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The Relationship between the Students' Achievement of Turkish Language Class and the Central Exam Score

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Abstract

Different methods have been using during the adjustment from primary education to high school education. One of these methods is addition of specific ratio from the primary education process to the examination results. Addition of class success ratio to the exam results is criticized widely because of the possible subjective assessments in teacher's evaluation. In this study, relation between the primary education achievement and central exam achievements has been researched. The study is a descriptive survey. Turkish Language class achievements and Turkish Language Success Evaluation exam points which aim to evaluate Turkish Language basic efficiency are used. Evaluation exam is applied to 23.036 students from 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th degrees, all around Altındağ district in Ankara. As result of the analysis, there is a meaningful relation with a ratio of 58 percent between class achievements and exam results of the students. This relation shows a raising attitude from 4th grade to the 8th. Variance of class achievement on the exam points is 35 percent. However relation with the ratio of 58 percent looks high, it also seems questionable because the class achievements is used for starting high school education, to provide objectivism. Types of exams and differences among the types of questions in the exam which are applied as central exams can be considered as results of the low relation ratio. However, it can also be said that it is necessary to have some regulations in reflection of study results to exam points to gather objectivism.
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1. Introduction

Tests and examinations at all stages of education have been considered an important and powerful tool for decision making in our competitive society, with people of all ages being evaluated with respect to their achievement, skills and abilities. Zollar and Ben-Chain (1990) have the opinion that "the era in which we live is a test-conscious age in which the lives of many people are not only greatly influenced, but are also determined by their test performance". Measuring student learning outcomes is increasingly recognized as necessary, not only for monitoring a school system's success but also for improving education quality. Student achievement information can be used to inform a wide variety of education policies, including the design and implementation of programs to improve teaching and learning in classrooms, the identification of lagging students so that they can get the support they need, and the provision of appropriate technical assistance and training to low-performing teachers and schools.

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If developing countries are truly to achieve education for all, they will need assistance both with measuring their student learning levels and with finding ways to translate this information into effective education policies and practices (Kellaghan, Greaney, and Murray, 2009, p. 11).

Virtually all education systems examine students' educational achievement. The exams, which are usually administered by a public agency, tend to be based on the schools' curriculum and grade student performance into multiple levels of achievement based on an external standard, not just relative to students in a class. Examination systems constitute a vital part of accountability systems in schools. Central exams are a part of this accountability system. By producing comparable information on student performance, they go some way towards eliminating the informational asymmetry between principals and agents ubiquitous in education. Thus, central exams enable an improved monitoring of the behavior of the different stakeholders in education such as students, teachers, school heads (Woessmann, 2002).

It is worth discussing some studies showing the statistically significant inverse relationship between central test and students' achievement at school since long time. Central-based exams are an opportunity for students to show what they can do with what they know. Woessmann (2002) indicated that student-based central-exams based on level measures of performance, are less prone to arbitrariness and create incentives that induce each student to get the best possible performance out of his or her ability and social background. Woessmann (2004) stated that students performed better in countries with curriculum-based external exit exams on the 1991 International Assessment of Educational Progress (IAEP) math, science and geography tests, the 1991 International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Reading Literacy study, the 1995 Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the 1999 TIMSS-Repeat study and the 2000 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reading, math and science tests.

The empirical studies of the effect of central exit examinations on the academic performance of students claims that in cross-country as well as in single-country studies, the existence of central exit examinations significantly improves student performance (Bishop, 1997, 1999). Jürges, Schneider and Büchel (2003) stated that central exit examinations could raise average student achievement significantly. They also suggested that the government should seriously consider central exit examinations in order to provide students and teachers in their states with incentives to adhere to higher standards. Compared to other measures discussed to raise student achievement such as decreasing class sizes, central exit examinations seem to be a lot more cost effective.

In Turkey, pupil admission to secondary education institutions is performed by means of direct application and entrance examination. General high schools, vocational high schools on commerce, vocational high schools on industry, vocational high schools for girls, theology high schools, high schools with multiple curriculums and vocational and technical education centers admit pupils by means of direct application. Students are accepted to the other schools by means of centralized placement test. Transition system to secondary education is a system to place the students centrally to the secondary education institutions according to Secondary Education Placement Grade (SEPG) consisted of the score of the placement exam named "Seviye Belirleme Sınavı (SBS)", conducted at the end 8th class, year-end competence score and class score components regarding students' school preferences. SBS is a centralized nationwide, curriculum focused (the courses included in the examination is determined by the ministry) multiple choice examination. Year-end competence score is the mean of the two semesters' end averages of all courses. The students who want to attend to the schools in this group preferred the school according to their SEPG. Students are ranked according to their SEPG and placed to the schools regarding their preferences. Placement application is realized by Ministry of National Education (MEB, 2012).

This study focuses on reading achievement due to the fact that the acquisition of literacy is a lifelong process that takes place not just at school or through formal learning, but also through interactions with family, peers, colleagues

and wider communities. Reading is fundamental to function in today's society. Reading is an important gateway to personal development, and to social, economic and civic life (Holden, 2004). Success in reading provides the foundation for achievement in other subject areas and for full participation in adult life. Levels of reading literacy are more reliable predictors of economic and social well-being than is the quantity of education as measured by years at school or in post-school education (OECD, 2010a, p. 18-32). Events focusing on reading for pleasure can also promote or enhance social skills in children (Allan, Ellis & Pearson, 2005). Since a literate population provides the foundation for any nation's social and economic health and the ability to read is essential for the personal growth of citizens, it is crucial to have easily accessible information about students' achievement in reading.

Although there are various national and international studies conducted to analyze the relationship between students' achievement and central exam scores, local studies in this field are not high in number. With this view in mind, this study aims to be the first local survey that shows the relationship between students' achievement of Turkish Language class and central exam score of 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders in public schools in Altındağ, Ankara. The purpose of this study is to determine whether or not there is a relationship between students' achievement of Turkish Language class and central exam score of 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders in public schools in Altındağ.

2. Method

Research, locally is a relational survey as it focuses on to find out the relationship between the students' Turkish Language achievement and central exam score. The section to find out student success according to a central exam applied locally and their Turkish Language points is formed by 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. It doesn't contain the whole universe of research because the area can be searched totally.

In the research, two different types of gathering information methods which include test questions about Turkish subject which aims to define students' success and survey materials which aims to determine students' Turkish Language points. The achievement of Turkish language class has obtained from basic skills which are aimed to earn by students in Turkish language class referred to PISA, PIRLS, and Evaluation Exam for Student Achievements and Primary education Turkish Language program by Ministry of National Education (Ayral, 2008). The preparation process of the test questions which aim to improve students' success can be summarized like this: At first stage, a group containing eight Turkish Language educators has been created from all primary schools in Altındağ in 2011-2012 academic year. The test question created by this group personally, evaluated as a group again, made some corrections (context, format, intelligibility) at the second stage.

Students' test results and data which give information about Turkish Language points in students' reports are gathered from booklet and optical forms. The booklet has applied in May in 2011-2012 academic year. Applications are applied by sending and receiving booklets from school management to the class teachers in 62 schools of Altındağ. In this research, data are gathered in three workdays and 62 schools out of 67 (%93), 23.036 students out of 30.336 (%76) have reached. Exam results applied to students and data related to the survey are transferred to electronical platform by the use of optical forms and analyzed using SPSS20 computer software. Before the analysis the Turkish test answered by the students were tested for reliability analysis and Cronbach's Alpha in Turkish Tests for 4th grade ,855 in 40 items; for 5th grade ,865 in 45 items; for 6th grade ,894 in 50 items; for 7th grade ,907 in 55 items and for 8th grade ,904 in 60 items were founded. At the end of the research exam, Turkish achievement degree is calculated by converting clear correct answers to t-points with a maximum of 500 points. Additionally, average value of this data, percentage rates are calculated, and correlation technic as significance test, ANOVA and Scheffe test are also used to analyze the data.

3. Findings and Discussions

This section discusses the main findings of the study. Mean scores of Turkish Language class according to the passing grades are listed as follows (Table 1). Students whose passing grade is 1 scored 213, students whose passing grade is 2 scored 235, students whose passing grade is 3 scored 267, students whose passing grade is 4 scored 319 and students whose passing grade is 5 scored 373 in the central exam. Mean score is 306 in this central exam. This finding indicates that the students, whose passing grade is high, outperformed in the central exam with a difference that ranges from 54 and 160 score points. It can be easily said that there is proportionately an adjustment between Turkish Language points in students' reports and central exam scores.

Table 1. Mean Central Exam Score According To The Turkish Language Points in Students' Report

Turkish Language Points in Student's Report	N	Mean of Central Exam Score	Std. Deviation
1	1317	213	56,68226
2	2308	235	66,03755
3	5459	267	69,48558
4	6931	319	73,59192
5	5961	373	74,58035
Total	21976	306	88,12213

The relationship between Turkish Language achievement and central exam score is shown in Table 2. Results indicate that there is a relationship between Turkish Language achievement and central exam score; r=.581, p=.000. The relationship between Turkish Language achievement and central exam score is positive and statistically significant. This relation is moderate. The relationship between Turkish Language achievement and central exam score is r=.500, p=.000 at grade 4; r=.573, p=.000 at grade 5; r=604, p=.000 at grade 6; r=.608, p=.000 at grade 7 and r=.582, p=.000 at grade 8. The correlation is statistically significant at each grades. It is observed that the relationship between passing grade and central exam score increases considerably from 4th grade to 6th grade; this increase is so low at grade 7 and this correlation is decreases at grade 8. Thus, it can be stated that this correlation between Turkish Language Points in Student's Report and central exam score is changes according to grades and there is no significant stability.

Table 2. The Relationship between Turkish Language Achievement and Central Exam Scores at each Grade

Grades	N	Passing Grade	Mean of Central Exam Score	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Grade 4	4623	4.02	307	.500*	.000
Grade 5	4832	3.99	327	.573*	.000
Grade 6	4884	3.43	305	.604*	.000
Grade 7	4503	3.33	292	.608*	.000
Grade 8	4194	3.37	290	.582*	.000
Total	23036	3.63	305	.581*	.000

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) result between Turkish Language points in student's report and Turkish score is shown in table 3. It is shown that there is a significant difference between the Turkish Language points in student's report and central exam score. Scheffe was used to analyze the difference between the groups. After the analysis, it is defined that the difference between one group and the others is significant.

Table 3. ANOVA Analaysis Between Passing Grade and Turkish Language Score

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Turkish Language Score*	Between Groups (Combined)	59323457,107	4	14830864,277	2927,042	,000*
Turkish Language points	Within Groups	111323618,532	21971	5066,843		
in student's report	Total	170647075,639	21975			

Eta: ,590; Eta Squared: ,348.

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. (Post Hoc Tests: Scheffe)

4. Conclusion

The study, aimed at defining the relationship between the Turkish Language points in student's report and central exam score, proved that there is a moderate and statistically significant relationship between the passing grade and central exam score. This finding is supported by Bishop (1997, 1999) and Woessmann (2002, 2004). Whether this relationship is sufficient or not is changes according to the way how this passing grade is going to be used. In Turkey, students are accepted to upper secondary school according to their placement exam scores. However, Students' passing grades are going to be taken into consideration while admitting them to upper secondary schools in the forthcoming years. Consequently, it is necessary to be really responsive to take the students' passing grade into account while admitting them to upper secondary school. This study points that the relationship between Turkish Language points in student's report and central exam score is sufficient enough to indicate the reason of this suggestion.

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