

Full Length Research Paper

The effect of hidden curriculum on the criteria parents use to select schools and teachers

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Received 11 July, 2014; Accepted 27 November, 2014

A framework of school and teacher qualities has been established by research. The need to identify families' school and teacher selection criteria, in particular, is the main motive behind the present study. It mainly aims to identify the criteria parents use when selecting schools and teachers, or the influence of hidden curriculum on school and teachers' selection. The study adopted the descriptive scanning model, and employed quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. The main data source are parents whose children attend private schools. "Parents' School Selection Criteria Scale" and "Parents' Teacher Selection Criteria Scale" were administered to 202 parents, and an interview form was used to collect qualitative data from 12 parents. Scores showing parents' opinion about school and teacher selection criteria were discussed with reference to set intervals. ANOVA and t-test were used to identify whether there is a significant difference between these opinions with respect to parents' level of education. The results of the analysis were interpreted at .05 level of significance, and only the items revealing a significant difference are presented in the tables. The data collected from the interviews were interpreted by content analysis, and the results are accompanied by direct quotations for enhanced meaning. It was found out that the main criteria used for school and teacher selection consist of the elements of hidden curriculum related with the school and teacher, that the parents attach greater importance to teachers than they do to schools, and the qualities of teacher is the major criterion used for school selection.

Key words: School selection, teacher selection, hidden curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Moving with the times and meeting the educational standards of developed countries is possible only by means of modern, high-quality, and effective education. Today, increasing importance is attached to the necessity of top-notch education, and thus to the necessity of training better equipped teachers.

Schools are institutions where education is given within an organized setting in a planned and systematic fashion

(Ada and Baysal, 2010). An individual learns not only the socially acceptable behavior types, but also different ways of communicating with adults and peers outside their own families at school, which is the institution officially responsible for preparing individuals for future and transferring societal values (Oktay, 2010).

Schools are generally supposed to provide equal opportunity to every student when teaching the behaviors

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that they have to teach (Bloom, 1995). Although schools serve the same cause and are expected to have the same features theoretically, they differ from each other in terms of the processes they follow in implementing the formal curriculum and the unwritten characteristics they possess. Put differently, just as each individual learns differently, each school has its own teaching and learning environment (Başaran, 1996). These differences can be explained by hidden curriculum, which is often defined as unspoken features. Hidden curriculum is the knowledge, ideas, and practices, other than the goals and activities of the teaching-learning process indicated in the official curriculum (Tan, 2007). Hidden curriculum involves the architectural features and decoration of the school building, the classes and the time allocated to classes, extracurricular activities and time devoted to these activities (Yüksel, 2004), the behaviors, attitudes, values, beliefs of teachers and administrators at school, the nature of the school atmosphere, the interaction patterns and opportunities the school provides to students, and the unwritten rules of the school (Demirel, 2011). They may be even more influential in determining the quality of schools than the written rules of the school. A study carried out by Anyon (1981) demonstrated that the education service provided by schools changes according to the socio-economic background of students. This study revealed that every school has a hidden curriculum depending on the socio-economic status of students, and the hidden curriculum of schools varies greatly although everything is the same in the formal curriculum.

The families rightfully hope for the best quality and most ideal school conditions for their children. However, since the very first day the concept of school emerged, what the "ideal" features of a school are have always been debated (Ural, 2009). This discussion also means that families are given the chance to select schools for their children (Abdulkadiroğlu and Sönmez, 2003). On the other hand, the school choice has gained increasing importance as a strategy that increases academic performance (Cullen et al., 2006). Because there are many dimensions affecting the efficiency of the school, several factors should be considered together when selecting the school (Hoxby, 2003).

Bernal (2005) found out that low-income families prefer state schools, while middle- and high-income families prefer private schools. The socio-economic variety of student sources drastically influences the school and classroom climate. This may be the reason why parents prefer schools which they believe are more prestigious although elementary and secondary schools have to, by law, follow the same formal curriculum. At this point, the families may tend to prefer private schools to state schools. However, private schools, too, may have different properties as to the elements of hidden curriculum (educational philosophies, features of teachers and other staff, unique environment characteristics, and representation of certain religious and political

perspectives) (İnan, 2003).

Another deciding factor in school selection is the teacher. The qualities of the teacher who creates the environment conducive to teaching and learning are extremely important, and the success of a school is restricted with its teachers (Arı, 2003). No matter which model, approach, or strategy is observed in the learning process, the teacher is in the core of everything (Erdoğan, 2009). The teacher's role is critical for school performance and personality development, particularly for the elementary school student. Indeed, the most dominant role outside of a child's family belongs to the teacher, and its impact continues even after the school years (Oktay, 2010). Because of this, teacher selection is as important as school selection in a child's life.

Leaving from the principle "schools are only as successful as their teachers", the teacher is a sole issue that needs to be decided, let alone being an important factor affecting the school choice (Yavuzer, 2001).

The role of the teacher throughout the teaching learning process, who directs and accomplishes teaching (Duman, 2011) should assist children to gain desired behaviors and make this process possible. Teachers should serve this process by implementing the curriculum effectively, arranging for the suitable learning environment, and determining the achievement levels (Senemoğlu, 1994). A modern teacher is generally accepted to be consistent, conscious, flexible, and open to developments, democratic, cooperative and ready to take criticism (Bilen, 2006).

Teachers have to follow the same formal curriculum, yet they do not follow the same teaching processes. Because different viewpoints, thoughts, and understandings of teachers are reflected in educational practices, different educational processes emerge in different schooling institutions, or even in different classes at the same school. Just as this difference can be a consequence of teachers' own personal traits, beliefs, and opinions, so can it be due to the circumstances or the educational philosophy of the school, teachers' different levels of professional development and their implications for the education processes. According to Chen (2013), professional development of teachers depends on the professional training they received and their own willingness to develop professionally. These characteristics associated with the concept of hidden curriculum has a far greater influence on students than the formal curriculum (Yüksel, 2004). Although scientific studies have constructed a framework of school and teacher qualities, the main motive behind this study is the need to establish the school and teacher selection criteria according to the expectations of families. As a matter of fact, the main goal of the present study is to identify the criteria according to which parents select schools and teachers, or put differently to identify the influence of hidden curriculum on the school and teacher selection.

To this end, the present study seeks answers to the

Table 1. Personal information about the sample.

		f	%
School graduated	Elementary or secondary school	20	9,9
	High school	22	10,9
	University	160	79,2
	Total	202	100
Income	Equal to or less than the expenses	133	65,9
	Greater than expenses	69	34,1
	Total	202	100

following research questions:

- 1) What criteria do parents use for school selection?
- 2) What is the effect of the following on parents' school selection criteria?
 - a) Their education level
 - b) Their income
- 3) What criteria do parents use for teacher selection?
- 4) What is the effect of the following on parents' teacher selection criteria?
 - a) Their education level
 - b) Their income

METHODS

The study, which aims to determine the school and teacher selection criteria used by parents, adopted descriptive scanning model.

Participants

As for state elementary schools, students must by law enroll in the school nearest to their addresses registered in the national address database; thus, parents are not entitled to prefer schools or teachers. Therefore, the study focused on parents whose children attend private schools. Of the 507 parents whose children are 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders at three private schools in Balıkesir, a total of 202 volunteered to participate in the study; quantitative data was collected from these parents by using the scales developed as part of this study. The demographic information about these participants is displayed in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority (79.2%) of the parents that participated in the study are university graduates, and more than half (62.4%) have incomes equivalent of their expenses.

Qualitative data were collected from 12 parents by using an interview form. These parents participated in the study on voluntary basis. A total of 12 parents were interviewed, 4 from each school.

Data collection

Quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used together to obtain data pertaining to the sub-questions of the research both holistically and in a detailed way. Two scales, namely "Parents' Criteria for School Selection" (PCSS) and "Parents' Criteria for Teacher Selection" (PCTS), and an interview form were utilized as the data collection instruments in the study. The scales

have 21 items and were developed by the researcher. Each item in the tool used a 5-point Likert scale with response categories of 'unimportant', 'partially important', 'important', 'fairly important', and 'absolutely important', allowing the participants to indicate their opinions about school and teacher selection. The scale items were constructed based on the literature focusing on ideal school and teacher properties (Abdulkadiroglu and Sonmez, 2003; Cullen et al., 2006; Elacqua et al., 2006; Hesapçioğlu and Nohutçu, 1999; Hoxby, 2003; Keskin and Turna, 2010; Topaç et al., 2012).

The construct validity of instruments was ensured by the help of 12 expert views. To identify the factorial structure of the scales, Kasier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Barlett test results were evaluated to find out whether the data at the onset of factor analysis is suitable for factor analysis or not, and the results have proven statistically significant according to PCSS (KMO=0.79; Barlett test=1.1933; df=210; p<.000) and PCTS (KMO=0.80; Barlett test=1.1463; df=210; p<.000). So as to test the structure validity of the scales, factor analysis was performed with data belonging to 202 participants through principal component analysis by using varimax rotation. Factor loadings of the 22 items in PCSS vary between the given values: .40 and .82 in the first matrix (5 items), .45 and .79 in the second matrix (6 items), .63 and .77 in the third matrix (3 items), .69 and .73 in the fourth matrix (2 items), .51 and .80 in the fifth matrix (3 items), and .54 and .59 in the sixth matrix (2 items). The PCSS scale scores had an adequate internal consistency ($\alpha=0.84$). Factor loadings of the 22 items in PCTS vary between the following values: .57 and .75 in the first matrix (4 items), .43 and .6 in the second matrix (5 items), .44 and .72 in the third matrix (5 items), .69 and .70 in the fourth matrix (2 items), .46 and .67 in the fifth matrix (3 items), and .42 and .80 in the sixth matrix (2 items). The PCTS scale scores also had an adequate internal consistency ($\alpha=0.83$). That all the items in both scales have factor loadings higher than .30 may indicate that the items of the scale effectively measure what they are meant to measure. According to Tavşancıl (2002), between .30 and .40 can be taken as the factor loadings intersection value. The analysis revealed that they are both six-matrix scales. PCSS explains a total variance of 58.316%. The first factor explains a variance of 14.227%; second factor, 13.397%; third factor, 8.926%; fourth factor, 7.999%; fifth factor, 7.589% and sixth factor, 6.179%. PCTS explain 58.860% of the total variance. The first factor explains 12.324%; the second factor, 11.949%; the third factor, 10.986%; the fourth factor, 9.342%; the fifth factor, 7.891%, and the sixth factor, 6.329%. Büyüköztürk (2005) stated that the total variance explained should be 30% and higher in single-factor scales, and it should be higher in multi-factor scales.

There are 6 items on school selection and 5 items on teacher selection on the research-prepared design to probe the criteria used by parents for school and teacher selection. While preparing the items, the researcher paid attention to consistency with the items in the interview form, school and teacher qualities, and

Table 2. School selection criteria.

	N	X	S
Schools' performance according to students' success in national exams	202	4.10	.071
School's being near home or easily accessible	202	2.80	.085
Extracurricular activities (trips, sports, drama, and similar activities)	202	3.57	.071
Physical conditions of the school (playground, library, laboratories, sportshall, etc.)	202	4.20	.062
A family member or a close acquaintance being the alumni of the school	202	1.76	.077
Recommendations about the school	202	3.07	.072
The generally positive fame of the school	202	3.54	.074
Child's opinion or preference	202	3.68	.077
Relatives or acquaintance among the school staff	202	1.34	.057
Qualified teachers	202	4.54	.054
Physical structure and appearance of the school	202	3.65	.075
Small class size	202	4.14	.068
School administrators' and staff's attitude toward parents	202	4.29	.063
The school's being a national or an international franchise	202	3.15	.091
Half-day or extended education provided	202	3.65	.082
Registration fee and other costs	202	3.92	.072
Other parents' recommendations	202	3.10	.076
Order and hygiene in the environment	202	4.57	.048
Security and safety regulations at school	202	4.68	.045
Whether the school is centrally located or not	202	2.80	.096
Success of the school in fields of art and sports	202	3.46	.079

principles of developing interview forms (Yıldırım, 2013). The interview form was finalized based on the experts' view.

The researcher enclosed the questionnaires in envelopes and had the students take them home to their parents, and the parents sent them back in the same way. A total of 12 parents, who were selected according to convenience principle, were interviewed face-to-face, and the interviews were tape-recorded.

Data analysis

The quantitative data collected to seek an answer to the subquestions of the research were analyzed by SPSS. The values indicating parents' opinion about school and teacher selection criteria were analyzed with reference to the set intervals. The scales used had 5 Likert options and 4 intervals (4:5=0.8), so the intervals were evaluated within the 0.8 range, starting from 1 and extending to 5 (1-1.80 "Unimportant", 1.81-2.60 "Partially Important", 2.61-3.40 "Important", 3.41-4.20 "Fairly important" and 4.21-5.0 "Absolutely important". When the responses were analyzed, the data that fall right between two response categories were considered to belong to the higher category. To test whether parents' opinion about school and teacher selection criteria vary according to their education level, ANOVA was run because the variances were homogeneous; and to test whether it varies according to parents' income level, t-test was used. The significance level of the difference between results was accepted to be .05, and only the significant differences were included in the tables.

The data obtained by interviews were interpreted by content analysis. The data collected were categorized into the pre-determined themes and analyzed accordingly. This type of data analysis presents the organized and analyzed data to the reader (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). The data thus collected from the interviews were described around the themes determined according to the sub-questions of the research, and these descriptions were

supported by verbatim quotes taken from the interviews. The parents interviewed were numbered from 1 to 12, and when the quotes were presented to the reader, a "P" code accompanied by a number was used. To triangulate data, qualitative results, tables displaying descriptive statistics pertaining to parents' views on schools and teacher selection, and quantitative results are presented together.

RESULTS

This subsection includes visual representations of results derived from the scales. It also presents direct quotations taken from interview forms to validate the consistency of results obtained from different data sources. Table 2 presents the results pertaining to parents' school selection.

An analysis of parents' opinion on school selection criteria in Table 2 indicates that five criteria are rated as "definitely important": "Physical conditions of the school", "Qualified teachers", "Attitude of school administration and staff to parents", "Sanitary conditions and orderliness", and "Adequate safety and security regulation at school". "A family member or a close acquaintance being the alumni of the school" and "presence of relatives or acquaintances among the school staff" criteria were rated as unimportant by the parents. The results obtained show that parents take into account such scientific and current criteria as institutional structure, and teacher qualities.

The interview results revealed that half of the parents find extra-curricular activities (e.g. trips, sports, drama) an

important criterion because they believe these activities assist the development of children in all aspects, while for the other half find it insignificant. For example, a parent (P-12) stated the following: *"...It is definitely an important factor. Extra-curricular activities are essential for children's physical and social development, and the presence of these activities influences our decision about a school ..."* On the other hand, another parent (P-4) expressed disagreement: *"It is not a determinant factor. I discovered this aspect of the school much later, so I can tell it is not an influential factor"*.

The interview results pointed to an overwhelming agreement among parents about the importance of how well the school is physically equipped (playground, library, laboratories, sports hall, the class sizes, etc.). However, parents attach varying degrees of importance to these factors. Indeed, a parent (P-8) stated the following *"...These are very important properties influencing school choice. Is there a playground? Is it sufficient for children? And is there a sports hall? I took all these into consideration. In addition, the classroom environment is very important. I think this is the very reason why private schools are preferred to state schools. I'd like my child to be educated in a reasonably sized class rather than in a crowded class."* On the other hand, another parent (P-6) stated his opinion as follows: *"...It is important that children have the space where they can play. The existence of utilities such as sports hall and laboratories appeals to me just as it does other parents. The conditions in the classroom are of secondary importance to me. My priority is the conditions of the school in general ..."*

As for the item which probes the effect of whether a relative or an acquaintance received education at that institution, a parent (P-8), like the big majority, stated that it *"...did not have any effect because no relative or acquaintance had gone to the school we preferred,"* while few said it had an effect. For example, (P-4) said the following: *"A close relative's child was at the same school. Their experiences were important to us. For example; we saw a dramatic increase in the child's performance, which influenced our decision"*.

The interview results reveal three main response categories pertaining to the importance of recommendations about the school: "effective", "ineffective", and "effective but not determinant". In the view of one parent (P-3) who thinks this is effective: *"The comments and saying about a school is determinant. I have made a mini survey to find out what people in my environment think about the school. My decision became certain in the light of these."* A parent (P-6) who does not think it is has an effect says the following: *"...it is not a criterion for me because my own observation means more to me. Of course you hear some comments, but I never act according to them. My own observation and what I think after I talk to the school*

administration is the most important for me..." A parent (P-3) who falls in the third group, i.e. who thinks it is important yet not a determinant factor stated the following on this issue: *"...It had an effect but was not a sole determinant. That it was an institutional brand name appealed to us. Comments about the school did not mean much to us..."*

Parallel to the majority of the parents who participated in the study, a parent (P-4) expressed the following: *"...When a person in charge directly contacts you, it makes you feel special. Naturally when you feel you are cared for, it influences your decision."* Thus, he emphasizes the importance of the school administrators' and staff's attitude for the school choice. Few parents (e.g., P-8) said it was not important: *"...It had no effect whatsoever. I had already made my decision about which school to choose based on the information I had collected. Therefore, I was not impressed by the attitude of the school administration and staff."*

The interview results show that almost all of the parents, especially mothers, find sanitary conditions and orderliness at school a determinant criterion. (P-2)'s opinion is as follows: *"...I am a mother, so it is extremely important for me. When I was trying to make a choice, I analyzed as such detail as the toilets of the school. This may be very typical to all the mothers ..."* Still another parent (P-9) stated this: *"...I am a mother, so this is one of the first few things that attract my attention at school. This is the very reason why I prefer private schools to state schools. Thus, when I am to make up my mind about a school, I check out this ..."*

An analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data together shows, about the school selection criteria, that the physical equipment at school and in classrooms, the public opinion of and recommendations about the school, the administrators' and staff's attitude towards parents, and sanitary conditions and orderliness are the major criteria in school selection, whereas whether a relative or family member received education at the same school or not is not that much important.

An analysis of parents' school preference criteria according to their education level is demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 demonstrates that the school selection criteria as to "a family member or a close acquaintance being the alumni of the school", "relatives or acquaintances among the school staff", "existence of generally qualified teachers", "small sized classes at school", and "whether the school is centrally located or not" significantly vary among parents according to their education level. 'Whether a family member or a close acquaintance attended that school' emerged as an important criterion among parents who completed elementary school or secondary school, while it was an insignificant criterion for parents who are university graduates. 'Relatives or acquaintances among the school staff' were a partially important criterion for

Table 3. Variance of school selection criteria according to parents' education level.

Item	Education level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	f	p
A family member or a close acquaintance being the alumni of the school	Elementary school or secondary school	20	2.65	1.34	8.204	.000*
	High school	22	1.86	.99		
	University	160	1.63	1.03		
Relatives or acquaintances among the school staff	Elementary school or secondary school	20	1.65	.98	6.585	.002*
	High school	22	1.81	1.25		
	University	160	1.24	.68		
Qualified teachers	Elementary school or secondary school	20	4.05	1.50	5.985	.003*
	High school	22	4.36	1.00		
	University	160	4.63	.66		
Small size of classes	Elementary school or secondary school	20	3.60	1.23	4.158	.017*
	High school	22	4.40	1.00		
	University	160	4.18	.91		
Success of the school in fields of art and sports	Elementary school or secondary school	20	3.40	1.39	4.415	.013*
	High school	22	3.31	1.32		
	University	160	2.66	1.34		

*p<.05.

Table 4. Variance of school selection criteria according to parents' income level.

Item	Income	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	f	p
The child's opinion or preference	Lower than or equal to my expenses	133	3.6391	1.16	4.808	.029*
	Higher than my expenses	69	3.4681	.95		
Qualified teachers	Lower than or equal to my expenses	133	4.5940	1.08	4.480	.036*
	Higher than my expenses	69	4.4493	1.07		

*p<.05.

parents who completed high school, while the remaining parents found it important. All of the parents rated the criterion 'Qualified teachers' as a fairly important or an absolutely important criterion for school selection, which highlights the determinant role of this criterion. It can also be seen that the higher the education level of parents, the greater importance they give to qualifications of the teacher, and the less importance they give to whether the school is centrally located or not.

An analysis of parents' school preference criteria according to their income level is demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4 displays differences between parents' school selection criteria by their income. It can be seen that the criterion "the child's opinion or preference" is rated as "fairly important" by the parents whose income is lower than or equal to their expenses. It shows that these

parents take into account their children's preference in the school selection process. On the other hand, the criterion "qualified teachers" is rated as "definitely important" by the parents whose income is lower than or equal to their expenses. It shows that these parents take into account the teachers' qualifications in the school selection process.

Table 5 demonstrates parents' views on teacher selection criteria.

Table 5 shows that parents rated four criteria as *definitely important*: "teacher's attitude towards students", "teacher's education level", "teacher's communicative competence", and "whether the student will complete the elementary education with the same teacher or not"; they rated two criteria as *unimportant*: "teacher's gender" and "being a relative or an acquaintance to the teacher". In

Table 5. Teacher selection criteria.

	N	X	S
Teacher's gender	202	1.76	.078
Teacher's age	202	2.42	.077
Length of teaching experience	202	3.16	.081
Teacher's having a child or not	202	2.29	.087
General opinion and recommendations about the teacher	202	3.26	.079
Child's opinion and preference	202	3.79	.073
Teacher's success in preparing students for the national exams	202	3.71	.078
A family member or a close acquaintance being a former student of the teacher	202	2.09	.089
Teacher's attitude towards students	202	4.66	.049
The teacher's having deserved popularity	202	3.33	.087
Physical appearance of the teacher	202	1.95	.078
Whether the teacher gives homework or not	202	3.22	.089
Religious and political views of the teacher	202	3.14	.109
Educational background of the teacher	202	4.36	.062
Communicative competence of the teacher	202	4.53	.064
Being a relative or acquaintance to the teacher	202	1.38	.064
Health state of the teacher	202	3.68	.077
Number of students in the teacher's class	202	4.05	.077
Whether the student will complete the elementary education with the same teacher	202	4.31	.072
Other parents' recommendations about the teacher	202	3.05	.085
Teacher's ethnic identity	202	2.11	.092

brief, the results show that parents, when choosing teachers, give priority to teachers' teaching skills, and they do not favor the idea of changing teachers in elementary education. On the other hand, the parents showed consensus over that the gender of the teacher and being a relative or acquaintance of the teacher is not important criteria for teacher selection.

The interview results about the teacher selection revealed that all the parents pointed to job experience as the most important criterion, and some highlighted the importance of certain personality features in addition to this. For example, a participant (P-6) said "...*Job experience is the most important property among the others. His or her having a child is also important to me because, then I think, he or she will have empathy. I also would rather the teacher is not very old, nor very young, too old or too young.*"

The parents interviewed agreed on the determinant power of the hearings and sayings about the teacher as a teacher selection criterion. Here is what P-10 stated about it: "*It dramatically influenced our teacher selection. We found out what other teachers, parents of former students think about the teacher before we made up our mind about the teacher*"; another parent (P-6) made the following comment: "*I carried out a special investigation about it. I collected information about the teacher from the colleagues and administrators at her previous workplace.*"

The majority of the participants point to physical

appearance as an important criterion for teacher selection. P-4 elaborates what he thinks about it: "...*It is an important point for me. The teacher should be elegant and neat. A person who cares for him/herself will also care for the students. I would never prefer a teacher who is physically handicapped because I believe it will have an adverse effect on the child.*" Few (e.g. P-9) thought differently: "*It had no effect on our decision. We did not decide according to physical appearance. All that matters is the teacher's attitude to children, personality, and experience.*"

One of the many participants who advocated that the teacher's religious and political perspective is an important criterion in teacher selection (P-1) said, "...*Important, I think it will shape the way he or she approaches the student. If the teacher has radical views, this will somewhat be reflected on the teaching, which is why I don't favor it. I believe, a person's religious and political standing is reflected on his life to some extent ...*", while another participant who thinks this factor is not really important in teacher selection (P-4) stated the following: "...*It is not a significant criterion for me. An experienced teacher would not reflect this anyway. That is why I did not take this criterion seriously.*"

As for the impact of being a relative or acquaintance to the teacher, half of the parents (e.g., P-7) expressed such opinions as this one: "...*I would like the teacher to be a relative or an acquaintance. Then, the teacher would know the child better, communicate with the child easily,*

Table 6. Variance of teacher selection criteria according to parents' education level.

Item	EducationLevel	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	f	p
Whether the teacher gives homework or not	Elementary school or secondary school	20	4.15	.98	6.257	.002*
	High school	22	3.04	1.296		
	University	160	3.13	1.25		
Teacher's ethnic identity	Elementary school or secondary school	20	3.70	1.45	23.998	.000*
	High school	22	2.63	1.43		
	University	160	1.85	1.11		

*p<.05.

Table 7. Variance of teacher selection criteria according to parents' income level.

Items	Income	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	f	p
Other parents' recommendation of the teacher	Less than or equal to my expenses	133	2.96	1.15	5.487	.020*
	Higher than my expenses	69	3.23	1.33		

*p<.05.

or intervene when extra help is needed", whereas the other half somewhat disagreed. For example, P-8 indicated its disadvantages: *"I would not particularly prefer for a teacher who is a relative or an acquaintance. I wouldn't like my child to suffer from role conflict. My child should acknowledge the teacher as the teacher only"*.

An analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings about teacher selection together revealed that the professional experience of the teacher, recommendations about the teacher, teacher's religious and political perspective are *important* criteria, and the physical appearance of the teacher, whether the teacher is a relative/family member are *partially important* criteria.

An analysis of parents' teacherselection criteria according to their education level is demonstrated in Table 6.

Table 6 demonstrates that two teacher selection criteria vary significantly according to the education level of parents: "Whether the teacher gives homework or not" and "Teacher's ethnic identity". Elementary school or secondary school graduates give greater importance to the criterion of "whether the teacher gives homework or not" than high school and university graduates do. The importance attached to the criterion "teacher's ethnic identity" does not vary among different parent groups, but they all find it somewhat important. At this point, it is noteworthy that the higher the parents' education level is, the less importance they attach to ethnic identity.

An analysis of parents' teacher selection criteria according to their income level is presented in Table 7.

Table 7 reveals that the parents that participated in the

study give 'importance' to other parents' suggestions about the teacher, yet those parents whose income is greater than their expenses give greater importance to these suggestions.

DISCUSSION

Selection of schools and teachers directly and indirectly influences the personality development of individuals and their tendencies in the future, as well as acquisition of certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes set prior to the education. Therefore, it is evident that the choice of school and teacher is important for families. Nevertheless, the optimum features as to the school and teacher may vary from one family to another.

The overall results of the study aiming to identify parents' criteria for teacher and school selection, or the effect of hidden curriculum on teacher and school selection, reveal that five criteria are significant: 'presence of qualified teachers working at school', 'physical equipment in the classrooms and at school', 'the attitude of school administrators and staff towards parents', 'sanitary conditions and orderliness', 'recommendations about the school'. By contrast, two factors seem to be insignificant selection criteria: the presence of relatives or acquaintances among the school staff. In brief, the parents attach importance to scientific and contemporary assets such as organizational structure and teacher qualities.

The related literature widely points to the size of

classes, classroom activities, technological instruments and equipment, existence of laboratories, and security as the deciding factors in the selection of school (Dimaki et al., 2005; Bernal, 2005; Jacob and Lefgren, 2007; Tamm, 2008; Friedman et al., 2007), which is significant in that it shows the consistency among the results of similar studies. McNally (2002) investigated how families decide on which school to send their children to and found out that the most important factors are qualified teachers (quality), the class size, security, and discipline at school. These results are parallel to those found out by Hesapçioğlu and Nohutçu (1999).

The findings of the current study revealed that, similar to what Woods (1996) reported, parents tend to select schools based on the quality of teachers' pedagogical skills and feedbacks and rumors they receive from their environment. Likewise, a study conducted by Friedman et al. (2006) demonstrated that teacher efficiency, security at school and school's activities are the major factors shaping the school selection. Another study conducted by Topaç et al. (2012) showed that parents, while choosing early education institutions, take into account teacher's education background and experience, the utilities of the school, class sizes, convenient location of the school, and other parents' recommendations about the school. The result may indicate that parents use similar criteria when selecting early childhood education and elementary school institutions. That there is a concordance between the results of the present study and those found in the literature can be evidence of the consistency of study results.

To conclude, the results of the present study demonstrate that five of the schools and teacher selection criteria used by parents tend to vary significantly according to parents' education level: "A family member or a close acquaintance being the alumni of the school", "Relatives or acquaintances among the school staff", "qualified teachers", "Small sized classes at school", and "Whether the school is centrally located or not". On the other hand, two of them tend to vary according to parents' income level: "The child's opinion or preference" and "presence of qualified teachers". An overall comparison of the results has interestingly shown that the criterion "qualified teachers" differs significantly according to all the variables. The results about the variables influencing parents' school and teacher selection criteria seem to be in concordance with those of the studies conducted by Elacqua et al. (2006), Hesapçioğlu and Nohutçu (1999), and Keskin and Turna (2010).

It was found out that the following criteria are dramatically important in teacher selection: professional experience, recommendations about the teacher, teacher's religious and political perspective, teacher's attitude towards the students, teacher's educational background, teacher's communicative ability, and whether the student will complete the elementary education with the same teacher or not. 'The gender of the teacher' and 'the

teacher's being a relative or an acquaintance' did not emerge as a marked criterion for teacher selection. The results indicated that, for the parents, the professional experience is on top of other criteria for teacher preference. Similar findings are obtained in Gençtürk and Memiş's (2010) study where teachers tend to feel more competent as they get experienced. Campbell (1996) and Daughtery (2005) also reported similar results. Professional experience appeared to be a major criterion for both parents and the teachers.

The research results demonstrate that there is a significant difference between the degrees of importance given by parents to "whether the teacher gives homework or not" and "teacher's ethnic identity" according to their education level. Similarly, there is a significant difference between the degrees of importance given by parents to "other parents' recommendations about the teacher" according to their income level.

Whether the school or parents come first as a school and teacher selection criterion was not one of the subquestions of this study. Still, several themes as a response to this question emerged during the analysis of interview results. Therefore, it is worth sharing these results. Although by nature the two factors interact with each other, it was observed that parents quite explicitly express their opinions about which is more important for them. The majority of the participants who expressed their opinions on this issue stated that they choose the school according to the teacher, while few gave priority to school. This once again confirms the claim that "schools are just as qualified as their teachers". A noteworthy finding at this point is that parents who express priority of school prefer schools that are aligned with certain religious and political views.

In general terms, the research has revealed three results: the main school and teacher selection criteria comprise components of hidden curriculum related to school and teacher; teacher is given higher priority in this selection process; the qualifications of the teacher is the most influential factor in school selection.

The results indicate that determining the school and the teacher is a difficult process for families, entailing a diversity of variables. Thus, it should be a multi-dimensional decision based on different perspectives. Improving the quality of teachers working at state schools will not only close the gap between state and private schools but it will also make the selection process easier for the parents. In addition, when trying to select a school or teacher, criteria established by scientific research may help parents in making better decisions. To this end, consultancy centers for parents can be established; they can help parents along the process of school selection, providing them with reliable and objective information. Considering the fact that a teacher qualification is the number-one criterion used by parents, a school's popularity may increase if it gives enough attention to this issue. Further research can be carried out to identify the

priorities related to school and teacher selection, and reasons behind them.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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