

Generation Z Support Autonomous Management in School: Evaluation of Teacher Candidates' Views

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
EDU-2020-08043311

Volume: 8

Issue: 4

Month: September

Year: 2020

P-ISSN: 2320-2653

E-ISSN: 2582-1334

Received: 02.07.2020

Accepted: 08.08.2020

Published: 01.09.2020

Citation:

Çankaya, İbrahim, et al.
“Generation Z Support
Autonomous Management
in School: Evaluation
of Teacher Candidates’
Views.” *Shanlax
International Journal of
Education*, vol. 8, no. 4,
2020, pp. 38-44.

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.34293/
education.v8i4.3311](https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3311)



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Abstract

The aim of the study was to demonstrate the opinions of teacher candidates, who were born after 2000 and called generation Z, about the concept of school autonomy. This is quantitative research conducted according to the descriptive survey model. The data obtained is based on the responses given by teacher candidates to the “School Autonomy” questionnaire that was prepared for school administrators for the 2012 PISA exam. The target population of the study consisted of teacher candidates who studied in the Faculty of Education of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University in Turkey in the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic years. Questionnaires were distributed to all teacher candidates (351) in education faculty. The questionnaires were applied to face-to-face interviews with teacher candidates. Generation Z (teacher candidates) in general hold the opinion that the authority to make decisions should lie with school when it comes to determining the annual school budget, making disciplinary decisions about students, evaluating students’ success, accepting students to school, choosing textbooks and determining the courses to be taught. Generation Z also believes that the ministry, provincial education directorates, and schools should cooperate in the selection of schools and the determination of their annual salaries.

Keywords: Generation Z, Teacher candidates’ view, Autonomous management in school and Participation in decision-making.

Introduction

Keeping up with change requires a flexible structure for organizations and personal development for individuals. The generation of individuals plays a very strong role in their beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and general views (Kayihan and Erduran, 2017). A generation is defined as a community that has lived in the same historical period, has been affected by the same social events, and has the same social identity. Each generation has different ways of perceiving life and styles of communication, its characteristics, principles, strengths, and weaknesses (Toeffler, 2018).

Generations are defined according to the years they were born in the 20th century and 21st century; “Generation X” includes individuals born between 1965-1979, “Generation Y” is comprised of individuals born between 1980-1999, and those born after 2000 are called as “Generation Z” (Yüksekbilgili, 2013). Generation X, referring to individuals born in the 1960s, is described as a generation of emotional, idealistic, contentious, neat people that are open to change, educated, and focused on their careers. They prefer watching movies to reading books (Senbir, 2004).

Generation Y can be defined as libertarian, intellectual, and technologically capable individuals. Generation Y members are individuals who are independent, free, against authority, not restricted by the rules, not constrained by working hours, self-confident. They want to climb career ladders as soon as possible. They dislike taking orders, reject impositions, have stubborn and rebellious characters. They love to be in social media and social environments and can engage in conflicts in line with their ideas and wishes. (Bayraktar, 2017). Generation X is called an ideological generation, while generation Y is referred to as a pragmatist generation (Çetin and Karalar, 2016).

Individuals born in 2000 and onward are called members of Generation Z. Generation Z is also labeled as “Digital Generation” (Somyürek, 2014). This generation, as in the previous generation, is highly engaged in technology, and can even be said to be addicted to technology. Especially, today’s ever-developing advanced smart devices and internet infrastructure make the members of this generation individuals grow addicted to technology (Kavalcı and Ünal, 2016). Generation Z is in the very center of the internet. This generation, which uses technology well, is younger than other generations. However, they can easily perform many tasks simultaneously (Golovinski, 2011). This brings generation Z one step ahead of other generations.

In a general sense, generation Z has a pragmatic and realistic character. Compared to previous generations, they are warier about taking risks. This entrepreneurial and more social generation consists of individuals who learn how to learn and are open to new technologies because they are raised surrounded by technology. It takes a very short time for the members of this generation to focus on any topic. Long texts and time-consuming and repetitive applications are boring for them (Penfold, 2017). The perspective of generation Z regarding business life differs from previous generations. Among the expectations of the generation Z from the working environment are flexibility in the workplace and working time, maintaining the work-life balance, the opportunity of both vertical and horizontal career advancement, the tasks in which technology is integrated, recognition for success, opportunities that offer moral rather

than material satisfaction, technological tools (Computer, internet, etc.) made available to them (Arar, 2016). Due to its features, generation Z can be considered as the generation of individuals who like to act individually in flexible organizations and can create an environment where they can express themselves. Besides making money, job satisfaction, organizational justice, and motivation are very important for this generation. They have the feature of adapting to the speed of knowledge and time, and these individuals pursue fun and continuous learning while working. These characteristics are directly related to flexible organizations, self-management, and school autonomy (Seymen, 2017). This is because an autonomous management approach and flexible organizational structure rely on individual talents and a participatory management approach (Elma and Demir, 2017). Generation Z, born after 2000 and mostly studying at universities, will be assuming their roles in business life very soon.

Primary, secondary, high school, and university students born after 2000 and named as the technology generation are all members of Generation Z. Although there are different approaches in the literature regarding the personal characteristics of the new generation teacher candidates that belong to generation Z and who will be responsible for the education of the next generations (Kırık and Köyüstü, 2018), the studies conducted on the expectations of this generation regarding the teaching profession and school expectations are limited. Therefore, new research is needed to determine the opinions of generation Z teacher candidates about how the structure of schools should be. New findings can shed light on educational policies, education reforms, and teacher training process.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of autonomy in school management is to provide quality and egalitarian education services to students. In terms of schools, it is aimed to have the power to make decisions regarding management, financing, programs, and personnel and to reduce bureaucratic obstacles at the central level. Autonomy in school management is to make the way bureaucratic school structures work from top to bottom in a horizontal and collaborative state

(Lakes and Carter, 2004) After 1990, England, New Zealand, Australia, United States, South Korea, Japan, Finland, Switzerland, and Canada gave importance to school autonomy. These countries are among the most successful in PISA 2012 and PISA 2015 (OECD, 2018).

School autonomy is to increase the authority and responsibilities at the school level to improve education (Güçlü, 2000). School autonomy is the empowerment of principals and teachers on issues such as budget, human resources, and school programs (Şişman and Turan, 2013). School autonomy is the authority to make decisions in education (Caldwell, 2005). School Autonomy means that the school has the authority to make decisions in education and training services, determining the school budget, and selecting personnel (Gertler, Patrinos & Rubio-Codina, 2007). Identifying the opinions of generation Z teacher candidates about school autonomy can serve as a guide to the restructuring of the school. In this context, in the study, the “School Autonomy” questionnaire prepared within the scope of the 2012 PISA exam for school administrators was applied to teacher candidates, and the following questions were asked:

- Who should have the authority to make decisions in the appointment of teachers to school?
- Who should have the authority to make decisions in determining annual teacher salary increase rates?
- Who should have the authority to make decisions in determining the annual school budget?
- Who should have the authority to make decisions in making disciplinary decisions?
- Who should have the authority to make decisions in assessing students’ achievement?
- Who should have the authority to decide on the students’ admission to the school?
- Who should have the authority to make decisions in determining the textbooks?
- Who should have the authority to make decisions in determining the courses to be taught in the school?

It can be assumed that the answers given to the questions reflect the expectations of generation Z about school autonomy.

Method

This is quantitative research conducted according to the descriptive survey model. Survey model studies are aimed to make predictions and generalizations about the research universe through the method of sampling (Balci, 2018).

Study Group

The target population of the study consisted of teacher candidates who studied in the Faculty of Education of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University in the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic years. In the study, no sample selection was made, and questionnaires were distributed to 351 teacher candidates. One hundred seven of the questionnaires returned by 162 teacher candidates were found suitable for evaluation. 74% of the teacher candidates who participated in the research were female, and 33% were male. 97% of the teacher candidates who participated in the study were born after 2000 and afterward (gen. Z), & 3% were born before 2000.

Data Collection Tool

The data were collected through the “School Autonomy” questionnaire prepared for school administrators in the 2012 PISA exam. School autonomy questionnaire form is composed of school autonomy related to resource allocation category and school autonomy related to the academic and program category. In the category of school autonomy related to resource allocation, the items regarding the determination of annual teacher salary rise, creation of annual school budget are included. Academic and program-related school autonomy category includes the items about choosing a teacher for the school, making disciplinary decisions about the students, evaluating the success of the students, accepting the students to the school, determining the textbooks, and determining the courses to be taught (OECD, 2013). The school autonomy questionnaire was applied to the school administrators in Korea, Turkey, and Mexico in 2012. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire in Korea (.79), in Turkey (.74), in Mexico (.78). The reliability coefficient of the survey was determined to be high. The content validity of the questionnaire was provided by getting expert opinions (OECD, 2014).

Data Collection Process

The questionnaires were applied to face-to-face interviews with teacher candidates. First, teacher candidates were informed by the researcher about how the questionnaire should be filled. The target population was divided into two groups. The first group consisted of the first and second-year students of the faculty of education. The second group consisted of third and fourth-grade students of the faculty of education. The questionnaires were distributed to teacher candidates simultaneously by the researcher and collected simultaneously.

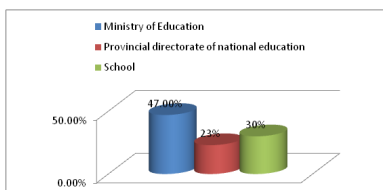
Data Analysis

Regarding the eight items included in the school autonomy questionnaire, the teacher candidates replied to the question, “Who do you think should have authority?” by choosing one of the following: Ministry of Education, Provincial Directorate of National Education, The School Administration. Based on frequency and percentage analyses in the SPSS program, the responses were shown in a percentage graphic.

Results

After analyzing the responses given by teacher candidates, who should have the authority in choosing teachers for the school, determining teacher salary increase rates, making the annual school budget, making disciplinary decisions about the students, evaluating student success, accepting students to school, determining the textbooks and determining the courses to be taught, are shown in figures in this section.

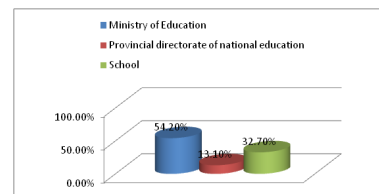
Figure 1: Authority of the School in Teacher Selection



As shown in (figure 1), 47% of the teacher candidates included in generation Z thought that the decision-makers in the appointment of the teacher should be the ministry. In comparison, 30% thought that the schools should also have the authority to

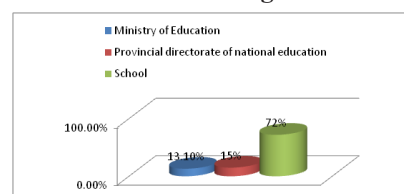
decide on the selection of teachers, and 23% stated that the authority regarding this issue should lie with the Provincial Offices of National Education. 53% of the teacher candidates in total emphasized that the school and local education elements should be involved in the decision-making process regarding the selection of teachers.

Figure 2: Authority in Determining Teacher Salary Increase Rates



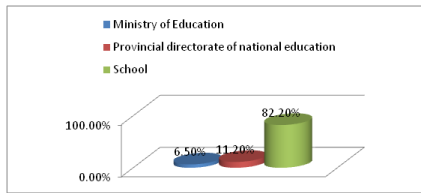
As shown in (figure 2) 54.20% of generation Z teacher candidates stated that ministry should have the authority to determine teacher salary increase rates, 32.70% of them expressed that the schools should also have the power to make decisions in determining the salary increase rates, and 13.10% replied that Provincial Offices of National Education should be the authority determining the rates of salary increase. It can be said that teacher candidates thought that not only the ministry but also the local stakeholders who make up the education system should be asked of their opinions and decisions should be made together.

Figure 3: Authority to Determine the Annual School Budget



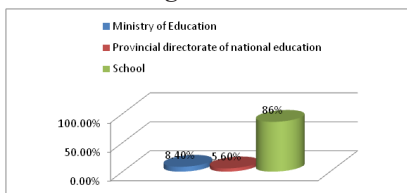
As shown in (figure 3), 72% of the teacher candidates stated that the decision-making authority regarding the determination of the annual school budget should be completely the school; 15% said the power to make decisions on this issue should be given to the Provincial Offices of National Education, while only 13.10% believed that the ministry should be the authority. It was observed that the teacher candidates of generation Z mostly advocated that the schools should be autonomous in determining the education budget.

Figure 4: Authority to make Disciplinary Decisions about Students



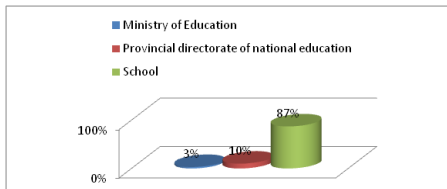
As shown in (figure 4) While 82.20% of the teacher candidates stated that the decision-making authority to punish undesired student behavior and to reward students should lie only with the school, only 6.50% stated that the authority should lie with the ministry. The teacher candidates endorse the idea that the school should be autonomous about disciplinary decisions.

Figure 5: Authority to make decisions in evaluating student success



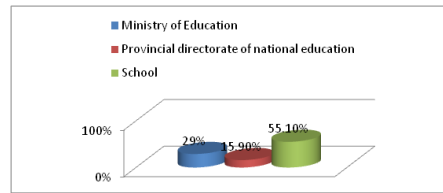
As shown in (figure 5), 86% of the teacher candidates stated that the decision-making authority should completely rest in the school in evaluating students as successful or unsuccessful in passing the courses or classes. Only 8.40% of the teacher candidates expressed that the power to make decisions about the assessment of success should be given to the ministry.

Figure 6: The student's authority to decide on admission



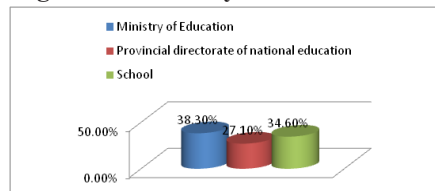
As shown in (figure 6) While 87% of the teacher candidates stated that the final decision should be made by the school regarding the admission of the student to the school, 10% argued that the decision should be left to the Provincial Offices of National Education, only 3% held the opinion that the decision should be at the disposal of the ministry.

Figure 7: Authority in the selection of textbooks



As shown in (figure 7) While 55.10% of the teacher candidates stated that the school should be the authority in the selection of the textbooks to be taught, 29% said that the authority should be the ministry in the book selection, and 15.90% proposed that the Provincial Offices of National Education should be authorized regarding the matter. Teacher candidates expressed the opinion that schools should also have the option of choosing books in addition to the common books determined by the ministry.

Figure 8: Authority to decide courses



As shown in (figure 8) 38.30% of the teacher candidates stated that the ministry should determine the courses to be taught in the school, 34.60% said the schools should decide, and 27.10% thought that the Provincial Offices of National Education should have the final say in this issue. Teacher candidates held the opinion that the ministry should be the determining factor in compulsory and elective courses in schools, but that the schools should also have the freedom of choice.

Discussion and Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from the opinions of the teacher candidates in generation Z: The teachers who will work in the school should not be appointed only by the ministry, but the school should also have the authority to make assessments regarding this issue. While approximately 54% of the teacher candidates think that the ministry should decide on the determination of the annual salary increase rates, about 47% believe that the Provincial Offices of National Education and schools should be involved in the decisions to be taken. According to

the teacher candidates in general, the school should be authorized to decide on the annual budget of the school. The school should have authority regarding disciplinary decisions about students. The school should have the authority to decide on students' success and failure. The decision-making authority regarding the admission of the students should lie within the school. The students' admission to the school should not be limited to the decision of the ministry. The teacher candidates hold the view that the ministry and Provincial Offices of National Education should have the power to make decisions. Still, the final decision should be left to the school. The teacher candidates have the view that both the ministry and the school should decide together in determining the courses to be taught.

The results of this study are compared with the literature; it seems that autonomy management is in line with the expectations of the z generation. Because generation z wants the job to be simple, generation z tends to join the decision in management (Senbir, 2004). Generation z wants to be a partner in management; generation z wants to solve problems on the spot, generation z is against hierarchy, generation z adopts self-management (Stillman and Stillman, 2017). Generation z wants to be at the center of the business because the aim of autonomous management is to make decisions together (Elma and Demir, 2017).

When looking at the results of the research related to generation Z in the literature, in his study, Penfold (2017) determined that 70% of generation Z members wanted to be the manager of their own business and that 60% wanted to have a say in their profession. In his research, Golovinski (2011) determined that individuals from generation Z want their job to be completed quickly and have the ability to do many things simultaneously. In his research, Taş, Demirdöğmez, and Küçükoğlu (2017) found that generation Z is a generation whose members express themselves more and want to participate in managerial decisions. Yelkikalan, Akatay, and Altın (2010) determined that generation Z is visionary, open to change, and favors innovation. In his study, he conducted on university students, Kızıldağ (2019) identified that generation Z has a participatory management approach. It is stated in the OECD

(2013) report that schools should be more autonomous in decision making in education, according to the general view of school administrators. The personal characteristics of generation Z identified in various studies are consistent with the teacher candidates' opinions about school autonomy and participation in the decision in this study.

From the perspective of generation Z, the school should be empowered to make decisions for the effective operation of the school, and hierarchical barriers to the school's participation in political decisions should be removed. For generation Z teacher candidates, flexible school and school autonomy are a preferred business environment because generation Z considers work motivation and enjoying work as very important. PISA 2012 exam have higher scores in mathematics and science scores compared to countries with low scores; it is seen that schools have the authority to determine their teachers, schools have the authority to determine the textbooks, students have the authority to evaluate student achievement and the school budget, and these rates are above the OECD average (OECD, 2013). Teachers' job satisfaction is higher in countries such as Switzerland, Finland, South Korea, Japan, and Canada, where PISA 2015 has a high success (OECD, 2017).

Recommendations

According to the expectations of generation Z teacher candidates, schools should have autonomous management, and the school should be at the very center of decision-making on issues related to education. The school should have more authority. Thus, schools can make decisions faster while solving problems. Professional development activities of teachers can be easily determined according to teachers' needs and the needs of the school environment.

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