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Views Of School Managers, Parent-Teacher Association Board Members And Parents On Why Parent-Teacher Associations Fail To Raise Donations

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the reasons why parent-teacher associations are not able raise donations according to the views of school managers, parent-teacher association board members and parents. The financing of kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools occur through parent-teacher associations. It is a well-known fact that as the sources listed by item 15 in the Parent-Teacher Association Regulation are not enough to meet the needs of schools, they try to raise donations and this creates many problems. This study intends to reveal these problems. The population of the study comprises 6,078 parents and 63 managers and parent-teacher association board members from 7 schools selected from among the school located in central Elazığ by considering the socioeconomic level of parents and the cultural environment of the schools. The sample included 833 parents and the above number of school managers and parent-teacher association board members who were selected randomly. The study used questionnaires to collect data.

Keywords: Parent-teacher association, donations, parents, board members;

Introduction

The financing of kindergarten, elementary and high schools happens through parent-teacher associations that are supported by a) collecting capital, cash, conditional/unconditional donations, b) running canteens and similar places, c) organizing social, cultural and sports events, courses, projects, exams, meetings, campaigns held during after-hours on their premises by public institutions, personal and institutional legal entities, and d) using other sources. The income generated through these sources often fail to meet the needs of schools, which leads to a request for donations from parents, a technique accompanied by several problems.

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Established in order to strengthen the relationship and collaboration between the school and parents, support instructional activities, and meet the needs of underprivileged students and schools (Parent-teacher Association Regulation, item 5, 2012) parent-teacher associations should sustain these efforts. Such collaboration can meaningfully contribute to the academic success of students and make room for donations to reach schools to buy necessary products and services.

Effective collaboration and relations between schools and their social environment can help alleviate problems and difficulties. When establishing this collaboration, it is important to know the geographical conditions of the area where the school is located and the problems stemming from this location, the economic status of the local community, their cultural level and traditions (Yiğit, 2013:213).

The main factors that stop parents from participating in school activities and collaborating with schools are as follows: Negative school experiences of parents in the past, economic problems, negative attitudes of teachers, lack of time to spend on schools, low educational status, and the difference between home and school cultures (Fiders and Lewis, 1994; cited in Pehlivan, 2000).

In Turkey, parent-teacher meetings in elementary schools generally bring parents together in the school to superficially discuss issues related to the school. On average, these are compulsory meetings which entail a general discussion of the primary problems of the school and a mention of overall achievements rather than those of individuals (Yiğit, 2013:218).

The following has been recommended to increase the collaboration between parents and schools: Meeting the needs of parents, establishing a dialogue with them, tapping into their knowledge, educating parents for leadership, and facilitating extracurricular activities for children (Teyfur, 2009:122).

There are many publicly run and financed education institutions in Turkey. However, the large young population and financial difficulties in the country make it hard for these institutions to supply their students with high quality modern education. Therefore, they attempt to meet their needs with non-public funds (Özmen and Yalçın, 2011:58).

While some propose more sharing of costs and paid schooling for more widespread education services, others argue that this would prevent equal opportunity in education. Finding balance between the two seems to be a major challenge for many countries (UNESCO, 2002:15).

Parent-teacher associations try to raise funds for the needs of schools through different sources. Of these, the most problematic for all parties is probably trying to raise donations from parents. Clearly, there are many problems regarding how these donations are demanded, collected and spent. At the beginning of every school year, there appear news items in the media stating that “schools demand money under the name of donation”, upon which the minister of education warns school managements that “collecting money is not allowed and legal action will be taken against those who do”.

As stated in item 15 of the Parent-teacher Association Regulation, schools have limited funds and these cannot meet the needs. The Ministry also states that capital, cash, conditional/unconditional donations may be received as long as they are voluntary and not mandatory. Of course, those parents who are able to donate can hesitate due to the attitude of parents who are not willing to do the same and the emphasis that the Ministry places on the voluntary nature of the donations. As a result, schools become unable to supply their needs. The present study was conducted to identify the problems that cause this situation by obtaining the views of the stakeholders, i.e. school managers, parent-teacher association board members and parents.

**Purpose of study**

This study aims to identify the reasons why parent-teacher associations fail to raise donations by asking the views of school managers, parent-teacher association board members and parents. In order to do this, a separate questionnaire was prepared to obtain the views of school managers, parent-teacher association board members and parents.

In order to seek an answer to the research problem, the following subproblems were written.

**A. Subproblems about school managers and parent-teacher association board members**

1. What are the duties, professional seniority, gender and education level of school managers and parent-teacher association board members?
2. What do you think is the reason for refusing to donate to the parent-teacher association? Please explain.
3. Do parents trust the parent-teacher association in how they spend the donations? If not, please explain why you think this is the case.
4. Do parents regularly participate in parent-teacher meetings? If not, please explain why you think this is the case.
5. What kind of activities do you organize to increase parent participation rate in meetings?
6. Do you believe that school needs are fully supplied by the Ministry of Education?
7. Do you think the Ministry of Education announcements to parents asking them not to donate to schools stop parents from donating?
8. Please add any other views you wish to mention.

B. Subproblems about parents

1. What are parents’ profession, gender, monthly income, education level, number of children and number of school-going children?
2. Do you donate to another institution other than the school?
3. Do you donate to the parent-teacher association? If not, please explain your reasons.
4. Does the parent-teacher association board inform you regularly about how they spend the donations?
5. Does the parent-teacher association board inform you about the needs of the school?
6. Does the information satisfy you? Does it instill trust in you?
7. Do you trust the parent-teacher association board in using their resources? If not, please explain your reasons.
8. Do you regularly participate in parent-teacher meetings? If not, please explain your reasons.
9. Do you think that all school needs are met by the Ministry of Education?
10. Do the announcements made by the Ministry of Education for parents not to donate to schools stop you from donating?

METHOD

This is a descriptive survey study. Surveys aim to describe a past or present situation as it is (Karasar, 2009:77).

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprises 6,078 parents and 63 managers and parent-teacher association board members from 7 schools selected from among the school located in central Elazığ through proportional cluster sampling by considering the socioeconomic level of parents and the cultural environment of the schools. The sample included 833 parents and the above number of school managers and parent-teacher association board members who were selected by using random sampling.

Data Collection Tool

The study used the quantitative research method of questionnaires. They included open-ended comments and closed-ended gradation questions. The items in the questionnaires were prepared separately for parents and school managers and parent-teacher association board members, and were finalized and used after obtaining expert opinions.

Data Description

The frequencies and percentages of variables pertaining to school managers, parent-teacher association board members and parents were calculated. Regarding the duties of school managers and parent-teacher association board members, 7 (11,1 %) were school principals, 20 (31,7%) were vice principals, 7 (11,1%) were parent-teacher
association board chairs and 29 (46.0%) were parent-teacher association board members. As for seniority, 1 had 1-5 years of experience (3.7%), none had 6-10 years of experience, 3 had 11-15 years of experience (11.1%), 4 had 16-20 years of experience (14.8%) and 19 had 21 years of experience and more (70.4%). The were 17 (27.0%) female participants and 46 (73.0%) male participants. Regarding education level, 5 (7.9%) were primary/secondary school graduates, 13 (20.6%) were high school graduates, 10 (15.9%) were college graduates, 31 (49.2%) held university degrees and 53 (6.3%) held graduate degrees. As for their profession, 46 were civil servants (73.0%) and 17 were in trade (27.0%). The demographical questions directed to the parents revealed that 287 (34.5%) were self-employed, 174 (20.9%) were civil servants, 128 were (15.4%) housewives, 81 (9.7%) were teachers, 89 (10.7%) were workers, 43 (5.2%) were unemployed and 31 (3.7%) were retired. There were 182 females (21.8%) and 651 (78.2%) males. Monthly income was as follows: 184 (22.1%) earned less than minimum wage (773 TL), 224 (26.9%) earned between 774-1300 TL, 147 (17.6%) earned between 1301-1950 TL, 156 (18.7%) earned between 1951-2600 TL, 76 (9.1%) earned between 2601-3250 TL and 46(5.5%) earned between 3251 TL or more. Regarding education level, 294 (35.3%) were primary and secondary school graduates, 261 (31.3%) were high school graduates, 97 (11.6%) were college graduates, 146 (17.5%) held university degrees and 35 (4.2%) held graduate degrees. As for the number of children in the family, 66 had 1 (7.9%) child, 622 (74.7%) had 2-3 children, 128 (15.4%) had 4-5 children and 17 (2.0%) had 6 or more. Of the participants, 259 (31.1%) had 1 child at school, 529 (63.5%) had 2-3 children at school, 42 (5.0%) had 4-5 and 3 had (4%) 6 or more children at school.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section, the findings of the study are presented in relation to the subproblems.

Findings from Questionnaire Items for School Managers and Parent-Teacher Association Board Members

1. School managers and parent-teacher association board members think that the following factors stop parents from donating to the parent-teacher association: the Ministry's announcements (27 respondents), parent irresponsibility and insensitivity (6 respondents), negative influence of parents who tell others that they have not been donating anything for years (2 respondents), the expectation that the state should fund schools (3 respondents), the misconception that the state funds schools (13 respondents), poor economic conditions of families (20 respondents), lack of knowledge about how the donations are used (4 respondents), lack of trust and values (3 respondents) and news in the media that donations are not to be made (3 respondents).

Do parents trust the parent-teacher association in how they spend the donations? If not, please explain why you think this is the case? While 52 respondents answered yes, 4 answered negatively, and 7 respondents stated they do not have an idea.

Do parents regularly participate in parent-teacher meetings? If not, please explain why you think this is the case. As an answer, 9 respondents said parents participated rarely, 12 respondents said sometimes, 34 respondents said generally, and 8 respondents said always.

4. What kind of activities do you organize to increase parent participation rate in meetings?

The answers of school managers and parent-teacher board members to this question were as follows: Advertising the successes of the school on billboards (1 respondent), informing parents about instructional activities and answering their questions in detail (2 respondents), organizing get-togethers (1 respondent), organizing activities for children (1 respondent), choosing classroom mothers (1 respondent), organizing an end-of-year farewell activity (1 respondent), organizing theater plays, events, boot sales, etc. (12 respondents), organizing knowledge competitions (1 respondent), adding popular topics to the meeting agenda (1 respondent), offering refreshments during meetings (1 respondent), asking the parents to participate (1 respondent), seeing parents one-to-one (3 respondents), organizing seminars for parents (4 respondents), and making home visits (1 respondent).

5. Do you believe that school needs are fully supplied by the Ministry of Education? On this question, 3 respondents answered yes, 59 respondents answered no, and 1 respondent answered no idea.

6. Do you think the Ministry of Education announcements to parents asking them not to donate to schools stop parents from donating? Here, 58 respondents answered yes, 3 respondents answered no, and 2 respondents answered no idea.
7. Please add any other views you wish to mention. The following ideas were obtained from school managers and parent-teacher association board members: The Ministry of Education should send an inspector to identify the needs of schools (1 respondent), the Ministry should be more sensitive to the needs of schools (1 respondent), the Ministry should support primary schools (2 respondents), the Ministry should allocate funds to schools for their needs (12 respondents), the Ministry should become more involved in school problems (1 respondent), school managers must devote time to oversee construction work and repairs, and to collect donations (1 respondent).

B. Findings from Questionnaire Items for Parents

1. Do you donate to another institution other than the school? Of the parents, 357 answered yes and 476 answered no.

2. Do you donate to the parent-teacher association? If not, please explain your reasons. Here, 452 parents answered yes and 381 answered no. As their reasons for not donating, they listed other parents not donating (6 respondents), the school asking for compulsory donations (1 respondent), the belief that donations are not used well (13 respondents), their poor financial situation (166 respondents), repairs taking too long (1 respondent), preferring to donate to the poor instead (3 respondents), the belief that the Ministry of Education supplies schools (20 respondents), the Ministry banning donations (13 respondents), the belief that schools always need something (1 respondent), the fact that there is no more monthly payments (1 respondent), always donating until this year (2 respondents), working for the school (2 respondents), the belief that parent-teacher associations are unnecessary (1 respondent), not trusting the parent-teacher association board (4 respondents), lack of information on how the donations are spent (8 respondents), not having received a request for donation (2 respondents), the news on the media that donations are not allowed (3 respondents), the Prime Minister asking the public not to donate (4 respondents), and the failure of the parent-teacher association to present themselves (1 respondent). A study by Gök and Okçabol (1998) found that 64% of teachers did not agree with the statement “students should pay school fees”. The same study also found that 59% of the teachers did not agree that “parent-teacher relationships are at an adequate level”.

3. Does the parent-teacher association board inform you regularly about how they spend the donations? Of the participants, 242 answered yes, 392 answered no, and 199 answered partially.

4. Does the parent-teacher association board inform you about the needs of the school? Here, 411 parents answered yes and 422 answered no.

5. Does the information satisfy you? Does it instill trust in you? Of the parents, 306 answered yes, 224 answered no and 303 answered no idea.

6. Do you trust the parent-teacher association board in using their resources? If not, please explain your reasons. Here, 652 parents responded yes and 181 responded no. As their reason for not trusting them, they listed the following: The failure of the Board to inform them on the expenses (50 respondents), the legislation and announcements of the Ministry of Education about not paying school fees (3 respondents), the failure of schools to make their full-time employees work efficiently (4 respondents), lack of trust for the parent-teacher association board and the school management (11 respondents), the failure to ever supply schools with all that they need (5 respondents), their failure to look after the properties bought with donations (1 respondent), their failure to use their resources effectively (13 respondents), the lack of need for parent-teacher associations (2 respondents), the problems in parent-teacher association role allocations (1 respondent), lack of transparency and accountability (6 respondents), rebuking students for school fees (1 respondent), not knowing who is on the parent-teacher association board (6 respondents), the possibility that the board uses donations for their own needs (1 respondent) and fraud (1 respondent).

7. Do you regularly participate in parent-teacher meetings? If not, please explain your reasons. Here, 142 parents responded never, 361 responded sometimes and 330 responded always.

The following were mentioned as their reasons for not attending meetings: work commitments (night shifts, working hours, too much work, etc.) (37 respondents), the belief that the fees are not used effectively (2 respondents), the fact that they use meetings to primarily discuss financial issues and demand donations (8
respondents), the lack of a perceived need to attend them (3 respondents), having other younger children at home (3 respondents), the failure of the school to live up to the decisions made at meetings (1 respondent), lack of time (7 respondents), having a chronic disease (2 respondents), lack of a proper older person at home to attend the meetings (1 respondent), badly organized meetings (2 respondents), lack of informations about the meetings (23 respondents), unwillingness to attend (1 respondent), lack of meetings (2 respondents), and the low performance of the parent-teacher association (1 respondent).

8. Do you think that all school needs are met by the Ministry of Education? Here, 225 parents answered yes, 386 answered no, and 222 answered no idea.

9. Do the announcements made by the Ministry of Education for parents not to donate to schools stop you from donating? Here, 293 parents answered yes, 363 answered no, and 177 answered no idea.

CONCLUSION

Conducted to identify the reasons why parent-teacher associations cannot raise donations, this study obtained the following views from school managers and parent-teacher board association members:

1. The failure of parents to donate to the parent-teacher association is primarily caused by the announcements of the Ministry of Education, followed by poor economic conditions of parents.

2. The Ministry does not fully supply schools with their needs.

3. The press releases of the Ministry prevent donations. This finding corroborates an earlier one by Özmen and Yalçın (2011) that “parents who have the financial situation and the means to make donations may also refrain from donating”.

4. Parents trust how their donations are being spent.

5. He majority of parents generally attend meetings.

6. Parent participation in meetings may be increased by organizing activities such as theater plays or boot sales, and the Ministry of Education should fund schools to supply their needs.

The parents, on the other hand, thought the following:

1. More than half of the parents make donations, and the first reason that some of them fail to donate is financial difficulties.

2. The majority of parents stated that the parent-teacher association board did not inform them about how they spend the donations, and more than half of the parents stated that they were not informed about the needs of the school.

3. The majority of parents trust the parent-teacher association board in using the resources, and any lack of trust is caused by their failure to inform the parents about how the money is spent.

4. There were problems with regularly attending meetings, caused primarily by work commitments (working night shifts, work hours, too much work, etc.)

5. Half of the parents stated that school needs were not being fully met by the Ministry of Education, and more than 1/3 stated that the Ministry's announcements about not donating to schools prevent them from doing so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Education should identify the needs of elementary and high schools and put aside a budget to meet these needs.

2. If the Ministry has no budget for schools, they should refrain from making public announcements that prevent parents from donating to schools.

3. In order to win the trust of parents, parent-teacher associations should publicly announce their expenditures on bulletin boards at the entrance to schools.

4. Activities may be organized to ensure that parents participate in meetings.

5. In order to encourage more parent participation in meetings, these events may be organized by taking into consideration the demands that come from parents.

REFERENCES


