's					
administrative practices on behalf of their children	490	3.19	454	3.05	
6. Creating a naturat environment with full of respect and					
trust in relations with families	490	3.53	454	3.34	

In secondary education, students' socio-economic features are taken into consideration at "medium" level. This situation can be interpreted as such that at Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high schools and regular high schools, socio-economic features that form students' subjective conditions cannot be adequately reflected to administrative implementations.

Table 3.Comparison of Student Perceptions about School Implementations Regarding Socio-Economic Features

Group			N	\overline{X}	SD	df	t	р
Exam-Conditioned Students	Secondary	Education	490	3.12	1.37	942	-2.299	.260
Exam-Unconditioned Students	Secondary	Education	454	3.01	1.24	942		

p<.05*

Perceptions Regarding the Quality of Elementary Education

Students have perception of taking the most qualified educational service about "equal participation to lessons" (Item 12) during the elementary education. Elementary education schools' lowest performance has been displayed about "professional counseling and routing services" (Item 7). As it can be seen in Table 4, this finding shows that elementary education schools do not render professional counseling and routing services proper to needs of students.

Table 4.Student Perceptions Regarding the Quality of Elementary Education Services

	Exam-Cor Schools	ditioned	Exam-Unc Schools	onditioned
Items	N	X	N	\overline{X}
7. Convenience of counseling and routing services				
taken in elementary education to students.	490	2.90	454	2.63
8. Contribution of in-class teaching to learning	490	3.25	454	2.97
9. Considering socio-economic features	490	3.34	454	2.89
10. Correlation level of social activities and student				
personality services the student needs	490	3.14	454	2.80
11. Providing chances to students about increasing				
their level of success at lessons.	490	3.12	454	2.74
12. Providing equal attendance chances to lessons	490	3.39	454	3.05
13. Efficient and productive use of learning process	490	3.38	454	2.98
14. Providing chances to students about increasing their	ir			
level of success in their lessons	490	3.31	454	2.90

There has been a significant difference among perceptions of Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high school and regular high school students regarding the quality of educational services they have taken during the elementary education. About this, perceptions of Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high school students (3.23) are higher than the perceptions of regular high school students (2.87). Difference of perception among the groups (.36) has been found significant at .05 level. According to this, exam conditioned secondary education school students have the opportunity of having more privileged learning process as result as more qualified educational services they had at elementary schools.

Table 5. Comparison of Student Perceptions Regarding Quality of Elementary Education Services

Group			N	\overline{X}	SD	df	t	р
Exam-Conditioned Students	Secondary	Education	490	3.23	1.20	942	-4.438	.000*
Exam-Unconditioned Students	Secondary	Education	454	2.87	1.29	942		

p<.05*

Perceptions Regarding Quality of Secondary Education Services

According to perceptions of Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high school and regular high school students, educational services at secondary education have been performed at a very low performance. Students have the perception that schools do not adequately support them in terms of meeting their social and personal development providing needs with academic activities that create their learning experiences.

Table 6. Student Perceptions Regarding Quality of Secondary Education Services

	Exam-Conditi Schools		Exam-Uncon Schools	
Items	N	\overline{X}	N	\overline{x}
15. Considering student interest, need and abilities				
to determine fields and classes of students	490	3.05	454	2.75
16. Providing opportunities of benefiting from teach	ching			
technologies out of classrooms	490	2.85	454	2.53
17. Teachers' level of efficient and productive use	of			
teaching process	490	3.18	454	2.81
18. Providing chances of improvement to students	about			
music, theatre, literature, sports, etc.	490	2.58	454	2.40
19. Providing equal attendance to in-class experien	ces 490	3.01	454	2.58
20. Providing academic support related to studied				
field in access to higher education process	490	2.76	454	2.50
21. Providing academic support about				
compensating failure at lessons	490	2.86	454	2.59
22. School's student personality services and Psyc	hological			
Counseling and Guiding service's giving support for				
of student problems and their developmental needs	. 490	2.68	454	2.47

As it is seen in Table 7, in this factor perception average of exam-unconditioned secondary education students is (2.57) "seldom" and perception average of exam-conditioned secondary education students is (2.88) "medium". The difference among the perceptions (.31) was found significant at .05 levels. During secondary education process, Anatolian, Anatolian teaching, science high school students have a more qualified educational service than regular high school students do.

Table 7. Comparison of Student Perceptions Regarding Quality of Secondary Education Services

Group	N	\overline{X}	SD	df	t	p
Exam-Conditioned Secondary Education Students	490	2.88	1.23	942	-4.438	.001*
Exam-Unconditioned Secondary Education Students	454	2.57	1.34	942		

p<.05*

Discussion

Since students are not same in terms of their socio-economic and individual features, their educational needs are not similar to each other, as well. In this study, it has been determined that socio-economic features of students which affect their school experiences are not adequately taken into consideration and there has not been actualized cooperation with families on behalf of children in administrative process. Several national and international research findings have shown that students' socio-economic features have important effects upon their academic success. Those features have been emphasized as more effective upon especially disadvantaged students' academic success (Breen & Johnson, 2005; Cassen, 2007; Ferrara, 2010; Juma, Simatwa & Ayodo, 2011; OECD, 2012; Ozbas, 2012).

With this research, it has been revealed that in what kind of a school the secondary education students will receive education is associated with educational services they have during their elementary education. It has been determined that students studying at Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high schools have more qualified training than regular high school students during their elementary education; and as result of this they have had better educational opportunities in secondary education. Not considering educational needs of regular high school students adequately during elementary education negatively affect their academic success and cause them not to be deprived of getting more qualified educational services in secondary education. Educational need have generally been accepted as depending upon students' socio-economic features. It has been determined in studies of Buluc (1997) about equality of chance and opportunity in education, Polat (2007) about social justice in education, Buyruk (2008) about social inequities in education and Temur (2005) equality in education that educational need of students based on their socio-economic features have importance upon their school experiences at a significant level.

More qualified educational opportunities are provided to Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high school students in whole fields regarding academic, social, and personal development in secondary education than the rhe regular high school students. Research findings also reveal that educational services differentiate according to school types in terms of qualitative and quantitative aspects (Gumus, 2001; Gur and Celik, 2009; Gurbuz, 1999).

Conclusion and Suggestions

According to research results, it has been understood that opportunities of cooperation with families about administrative functioning and introduction of educational chances in secondary education are not developed; and unilateral administrative mentality directs implementations. Better educational opportunities taken by Anatolian, Anatolian teaching and science high school students during the elementary education underlies the factors that cause inequality of opportunity in secondary education. Secondary education schools cannot provide self-realization opportunities to students in fields such as music, theatre, literature, and sports. Regular high school students cannot benefit from secondary education in accordance with their educational need; and this fact affects their access process to higher education. In line with research results, the suggestions below have been made:

- 1. Secondary school manager and teachers should be enabled about participative management skills that will improve effective cooperation with families of students,
- 2. Students should be provided educational services proper to social justice during this educational process in order to make them benefit from elementary education in accordance with their need and expectations,
- 3. Secondary schools should be turned into educational institutions where students are not made different according to their elementary school success levels in terms of qualitative and quantitative aspects, where students are made equal,
- 4. Secondary school students should be provided with multi-perspective training opportunities in personal development fields such as music, theatre, literature, sports, etc. with social and cultural activities,
- 5. In order to make students benefit from educational opportunities properly, educational system should be restructured on 'accountability' basis.

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