REASONS FOR STUDENTS AT THE AGE OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION TO CHOOSE OPEN EDUCATION HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

In the study, it is aimed to determine the profile of students preferring open high school at an age of compulsory education and to determine the reasons to their open high school preference. Study group of the research consists of 174 students enrolled in the open high school in Burdur city center. In the research using descriptive research model, research data was collected through the student information form. In the research; descriptive analyses and chi-square test were employed. As a result of analyses, it is understood that most of these students are from low socio-economic level, they do not find the education provided in open high school sufficient and they consider enrolling back to formal education. Among causes for students to enroll to open high school, there are low success, dislike in school and lessons, failing the class for two years in a row, low family income and more comfortable preparation to the university entrance exam. It is understood that, among these causes, low family income and failing the class for two years in a row showed significant differences by gender and these were more decisive in male students' enrollment for open high school.

Keywords: Open high school, compulsory education age, reasons for choosing open high school.

INTRODUCTION

Training and education is a right for individuals. However, unless appropriate training opportunity is not established, there is no benefits for the individual from his/her right to education. For this reason; to establish the necessary atmosphere and conditions for using this right is the responsibility of the State. This responsibility, all over the world, not only has ensured providing the more common use of the right to education but also revived the distance education as an alternative to education and training because of increase in demand for education, failure to respond such demand by formal education and the idea of providing lifelong education.

Showing itself in the form of correspondence education initially in the past, the distance education was implemented by means of communication and media tools such as telephone and television. On the other hand, in the 20th century when rapid changes are experienced in all fields, distance education has been conducted through multimedia technologies such as computer and telecommunication (Alkan, 2005; Keegan, 1995; Kör, Çataloğlu and Erbay, 2013; Young, 2007). Since its cost is low and brings educational services for a large audience, distance education has quickly become widespread in the world. Turkey has also been affected from these trends experienced in the field of distance education in the world in changing sizes and qualities. As in the world, distance education started with correspondence education in Turkey. After passing through various stages, distance education gained continuity in 1982 (Alkan, 2005). From this date on, modern distance education applications have commenced in a quality that can be a milestone in Turkish educational history. First, open education faculty was founded, then in 1992, open education high school at secondary education level and the public elementary school in 1997 were implemented. Thus, an opportunity for education is

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provided to those who cannot attend education due to reasons such as working in a job, disability, imprisonment, deprivation of financial possibilities, parents' failure in realizing the importance of education, absence of schools, teachers and class in the place of living, and lack of students (Kaya, 1996; Kaya, 2002).

Distance education is defined as activities carried out by trainers and students in different environments by taking advantage of communication technologies in the process of education (İşman, 2011). According to Alkan (1987), distance education is an education method in which educational activities are provided from a particular center by means of specifically prepared educational units and various medias between students and planners-practitioners where there are no opportunities to carry out in-class activities due to the limitation of traditional training-education methods. With this system, a new dimension was granted to the training application that had been limited with school. An opportunity to complete education has been provided for social sectors that are unable to find opportunity for education by means of completely or partially removing limitations in providing educational services. It was objected to educate individuals under different conditions by changing the monopoly of a particular social group in benefiting from educational opportunities (Hızal, 1983). Considering from this perspective, it can be said that distance education is one of methods for providing equality of opportunity and means in education based on more common use of right for education (McIsaac and Köymen, 1990; Taşcı, 1996; Teker, 1995; Verduin and Clark, 1994).

Distance education also increases justice and decreases cost by removing psychological, social and physical barriers in education. Moving education outside the school walls removes boundaries of time and space and provides independence to student and brings in responsibility of learning to the individual (Eshelman, 1997). Thus, learning becomes independent. Since distance education provides individual with the opportunity to learn by themselves, it is an education more flexible and adaptable to individual circumstances compared to traditional education. However, distance education is criticized from time to time due to limitations such as failure to allow for social interaction similar to face to face training, inability to provide enough help to students lacking self-learning habits, not being effective in teaching skills and attitude, and inability to benefit enough from application-oriented courses (Uluğ and Kaya, 1997). From this perspective, it is not possible to say that the distance education methods are indispensable and the only option among educational systems. However, it should be noted that a working distance education system together with formal education is an important field of application among educational systems with their important social aspects. Therefore, it is quite important to conduct researches on this subject with a view to provide data towards studies for establishment of educational environments suitable for students and for revealing issues from the point of more efficient operation of distance education systems and developing solution suggestions accordingly.

Considering studies conducted in relation to open education, it can be said that many scientific researches have been conducted at level of thesis, article, book, papers and reports based on open education application, and various national and international seminars, symposium, congress, panel discussions etc. have been arranged for scientific discussion on this subject. It can be seen that most of these studies are related to the higher education level and about a third of these studies on the open education high school are carried out on subjects including overall presentation, process, evaluation and revealing problems (Kaya, 1995). However, recognition of students attending the system is important in terms of observation of their attitudes and behaviors on certain topics and planning appropriate training environments. However, in the field literature scan conducted within the scope of the study, limited number of studies could be found on recognition of students attending the system. Some of these studies were conducted prior to the 2000s (Ağın, 1995; The Ministry of Education [MEB], 1994), while others only cover female students (Çam Tosun and Bayram, 2015). As is known, in Turkey, with "the Primary Education and Training Law no 6287" adopted on March 30, 2012 also called as 4+4+4 system, compulsory education was increased to 12 years, and the secondary education was taken into the scope of compulsory education. Again with this law, students were provided with the opportunity to complete their secondary school and high school education in open education institutions. Indeed, considering the 2014-2015 statistics of the Ministry of National Education, rate of the youth of 15-19 ages in participation into formal education is seen as 76.37%. This means that, currently in Turkey, about 24% of students at the age of compulsory education is outside the formal education at the level of secondary education (Ministry of Education, 2014-2015). This case makes it important to construct the profile of students left outside formal education while being at the age of compulsory education and to determine the reasons for

their preference of open education institutions. For all these reasons, in the study, it is aimed to construct the profile of students preferring open high school at an age of compulsory education and to determine the reasons to their open high school preference. In line with this purpose, answers to following research questions were searched:
1) What sort of characteristics do students preferring open high school demonstrate?
2) What are factors effective in students' choice of open high school?
3) Are there any significant differences among students as per gender in preferring open high school?

METHOD

Research Model
The research is in the descriptive scan model since it aims at determining the existing status. In the descriptive survey model, the individual or object as the subject of research is described without changing or affecting in any way within its own conditions as is the case (Karasar, 2002). Answers to the research problem or problems are searched by means of analyzing data obtained from a large number of subjects and objects in a specific time section (Arseven, 2001).

Study Group
Study group of the research consists of students at the age of compulsory education who have recently enrolled in open education high school and who renew their enrollment. Within the scope of research, a total of 174 students including 70 females and 104 males were contacted. While 17 of these students are at the age of 15, 22 of them are 16 years old and 58 of them is 17, 63 of them 18 and 14 of them is 19 or older.

Data Collection Instrument
Research data were collected using the student information form developed by the researcher. While developing the information form, students enrolled in the open high school as of 2015-2016 academic year were asked to write a text explaining their reasons to enroll in open high school. Then, 34 expressions regarding reasons for enrollment in open high school were established using survey questions used from some researches (Özdemir *et al*., 2010) in addition to texts written by students and by considering the theoretical framework and the field literature. These expressions were sent to 3 field experts regarding whether they were expressions of reasons for enrollment in open high school expression, they resembled with other items and were consistent, and scale trial form was prepared by receiving related field experts' views on these expressions. Then application was made on 20 students with a view to control whether expressions in the trial student information form were clear or not. As a result of this application, incomprehensible items were eliminated, and number of items was reduced to 20. In the measurement tool, in addition to these items in question, items towards determination of students' personal and family-related information were also included. Items related to reasons for enrollment in open high school have two categories in the form of effective-not effective.

Implementation of Data Collecting Application
The information form used in collection of research data was applied to students included in the scope of study by the researcher during the enrollment period of 2015-2016 academic year. Researcher made necessary explanations about the scale and the application process before starting the application.

Data Analysis
In the research, percentage and frequency values of data were calculated with a view to obtain a general opinion about student characteristics and to determine their reasons for choosing open high school. Using chi-square test, it was analyzed whether there are any significant differences among reasons for choosing enrollment in open school as per gender variable.

FINDINGS

In this section, there are findings available relating to reasons for students of compulsory education age to choose open high school, and whether their reasons for such preferences vary as per gender. Each research question is discussed in the form of a subheading.

1) Characteristics of students attending open high school at the age of compulsory education

Students' dwelling unit, number of siblings, monthly average income and their working status are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' Dwelling Unit, Number of Siblings, Monthly Average Income and Their Working Status

	Dwelling Unit			Nr. of Siblings		Monthly av. income				Working status	
	Village	Distr.	City	3 and under	4 and higher	Under TRY 1000	Btw. TRY 1000-1499	Btw. TRY 1500-1999	Over TRY 2000	Yes	No
n	55	18	101	98	76	27	78	26	43	66	108
%	31.6	10.3	58.0	56.3	43.7	15.5	44.8	14.9	24.7	37.9	62.1

Analyzing Table 1, it can be understood that 31.6% of students attending the open high school live in village, 10.3% of them live in a district and 58% of them live in the city, and 56.3% of them have two or less siblings and 43.7% of them have three or more siblings. Considering students' income distribution, it can be seen that 15.5% of them have a monthly average income less than TRY 1000, 14.9% of them have between TRY 1500 and 1999, and 24.7% of them have over TRY 2000 as monthly income. In addition, it can be said that many of open high school students (%62.1) do not work in a job.

Findings about school type and grade level that students attending open high school have switched are given in Table 2.

Table 2: School Type and Grade Level Students Switched in Open High School

	School type students used to attend before switching to open					Grade level when student starts high			
	General High School	Vocational High School	Rel. Voc. High School	Multi-Program High school	Secondary School	High School 1	High School 2	High School 3	High School 4
n	70	59	19	3	23	109	30	22	13
%	40.2	33.9	10.9	1.7	13.2	62.6	17.2	12.6	7.5

Examining Table 2, it can be understood that 40.2% of students switched from general high school, 33.9% of them from the vocational school, 10.9% of them from religious vocational high school, 1.7% of them from multi-programed high school to the general high school; and 13.2% of these student enrolled directly to open high school after graduating from the secondary school. Among students starting the secondary education in another high school but having switched to open high school for various reasons, 62.6% of them switched to open high school at the 1st grade, 17.2% of them at the 2nd grade, 12.6% of them in the 3rd grade and 7.5% of them in the 4th grade.

Findings about education of parents whose children attend open high school are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Educational Background of Open High School Students' Parents

	Illiterate		Primary Sch.		Secondary Sch.		High School		University	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mother	12	6.9	97	55.7	50	28.7	14	8.0	1	0.6
Father	1	0.6	90	51.7	50	28.7	23	13.2	10	5.7

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Analyzing Table 3, it is understood that mothers of 6.9% of students and fathers of 0.6 of them are illiterate. Among students, mothers of 55.7% of them and fathers of 51.7% are primary school graduate; fathers of 28.7% and mothers of 28.7% are secondary school graduate; fathers of 13.2% and mothers of 8% are high school graduate; and mothers of 0.6% and fathers of 5.7% of these students are university graduate.

Professions of parents whose children attend open high school are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Professions of Students' Parents

	Unemployed		Officer		Worker		Retired		Tradesman		Self-empl.		Farmer	
	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father
n	123	33	3	10	10	39	1	16	-	24	-	39	-	33
%	70.7	19.0	1.7	5.7	5.7	22.4	0.6	9.2	-	13.8	-	22.4	-	19

Analyzing Table 4, it can be understood that mothers of 70.7% of students and fathers of 19% do not work. Among students whose parents work, mothers of 1.7% and fathers of 5.5% are officers, mothers of 5.7% and fathers of 22.4% are workers. Mothers of 0.6% of students and fathers of 9.2% are retired, and parents of 19% are farmers. 13.8% of students' fathers are tradesmen and 22.4% of these fathers are self-employed.

Findings relating to whether students attending to open high school would consider attending high school if it was not within the scope of compulsory education, their opinions for education they receive in open high school and their requests for continuing formal education in high school and university are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Students' Opinions on Education They Receive and Their Requests for Switching Back to Formal Education-Continuing to University

	Continuing to high school if not		Open high school education			A request to return to formal		Request for continuing to	
	Yes	No	Efficient	Partially	Insufficient	Yes	No	Yes	No
n	115	59	71	75	28	60	114	106	68
%	66.1	33.9	40.8	43.1	16.1	34.5	65.5	60.9	39.1

Analyzing Table 5, it can be seen that approximately 34% of these students do not consider continuing high school if it is not compulsory, around 40% of them do not considering continuing to higher education after completing high school education. It can be understood that 34.5% of students attending open high school consider their education as not sufficient, 43.1% of them as partially sufficient and 34.5 of them consider returning back to formal education.

2) Reasons for students at compulsory education age to prefer open high school
Students' reasons to prefer open high school are given in Table 6.

Table 6: Students' Reasons to Prefer Open High School

Reasons for choosing open high school	F	%
Parents separated	13	7.47
Security issues experienced around school	10	5.75
Being obliged to contribute to family income	27	15.52
Low level of family education	16	9.20
Problems experienced in transported education	14	8.05
Being obliged to help to housework and childcare	12	6.90
Absence of high school or being far away	17	9.80
Understanding of no outcome by education	18	10.30
Unemployment status of university graduates	12	6.30
Low achievement in primary education	28	16.10
Dislike in school and courses	36	20.70

Low family income	33	19.00
Early marriage	13	7.50
More expensive education in other schools compared to open education	16	9.20
Considering better preparation to university exams	19	10.90
Failing the class for two years in a row	25	14.40
Low achievement in courses	36	20.70
Absenteeism in formal education	12	6.90
High school placement point not enough for other high schools	14	8.00
Unable to receive enough interest and support for teachers	11	6.30

Analyzing Table 6, it can be seen that students' reasons for continuing to open high school show so much diversity. However, it is observed that, among reasons to prefer open high school, there are prominent causes such as failure in courses and not liking school-courses (20.70%), low family income (19%), low performance in primary education (16.10%), obligation to contribute to family economy (15.52%), failing the class for two years in a row (14.40%) and considering to prepare for university exam more comfortably (% 10.90).

3) Reasons for preferring open high school by students as per gender
Results of chi-square test conducted with a view to understand whether there are any significant differences between students' gender and their open high school preferences are given in Table 7.

Table 7: Chi-Square Test Results Relating to Students' Reasons for Preferring Open High School as Per Gender

		N	Gender		X^2	P
			Female	Male		
Being obliged to contribute to family income	Yes	27	12	15	0.24	0.39
	No	147	58	89		
Absence of high school at dwelling areas, or being far away	Yes	17	9	8	1.27	0.19
	No	157	61	96		
Low success in primary education	Yes	28	12	16	0.10	0.46
	No	146	58	88		
Dislike in school and courses	Yes	36	16	20	0.34	0.35
	No	138	54	84		
Low family income	Yes	33	8	25	4,33	0.03
	No	141	62	79		
Considering better preparation to university exams	Yes	19	4	15	3.26	0.06
	No	155	66	89		
Failing in class for two years in a row	Yes	25	3	22	9.68	0.00
	No	149	67	82		
Low achievement in courses	Yes	36	10	26	2.93	0.06
	No	138	60	78		

Analyzing Table 7, it can be understood that only factors of low family income and failing the class for two years in a row among prominent factors for preferring open high school show significant differences as per gender ($p<0.05$). Considering student rates in these factors [(11.4% females and 24% males in low family income factor), (4.3% females and 21.2% males in failing class for two years in a row factor)], it can be said that male students bring these factors to forefront as reasons for enrolling in open high school.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the research, it has been determined that average monthly income of most students attending open high school is around TRY 1000-1499, mothers of three quarters of them and fathers of one-quarter of them do not work, and parents of more than half of these students are primary school graduates. In addition, it has been understood that almost half of the students have 3 or more siblings and one-third of them consider education

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given in open high school as inadequate and returning back to formal education again and most of them are transferred from general and vocational high schools. It has been concluded that most of students do not work in a job and almost half of them do not consider attending in a higher educational institution. Considering the results achieved, it can be said that students attending open high school come from lower socio-economic level. In another research conducted on the subject, parents of a majority of open education students regardless of their gender have low levels of education and profession in Turkey. In other words, it is indicated that open education is preferred by students who can be called relatively lucky and who come from low income and middle-lower income groups (Suğur and Şavran, 2006). In many studies in the field literature, it was pointed out that socio-economic characteristics of the family are decisive on school type in which the child receives education (Alkan, Doğan and Sezgin, 1998). It is indicated that students grow up in parallel with their families' socio-economic characteristics (Alkan *et al*., 2008), children with socio-economically better conditions are more likely to access better types of school with more opportunities and more selective in terms of academic quality (Dinçer and Uysal Kolaşin, 2009). It is emphasized that, in Turkey, 64% of students included in the lower quadrant as per social and cultural status are able to attend to disadvantaged schools and only 7% of them attend advantageous schools (Educational Reform Initiative [ERG], 2009). These findings remind the fact that open education high school is an obligation for many students rather than a preference.

According to another finding of the research, students in the age of compulsory education, generally, prefer to go to open high school since they do not like school and courses, they have low success in the primary education, they want to contribute to family economy, because of lowness of their family's education and income level, lack of high school or being away from where they live, because of failure in class for two years in a row and finally because they want to prepare for university exam more comfortably. In studies conducted on the subject, generally dislike reading and going to school, and familial reasons are shown among the main justifications of attending open high school (Çam Tosun and Bayram, 2015). In addition, in the study, it has been understood that low family income and failing the class for two years in a row listed by students among reasons for preferring open high school showed significant differences by gender, and male students bring these situations to forefront as the reason for attending open high school. It can be said that differences by gender are originated from differences based on social gender identity. Gender is considered a social status in societies, and certain meanings and roles are imposed on the female or male. In other words, girls and boys with the effect of social environment and received education acquire roles suitable for their genders, and they obtain gender identity. Thus, while works such as conducting domestic affairs and child care come to forefront for females, professional roles become more important than familial roles for males (Powell and Greenhause, 2010). That's why, it is considered that results obtained in this research may have caused such situation.

Consequently, it can be said that open education high school in general is preferred by students included in the lowest layer of social stratification pyramid. Although students' reasons for preferring open high school vary, it can be said that personal reasons such as dislike in school and courses and low success in their previous educational level, familial reasons such as low level of education and income in the family, systemic reasons such as absence of high school or being far away from residential area are among more decisive reasons.

Judging from results achieved in the research, educational environments should be designed and developed according to all kind of needs of students to make distance education an important opportunity for individuals as target group of distance education in terms of self-development, acquiring profession, achieving status-career and completing their unfinished education. It is considered, in this way, that disadvantaged students from many aspects will be able to refrain from another disadvantages and social inequalities will be prevented from passing to next generations through education. In the study, the vast majority of students specified failure in the class for two years in a row as their reason to discontinue formal education. Therefore, in future studies, causes of grade repetition may be studied in detail. In addition, the results of this research limited to Burdur province can be tested and expanded in new studies that will represent the Turkey population.

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