



Schools for All

Belkıs Garip¹, Emrah Özpolat², Dilber Demirtaş³, M. Şahin Bülbül⁴

^{1,3,4}Middle East Technical University, ²Harran University (Turkey)

¹blksgrp@gmail.com, ²ozpolat01@gmail.com, ³demirtasdlbr@gmail.com, ⁴msahinbulbul@gmail.com

Abstract

Education promotes improvement in person's knowledge, skills and habits. It is an incontrovertible reality that education is very important for every individual. As stated in universal human rights declaration (1948), education is the legal right of every person. Since schools are places where formal education takes place in, they should provide equal opportunities for all students. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the ideas about conditions of schools to be accessible for all students, specifically disabled students. For this purpose, a questionnaire is designed by the researchers of this study. It consists of nine main dimensions, namely; lecture, class, laboratory, toilet, library, webpage, sport room, school garden and canteen conditions. For each dimension, two questions are asked which are: "which conditions should this dimension hold?", "which conditions should not this dimension hold?". Moreover, "other" option is added at the end of the questionnaire for the participants having different idea other than asked ones. The sample was selected from the university students interested in disability. The results will be used to determine the needs of schools to provide equal and accessible conditions for all students. For example, laboratory should be accessible for visually impaired students while making experiment independently. If laboratory has tactile or audible materials, visually impaireds can use them without help. What's more, lecture conditions should be suitable for hearing impaired students. If teacher explains the lecture turning his/her back to students, a hearing impaired student can face with difficulty. In Turkish education system, instead of providing necessary conditions for disabled students, they are usually exempted from that learning process. For instance, almost no visually impaired students choose to major in science since the conditions for science learning process is not adapted considering their needs like providing tactile graphs. By exposing the needs in the target dimensions, the study will be a guiding light for educational policy makers, teachers and researchers.

Introduction

Education promotes improvement in person's knowledge, skills and habits. It is an incontrovertible reality that education is very important for every individual. As stated in universal human rights declaration [1], education is the legal right of every person. Since schools are places where formal education takes place in, they should provide equal opportunities for all students. The question "To what extend the schools can meet the needs of each individual including disabled?" is a starting point of this study. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the ideas about conditions of schools to be accessible for all students, specifically disabled students. This study is the first period of a project whose focus is investigating the conditions of public schools and determines to what extend do schools meets the needs of each student. There is need of a tool to investigate the conditions of public schools. For this purpose, a questionnaire is designed by the researchers of this study. It consists of nine main dimensions, and for each dimension, two questions are asked which are: "which conditions should this dimension hold?", "which conditions should not this dimension hold?". The questionnaire was applied to 56 university students who were interested in disability. The results of this questionnaire were used to develop the tool to determine the needs of schools to provide equal and accessible conditions for all students. In Turkish education system, instead of providing necessary conditions for disabled students, they are usually exempted from that learning process. For instance,



almost no visually impaired students choose to major in science since the conditions for science learning process is not adapted considering their needs like providing tactile graphs. By exposing the needs in the target dimensions, the study will be a guiding light for educational policy makers, teachers and researchers.

The idea of this study started with the Project from the *Guardian's* education pages named as “The school I'd like”. After reading the reflections of student about their schools, the researchers intend to collect the needed features of schools and present an evaluation form to compare and classify the schools. Different from the Project “The school I'd like”, our Project focus on the barriers and opportunities to make the schools appropriate for each learner. Some ideas like a school in a submarine [2] in that project will be ignored during this Project. Similar to the project “The school I'd like”, the researchers took the views of students about the buildings such as canteen and playground [2].

The dreams of students about their schools should be considered and the schools should be transformed according to the 21st century needs [3]. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to ask and learn the new needs of pupils. For instance, being a global student or sharing via a social media is new and important terms in current education system [3]. Our Project aims to collect all these kinds of needs and analyze to prepare a tool to evaluate the conditions of schools.

Although education literature is clear about the fact that effective schools should focus on learning atmosphere more than buildings and furniture [4], there are some additional factors like school wide staff development or parent involvement [5]. The scope of our study involves all these kind of factors which helps the students feel themselves as the component of the school. The significant components of schools are the users of it and this long term project will draw the characteristics of “Schools for All”.

Methods

This long term project has five periods which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Explanations of six periods of the ‘Schools for All’ study

Period Number	Procedure of Each Period	Aim of Each Period
Period 1	Taking ideas of the students interested in disability	Composing categories of school conditions in terms of students' needs and preparing the draft of <i>school evaluation form</i> (tool to evaluate school conditions)
Period 2	Taking ideas of students and teachers	
Period 3	Taking ideas of educational researchers	
Period 4	Taking expert opinion about categories	Improving the school evaluation form
Period 5	Applying the school evaluation form as a pilot study	Testing the validity and reliability values of the form's results
Period 6	Application of the form	Evaluating the public schools

As seen in the Table 1, first three periods aim to take ideas of three samples. First sample is selected for taking ideas of individuals interesting in disability which are the sample of the current study. The second sample is selected as students and teachers as they are actual components of the schools. Their needs and what they want for their schools should be focus point. The third sample is selected as educational researcher since they are aware of the studies conducted on same issue.

For period 1, the researchers used purposive sampling. While choosing the sample, the researchers take into the consideration that students are interested in disability. For this reason, the researchers selected sample between the members of a specific student society of METU (Middle East Technical University); namely, ‘METU without Barriers’. These members have different experiences related to disability. Here are some examples: Some of them give private lectures to visually impaired students,



some of them learn sign language, and some of them attend projects about barriers in schools. As our purpose is to determine the barriers to learn and identify school conditions addressing all characteristics of learners in first sense, this sample is appropriate for this study. In short, this study was conducted on 56 members of METU without Barrier society. In this study, survey research design was used. Composed questionnaire is distributed to 56 METU students and the students' answers were examined using content analyze.

The researchers of this study composed a questionnaire (Appendix A) for period 1. It consists of nine main dimensions, namely, lecture, class, laboratory, toilet, library, webpage, sport room, school garden and canteen conditions. Two questions are asked for each dimension which are: "which conditions should this dimension hold?", "which conditions should not this dimension hold?"

Findings

Students' responses to questionnaire items were analyzed and seven main categories were composed. These categories are:

- **Support unit:** Many of the students stated that there should be a supporting person for disabled students. For example, a supporting person should be at classroom with visually impaired students to take notes. Moreover, a supporter is needed while making experiment for physically disabled.
- **Accessibility:** Students mentioned that every place and materials should be accessible for all students. For instance, maps used in lectures should be tactile for visually impaired. There should be spaces for well-chair users in the classroom.
- **Awareness:** Most of the responses were about the awareness of teachers, students and other school personnel. For example, the teacher who has a deaf student in the class should not talk by turning his back to the class. Class mates of disabled students should not exclude them.
- **In-service:** Students stated that some out of service materials limit the learning process; therefore, all units of the school should be in-service. For example, broken door, out of service laboratory materials limit students.
- **Compatibility:** Some of the students responded that all facilities in school be compatible with different needs of students. For instance, school garden should address all students' needs such as sport part, reading part etc.
- **Clean:** Some of the students emphasized the importance of the school to be clean. For example, they stated that toilets should be clean.
- **Democracy:** Some students wanted all students to have role in decision making process. For instance, some students should be able to choose not to attend to gym classes according to his/her physical conditions.



Students' answers are summarized according to these seven main categories in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency Table

	There should be a support unit	Each place and each material should be accessible .	All members should be aware about students with special needs	All units should be in-service .	Facilities should be compatible with different needs of the students.	All places should be clean .	Decisions should be taken democratically .
Course	3/56	24/56			13/56		
Classroom		30/56	1/56		2/56		
Garden	8/56	20/56		2/56	4/56		
Canteen	4/56	5/56	5/56		2/56		
Library	3/56	43/56					
Web of School		30/56	2/56		1/56		
Toilet		25/56				1/56	
Labs	1/56	12/56				1/56	1/56
Gym		17/56					1/56
Pool		1/56					
TOTAL	19	207	8	2	22	2	2

As seen in Table 2, most students' responses are related with the accessibility. In addition to nine dimensions, one student responded to the other option about pools.

Conclusion

The researchers have examined the ideas of students interested in disability about the conditions of public schools to provide equal opportunities and meet the needs of each individual. To reach the purpose, this study revealed that the ideas of the students can be grouped into seven categories. With this study, first step of a long term process has been accomplished. The seven categories will be combined with the categories obtained from Period 2 and Period 3 and they will be used to compose the school evaluation form in Period 4. This project will reveal the deficient points of schools to provide the legal right of each individual, education, with equal opportunities.

References

- [1] UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html> [accessed 25 November 2013]
- [2] Cunningham, P. (2005). The school I'd like: children and young people's reflections on an education for the twenty-first century. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 35(1), 140–143.
- [3] Our, B., Out, S., & Page, T. (2007). How to Bring Our Schools Out of the 20th Century. *Time*, 1–7.
- [4] Chandler, H. N. (1984). Effective schools. *Journal of learning disabilities*, 17(5), 312–313. doi:10.1177/002221948401700518
- [5] Purkey, S. C., & Smith, M. S. (1983). Effective Schools: A Review. *The Elementary School Journal*. doi:10.1086/461325



Appendix A: Questionnaire

ÖĞRENCİ DOSTU OKULLAR

Bu projenin amacı öğrenci ve öğrenci olmuş katılımcıların görüşleri doğrultusunda "öğrenciler için engel" barındırmayan okulları tanımlayabilmek ve özelliklerini ortaya koymaktır. Uzun soluklu bu çalışmada her bir görüşün ayrı ve özel bir katkısı olacağını düşünüyor ve görüşlerinizi yazarak destek verdiğiniz için teşekkür ediyoruz.

	Ne olmalı?	Ne olmamalı?
Derslerde		
Sınıflarda		
Bahçede		
Kütüphanede		
Okulun internet sayfasında		
Tuvaletlerde		
Laboratuvarlarda		
Kantinde		
Spor salonunda		
.....		
<input type="radio"/> Öğrenciyim <input type="radio"/> Öğretmenim <input type="radio"/> Akademisyenim <input type="radio"/> Öğrenci velisiyim <input type="radio"/> İdareciyim <input type="radio"/> Diğer		

Beni projeden haberdar etmek için şu **e-posta** adresine bilgi gönderebilirsiniz:

www.fizikil.com/engelsiz/okul adresini kullanarak da bu formu doldurabilirsiniz.