

Analyzing Turkish Parents' Educational Expectations through the Lens of Curriculum Elements

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to reveal the educational expectations of parents whose children attend primary, secondary, and high school by using the phenomenology from qualitative research designs. In order to ensure the representation of the study group with different demographic variables, the maximum variation sampling method was used to select 15 participants according to both their occupational background (unemployed, worker, civil servant, private sector, and white collar) and the education level of the participant parents. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using content analysis. The findings were divided into five main themes: a) the general expectations, b) the expectations from the purpose, c) content, d) process, and e) evaluation of education. The parental expectations highlighted in the study are: a) developing psychomotor skills, b) reducing class sizes, c) improving educational experiences, d) increasing stakeholder participation, e) addressing insufficient class hours, f) reducing inefficiency in classes, g) reducing curriculum density, h) increasing course variety, i) improving school facilities, j) rethinking attendance requirements, k) questioning the necessity of grade 12, l) prioritizing student happiness, and m) challenging the exam system. This study shows what kind of approach parents expect from their children in the context of the purpose, content, process and evaluation of education. Parents generally favor a well-rounded educational approach that nurtures academic, moral, emotional, and social growth. However, this preference often clashes with the exam-driven national system, creating a gap between parental hopes and institutional constraints. This study emphasizes the need for a system that better aligns with the needs of both students and parents, offering recommendations for teacher training, curriculum revisions, and student-centered assessments. Policy makers and educators should consider parental expectations to accurately assess the student population and structure educational processes to align with the goal of socializing individuals.



Eğitim Programı Öğeleri Merceğinden Türk Ebeveynlerin Eğitim Beklentilerinin Analizi

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Bu araştırma, nitel araştırma desenlerinden olgubilim kullanılarak çocukları ilkökul, ortaokul ve liseye devam eden ebeveynlerin eğitimden beklentilerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Farklı demografik değişkenlere sahip çalışma grubunun temsiliyetini sağlamak amacıyla, hem mesleki geçmişlerine (çalışmıyor, işçi, memur, özel sektör ve beyaz yakalı) hem de ebeveynlerin çocuklarının eğitim düzeyine göre maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak 15 katılımcı seçilmiştir. Veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle toplanmış ve içerik analizi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular a) genel beklentiler ve görüşler, b) amaca, c) içeriğe, d) sürece ve e) eğitimin değerlendirilmesine yönelik beklentiler olmak üzere beş ana temaya ayrılmıştır. Çalışmada vurgulanan ebeveyn beklentileri şunlardır: a) psikomotor becerilerin geliştirilmesi, b) sınıf mevcutlarının azaltılması, c) eğitim deneyimlerinin iyileştirilmesi, d) paydaş katılımının artırılması, e) yetersiz ders saatlerinin ele alınması, f) derslerdeki verimsizliğin azaltılması, g) müfredat yoğunluğunun azaltılması, h) ders çeşitliliğinin artırılması, i) okul olanaklarının iyileştirilmesi, j) devam gerekliliklerinin yeniden düşünülmesi, k) 12. sınıfın gerekliliğinin sorgulanması, l) öğrenci mutluluğunun önceliklendirilmesi ve m) sınav sisteminin sorgulanması. Bu çalışma velilerin, eğitimin amacı, içeriği, süreci ve değerlendirilmesi bağlamında çocuklarına yönelik nasıl bir yaklaşım beklediklerini göstermektedir. Veliler genellikle akademik, ahlaki, duygusal ve sosyal gelişimi destekleyen kapsamlı bir eğitim yaklaşımını tercih etmektedirler. Ancak bu tercih, sınav odaklı ulusal sistemle sıklıkla çelişerek ebeveynlerin beklentileri ile kurumsal kısıtlamalar arasında bir uçurum yaratmaktadır. Bu çalışma, hem öğrencilerin hem de ebeveynlerin ihtiyaçlarıyla daha iyi uyum sağlayan bir sisteme olan ihtiyacı vurgulayarak, öğretmen eğitimi, müfredat değişiklikleri ve öğrenci merkezli değerlendirmeler için öneriler sunmaktadır. Politika yapıcılar ve eğitimciler, öğrenci nüfusunu doğru bir şekilde değerlendirmek ve eğitim süreçlerini bireylerin sosyalleşmesi hedefiyle uyumlu hale getirmek için ebeveyn beklentilerini göz önünde bulundurmalıdır.

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INTRODUCTION

In the preparation, presentation, and renewal of educational policies and programs, parents constitute one of the most important references in terms of the compliance of decisions with education's goal of socializing the individual. Parents' expectations about the school can also provide an opportunity to see society's perspectives on the school. School practices within the context of curriculum that take parental expectations into account demonstrate that parents can better fulfill their joint roles in creating an environment conducive to student success (Aldırmaz, 2009; Davis-Kean, 2005; Saygılı, 2013; Şad, 2012; Şentürk & Demir, 2019). Parents' high expectations for education directly affect student achievement (Milovanska-Farrington, 2022; Wiseman & Zhao, 2020). Furthermore, parents' satisfaction with the fulfillment of their expectations directly influences decisions to improve the school's educational resources and processes (Kunanusorn & Puttawong, 2015). To give a concrete example, parent satisfaction and involvement also seem to be effective in predicting student success in international exams such as PISA and TIMSS (Ertem, 2020; Karalı et al., 2021; Karalı & Coşanay, 2021; Reparaz & Sotés-Elizalde, 2019; Sarier, 2020). In this context, parental expectations are a critical aspect of the needs analysis that forms the basis of school curriculum implementation. They are also believed to be an important data source for assessing implementation deficiencies in existing curriculum, and its consequences in various educational contexts.

Curricula are most effective when developed through collaboration between internal and external stakeholders (Fagrell et al., 2020; Lindstén et al., 2019). Teachers and administrators play key roles in planning and implementing curricula, supported by their subject expertise and leadership (Kufi, 2012). While students offer valuable insights, their involvement is often inconsistent (Lindstén et al., 2019; Gümüş, 2017). External stakeholders—government, industry, and community members—provide crucial perspectives on policy, market relevance, and support (Arsal, 2024; Fagrell et al., 2020; Meirani et al., 2023). Research across diverse settings shows that well-structured engagement mechanisms, such as advisory boards and focus groups, enhance curriculum relevance and impact (Lindstén et al., 2019). Parents can be seen as one of the members who can continue to cooperate in the daily needs analysis of educational decisions and practices. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), established by the United Nations, parents have the right to choose the type of education they will receive. Turkey signed this declaration in 1949, and national legislation has incorporated these decisions. While this declaration lacks any protective content, it forms the basis for supporting the principles of national education and the assurance of permanent education, based on principles such as universality, affordability, permanence, diversity, quality, sustainability, and accessibility of the right to education (Eren, 2020). The binding nature of the provisions is based on the principle of acceptability in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), established by the United Nations. States are obligated to provide education with acceptable content and methods for children, their families, and teachers. Therefore, one source of understanding what is needed in the process of developing policies that guide educational practices is what parents expect their children to acquire from school. While parents are involved in the curriculum development process as stakeholders, the state also informs parents who need to know the subjects and methods of education offered (Yılmaz et al., 2015). Thus, it can be argued that parents and the state are involved in the development of curriculum within a framework of mutual responsibility (Karaman-Kepeneci, 2014). Furthermore, even if parents lack the formal knowledge necessary for curriculum development, they can comment on mismatches between their own expectations, their children's needs, and classroom practices. Indeed, identifying individuals' educational needs is possible by observing the discrepancies between the outcomes achieved through education and the targeted outcomes within the curriculum. As direct observers of concrete educational practices, parents are an important resource in identifying these discrepancies (Adebayo & Heinz, 2023; Plata-Potter & Guzman, 2012; Poza et al., 2014). Thus, they can express their opinions on the subject

areas they consider important for their children's learning. They can also provide examples from their children's situations to demonstrate what has been learned effectively and what has not been learned sufficiently (Erdoğan & Demirkasımoğlu, 2010). It has been reported that curriculum development in the Turkish education system is based on an educational model that addresses national educational goals, incorporates stakeholder participation, needs assessment, especially in rural areas, and a specific educational model (Akşit, 2007). Accordingly, draft programs, which serve as data sources for determining educational needs, are presented to the public through planning meetings and workshops attended by academics, experts, and practitioners, and feedback is received (Akınoğlu, 2005; Kara, 2020). As a recent example from the Turkish education system, draft curricula entitled the Türkiye Century Education Model were presented on 26 April 2024 to education stakeholders and the public for their views and suggestions via a joint text (MEB, 2024a). Various education associations and civil society organisations, trade unions, and academics submitted their written evaluations for the draft, which was announced to remain open for comments for one week, expressing their predictions regarding its implementation (Akpınar et al., 2024; Kara-Kaşka, 2024; Karataş, 2024; Özge-Sağbaş, 2025; Sever, 2024; TEDMEM, 2024; Yıldırım & Çalışkan, 2024). However, it is not sufficiently clear how the data obtained from educational stakeholders is used (Çobanoğlu & Yıldırım, 2021). As educational stakeholders, parents are not directly involved in the needs assessment for curriculum development at the governance or upper bureaucracy level (Sliwka & Istance, 2006). Domestic academic studies addressing the needs and problems of specific subjects, such as moral education, physical education, or science education, and educational levels, such as special education classes/schools, kindergartens, or primary schools, also include the views of parents (Aslan et al., 2015; Canoğlu, 2020; Gökdemir, 2017; Özcan & Mirzeoğlu, 2014; Özyurt, 2015; Şahin, 2017; Yaka et al., 2014). This allows parents to indirectly express their views on curriculum development through academic studies. Indeed, although parent involvement and school-parent cooperation are among the fundamental issues emphasised in the Türkiye Century Education Model, in the initial implementation of the draft, parent information guides (MEB, 2024b), “parent meetings” (MEB, 2025), and parent gatherings within the Parent School (MEB, 2024c), as well as written tools (MEB, 2024d). The impact of these initiatives has again been realised through academic studies, and the indirect role of parents has been reinforced (Ayyıldız Asil & Asil, 2025; Yılmaz & Aydın, 2025). The more collaboration parents have with the curriculum development process, the more likely they are to support their children's formal education.

One of the current focuses in the literature addressing parent-school interactions is family engagement. Ruhela (2024) considers family engagement, particularly in program development, critical for shaping educational practices, fostering a deeper understanding of students' needs, and fostering transparency and accountability in educational institutions. Children's education involves reciprocal processes in which schools and families are stakeholders (Peltier et al., 2024). School personnel, or more broadly, the education system, and parents may not always agree on goals, values, teaching approaches, and various school practices. These disagreements naturally reflect expectations. Thus, balancing expectations between parents and schools creates family-school partnerships. This partnership involves working together to foster students' social, emotional, behavioral, and academic learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Family involvement and/or engagement, based on family-school partnership, focuses on the parents' ideas about how education should be and what they can offer to the child in this process. In parallel with it, parents' educational expectations will determine the appropriateness and responsiveness of the curriculum to their needs. Plans and policies developed based on these expectations will also be useful in setting priorities for future educational practices. In this context, the aim of this study is to reveal the educational expectations of parents whose children are studying in primary, middle, and high schools. Regarding this aim, the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do parents make sense of the purpose of education in light of their own experiences?
2. What are parents' perceptions of the content of education, and their expectations based on these perceptions during their children's learning process?
3. What are parents' perceptions of the educational processes their children are involved in, and their expectations based on these perceptions?
4. How do parents describe their experiences with the evaluation and measurement of education, and what expectations do they have in this context?

Literature Review

The planning and conducting of educational services are possible with various stakeholders. These stakeholders can be considered as internal and external stakeholders of the school. Parents, as internal stakeholders of the school, express their expectations regarding educational services, provide input on decisions made, and experience the school's activities together with their child in the active learning process (Marmara & Atmaca, 2023; Marshall, 2018). A parent is defined as a person who protects a child, manages affairs related to the child, and is responsible for the child's behavior (TDK, 2024a). Parents are indirectly the most influential group in evaluating the school (Saritaş, 2008). Expectation is defined as an individual's anticipation related to certain conditions or circumstances or what is expected of them in those conditions or circumstances (TDK, 2024b). In the context of education, parents have various desires and needs regarding their children's education. These desires and needs form their expectations from education. Considering that the school is a tool for socialization (Dewey, 2010), it is important that the curriculum implemented there takes national standards and school conditions into account. Achieving this requires the expression of expectations by various stakeholders and their participation in the implementation process of decisions made (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014). As a stakeholder, a parent can directly reflect societal expectations onto the school and provide positive or negative evaluations regarding their child's education. Considering parents' expectations from education is important for strengthening school-family collaboration (Şad, 2012), creating an atmosphere in out-of-school environments, especially at home, that ensures student success (Saygılı, 2013), and increasing the child's academic achievement (Şentürk & Demir, 2019).

Schools are increasingly recognized as the central institutions for transmitting values needed by society. In this context, the curriculum implemented in schools should respond to the transformative nature of society through holistic development and the transfer of values that meet the needs of students (O'Brien et al., 2023; Priestly et al., 2021). Parents, who can be a direct source of data on which values are or can be transmitted while raising members of society, are important. Additionally, identifying parents' expectations from education directly impacts the improvement of students' academic achievement. Parents who care about their children's academic success have expectations from education that include assumptions about the highest level their child can achieve, framed by exam grades and the academic competencies aimed to be developed throughout their educational life (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010). Children of parents with high expectations regarding education tend to be more academically successful (Milovanska-Farrington, 2022). The relationship between parental expectations and educational outcomes is also observed in an international context. According to a study by Wiseman & Zhao (2022) based on the 2011 PIRLS results, the level of parental expectations from education varies across countries. The study results show that parents in the Middle East have the highest expectations from education, followed by East Asia and Pacific countries. The lowest parental expectations from education are observed in Europe. Similarly, immigrant parents have higher expectations regarding education compared to non-immigrants. Education does not hold the same meaning across different social, cultural, and economic conditions (Yılmaz et al., 2015; Wei & Ni,

2020).

In the context of parents' right to a say in education, the first framework in the literature regarding family involvement includes the following focuses: a) families' ability to create a supportive learning environment at home, b) effective two-way communication between home and school, c) the school's attitude toward informing families about their roles, and d) securing family support for school-related decisions (Epstein, 2002). However, this framework has been criticized for portraying the family's role in the educational process as passive recipients, leading to the emergence of the concept of "family engagement." In essence, it emphasizes seeking the family's input in educational decisions and implementing these decisions holistically, both at school and at home, enabling the family to learn from the school and create an environment for continued learning at home. Family engagement in curriculum development ranges from one-way educational models to two-way partnership models. In one-way educational models, the family is not involved in curriculum design but receives training on their own role in teaching predetermined objectives. In two-way partnership models, families are active participants in curriculum design, providing feedback and critical support (Abo-Zena & Mardell, 2015; Auerbach & Collier, 2012). In both types of family engagement, the alignment of parent expectations with curricular values is considered crucial for the quality and outcomes of family involvement (NAFSCE, 2022).

Literature shows that meeting parental expectations facilitates teachers' inferences about teaching quality (Rahill, 2018; Tehseen & Hadi, 2015). Parents have expectations in areas such as safety, quality education, appropriate teacher behavior, and effective curriculum and delivery (Goldring & Rowley, 2006; Kunanusorn & Puttawong, 2015). Additionally, communication and participation, school resources, the quality of leadership, and budget adequacy also affect parental satisfaction (Friedman et al., 2007). Considering the linear relationship between parental involvement and academic success (Barnard, 2004; Davis-Kean, 2005), it becomes clear why the alignment between what parents expect from schools and what actually happens is important. Studies on the subject emphasize that parental involvement plays an effective role in the implementation of curricula, supporting the finding that parental expectations influence curriculum and its processes (Aldırmaz, 2009). In addition to educational expectations for students, parents have expectations in areas such as spatial, managerial, teacher-related, professional and personal interest, communicational, and economic aspects (Ergin & Çayak, 2019). However, there is a need for more studies that address these expectations within the framework of curriculum development.

METHOD

Research Design

The aim of this study is to determine the expectations of parents whose children are attending primary, secondary, and high school levels regarding education. In line with this aim, answers were sought to questions about general expectations on education, the purpose of education, the content of education, educational processes, and the evaluation of education, according to the participants' lived experiences throughout their children's educational life. The research design of this study is phenomenology as a qualitative research method. Phenomenology is a research design that employs a qualitative approach in the processes of data collection and analysis, aiming to find out views, perspectives, experiences and emotions about a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The reason for choosing the phenomenological design in this study is to reveal the shared expectations of the participating parents regarding different dimensions of current educational practices by evaluating the educational lives of their children so far with a holistic and exploratory approach.

Study Group

In this study, the aim is to describe the educational expectations of parents according to their occupational groups and the type of school their children attend. Therefore, while determining the sample of the study, the maximum variation sampling method, one of the purposive sampling types used in qualitative research tradition, was chosen. Maximum variation sampling involves selecting the sample participants who represent the maximum variety possible for the phenomenon to be examined (Neuman, 2006). According to this sampling method, a study group was formed with 15 participants selected based on the variables of the child's educational level (primary school, secondary school, high school) and the parents' occupational group (unemployed, worker, civil servant, private sector, white-collar). In selecting schools at each level, attention was paid to selecting schools with common locations but not homogeneous financial resources or achievement levels. Furthermore, middle schools were selected from various types, such as imam-hatip (i.e., religious vocational schools in Türkiye) or general, and high schools were selected from various types, such as imam-hatip, Anatolian, vocational, or science high schools. This approach allowed for more diverse and holistic data to be obtained from schools whose specific objectives may vary. In selecting parents, parents' educational backgrounds and, consequently, their professions were considered important factors in determining whether students choose or attend these schools. It was intended to reveal the differences in educational perspectives of parents from different educational backgrounds and professional backgrounds. Another reason for selecting parent professional groups was the belief that this would provide a perspective that could address the impact of socioeconomic status on educational expectations. Participants were coded as P-1, P-2, P-3, ... P-15. In the study, since sufficient patterns were obtained from the participant data regarding the investigated phenomenon, there was no need to include new participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data Collection Tool

In the study, the semi-structured interview format was selected as the primary data collection technique according to Merriam's (2013) classification of structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for the collection of quality data by providing the researcher with the flexibility to expand on questions (Ritchie et al., 2013). Therefore, a semi-structured interview form, prepared based on the objectives and sub-dimensions determined by the researchers, was used (Appendix-1). In the process of preparing the interview questions, similar data collection tools were examined by reviewing the literature. A total of five semi-structured interview questions were prepared for the interview, focusing on general expectations, the purpose of education, the content of education, educational processes, and the evaluation of education. These questions were analyzed for content validity by two academics who are experts in educational sciences and were revised according to their feedback to ensure content validity. The revised version of the interview form was reviewed in a pilot study with three participants. This confirmed its suitability as a data collection tool.

Data Analysis

A deductive content analysis approach was adopted in the analysis of the research data (Patton, 2002). This approach utilizes an analysis matrix constructed by the researchers. The data analyzed is grouped according to the basic classes included in the matrix (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Thus, the researchers identified themes based on the subheadings of the research question. They categorized the coding they generated and classified them under these themes. In qualitative research, content analysis can be used to obtain reproducible and valid results from the data collected through interviews (Krippendorff, 1980, as cited in Koçak & Arun, 2006). In this study, content analysis was preferred to

group the parents' expectations regarding education based on the strength of their expressions and to examine parental views comprehensively. The data collection process was conducted through interviews, averaging one hour each. In addition, field notes taken during the interviews aimed to enrich the data. These notes also provided an important resource during the coding process of data analysis. The MAXQDA 2018 data analysis program was used for content analysis of the interview data. For this purpose, the audio recordings of the interviews were first transcribed. According to the content analysis process suggested by Saldana (2009), open coding was conducted in the first stage and focused coding in the second stage of transcript and field note analysis. In the first stage of data analysis, open coding was used to identify common views generally expressed by the participants. Later, participants' views were grouped through focused coding. An example of the coding process is shown as below:

Table 1.

An Example of the Coding Process from the Data Gathered P-10

Field note taken during the interview	Transcription	Open coding	Focused coding
Information useful in daily life	“If it were up to me, of course I would want them to learn mathematics, but they should learn it by exploring it, by understanding where it is used in daily life... If they go on by incorporating these into their lives, they will become thinking individuals because they will be exploring on the one hand and thinking on the other.”	Transfer of real-life knowledge and skills	Relationship with real life

In this study, the concepts of validity and reliability are considered as transferability, credibility, and consistency. Transferability relates to the generalizability of the results (Merriam, 2013). In terms of transferability, audio recordings, field notes, and direct quotations were used in this study. In addition, it was paid attention to ensure that the research environment was conducive to interviews, a calm atmosphere conducive to expressing ideas freely, and a suitable atmosphere for the participant's preferences. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with participants from diverse educational backgrounds and professional backgrounds, in environments where their children at different educational levels were not present. This encouraged them to be more open in expressing their opinions. The sharing atmosphere of the research was maintained by informing participants about the research before the data collection process and, afterward, thanking them for their volunteering and informing them that a publication outlining the results would be shared with them. Credibility is a term related to the accuracy of the study and how accurately the subject is examined. To ensure credibility, triangulation, expert feedback, and member checking were used. Triangulation means taking advantage of different perspectives to explore social situations and phenomena (Neuman, 2006). In the data analysis of this study, researcher triangulation, which involves multiple researchers conducting the analysis, was used. The researchers came together during the coding stage of the data and performed their coding for each interview. They then compared these codes to determine the codes to be used in the research analysis. To ensure credibility, expert feedback was utilized before, during, and after the data collection processes. Additionally, the data collection process was conducted in several settings where participants could easily focus on the interview and feel comfortable, including their home, their personal office, the schoolyard during class hours, or a quiet room at school with permission for this purpose. Participants were informed about the research's aim, data gathering process, interview questions, and ethical procedures through extended interaction. In addition, the transcript files on which the data analysis would be conducted were presented to the participants for their opinion and their approval was obtained. Member checking included ensuring participants' experiences were fully

documented and asking for any additional insights or experiences they might wish to add. Accordingly, participants were asked to indicate if they had any additional experiences they would like to share before giving their consent. Finally, consistency is concerned with considering the variability of the research topic during data collection and analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). To ensure consistency in the study, expert feedback and triangulation were used, and the researchers identified their beliefs and views, maintaining an objective stance during interviews and observations. Also, in order to ensure consistency between coders in the study, in the first coding, each researcher carried out their individual coding, and in the second coding, a common coding was reached by cross-examining the data obtained from the first coding.

Ethical Committee Approval

Ethical approval (Meeting Date/No: 14/07/2023 / 08; Decision Number: 2023/05) is presented to the Journal of Necmettin Erbakan University Ahmet Keleşoğlu Faculty of Education.

FINDINGS

The findings obtained from the analysis of the research data are addressed under the subheadings of a) parents' general expectations from education, b) their expectations from the aims of education, c) their expectations from the content of education, d) their expectations from the educational processes, and e) their expectations from the evaluation of education.

Findings on Parents' General Expectations from Education

Based on the findings, parents of children attending primary, middle, and high school generally find the current formal education system inadequate. Additionally, two parents mentioned they would prefer not to send their children to school if possible. Among the negative evaluations of education by parents, particularly at the high school level, insufficient class hours, ineffective teaching sessions, overly intense curriculum that exceeds students' capabilities, limited variety of subjects to meet students' interests and needs, inadequate physical facilities at schools, compulsory attendance requirements especially in the 12th grade, lack of focus on student happiness as part of education, and criticism of the existing examination system stand out. On the other hand, there are also positive evaluations, although they are fewer in number. Therefore, while many parents perceive certain factors negatively, some parents find their children's schools to be in better condition. Nonetheless, the number of parents encountering better teachers, schools, and physical facilities within the participant group remains small. The changing positive evaluations include increased professional competence of teachers compared to previous generations, opportunities for developing psychomotor skills, infrastructure development, reduction in class sizes, and socialization opportunities for children. Parents have also made comparisons with their own educational experiences while providing both positive and negative evaluations. In education, among the indispensable aspects highlighted in curriculum and schools are the imparting of ethics, discipline, life skills, and critical thinking skills to students; the role of schools in socializing students within a context; the transmission of knowledge that is relevant to life through education; character and values education; the implementation of subject-centered education; effective teaching methods; enhancing teacher qualifications; stakeholder involvement; and teacher-centered approaches.

Findings Regarding Parents' Expectations from the Aims of Education

According to the views obtained from participating parents, moral education stands out prominently among the dimensions of educational aims. Despite different educational backgrounds and

professional experiences, all parents agree that moral education (P-7) should be prioritized at every level of education:

"... I mean morally... I'm not insisting on sending my child to a specific school; perhaps that school may not be the best for my child. If all schools emphasized moral values and discipline, all schools would be good anyway. I want my child to be a beneficial individual for the country, the nation, and this land. For example, they can become a nurse, but I want them to be a nurse who does their job well and comes from such a school. ..." (P-7)

Other prominent expectations regarding the purposes of education include vocational guidance, the transmission of knowledge and skills related to real life (P-10), teaching societal rules, character and value education, instilling a sense of discipline and responsibility, diversifying education according to the individual differences of students, religious education (P-7), and fostering environmental awareness. Some notable participant statements in this dimension are as follows:

"... As I said, preparing the child for life, making them capable of standing on their own feet. But in every sense, not just education, like school education, but truly 'how to stand in life.' Maybe, you know, a child who has lost a parent or might lose one... Or a child who will know what to do in different or adverse conditions. ... A child, no matter what, a new citizen of a country, a child who will carry that country into the future, needs to be given the ability to stand in life. ..." (P-10)

"... Occasionally, for example - speaking for myself - religious lessons are given, such as the life of our Prophet. ... I want my children to grow up aware of their spiritual values while learning their material values, and this is happening. ..." (P-7)

Findings Regarding Parents' Expectations from the Content of Education

Participant parents' evaluations regarding the content of education highlight expectations such as skill and expression classes (P-6), relevance to life, diversity of subjects, and a focus on core subjects particularly for preparing for national exams in middle and high school levels (P-15). Participant statements illustrating these expectations can be exemplified as follows:

"...we talk about physical education, and some parents don't emphasize it much. But I think physical activity is as important as other subjects. Students can release all their energy there, and this can increase their attention and concentration. ..." (P-6)

"... So, of course, he needs to take mathematics. For instance, he needs to take extra classes or private lessons in mathematics. Because there will definitely be quantitative questions in the university entrance exam, and since the scores are high, the questions he solves there will yield high scores, so he definitely needs to learn mathematics. Not just to use it in school, and not just for work, but he can use mathematical intelligence in all areas of life. ..." (P-15)

In addition to these statements, the intensity of the educational program (P-11) stands out among the negative evaluations expressed by the participants. Especially at the primary and secondary school levels, the educational program is considered too full in terms of the knowledge and skills that students

can acquire within a semester. Moreover, these intensive lesson programs present information that the student will not need in life or that will not develop their interests and abilities:

“... Well, they actually included a lot of necessary and unnecessary things... I mean, in terms of information, there is even too much; I think the curriculum program goes very deep. ... Since students are not separated according to their abilities, they give the same information to every student, regardless of whether they can handle it or not. ... Maybe something like spreading the content of the curriculum over the other years could be done. ... The program is so intense, and they memorize it due to exam anxiety, so we don't make those children think in any way. We just make them memorize, and a year later, they forget everything they know. ...” (P-11)

Other prominent participant views on the content of education are listed under categories such as teacher qualifications and competencies, subject-centered education especially for Turkish, Mathematics, and Foreign Language courses, reading skills, interdisciplinary approach, activity-centered learning, and exam-based content (P-7). In this context, a notable participant statement can be seen as follows:

“... I mean, they are taking all the courses. ... In art and music classes, teachers insist on practical application, like 'how to solve a problem more quickly.' For example, music and physical education, yes, these are social needs for the children. Yes, these are necessary, but for students preparing for the LGS (High School Entrance Exam), I see these as a waste of time. Instead, practical math lessons could be added. Two more Turkish lessons could be added, for example. I'm speaking from an LGS-focused perspective.” (P-7)

Findings Regarding Parents' Expectations from the Educational Processes

Participants' expectations from the educational processes are primarily related to the teacher. These expectations are addressed under categories such as teacher roles, qualities and competencies (P-6), teacher-centeredness, considering individual differences in teaching, and student communication. A notable participant view is cited as follows:

“Now, a teacher has an aura; students love and respect their teacher, which makes it easier to control them. ... Or the teacher provides very valuable information and explains it well, using practical methods we mentioned earlier, and the student enjoys this, therefore participating in the lesson, which makes it easier for the teacher to maintain control. ... They love their teachers very much and don't want to feel embarrassed in front of them. ...” (P-6)

Participants expect activity and game-based learning (P-4), motivation, and reward-punishment (P-6) categories to be prominent in primary and middle school levels for effective teaching and learning processes. Participant views on these categories are stated as follows:

“... Children can be directed more towards play and behaviors, as I said earlier, to acquire positive behaviors. Rather than overwhelming children of this age with direct lessons... These children usually stay at home and cannot go outside. It is important for them to have social interactions with other individuals outside and

learn about the outside world. They don't know about outdoor play life. Therefore, the curriculum can be more game-oriented with reduced intensity.” (P-4)

“I would eliminate this reward thing. The whole system is focused on rewards in schools. There is an exam, actually, it's just a trial exam, which should help students see their shortcomings. But teachers take it seriously and reward the top twenty students every weekend or after each trial with a small certificate. While this can have a positive effect on rising students, it causes motivation loss for students who perform poorly or feel bad that day. ...” (P-6)

Participants' evaluations regarding what is expected from schools and students in the education process focus on attendance obligation (P-12), material sufficiency, physical characteristics of schools, class size, student roles and qualities, and student-centeredness (P-10) categories. Participants' notable criticisms regarding the execution of the education process can be presented as follows:

“... The last few years, what a waste of time. This year, my child attending school in the twelfth grade is now a waste of time. Now, if she goes to a cram school, it would be better for me. Because she can directly prepare for university... .. If there weren't 30 days of absenteeism, she wouldn't go to school, believe me. She is obliged to go now and gets tired. Normally, she leaves school at 4, goes to cram school at 5:30, leaves at 9, gets tired.” (P-12)

"... Everyone should be questioning, able to comfortably ask what they don't understand. They should express that they don't understand without fearing, 'Oh, if the teacher gets mad at me now.' If what they didn't understand needs to be repeated, I believe additional information should be provided to them.” (P-10)

Concerning the teaching and learning process dimension, participants' negative evaluations of philosophical conflicts in lesson resources are frequently emphasized. According to participant parents, lesson resources are insufficient in terms of philosophical conflicts, explanations related to the subject, and activities. Parents have indicated that they must benefit from internet sources like YouTube, additional books other than state books offered at school, and additional test books and cram schools if their children are preparing for exams. Regarding the inadequacy of lesson resources (P-7), participant views are cited as follows:

“... Additional books can be a big problem, but only state books without additional books are definitely not enough. ... Because if the child does not have that book, where will he solve the test, and there are those who will not send him to cram school. For example, I don't have the means to send him. There's no cram school below 13,000 liras. How can I send that child to a cram school? I can't. Then that book will compensate for it, so it should be necessary to get out of the mindset of 'only the state book is sufficient'...” (P-7)

Findings Regarding Parents' Expectations from the Evaluation of Education

Finally, in terms of evaluating education, especially at the middle and high school levels, despite parents' opposition to the exam system (P-7), they closely monitor their children's preparation for exams (P-12). Moreover, the stress caused by preparing for national exams (P-11) also refers to one of the most common parental opinions. Some striking parental views on the exam system include:

"... Instead of a general exam, a talent-specific exam could be conducted. For instance, a child is very successful in fine arts but gets stuck in the LGS exam (i.e. the abbreviation of the 'high-school entrance exam' in Turkish education system); they want to get into fine arts but can't. What is this? This is blocking the child's path. ..." (P-7)

"Even though they don't teach the lesson, they give homework. For instance, today the Physics teacher said, 'You will write down and solve 25 questions,' my daughter said. Instead of saying that, it would make more sense to say, 'Solve questions from this many test books,' I think. Because this child will take an exam and is wasting time for nothing. ..." (P-12)

"... What kind of environment do I imagine? Where students don't spend their time preparing for exams, even if it's just one year or two, three years, without preparing for exams, where they take their basic courses in regular school and are social, where there are constant social activities, where they are involved in any social activity according to their talents. ... Where those stages are structured based on trust, not on threat..." (P-11)

Parents' expectations regarding the evaluation of education can be presented in the formats of formative assessment (P-15), multiple assessments, evaluation of non-cognitive skills, access-based evaluation, uniqueness-based evaluation (P-1), and traditional evaluation. Again, in this dimension, the bias category in evaluation, school-based and inter-school evaluation, reveals parental views. Prominent parental views in these categories are as follows:

"I mean, I think as a process, not as a thing. I mean, I don't want to appreciate the result there. ... Is my daughter putting effort into it, is she studying; I would like to observe that process, I would like to appreciate it. ..." (P-15)

"... Look, we provide the standard education, right? Is this child's area of interest this or not, we don't look at that. ... Since we proceed with a single curriculum, we have no idea what to do with the students below the group. We also have no idea what to do with the students who surpass the group. ... Just as a one-size-fits-all dress doesn't suit everyone, a one-size-fits-all education system doesn't suit everyone either." (P-1)

In addition, from elementary school to high school, the discussion has touched on skill-based questions. Parents have also emphasized material sufficiency and provided critical comments on new generation questions (P-15). Some prominent parental views in these categories are as follows:

"As a topic or as a lesson, what is given does not match our exam system. There are new generation questions now. New generation questions are always logic-based questions, long questions. But there are never new generation questions or paragraph questions in curriculum books." (P-15)

DISCUSSION

While parental expectations are stated to vary with the natural differences brought by class level, it is noteworthy that there are no expectations that vary according to educational levels, other than

categories such as game-based teaching in primary schools or exam-focusing and stress in secondary and high schools. As a result of the findings obtained, most parents find the current education system inadequate for their children's academic, personal, and professional development, regardless of the level of service received from elementary school to high school. Similarly, Friedman et al. (2007) suggest that dissatisfaction among parents stems from insufficient communication and participation with the school, inadequate financial resources and budgeting, and the quality of leadership. Hussain et al. (2018) and Park & Holloway (2018) also note that parents are dissatisfied not only with the education system but also with teacher qualifications and the physical facilities of schools, particularly at the high school level. Meier & Lemmer (2019) suggest a linear relationship between students' academic success and parental satisfaction, indicating that lower grades are associated with lower satisfaction. In this study, however, such a comparison has not been made. One visible consequence of this dissatisfaction is that schooling is considered an unattractive alternative for students today. Parents are practically forced to persuade their children to attend school. Whether school, even if not a necessity, will be valued raises an important question.

In the realm of educational goals, what stands out is the emphasis placed by all participating parents on moral education. Moral education and character development are seen as significantly preceding the learning process of students in any subject. Similar findings were highlighted by Björnsdóttir & Jónsdóttir (2014), who expressed that the development of children's characters and socialization is considered more important than academic success by both parents and educators. Parents, especially given current societal conditions, view the moral upbringing of students as one of the school's foremost priorities. Additionally, Berkowitz (2011) states that parents' expectations regarding their children's moral and character education positively influence their maturity. Can (2015) emphasized in his study that parents expect their children to mature as individuals with self-confidence, responsibility, and positive character. The study by Selvitopu, Taş & Bora (2015) aligns with parental expressions regarding moral and character education. Similarly, Yılmaz et al. (2015) demonstrated that religious and moral education and schools' positive value contribution stand out in parental expectations. Yılmaz et al. (2023) also found in their study examining parental philosophical inclinations that issue-centered education emphasizing moral instruction and discipline is considered more significant by parents. The expectation for moral and values education identified in the reviewed studies parallels the parental views obtained in this study. The emphasis placed on moral education by parents can be gauged by the rapid pace of social change and the increasingly blurred boundaries between cultures. Given the role of education in integrating individuals into society, parents are seeking to ensure that their own social values are still being transmitted amidst this rapidity and immensity.

When examining parental expectations regarding the content dimension of education, the intensity of the curriculum stands out. Despite the Ministry of National Education's implementation of application-based, skill-oriented questions and activities in line with the constructivist paradigm (Süral, 2024), the impact of these efforts in current schools is not yet as desired (Çepni, 2020; Karabulut et al., 2024; Şad & Aydın, 2023). Moreover, the reality of the examination system awaiting students at the end of the educational stage does not align with the findings of these studies. Kara (2020) similarly addressed parental views on the intensity of the curriculum, indicating that it fails to fulfill its function due to covering more than what students can learn. Studies focusing on the importance placed on mathematics, reading skills, and foreign language lessons also bear resemblance to literature (Jerrim et al., 2023; Meier & Lemmer, 2019). Furthermore, the adequacy of teacher qualifications and instructional materials has been highlighted as influential in conveying educational content, as observed in parental views. Similarly, Miller & Smith (2018) demonstrated that as teachers' professional qualifications increase, student achievement also improves. Meier & Lemmer (2019) emphasized that how teachers implement

the curriculum within the classroom is a significant factor in parental satisfaction. Jones et al. (2021) noted that the scarcity of school physical facilities adversely affects learning experiences. Considering the studies in the literature, the global effort to align the content of education with the expected outcomes of the educational process is striking. In a sense, a balance is being sought between what education should encompass and what the educational process should measure. On the other hand, a significant problem arises, especially in national systems where testing is so central and has become a frightening fact of life. Instead of pursuing results based on purpose, shaping the purpose and process for the results has become paramount.

Parental expectations regarding the process dimension of education emphasize student-centered, contemporary teaching and learning methods. Yamaguchi et al. (2019), emphasizing the importance of teachers' skills such as accessibility and effective communication, also suggest that teaching should be more student-centered. However, the importance of the teacher's role in establishing discipline and fostering respectful communication with all students is among parents' primary expectations. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers, especially at lower grade levels, to enhance their competencies in educational activities and utilize activity-based and game-based learning methods. Supporting this, Thompson (2003) notes that the activities and methods employed by teachers in the classroom are among the most visible elements of parental satisfaction, particularly during elementary school years. Similarly, studies by Kara (2020) and Çelikdelen (2010) support parental views on the implementation of student-centered teaching approaches. However, as students progress to higher grades and approach exam periods for transitioning to new grade levels, parents expect teachers to focus on disciplining students, teaching respect and boundaries, focusing on essential subjects needed for exams, and preparing students for exams. This expectation during exam periods reflects parents' compliance with the exam system, which they may openly oppose but see no alternative to. Akbaba (2019) also supports similar views regarding the teacher's role in providing discipline as students advance to higher grades. As observed both in the findings of this study and in the literature, teacher-centeredness and teacher qualifications become more prominent as education progresses. Therefore, a more student-centered structure is expected in primary schools, while a more teacher-centered structure is sought in high schools. Middle schools, however, are expected to incorporate both structures as a transitional process. These expectations are closely related to the transfer of increasingly intensive educational content and the examination process. In other words, parents' expectations regarding the process are linked to their expectations regarding content or assessment. A more important question is how this can be achieved, given the expectation that students will assume greater responsibility as they progress through higher grades, and the expectation of teacher-centeredness in later grades.

The findings regarding the assessment dimension of education indicate that parents prefer formative assessments (process evaluations) over summative assessments (outcome evaluations) when it comes to evaluating their children's learning. Studies in the literature suggest that process evaluation is more effective than outcome evaluation (Bacquet, 2020; Çetin & Çetin, 2024; Taras, 2005; Torres, 2019; Yüksel & Gündüz, 2017). In other words, process evaluation complements outcome evaluation. Therefore, process evaluation is essential for holistic assessment (Göçer et al., 2017; Lau, 2016). Parents believe that assessments throughout the process, which do not induce anxiety and stress in students, will yield more realistic results. Rätty & Kasanen (2007) mention that parental satisfaction with education is mostly influenced by the quality of teaching, assessment methods used in education, and factors related to the teacher. The same study also indicates higher parental satisfaction in the early stages of education. However, this study did not find a decrease in satisfaction among parents receiving educational services at the primary and middle school levels compared to those at the high school level. Additionally, parents perceive the national examination system, which they particularly emphasize as a source of dissatisfaction, as a threat to students. Karadeniz et al. (2014) found that students' negative metaphors

about exams and exam success align with parents' views on exam stress and anxiety. Similarly, Dinç et al. (2014) express similar sentiments, where parents believe that while some form of assessment is necessary, the current exam system is ineffective and unfair. Critical studies of national exam systems indicate that progressing to the next level or making career decisions based on such assessments places significant pressure on students and parents. It was seen that the participants interviewed for this study felt similar pressures. Furthermore, the expectation of fairness through exams is striking in responses to the question, "What else would be more appropriate for your child if this system were replaced?". It's clear that exam assessment should be considered when it comes to fair education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on all the findings and conclusions, it is possible to say that parents' primary expectation from education goes beyond academic development. In the fast-changing world of the 21st century, with the influence of social media and societal movements, younger generations have gained the power to influence each other at a pace much faster than that of teachers and parents. In this context, schools and the education system must continue to be a reliable source for controlling this influence. Schools need to explore ways to impart moral, personal, and social development in line with parental expectations to nurture future generations as healthy and productive members of society. On the other hand, national exam systems, where parental expectations often reach an impasse, continue to pose a threat to both parents and students. Parents expect their children to develop cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor knowledge and skills comprehensively. However, they also expect them to study and solve tests in core subjects in a manner that ensures they can achieve the highest scores, secure places in the best schools, and aim for the best careers. Balancing these expectations within a school is challenging on its own. This study underscores the necessity for an educational system-wide restructuring that truly understands what parents and students need. Practical solutions derived from this study could involve enhancing teacher qualifications, updating curriculum content to emphasize skills over mere knowledge, adopting more student-centered and alternative learning methods, and promoting widespread use of formative assessments. The data from this study highlight the need for researchers to explore deeper understandings, such as the reasons for parents' shared perceptions, the contradictions surrounding national exams, and sociocultural factors in education policies. In other words, the background to common parental expectations and the current situation and potential futures of meeting these expectations warrant thorough examination. While this study did not directly compare academic achievement with parental satisfaction, future research could explore whether a similar situation exists within the Turkish education system by comparing the satisfaction of families with academically less successful children. One of the important limitations of this study is to reveal the impact of regional, cultural, demographic and socioeconomic changes on parental expectations. In a more general context, the educational expectations of students' parents can be investigated in terms of the region they live in, the culture they grew up in, and the socioeconomic conditions. Additionally, future studies could analyze the relationship between demographic variables such as parents' education level, occupation, and age, and their varying needs across different educational stages. Finally, parents' cultural, ideological or political perspectives can be considered to see how their expectations regarding their children's education differ.

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