



STUDENTS' REASONS FOR ATTENDING PRIVATE COURSES AND THEIR VIEWS ON THEM: THE CASE OF TURKEY

Dr. Dilek Sultan Acarli
Hacettepe University, Education Faculty
Department of Secondary Science
and Mathematics Education
Ankara- TURKEY
dsultan@hacettepe.edu.tr

Dr. Canan Altundağ
Hacettepe University, Education Faculty
Department of Secondary Science
and Mathematics Education
Ankara- TURKEY
canankck@gmail.com

Dr. Fatma Alkan
Hacettepe University, Education Faculty
Department of Secondary Science
and Mathematics Education
Ankara- TURKEY
ftmalkan@gmail.com

Abstract

Private courses, which were initially founded as a means of providing science, language, and art education and which were regarded as “private schools,” turned into refresher courses. Programs applied in private courses are prepared in parallel to regular school curriculums and run by the approval of the Ministry of Education. With the centralized exams becoming widespread, these courses have evolved, and their number has increased nationwide. The competitive atmosphere of the preparations for university entrance exam results in parents’ using every means available to support their children’s education by means of private courses and tutoring. Private courses and the education they provide have frequently found place in Turkey’s agenda, and been a constant source of debate. This study investigated the views of 7711 students enrolled in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades at various schools in Ankara regarding their reasons for attending private courses and their views on them. As a result of this study, it was determined that students mostly got supplementary education to their school courses and that they preferred private courses due to the fact that these courses provide placement tests on a regular basis. Students think that centralized exams make private courses a necessity, that they are complementary where regular schools fall short, and that they have become a part of their education. Moreover, students also indicate that private courses should not be closed down.

Key Words: Private courses, secondary school students, education system.

INTRODUCTION

Private courses in Turkey are institutions that were first established for science, language and art education and were thought of like “private schools” but then they were turned into private courses for supporting regular schools. Today, functioning as supporting institutions for preparation for high school and university entrance exams, have become educational institutions on which the focus of students and parents with future worries have centred upon. In Turkey, going to a private course is seen as an important determinative factor for being successful in university entrance exam. Students and their parents think that it is almost impossible to be successful in exams without going to private courses (Ayvaci & Er Nas, 2009; Dikici & Isik, 2001; Ozdemir, 2001; Turan & Alaz, 2007). Especially, the competition in university entrance exams is the leading factor that leads the students to go to private courses (Bray, 1999). The researches related with private schools show that the facts that going to a private course effects the success in university entrance exam positively, the course contents in the regular schools are not compatible with the content of the university entrance exam, and that the regular schools cannot prepare the students for the university entrance exam, are among the important factors for choosing the private courses (Temelli, Kurt & Kose, 2010). Private courses, especially in recent years, have often been on agenda in Turkey and a regular subject of debate. The study in question tried to determine the thoughts of high school students who are primarily affected by these debates. In this respect, via the help of a questionnaire which was prepared by the researchers, 7711 students from different high schools in Ankara were questioned for their reasons for going to private courses and thoughts about them.

METHOD

This is a quantitative research. Data were collected by using a questionnaire, developed by the researchers.

Sample of Research

The research has been carried out with 7711 students of 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th classes from different high schools in Ankara. %54.6 (4213) of the students participated in this research were boys and %45.4 (3498) of them were girls. %26.7 (2060) of the students were from the 9th class, %23.7 (1829) of them were from the 10th class, %23.9 (1841) of them were from the 11th class and %25.7 (1981) of them were from the 12th class. Besides, %97.5 of the students in this research was going to private courses.

Data Collection and Instrument

In this research a questionnaire with 11 clauses which was prepared by the researchers was used in order to collect data and determine the students’ reasons to go to private courses (6 clauses) and their thoughts about the private courses (5 clauses). The clauses in the questionnaire were graded according to Likert 5 type as; “totally agree = 5”, “agree = 4”, “partly agree = 3”, “do not agree = 2”, “absolutely do not agree = 1”, and graded from 1 to 5 in accordance with these choices.

Data Analysis

Average and standard deviation values were calculated according to each of the answers the students gave to the clauses; and moreover, by using the unrelated examples T- Test, variability of the students answers were analyzed to see if they changed according to sex variable, and whether the answers varied according to class difference or not was analyzed by using one directional ANOVA. In the effect rate calculation in the results, Cohen’s d formula (Cohen, 1988) was used. The d value that was reached after the calculations was evaluated as: .20- small effect rate, .50- medium while .80 is the large effect rate (Cohen, 1988).

FINDINGS

Average and standard deviation values, % and frequencies related to the reasons of the students’ for going to private courses were calculated and shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Defining Statistics in the Students' Reasons for Going to Private Courses

	Absolutely do not agree	Do not agree	Partly agree	Agree	Totally agree	Mean	sd
<i>I am going to a private course because;</i>							
A1. It provides numerous sources.	323 %4.2	411 %5.3	1556 %20.2	2960 %38.4	2461 %31.9	3.88	1.05
A2. It supports my courses at school.	133 %1.7	168 %2.2	637 %8.3	2360 %30.6	4413 %57.2	4.40	.860
A3. Without going to private courses it is very hard to be successful in the exams.	783 %10.2	1102 %14.3	2230 %29.2	1403 %18.2	2193 %28.4	3.41	1.31
A4. Everybody goes to private schools.	1979 %25.7	1662 %21.6	1880 %24.3	1220 %15.8	970 %12.6	2.67	1.34
A5. It makes it easier to adapt to the social environment.	811 %10.5	905 %11.7	2032 %26.4	1945 %25.2	2018 %26.2	3.46	1.28
A6. The private courses do level detection exams on a regular basis.	156 %2	188 %2.4	750 %9.7	2388 %31	4229 %54.8	4.35	.898

Average and standard deviation values, % and frequencies related to the thoughts of the students about private courses were calculated and shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Defining Statistics about the Students' Thoughts about Private Courses

	Absolutely do not agree	Do not agree	Partly agree	Agree	Totally agree	Mean	sd
B1. Private courses should be abolished.	4824 %62.6	1039 %13.4	623 %8.1	349 %4.5	876 %11.4	1.89	1.38
B2. Private courses have become a part of the education system.	282 %3.7	300 %3.9	1117 %14.5	2485 %32.3	3527 %45.7	4.13	1.04
B3. Private courses compensate the lacks of regular schools.	250 %3.2	289 %3.7	1007 %13.1	2094 %27.1	4071 %52.8	4.23	1.02
B4. Private courses are established for teaching exam techniques before anything else.	456 %5.9	534 %6.9	1354 %17.6	2382 %31.1	2985 %38.7	3.90	1.17
B5. The exams make the private courses a necessity.	315 %4.1	384 %5	1026 %13.3	1591 %20.7	4395 %57	4.22	1.11

Analysis of students' reasons for going to private courses and thoughts about these courses according to "sex" variable

The reasons of the female and male students for going to private schools were compared by T- Test and results were summarized in Table 3. While there were meaningful differences between the female and male students'

reasons for going to private schools, the explaining power (d= effect rate) of these differences with sex variable was found to be little.

Table 3: The T- Test results of the reasons of the students for going to private schools according to sex variable

Item	Sex	N	Mean	sd	df	t	p	d
A1	Male	3498	3.84	1.068	7344	2.873	.004	.07
	Female	4213	3.91	1.029				
A2	Male	3498	4.33	.903	7133	6.601	.000	.15
	Female	4213	4.46	.817				
A3	Male	3498	3.33	1.325	7709	5.316	.000	.12
	Female	4213	3.48	1.283				
A4	Male	3498	2.69	1.348	7709	1.089	.276	.02
	Female	4213	2.66	1.336				
A5	Male	3498	3.41	1.295	7378	2.845	.004	.07
	Female	4213	3.50	1.262				
A6	Male	3498	4.30	.931	7231	4.518	.000	.10
	Female	4213	4.39	.867				

The thoughts of the female and male students about private schools were compared by T- Test and results were summarized in Table 4. When the table is analyzed, it can be concluded that there are meaningful differences between the female and male students' thoughts about private schools but the explaining power of these differences with sex variable is of little value.

Table 4: The T- Test Results of the Thoughts of the Students about Private Schools According to Sex Variable

Item	Sex	N	Mean	sd	df	t	p	d
B1	Male	3498	2.03	1.461	7045	8.503	.000	.05
	Female	4213	1.76	1.292				
B2	Male	3498	4.05	1.119	6905	6.136	.000	.13
	Female	4213	4.19	.955				
B3	Male	3498	4.11	1.103	6920	8.767	.000	.15
	Female	4213	4.32	.944				
B4	Male	3498	3.81	1.166	7441	5.863	.000	.03
	Female	4213	3.97	1.163				
B5	Male	3498	4.12	1.166	7103	6.883	.000	.08
	Female	4213	4.30	1.047				

The effect of the "class" variable on the reasons of students' for going to private courses and their thoughts about these courses

The effect of the "class" variable on the reasons of students' for going to private courses and their thoughts about these courses, was analyzed by one directional ANOVA by taking one clause as a parameter for each that are thought to be determining clauses by the researchers. "A3. Without going to private courses it is very hard to be successful in the exams" and "B1. Private courses should be abolished" (Table 5).

The ANOVA results show that the clauses A3 and B1 show variety between the students according to class variable. When the averages are inspected, it is seen that as the class level increases the students' belief to the effect of private courses on the success increases too (M9: 3.04; M10: 3.14; M11: 3.63; M12: 3.85), and that they do not want the private courses to be abolished (M9: 2.03; M10: 1.96; M11: 1.72; M12: 1.82). The explaining power of the differences between the class levels by the class level is changing between .10 and .65.

Table 5: ANOVA Results

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p	Sig. Difference	d
<i>A3. Without going to private courses it is very hard to be successful in the exams.</i>							
Between groups	875.059	3	291.686	183.53	.000	9-11 9-12	.47 .65
Within groups	12248.662	7707	1.589			10-11 10-12	.38 .56
Total	13123.721	7710				11-12	.17
<i>B1. Private courses should be abolished.</i>							
Between groups	111.88	3	37.296	19.80	.000	9-11 9-12	.23 .15
Within groups	14516.435	7707	1.884			10-11 10-12	.18 .10
Total	14628.324	7710					

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When the outcomes are inspected, it is revealed that the students choose private courses primarily because they support the courses at their school (M= 4.40) and because they do level detection exams on a regular basis (M= 4.355). The students think that the examination system makes the private courses a necessity (M= 4.22), private courses compensate the lacks of regular schools (M= 4.23) and they are a part of the education (M= 4.13). Besides, the average of the answers of the students to the statement “private courses should be abolished” is 1.89. This shows that the students do not favor the abolishment of the private schools and that they have a positive view about the private courses. These outcomes are similar to many others in the literature of the field (Ayvaci & Er Nas, 2009; Bray, 1999; Dikici & Isik, 2001; Ozdemir, 2001; Temelli, Kurt & Kose, 2010; Turan & Alaz, 2007). According to the results of the research, students and their parents think that it is almost impossible to be successful in exams without going to private courses. Temelli, Kurt and Kose (2010) have pointed out that private courses’ positive effect on the success in university entrance exams, the insufficiency of the course contents at schools for university entrance exams, and the inability of the schools in preparing the students for these exams are important reasons for choosing private courses. Moreover, it is known that the students who are preparing for the university entrance exam and going to private courses see going to private courses as a must in order to learn test techniques and they have the impression that the education they have at the private courses is more qualified than the one they have at school (Cenk, 2005; TED, 2005).

When the answers of the students are analyzed according to sex variable, it is seen that the female students attach more importance to the role of private courses in their education, and they believe the necessity of the private courses more than the male students. The previous studies in this subject also provided similar results. For example, Kilic, Celikkol and Soran (2010) have stated that high school students have a positive opinion of private courses and the female students have more positive attitude towards the private courses in their studies. When the answers are analyzed according to class variable, it is notable that as the class level increases the students see the private courses more necessary and they have a better belief that these courses will improve their success. This is thought to be a result of the approaching university entrance exams and therefore the increasing exam anxiety.

The results show that the students believe in the necessity of the private courses. Probably a result of the present education system, this situation should be evaluated correctly and after the required structural changes are done; the subject should be reconsidered in details. This study suggests that the reasons of the need for private courses should be investigated and there should be improvements in the education system accordingly.



WCEIS's Note: Presented as a paper at V. European Conference on Social and Behavioral Sciences held at the Baltic Institute of Humanities in the Russia on September 11-14, 2014.

Acknowledgements: This study is a part of the project numbered 013 D05 704 002 which was supported by the Hacettepe University Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit.

REFERENCES

Ayvaci, H.S. & Er Nas, S. (2009). Fen ve Teknoloji dersi konularının okulda ve dershanede işlenişleriyle ilgili durumların belirlenmesi. *Dicle Üniversitesi Ziya Gökalp Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 13, 113-124.

Bray, M. (1999). *The shadow education system: Private tutoring and its implications for planners. Fundamentals Educational Planning* (No: 61). Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.

Cenk, E. (2005). *Öğrencilerin özel dershanelere gitme nedenleri ile özel dershanelerde aldıkları eğitime ilişkin görüşleri (Ankara İli Örneği)*. (Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi). Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Dikici, R. & Isik, C. (2001). Özel dershanelerin matematik öğretimindeki yeri. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 9(1), 157-164.

Kilic, D.S., Celikkol, N.Z. & Soran, H. (2010). *Ortaöğretim öğrencilerinin dershaneye yönelik tutumları*, IX. Ulusal Fen Bilimleri ve Matematik Eğitimi Kongresi, 23-25 Eylül 2010, İzmir, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Buca Eğitim Fakültesi, Özet Kitapçığı, s.202.

Ozdemir, C. (2001). İlköğretim okullarında ikinci kademe öğrencilerinin fen öğreniminde özel dershanelerin yeri üzerine bir araştırma. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 9(2), 411-418.

TED. (2005). *Hayat = 180 dk. mı?* Ankara: Türk Eğitim Derneği.

Temelli, A., Kurt, M. & Kose, E.O., (2010). Özel dershanelerin biyoloji öğretimine katkılarının öğrenci görüşlerine göre değerlendirilmesi. *Kuramsal Eğitimbilim*, 3(2), 148-161.

Turan, I. & Alaz, A. (2007). Özel dershanelerde coğrafya öğretiminin öğrenci görüşleri çerçevesinde değerlendirilmesi. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 15(1), 279-292.