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CLASSROOM TEACHERS' OPINIONS CONCERNING THE EVALUATION OF STUDENT-RELATED SERVICES AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN RESPECT OF THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD¹

İLKOKULLARDA ÖĞRENCİ HİZMETLERİNİN ÇOCUĞUN YÜKSEK YARARI BAKIMINDAN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİNE İLİŞKİN SINIF ÖĞRETMENİ GÖRÜŞLERİ

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ÖZET

The aim of this study is to reveal the compatibility of the regulations and practices about the student-related services for elementary school students with the principle of the best interest of the child. The target population of this study consists of 13657 classroom teachers employed in public schools during the 2016-2017 academic year in Ankara Province. 374 classroom teachers selected by stratified sampling technique constitute the sampling of the study. Data of the study were collected by the "Instrument for Evaluation of Compatibility of the Regulations and Practices about the Student-Related Services for Elementary School Students with the Principle of the Best Interest of the Child", a means developed by the researcher. The data were analyzed by use of SPSS. Data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics (arithmetic mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test, Mann-Whitney U Test, ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis H Test). As a significance level, $\alpha=.05$ was taken as a basis in tests of significance. Results of this study reveals that to the classroom teachers, an interest of child is respected "occasionally" in the regulations and practices with the enrolment procedure at the elementary schools. To the classroom teachers are of the opinion that such an interest of child is respected "always" in the regulations and practices concerning the supervision of the attendance of the students and assessment of their behaviors and success in elementary schools. According to the classroom teachers, an interest of child is respected "mostly" in the regulations and practices concerning the protection of the student's health, maintaining student security and providing the children with counselling services and social activities.

Keywords: Best interest of the child, elementary school, classroom teacher, student-related services.

ABSTRACT

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ilkokul öğrencilerine yönelik öğrenci hizmetleri ile ilgili düzenleme ve uygulamalarda çocuğun yüksek yararı ilkesine uygunluğun gözetilme durumunu ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmanın hedef evrenini 2016-2017 eğitim-öğretim yılında Ankara ilinde kamu okullarında görev yapan 13657 sınıf öğretmeni oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın örneklemini ise tabakalı örnekleme tekniğiyle seçilen 374 sınıf öğretmeni oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın verileri, araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilmiş olan "İlkokullarda Öğrenci Hizmetleri İle İlgili Düzenleme ve Uygulamaların Çocuğun Yüksek Yararı İlkesine Uygunluğu Ölçme Aracı" ile toplanmıştır. Veriler SPSS ile analiz edilmiştir. Veriler betimsel istatistikler (aritmetik ortalama, standart sapma), anlam çıkarıcı istatistikler (t-testi, Mann Whitney U testi, ANOVA, Kruskal Wallis H testi) ile çözümlenmiştir. Anlamlılık testlerinde $\alpha = .05$ anlamlılık düzeyi temel alınmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda sınıf öğretmenlerine göre, öğrencilerin okula kayıt işlemleri boyutuna ilişkin düzenleme ve uygulamalarda ise çocuğun yüksek yararı "ara sıra" gözetilmektedir. Öğrencilerin devamlının izlenmesi ve davranışların değerlendirilmesi ile öğrencilerin başarılarının değerlendirilmesi boyutlarındaki düzenleme ve uygulamalarda çocuğun yüksek yararı "her zaman" gözetilmektedir. Sınıf öğretmenlerine göre, öğrencilerin sağlığının korunması, öğrencilerin güvenliğinin sağlanması ve öğrencilere rehberlik hizmetlerinin ve sosyal etkinliklerin sunulması boyutlarındaki düzenleme ve uygulamalarda çocuğun yüksek yararı "çoğunlukla" gözetilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Çocuğun yüksek yararı, ilkokul, sınıf öğretmeni, öğrenci hizmetleri.

¹This study is a part of the doctoral thesis titled "Assessment of the Regulations and Practices concerning Student-related Services at Elementary Schools in respect of the Best Interest of the Child", conducted and completed under the supervisory of Prof. Dr. Yasemin KARAMAN KEPENEKCI.

1.INTRODUCTION

It may be told that societies are able to soundly keep living in future thanks to children who have been well trained and who are self-confident. Children are living beings who are innocent, sensitive, dependent and who are under development, on one hand, and who are curious, high-spirited and full of hope, on the other. A child who spent his childhood by enjoying himself, playing, learning and developing himself becomes happy as well as contributes to welfare and happiness of the society in future. Therefore, countries wishing to develop and live in peace place emphasis on children's healthy growing and their development in line with their abilities (Akyüz, 2013, 1). Those responsible -namely policy-makers, parents, teachers, managers, experts, police officers, doctors, judges and prosecutors- must take into consideration the child's best interest in taking any decisions and performing any acts. During the period from enrolment to graduation, schools must also pay regard to the child's best interest in rendering student-related services.

The principle enshrined in Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child sets forth "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration". According to this provision, the child's best interest is an umbrella principle defining the approach required to be pursued for materialization of child's rights enshrined in the Convention. In short, this principle shall be taken into account in implementation of all articles (Taşkın, 2006, 19). In light of Article 3 of the Convention, in any situation and any decision regarding the child, the best possible solution for him must be definitely preferred (Pais, 1997, 45). The principle concerns any kind of initiative regarding the child which is conducted by either public or private institutions (Hodgking and Newell, 2002, 40).

The most significant feature of the organization called school is its raw material, the human being that is inherent in the society. Thus, institutional aspect of school is more sensitive than its individual aspect, its informal aspect is severer than its formal aspect, and its sphere of influence is wider than its scope of authority (Bursalıoğlu, 1998, 33). School is liable to change individuals' behaviours with a view to meeting the changes that individuals constantly undergo and to ensure them to gain desirable behaviours. In a society, a school capable of meeting pedagogical needs of the socio-economic environment is considered as the best element of the educational system (Taymaz, 1997, 1).

Education is a social right. Its definition as a social right requires it to be a public service. Development of both individuals and societies is undoubtedly related to the provision, for all individuals, of the right to receive education in line with their interests and abilities (Karaman Kepenekci, 2008, 48-49). The right to education afforded to every child is ensured through schools which are educational organizations (Balci, 2008, 180).

Student-related services, in broad terms, cover everything carried out in favour of the student; whereas, in the strict sense, cover each act and action performed for each student from his enrolment to his graduation even including the post-graduation monitoring process (Dönmez, 2010, 177). Regulations concerning student-related services at elementary schools are set out in the Regulation on Pre-School and Primary Education Institutions which was issued by the Ministry of National Education, published in the Official Gazette dated 26/07/2014 and no. 29072, the Regulation on the Social Activities, which was issued by the Ministry of National Education, published in the Official Gazette dated 08/06/2017 and no. 30090, as well as in the Regulation on Counselling Services, which is dated 10/11/2017 and no. 30236. Within the scope of student-related services at elementary schools, the issues "enrolment of students to the schools", "monitoring of their attendance and assessment of their behaviours", "assessment of their success", "protection of their health", "maintenance of their safety" and "providing counselling services and social activities for them" are explained below under headings.

Schools must pay regard to the student's best interest in all services provided for students within the period from the enrolment process to graduation. In cases where the child's best interest is not observed in schools, national and international tribunals impose heavy penalties on individuals, institutions and even on States. These decisions set an example for other students who have been also victims as well for their families. It may be said that these incidents have ensured the idea of protecting children and respecting their best interest to develop and be effective at schools. For instance, in the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights ("ECHR"), dated 10/4/2012 and no. 19986/06, the school where Atalay Kerimoğlu, who was seven years old in 2004, was discharged from the school in the afternoon, before the normal



school day was over, due to the heavy snow storm. Atalay tried to walk back home, which was 4 km away from his school, as the shuttle that was operated for free by the municipality and he was using did not come at the time when the school was over. His body was found, the following day, frozen near a river bed. His parents filed a case, alleging that their child died due to the domestic authorities' negligence. Having obtained no outcome through the domestic remedies available in Turkey, they lodged an application with the ECHR. In its judgment, the ECHR concluded that the domestic authorities did not display due diligence in protecting the right to life of Atalay and that any step was not taken against those responsible. It accordingly sentenced Turkey to pay 50,000 Euro to Atalay's parents.

In the research carried out, with respect to the best interest of the child at school, by Malugade (2014) on "What's in the best interest of Wisconsin students, families, and public schools?" Malugade, criticizes the legislature allowing for open enrolment to public schools in the state from each region. Suggesting that the continued expansion of open enrolment without sufficiently defined standards undermines local control, she notes that it adversely impacts effective operation of public schools. The author advocates for a return to a more limited and defined version of enrolment system which is capable of weighing the best interests of children.

In Turkey, studies as to the principle of the child's best interest are related to the parental relationship between the parent and the child. In this respect, in his work "Principle of the Child's Best Interest in Custody" prepared in 2006 within the scope the principle of the child's best interest, Taşkın refers to the significance of paying regard to child's short- and long-term interests particularly in granting child's custody upon divorce. In Taşkın's custody-related study "Child's Will in the context of His Best Interest" (2013), Yücel notes that the child's best interest, as a procedural rule enshrined in the UN Children's Rights Convention, also has a function to guarantee the child's rights.

Observance of the best interests of the children spending a significant part of their lives at schools during the period they are studying gains more importance day by day. It may be asserted that through the researches demonstrating different aspects of the children's best interest at schools, awareness of classroom teachers and school administrators in their capacity as the practitioners of student-related services as well as of other persons responsible for the children in every field of the social life would be increased so as to ensure them to observe "the child's best interest" in their decisions and behaviours. Particularly at elementary schools where personality is built, the child's best interest must be taken into consideration in rendering of student-related services.

The problem of this research study addresses the question whether the regulations and practices concerning student-related services at elementary schools observe the child's best interest principle. In line with this problem, answers are sought for the following questions:

A) What are the opinions of the classroom teachers working at the public elementary schools in Ankara province as to the observance of the compliance of the regulations and practices under the following aspects with the child's best interest?

1. of the student-related services

- a) Enrolment of students to the schools,
- b) Monitoring attendance of students and assessment of their behaviours,
- c) Assessment of students' success,
- d) Protection of students' health,
- e) Maintenance of students' safety,
- f) Providing counselling services and social activities for students

2.METHOD

2.1.Research Design

This research, which intends to represent the compliance of the regulations and practices concerning the student-related services at elementary schools with the child's best interest in line with the opinions of classroom teachers, a quantitative, survey model.

2.2. Research Sample

Target population of the study consists of classroom teachers working, during the 2016-2017 school year, at the public schools that operate under the Ministry of National Education in nine districts of Ankara province (Altındağ, Çankaya, Etimesgut, Gölbaşı, Keçiören, Mamak, Pursaklar, Sincan, Yenimahalle). As shown in the formal education statistics (the Ministry, 2016), number of classroom teachers working at 452 elementary schools in nine districts of Ankara province during the 2016-2017 school year is 13.657. However, given the high number of the targeted population of classroom teachers, which is impossible for the researcher to get in contact, as well as time and resource cost, the sampling method was applied. Each of nine districts within Ankara was accepted as a group, and number of classroom teachers within each group is accordingly calculated by the size of groups within the sample. It is presumed that a total of 13.657 classroom teachers may be represented, as a minimum, by 374 classroom teachers at the = .05 significance and 5% tolerance level (Anderson, 1990; Akt. Balcı, 2013, 108). Accordingly, the sample population of the study includes 374 classroom teachers working at the public elementary schools in nine districts of Ankara province – 40 teachers in Altındağ, 55 in Çankaya, 39 in Etimesgut, 13 in Gölbaşı, 71 in Keçiören, 51 in Mamak, 11 in Pursaklar, 46 in Sincan and 48 in Yenimahalle.

2.3. Research Instruments and Procedures

With the aim of determining the frequency of observance of the compatibility of regulations and practices concerning the student-related services at elementary schools with the principle of the child's best interest, the "Instrument for Assessing the Compatibility of Regulations and Practices concerning the Student-related Services at Elementary schools with the Principle of the Child's Best Interest" developed by Arslan (2017) was employed. The scale was prepared in the form of a five-point Likert grading scale with choices (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Occasionally, (4) Mostly and (5) Always.

Factor load value in all factors of the six-factor scale is 0.44 and above. Six factor represents 60.28% of the total variance. Item-total score correlations are generally over 0.30. Total alpha calculated reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.89. According to these results, it may be said that construct validity of the scale was ensured, that the items in the scale are sufficiently distinctive, and that data obtained through the scale is reliable.

At the end of all factor analyses carried out, a total of 30 items are included in the scale: 4 items in the "Aspect of Enrolment to School", 5 items in the "Aspect of Monitoring Attendance of Students and Assessment of Their Behaviours", 3 items in the "Aspect of Assessment of Students' Success", 4 items in the "Aspect of Protection of Students' Health", 5 items in the "Aspect of Maintenance Students' Safety" and 9 items in the "Aspect of Providing Counselling Services and Social Activities for Students".

2.4. Data Analysis

In analysis of survey data, statistical package programs namely SPSS 22 and Lisrel 8.80 were used. In deciding which parametric or non-parametric tests would be used, it was determined whether scores had a normal distribution. In order to test normality, arithmetic mean, median and mode value, normal distribution curve, coefficient of skewness and kurtosis, Q-Q graphics were examined. At the end of the examinations carried out on the basis of these criteria, it was observed that the aspects of "Enrolment to Schools", "Monitoring Attendance of Students and Assessment of Their Behaviours", "Assessment of Students' Success", "Maintenance of Safety of Students", "Providing Students with Counselling Services and Social Activities" had a normal distribution, whereas the aspect of "Protection of Students' Health" did not. Therefore, while non-parametric tests (Mann Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis H test) were used for the aspect of protection of students' health, parametric tests (t-test and ANOVA) were preferred in the other aspects.

In definition of the frequency values of classroom teachers' personal information (sex, age, term of experience, type of faculty they graduated from and whether to have studied in the field of child rights) as well as definition of classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the compliance of regulations and practices concerning the student-related services with the child's best interest principle, measures of arithmetic mean and standard deviation were used. The following ranges were taken as a basis in the assessment of the arithmetic means of answers given by participants to the research questions:

Score	Observed Frequency	Limit Value
1	Never	1.00-1.79
2	Rarely	1.80-2.59
3	Occasionally	2.60-3.39
4	Mostly	3.40-4.19
5	Always	4.20-5.00

3. FINDINGS

This part of the research study includes opinions of the classroom teachers, who are serving at the public elementary schools, as to the observance of compliance of the regulations and practices concerning student-related services at elementary schools with the child's best interest principle as well as findings and comments concerning analysis of these opinions by different variables and suggestions in respect thereof.

3.1. Findings and Comments as to the Observance of The Child's Best Interest in the Enrolment Process

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the compliance of the regulations and practices concerning the enrolment process with the child's best interest are presented in Table 1 on an item by item basis.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation values of the classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the child's best interest in the enrolment process

Aspect	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
Enrolment of Students to the School	In formation of classrooms, students are equally distributed in terms of their families' socio-economic levels.	2.64	1.42
	In formation of classrooms, balanced distribution of girl and boy students is ensured.	3.70	0.99
	In formation of classrooms, inclusive students are equally distributed.	3.62	1.02
	Classes are formed by taking into consideration ages of children in months.	3.23	1.29
	Mean Value of the Aspect	3.29	1.18

As can be inferred from Table 1, classroom teachers express that the items in the aspect of enrolment of students to school are generally observed "occasionally" ($\bar{X}=3.29$). According to this finding, it may be said that classroom teachers are of the opinion that in regulations and practices concerning the enrolment process at the elementary schools, the child's best interest is observed to a relatively lesser degree. In other words, from the standpoint of classroom teachers, the child's best interest is not observed during the enrolment process at elementary schools.

3.2. Findings and Comments as to the Observance of the Child's Best Interest in the Monitoring of Attendance of Students and Assessment of Their Behaviours

As represented in Table 2, classroom teachers state that compliance of the child's best interest is "always" observed in terms of all items included in the aspect of monitoring students' attendance and assessment of their behaviours ($\bar{X}=4.44$). In other words, according to classroom teachers, the child's best interest is "always" observed in monitoring their attendance and assessment of their behaviours at elementary schools.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation values of the classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the child's best interest in monitoring of students' attendance and assessment of their behaviours

Aspect	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
Monitoring of Students' Attendance and Assessment of Their Behaviours	The attendance of students is continuously monitored through e-school system.	4.39	0.79
	Parents whose children are absent keep updated of the situation.	4.54	0.61
	Students are provided with necessary training, during courses, to have behaviours expected of them and to learn rules to be obeyed.	4.59	0.55
	Counselling service provides support for students in order to eliminate their wrong attitudes.	4.24	0.89
	A cooperation is ensured with parents of students displaying wrong attitudes.	4.46	0.66
Mean Value of Aspect	4.44	0.70	

As inferred from Table 2, the classroom teachers consider that the item where the child's best interest is observed most frequently in regulations and practices concerning the monitoring of students' attendance and assessment of their behaviours is "students are provided with necessary training, during courses, to have behaviours expected of them and to learn rules to be obeyed" ($\bar{X}=4.59$), whereas the least observed item is "counselling service provides support for students in order to eliminate their wrong attitudes" ($\bar{X}=4.24$). According to these findings, it may be concluded that steps for elimination of wrong attitudes at elementary schools are mainly taken by classroom teachers; but to a lower extent, the counselling unit is asked for support. In other words, it may be said that classroom teachers try to resolve behavioural problems experienced in classes mainly by their own methods.

3.3. Findings and Comments as to the Observance of the Child's Best Interest in the Assessment of Students' Success

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the compliance of the regulations and practices concerning the assessment of students' success with the child's best interest are presented in Table 3 on an item by item basis.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation values of the classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the child's best interest in the assessment of students' success

Aspect	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
Assessment of students' success	Success of students at 1st, 2nd and 3rd classes during the elementary school is determined according to their attendance to course activities.	4.27	0.69
	Success of students at 1st, 2nd and 3rd classes during the elementary school is determined according to assessment and evaluation principles specified in the curriculums.	4.20	0.79
	Success of student is determined according to grades he obtained through the studies whereby he attended the course activities.	4.19	0.78
Mean Value of Aspect		4.22	0.75

As inferred from Table 3, in respect of all items included in the aspect of assessment of students' success, classroom teachers are of similar opinions and accordingly express that compliance of the child's best interest is observed "always" ($\bar{X}=4.22$). It may be accordingly said that according to classroom teachers, the child's best interest is observed in regulations and practices made by elementary schools for assessment of students' success. In other words, classroom teachers are of the opinion that in assessment of students' success at elementary schools, the child's best interest is observed.

3.4. Findings and Comments as to the Observance of the Child's Best Interest in Protection of Students' Health

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the compliance of the regulations and practices concerning the protection of students' health with the child's best interest are presented in Table 4 on an item by item basis.

As could be inferred from Table 4, classroom teachers are of similar opinions in terms of all items under the heading of protection of students' health and accordingly state that compliance of the student's best interest is observed "mostly" ($\bar{X}=4.06$). Given the fact that the frequency of this aspect is "mostly", it may be stated that according to classroom teachers, the child's best interest is observed to a relatively lesser degree in terms of this aspect.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation values of the classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the child's best interest in the protection of students' health

Aspect	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
Protection of Students' Health	Students are ensured to have a balanced and regular diet at school.	3.86	0.90
	Students are ensured to undergo several medical controls such as vaccination, dental examination and etc.	4.33	1.67
	Schools are ensured to be clean and hygienic.	4.06	0.84
	School canteen and dining halls are regularly controlled.	4.00	0.94
	Mean Value of Aspect	4.06	1.08

3.5. Findings and Comments as to the Observance of the Child's Best Interest in Maintenance of Students' Safety

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the compliance of the regulations and practices concerning the maintenance of students' safety with the child's best interest are presented in Table 5 on an item by item basis.

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation values of the classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the child's best interest in maintenance of students' safety

Aspect	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
Maintenance of students' safety	It is ensured that security officers at schools be trained and qualified.	3.01	1.28
	Speed bump is placed on streets and main streets where schools are located.	3.39	1.38
	School/student-related signs are placed on streets and main streets where schools are located.	3.48	1.28
	Schools have first aid cabinet, first aid kit and relevant tools and materials.	3.97	0.92
	Teachers and other staff of the school are ensured to be sufficient for doing first aid.	3.45	1.07
	Mean Value of Aspect	3.46	1.18

As inferred from Table 5, although classroom teachers state that items in the aspect of maintenance of students' safety are observed "mostly", it may be said that according to them, all items concerning this aspect are observed to a degree lesser than the items in the other aspects ($\bar{X}=3.46$). Yaman and Ayar (2009), discussing the practice of school police as an alternative to the school security, note in line with findings of their study that a permanent security officer must be charged at schools and that school polices appointed from place of duty which is closest to schools must frequently pay visits to schools.

3.6. Findings and Comments as to the Observance of the Child's Best Interest in Providing Counseling Services and Social Activities for Students

Arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the compliance of the regulations and practices concerning the provision of counselling services and social activities for students with the child's best interest are presented in Table 6 on an item by item basis.

Table 6. Mean and standard deviation values of the classroom teachers' opinions as to the observance of the child's best interest in providing counselling services and social activities for students

Aspect	Items	\bar{X}	Sd
Providing Counselling Services and Social Activities for Students	At elementary schools, counselling services aiming at attracting students' interest and discovering their talents are rendered.	3.39	1.09
	Counselling services that are suitable for students' level and that aim at ensuring students to have knowledge of professions are rendered.	3.36	1.08
	During counselling services at elementary schools, class teacher, counsellor, school administrator and parent act collaboratively.	3.98	0.86
	Social activities for developing students' sense of trust are carried out.	3.84	0.86
	Social activities for developing students' sense of responsibility are carried out.	3.87	0.89
	Scientific activities for ensuring students to have new field of interest and acquire news skills are carried out.	3.47	1.01
	Artistic activities for ensuring students to have new field of interest and acquire news skills are carried out.	3.53	1.02
	Sportive activities for ensuring students to have new field of interest and acquire news skills are carried out.	3.53	0.98
	Suitable places and facilities for enabling effective and efficient social activities at schools are provided.	3.39	1.13
	Mean Value of Aspect	3.59	0.99

As inferred from Table 6, classroom teachers state that the child's best interest is observed "mostly" in respect of items included under the aspect of providing counselling services and social activities for students ($\bar{X}=3.59$). Given the fact that the frequency of this aspect is "mostly", it may be stated that

according to classroom teachers, the child's best interest is observed to a relatively lesser degree in terms of this aspect when compared to the mean values of the other aspects.

4. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Concept of the child's best interest means "his protection for being raised in a healthy, balanced and free manner in physical, mental, emotional, socio-cultural, moral, legal and economic terms". In case of any conflict between the child's interest and the others' interests, the child's interest must be given superiority (Akyüz, 2013, 46). Those responsible -namely policy-makers, parents, teachers, managers, experts, police officers, doctors, judges and prosecutors- must take into consideration the child's best interest in taking any decisions and performing any acts. During the period from enrolment to graduation, schools must also pay regard to the child's best interest in rendering student-related services.

This research study reveals that according to classroom teachers, the child's best interest is observed "occasionally" in regulations and practices concerning the enrolment process. It is established that the teachers participating in the research study consider that classes are not suitable for physical and mental characteristics of 66-month-old students. As a matter of fact, in their research, Cerit, Akgün, Yıldız and Soysal (2014) conclude in line with the considerations of school administrators and teachers that the most important problem experienced during the beginning phase of the new educational system (4+4+4) is the "earlier school start time". In a similar research study conducted by Merter, Şekerci and Bozkurt (2013), most of the teachers involving in the study note that studying of 66-month and 72-month old students according to the same educational program is not found suitable as their readiness levels are not the same. It has been observed that the findings obtained through other researches concerning the school enrolment age are matching with the finding of this study. According to these results, it may be concluded that the child's best interest is not observed in terms of the school enrolment age.

This research study reveals that according to classroom teachers, the child's best interest is observed "always" in regulations and practices concerning the monitoring of students' attendance and assessment of their behaviours. Given the facts that transportation of students in this age group (6-10) is generally ensured by their families or service vehicle, that the communication between parents and teachers is more frequent, that families act meticulously due to earlier age of their children and that students of this age group mainly obey the school rules, it may be said that at elementary school, students' non-attendance is monitored and they are ensured to change their behaviour more easily.

Regard being had to the findings of the research, it has been observed that according to classroom teachers, the child's best interest is observed "always" in regulations and practices concerning the assessment of students' success. In other words, it may be said that the child's best interest is observed in assessing success of students at elementary schools. Such opinion adopted by the classroom teachers in the assessment of students' success at elementary schools may be said to be affected by the practice whereby students' success is determined not through exams but by their attendance to courses. Balcı (1988) states that the effective school understanding is a product of joint coordinated endeavours of all shareholders namely administrators, teachers and parents. Many researches indicate that effective participation of parents in school increases students' attendance in schools, their success, motivation and self-respect as well as ensure students to take a positive attitude towards school.

According to classroom teachers, the child's best interest is observed "mostly" in regulations and practices concerning the protection of students' health. Although classroom teachers note that items in the aspect of maintenance of students' safety are "mostly" observed, they are of the opinion that all items concerning this aspect are observed to a degree lesser than the items in the other aspects. The finding as to the "attention is paid to the requirement that security officers at schools are trained and qualified", which is - according to classroom teachers- observed at the minimum level at schools under the aspect of maintaining students' safety, is also matched with the studies carried out in the same literature. In this respect, 42,4% of administrators and teachers participating in the research study by Dönmez and Güven (2002) state that there must be a security officer maintaining control at the school gates.

The classroom teachers participating in this research indicate that the child's best interest is "mostly" observed in regulations and practices concerning the provision of counselling services and social activities for students. However, they note that the requirement of providing suitable places and facilities for enabling effective and efficient social activities at schools is observed "occasionally".

Recommendations required to be taken into consideration in line with the research findings are as follows:

1. Regulations which would ensure taking into consideration of the student's age and readiness level in his enrolment to school – specified in Article 11 of the Regulation on Pre-School and Primary Education Institutions issued by the Ministry of National Education – must be introduced in order to certainly avoid enrolment to elementary schools of children under 72 months of age or not reaching a certain level of maturity.
2. A certain budget must be regularly allocated for schools in order for the effective implementation of the provision “it is essential to provide students with a healthy and safe educational environment at schools and the surroundings”, specified in Article 78 of the Regulation on Pre-School and Primary Education Institutions that was issued by the Ministry and concerns ensuring clean environments at elementary schools.
3. Certain provisions must be added to the Regulation on Pre-School and Primary Education Institutions that was issued by the Ministry for ensuring establishment of dining halls at schools for healthy nutrition of students. In this respect, new schools to be built must be planned with a dining hall.
4. A provision which prescribes that a trained security officer must also be present at schools along with a video surveillance system and alarm system must be added to Article 78 of the Regulation on Pre-School and Primary Education Institutions which concerns maintenance of safety of students.
5. A binding provision must be added to the Regulation on the Permanent Administrators and Teachers of Educational Institutions issued by the Ministry in order to ensure employment of counsellors by all schools, regardless of the total number of students.
6. Provisions must be added to the Regulation on Pre-School and Primary Education Institutions that was issued by the Ministry and the Regulation on Social Activities at Primary and Secondary Education Institutions, in order to establish arts, music, painting and sports hall and to provide students at elementary schools with social activities suitable for their development in line with their interests and skills. For the implementation of these provisions, currently established schools must be granted funds, and thereby the halls for social activities must be expanded. New schools to be built must be planned with halls where students would play as well as learn by doing. Besides, regulations must be made for preventing boutique schools from receiving a license.
7. It must be researched whether regulations and practices concerning student-related services at secondary and high schools are in compliance with the child's best interest principle. Besides, those concerned must be encouraged to carry out research studies revealing the question whether the compliance of the child's best interest is observed in every field of life particularly schools.

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