



Impact of Education in Institutional and Individual Development

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Abstract

The rapid process of change, which is the result of social dynamism and environmental factors, leads societies to consider how to educate more qualified people. Without lifelong education, it is impossible to bring up efficient individuals who will contribute to the development of institutions. The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of lifelong education and staff improvement programs upon individual and institutional development. The research was carried out in Turkey between January – July, 2014. The researcher himself participated in all the educational activities in a private primary school and in a textile firm. The data of the study was collected by the researcher in the light of his observations and meetings. While collecting the data within the scope of this study, meetings were organized with the school administrators, the students and their parents in the primary school and with the craftsmen and engineers in the textile firm. In both of the institutions 41 people in the education program were regarded as the group of the study. By means of the education program based on the improvement of the school staff, the quality of the service at school increased. Team work among the staff strengthened the cooperation and enabled the teachers to become more effective. As a consequence, a considerable increase in the students' quality was seen. The findings of the study reveal that the improvement of the staff results in the improvement of the school and of the students. Similarly, the education program carried out in the textile firm contributed considerably to the increase of the product quality and the customer satisfaction. The quality of the staff working in institutions should constantly be improved. It is apparent that the way to improve the quality of the staff lies in lifelong education. With the educational programs, the staff of organizations can work more efficiently and attains more success. Thus, they will be influential in the progress of institutions and individuals.

Keywords: individual improvement, institutional progress, staff improvement program, continuous education

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Eğitimin Bireysel ve Kurumsal Gelişime Etkisi

Öz

Sosyal dinamizmin bir sonucu olan hızlı değişim süreci ve çevresel faktörler insanların nasıl daha nitelikli yetiştirilebileceğini düşünmeye yönlendirmektedir. Yaşam boyu eğitim olmadan kurumların gelişimine katkı sağlayacak etkin bireylerin yetiştirilmesi mümkün değildir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, yaşam boyu eğitim ve personel geliştirme programlarının, bireysel ve kurumsal gelişim üzerine etkisini incelemektir. Araştırma Ocak –Temmuz 2014 tarihleri arasında Türkiye’de gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmacı özel bir ilköğretim okulunda ve bir tekstil firmasında bütün eğitim faaliyetlerine katılmıştır. Çalışmadaki veriler, araştırmacının kendi gözlemleri ve yaptığı toplantıların ışığında araştırmacı tarafından toplanmıştır. Araştırmanın amacı kapsamında veri toplanırken ilköğretim okulundaki okul yöneticileri, öğrenciler ve veliler ile diğer yandan da tekstil firmasındaki mühendisler ve ustalar ile toplantılar gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunda, kurumların her ikisindeki eğitim programına toplam 41 kişi katılmıştır. Okul personelinin geliştirilmesine dayalı eğitim programı sayesinde okuldaki hizmet kalitesinin arttığı, personel arasındaki ekip çalışmasının işbirliğini güçlendirdiği ve öğretmenlerin daha etkin hale geldiği gözlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak öğrencilerin kalitesinde önemli bir artış görülmüştür. Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgulara göre, personelin iyileştirilmesi ve geliştirilmesi hem okulun hem de öğrencilerin gelişmesini sağlamıştır. Benzer şekilde tekstil firmasında yürütülen eğitim programı da ürün kalitesinin ve müşteri memnuniyetinin önemli ölçüde artmasına katkı sağlamıştır. Kurumlarda çalışan personelin sürekli geliştirilmesi gerekmektedir. Kurumlardaki personel kalitesini artırmanın yolunun yaşam boyu eğitimden geçtiği bilinen bir gerçektir. Kurumlarda çalışan personelin, eğitim programları aracılığıyla daha verimli çalışmaları sağlanabilir ve daha fazla başarı elde edilebilir. Kurumlarda çalışan personelin niteliğinin artmasıyla, bireylerin ve kurumların ilerlemesinde etkili olmaları sağlanabilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: bireysel gelişim, kurumsal ilerleme, personel geliştirme programı, sürekli eğitim

Introduction

Considering the national and international improvements, the institutions and organizations need to provide services in accordance with the expectations of the time, and providing better services largely depends on the institutions' effort to educate and to improve its staff according to the changing values of society. The importance given to education plays a fundamental role in the development of societies in the international competition arena; therefore the lifelong education has become an essential factor of quality and efficiency. "As many studies have documented, education is one of the predictors of success in the labour market. More educated workers earn higher wages, have greater earnings growth over their life times, experience less unemployment and work longer" (Riddell, 2004, p.10).

In a society in which knowledge has a considerable significance, it is too important and necessary to educate individuals who will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills of the time, who can consider the facts with a wide perspective, participate in group facilities, produce solutions for problems and can lead a life that consists of lifelong education (Kamp, 1998). Now, it is more necessary than ever to improve the qualities of the staff working in institutions, because the needs and expectations of these organizations have been constantly changing; as a result the qualities expected from the individual have been rising as well.

The quality of the products and services produced by institutions is directly related to the quality of its staff. The more the institutions educate, improve and equip their staff with new knowledge and skills, the more efficient and effective the staff will become. The most effective way to improve the structure and working in an institution is to make the human resources better together with considering the changing and rapidly developing conditions. Reaching the planned targets and achieving the expected goals depend on determining the education needs and meeting these requirements by means of staff improvement programs.

Education and Change

Today, education has become the most important fact almost in every country. The rapid distribution of communication technologies and the increase of employment opportunities have made education and the understanding of continuous improvement vital as a result of globalization. The process of globalization can be taken into consideration as a process in which the problems related to national identities, situation of economy and borders are solved and the considerable structures of social life is determined. Together with these facts, it can also be regarded as a process that transforms the world economy into a whole by leading people to view the world as a single common place. The tendencies, which make the globalization process arise, come out as a transition from the industrial society to the knowledge-centered society, from the labor force to high modern technology, from national economy to the world economy, from the representative democracy to the world economy (Fındıkcı, 2001).

In history, leaving the material and energy behind, knowledge has become the most essential source and this proved that all the organizations dealing with

production all over the world should pay attention to the necessity of improving the factors related to competition, staff development, control of expenditure, and human resources, since “those receiving education will become more productive and thus more valuable to employers” (Riddell, 2004, p. 21). Consequently, the necessity of fulfilling the requirements of globalization and the market, being in conformity with the changing conditions of environment and society, can be taken into consideration as the noticeable factors that not only a country but also all the institutions and all of the countries should consider in detail. The improvement of institutional structure and working can only be carried out by improving the human resources, so “one should collaborate with the participants about what alterations make the most sense to help them build their competence and implement what they are learning” (Champion, 2003, p. 3).

The factors that have direct or indirect influence on social and individual life can be listed as follows (Gökçe, 2003, p.1-5):

- The knowledge capacity increasing rapidly.
- Characteristics of individual and society.
- Improvement of human resources.
- Increase in the understanding of competition and cooperation.
- Rise in customer demand and expectations.
- Continuous change.
- Rapid change in national identity and habits.

It is important for an institution to pay attention to the factors pointed out above in order to reach its determined targets, to compete in national and international working fields and to renew itself in accordance with the changing conditions and innovations in environment, so focusing on continuous education process and staff improvement has become inevitable. The reasons to educate the staff working in an institution can be indicated as follows:

- Recent developments in science and technology.
- Change that has taken place in the institutional structure and in the working area.
- Increase of the expectations from the institution.
- Change in the position of staff and in the understanding of quality.
- Rise of the positive effects of the improvement in human resources.
- Spread of the team-work idea.
- Improvement of the staff quality in consequence of continuous and effective education (Gökçe, 2004, p. 5).

Since the staff improved by education plays a fundamental role in rising the quality of the products and services, education can be considered to be the most effective means to improve the quality of staff. The institutions, being aware of this fact, by means of staff improvement programs, fulfill educational activities related to the needs. Recently, carrying out educational programs and practising these

programs in certain periods, many institutions have been analyzing and deeply evaluating the benefits of them upon the institution and staff. It is no doubt that:

There is widespread agreement that education and training and human resources play a decisive role in achieving a number of economic and social goals and in particular are important means of paving the way to a knowledge society. They are expected to promote long-term individual employability and ensure social and economic inclusion as well as equal opportunities (Tessaring, 2004, p.1).

As education process has become an inevitable element of quality and efficiency, recently many institutions have been making enormous efforts for improving the educational facilities of human resources. Benefits of educational activities practised on the staff are examined and evaluated. This study aims to analyze in great detail the advantages of educational activities put into practice and to determine the function of these educational programs in two institutions. While one of these is a private primary school, the other one is a textile firm making productions in ready-made clothing sector. In the private primary school, an education plan was prepared related to improving the quality of the teachers. In the textile firm, another education plan was studied in order to improve the quality of the staff working as engineers and craftsmen. The reason why two different institutions were selected is that one of them is producing services, whereas the other one is producing goods. While the staff improvement program prepared for the school was organized by the administrators, teachers and the researcher; the education program handled for the textile firm was planned by the firm administrators, engineers, craftsmen and the researcher.

The extent of the education program carried out for improving the staff both at the school and in the firm was planned in accordance with an educational activity delivered by experts for 24 hours. These two educational programs were performed with different contents. Having begun on January, 2008, this research lasted at 6 months. The main targets of the education program practised in these institutions are pointed as follows:

Table 1

Main Targets of the Education Program

<i>The education program practised at the private primary school</i>	<i>The education program practised in the textile firm</i>
Improvement of communication with the students.	Improvement of communication with the workers.
Interaction and cooperation with the parents.	Interaction of the administrators with the staff.
Solving problems at school.	Solving problems in administration.
Improving teaching strategies.	Improving quality and efficiency.
Working with groups at school.	Group working in the institutions.
Increasing the motivation of the teacher and the student.	Increasing the staff motivation.

Thus, it is obvious that the main target of the education program performed in these two different institutions is to improve the institution and its staff; in a word the basic objective of these two programs is common (See Table 1). All the staff that

took part in the education activities was informed by the researcher about the subjects related to the plan, practice and evaluation of the program.

Aim of the Study

The target of the study is to determine the effect of educational activities carried out in the private primary school and in the textile firm on the institutional and individual improvement. In order to achieve this aim, the questions below were examined:

- 1) Are the educational activities crucial factors for institutional change and improvement?
- 2) Does an education program increase the quality of the service or product?
- 3) Does it improve the relationship and the cooperation inside the institution?
- 4) What do the staffs think about the benefits of this program?

Method

Having an experimental quality, the research was carried out in Turkey between January – July, 2014. The researcher himself participated in all the educational activities in both of the institutions. The data of the study was collected by the researcher in the light of his observations and meetings. The researcher collected 6 engineers and 12 craftsmen from the textile firm. While collecting the data within the scope of this study, meetings were organized with the school administrators, the students and their parents; moreover there were meetings with the administrators and the staff of the textile firm. The ultimate goal of this study is to determine to what extent the staff in the education program can reflect the knowledge, skill and the behaviors to their environment. Therefore, the meetings with the group were fulfilled a month later after the practice of educational activities. In both of the institutions 41 people in the education program were regarded as the group of the study. All the data acquired during the research was analyzed and evaluated by the researcher. During the plan, practice and evaluation processes of the staff improvement programs were carried out with the cooperation of Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences.

Findings and Interpretations

The data collected from the teachers working in the private primary school:

The education program in the private primary school was delivered under the topics of six subjects and each of the subjects was given to the primary school teachers as three hours of theoretical courses and three hours of practising process. The data of the study was collected a month later after the education program was put into practice. The opinions of the teachers participated in the education program can be emphasized as follows:

- Our relationship has become more positive and we have become more helpful to one another.
- I can understand my students, their parents and my colleagues better.
- I am more self confident.

- Cooperation and team work among us have begun to improve.
- Students are coming to school more willingly.
- My respect towards my work has increased.
- I am able to create permanent and effective solutions for the problems I am faced with.
- The in-class activities have become more efficient and exciting.
- I can make communication more effectively with the administrators of my school.
- We have realized that the improvement of the school is directly related to the improvement of the school staff.

It is clear that the education program carried out as a result of the meetings with the teachers is not only functional, but also useful for the improvement of the school. While the qualities of the school staff improve, the quality of the students improves as well. As the director of accelerated and compensatory education in the Spring Branch Independent School District, Eloise Hambright (2000) stresses, “whole school institutes provide a strong overview of theory and practice whereas there is no substitute for adult learning” (Richardson, 2000, p. 3). In this sense, by means of adult learning, the quality of the service that the school offers also increases. The administrators of the school are not the only ones who are responsible for the improvement of the school, because all the school staff should work by regarding the requirements of the team work. As the quality of the school is directly related to the quality of the staff, it leads a considerable increase in the students’ quality as well. Therefore, the issue for the teachers and teaching profession can be described as follows: “The issue for the teachers and the teaching profession is how to manage a set of competing expectations about the nature of teachers’ work by the profession, government and community and what constitutes a profession” (Sachs, 2005, p. 2).

The findings of the study reveal that the improvement of the staff means the improvement of the school and the students. After the study in the private primary school, the school administrators have begun to prepare annual education programs for the staff progress; so every month education programs are put into practice to improve the school team. Before the organization of such programs, educational needs, which can develop the functioning of the school team, were analyzed. Thus, the aim was to enable the staff to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and behavior to achieve educational needs. In this respect, the conscious learning process for the teachers and administrators acquires considerable importance, because:

Even if the school experiences provide opportunities for learning, that does not ensure that teachers and administrators learn from them. The learning that comes from experiences must be brought to a conscious level. Only then can educators verbalize and control what they have learnt. (McQuarrie and Wood, 1999, p. 4)

The data collected from the engineers and the craftsmen working in the textile firm

Education program in the textile firm was carried out under the topic of six subjects after three hours of theoretical and practical courses. The data of the study

was collected a month later after the education program was put into practice. The researchers paid considerable attention to the active participation of all the staff. The members of the staff were asked to find solutions or to develop imaginative ideas for the problems and facts of real life; consequently the program continued with an increasing interest and participation. Opinions of the 6 engineers and 12 craftsmen who participated in the education program were brought together in order to provide the institutional and individual improvement, and their opinions related to the improvement observed within the firm are emphasized as follows:

- In our firm we pay much more attention to cooperation.
- We give much respect to one another in the working process.
- Our production defects have decreased to the percentage of 1,7 from 3 per cent.
- The quality of the products we produced has increased.
- We regard our work as more important.
- The satisfaction of our customers has begun to increase.
- We achieved to increase the understanding of team work.
- We can create more effective solutions for the problems met during the production process.
- Our motivation, participation and social activities have reached a higher level.
- The textile workers are more content than before.
- Our understanding of staff development has increased.

It can be indicated that the education program carried out after the meetings with the staff of the textile firm contributed considerably to the increase of the product quality and the provision of customer satisfaction. As a result this education program brought about the development of institutional structure and working capacity. Moreover, it can be deduced that the interaction and cooperation among the staff have increased.

All the members of the textile firm in the staff improvement program have paid more attention to the program and participated in the education process actively. The positive developments after the education activities and the increase of the production quality reveal that this program should be carried out constantly and effectively. As a result, the administrators of the firm established a 'Human Resources Unit' in order to improve the structure and function of the institution and the human resources. In July, 2008, the human resources unit prepared institutional development and staff improvement plans for 6 months. The education program in this institution played a determining role in institutional development and in establishing policies.

This education program enabled the adoption of the 'Continuous Education and Continuous Improvement Understanding' among the firm administrators and its staff, therefore this situation shows that the most effective way to provide both institutional and individual improvement is the staff improvement program centered on the educational needs. Before the practice of the education program in the textile firm, those who consider the time spent for education as a waste accepted after the practice of the program that education is the most crucial element not only for the

institutional development, but also for the increase of the production quality, consequently the way to increase the quality of the production or service lies in developing the human resources.

Having directly influenced the structure and the workings of both the private primary school and the textile firm, this study led to the development the quality of the staff, so every institution should concentrate on improving the human resources as well as its own development, since without improving the human resources it is almost impossible to mention institutional progress. In this sense, education plays a key position for change and improvement (Imel, 1995). The provision of the ultimate goals of an institution proves the success of the staff improvement programs. As the environmental factors and expectations of the individual have been increasing rapidly, it is possible to follow the continuous change by means of the staff improvement programs; therefore in recent years many institutions in Turkey have adopted the principle of continuous education and improvement.

Discussion

This study was carried out in order to determine the effect of the education program practised in the private primary school and in the textile firm for the improvement of the staff and the institution, so noticeable developments were observed in both of the institutions in terms of the production and the service quality, and one can realize that the staff participated in the education program have an indirect impact on one another. As regards to the findings of the research, all 23 teachers participated in the education program with a great interest and willingness. Having experienced the atmosphere of the education program, a teacher of 32 years of age stressed his opinions related to the benefits of the program as follows:

I am an experienced teacher, I used to assume that I had a great knowledge on various subjects, but I have realized that I could not improve myself sufficiently. As my students are curious about improving themselves and broadening their minds, I should also renew myself, therefore by means of this program I have begun to question myself. Tomorrow I will come to the classroom with a different understanding.

Similarly, in a meeting with one of the students of this teacher, the student indicated her viewpoints about the positive change she has noticed in her teacher's attitudes as follows:

Our teacher is making much more effort to understand and teach us. Now he does not complain about our mischievousness to our parents, instead he prefers to spend his time with us. Recently he has been carrying out various activities and group work in class, so we not only enjoy the course, but we also learn. From now on I like my school very much.

Also, the administrator of the private primary school highlighted the change in the behavior of the teachers by stating that the teachers in his school used to share their problems with him before, but after the education program, they started to solve their problems by themselves or by cooperating with their colleagues. He adds that the parents of some students informed him of the considerable improvements they observed in the attitudes of both the teachers and their children. Thus, the problems

related to discipline considerably decreased as well. In other words, the administrator of the school emphasized the positive developments in the quality of the school, in this sense the development of the quality at school is closely related to the quality of the students. The most important aspect of an efficient school is that it can improve itself and the students in accordance with the changing and developing needs, and the effective way to provide these developments lies in putting into practice staff improvement programs which are centered on the needs of the staff.

One of the parents of a student from the private primary school points out his opinions as follows: "Our child's teacher guides us more by cooperating with us for our child's success, so he goes to school more willingly than before and it makes us so pleased." Another protector of a student states:

My son used to be uninterested in his school and in his courses, therefore his teacher encouraged him to determine a target for himself and now he is more interested in his and has regarded his teacher as a model. In my opinion, the reason why the quality of interaction has increased depends on the role of the teacher as a team leader in class.

It is obvious that the program put into practice for the improvement of institutions and individuals has contributed considerably to not only school, but also to the teachers, so the influence of this improvement entirely reflects to the student's success, therefore the education process has positive reflections both on the administrators and on the students. Thus, the school has turned out to be a more appealing place where the targets are achieved more effectively. In other words, "high-quality professional development is essential for school systems to achieve their goals for student and staff performance" (Hirsh, 2004, p.3).

If increasing the quality of the primary schools is the ultimate aim, first of all efficiency of teachers should be improved by practising staff improvement programs. In this sense, "education is not only essential to development, and in particular to what we today call sustainable development. Sustainable development implies a balance between meeting immediate needs and looking to the future with a long-term vision" (Arias, 2001, p. 2). Since an effective school means effective teachers and students, by means of such programs we can make our schools effective learning centers, which would enable the creation of a more prosperous world.

However, the improvement at school should be organized and planned with great care. The educational institutions prepare staff improvement programs and perform them periodically in order to make the process of change and improvement more effective. The educational activities carried out in an institution not only have an enormous influence in working life but also have a significant role in increasing the quality of interaction and cooperation between the individuals. A worker in the textile firm considers the participation of his craftsman in the education program as follows: "After having participated in the education program he has begun to show us more respect by paying much more attention to our problems. In addition, he has undertaken the role of a team leader by motivating us considerably". Another worker indicates: "Our unit manager has been supporting us more than ever, he is improving our relations with the administrators, gives much respect to us while telling us our duties and responsibilities, so now it is better to work with him". The administrators of the textile firm stressed that there has been a considerable decrease

in the rate of problems in the firm and underlined that 40 per cent decrease in production defect can be observed as well, as a consequence of which he has received messages of customer satisfaction. A craftsman in the educational activity expressed his ideas at the end of the program:

I used to pay attention only to my work and my duty, but now I prefer to centre on human beings. I like my job and regard it as very important. I can communicate with my customers better, because I have begun to realize my skills by this program and become more positive and cooperative. If education means “change”, I think I have undergone a period of change, but it can be considered to be a useful one.

The recognition of the positive results of the educational activities in the textile firm has brought about the provision of a new unit in the institution and made the continuous improvement as a policy of the institution. The new human resources unit has undertaken the mission of increasing the quality and efficiency by improving the staff continuously. In this sense, “recent research findings suggest that investment in training generate substantial gains for firms in terms of productivity gains, profitability, market share and competitiveness ” (Tessaring, 2004, p. 10). The coordinator of human resources in the textile firm emphasizes his opinions related to the new approach they will carry out by pointing out that their target is to achieve perfection; in other words their objective is to produce things which have better quality and he continues along these lines: “We are employing a strategic approach in which we examine, analyze, create solutions and ideas, evaluate and improve the product. All of our staff is using the approach of continuous improvement for the production process.”

If an education program in an institution is planned in accordance with the needs and is put into practice by a professional team, it can provide the institutional and individual improvement. Such a continuous improvement and education program can be regarded as an institutional culture, therefore the educational programs put into practice contributed considerably to the development of the two institutions.

Education is the most important factor that enables to find solutions for the problems, it not only creates innovations but also increases the quality of the educational centers and working fields; therefore in developed and developing countries and societies the provision of ‘goods’ and ‘services’ of better quality lies in continuous education . In this sense, this study reveals the necessity and importance of education for every individual in all levels and in all institutions of society.

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