

Evaluation of Students' Perceptions on the Quality of University Life In Terms of Democratic Life Culture: The Example of Cukurova University Physical Education and Sports Department

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine Cukurova University Physical Education and Sports Department students' perceptions on the quality of university life and evaluate them in terms of democratic life culture. 241 students randomly selected students constitute the sample of search. Quality of University Life Scale (ÜYKÖ), developed by Doğanay and Sarı, was used as data collection tool. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale is found as 0.87.

As a result of the study, it is seen that students' the lowest ratings belong to the “extents of identity” and “attendance to decisions”, while their highest ratings belong to “extents of future” and “classroom environment”. Significant differences are found at students' perceptions of the quality of life in comparison based on their departments. It is observed that students of management department have higher ratings in the extents of "social opportunities" and "the attendance of decisions" while students of physical education teaching have higher averages in the extents of" student-student relationship ", "future" and "classroom environment".

Key Words: Quality of Life; University Quality of Life; Democratic Life Culture; Democracy Education; Physical Education and Sports Department

Introduction

In 1948, World Health Organization defined disease as not only the absence of disease but also a complete well-being from the point of physical, spiritual and social (WHO, 2004). The Quality of life is closely associated with this definition. *The quality of life has a special role for being defined this completion as "development in democracy"*. According to individual perspective, the quality

of life is considered as a general and continuous well-being state and its evaluation concentrates on happiness, feeling of liking and positive life satisfying people and negative experiences and feelings meaning its reverse. These experiences are evaluated in the framework family, circle of friends, school, leisure time and etc. which are important and significant for individual. It is also understood that, education is considered as one of the most important extent of general quality of life. The quality of life consists of individual's physical function, state of mood, community relations in and out of family, level of affected from environment; it also shows that to what extent situations may affect individual's functionality (Testa & Simonson, 1996, Avcı & Pala, 2004). Working and professional life affect the quality of life. Those, who work in various professions, are mentally affected by the works they do, pressure from work reflects on one's quality of life (Yeşil, et al. 2010).

In Turkey, the importance of quality of school life has debated and researches have carried out in the recent years (Sarı 2007, Tekkanat, 2008, Korkmaz, 2009). Education has concentrated on pedagogic extents such as cognitive developments of children until the middle of 1990s. But nowadays, concern for social purposes of education has progressively increased. The quality of school life, accepted as one of indicators of general well-being of students, is considered as part of students' school life and general well-being which arises from their coalescence with life (Karatzias et al, 2001). When regarded that students pass their long years in the school, the importance of quality of school life come into focus. The quality of school life is considered as a preparation of students for their future life in many aspects. For this reason, positive school lives draw considerable interest by educators and researchers. For example, according to purposes of national education of Austria, the importance of quality of school life is emphasized in many areas the following: Schools make a great contribution to nurture of students as individuals who esteem by themselves. Schools are also contributes on learning, make students look to the future with optimistic by providing a supportive and educational environment (Mok & Flynn, 2002). Universities are closely associated with democratic environment that creates the quality of life. It is emphasized that universities cannot make much contribution to acquisition of democratic values with course contents, but rather with school culture created in or out of class (Gürkaynak, 1989). Universities make a great contribution to the development of a democratic politic culture through a democratic life culture, which they offer to students and all personnel in and out of

class. Therefore, in the universities, responsibility of creating environment, where fundamental principles and values of democracy are consciously considered, is probably one of the most important responsibilities of university administrators. When the managing body of university democratizes, it contributes to creating more democratic life in school (Karlsson, 2002). Universities should be places in which differences concertedly live by understanding each other. Universities create opportunity of more active participation of all personnel in the decision process about themselves. Universities develop independence and self determination of individuals and create environment for nurture and development of individual who thinks, examines and is awake to his own rights and responsibilities (Doğanay & Sarı, 2004). Democracy constitutes of loving people, appreciation to those produced by human respect for human, cooperation and attendance. These are human attitudes that make human beings as human. Every community wants to raise human by having understanding and proper attitude. It is primarily duty and function of education. In democratic systems, education aims at bringing individual in democracy and life style concretizing within the frame of concept and preparing him at community. The type of education is “education of democracy”. Education of democracy is made by democracy like that love is learned by love and violence is learned by violence. Living, observation and rules constitute entire frame of education for individual by completing each other. In this entirety, the understanding of democracy begins to develop (Uluğ, 1997). In such education, one of important factor is knowledge. Liberality and democracy are related to the development of mind. The development of mind is related to being knowledgeable. Of course, knowledge in question constitutes experiences which people have achieved and learned within the process. In this sense, the borders of knowledge constitute abilities such as thinking, investigation, making judgment and ingeniousness. Such approach takes into account "student-oriented" system instead of "knowledge-oriented" in the education. The reason is that democracy is a feature that gains its reality in life. While to learn democratic rules are tried to carry out with courses such as social studies and civics in the basic educational level. In order to turn are learned things into the permanent behavior, democracy rules should be taught to students by constructing social reality in practice (Gutman, 1987). While the requirement of education and awareness of public about democracy are emphasized in international instruments within the context of both United Nation and European Council and European Community. Accordingly, it can be said that the university education has important responsibilities for actualizing

democracy. Above all, university is an environment of culture. University has units locating in a campus to create physical condition for learning. University is an institution in which an ordinary person learns how to a cultural individual and an ideal member of the society. First of all, university should give culture to the students. A pleasant school environment increased academic achievement. Researches related to effectuality of school showed that the school environment makes great contributions to academic achievement. In addition, schools are responsible for social and personnel developments of students, in other words the developments of students as a whole (Marks, 1998).

How is the quality of university life in Cukurova University perceived by Physical Education and Sports Department students who are active participants of the campus? Are there a significant relationship in terms of social identity and their affiliated departments? These questions are discussed and answered in terms of democratic life culture in this study.

Methods

This search is a descriptive study for evaluating Cukurova University Physical Education and Sports Department (BESYO) students' perceptions on the quality of university life. 131 males and 110 females who study in University Physical Education and Sports Department their average of age is 22,94 ($SS \pm 2,79$). The data of the study were collected by using "Quality of University Life Scale" (ÜYKÖ) which was developed by Doganay and Sari in 2004. UYKO is a scale including 33 items with 7 constructs. These constructs are: "Instructor-Student Relationship" (6 items), "identity" (5 items), "social opportunities" (5 items), "attendance to decisions" (6 items), "student-student relationship" (4 items), "future" (3 items), "classroom environment" (4 items). Internal consistency coefficient of the scale covering all constructs (Cronbach's Alpha value) reached .87.

Continuous measurements on constructs in the study are given as average, median and minimum- maximum. The test of Kolmogorov-Smirnov was carried out in only one group for evaluating whether or not the data show normal distribution. The Kruskal Wallis test was carried out in more than two groups (i.e differences among three programs within the development). For

evaluation of differences between two (i.e gender) groups, the test of Mann Whitney U was carried out.

Findings

Arithmetic average, median, minimum, maximum values are offered in table 1 according to Cukurova University Physical Education and Sports Department (BESYO) students' perceptions on the quality of university life, the constructs of scales and total points,

Table1. Students' Perception on the Quality of Life According to UYKO Extents and Total Point

Constructs	Cukurova University BESYO	
	N	241
Instructor-Student Relationship	\bar{X}	3.15
	Median (min – max)	3.16 (1.67 – 4.50)
	\bar{X}	2.15
Identity	Median (min – max)	2.00 (1.00 – 4.60)
	\bar{X}	3.08
	Median (min – max)	3.20 (1.40 – 4.40)
Social Opportunity	\bar{X}	2.99
	Median (min – max)	3.00 (1.67 – 4.33)
	\bar{X}	3.15
Attendance to Decisions	Median (min – max)	3.00 (1.25 – 5.00)
	\bar{X}	3.33
	Median (min – max)	3.33 (1.00 – 5.00)
Student-Student Relationship	\bar{X}	3.22
	Median (min – max)	3.25 (1.75 – 5.00)
	\bar{X}	2,98
Future	Median (min – max)	2,96 (2,39 – 3,88)
	\bar{X}	2,98
	Median (min – max)	2,96 (2,39 – 3,88)
Classroom Environment	\bar{X}	2,98
	Median (min – max)	2,96 (2,39 – 3,88)
	\bar{X}	2,98
General Total	Median (min – max)	2,96 (2,39 – 3,88)
	\bar{X}	2,98
	Median (min – max)	2,96 (2,39 – 3,88)

When the constructs of quality of life are examined in Table 1, it is observed that the “future” has the highest value with 3.33, and the lowest is in the extent of "identity" (with 2.15). While the constructs of "classroom environment" has the second of the highest value (with 3.22), the constructs both "student-student relationship" and "instructor-student relationship" also have a high average (3.15 point). The average construct is 2.98. Score of combined constructs are listed in Table 2.

Group comparison on perceptions of the quality of life between BESYO departments is listed in Table 2. Significant differences were found in five extents among the three groups that consisted of Physical Education Teaching, Sport Management and Coaching Education students.

Table2. Kruscal Wallis Test - The Results of Significant Test of ÜYKÖ Constructs Between BESYO Departments

Departments Constructs		Physical Education Teaching	Sport Management	Coaching Education	p
Instructor-Student Relationship	\bar{X}	2,99	3,15	3,23	0.08
	Median (min – max)	3,16 (1,83 – 4,00)	3,00 (1,67 – 4,50)	3,16 (1,83 – 4,50)	
Identity	\bar{X}	2,20	2,27	2,08	0.35
	Median (min – max)	2,10 (1,20 – 3,60)	2,00 (1,00 – 4,40)	2,00 (1,00 – 4,60)	
Social Opportunities	\bar{X}	2,92	3,23	3,09	0.00*
	Median (min – max)	2,80 (1,60 – 4,40)	3,20 (1,60 – 4,20)	3,20 (1,40 – 4,20)	
Attendance to Decisions	\bar{X}	3,02	3,18	2,90	0.01*
	Median (min – max)	3,00 (2,00 – 4,33)	3,16 (2,17 – 4,33)	2,83 (1,67 – 4,17)	
Student-Student Relationship	\bar{X}	3,27	3,16	3,09	0.04*
	Median (min – max)	3,25 (1,75 – 4,25)	3,00 (2,00 – 4,50)	3,00 (1,25 – 5,00)	
Future	\bar{X}	3,56	3,34	3,21	0.03*
	Median (min – max)	3,50 (1,00 – 4,67)	3,33 (2,00 – 5,00)	3,33 (1,00 – 5,00)	
Classroom Environment	\bar{X}	3,36	3,26	3,14	0.02*
	Median (min – max)	3,50 (2,25 – 4,50)	3,25 (2,00 – 5,00)	3,00 (1,15 – 4,75)	

*p<0,05

Those constructs which examined significant difference are "social opportunities," "attendance to decisions," "student-student relationship", "future" and "classroom environment".

The result of students' perceptions on the quality of life in terms of gender is given in Table 3.

Table3. Mann Whitney U Test- BESYO Students' Perceptions on Quality of Life in Terms of Gender

Constructs	Gender	N	Line Average	p
Instructor-Student Relationship	Male	131	121,08	0,98
	Female	110	120,90	
Identity	Male	131	126,56	0,17
	Female	110	114,38	
Social Opportunity	Male	131	125,26	0,30
	Female	110	115,93	
Attendance to Decisions	Male	131	121,10	0,98
	Female	110	120,88	
Student-Student Relationship	Male	131	118,16	0,48
	Female	110	124,39	
Future	Male	131	118,55	0,55
	Female	110	123,92	
Classroom Environment	Male	131	122,46	0,72
	Female	110	119,26	

Apparently significant difference was not found between male and female students on all constructs of quality of life.

Discussion

According to Report (2006) of the Quality Management Subgroup in Higher Education which was presented by Accreditation Policies and Institutions Working Group with Regard to Fields of Science-Technology-Engineering of European Union, the quality of education is emphasized for development in democracy. With the statement of "*In a change and progress term called as period of information, skilled labor and citizen dominating conditions of the period are concepts*

requiring to complete each other in the level of a general quality of life. The quality of education has a special role for being defined this completion as "development in democracy". It is also important for growing intellectual individuals and gaining skilled labor and these produce a general quality of life.

In this study, high average scores are found in the constructs of "future", "classroom environment", "student-student relationship", "instructor-student relationship" and "social opportunities". The constructs of "identify" and "attendance to decisions" have low average scores according to students' perceptions on the quality of life. The average score all constructs was 2.98. Doğanay and Sari's (2004) study was the average score was on 2.89. This means that Cukurova University BESYO students' perceptions on the quality of life are higher than students of Doğanay and Sari's study. According to Turosz (2011) students having high quality of life are more extrovert, optimistic, success oriented and confident. Since BESYO students are regularly participated in sports, the descriptions such as extrovert, success oriented and confident logical associated with students. According to Doğanay and Sarı (2004), the two lowest averages among all of the constructs are classroom environment and attendance to decisions. According to findings of this study, the constructs of "classroom environment" is high and it doesn't correspond with the findings of Doğanay and Sarı. When we think that the course environment of Physical Education and Sports Department was freer and more entertaining sport halls, this finding can be normal. But, the constructs of "attendance to decisions" and "identity" were found low while the constructs of "social opportunities" was found high in this study and it corresponds with the findings of Doğanay and Sarı. When we think that the extents of identity and attendance to decisions are the extents of the most important indicators of democratic life in Cukurova University, it is very apparent that Cukurova University is required to being strengthen these constructs for creating democratic life.

By design this study did not put a significant emphasis on the level of students' participation on administrative decisions, nor their appreciation of being part of their respected universities. However, it has been assumed the sociocultural activities that include students' opinions would trigger their feelings of belongingness to their institutions. Kepenekçi (2003) stated that democratic school environment should meet two conditions. These are: offering two-way

communication being based on love, respect, understanding and toleration and away from violence between all people in school and classroom environment and offering to attend all units (teacher, student, family) of school to decisions related to them in school and classroom management. According to Dewey, democracy is a life style rather management structure. School should form this life style for teaching democracy and create an example of small community (Dewey, 1916). We can find the reason of not being created these democratic values in our country in the report of Specialization Commission on Higher Education, The Ninth Development Plan (2007-2013). Dependence of structure of highly centralized (such as The Council of Higher Education) of universities leads to reflect the same practice on the structure of university management. So, universities don't reach a participatory and democratic management mentality with their all systems and grades to employee from students and to lecturer from research assistant. The problem of system removes not only executive and financial autonomy but also administrative autonomy and directly impairs scientific (academic) autonomy. Universities should prepare students to business world and occupation; liberalize them as active participants of democratic society and prepare them as individuals who are able to think independently, make decision based upon knowledge and approach problems with scientific attitudes. In the publication named " The Reconstruction of Higher Education: Bologna Process Implementation with 66 Questions (2010), the attendance of active student is defined as students' participation in the management of higher education and taking part in decision processes as equal and sharer. Also, it is also required for that students are considered within the scope of driving forces for changes in the fields of higher education as qualified, active and constructive sharers. It is indicated that active attendance of students is the main condition for the success of the structure of higher education in all processes of national, regional, institutive fields of European Higher Education.

There is significant difference in the constructs of "social opportunities" and "attendance to decisions" in the good of management department, in the extents of "student-student relationship", "future" and "classroom environment" in the good of physical education teaching when it is evaluated students' perceptions about the quality of university life as to departments. Students of sport management are higher points in the constructs of "attendance to decision" because this department has much more courses related to management than the other departments and this situation is emphasized by instructors. The existence of pedagogical

formation courses given in the department of teaching and being cared this by instructors may lead to being high points in the constructs of "student-student relationship" and "classroom environment". The constructs of "future" is higher in the department of teaching than other departments because teaching profession is defined as an occupational group in our country and is guaranteed by government.

There is no significant difference between groups when students' perceptions about the quality of university life are evaluated in term of gender. There is no difference in terms of gender in such studies (Daly and Defty, 2001, Doğanay and Sarı, 2004, Argon and Kösterelioğlu, 2008). In some studies, it is stated that gender is not powerful over perceptions about the quality of school life but it has indirectly effect on them (Mok & Flynn, 2002; Marks, 1998).

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