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# The functionality of implementation of vocational guidance regulation in elementary education

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## Abstract

In this research, the functionality level of guidance regulation in elementary education which has been implemented since 2003 was examined. To what extent the school principals, guidance counselors of classes, guidance counselors of the eight year students, and advisory teachers do their own work was enquired within the frame work of the Regulation of Primary Education. In this context, psychological counselors at schools were asked to evaluate the guidance activities implemented at their schools. Within the sample of Bursa Province, 80 psychological guidance counselors at primary schools were asked their opinions. As the data collection tool, “The Inventory of the Guidance Task at Primary Education” gathered from the tasks stated in the regulation of guidance in primary education was considered. The results of the research pointed out that the psychological counselors gives guidance activities at their institutions a poor mark with a score of 2, 08 out of five.

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## 1. Introduction

Vocational guidance regulations in elementary education have been implemented for 5 years since it was published by the Ministry of National Education in 2003 (Tebliğler Dergisi, September 2003/2552). This regulation establishes the guidelines for identifying elementary school students’ interests, aptitudes and personality traits; and aims to direct them to relevant educational programs at the end of the eighth grade. Vocational guidance regulations define guidance as below:

Guidance is the regular and continuous provision of scientific services aimed at taking students’ interests, aptitudes and personality traits into account, helping them develop a positive self-concept, know about their choices, understand their potentials, being aware of them and improving them, making appropriate decisions, seeing the results of their decisions and taking responsibility for them.

This regulation determines vocational guidance process at elementary level as below (*Item 7*):

- a) As from the kindergarten, a file is kept for each student.

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b) A classroom observation form is filled out by branch teachers for each 6th, 7th and 8th grade they teach and submitted to the primary school teacher or advisory teacher before the end of April.

c) The advisory teacher makes student observation reports, using the results from observation forms for each student filled out by each branch teacher before the PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) meeting.

d) Hands out a sample copy of the observation report to parents in the PTO meeting.

e) The observation report has a section for opinions of students and parents. They can fill in that section regarding additional opinions or disagreements and return it to school in a week.

f) The reports are kept in the students' files after the school principal approves them.

g) For the students entitled to get diploma, the vocational guidance proposal committee arranges two copies of vocational guidance recommendation form, one to the student, and the other, with the file of the student to the educational institution that the student is registered.

Guidance regulation is composed of principles and methods regarding tasks, to guide students at primary schools, carried out by school principals, teachers and guidance and research centers. The roles and responsibilities of school principals, primary school teachers, advisory teachers, branch teachers, eighth grade advisory teachers and school counselors are defined item by item. In that sense, the school is given a crucial role in identifying students' interests, aptitudes and personality traits, and involving the parents in this process. Recently, due to Ministry of National Education's e-school Project, attempts are made in order to carry out the procedure online.

The question here is: How efficient is the regulation number 2552 in practice, which has been conducted by the Ministry of National Education since 2003? For instance; are student files kept from kindergarten? Do 6th, 7th and 8th grade branch teachers perceive filling out classroom observation forms as a burden, or as essential? How much do the school principals, primary school teachers, advisory teachers, branch teachers, eighth grade advisory teachers and school counselors complete the tasks they are required to do?

Since 2003, as the regulation has become effective, several observations have shown that there are some problems in practice. Due to reasons such as over-crowded classrooms, over-load of lecture hours, teachers' lack of awareness on guidance, it is considered that there are some dysfunctions in the process; however, there hasn't been a study which investigates this aspect. The purpose of this study is to test these concerns. The research question deals with how much the elementary school guidance regulation is functional for the last 5 years since it became effective in 2003.

In this sense, counselors responsible for carrying out guidance and psychological advisory service at schools, including the guidance activities, were asked to evaluate as a whole and asked their opinions about to what extent the staff at their school do their duty in line with the guidance regulation.

Questions in this research are as follows:

Based on the evaluations of counselors at elementary schools;

1. How much are the elementary school guidance tasks performed in elementary education?

2. Within the framework of the regulation of elementary education, among school principles, class guidance teachers, 8<sup>th</sup> year guidance teachers and branch teachers and advisory teachers, who perform their tasks as necessary and at the least level?

3. Is there a significant difference between performances of the tasks that school principals, primary school teachers, advisory teachers, branch teachers, eighth grade advisory teachers were required to do?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. The scope of the Study and Sampling

The scope of the study was elementary schools in the city centre of Bursa. The sample was the 77 elementary schools in Bursa

### 2.2. Instruments

A researcher-developed "Elementary school vocational guidance tasks inventory" was used in the study. The inventory was composed of the tasks that school principals, primary school teachers, advisory teachers, branch teachers, eighth grade advisory teachers were required to do by Regulation 2552 (Tebliğler Dergisi, Eylül 2003/2552). There are 20 items in the inventory towards 5 tasks for each group, and a 5-point likert scale ranging from "never done" (1), "done somewhat" (2), "done" (3) "done well" (4) and "done very well" (5).

School counselors' evaluations were the sources of data. Each school gets a score based on the school counselors' evaluation of their own institutions regarding their performance on the elementary school vocational guidance tasks. The score was considered as the performance level of the tasks the regulation asks the staff at that school to do.

### 2.3. Data analysis

School principals, primary school teachers, advisory teachers, branch teachers, eighth grade advisory teachers and school counselors were asked about their self-evaluations regarding the level of their performance about the tasks they are required to carry out for the elementary school guidance regulation; scores regarding each task item, task group and school are determined, mean score are found and rank ordered.

## 3. Findings

Results of the study, in accordance with the varieties considered, are listed and interpreted as follows:

### 3.1. School counselors' evaluation of their own institutions regarding their performance on the elementary school guidance regulation:

Results from a sample of 80 school counselors' evaluations of their own institutions regarding their performance on the elementary school guidance activities showed that, with 2.08 mean score out of 5, school counselors perceived their institutions' performance as poor. It is interesting that on a scale between 1-5, "done well" (4) and "done very well" (5) options were never chosen. Evaluations were limited to "never done" (1), "done somewhat" (2), "done" (3), and the highest score was 3. As a result, elementary school guidance activities as perceived by school counselors were poor.

### 3.2. School principals', primary school teachers', advisory teachers', branch teachers', eighth grade advisory teachers' tasks most and least effectively carried out regarding elementary school vocational guidance regulation:

School counselors' evaluation of their own institutions regarding their performance on the elementary school vocational guidance regulation is as below:

Table 1: Evaluation of performance regarding tasks related to elementary school vocational guidance

| Tasks  |  | Evaluation  |             |             |       |
|--|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| SCHOOL PRINCIPLE   |  | 1           | 2           | 3           | Mean  |
| 1. Enhances teachers', students' and parents' involvement in the guidance activities and coordinates them.   |  | 17<br>%21.3 | 51<br>%63.8 | 12<br>%15   | 1.939 |
| 2. At the beginning of the spring semester, plans to set a date for a PTO meeting that will take place in May.   |  | 16<br>%20   | 23<br>%29   | 40<br>%51   | 2.30  |
| 3. Examines and approves observation reports with respect to procedures and content.   |  | 25<br>%31.3 | 37<br>%46.3 | 18<br>%22.5 | 1.914 |
| Advisory TEACHER   |  |             |             |             |       |
| 4. Fills in student files, records changes.  |  | 7<br>%8.8   | 65<br>%81.3 | 8<br>%10    | 2.44  |
| 5. Collects information about the student, which can be also be used for guidance purposes, using student appraisal techniques, informs the student and the parent when necessary. |  | 21<br>%13.8 | 51<br>%63.8 | 8<br>%10    | 1.714 |
| 6. Records the results from observation forms for each student filled out by each branch teacher before the PTO meeting in May.  |  | 11<br>%13.8 | 47<br>%58.8 | 22<br>%27.5 | 2.139 |
| 7. Hands out a sample copy of the observation report to parents in the PTO meeting, explains it, and arranges a private interview with those who request it.                       |  | 17<br>%21.3 | 39<br>%48.8 | 24<br>%30   | 2.089 |

|                               |  |             |             |             |       |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| 8.                            | Cooperates with the guidance and counseling unit at school to identify and guide gifted and special students.  | 12<br>%15   | 46<br>%57.5 | 22<br>%27.5 | 2.125 |
| 9.                            | Informs students about the role of academic achievement in placement to higher educational institutions.   | 8<br>%10    | 48<br>%60   | 24<br>%30   | 2.2   |
| 10.                           | Makes documents available to students and arranges activities in order to promote various professions and higher educational institutions.   | 34<br>%42.5 | 37<br>%46.3 | 9<br>%11.3  | 1.687 |
| 11.                           | Cooperates with the school counselor through out the guidance process.   | 5<br>%6.3   | 46<br>%57.5 | 29<br>%36.3 | 2.298 |
| EIGHTH GRADE ADVISORY TEACHER |  |             |             |             |       |
| 12.                           | Fills out the parts of the guidance proposal form regarding "Interests and aptitudes, personality traits, academic achievement, social and cultural activities involvement,              | 4<br>%5     | 40<br>%50   | 36<br>%45   | 2.4   |
| 13.                           | Recommends an educational institution for each student using the observation reports and information on student files; fills out the recommendation section of the form.                 | 6<br>%7.5   | 35<br>%43.8 | 39<br>%48.8 | 2.415 |
| 14.                           | Joins in the guidance proposal committee, explains the rationale for each student's guidance recommendation and presents it to the committee's approval.                                 | 16<br>%20   | 33<br>%41.3 | 29<br>%36.3 | 2.115 |
| BRANCH TEACHER                |  |             |             |             |       |
| 15.                           | Fills out an observation form for each class s/he teaches.   | 3<br>%3.8   | 34<br>%42.5 | 43<br>%53.8 | 2.502 |
| 16.                           | Submits classroom observation forms to each advisory teacher before the end of April.  | 8<br>%10    | 31<br>%38.8 | 41<br>%51.3 | 2.415 |
| PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER        |  |             |             |             |       |
| 17.                           | Fills data in student development files regarding observations and results from year-round meetings on "Interest, aptitude, personality traits, academic achievement, and involvement in | 16<br>%20   | 45<br>%56.3 | 19<br>%23.8 | 2.04  |
| 18.                           | Cooperates with the guidance and counseling unit at school to identify and guide gifted students and those who need special education.   | 3<br>%3.8   | 48<br>%60   | 29<br>%36.3 | 2.327 |
| 19.                           | Informs students about professions.  | 15<br>%18.8 | 48<br>%60   | 17<br>%21.3 | 2.027 |
| 20.                           | Cooperates with school counselor.  | 1<br>%1.3   | 48<br>%60   | 31<br>%38.8 | 2.377 |

As seen in the table, "15. Fills out an observation form for each class s/he teaches" (2.5), "16. Submits classroom observation forms to each advisory teacher before the end of April" (2.41) and "13. Recommends an educational institution for each student using the observation reports and information on student files; fills out the recommendation section of the form" (2.41) reported as the best performed tasks. Since these tasks are necessary and whether they are performed is kept in the records during the process, they are performed inevitably. As the weakest performed tasks, "10. Makes documents available to students and arranges activities in order to promote various professions and higher educational institutions" (1.68), and "5. Collects information about the student, which can be also be used for guidance purposes, using student appraisal techniques, informs the student and the parent when necessary" (1.71) were reported. It is obvious that, the advisory teacher can not perform well at task 16, if s/he can not perform well at task 5. Accordingly, it is seen that although task 5 appeared as the best performed task, the score for this task did not exceed 2.5 out of 5. Task 10 is so important that it can not assign to advisory teachers in developed education systems. An official is in duty at the Ministry of National Education to organize the documents send to schools by the unit publishing the brochures and written documents.

### 3.3. Elementary school counselors' evaluation of the performance of school principals, advisory teachers, eighth grade advisory teachers, branch teachers and primary school teachers groups on the elementary school vocational guidance tasks.

Results reported below in table 2. indicated that elementary school counselors considered the branch teachers as the best performed group in elementary school vocational guidance tasks, with a mean of 2.45. However, they have the opinion that the weakest performed group is the advisory teachers, with a mean of 2.05.

There is a meaningful statistical difference ( $p>0.01$ ) between the level of fulfillment of the elementary school vocational guidance tasks of branch teachers and of advisory teachers. ( $z=5.40$ )

Table 2: The distribution of the level of fulfillment of the elementary school vocational guidance tasks by the officials in schools

|                                | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------------|----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Branch teachers                | 30 | 1,00    | 5,00    | 2,4563 | ,56322         |
| Eighth grade advisory teachers | 78 | 1,00    | 5,00    | 2,3291 | ,56344         |
| Primary school teachers        | 80 | 1,00    | 5,00    | 2,1906 | ,46437         |
| School principal               | 79 | 1,00    | 5,00    | 2,0591 | ,56576         |
| Advisory teachers              | 80 | 1,25    | 4,88    | 2,0484 | ,36484         |
| Valid N (listwise)             | 7  |         |         |        |                |

Branch teachers have two guidance tasks to do (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>). Since it is compulsory to do these tasks, the teachers reported as if they would do them. The teachers spent about 25 hours for class time per week. This means that they have classes in approximately 12 classrooms, each of which include about 30 students. Therefore, it is known that, filling out observation forms for about 360 students in a year is difficult to overcome for the teachers. The adversities of observing 360 students separately and then expressing opinions regarding them frequently put into words by this group.

Advisory teachers who appeared as the weakest group in discharging their duties place at the last step of the guidance process. Taking into account that their tasks are depend on the observation forms filling out by the branch teachers, advisory teachers' performances could be expected to affect by the formers' poor performances.

## 4. Conclusion

According to the evaluations of the school counselors, the functionality of the vocational guidance that has been established in elementary schools since 2003 is of low level (Average 2.08 points out of 5). It is considered that the guidance task directed to the school principal, branch teacher, primary school teacher, advisory teacher and eighth grade advisory teacher by the elementary school vocational guidance regulation is not being effectively carried out

Guidance regulation seems to be focusing only on measurement and evaluation. The regulation is mostly arranging recognition and assessment of the students by teacher rather than students' self development in a way that students can plan his or her own future and can take over the responsibility of his or her own decisions. However, student's raising self awareness and self improvements are more important than their evaluation by teachers. School should be an educational place where student can improve his or her own projects about his or her career and that point should take precedence in guidance.

Guidance focused on measurement and assessment requires that the teacher should be a good observer. In Turkey, when we consider the status of the schools and working conditions of the teachers, it is seen that teachers do not have the opportunity of observing their students sufficiently and appropriately.

Guidance regulation was arranged in a way that the regulation could make suggestion to each student who has completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. On the other hand, our education system is not suitable for these suggestions to be effective. Consequently, educational succeeding of the student depends not on this guidance suggestion but the

result of the Seviye Belirleme Sınavı (SBS) -Level Determination Exam. In this case, teachers form an opinion that these procedures are unnecessary, and as a result, they fill the observation forms randomly and carelessly. It might be expected that teachers would fill these forms seriously if school choice based on these forms is in question.

Even though the e-school system developed by Ministry of National Education has provided teachers with the possibility of filling these forms electronically seems to be facilitating teachers' work, this case actually has increased the tendency for teachers to fill the forms randomly and carelessly. That the computer software of e-school has forced teacher to conduct the procedures rapidly and that the system has discouraged teachers because of system's insufficiencies and defects, both have urged the teachers to perform their works mechanically without reasoning.

As a result, guidance practices in elementary schools cold not reach the desired level, for there are some deficiencies in the regulation along with the other reasons such as insufficiency in the adaptation of administrators, teachers and students to the new arrangement, and that transfers of students from one school to another can be realized via examinations. The guidance arrangements can be developed in a mutual understanding and structure within the integrity of guiding and counseling services. Starting from the elementary school level, guidance system should take place within the guiding and counseling programs that enables students to discover, develop and assess him or her.

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