Team Perception of the Teachers in the Primary Schools[*]

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Abstract

This study which examines the team perception levels of the teachers in primary schools based on various variables were done with the data acquired from 10 primary schools in the Sapanca district of Sakarya in 2011 – 2012 academic year. The universe of the research consists of 242 primary school teachers in Sapanca, Sakarya. In the study, instead of sampling method the entire universe was tried to be reached. The results of the study present that teacher don't/can't work with team spirit within the teams; team perception of the female teachers are higher than of the male teachers and the teachers working in the same school for a longer period have better team perception.

Key Words: Team Work, Team Perception, Teacher.

İlkokul Öğretmenlerinin Takım Algısı

Özet

İlköğretim okullarında öğretmenlerin takım algısı düzeylerini ve takım algısı düzeylerinin çeşitli değişkenlere göre inceleyen bu araştırma, 2011-2012 öğretim yılında Sakarya ili Sapanca ilçesinde bulunan 10 resmi ilköğretim okulundan elde edilen veriler yardımıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın evrenini Sakarya ili Sapanca ilçesi sınırları içinde yer alan Milli Eğitim Bakanlığına bağlı ilköğretim okullarında görev yapan 242 öğretmen oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada örneklem belirleme yoluna gidilmemiş, evrenin tümüne ulaşılmaya çalışılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda;. Öğretmenlerin okullarında kurulan takımlarda takım ruhu içinde çalış(a)madıkları, kadın öğretmenlerin takım algılarının erkek öğretmenlere göre daha yüksek olduğu, bulundukları okulda daha uzun süre görev yapan öğretmenlerin daha yüksek bir takım algısı olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Takım Çalışması, Takım Algısı, Öğretmen

Introduction

Schools can meet their predetermined targets only with teachers, who adopt these targets as their own targets, work cooperatively with their colleagues in order to reach their goals and who are aware of the fact that schools succeed only when their teachers do their own shares fully and with team spirit (Demirtaş, 2005: 42).

Subjects such as groups in organizations, group behaviors and grouping emphasized by neoclassical school since 1930sandstudied in previous researches have been defined as "team" recently and used this way in the literature (Kayalar, 2002: 271). However, in time these two terms differ. The reason is explained by Çetin (1998: 1-2) as the underlying thought of building a team is the desire of optimizing the performance of a group in accordance with the structure and operation of the group and teams usually display a better performance comparing the groups and individuals. Similarly, as Maddux (1999: 5-6) stated the most remarkable successes of the groups occur when they transform into an efficient organizations called "teams". Thus, it is quite appropriate to claim that the terms "team" and "group" are different.

Team is a group of people consisting two or more individuals who are connected to each other and act in unison in order to achieve the common goal together, cooperatively and in an effective manner (Başaran, 2004: 292; Balcı, 2005: 177; Eren, 2007: 463; Dengiz, 2000: 30).

Balcı (2002: 98) and Sümter (2003: 7) lists the characteristics of the teams as: they consist of at least two members who are constantly in interaction with each other, perceive themselves and the others as the members of the team, share the common values of the team, believe in their collaboration and act in unison, adopt the same goals and keep identifying new goals, create synergy, are creative and highly motivated and are able to decide rapidly; briefly the member should act as the pieces of a puzzle which generate an entity when they come together without wearing out each other.

Significance of Working with the Teams

Since the beginning of the 1990s changes in the economic and social environment affected the structures and management strategies of the businesses deeply. Therefore, team work practice which is one of the elements of these changes appeared to be an essential requirement for the businesses. Nowadays most of the successful businesses emphasize the significance of the team work practices in providing a competitive advantage. All of these developments bring forth the prevalence and emergence of the team work practiceswhich is supported by the administrative level as a mandatory philosophy and application. (Özler and Koparan, 2006).

The essential point of the team work is the awareness of the individuals about the facts that their decisions and activities will affect the other members and group thinking is more preferred than the individual thinking (Polat, 2000). The phrase "None of us is as smart as all of us" clearly expresses the significance of the vision manifested with team work (Blanchard, 1996: 22-23).

Although an individual spends more time and more effort when he/she works alone, within a team a lot more and more efficient work can be done. The magic word of the teamwork is synergy (Karslı, 2004: 63) as when the team work and personal employment performance can be turned into team performance, synergy occurs (Brestrich, 2000: 111).

In organizations teams are built with many aims. These aims can be listed as initializing the change, breaking the resistance against change, finding possible solutions to the existing problems, enhancing the work relations, obtaining goal-oriented results, modernizing the organization, making the work more meaningful for the employees, creating a cooperative and participative organizational culture, providing a quality service, developing new strategies, etc. (Elma, 2004: 197).

Building Efficient Teams

In order to improve the efficiency of the organization and to meet the organizational goals more rapidly and more reliably for each integrated task a team should be built (Başaran, 2004: 195-196). The main target of building a team is after gathering supportive and trustworthy people completing the given task without being inconsiderate about the

values, behaviors and skills of the members (Özkalp ve Kırel, 2001: 438).

Teams aren't group of people who come together instantly. It takes some time for a group of strangers to act in unison and behave in a coordinated manner, the best way to do so requires a great deal of interaction among the members (Eren, 2007: 467).

The structuring process of the team indicates cooperation. The members of a team should accept the idea that they have to work together. The members should stick to the thought of how we can contribute to the team and what can be created with this contribution as a synergic team. During the structuring process active participation is anticipated about the evaluation of the efficiency of the team and determination of what is necessary in order to enhance and continue this efficacy in the future (Keçecioğlu, 2000: 17). Therefore, during this process the prospective members of the team are expected to answer some questions.

According to Margerision (2001: 19) all of the members of a new team should know and understand the importance of some questions such as "Who are we?", "Where are we now?", "Where are we heading to?", "How will we reach there?", "What is expected from us?", "Who will support us to reach our goals?", "How effective are we?", "What will we get at the end?" (cit. Çetin, 2001: 32). After the members answer these questions structuring of the formation process of the team starts and then develops rapidly.

The main reason for the preference of team work in organizations is to improve the performance in accordance with business strategies. However, several researches have depicted that it is hard to apply teamwork successfully, a lot of mistakes are made or the synergy that emerged with the team work cannot be used sufficiently (Yedievli and Ersen, 1997: 29-30). First of all, some requirements have to be fulfilled in order to build a team (Ataman, 2002: 89) so the team has to have certain characteristics for an efficient and influential teamwork. These characteristics can be listed as open targets, high motivation, healthy communication, skilled members, sharing the joint responsibilities, having a common mission and vision, sense of be-

longing to the team, authorization of the team, creating a positive working environment, arranging efficient meetings, creativity and innovation, appropriate working methods, mutual trust, cooperation, active leadership, commitment to the team, periodical review and evaluation, rewarding, supporting personal development and close and strong relations with the other teams.

Team Work in Education

Tendency of the educational institutions, which prepare people for the future, towards teamwork should be considered as the necessity of time and working conditions. The principles must build their own teams which contains academic and support staff and which is capable of accomplishing different tasks (Cafoğlu, 1996: 65-72; Çetin, 2001: 35). When the team work includes all personnel, the barriers between the teaching, auxiliary and administrative staff will be removed and thus a better working environment can be created. Appliance of problem solving and decision making systems in the organizations in accordance with teamwork is a significant step for the success of the educational institutions (Cafoğlu, 1996: 66).

School is an organization consisting educational staff who have a common educational aims. While educating students it is very normal that a teacher (employee) seeks help from another teacher (employee). Education is a service given collectively as training students is too heavy to be done with only one person's knowledge and skill (Başaran, 2008: 310). When schools are evaluated in this respect, the nature of the responsibility necessitates the coordination and cooperation. Therefore, teamwork is quite important for the schools (Demirtaş, 2005: 43-44).

In organizations the words "team" and "board" are used interchangeably (Cooper, 2000'den cit. Şekerci and Aypay, 2009: 141). In primary schools, teachers' board, teachers' council, student assessment board can be thought as teams which are responsible for decision making on the educational activities in schools.

In this study we will examine teams of teachers' board, teachers' council for the classes, school development management team, par-

ent-teacher association and student assessment board.

- **Team of Teachers' Board**

Teachers' board consists of classroom teachers of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5thgrades (and branch teachers of these classes, if there are any) and branch teachers of 6th, 7th and 8th grades. By preparing activity samples and materials based on the lesson common perspective is brought (MEB, 2003).

- **Team of Teachers' Council for the Classes**

Teachers' Council for the Classes consists of the teachers who are teaching in the same classes of 4th, 5th,6th, 7th and 8th grades and the counselor of the school. In the council meeting besides the issues about the students such as personality, nutrition, health and social relationships, successes of the students and the economic conditions of the families are discussed and the common decisions are written down to the council book in order to be performed (MEB, 2003).

- **Team of Parent-Teacher Association**

Parent-teacher associations are unions within the body of schools in order to provide integrity between the school and the parents, creating communication and cooperation between the school and the parents, supporting educational activities, satisfying the educational needs of the poor students (MEB, 2012).

- **School Development Management Team**

In primary schools "School Development Management Team" is founded in order to improve the quality of the education and the success of the students with administrative mentality based on cooperation and participation, enhancing the physical conditions and human resources of the school, giving student-centered education and making planned and continuous progress in education (MEB, 2003). School development management team represents the school community and administers and conducts the development of the school. Development plan of the schools an important tool which helps the school become an efficient organization (MEB, 2007: 9-10).

- **Student Assessment Board**

Student assessment board is formed in order to encourage the positive behaviors and to prevent the negative behaviors of the students by determining the interests, desires, skills and needs of the students(MEB, 2003).

Problem Sentence

What is the team perception level of the primary school teachers in Sapanca, Sakarya?

Sub Problems

To find an answer to the abovementioned questions the answers of the following sub problems are going to be seek in this study:

1. What are the team perception levels of the primary school teachers on teachers' board, teachers' council for the classes, school development management team, parent-teacher association and student assessment board?

2. Does the team perception of the teachers reveal any significant difference based on
   a. their sex
   b. the amount of their working hours?

Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to establish the team perception of the primary school teachers who are the milestones of our education system, to determine whether their team perception differ according to their personal and professional characteristics, to find out the challenges of the teamwork, to offer possible solutions for the problems and to emphasize the significance of the teamwork in schools.

Findings of this research are important in terms of establishing the team perception levels of primary school teachers, determining the deficiencies and challenges in the teamwork of the teachers and by offering possible solutions improving the efficiency of the teamwork in schools. Thus, it is expected to lead the teachers of the schools of Ministry of National Education and other educational institutions to be more participant in teamwork creating the school culture.

Table 1: Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation of the Primary School Teachers on Team Perception

Teams	N	X	sd
Teachers' Board	208	2,05	0,81
Parent-Teacher Association	208	2,00	0,86
Teachers' Council for the Classes	131	2,07	0,76
School Development Management Team	40	2,03	0,73
Student Assessment Board	37	1,49	1,12

Table 1 displays the data of the team perception of the teachers within the teams of their school. According to this, while teamwork is "rarely" seen in teachers' board, teachers' council for the classes, school development management team and parent-teacher association, it is "never" seen in student assessment board.

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of the Team Perceptions of the Primary School Teachers

	N/%	Does not Know	Low	Medium	High	Total
Teachers' Board	N	.00	63	72	73	208
	%	.00	30.3	34.6	35.1	100
Parent-Teacher Association	N	.00	77	55	76	208
	%	.00	37	26.4	36.5	100
Teachers' Council For The Classes	N	.00	33	56	42	131
	%	.00	25.2	42.7	32.1	100
School Development Management Team	N	.00	10	19	11	40
	%	.00	25	47.5	27.5	100
Student Assessment Board	N	10	7	12	8	37
	%	27	18.9	32.4	21.6	100

Table 2 shows the frequencies and percentages of the team perceptions of the teachers in the teams of their schools. 63 teachers of the teachers' board (%30.3), 77 teachers of the parent-teacher association (%37), 33 teachers of the teachers' council for the classes (%25.2), 10 teachers of the school development management team (%25) and 7 teachers of the student assessment board (%18.9) are low in team perception; that is to say teachers are lack of team spirit.

t-test was applied to find out whether team perceptions of the primary school teachers differ based on sexes of the teachers and the results can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: t-Test results of the research determining whether the team perceptions of teachers differ based on sex.

Teams	Sex	N	X	s.s.	s.e. of Mean	F	t	sd	p
Teachers' Board	Female	116	2,20	0,78	0,07	,05	3,06	206	,00
	Male	92	1,86	0,81	0,08				
Parent-Teacher Association	Female	116	2,03	0,87	0,08	,22	,57	206	,56

Teams	Sex	N	X	s.s.	s.e. of Mean	F	t	sd	p
Teachers' Board	Female	116	2,20	0,78	0,07	,05	3,06	206	,00
	Male	92	1,86	0,81	0,08				
Parent-Teacher Association	Female	116	2,03	0,87	0,08	,22	,57	206	,56
	Male	92	1,96	0,85	0,09				
Teachers' Council For The Classes	Female	68	2,24	0,76	0,09	1,51	2,68	129	,00
	Male	63	1,89	0,72	0,09				
School Development Management Team	Female	15	2,00	0,85	0,22	1,68	-,65	38	,87
	Male	25	2,04	0,68	0,14				
Student Assessment Board	Female	18	2,06	0,94	0,22	1,03		-,18	,85
	Male	19	2,11	0,74	0,17				

*p<.05

As it is seen in Table 3 the team perceptions of teachers of teachers' board and teachers' council for the classes display a significant difference based on sex (t=3.06, t=2.68 p<.05). Team perceptions of the female teachers are higher than of the male teachers.

On the other side, team perceptions of teachers of parent-teacher association, school development management team and student assessment board do not display significant difference based on sex (t=.57, t=.87, T=.85 p>.05). The perceptions of the female and male teachers are almost similar.

The test results trying to figure whether team perceptions differ according to seniority is given in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of analysis of variance on the team perceptions of the primary school according to the years they spent in their schools

ANOVA   LSD

Source of the variance		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean of Squares	F	(I) O.Ç.S.	(J) O.Ç.S.	Mean Difference (I-J)	P
Parent-Teacher Association	Intergroup	8,45	2	4,22		1-5 Years	6-10 Years	,07	,60
							11 Years and more	-,49	**,00**
	In-Group	144,54	205	,70	5,99	6-10 Years	1-5 Years	-,07	,60
							11 Years and more	-,56	**,00**
	Total	152,99	207			11 Years and more	1-5 Years	,49	**,00**
							6-10 Years	,56	**,00**

p<.05

When the seniority of the teachers related to team perception are examined, only parent-teacher association team displays a significant difference (F=5.99, p<.05). The results of the LSD test applied to reveal which periods of working time cause the difference report that the more the teachers work, the more perception is seen.

Results and Discussion

It is has been found out that in primary schools while teamwork is "rarely" seen within the teachers' board, teachers' council for the classes, parent-teacher association and school development management team it is "never" seen within student assessment board.

Moreover, the team perception of the primary school teachers is revealed as low, in other words teachers cannot work with team spirit within the teams built in their schools.

The mean of the findings of the research presents that team perception of the female teachers in teachers' board and teachers' council for the classes are higher than of male teachers in the same teams. Whereas, sex is not a determinant for team perception in parent-teacher association, school development management team and student assessment board.

Seniority is not a factor affecting the team perceptions of the teachers either. Besides, when working time is considered, no significant difference is found to be related to the team perceptions of the teachers who are members of teachers' board, teachers' council for the classes, school development management team and student assessment board. Therefore, there aren't any differences between the views of the teachers who have been working for a long time in the school and who have recently started to work. However, working time in the same school affects the team perceptions of the teachers in parent-teacher association; teachers who work more are found to have more team perception compared to their colleagues who work less. This can be explained with the fact that teachers of the parent-teacher association might need some time in order to be familiar with the students, parents and other teachers. Furthermore, the teachers who spent longer time in the same school establish a loyalty and this commitment might lead the teachers to stay in the same school for longer periods.

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