A Comparative Case Study: Opinions of Ministry of Education, Teachers, Parents, and Managers of Union about Education Reforms in North Cyprus

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Abstract

This research aimed to evaluate the opinions of Ministry of Education, teachers, parents, and unions regarding to the main problems of education in North Cyprus in order to contribute for the development of education system of the North Cyprus. It was also believed that this research could make a greater contribution to the comprehension of the educational and societal reality in North Cyprus. In this research, semi-structured interview was used as a notion of qualitative research method. Totally, 110 participants were interviewed that the senior managers of the union, both the managers and the employees of Ministry of Education, teachers, and the parents participated research. According to the findings of comparative case study, it was revealed that the education unions looked after their own benefits and privileges by deviating from their aim; they did not take the role which they had to take to educate the unions, they did not have any prospective research which concerned a certain plan and an attempt, and it was also determined that there was a great divergence between education unions and Ministry of Education. In this research, within the context of education unions, which they could make greater contributions to the improvement of society and education, what offered to the managers of education union was that they should arrange more education councils in order to allow North Cyprus to reach the education level of Europe and other developed countries. Besides, they should inform the parents and also education unions should take an active and a more efficient role in increasing both the numbers and qualifications of education conferences and the workshops within the framework of a certain plan and a program.

Key Words

Education, Union, Ministry of Education, Education Reforms, Parents, Teachers.

In general terms, education is defined as a conscious development or modification of behaviors. The direction, content and the method of this

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variability depends on the social and economical conditions, culture and value judgment of an individual, and the development of human rights and education sciences in the country (Altunya, 2000, p. 9). The education of an individual can also be defined as sum of the processes where an individual can develop his/her ability, attitudes, and positive behavior patterns (Aydın, 2000, p. 183). The personality of an individual, who goes through this process, becomes different because this differentiation occurs via the ability, attitude and values that are gained in the education process (Fidan ve Erden, 1998, p. 2). For this reason, education can also be defined as "the process of educating a per-

son". In short, education is claimed as a tool since it leads a country to carry out its cultural, social, and economical development as well as it carries out the education of an individual (Başaran, 1992; Kaya, 1993).
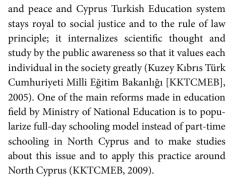
The capitalistic globalization process, which speeded up in 1980s, caused great changes in economical, social, and cultural relations around the world. The societal change, which is caused by this process, can be evaluated as "reorganization" because this process is defined as reorganization of economical and social structure that occurs in the direction of benefits of the global cost (Ünal, 2005, p. 6).

In order to go to the better schools, both the children and youths find themselves in an awful competition by going to the private teaching institutions those become a profitable field for the capital (Irkad, 1997, p. 91). Accordingly, this change causes the people's right of education to fail even in public schools and paves the way for private schools (İren, 2009). In despite of all those truths, the government decreases the portion that is saved from the budget for the primary education day-by-day (Bahçeci, 2004, p. 3).

The Union of Cyprus-Turkish Primary School Teachers and The Union of Cyprus-Turkish Secondary Education Teachers were both established in 1968. The name of The Union of Cyprus-Turkish Primary School Teachers changed as The Union of Cyprus-Turkish Teachers and separated from the union of secondary education in 1976 (Ktöstüzük, 2001, pp. 1-2). Another education union is called The Union of Cyprus-Turkish Secondary Education (KTOEÖS) and it has members more than 2000. This union is a civil society organization, which has the highest number of members. Both the teachers who work in secondary, vocational, and technical schools in Cyprus; and who work in the classes which are held for women in the village, and the teachers who retired from such schools can be a member of this union that was established in 1968 (Ktoeöstüzük, 2000, pp. 6-8).

The New Vision, Mission and the Reforms of Cyprus-Turkish Education System

Cyprus Turkish Education System can restore itself continually and it is open to change, put humanistic values ahead. It aims to introduce peaceful and conciliator individuals to society; it also paves the way for a multi-dimensional development of people which is possible by giving a qualified life-long education to them as well as freedom, democracy,

and peace and Cyprus Turkish Education system stays royal to social justice and to the rule of law principle; it internalizes scientific thought and study by the public awareness so that it values each individual in the society greatly (Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [KKTCMEB], 2005). One of the main reforms made in education field by Ministry of National Education is to popularize full-day schooling model instead of part-time schooling in North Cyprus and to make studies about this issue and to apply this practice around North Cyprus (KKTCMEB, 2009).

Purpose

According to the policies which are considered as exact market mechanisms in education system, it is believed that the analysis of the role of unions in this process has a great importance. This research had a purpose to evaluate the opinions of Ministry of Education, teachers, parents, and unions regarding to the main problems of education in North Cyprus.

Method

Research Design

Qualitative interview techniques was used in this research. Data were collected in 3 different ways of semi-interviews, open-ended questions, and close-ended questions. In semi-interview method, data questions can be prepared in advance and data are collected based on these questions. This technique is not as strict as close-ended questions and not as flexible as open-ended questions. It provides more realistic environment in the collection of data process; this is the main reason why semi-interview technique is used in the study (Karasar, 1998).

Universe and Sampling

In this research, purposeful sampling method was used. In this respect, working group was created based on the snowball sampling method (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001). Totally 110 participants took part in this research and those participants consisted of the senior managers of two well-established unions which are active in Cyprus, the members of the unions, teachers, the managers of Ministry of National Education, and the parents.

Data Collection Process

The research data were collected between 01 May and 15 June 2011. Interview form were evaluated by three different experts in this field and as a result of their evaluations, the questions were prepared. After making 3 pilot interviews , their voices were recorded during the interview and their answers were observed in order to figure out if their answers directly relate with the questions on the interview or not. In addition to that, two other experts evaluated the questions and observed whether they were related with the study topic, whether the questions could be easily answered, and whether the information needed could be obtained from these questions. As a result of all these studies, questions were evaluated and the final version of the survey was prepared. As already known, in the qualitative research methods, it's important how the researcher can obtain information with the research technique and the questions that they used. Accordingly, once the interview questions were evaluated, the researcher started to collect the data.

Analyses of Data

In this study, results can be classified into four different forms.

The Coding of the Data: In the interview sessions, the recorded cassettes were all put in numbered lines. Interview notes and cassettes were all given to an expert to evaluate and relevant controls were made. After the interview, notes were obtained; the relevant information was put in a logical manner and was grouped together in a coded manner. After the relevant research was coded, a code list was obtained and the relevant information acted as a key list. After the key list was read by the participants, "information agreed" and "information disagreed" in principle were argued and brought to a consensus. In order to find out the accuracy of the information, Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggested accuracy formula to be followed and 94% was recorded. For regarding accuracy of the information obtained 70% and over is recorded as accurate information.

Finding the Themes: In this part, firstly codes obtained in the primary section would be categorized under themes that were created in the beginning. In determining the similarities between the codes, the codes were all categorized and organized.

Organizing Data Based on Themes and Codes: In this category participant's answers and data were put into words which the reader would understand the data in a clear and precise manner and subsequently were given to the reader. In order to ascertain which interview notes belonged to the participants, foot notes were used along the research and interview notes were put into quotation marks. Later on, notes with quotation marks were expressed as to which participant the relevant notes belonged to.

Interpretation of Findings: At the final stage, detailed analysis of the research data obtained was interpreted with the relevant solutions. Gathered information was continuously interpreted in the research and the relevant solutions were supported by the data.

Results

I. Dimension: Determining the Purposes of Teacher's Unions

In order to determine the purposes of teacher's union, the participants who took place in the research group were asked about their opinions regarding to the missions of teacher's union. 76 % of the participants who took place as the Senior Manager of the Union pointed out that the members looked after their benefits.

II. Dimension: The Role of Teacher's Union in Education

67% of the participants who were in the position of The Senior Manager of the Union pointed out that the members took place in the committee's of national education council, they arranged conferences in order to inform both the teachers and parents regarding to education, they invited the famous people to the conferences, they conducted education workshops, they released many publications about education, and they took an extensive and an active role in education by organizing seminars.

III. Dimension: The Plan, Attempts and The Activities of Teacher's Union about Education Reforms

33% of the participants who were in the position of The Senior Manager of the Union pointed out that they entered into a study about planning education financing, the 25% of the unionists made attempts about developing an education model, and the

42% of unions conducted modern and advanced studies within the context of training teachers and improvement of qualifications of teachers and they also indicated that unionists carry out prospective activities about long-term plan and program.

IV. Dimension: Attitudes of Ministry of Education Regarding to Teacher's Union

92% of the participants who were in the position of The Senior Manager of the Union pointed out that the unions and Ministry of Education are in a very contrary and non-compatible relationship even though they should have had a cooperation in accordance with the compatible and parallel opinions

Conclusion and Recommendations

I. Dimension: Set up the Teacher Union

The results that we obtain regarding that there is needed to bring the solutions to the problems of the educational objectives of the teacher unions are similar with the studies of Tok (1996), Öcal (2003) and Gerboğa (2006). In this context, rather than protection of the rights and interests of teachers, education unions should acquire the ultimate goal of how to contribute of the education system in the country.

II. Dimension: The Role of Teacher's Union in Education

It can be suggested to the managers of education union that, they should take a more efficient and an active role in education by arranging more education councils in order to enhance the North Cyprus's education level up to the Europe's and other developed countries', by conducting meetings and conferences to raise the awareness of parents and the numbers and it was also suggested that the qualifications of education seminars, conferences, and councils should be increased within the scope of a certain plan. This suggestion coincides with the opinions and the suggestions in the studies of İren (2009). In his study, Kocabaş (2003) pointed out that the trade union movement around the world entered 2000s by being under the influence of period of change and he also indicated that it was better for unions to offer new solutions which concern the entire society.

III. Dimension: The Plan, Attempts and The Activities of Teacher's Union about Education Reforms

It can be suggested to the managers of the union that they should employ more experts or they should take an expert's opinion in order to make greater contributions to the education reforms. The opinions and the suggestions that are presented according to the findings which were obtained in the III. Dimension coincide with the opinions and the suggestions in the study of Gül (2007).

IV. Dimension: Attitudes of Ministry of Education Regarding to Teacher's Union

Based on the opinions of managers, it can be said that there is no cooperation between the unions and Ministry of Education, and each sides hold opposite views. However, since the opposite opinions and excessive polarization make no contribution to the education, it can be suggested to both sides that they should make common cause with each other and should be in cooperation. The opinions and the suggestions are presented based on the findings which were obtained in the III. Dimension coincide with the opinions and the suggestions in the studies of İren (2009).

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