e-International Journal of Educational Research
Volume: 4 Issue: 4 Autmn 2013 pp. 100-116

The Relationship between School Climate Perceptions and School Size and Status[1]

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Abstract

Over the last three decades, much research into school effectiveness has indicated the importance of school climate in school improvement efforts. This article describes the results of a study on school climate perceptions in relation to school size and status. The study employed a sample of 600 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students and 426 teachers in 16 public and 4 private primary schools in four central districts of Izmir, Turkey. The findings of this descriptive study indicated that both the teachers and the students hold generally positive perceptions about school climate and that there is a significant difference in the school climate perceptions of both the teachers and students in terms of school characteristics. One interesting finding of the present research is that students in public schools have more positive perceptions of school climate than their private school counterparts. In light of the findings of the study, some suggestions were made for school principals as well as policy-makers.

Key Words: School climate, school size, public schools, private schools, school improvement

INTRODUCTION

School climate has been recognized by researchers as well as educators as one of the characteristics which determines how effective a school functions. School climate research occupies a popular position in current school improvement initiatives and programs aiming to yield positive outcomes for students and teachers (Şahin, 2013; Balcı, 2000; Hoy, et al., 1998; Hoy and Miskel, 2005; Witcher, 1993). The extant theoretical and empirical work propounds that assessing school climate can provide valuable information on the responsiveness of the school community toward change and that school climate data is an efficient tool for assessing efforts to enhance the instructional environment (Freiberg, 2003). As Stevens and Sanchez (1999) stated, "The perceptions of students, parents, and the community are key components for creating an atmosphere where teachers can teach, students can learn, parents can take an active role in the education of their children, and excellence can be achieved" (p. 124).

The concept of school climate is quite elusive, and its conceptual and operational definitions as well as measurement techniques are highly diverse.

[1] *This paper is taken in part from a dissertation to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in the department of Educational Administration and Supervision at the Institute of Educational Sciences, Dokuz Eylul University, Izmir.*

However, researchers seem to have reached a consensus that school climate is a psychological, multidimensional, complex phenomenon (Likert, 1967). There is a wide variety of school climate definitions. One commonly held definition is "the set of internal characteristics that distinguish one school from another and influence the behaviors of each school's members" (Hoy and Miskel, 2005:185). More recently, Cohen, et al. (2009) defined school climate as "the quality and character of school life" and suggested that "school climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures" (p. 182).

It is useful to look into the aspects of school climate that are often examined as a means to comprehend and conceptualize this broad phenomenon. Among the key areas that seem to cut across conceptualizations of school climate are institutional environment, safety, interpersonal relationships, leadership, instructional environment and academic support. Recently, Cohen et al. (2009) presented a set of four dimensions; safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the environment. More recently, Zullig, et al. (2010) conducted a factor analysis and identified positive teacher-student relationship, social connectedness, academic support, and order and discipline as the most significant domains.

Positive school climates are largely known to be environments in which the whole of the school community thrives (Bryk and Driscoll, 1988; Cohen et al., 2009). The previous research on school climate acknowledge that academic success experienced by students may be largely attributed to a positive climate (MacNeil, et al., 2009; Sweetland and Hoy, 2000). A number of studies by other researchers have also successfully associated positive school climates with improved learning environments and increased student achievement (Bulach, et al., 1995; Grosin, 1991; Hoy, et al., 1998; McPartland, et al., 1998; Onoye, 2004). In addition to academic achievement, schools address many other objectives including the development of a wide range of social competencies, the promotion of an engaged citizenship, and the nurture of caring, humane persons (Bryk and Hermanson, 1993). Studies have also found that a positive school climate promotes group cohesion, cooperative learning, mutual trust and respect (Finnan et al., 2003; Ghaith, 2003).

School climate is also associated with positive outcomes for teachers. Studies show that increased job satisfaction for school staff can be the result of a positive school climate (Toprakci, 2003; Gündüz, 2008; Taylor and Tashakkori, 1995). Teachers in a school with a positive climate experience less job-related stress and burnout and the school has a lower attrition rate (Pepper and Thomas, 2002). Trust, cooperation and collaboration, and openness in schools generate higher levels of commitment, satisfaction and cohesion around school goals among teachers (Bryk, et al., 2010; Butt et al., 2005; De Nobile and McCormick, 2005; Pas, et al., 2012; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). A positive school climate is also an important contributor to the development of teachers' beliefs that they can affect student learning positively (Guo and Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2011; Hoy and Woolfolk, 1993).

In order to provide a better understanding of a school's climate, the differences between teachers' and students' perceptions with regard to teaching and learning should also be considered. Mitchell, et al. (2010) researched student and teacher perceptions of overall school climate and academic emphasis, and found that teachers' school climate perceptions are affected more by such classroom-level factors as poor classroom management and ratio of students with disruptive behaviors. However, students' perceptions are influenced more by student-teacher relationship, and principal turnover.

One of the factors that is linked with a positive school climate is school size. Research on the effects of school size on school climate shows that smaller schools are more advantageous in terms of student achievement, safety, and relationships among school members. McNeely et al. (2002) found that there is a positive correlation between smaller schools and school connectedness and suggested that school connectedness is lower in large schools as teachers in such schools cannot maintain caring and positive relationships with all students. Stevenson (2006) also concluded that smaller middle schools are better with regard to academic performance.

School status is another conspicuous factor in school climate analyses. The structures and conditions of private and public schools differ worldwide. However, in the context of the current study, public schools are those who are totally dependent on the Ministry of National Education, which is responsible for determining the curriculum, student assessment, teacher recruitment and appraisal, budgeting, and supply of equipment (Akşit, 2007:135). Private schools, on the other hand, have flexibility with regard to teacher recruitment and appraisal, budgeting and supply of equipment and facilities though they are also dependent on the Ministry in terms of curricular and student assessment decisions. In general, private schools in Turkey provide respectively higher salaries to teachers, good quality equipment and facilities, various extra-curricular activities and therefore, create better education opportunities for children. Research shows that private school teachers have a more positive climate perception than public school teachers (Arslan, et al., 2007; Choy, 1997). However, there is little research on school climate perceptions of students with regard to school status.

The aim of this study is to provide insight into the existing school climate through the examination of students' and teachers' perceptions. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the teachers' perceptions about school climate?
2. What are the students' perceptions about school climate?
3. Are there any differences between the teachers' perceptions in terms of school size and school status?
4. Are there any differences between the teachers' perceptions in terms of school size and school status?

METHOD

In the interest of this study, the researcher used the descriptive method. In this kind of research, the event, individual or object is described as it is, in its own circumstances (Karasar, 2004: 77).

Sample: The population of the study consisted of teachers and students in the primary schools located in 21 districts of Izmir, Turkey. In order to identify the sample, first, the districts were selected considering the following:

1. presence of at least one private school
2. the criteria used to identify the level of socio-economic development of districts in terms of educational conditions and facilities in schools, which was published by Çıngı, et al. (2007) as a project funded by TÜBİTAK.

At the second stage of sample selection, four districts were selected using first the cluster sampling, and then random sampling method. At the next stage, schools were classified by size according to Lee and Loeb's (2000) approach. The schools with less than 400 students are considered small, and those with more than 750 students are classified as large schools. Finally, 4 state schools and 1 private school were selected from each district. Thus, the sample comprised 426 teachers working in the selected 16 public and 4 private schools and 600 6th, 7th and 8th grade students studying in those schools.

Instrumentation: The data were collected using a five-point Likert scale called School Climate Survey (both teacher and student versions), developed by the author as part of her doctoral research. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement using a scale of 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) with a rating of 3 considered neutral. The instruments were developed in Turkish after thorough review of the literature and of various surveys developed by eminent researchers in the field, including Organizational Health Inventory (Hoy and Tarter, 1992) and School Climate Survey (NASSP, 1996). An exploratory factor analysis of the teacher version of the survey yielded 47 items and a three-factor model. The first factor is leadership and participation, and includes items such as "Administrators are aware of the problems teachers face", "Teachers trust administrators", "Teachers' involvement in decision making is valued". The second factor is instructional environment, composed of items such as "There is a positive relationship between teachers and students", "Students show respect to one another", and "Teachers keep up-to-date with trends in learning and teaching process". Collaboration is the third factor, and comprises items such as "Teachers are willing to help each other when problems arise", "Teachers meet socially outside of the school to enjoy each other's company", and "Teachers work in cooperation to reach professional goals". The reliability coefficient of each factor is .96, .95 and .94 respectively (Table 1).

An exploratory factor analysis of the student version of the survey yielded 35 items and a four-factor model. The first factor is teacher-student relationship, and includes items such as "Teachers love their students", "Teachers are proud of their

students", "Teachers are willing to help students". The second factor is leadership and participation, composed of items such as "In my school everybody helps one another", "Administrators value students' opinions", and "In my school problems are discussed openly". Instructional environment is the third factor, and comprises items such as "I enjoy learning in my school", "I feel safe in my school", and "I actively participate in class activities". Finally, the fourth factor is relationship among students, and includes items such as "Students respect each other", "I get along well with other students", and "Students are well-behaved even when they are not being monitored". The reliability coefficient of each factor is .91, .91, .92 and .96 respectively (Table 2).

Data Collection and Analysis: In the analysis of the first and second questions of the study, arithmetic averages and standard deviations were used to determine the teachers' and students' school climate perceptions. The surveys were designed as five-point Likert scales and the means of the perceptions of the teachers and students were used. The point intervals were as follows: 1.00-1.79 as "I definitely disagree", 1.80-2.59 as "I disagree", 2.60-3.39 as "I partly agree", 3.40-4.19 as "I agree" and 4.20-5.00 as "I completely agree". These intervals were calculated by the formula of 5-1= 4 and 4/5 =0.80. For the analysis of the third and fourth questions, t-Tests were used for independent samples to determine whether the teachers' and students' perceptions differed according to school size and school status.

FINDINGS

Teachers' perceptions of school climate: An analysis of the teachers' perceptions of the existing school climate is presented in Table 1. The mean of the primary school teachers' "total" school climate perceptions was $\bar{X}$=3.61. When compared to the scale, the mean corresponds to the answer "I agree". Consequently, it could be said that the primary school teachers' perceptions of school climate were quite positive.

Table 1:
Reliability coefficients, means and standard deviations of the scales of the school climate survey for teachers

Scale	No of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Alpha Reliability	Variance Explained (%)
Leadership and Participation	17	3.51	.86	.96	48.24
Instructional Environment	18	3.66	.66	.95	6.26
Collaboration	12	3.68	.76	.94	5.57
TOTAL	47	3.61	.70	.96	60.07

N=426 teachers

The findings revealed that, in general, primary school teachers favorably perceived their school climate. According to the results, of the three dimensions of school climate, collaboration is more prevalent than both instructional environment, and leadership and participation. These primary school teachers felt that most of their colleagues have a professional commitment to education, and that teachers

worked in cooperation with other teachers in the school. This supports previous research findings which show that teachers find it meaningful to meet and talk, and these activities promote a sense of satisfaction (Rosenholtz and Simpson, 1990), increased teacher retention (Schmoker, 2004), and commitment to the profession (Talbert and McLaughlin, 2002).

It was also found out that the items with the highest means are "Students' abilities and achievements are acknowledged", "Teachers make extra effort to help their students", and "Teachers can talk about their students with the other teachers openly". Among the items with the lowest means are "Students show respect to one another", Students are well-behaved even when they are not being monitored" and "If a student hurts another, the other students stop him/her".

Another finding related to the first research question is that the standard deviations of most of the items that belong to the instructional environment dimension are below 1.00, which indicates that there is congruence among the teachers regarding those items. Among them are "Teacher-student relationships are positive", "Students' abilities and achievements are acknowledged", and "Instructional activities are student-centered". On the other hand, some of the items about leadership and school management, such as "Teachers trust school administrators", "School administrators are fair in distributing work", and "School administrators are aware of the problems teachers face" have standard deviations between 1.00 and 1.50. This shows that there are several groups of teachers with disagreeing opinions.

Students' perceptions of school climate: An analysis of the students' perceptions of the existing school climate is presented in Table 2. The mean of the primary school students' "total" school climate perceptions was $\overline{X}$=3.96. When compared to the scale, the mean corresponds to the answer "I agree". It could therefore be said that the primary school students' perceptions of school climate were quite positive.

According to the findings, primary school students have positive perceptions regarding school climate. Of the four dimensions, instructional environment is the most favorably perceived dimension of school climate. Based on the items included in the instructional environment dimension of the scale, it could be claimed that these primary school students enjoy learning, actively participate in class activities and feel safe in their school. This finding aligns with some previous research findings in that students' perceptions of school climate have significant associations with their academic adjustment as well as their social and emotional well-being (Kuperminc, et al., 1997; Roeser, et al., 2000).

In a study conducted with a sample of teachers working in the primary schools in Izmir (Şahin, 2005), it was found out that the mean of the primary school teachers' professional attitudes is very high (X=4.10). Given that teachers' positive professional attitude is an important factor in creating a healthy learning

environment, the finding regarding the students' positive perceptions of the instructional environment is not surprising.

Table 2:
Reliability coefficients, means and standard deviations of the scales of the school climate survey for students

Scale	No of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Alpha Reliability	Variance Explained (%)
Teacher-Student Relationship	11	4.12	.85	.91	42.38
Leadership and Participation	9	3.83	.79	.91	5.22
Instructional Environment	8	4.28	.64	.92	4.30
Relationship among Students	7	3.52	.91	.96	3.10
TOTAL	35	3.96	.71	.89	55.00

N=600 students

It was also found out that the items with the lowest means are "Students are well-behaved even when they are not being monitored" and "If a student hurts another, the other students stop him/her". There is congruence between students' and teachers' perceptions with regard to student behavior given that the means of those two items both on the teacher and student surveys are the lowest.

Teachers' perceptions in terms of school size and school status: Further analysis of teachers' perceptions of school climate was conducted to examine the differences with respect to school size. Independent samples t-Tests revealed significant differences according to school size ($p<.05$). As seen in Table 3, the results show that the teachers in smaller schools have more positive school climate perceptions than those in large schools [$t(321)=3.78$, $p=0.000$].

Table 3:
Differences concerning teachers' school climate perceptions based on school size

Scale	School Size	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Leadership and Participation	Large	214	3.24	0.83	321	4.002	.000
	Small	109	3.65	0.91			
Instructional Environment	Large	214	3.42	0.61	321	2.848	.005
	Small	109	3.63	0.64			
Collaboration	Large	214	3.44	0.71	321	3.303	.001
	Small	109	3.73	0.79			
School Climate Scale	Large	214	3.36	0.65	321	3.780	.000
	Small	109	3.66	0.71			

p<0.05

Significant differences were also found between the dimensions of the school climate survey and school size ($p<.05$). The results of the independent samples t-

Tests indicated that the teachers in small schools have more positive perceptions regarding all three dimensions of the scale than those in large schools.

These findings are consistent with some prior research results. Several researchers have underscored the positive correlations between small schools and favorable interpersonal relations (Akkalkan, 2009; Bates, 1993; Kershaw and Blank 1993; and Stockard and Mayberry 1992, cited in Cotton, 1996; Fowler and Wahlberg, 1991). Smaller size allows for increased social interactions between teachers, increased collaboration, greater flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs, all of which translate into stronger teaching and learning. The fact that it is easier to establish and maintain communication in small organizations leads to a decrease in the need for bureaucracy and control mechanisms, and therefore makes school's management more efficient. Thus, affirmative interpersonal relationships can be considered to have a direct influence on the school climate perceptions of school community.

Table 4 shows the results of the independent samples t-Test conducted to examine the differences in teachers' perceptions of school climate with respect to school status. As seen in Table 4, the climate perceptions of the private school teachers are more positive than their public sector counterparts [t(229.16)=9.39, p=0.000]. This finding concurs with those of the research conducted by Arslan, et al. (2006), and Karaköse and Kocabaş (2006).

Table 4:
Differences concerning teachers' school climate perceptions based on school status

Scale	School Size	n	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Leadership and Participation	Public	323	3.38	0.88	231.04	6.437	.000
	Private	103	3.90	0.65			
Instructional Environment	Public	323	3.49	0.63	247.28	12.247	.000
	Private	103	4.17	0.44			
Collaboration	Public	323	3.54	0.75	220.88	8.129	.000
	Private	103	4.11	0.57			
School Climate Scale	Public	323	3.46	0.69	229.16	9.394	.000
	Private	103	4.06	0.51			

p<0.05

Significant differences were also found between the dimensions of the school climate survey and school status (p<.05). The results of the independent samples t-Test suggest that the climate perceptions of the private school teachers are more positive than their public sector counterparts in terms of all dimensions of the scale. Differences between the public and private sectors have frequently been discussed in the literature on public administration, politics and economics. One of the conventional distinctions between these sectors is that public organizations are driven predominantly by political rather than market forces. The public schools in Turkey operate under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education. The centralized structure leads to bureaucracy and an overemphasis of rules and

procedures (Karaman, et al., 2008). This may lead to more formal and distant interpersonal relationships and therefore, a less positive school climate.

Another distinction between public and private schools is that the physical conditions of the private schools lead to a school environment which is more conducive to instructional activities. The dynamic environment caused by competition in the sector, and more democratic management approaches, which involve teachers in decision-making are yet some other advantages that private schools enjoy. All of these factors could explain the difference in perception between the public and private school teachers involved in this study.

Students' perceptions in terms of school size and school status: Further analysis of students' perceptions of school climate was conducted to examine the differences with respect to school size. Independent samples t-Tests revealed significant differences according to school size.

As shown in Table 5, the students in small-sized public schools have more positive school climate perceptions than those in large public schools [t(478)=2.29, p=0.022]. The results of independent samples t-tests also indicated significant differences between the dimensions of the school climate survey and school size (p<.05).

Table 5:
Differences concerning students' school climate perceptions based on school size

Scale	School Size	n	$\overline{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Teacher-Student Relationship	Large	240	4.15	0.83	478	2.059	.040
	Small	240	4.30	0.78			
Leadership and Participation	Large	240	3.81	0.81	471.40	2.919	.004
	Small	240	4.01	0.71			
Instructional Environment	Large	240	4.32	0.60	478	2.014	.045
	Small	240	4.43	0.57			
Relationship among Students	Large	240	3.78	0.87	478	2.977	.035
	Small	240	3.92	0.84			
School Climate Scale	Large	240	3.98	0.70	478	2.291	.022
	Small	240	4.11	0.65			

p<0.05

According to the analyses, the climate perceptions of the students in small public schools are more positive than those in large public schools in terms of all dimensions of the scale. This concurs with some prior research findings. Several researchers have highlighted the positive correlations between small schools and favorable interpersonal relations (Akkalkan, 2009; Bates, 1993; Kershaw and Blank, 1993; Fowler and Walberg, 1991; Koth and Bradshow, 2008; and Hirase, 2000). They found that students in small schools had greater satisfaction with their schools. As McCathern (2004) stated, school size is important as it catalyzes conditions for school climate, teacher-student relationships, and student participation, all of which play important roles in promoting positive student outcomes (p. 208).

Table 6 shows the results of the independent samples t-Tests conducted to examine the differences in students' perceptions about school climate with respect to school status.

The analyses show that the students in public schools have more positive school climate perceptions than those in private schools [t(599)=6.11, p=0.000]. Significant differences were also found between the dimensions of the school climate survey and school status (p<.05). The results of the independent samples t-Tests suggest that the climate perceptions of the public school students are more positive than of the ones in private schools in terms of all dimensions of the scale.

Table 6:
Differences concerning students' school climate perceptions based on school status

Scale	School Status	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	p
Teacher-Student Relationship	Public	480	4.23	0.80	172.81	6.266	.000
	Private	120	3.67	0.89			
Leadership and Participation	Public	480	3.91	0.77	599	5.076	.000
	Private	120	3.51	0.80			
Instructional Environment	Public	480	4.38	0.59	163.58	6.392	.000
	Private	120	3.93	0.72			
Relationship among Students	Public	480	3.56	0.91	599	2.446	.015
	Private	120	3.34	0.89			
School Climate Scale	Public	480	4.05	0.68	599	6.106	.000
	Private	120	3.62	0.72			

p<0.05

There is little research on students' perceptions of school climate with respect to school status. Yılmaz (2005) found that private school students are more satisfied with their schools than public school students. In contrast, Bağışlar (2006) concluded that students in public schools have more positive school perceptions than the ones in private schools. However, the finding of the last problem addressed in the present study is surprising given that private schools are believed to provide better quality education with better physical conditions and greater safety.

In Turkey, most private schools can be classified as profit-making. Profit-making schools are opened as a result of diversification and unmet demands. Private schools generally serve for middle and upper-class clientele living in urban areas (Cinoğlu, 2006:681). A study with a sample of 1495 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students in Ankara shows that the majority of the parents of students in private schools have graduate or post-graduate degrees and have full-time jobs (Tuncer, et al., 2005). Considering the demands and expectations of the parents as well as the increasing competition in the private education sector, private schools are expected to provide good quality education in order to sustain their existence. Thus, private sector employees expect more from their employers than public sector employees do (Brown, 1996) and private school teachers are required to deliver good quality teaching in order to meet the expectations. In accordance with this, private school

teachers tend to set higher standards and expectations of their students (Karabulut, 1996:62).

According to the results of the present study, climate perceptions of students in both private and public schools are quite positive ($\overline{X}$=3.62 and $\overline{X}$=4.05 respectively). However, further analysis of the mean scores given by the private school students show that the items with the lowest means are "Teachers treat their students fairly" ($\overline{X}$=3.09), "Teachers treat their students as individuals" ($\overline{X}$=3.24), and "Teachers treat their students equally ($\overline{X}$=3.07), all of which are included in the teacher-student relationship dimension of the scale. From this perspective, it could be said that the findings of the present study converges with those of Mitchell, et al. (2010), who found that students' perceptions are influenced more by student-teacher relationships. Based on the means of the above-mentioned items, it may be concluded that private school students, who generally come from upper-class families, feel more privileged and expect more individual attention from their teachers. Another conclusion could be that, as private school teachers tend to set higher standards and expectations of their students due to the pressure coming from the school administration, they may have difficulty in satisfying individual students' needs and getting them to reach the desired level of achievement. These could explain the significant difference in perception between the public and private school students involved in this study.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Our perceptions of the environment or the atmosphere form our feelings about being in a particular place. Similarly, individuals' perceptions of the environment in which they work influence their feelings about their jobs. Teachers who perceive their school as warm and amiable tend to have positive feelings about their jobs and the schools in which they work. Evidence in the literature supports the belief that the social climate of a school and the morale of the staff can have a positive effect on individual's attitudes, their capacity to retain information, and their ability to perform at full potential. Improving the climate and morale also makes teaching a more pleasant experience (Miller, 1981:483; Tanrıöğen, 1995).

The findings of the present study have educational implications. First, the findings based on teacher perceptions can be used as a basis for reflection upon, discussion of, and systematic attempts to improve learning and teaching environment (Fisher and Fraser, 1991:25). In order to create a positive school climate, school administrators can be encouraged to examine school environment profiles, identify the aspects of school environment which would benefit from modification and improvement, and increase their understanding of the motivations of their human resources. Adopting a participative approach in leadership, promoting professional interactions and involving the school community in collaborative processes are the other important points to consider in the process of building a

favorable school climate. Second, while planning future investments, policy-makers should consider the finding that small schools are favored more by both teachers and students. One salient feature of small schools is that school members care about one another to a much greater degree than is possible in large schools and this leads not only to more cooperation among staff, but also more participation of students in instructional and social activities (Cotton, 1996). Interestingly, despite the numerous facilities and investments, students in private schools have less positive perceptions of school climate than the ones in public schools. It is also suggested that the reasons behind this finding be further investigated.

School climate is an integral component of the school improvement process. Leaders of school improvement can utilize the information gained through the assessment of a school's climate to help guide each phase of a change process. Continuous school improvement requires continuous information about the learner and the learning environment (Frieberg and Stein, 2003:12).

In today's competitive and dynamic school environment, schools are expected to justify the effectiveness and value of their programs. It is obvious that educators, education administrators and policy-makers can no longer rely on tradition, intuition or convenience in making decisions about the strategies and best practices to improve student learning. It is beneficial for schools to describe and define its climate in order to discover the factors that could either hinder or improve school effectiveness. Understanding school climate is important to maximize the effectiveness of development initiatives.

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e-International Journal of Educational Research
Volume: 4 Issue: 4 Autmn 2013 pp. 100-116

Okul İklimi Algıları ile Okulun Büyüklüğü ve Statüsü Arasındaki İlişki

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Problem: Okul iklimi araştırmaları, olumlu okul ikliminin, öğrencilerin akademik başarısının ve öğretmenlerin iş doyumlarının önemli bir göstergesi olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Geçtiğimiz otuz yılda gerçekleştirilen etkili okul araştırmalarında okul ikliminin, okul geliştirme çabalarındaki önemli rolü vurgulanmaktadır. Okul ikliminin açık bir biçimde ortaya konulması, okul geliştirme faaliyetlerinin en önemli aşamasıdır. Okul ikliminin ele alındığı bu araştırmanın amacı, öğretmen ve öğrenci algıları açısından ilköğretim okullarının örgütsel iklimini belirlemek ve mevcut iklimi, okul türü ve büyüklüğü açısından değerlendirmektir. Araştırmada yanıt aranan alt problemler şunlardır:

1. Öğretmenlerin okul iklimine ilişkin algıları nelerdir?
2. Öğrencilerin okul iklimine ilişkin algıları nelerdir?
3. Öğretmenlerin okul iklimine ilişkin algıları, okulun büyüklüğü ve statüsüne göre anlamlı bir farklılık göstermekte midir?
4. Öğrencilerin okul iklimine ilişkin algıları, okulun büyüklüğü ve statüsüne göre anlamlı bir farklılık göstermekte midir?

Yöntem: Araştırmanın örneklemini İzmir ili Aliağa, Bornova, Buca ve Çiğli ilçelerinde bulunan on altı resmi ve dört özel ilköğretim okulunda görev yapan 426 öğretmen ve bu okullarda öğrenim görmekte olan 600 ikinci kademe öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Bu genel tarama modelindeki araştırmada araştırmacının doktora tezi kapsamında geliştirdiği beşli Likert tipi Okul İklimi Ölçekleri kullanılmıştır. Öğrenciler için geliştirilen ölçek dört boyutludur ve 35 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Öğretmenlere uygulanan okul iklimi ölçeği ise üç boyutludur ve 47 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmanın ilk iki alt probleminin çözümlenmesinde aritmetik ortalama ve standart sapma, üçüncü ve dördüncü alt problemin çözümlenmesinde bağımsız örneklemler için t-Testi kullanılmıştır. Tüm çözümlemeler, SPSS 15.0 paket programı kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bulgular: Araştırmanın sonucunda hem öğretmenler ($\overline{X}$=3.61) hem de öğrencilerin ($\overline{X}$=3.96) okullarındaki örgütsel iklim algılarının oldukça olumlu olduğu ve bu algıların okul büyüklüğü ve statüsüne göre anlamlı farklılık gösterdiği bulgulanmıştır. Küçük ölçekli okulların iklimi, büyük ölçekli okullara göre hem öğretmenler [t(321)=3.78, p=0.000] hem de öğrenciler [t(478)=2.29, p=0.022]

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tarafından daha olumlu algılanmaktadır. Öte yandan, özel ilköğretim okullarında görev yapan öğretmenlerin okul iklimi algıları devlet okullarında görev yapan öğretmenlere kıyasla daha olumlu iken [t(229.16)=9.39, p=0.000], öğrenciler açısından tam tersi bir bulguya ulaşılmıştır. Devlet okullarında öğrenim gören öğrenciler, özel okullardaki akranlarına göre daha olumlu iklim algısına sahiptirler [t(599)=6.11, p=0.000].

Öneriler: Okul iklimi, okul geliştirme sürecinin vazgeçilmez bir öğesidir. Okul yöneticileri, okul iklimi araştırmalarından elde edilecek sonuçları, değişim ve gelişim çabalarında yol gösterici olarak kullanabilirler. Eğitim yatırımları planlanırken, küçük ölçekli okullardaki öğretmen ve öğrencilerin daha olumlu okul iklimi algısı olduğu bulgusu dikkate alınmalıdır. Küçük okulların, bireylerarası iletişimde samimiyet ve ilgi, işbirliğinde kolaylık ve eğitimsel ve sosyal etkinliklere katılımda artış sağladığı dikkate alındığında, okul binaları tasarımında çok sayıda öğrenciye aynı anda hizmet verecek büyük okul binaları yerine, az sayıda öğrenci için tasarlanmış nitelikli binalar yapılması önerilmektedir. Ayrıca, sunduğu çeşitli olanaklara karşın özel okulların öğrencilerinin devlet okullarına kıyasla daha olumsuz okul iklimine sahip olmalarının nedenleri araştırılabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okul iklimi, okul büyüklüğü, devlet okulları, özel okullar, okul geliştirme