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Disciplinary problems in secondary education: a sample of Amasya

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Abstract

This study was planned so as to perform an examination of the discipline problems experienced in the secondary education schools in accordance with school types. In this study, in which the special situation method was used, the data were obtained by the public survey method. The SURVEY used in this study was extracted from literature and a study was carried out to adapt it to Turkish. The adapted study was applied to totally 390 students in three secondary education schools in Amasya under the supervision of the researcher. The data obtained were assessed by putting them into a table.

The disciplinary problems existing in schools can be dealt with in two ways. They are the frequency and varieties of disciplinary problems. In these two points of view, the most variation appears to exist in Vocational High Schools among the school types. It can be said that, among the school types studied as to disciplinary problems not very big differences were found, and that vocational high schools (ML) reveal more varieties regarding disciplinary problems. In order to be able to reduce the disciplinary problems in schools to the least, (1) periodical SURVEY should be applied in schools and their results should be noted, (2) in solving the existing problems, rather than compelling disciplinary methods, creative, flexible techniques inclined towards finding solutions in cooperation with families should be preferred, (3) essentially within teaching process, for the productivity of teaching besides classroom management, students should be given chances so that they can be active

Keywords: Disciplinary proble;, classroom management; school type.

1. Introduction: The Needs of the 21st Century Thinking Skills

Education is a process comprised of activities which ensure constituting the desired differences in individuals' behaviors depending on beforehand planned purposes. According to Eleanor Duckworth (1964), education has two basic purposes: to bring up individuals (*i*) not repeating what preceding scientists and researchers have done but having the ability to create new products, (*ii*) not accepting everything but having ability to think critically. In the education and teaching process, teachers' qualities, learning situations, syllabus and students' qualities can be effective in obtaining the desired output (Henson, 2001; Jacobsen, Eggen, Kauchak, 1993). When educational programs are planned, it is aimed that the possible negative effects to arise from those factors be reduced to the least.

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Qualifications of teachers one of these factors, are tried to be gained by candidate teachers at the desired level with the help of teacher training programs. In the existing applications in our country, the negative effects on the learning situations and syllabus factors are tried to be reduced to the lowest level carrying out plannings and inspections under the control of the Ministry of National Education (MEB). Therefore, not a direct effect only on students is subject by these four factors. Particularly, students at secondary education schools are characteristically problematic rebellious due to their age levels (Martin & Shoho, 2000). If these students aren't provided with suitable conditions, both any output can't be obtained and problems in either classrooms and in schools are possible to arise. These possible problems will both reduce the output of teaching and affect the educational mediums negatively.

Such activities as purposeful activities, appropriate surroundings, collaboration habits, self-control are of great importance in the definition of discipline. The problem of discipline is in the inverse ratio with motivation to learning process (Kher, Lacina-Gifford, Lorna & Yandell, 2000). Because an individual who has worked up learning into a need for themselves will participate in the learning situation actively, it very less for him to cause disciplinary problems.

Disciplinary problems in education and teaching process can basically be dealt with in two ways. The first of them is the disciplinary problems existing all over the school and the second is the disciplinary problems affecting directly the output of the education and teaching situations in the classroom (Doyle, 1990). What the factors orienting students towards indiscipline are to be wondered. When the school is considered the basic, it will be seen that there is a relation between the disciplinary problems of students and the factors of teachers and administrators. These factors play in important part in the disciplinary problems, too. According to Edwards (1997), teachers and administrators show such behaviors as following;

- forcing students to learn misunderstood learning conditions and meaningless knowledge for students,
- failing inefficient to direct students for developing independent,
- setting intensive control over students and remaining inefficient to provide students with environments where they can be independent,
- making use of disciplinary processes which put forward wrong behaviors.

As can be understood from the above expressed items, in the formation of possible disciplinary problems to arise within an education and teaching process, the all of the factors in that process play role

The factors in the education and teaching process shouldn't be thrusting students out of class processes. Because, one of the most active ways of learning is to ensure the student to participate in the class actively (Gettinger, 1988; Kohn, 1996). If the concept of discipline is considered in this sense, ensuring the discipline will be able to affect the student's active participation in the class, thus the output of the education and teaching process positively. In the contrary case, the class process will be affected negatively (Dodge & Price, 1994). In our country, there are such variations in secondary education schools as general high schools (NL), vocational high schools (ML), Anatolia High Schools (AL) and Sciences High Schools (FL). Students who pass the exams held by the examination center are admitted to especially Anatolia and Sciences High Schools. On that account, These students are more motivated for the process of learning and have preparedness over a certain level. But relatively less successful students attend general and vocational high schools.

In our country, secondary education schools admit students at different levels of preparedness. For instance, the students who are the most successful in the exams held by the examination center are placed at the Sciences High Schools and those a little less successful are placed at the Anatolia High Schools. Those who can't pass the exam attend comprehensive high schools and vocational high schools. Students' expectations about secondary education schools are quite different. And parallel to this, it is expectable that the disciplinary problems experienced in those schools are different. What needs researching is to determine what kind of disciplinary problems there are at class and school levels. By that way, disciplinary problems as to school types will be able to be investigated and recommendations of solution will be able to be developed.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to carry out a comparative investigation of the change in disciplinary problems experienced as to schools types in secondary education schools.

3. Method

In this study, the data were obtained by using survey method. In the study, the survey extracted from literature (Williams & Walworth, 1996) adapted was used. Primarily in the adaptation process the concerning survey was translated into Turkish by three academicians. After that, the translations were compared and the uncertain parts were put into order through the consensus of the three academicians. Three expert were consulted whether the survey was practicable in the conditions in our country. So as to determine the understandability level of the translated survey, a pilot study was carried out with a group of 40 students, the students were asked to mark the statements they didn't understand and the changes offered were made. The survey is comprised of twelve items. The first seven questions are likert type with five. The other four questions are in multiple choice and the last question is in open ended format. In the items in the survey the viewpoints of students towards their schools and the disciplinary problems in classrooms and the school were aimed to determine. In the multiple choice questions, it was aimed to determine the kinds and reasons of disciplinary problems. And in the last item of the survey, there is a three-step question in order to receive students' offers to solve the existing problems. After its adaptation study was completed, the survey was practiced on totally 390 students in three secondary education schools in Amasya under the researcher's supervision.

The analysis of the data: The data obtained in the study were analyzed using grouping and categorization methods. In the evaluation of the answers to the likert type questions, their means were accepted as the basis. In the multiple choice questions, the numbers of choices marked were taken into consideration and designed as a table.

4. Findings

In this chapter, the data obtained from the answers by the students to the items in the survey used in this study are presented in a table. First, the answers by the students to the first seven items were evaluated in the likert scale of five and their means are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The means of the data of the first seven items of the survey.

| | <i>Vocational High School (N:130)</i> | <i>General High School(N:130)</i> | <i>Anatolia High School (N:130)</i> |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. I am proud of my school. | 2.94 | 3.3 | 3.75 |
| 2. I feel secure when in the school. | 3.1 | 3.75 | 3.90 |
| 3. I am aware of my duties and responsibilities in the school. | 3.94 | 4.4 | 4.80 |
| 4. I am aware of my duties and responsibilities in the classroom. | 3.94 | 4.35 | 4.80 |
| 5. I take on responsibility in ensuring discipline and obedience to rules in the classroom. | 3.00 | 3.25 | 3.85 |
| 6. One of my duties in the classroom is to be just (honest). | 4.68 | 4.35 | 4.95 |
| 7. One of my duties in my school is to be just (honest). | 4.68 | 4.4 | 4.55 |

When Table 1 is scrutinized, it is clearly seen that more negative data were obtained from the vocational high school students compared to the students of other school types. For instance, while the vocational high school has the lowest average (2.94) in reliance on the school, the average is 3.3 at the comprehensive high school and 3.75 at the Anatolia High School.

In Table 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, the dispersion of the answers by the students as to the choices marked is presented.

Table 2. If a student displays maladjustment (causes problems) in the classroom or school, what must the teacher choose to do?

| | Vocational High School (N:130) | General High School (N:130) | Anatolia High School (N:130) |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Warn the student | 34 | 41 | 57 |
| Nothing | 6 | 4 | - |
| Send the student to the principal | 7 | 8 | 17 |
| Give a break to settle the occasion | - | 2 | - |
| The a and d choices | 83 | 75 | 66 |

It can be seen in Table 2 that most of the students have the opinion “first warn and then give a break to settle the occasion” in case of a possible problem in the classroom.

Table 3. Of the problems existing in your school, which do you think is the most important?

| | Vocational High School (N:130) | General High School (N:130) | Anatolia High School (N:130) |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| The students do not perform their duties and responsibilities. | 73 | 38 | 54 |
| Smoking. | 16 | 54 | 24 |
| Chasy in the classrooms. | - | 4 | 8 |
| Quarrels between the groups of friends. | 36 | 22 | 19 |
| Random violence. | 5 | 14 | 25 |

Among the disciplinary problems submitted to the students by the help of the expressions organized in Table 3, it is seen that such problems as “the students do not perform their duties and responsibilities, smoking” are marked cumulatively.

Table 4. In your school, which period of the day in do behavioral problems happen most?

| | Vocational High School (N:130) | General High School (N:130) | Anatolia High School (N:130) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Before school time | - | - | - |
| Before the class | 46 | 31 | 25 |
| During the class | 4 | 28 | 56 |
| At the end of the class | 5 | 4 | 10 |
| Between classes | 39 | 46 | 24 |
| During the lunch break | 31 | 15 | 3 |
| After school time | 5 | 6 | 12 |

In accordance with the answers to the period of the day when disciplinary problems happen, at the vocational high school, it is seen that disciplinary problems most happen before classes begin (46) and during breaks between classes (39). It is also seen that disciplinary problems *during classes* happen less (4), compared to other school types.

Table 5. What is the best way to cope with a student who doesn't perform their duties and responsibilities at school?

| | Vocational High School(N:130) | General High School(N:130) | Anatolia High School (N:130) |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| To resolve within the school (to pass over lightly) | 86 | 93 | 89 |
| To resolve out side of the school | 6 | 4 | 12 |
| To send to other schools | 7 | 22 | 15 |
| Other ways(please write) | 31 | 11 | 14 |

In Tale 5, the choice “to resolve within the school” is marked most for “the best way cope with a student who doesn’t perform their duties and responsibilities at school”. However, the following data were obtained among the answers to the choice “other ways”.

- To threaten by an oral exam mark
- To warn in a loud voice
- Cooperation with the parents
- To give a pre-warning
- Empaty

Table 6. Of the following types, which do you think is the teacher who manages the classroom best and there is no disciplinary problem in their class.

| | Vocational High School(N:130) | General High School(N:130) | Anatolia High School (N:130) |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Well prepared for the class | 8 | 16 | 4 |
| Rather tough | - | - | - |
| Respected by the students | 34 | 12 | 23 |
| Compellent | - | - | - |
| Instantly stopping wrong behaviors when starting | 7 | 28 | 6 |
| Just towards students | 14 | 12 | 26 |
| Managing to attract the students’ interest in the subject | 67 | 62 | 66 |
| Giving chances to the students to play their parts in the classroom | - | - | 5 |
| Able to predict the students’ behaviors in the classroom | - | - | - |

It is seen in Table 6 that the students’ opinions on “the teacher who manages the classroom best and doesn’t have disciplinary problems in their class” concentrate on the choice “*managing to attract students’ interest in the subject*” (ML:67, NL:62, AL:66).

4.1 Qualitative findings

The answers by the students to the open ended questions are designed in tables and presented in Table 7, 8 and 9.

Table 7. What is the first ranking disciplinary problem in your school?

| Problems | Vocational High School | General High School | Anatolia High School |
|---|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Smoking | 54 | 52 | 46 |
| Unjust treatments by the teachers and the school administration | 11 | 28 | 32 |
| İmproper attire | 8 | 2 | 6 |
| Freshness in teacher-student relations | 12 | 14 | |
| Friendship poor in quality between girl and boy students | 20 | 10 | |
| İrresponsible and insensitive behaviors by the students | 11 | 8 | 23 |
| The students’ not performing their duties and responsibilities | 5 | 16 | 15 |
| Noise | 2 | | |
| Alcoholic drinks | 2 | | |
| Cellular phones | 5 | | |
| No problems | | | 8 |

Table 8. Why is it the first ranking disciplinary problem in your school?

| Problems | Vocational High School | General High School | Anatolia High School | |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------|----------------------|----|
| <i>Problem of smoking</i> | <i>Individual or social disturbance by smoking</i> | 54 | 22 | 42 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|----|----|----|
| | <i>Harm to health by smoking</i> | | 9 | 22 |
| | <i>Being a social danger</i> | | 23 | 24 |
| | <i>Causing desire imitate</i> | | 22 | 18 |
| Unjust treatments by the teachers and administrators | <i>Unjust treatments affects students' determination level of studying directly</i> | 21 | 17 | 26 |
| Insensitive treatments and disrespectful behaviors | <i>Irrespectfulness to teachers reduces the output of the class and makes adaptation to the class difficult</i> | 12 | 13 | |
| Poor quality in friendship between girls and boys | <i>Such behaviors and relations both causes disquiet in the school and affects the image of the school negatively</i> | 20 | 24 | |

Table 9. How do you think this problem can be solved? what is your offer?

| Offers to solve the problems | <i>Vocational High School</i> | <i>General High School</i> | <i>Anatolia High School</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Increasing the controls | 62 | 8 | 34 |
| Exhibiting the problematic students | 18 | 16 | |
| Increasing the frequency and levels of warnings | 4 | 4 | |
| Warning the teachers | 14 | | |
| Strengthening the authority in the school | 4 | | |
| Making punishments deterrent | 28 | 52 | |
| Going to the origin of the problem | | 8 | |
| Behaving equally to all teachers and administrators | | 20 | 24 |
| Cooperation between the school and families | | | 8 |
| Through education | | | 10 |
| Sending out of the school | | | 42 |
| Making the guidance counsellor service work actively | | | 10 |

5. Discussion

When the students are scrutinized for their awareness of their duties and responsibilities at school, it is seen that the average of the data from the vocational high school students are rather low compared to the others. In our country, students completing their primary education incline towards various secondary education schools. In that process of inclination, the success level in the exams held by the exams center and the parents' points of view towards those schools are effective. Some of the students having low level of success in the exams, especially boys, are enrolled in the vocational high schools so as to have a vocation. As a result of the data obtained from the students, it was seen that the accumulation of the students with low success level and of the same gender causes more various and frequent disciplinary problems to occur both in classrooms and schoolwide compared to the other school types.

When Table 1 is scrutinized, it can be seen that more negative data were obtained from the vocational high school students in the reliance on their school (items 1 and 2) and in awareness of and taking on responsibilities (items 3 and 4) than the comprehensive high school students and the Anatolia High School students. As touched above, it can be uttered that the decrease in the quality of students is effective on the data obtained from the vocational high school. It can be deemed normal for such an expectation in other student groups than the selected one to arise (McFarland, 2000). The fact that the data obtained from the comprehensive high school are more negative than those from the Anatolia High School appears to support our hypothesis. If the findings obtained are examined thoroughly together with the students' aim to attend school, the reasons of the negative opinions can be put forth more clearly.

One of the most negatory situations which a teacher wouldn't like to encounter within the education and teaching process is *maladjustment and causing problems by one or several students*. As a result of such incompatible behaviors, both the education and teaching process would be interrupted and it is possible that the students' motivation would be spoilt. When the students in the exemplification group were asked the question "what should the teacher's reaction to a student causing problems?" be, they answered "that student should be warned and a short break should be given". When the answers are examined as to the school types, it will be seen, regarding the

concerning choice, that the order is vocational high schools, comprehensive high schools and Anatolia High Schools respectively.

Of the data in Table 2, the choice “the student should be sent to the principal”, which is the indicator of applying the central discipline thoughtfully, was marked 100% more by the Anatolia High School students than those in the other schools. This data can be accepted to be an indicator of the fact that the Anatolia High School students adopt offers in solving disciplinary problems thoughtfully.

Also, the alteration in the kinds of the disciplinary problems existing in schools as to the school types is quite an important particular for our country. The schools examined in this study are those which containing students of various types regarding student profiles and success levels. Therefore, it is expectable there be various disciplinary problems encountered in such schools. When Table 3 is examined, although the problem “not fulfilling responsibilities and duties” is encountered more among the vocational high school students, it is understood that there is less problem of “smoking” than among those in the other schools. But in the Anatolia High School, the problems “smoking” and “not fulfilling duties and responsibilities” come to the fore. Another remarkable finding in Table 1 is that the rates of the arguments among the student groups in all the three schools are close to one another. Basically, if it is needed to evaluate all the three schools together, we encounter the problems “not fulfilling duties and responsibilities”, “smoking” and “quarrels between friend groups” as the main disciplinary problems in all the schools. In this item, the disciplinary problems were submitted to the students configured. That question was asked in the open ended format at the 13th item of the same form. The data obtained from the students in this question are more detailed than those in the others. In the data in Table 7, a lot of different data than those in Table 3 are expressed by the students. The most important ones of them bring to the fore such problems as “unjust treatments by teachers and administrators”, “insensitivity in teacher-student relations” and “indifference in girl-boy friendships”. In addition to them, such uncommon and unexpected problems alcoholic drinks and cellular phones have been expressed, especially in the vocational high school.

If the above mentioned problems and school types are examined, we encounter the problem “unjust treatment by the teachers and administrators” in almost every kind of schools. The fact that no negative data were obtained about the choice “insensitive teacher-student relations” at the Anatolia High School can be accepted to be the indicator of existence of sensitive teacher-student relations in the Anatolia High School.

Knowing the time of the disciplinary problems encountered in schools can give an idea for the prevention of those problems. In a general assessment carried out, it has been seen that there is the disciplinary problem before the beginning of classes at a significant level in all schools. Most of the problems existing in the Anatolia High School (56/130) are encountered within the class time. On the other hand, in vocational and comprehensive high schools, most of the problems occur before the beginning of classes and during the breaks.

As can be seen in Table 5, students, who are one of the focal points of the disciplinary problems, chose, in majority (268/390), the choice “pass over lightly” as a response to the question asked to them in order to receive their offers for the resolution of disciplinary problems. Choosing the choice “send to another school” for incompatible students is more in the comprehensive high schools and the Anatolia High School than in the vocational high school. The offers by the students to eliminate disciplinary problems display more variations in the vocational high school. As is seen in Table 5, the choice “threatening by marks and warning loudly”, to which students generally object vehemently, is preferred by them. This variation is less in the other school types. But, some students have made such positive and helpful offers as “a pre-warning and cooperation with parents”.

It is to be wondered what the peculiarities of the teacher who best manages the classroom. Most of the students (195/390) chose the choice “the one attracting students’ interest in the subject”. Another group preferred the choice “the teacher whom the students respect”.

One of the most evident data is that the choice “the forcing ones” is preferred by none of the 390 students. Despite this positive data, it can be deemed negative that the choice “giving students chances to play their parts in the classroom”, which is suitable for the student-centered educational approaches in which students are active, isn’t preferred by none of the students. In parallel to the general findings related to disciplinary problems, the choice “treating justly” among the students’ expectations is marked at a significant level. This finding has the qualification to be admitted as an indication of the relevance among the students’ opinions and expectations. Perhaps one of the most important particulars that needs emphasizing is to determine the origin of disciplinary problems and discuss the students’ offers, which is a factor in the core of the problems. “Smoking” ranks first among the disciplinary problems in schools. Why do students consider this problem the most important one? Most of the vocational high

school students marked the choice “personal and social disturbance”. It is remarkable that none of the students paid attention to the harm by smoking on people’s health. Students don’t take the health factor, which is an important factor enough in order not to smoke, into consideration. In the comprehensive high school and Anatolia High School, the students marked the choices “social risks” and “desire to imitate” besides the “personal and social disturbance” choice. One of the most significant problems, among the data obtained from the students, standing before us is the particular “unjust treatment by the teachers and administrators”. A certain number of the students expressed that they consider it the primarily privileged problem as unjust treatments affect students’ determination and level of studying directly. Especially in the vocational and high comprehensive high school, “insensitive relations among girl and boy students stand before us as an important problem. But in the Anatolia High School, no problem of such kind was expressed. While the students regard this problem as privileged, they put forward the opinion that such relations and behaviors causes disturbance both inside and outside of the school and damage the school’s image. As an offer of solution for such problems, the forcing disciplinary methods as “performing controls more frequently” and “making punishments deterrent” were cumulatively offered by the students. The Anatolia High School students approached to such disciplinary problems moderately and offered “school-family cooperation” and resolving “through education” and “through guidance”.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The reliance and motivation in the vocational high school students towards their school is at a lower level than those in the other school types. It is assumed that the students’ expectations from their school is effective on that level of reliance and motivation. The reflection of the vocational high school students’ expectations about the future, the after-school life conditions as to the present conditions, and their educational process is less than the others. The students’ reliance on their school will be effective on the educational process and on forwarding their motivations to an upper level, and will reduce possible disciplinary problems in schools. Of the data obtained from this study, the problems existing in schools can be dealt with in two ways: the frequency and variations of disciplinary problems. Regarded in these two points of view, the most variation is found in the vocational high school among the school types. It can be uttered that any great difference regarding disciplinary problems among the school types studied wasn’t found, and that the vocational high school has the most variation of disciplinary problems.

A great number of the students in all the school types think that, in case of a disciplinary problem, a teacher should employ a warning and give a short break. In this sense, it can be said that students agree on the same idea about what a teacher should do in case of a disciplinary problem during an occasion of teaching. It has been deduced that the students’ need for discipline is effective on the fact that the strictest attitude about the offers of solution for disciplinary problems has been made by the Anatolia High School students. In the schools researched in this study, the most important disciplinary problems are “smoking”, “unjust treatments by the teachers and administrators” and “quarrels among student groups”. Due to the fact that students are focused on those problems, we can name them “general problems encountered by students”. Besides, such problems as improper clothing, alcohol drinking and noise in the vocational high school stand as problems special to that school. In respect of “not fulfilling duties and responsibilities”, the Anatolia High School and in respect of “teacher-student relations” the comprehensive high school ranks first.

Approximately 69% of the students think that disciplinary problems should be solved by “passing over lightly”. It is thought that this response is a reaction and a result of the disturbance against the present practices. Despite, the students’ having preferred some forcing disciplinary models appears to be a remarkable particular.

The students’ responded that the best teacher is “the one that manages to attract students’ interest in the subject”. That none of them has chosen the forcing teacher choice is of significance in respect of their expectations. Also, none of them preferred the choice “a teacher providing student centered education”. In this sense, students prefer a teacher who doesn’t disturb or force them, presents them the subject ready and is active in the teaching process.

The students in the exemplification group take first the effects of the disciplinary problem to them and second its social harm into consideration. When the offers by the students for the solution of disciplinary problems are examined, it is surprisingly seen that the answers concentrate on the forcing disciplinary techniques. But the Anatolia High School students made more moderate and lasting offers. It is thought that the qualities of the learning situations of the students are effective on those offers for solution.

In order to be able to reduce disciplinary problems in schools to the least;

- Seminars and activities should be held aimed at students so as to ensure motivation in students.
- Periodical survey should be arranged in schools and their results should be taken into consideration so as to pursue the existing disciplinary problems up-to-date.
- Solution techniques helpful, flexible and in cooperation with families should more be preferred than the forcing disciplinary problems in the solution of the existing problems.
- In the determination and solution of disciplinary problems, school types should be taken into consideration.
- What is essential in the teaching process is to give students chances for them to be active besides classroom management for the productivity of teaching.

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