

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ignored Discrimination in Schools: Tracking

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Abstract

This study examines tracking systems that are implicitly and explicitly implemented in schools in terms of discrimination in education. It also investigates how tracking is perceived by school principals, teachers and students, and qualitatively examines what they experience in the implementation of tracking. Comprising three principals, 12 students and 18 teachers, the study employed semi-structured interviews to find participants' views about tracking. The results revealed that school principals were more in favour of tracking than other participants. However, student participants were more focused on the downsides of tracking compared to others. Proponents of tracking argued that dividing students into homogeneous groups provided students with the opportunity to learn in line with their level of success. It was often emphasized that students were not able to improve sufficiently in mixed groups. One of the outstanding points was that tracking was perceived in terms of academic success and successful students. Rather than considering tracking as discrimination, classifying students was argued to result in better outcomes.

Keywords: *Discrimination in Education, Inequity of Education, Tracking*

Introduction

Education has been one of the most considered and debated issues with its different implementations in different periods of history. It was mostly regarded as exclusive to high class, noble men and elites prior to nation state. School system, which developed particularly after the industrial revolution, started to be offered to the whole society without any discrimination according to people's ethnic origin, social class, religion or gender. Thus, education was accepted as a public service that had to be offered as per nation state concept. As the education was offered to everyone by the state without discrimination, it was aimed to eliminate any social privilege and inequality. It was considered that having equal rights to access to education would enable socialisation; therefore, the society would maintain its existence, and the ones who were talented

and determined rather than 'privileged' would be in higher positions by acquiring the necessary cognitive information and norms by means of schools.

However, this approach is criticised in that it further concretizes the inequality between social classes rather than eliminating. In particular, it is a matter of debate that the school is privileged to dominant powers. Along with globalisation and neo-liberal movement, schools are used to educate individuals who are needed in the capitalist system rather than improving them as versatile, and this represents the values and lifestyles of dominants classes and ideologies in society (Akar-Vural, Yılmaz-Özelçi, Çengel and Gömleksiz, 2016).

It is accepted in Turkey that education is a fundamental human right that should be offered to everyone by following an equalitarian policy. National Education Basic Law Article 4 bans discrimination by stating that "Educational institutions are open to everyone, regardless of language, religion, race, gender or discrimination. No privilege can be given to any person, family, group or class in education." In addition, it is stated that distinctive activities cannot be organised among students and classes depending on level of students' success, and tracking cannot be implemented in state schools (Aslan, Küçüker and Gürbüzler, 2014). It is also pointed out that tracking is against child rights, human rights and the constitution, and it can negatively affect the intended target behaviours that are expected to be acquired in the curriculum (MEB, 2009, 2011).

However, it is observed that there are several occasions in practice against the principle of equality. This study discusses tracking, which is one of the occasions against the principle of equality and still implemented implicitly and explicitly. Tracking is sometimes considered as usual, and therefore an under-researched topic compared to other types of discrimination. The study investigates the reasons for classifying students under different names including "distinctive class, degree class, elite class or ability groups", how it is implemented and how it affects educational components.

Tracking is grouping or classifying students depending on particular skills or some characteristics. Level of students can be determined through several variables such as central exam results, grade-point average, socio-economic status of families, views of families, teachers or principals, etc.

Although it is ensured in law that tracking cannot be implemented in formal education institutions, it is known that it has continued to exist in different forms informally in Turkey from past to present. It is believed to affect students in terms of many ways including sociological, psychological and academic success. Classifying students according to certain criteriasets ground for social discrimination. Students might have stereotypes about themselves as a result of being exposed to this kind of inequality at an early age. It is observed that they might be inclined to have negative attitudes such as considering themselves as superior or inferior to others. Students' sense of self might be damaged, and their peer relationship might be negatively affected.

Discrimination in Education and Tracking

There is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with tracking in schools. While few studies reveal some benefits of tracking for students, and some find no benefit at all, the majority of studies suggest that tracking has negative effects in many ways. The debate on tracking according to students' level of success can be classified into three main views. The studies which

are in favour of tracking emphasise that the application of tracking positively contributes to successful students, has limited effect on average students, and it is also beneficial for lower level students as they learn according to their level (Braddock and McParland, 1990; Hallinan, 1994; Karadeniz, 1968). Gameron (1992) argues that students' needs can be better met when they have similar characteristics and learn together. In other words, high level students can proceed faster, and lowerlevel students can get better academic help, since they do not have to compete with more successful students. In this way, lower level students' possible feeling of inadequate may be prevented. Advocates of the tracking system put forward that classifying students according to their level enables teachers to customize teaching according to students' level and abilities, and therefore quality and efficiency of education increase (Hallinan, 1994; Karadeniz, 1968).

Hallinan (1994) argues that the main aim of tracking is to improve students' cognitive and academic success. Thus, it is possible to increase emotional and social improvement. Akar-Vural, Yılmaz-Özelçi, Çengel and Gömleksiz (2016) argue that implementation of tracking in the 6th grade can increase the academic success for the students in middle and upper level classes, but it is not suggested for any level students in terms of social and affective variables, and therefore this system should be abandoned. Similarly, Aslan, Küçüker and Gürbüzler (2014) reveal that when the teachers who are in favour of tracking are asked to assess it in terms of 'equality and justice', they view it as inappropriate for lower level students in terms of equality and justice. However, most of the studies which are in favour of tracking emphasize the customization of curriculum according to level of the groups, since classifying students depending on their level and applying the same curriculum to each group do not have any positive effects (Bets and Shkolnik, 2000; J. A. Kulik and C.L.C. Kulik, 1992). There are also some studies which argue that students should be given the opportunity to be transferred to upper level groups if they possess sufficient abilities (Başar, 1999; Karadeniz, 1968).

In contrast, opponents of the tracking system argue that it has several downsides including its ineffectiveness in increasing success and negative psychological effects on students. Moreover, they state that tracking damages students' sense of self, studying in an unequal school context negatively affects personality development, and it legitimates social differentiation (Aldan-Karademir and Özsoy, 2007; Aslan, Küçüker and Gürbüzler, 2014; Ireson and Hallam, 1999). In a similar vein, Betts and Shkolnik (2002) find different effects of tracking in a study carried out in middle and high schools. Although the results are relatively positive with the upper level groups, and no effects are found in middle level students, negative effects are more dominant with the lower level groups. Eskicumalı (2002) states that downsides are more than its upsides in most of the studies conducted about the implementation of tracking. In these studies, although it is assumed that the students in tracking applied classes would learn better compared to the ones in unclassified classes, no considerable difference is observed when the same syllabus is used in tracking applied classes. It is also found that tracking has negative psychological effects on particularly lower level students.

When all citizens of a country are considered to have the right to have quality education, it is against human rights to prepare a curriculum according to students' level and compel lower level students to have a simplified and eviscerated education. Ural (2014) criticises the proponents of tracking and transition between different levels in that an education system based on transition between levels is a result of competitive concept of education which leads students to compete

with each other and implicitly urges them to be successful by benefiting from others' insufficiency. The education thus diverges from its targets in terms of social facts which are peace, solidarity, cooperation and sharing.

According to Aldan-Karademir and Özsoy's (2007) study, students are not generally in favour of tracking, and teachers view it as negative for students' personality development. Although it is generally believed that lower level students are negatively affected by tracking, this study reveals that particularly upper level students noticeably have negative experiences. They envy each other's success and experience more psychological problems because of feeling pressure on them as a result of competitive environment in the classroom.

Tracking violates human rights, as it is against the principle of equality in every respect. The right to education is one of the fundamental rights such as health, political and economic rights, and it is the duty of public administration to equally offer to every individual. However, the implementation of tracking systems in schools prevents individuals from benefiting from social rights and sets ground for social discrimination by privileged areas in schools that cannot be accessed by everyone. Social discrimination in education is not only created as the discrimination between the rich and the poor, the successful and unsuccessful, but it also creates a social justice problem by only allowing a particular group of people to get the right of quality education, whose cost is paid by all citizens in broad perspective (Ünal et al., 2010).

Although it is clearly stated that tracking is forbidden in Turkey, it is implemented implicitly through several ways such as doing exams, classifying students and placing them in the quality schools. According to Ural (2014), categorising the schools and classifying students in schools implicitly give messages to classify teachers and principals, too. Despite the efforts to hide these implicit messages, they are felt by all stakeholders in schools.

Tracking in schools also sets ground for social class discrimination. Individuals consider the classes they are placed as their fate and behave according to the norms of these classes. When classification is done in education, a binary system is created such as qualified-unqualified, successful-unsuccessful, advantageous-disadvantageous, etc. (Tunç, 2016). Class categorisation created in schools, differences in materials, differences of curriculum contents, teachers' and students' level of motivation and readiness cause educational discrimination, which is another negative aspect of tracking. In this respect, it is necessary to investigate how tracking is viewed by the stakeholders and what their experiences are during implementation. This study comprises the following research questions:

- What are the views of school principals, teachers and students about tracking?
- How does tracking affect teaching lessons?
- How does tracking affect learners?
- Do school principals and teachers have different attitudes towards the students in different levels?
- How is tracking evaluated in terms of social equality?

Methods

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative research design and examines tracking system in terms of educational discrimination based on the views of school principals, teachers and students. Thus, it is possible to have an in-depth understanding of tracking based on educational stakeholders' observation and experiences. Qualitative research is a dynamic phenomenon that is constantly changing, constructed by individuals depending on the time, culture and perception (Balcı, 2018). Qualitative research is an in-depth study in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are used, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal events and perceptions in a realistic and holistic manner in their natural environment (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018).

Participants

This study comprises 18 teachers, three school principals and 12 students in different state schools in which tracking system is implemented. In order to ensure maximum variability, nine male and nine female teachers from different subjects and students from different levels of success were chosen (four in upper level, four in medium level and four in lower level). The teachers and principals coded from T1 to T10 work in an Anatolian High School in Mersin, the ones from T11 to T14 work in a Vocational High School in Adana and the ones from T15 to T18 work in a middle school in Kayseri. This study employs a purposive sampling to determine these schools which have used both tracking and mixed class systems at different times. The students in the study were chosen in every level. The students with the codes S1, S4, S11, S12 are in upper level classes, the ones with S6, S7, S8, S9 are in medium level classes and the ones with S2, S3, S5, S10 are in lower level classes. The characteristics of participants are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographic features of participant teachers

Teachers		Number
Gender	Female	9
	Male	9
Teaching experience	5-10 years	4
	11-20 years	9
	21-30 years	5
Experience in the current school	1-5 years	8
	6 years and over	10
Taught groups	Only lower level	1
	Only high level	4
	Both	13
Total		18
Students		Number
Gender	Girls	6
	Boys	6
Grade	10 th grade	8
	11 th grade	4
Groups	Lower level	4
	High level	4
	Medium level	4
Total		12

Data collection methods and procedures

Data in the current study were collected through a semi-structured interview which was prepared by the researchers. The interview was first drafted following a literature review, and then revised by three lecturers from educational sciences, and finally, piloted with three teachers.

Some questions in teachers' and principals' interviews were different from the ones that were asked to students. Teachers and principals were asked about how they assessed tracking, whether or not lessons and activities changed in different groups, how students' behaviours changed in different groups, how their attitudes and behaviours were in different groups, how they viewed tracking in terms of social equality. Students were asked about their thoughts about tracking, how teachers' and principals' behaviours were in different groups and their attitudes towards different groups, and their communication with teachers and principals. Interviews were carried out face-to-face and audio-recorded with the permission of participants.

Data Analysis

Participants' accounts were analysed in terms of content in line with the research questions. Content analysis is a systematic, repeatable technique in which some words of a text are summarized into smaller content categories with specific rules-based encodings (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2012). After the data was written on a computer, it was

reviewed by the researchers, and short statements and concepts regarding the salient points were shown in tables. In the study, participants' accounts and salient points emerged in line with the research purposes were evaluated separately by the researchers and then comparisons were made. Then, the researchers' evaluations and participants' accounts were matched to make explanations about implementation of tracking in schools. Teachers participating in the study were coded as T1, T2...T18, principals as P1, P2, P3, and students as S1, S2.... S12.

Findings

In this section, the research findings are presented under separate headings according to the principals, teachers and students.

Principals' Views About Tracking

Principals' answers to "What do you think about tracking?" were grouped into two themes. While two principals answered this question as "positive", one principal answered it as "both positive and negative".

Table 2. *Principals' views about tracking*

Views	Themes	f	Participants
Both positive and negative	• Fluent and efficient lessons in upper level classes.	1	P1
	• Increasing students' and teachers' motivation.		
	• Providing a positive learning environment.		
	• Falling motivation of teachers and students in lower level classes.		
	• Rising behavioural problems of students.		
Positive	• Teachers' having more disciplinary problems.	2	P2, P3
	• Students are together with their peers who are in the same level with them.		
	• Lack of an environment in which students in the upper level classes humiliate others, show superiority, and the students in the lower level feel inferior.		
	• Contributing to the development of students both personally and academically.		

According to the principal who viewed tracking both positive and negative, lessons in the upper level classes were more fluent and efficient. He stated that both the students and teachers in these classes were highly motivated, and there was a positive learning environment. In contrast, he stated that both teachers and students in lower level classes had low motivation, and therefore an increase occurred in students' behavioural problems. In this regard, teachers had more disciplinary issues. However, he emphasised that tracking was implemented in a fair way, as students' success level in primary schools was taken into consideration to create the groups. Views of the principle about tracking is provided as follows:

Tracking has both positive and negative sides. There is a competitive environment in upper level classes, and teachers teach happier. Lessons are more efficient for the students. When it comes to lower level classes, disciplinary problems occur very often. Students in these classes have nothing to do with the lesson, which causes teachers and us to make more effort. (P1)

The principals viewing tracking as positive argued that it had positive effects in all levels, since students were together with their peers who had similar level of success. They stated that it would contribute to both students' personality and academic development, since there was not an environment in which upper level students would humiliate, show superiority, and lowerlevel students would feel inferior. The participants added that they did not support doing the same exams in different levels, and that each student should be taught and evaluated according to their level.

I am in favour of tracking. Last year, I wanted tracking to be implemented at this school. It is a fair and equal system since it is done depending on level of success. Everyone is placed to wherever they deserve. There were a lot of problems with lower level classes last year. However, there are very positive changes this year with the efforts of teachers and principals. Students in upper levels were already successful. There are no disciplinary problems in these classes. (P2)

For the questions of "How does tracking affect the way of teaching lessons? Do the content and quality of the lessons differ in differentlevels?", all three principal participants answered that there were differences related to both content and quality. All three participants similarly believed that more efficient and better-quality lessons were taught in upper level classes. Contents of the lessonswere necessarily reduced in lowerlevel classes, while more efficient and qualified lessons were taught in upperlevel classes. Their answers are presented as follows:

Teachers of upper level classes are comfortable. They have opportunities to enrich the content and solve more questions on the focus of the lessons, as students understand the topics better. In the lower level classes, however, the content is reduced, the quality decreases compared to upper level classes. (Y1)

Both the quality and the content change. Lessons are taught more efficiently in upper level classes. This creates difficulties for exams. For this reason, doing the same exam in all levels is not correct. Exams should be prepared according to the level of each class. (P2)

Two participants answered the question of "What effect do level classes have on students?" as "it has no effect". The other participant, however, stated that there were no complaints from students regarding this, but families in the lower level classes reacted. The participants implied that students disregarded how the classes were determined according to their level. However, it is understood that particularly parents of the lower level students were not in favour of their kids to be grouped together.

Students are not disturbed by tracking. It does not have a positive or negative effect on them. However, parents of the lower level class students are disturbed. Students get on better with the students similar to themselves. (P2)

Principals' responses to the question of "Do the attitudes and behaviours of principals and teachers change towards different level of students?" are grouped into two themes which were "It changes" and "It does not change".

Table 3. Principals' views about teachers' and school administrations' attitudes

Themes	f	Participants
• Stricter behaviour towards lower level students	2	P2, P3

- Disciplinary problems of lower level students

One principal replied it as *“It does not change; all students are equal for us and teachers. (P1)”*. The other two principals stated that they behaved more rigidly towards lower level students despite the same academic behaviour. Emphasizing the disciplinary problems with the lower level students, one principal stated that:

“We behave the same academically, but both teachers’ and our attitudes towards lower level students change in terms of discipline; we behave in a more disciplined way towards lower level students. (P2)”.

Teachers’ Views About Tracking

Teachers’ answers to “What do you think about tracking?” were grouped into the themes of “positive”, “negative” and “both positive and negative”. Nine teachers stated that tracking was “negative”, five as “both positive and negative” and four as “positive”.

Table 4. Teachers’ views about tracking

Views	Themes	f	Participants
Negative	Stigmatizing as good-bad, successful-unsuccessful discrimination, inequality of opportunity, decrease of motivation.	9	T1, T2, T3, T4, T7, T11, T13, T14, T16
Both negative and positive	High expectations from upper level students Increase of competition across successful students, increase of motivation of teachers and students of upper level classes.	5	T5, T6, T10, T15, T18
Positive	Unsuccessful students’ admitting their situation and develop negative attitudes towards learning. Based on segregation and competition. Increase of success of successful students.	4	T8, T9, T12, T17
Total		18	

According to the teachers viewing tracking as negative, this practice means discriminating students and labelling them by categorizing as good-bad and successful-unsuccessful, which is against human rights and equal opportunity in education. Teachers stated that it had more negative effects on lower level students, and that its negative effects on upperlevel students were not few, either. For them, lower level students were condemned to failure, separated from the peers who would be model for them and motivate them; therefore, they were alienated, and their self-confidence was broken. For the upper level students, tracking was likely to cause them to think that they were more successful than they actually were, to have unnecessary self-confidence and, as a result, to behave spoiled, especially since common exams were prepared by taking into consideration lower level classes.

Further, it was stated that students felt considerable pressure on them and had to be in a constant competition, since more success was expected from them by their teachers and their families. Views of teachers who are against tracking are presented as follows:

I do not find tracking appropriate in terms of equality or quality education. Unsuccessful students in mixed classes can imitate successful students and get motivated, at least their

behavioural problems decrease. However, in tracking, it becomes impossible to teach in lower level classes, as we must deal with behavioural problems all the time. The students acknowledge the feeling of inferiority by saying, "I am unsuccessful already and will not be successful", which impedes their potential success. They completely lose interest in the lessons, being negatively affected by each other. (T2)

A point emphasized by another teacher also shows the failure of tracking in general. He emphasized that while one class was the winning party, many classes were ignored and condemned to failure:

I think that tracking is negative. It is not suitable for students in terms of their psychological conditions and academic success. It is generally considered to be positive for the upper level classes, but, say, if a class is improving, the success of four classes is falling. This reduces overall success of the school. There is a positive competition for students in mixed level classes, which increases success of the students and decreases their negative behaviour. (T7)

According to the teachers who stated that tracking had both positive and negative sides, this was generally advantageous for upper level classes but disadvantageous for lower level classes. The motivation of both students and teachers increased as a result of positive competition environment in upper level classes. However, the students in the lower level classes acknowledged that they were unsuccessful and developed negative attitudes towards learning. This was a disadvantage for the students who learned to study later and caused teachers to lose them completely. The teachers having both negative and positive views about tracking expressed it as follows:

Since perception level of the students in the upper classes is higher, teaching of the lesson is more fluent, thus providing the opportunity to solve more diverse and quality questions in the lesson. Of course, this positively affects academic success of the students. For lower level students, tracking has some psychological disadvantages. They can feel humiliated and excluded. However, from an academic perspective, it can be turned into an advantage, teaching at their level can boost students' self-confidence, but teachers need to be more laborious and patient. (T6)

Since the lesson is taught taking into consideration the middle level students in mixed classes, successful students may get bored and get distracted from lessons, but it may be easier for lower level students to move up to the middle level. (T5)

There are also other teachers arguing the necessity of tracking system. Despite being disturbed by its application, two teachers admitted that they had to be in favour of tracking, since students were already segregated in the whole system – both in high school and university entrance exams. Since the existing education system constantly kept students in a competition and valued only academic achievement, both teachers supported tracking to make successful students more successful. However, confessing that it was not an applicable system in the context of equality and justice, the other two teachers argued that students should get education according to their abilities and interests, and that every student in every school should have equal rights. In line with this, one teacher pointed out:

I think that tracking is very necessary. Unsuccessful students should not take away the right of the students who struggle and endeavour to get a quality education. Learning in an

appropriate level makes successful students more successful and enables unsuccessful students to learn at least basic skills by being taught at a level that they can understand. In my opinion, most of our current students are at the vocational high school level and these students should be educated in the type of school they want and in line with their interests and abilities after primary school. In the current system, only academic achievement is considered important, but not every student has to study. This is not what we need anyway. We forcibly keep students in education until they are 18-19 years old. Since the focus in education is only on academic success, we cannot get them to get the necessary training on time to become quality businesspeople, craftspeople, sportspeople. In summary, we cannot achieve anything for these students at all. (T8)

The answers to “How does tracking affect way of teaching in classes? Do the content or quality of your class change according to different levels?” were grouped into two themes, which were “both quality and content change” and “only content changes”. Teachers answered this question evenly (nine for both quality and content and nine for only content).

Table 5. Teachers’ views about the effects of tracking on their way of teaching

Aspects of change	Themes	f	Participants
Quality and content	Increase of successful students’ listening to and participating in the lesson. Teaching more fluently and actively.	9	T1, T2, T8, T9, T10, T13, T14, T15, T17
Quality	Change of only quality Increase of quality as a result of teaching upper level students more actively and interactively.	9	T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T11, T12, T16, T18
Total		18	

According to the teachers arguing that there was a change in teaching in different levels in terms of quality and content, lessons with the high level students were so fluent and active as a result of their desired behaviours including actively listening to the teacher and participating in the activities. One participant explained it as follows: “This ensures that the content of the upper level classes is enriched as much as possible, the materials are differentiated, and the types of questions solved in the course are diversified, thus increasing the quality of the course” (T10). However, teachers were in favour of reducing content of the lessons in lower level classes, since they spent more time for classroom management due to students’ frequent behavioural problems. One teacher’s view about this issue is provided below:

Since students’ level of understanding is high in upper level classes, lessons run faster and more smoothly, and there is more time to solve questions. Thus, we have an opportunity to solve more questions with diverse types. In this sense, quality of the lesson increases. Since there is not a time problem to follow the curriculum in these classes, we can include extra-curricular topics. In lower level classes, however, we mostly make explanations about focus of the lessons. Therefore, I try not to fall behind the curriculum, and we so we solve fewer and easier questions. Since they cannot solve a lot of questions, they cannot fully understand the topic. (T5)

The teachers in favour of the “change only in quality” argued that content had to be the same in different levels due to the common curriculum and exams. They stated that quality in the upper level classes increased compared to the lower level classes because of teaching more actively and

interactively. The content was the same in lower level classes, but teachers solved easier questions. However, since the exams were carried out jointly and lower level students were taken into consideration while determining the difficulty of the questions, success level of upper level students could not be assessed efficiently. One of the participants' views are presented below:

The content is necessarily the same due to the same curriculum and common exams, but it should be simplified. Since we have to teach the same curriculum in a simplified way in lower level classes, quality of the lessons decreases. When it comes to upper level classes, the quality of the lesson increases. However, we use a common exam system, and exam questions are prepared considering the lower level classes, which causes us not to get enough feedback from the upper level classes. Common exams cause an artificial success in upper classes, and therefore successful students do not improve further. The exams are not an efficient way of determining upper level students' success level, since the questions are too easy for them, which causes them to lose interest in the lessons. Their motivation decreases because they think the questions will be too easy anyway. (T4)

Teachers' answers to "How does tracking affect students?" were grouped into three themes which were "negative for both levels of students", "positive for upper levels and negative for lower levels" and "positive". Eleven teachers argued that tracking positively affected students, while six had mixed views about its effects depending on students' level, and one teacher regarded it as positive. A summary of teachers' views is shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Teachers' views about the effects of tracking on students

Effects of tracking	Themes	f	Participants
Negative for both levels of students	Upper level students' extreme self-confidence and spoiled and selfish attitudes as a result of feeling chosen and superior to lower level students. Constant stress among upper level students due to expectation of success. Negative effect of stress on psychological and personal development. Low self-perception of lower level students, feeling themselves alienated, unsuccessful, hopeless or lazy.	11	T1, T2, T4, T7, T8, T10, T12, T14, T15, T17, T18
Positive for upper level but negative for lower level	Upper level students' feeling themselves valuable. Creating a competitive environment due to keeping successful students together. Several negative academic and psychological effects on lower level learners. Lack of successful peers to take them as model, lack of a motivating environment, acknowledging failure, having negative attitudes towards the school and lessons and lack of interest in lessons. Profound psychological effects on lower level students, feeling alienated and negative self-perception.	6	T3, T5, T6, T11, T13, T16
Positive for both level of students	More active and interactive lessons with upper level students. Fast-paced lessons with upper level students due to homogenous classes. Teaching in line with students' level in lower level classes. Lower level students' not feeling inferior to successful peers.	1	T9
Total		18	

The teachers viewing tracking negative for both level of learners argued that upper level students had an extreme self-confidence and felt themselves as chosen and superior to others,

which prevented them to discover their potential abilities and success. Moreover, because of high expectation of success, upper level students felt stressed, and this negatively affected their psychology and personal development. Teachers also stated that tracking caused lower level students to have a low self-perception and feel alienated, unsuccessful, failure and lazy. Two teachers expressed it as follows:

Both upper and lower level students are negatively affected by tracking. Upper level students consider themselves superior to others, and their classmates who cannot compete with others feel inferior even though they are average level. Although these students are in upper level classes, they are excluded by more successful students in the class. The students in lower level classes already give up, since they are labelled as unsuccessful and lazy. Their self-confidence is damaged and behavioural and disciplinary problems increase in these classes. In other words, the very few most successful students in upper level classes stand out among the others. Success certainly does not belong to all students but only a small number of students. This negatively affects personality development of all students. (T7)

Upper level students become more spoiled and selfish. In contrast, students in lower level classes feel lazy. Classifying students depending on their levels does not have a great effect on their academic success but causes much greater problems in the long run. They take for granted the features of tracking which are alienation and classification of students, and this becomes a social problem. (T8)

According to the teachers viewing tracking positive for upper level classes but negative for lower level students, upper level students regarded themselves psychologically valuable. Further, learning with successful peers helped to create a positive competitive environment, which made them more successful academically. However, the teachers argued that tracking had a considerable negative effect on lower level students in terms of both psychological state and academic success. They stated that several reasons such as lack of successful classmates to imitate, inability to create a motivating environment and acknowledging failure caused students to develop negative attitudes towards school and lessons, and they completely lost their interest in learning. Psychological effects were believed to be even more severe as students felt excluded, had negative self-perception, and therefore personality development was damaged. One teacher expressed it as below:

Tracking positively affects upper level students. Since almost all students are interested in the lesson, they motivate each other. They are aware of their success, so they do not have any problems about self-confidence. In contrast, tracking is almost entirely negative for the lower level students because they lose interest in the lessons. Unfortunately, the academic difference between upper and lower level becomes even greater. Lower level students feel worthless. They admit failure, think that they are unable to do it anyway and become completely discouraged. However, in mixed classes, lower level students can go on to the middle level and middle level students to the upper level by being motivated. (T13)

One teacher (T9) viewed tracking as positive. T9 stated that successful students became more successful in upper level classes as a result of more active and interactive lessons, and lack of lower level students, which was an important factor slowing them down whilst teaching. Thus, T9 found an opportunity to solve more challenging and various questions in lessons, which teacher believed was useful for successful students. In terms of lower level classes, he stated that he taught

lessons and solved questions according to the students' level, allowing students to experience the feeling of being successful, which motivated them. T9 explained his views as follows:

I think tracking has a positive effect on both upper and lower level classes. Each student's learning speed is different, and it is usual to have individual differences. When they are classified based on their level, they do not have to compare or compete with anyone in the classroom. They do not view each other as a rival. In upper level classes, it is possible to teach more intensively and solve more questions in their level, which makes them more successful. In lower level classes, we teach lessons in a simpler way, in accordance with students' level, which enables them to experience the feeling of success. In mixed classes, lower level students are suppressed. They feel overwhelmed. Upper level students have to slow down and become more middle level. I believe that both students should be in the classes which are appropriate to their level. This is true for me in terms of both academic and psychological aspects. (T9)

The answers to the question of "Do school principals and teachers have different attitudes towards the students in different levels?" were grouped into two different themes. 12 teachers answered it as "different" and six as "the same". A summary is provided in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Difference between principals and teachers' attitudes towards students

Change of attitudes	f	Participants
Different	12	T1, T2, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T15, T16, T17, T18
The same	6	T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T14,
Total	18	

The majority of teachers believed that they behaved differently to the students in upper and lower level classes. Teaching in upper classes made them feel happier and therefore behaved more tolerantly and graciously towards these students. It was also pointed out that principals and teachers ignored the mistakes of upper level students, but in lower level classes, they behaved more strictly for the same mistakes. Additionally, teachers teaching lower level classes stated that they had a low motivation, low job satisfaction and high level of job burnout. This affected teachers' attitudes towards students in different levels and caused them to behave more strictly, authoritarian, disciplined and angrily towards the students in lower level classes.

Both teachers' and principals' attitudes towards students change in terms of level. Several factors including students' academic level, content of the lessons and way of teaching inevitably affect teachers' attitudes towards students. Even teachers' jokes in upper level classes are different due to students' high level of perception. I unwillingly teach lower level students, and this decreases my tolerance level. I think that teaching lower level classes accelerates burnout, decreases job satisfaction and causes teachers to question their own competencies particularly in the first years of their teaching. (T10)

It [attitude towards students] necessarily changes. All teachers like successful students more than others. No matter how hard I try, I cannot help it but become more motivated in upper level classes, as the students have high readiness level and motivation to learn. Both teachers and administrators have a higher level of tolerance for upper level students. I have to focus more on class management than teaching in lower level classes. I try to follow the curriculum, which makes me stressed, and therefore I get more nervous in lower level classes. (T2)

Students' Views About Tracking

Students' answers to "What do you think about tracking?" were grouped into two themes. Nine students viewed it as "negative" while three as "positive".

Table 8. *Students' views about tracking*

Sub-themes	f	Participants
Discrimination among students.	9	S1, S3, S4, S5, S7, S8, S10, S11, S12
Lower level students' feeling worthless.		
Negative effect on the students endeavouring to learn.		
Depriving low level students' opportunity to become successful.		
Some students' efforts to succeed in mixed classes.		
Humiliation and ridicule of lower level students.		
Frequent disciplinary problems in lower level classes.		
Low level students' inability to get help from their classmates regarding homework and challenging topics in which they have difficulty to understand.		

The majority of student participants believed that tracking had more negative effects than positive. It is notable that both upper and lower level students viewed it as negative. Upper level students more focused on the discrimination among students while lower level students pointed out that they felt worthless, and this negatively affected eager students. An upper level student particularly viewed tracking as "an unfair system for lower level students (S1)". In fact, this student interestingly argued for lower level students who were deprived of the opportunity to succeed, and stated that it would be possible for some students to try to become successful in mixed classes. However, it was highly unlikely for lower level students to do it in tracking system. Lower level students also had negative views about tracking, stating their feelings of being humiliated, ridiculed and scorned by the successful students in upper level classes. On the other hand, upper level students had other problems in the class. Since they were all successful, they did not have chance to take the floor or answer the questions in lessons. Even when they had the chance, they were afraid of making even the smallest mistakes not to be ridiculed by their classmates. Lower level students also complained about disciplinary problems and frequent noise in the classroom, which caused them not to be able to understand the lesson. Unfortunately, they were not able to get help from their classmates about the lessons they could not understand or homework.

I think that tracking is unreasonable. It is unfair for the students trying to catch up with others. They might notice the importance of studying a little bit late. Nobody deserves it just because they used to be unsuccessful in the past. If the classes were mixed, unsuccessful students would learn something from their classmates and be more successful. Successful students could be good role models for unsuccessful students. (S1)

For me, implementation of tracking is negative. It causes inequality among students. Upper level students are tolerated. In addition to having low academic success, the students in lower level classes have behavioural problems; they come together in the same classroom and misbehave more by being affected by each other. (S3)

It can be understood from the above interview extracts that students were highly aware of discrimination, which is a fundamental aspect of education.

Students were also asked if they observed any change in principals’ and teachers’ attitudes towards the students in different levels. The answers to this question were grouped into two themes. Two students answered it “the same” while a great majority (ten students) answered it as “different”.

Table 9. *Students’ views about principals’ and teachers’ attitudes*

Sub-themes	f	Participants
Teachers’ behaving in a more tolerant, polite and understanding way towards high level students.		
Behaving in a more angry, disciplined and inconsiderate way towards lower level students.	10	S1, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S10, S11, S12
Threatening higher level students to send lower level classes in case of misbehaviour.		

According to most of the students, teachers’ and principals’ attitudes and behaviours changed towards students depending on their level. Almost all students stated that the teachers were more friendly, tolerant and understanding towards upper level students. In contrast, they behaved in a more angry, disciplined and insensitive way towards lower level students. In fact, the threat of sending upper level students to lower level classes in case of misbehaviour shows the reality of implementation of tracking. Another student stated that teachers’ attitudes were the same towards both levels of students, but principals behaved more negatively towards the lower level classes.

Students’ behaviours inevitably affect teachers’ attitudes towards them. Since high level students behave in a more respectful manner, teachers like them more. (S2)

Teachers often get angry with us because we are mischievous. Teachers constantly compare our grades with other classes. The principals always treat us more strictly. We are not treated fairly. When our classmates make an evensmall mistake, they are referred to disciplinary, but those from other classes [higher level classes] who make the same mistake are forgiven. (S3)

Teachers’ behaviours do not change, but principals behave more strictly towards us [lower level students]. They threaten to send other students to our class as a punishment. For this reason, other classes ridicule us. There are very hardworking students in our class, too, but students from other classes think that we are lazy, and that teachers do not teach lessons with us. (S9)

Students’ answer to the question “Do students from other classes behave differently towards you?” were grouped into three themes. Eight students answered it as “ridiculing”, four students as “thinking themselves superior” and two students as “unwilling to become friends”.

Table 10. *Views about attitudes towards students from different levels*

Sub-themes	f	Participants
Ridiculing	8	S1, S2, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S12
Feeling superior	4	S2, S4, S10, S11
Unwilling to become friends	2	S3, S4
Total	12	

**The answers of S2 andS4 are related to two themes.*

Lower level students' "being ridiculed" was a frequently stated issue among participant students. Lower level students argued that they were ridiculed, humiliated and ignored by higher level students when they all came together particularly at weekend courses in which classrooms included mixed level students.

High level students consider they superior to us and ridicule us. We are in the same class at weekend courses, and they laugh at us when we ask a question to the teacher or answer wrong. They do not want to let us speak in the lessons. (S2)

Some students do not have any problems, but most of the students [in lower level classes] do not want to make friends with the students in upper level classes. We cannot get on well with each other, since we have different perspectives on life. Upper level students ridicule lower level students who therefore do not want to make friends with them. (S4)

In summary, research findings show how common tracking is implemented and it is taken for granted despite its being illegal. A significant number of participants pointed out the negative consequences of tracking for not only unsuccessful students but also successful ones. In other words, it can be concluded that although the aim of tracking is offer better quality education to different level of students, students are more aware of and susceptible to the negative effects of being classified according to their success. The negative effects of tracking are mainly related to communication and interaction among students and teachers, and psychological aspects.

Discussion

According to findings, school principals were more in favour of tracking system compared to teachers and students. The principals believed that implementation of tracking helped smooth running of the lessons both from teachers' and students' perspective and increased students' success and motivation. In addition, they admitted that more disciplinary problems occurred in lower level classes compared to high level classes. Some teachers, however, argued that tracking had some considerable negative effects. They emphasised that it damaged students' personality development, self-esteem and self-confidence, and that it did not contribute to academic success in general. This finding is in line with Eskicumalı's (2002) results. Eskicumalı (ibid.) similarly stated that tracking did not make a significant contribution to the overall achievement, but it caused inequality among students. Teachers taking part in this research also argued that there was no or limited peer interaction among students who were unable to improve themselves due to lack of good role models, as both higher and lower level students were classified homogeneously depending on their success level. This resonates with the findings of Aslan, Küçükler, and Gürbüzler (2014) and Aldan-Karademir and Özsoy (2007). Aldan-Karademir and Özsoy (2007) found that students became good role models to each other in mixed classes, and in doing so, lower level students could be more successful by means of peer support, and behavioural problems could decrease when students were in the same classes with other level students.

A great majority of the teachers stated that they taught more efficiently in their upper level classes, they felt more motivated and happier whilst teaching these classes, but in lower level classes, they had to focus more on discipline than teaching, as they experienced disciplinary problems very often. It shows that most of the teachers were more eager to work with higher level students and had high expectation from them in terms of academic success, while they taught

more roughly in lower level classes and focused more on solving disciplinary issues, as these students were regarded as “discarded” for them.

Some teachers believed that tracking had positive effects on upper level classes, but it was negative for lower level groups. They stated that lessons with the upperlevel students were more efficient and students got better quality education, as teachers enriched the lessons by using various materials and they had more question-solving opportunities. On the other hand, they simplified the topics and used longer explanations in lower level classes, as the main aim was to help the students acquire the very basic skills. These results are consistent with those of Betts and Shkolnik (2000), Akar-Vural, Yılmaz-Özelçi, Çengel and Gömleksiz (2016) and Eskicumalı (2002). In their research on the elite class, Akar-Vural et al. (2016) revealed that teachers simplified teaching materials in lower level classes and focused more on basic skills by ignoring high level and complex learning outcomes. According to Eskicumalı (2002), the most important negative effect of tracking was slower success increase of students in all levelson average. The reasons for decreasing success were insufficient teaching materials which failed to attract students’ interest and low motivation of students and teachers. As emphasized by Aslan, Küçüker and Gürbüzler (2014), tracking creates some problems among teachers, and causes discrimination between teachers teaching “good” classes and those teaching “bad” classes. Teachers teaching higher level students are regarded as “good” teachers, while the ones teaching low level classes as “bad”. Motivation of the teachers working with lower level students decreases, which causes them to change their attitudes and behaviours towards these students. Further, these teachers’ relationship with the school management is damaged.

Teachers viewing tracking as a positive practice argued that it enabled students to get education together with the other students who were in similar level with them. However, they also argued that each class should be assessed at its own level, rather than making common exams for both levels. In other words, they were in favour of different exams for different level of students in tracking system, as they believed that this was the most fair way to assess all students. These findings are in line with those of Hallinan (1994) and the Karadeniz (1968). Hallinan (1994) argued that the curriculum applied in lower and upper level classes should not be the same. In a similar vein, Karadeniz (1968) argued that tracking was beneficial for lower and higher level students. More specifically, while lower level students had a chance to get educated in their level, and thus go on to the next level, successful students had an opportunity to develop their abilities by getting deeper and more comprehensive education.

Participant students argued that negative effects of tracking were more than its benefits. They stated that classifying students was an unfair practice, and teachers and principals behaved differently towards the students in different levels. This caused students to lose respect for themselves and each other, which also caused a relationship breakdown among students. These results corroborate the findings of Akar-Vural et al. (2016) which revealed that students were aware of being divided into groups according to their level of success even if implementation of tracking was done implicitly, and that they admitted being in lower level class because they failed. They felt that they belonged to that class, and thus did not want to go on to an upper level class. However, it is noteworthy that they would study hard and endeavour to be in upper level class of they had chance in the past.

The evaluation of students' views indicates that they comfortably stigmatised each other, saying lazy, mischievous, unsuccessful, hardworking, jealous or cool. It shows that students internalized such labels in the current education system. In addition, teachers' different attitudes and behaviours towards the students in different levels caused the deterioration of students' relationship with each other, which also resulted in losing self-respect and respect to each other.

Conclusion

Schools, being already a part of the system that resonates with social injustice, appear to contribute to inequality with the implementation of tracking system. In line with the understanding of social state, tracking should be stopped so that every individual can get an education equally. Accepting the individual differences in every aspect, it should be ensured that individuals with diverse cultural, social and economic background learn together under equal conditions. Since such differences are regarded as richness, schools should offer opportunities from different perspectives and have an integrative role rather than discriminative.

One of the most striking points in the study is that the participants mostly did not regard tracking as an educational discrimination. The number of participants considering it as a form of discrimination was low. It can be argued that participants of this study mostly viewed implementation of tracking in terms of success. Another striking point is that particularly teacher participants commented on tracking from the perspective of successful students. Several teachers pointed out that successful students would fail in mixed classes, and that tracking enabled them to further improve their potential in a segregated environment. This viewpoint means stigmatising most of the students as unsuccessful and discarding them due to not promising hope. It is a discrimination against the students who are in need of more support, since they are stigmatised as unsuccessful and condemned to basic level of education. In contrast, it can be expected that those students are regarded as disadvantageous group and therefore positively discriminated.

Compared to teachers and principals, students taking part in the study viewed tracking more negative, stating that it caused discrimination among students, and particularly low level students were negatively affected in terms of academic and psychological aspects. In contrast, principals had relatively more positive views about tracking compared to other participants. In this respect, they emphasized that successful students could be better educated with the inclusion of diversified materials and more question-solving opportunities, and similarly, unsuccessful students could be educated at a basic level in line with their own ability. In one aspect, this is an expected result, as the implementation of tracking in schools is the proof of principals' support to it. Otherwise, they would be expected not to allow tracking to be implemented in schools.

An issue that was not addressed in participants' accounts was that students' success/failure was not associated with out of school factors. Participants taking part in the study viewed the students as the only source of success/failure without any external interference. They believed that teaching unsuccessful students the minimum required knowledge and skills was a commonly accepted norm. Students are regarded as the 'perpetrators' of their own failure or negative behaviours when success and failure cannot be associated with social, political, particularly socio-economic factors (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2014, 2015). This continues the cycle of social discrimination by exposing disadvantaged social classes to the disadvantageous conditions in

schools. In this regard, tracking should no longer be implemented in schools. Since people are not classified depending on level of success in daily life, they should not be classified in education, either. It should be borne in mind that success/failure mostly depends on students' socio-economic status rather than students themselves, and thus low level students should not be discarded, as they are more in need of schools, education and teachers. An equal and quality education should be offered to all citizens.

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