



What is school for? Understanding Structural Inequalities through the Experiences of High School Students

Okul ne için var? Lise Öğrencilerinin Deneyimleri Üzerinden Yapısal Eşitsizlikleri Anlamak

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Abstract

This paper probes the ways of which structural formations of society manifest themselves in school practices. Towards this end, study focuses on the daily life experiences of high school students and their interactions with the broader society through making sense of these experiences. Within the scope of the research, 96 high school students attending 11th grade at six different types of high schools were interviewed. All schools are located at the central districts of Ankara. These school are Science (SH), Anatolian (AH), Vocational and Technical Anatolian, (VH) Fine Arts (FAH), Social Sciences (SCH), and Anatolian Imam and Preacher High Schools (IPH). Eight girls and eight boys were selected from each high school to compose study group. In this study, three major segments of experiences of high school student are located at the center of the scrutiny: expectations from students, limits and possibilities of social mobility and distinctive characteristics of school types, as they articulated by high school students. It was found that each high school has various characteristics that shape daily life activities of students. Expectation from students seems to occupy a primary position in establishing the ideas about the self-efficacy as well as legitimating teacher-student relationship. There seems to be intimate relationship among possibilities of social mobility, and school type, the condition that school type corresponds to the possible future positions student may have in the future. Similarly, distinctions across schools are produced with reference to what is going to happen to them in the near future.

Keywords: Social formation, high school, social class.

Öz

Bu araştırma, toplumun yapısal oluşumlarının okul uygulamalarında kendini gösterme yollarını araştırmaktadır. Bu amaçla, çalışma lise öğrencilerinin günlük yaşam deneyimlerine ve bu deneyimleri anlamlandırarak daha geniş toplumla etkileşimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında altı farklı lise türünde 11. sınıfa devam eden 96 lise öğrencisi ile görüşülmüştür. Tüm okullar Ankara'nın merkez ilçelerinde bulunmaktadır. Bu okullar Fen (FL), Anadolu (AL), Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu, (ML) Güzel Sanatlar (GS), Sosyal Bilimler (SBL) ve Anadolu İmam Hatip Liseleridir (İHL). Çalışma grubu oluşturmak için her liseden sekiz kız ve sekiz erkek öğrenci seçilmiştir. Bu çalışmada, analizin merkezinde lise öğrencilerinin deneyimlerinin üç ana eksenini yer almaktadır: öğrencilerden beklentiler, sosyal hareketliliğin sınırları ve olanakları ve lise öğrencileri tarafından ifade edilen okul türlerinin ayırt edici özellikleri. Araştırma, her lisenin öğrencilerin günlük yaşam aktivitelerini şekillendiren çeşitli özelliklere sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Öğrencilerden beklenti, öğretmen-öğrenci ilişkisinin meşrulaştırılmasının yanı sıra öz-yeterlik hakkındaki fikirlerin oluşturulmasında birincil bir konuma sahip gibi görünmektedir. Okul türünün öğrencinin gelecekte sahip olabileceği olası pozisyonlara karşılık gelme durumu, sosyal hareketlilik olanakları ve okul türü arasında yakın bir etkileşim olduğu görülmektedir. Benzer şekilde, yakın gelecekte onlara ne olacağına ilişkin olarak okullar arasında ayrımlar olduğu gözlemlenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal oluşum, lise, sosyal sınıf.

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1. Introduction

This paper sets out to understand how high school students make sense of their schooling experiences in relation to the connections to structural formations of society. While doing this, study attempts to focus on three major axes: expectations from students, limits and possibilities of social mobility and distinctive characteristics of school types, as they articulated by high school students. Towards this aim, a qualitative research study conducted in various high school types with a particular attention given to the daily life experiences of students and how they make sense of their interaction with schooling practices. The issue of differences across school types is one of the most central topics of educational research agenda (Reay, 2010; Croll, 2004). On the other hand, the question of how one can understand the reasons of such differences is subject to a great controversy. This is mostly because the issue could be taken both macro and micro forms through and within various disciplines. Take for example the perspective of psychology, one needs to approach the question how it operates at individual level by hinging on the conceptual frameworks of psychology. But at the same time, critical perspectives of sociology of education would most likely produce another analytical framework in explaining the differences. In this study, the perspective of critical sociology of education is adopted in an attempt to understand how structural formations exist in society are produced and sustained within school settings.

2. Literature

Soylu (2018) mentioned that socio-economic situations of the individuals impact almost every segment of their life, thus it would not be a mistake to look at schooling from this perspective. Therefore, while affluent attending prestigious school, lower income groups “naturally” find themselves schools in which resources are both psychical and otherwise are limited. According to Kerckhoff (1995), schools have some invisible functions particularly in industrial societies such as sorting and placing the students within social hierarchy in alignment with their socio-economic backgrounds. This also results in a widening gap across schools in every sense, as such hierarchy takes the form of geographical segregation after a while. Although there is a common view that schooling plays a crucial role in providing opportunities for individuals, it is also claimed by many scholar that, at the same time schooling serves to legitimate and sustain profound structural inequalities (Weis & Fine, 2004; Kozol, 1991). Structural inequalities are generally discussed with the concepts related to social class. Social class almost always theorized in relation to other segments of class spectrum: working class versus middle class. This is very similar to the discussion of this paper as to how achievement gap is produced. If one wants to understand achievement gap or even claims to that there is one, then it means there is a certain comparison made the claim holder one way or another. The reason of theorizing class within its ties to other class segments is due to the nature of class. Class illustrates hierarchical position inside its logic (Anyon, 1980; Bourdieu, 1984). Whenever one talks about any sort of class, albeit without mentioning other layers, one refers to vertical (sometimes horizontal) positioning in a sense that moving towards any edges transforms your class position, be it discursive or actual. On the other hand, this positioning is not named by its holders but people who are interested in naming these positioning. Tendency towards naming ones’ class position as middle is not only because of yearning for middle-class values, idealized and consumed throughout whole society, but at the same time, owes a lot to the ambivalence about the concept itself. Therefore, middle as the safest place to locate. One needs to be careful about proposing arguments about the functions and mechanisms of social class because the concept does not qualify similar situations universally, for example, degree of which social class impacts on school success differs country to country. However, almost all types of evaluations, local or international, reveal the fact that, social class is still the most prominent determinant of educational outcomes. Following the argument of Weis and Fine (2004), structural inequalities which are mostly nested in macro-structural systems of societies, empirical studies are assumed to find their way of researching invisible concepts such as “structure”. Reflections of these macrostructures in social life manifest themselves especially and firstly in schooling practices in various forms. Most concrete form of such manifestation could be “academic success”, while at the same time distinctive practices of in and out of school activities accompanying educational practices. These practices also prepare some students to the power positions, presumably they will hold in their future lives. Therefore, it would be safe to claim that opportunities individuals have through schooling have an impact on determining individuals’ learning experiences. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), for example, indicated that the major factor affecting behaviours and attitudes of students toward school is the differences about social class and its functions at home and school context. For Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) schools are reproducing societies through differential distribution of schooling practices. These differences function often for the advantage of upper class students (McKillip, Godfrey, & Rawls, 2012). The question remains here is that how one can understand the effects of macro-structural formations then. Social inequalities produced or reproduced within school make themselves visible within “the day-to-day actions and activities of parents, teachers, and school personnel as they collectively forge and enact normative practice within educational institutions (Weis and Cipollone, 2013 p.

718).” The eye of the researcher needs to be designated to decode such practices so as to make them visible to the eyes of the rest of the society (Fine, Bloom, Burns, Chajet, Guishard & Perkins-Munn, 2004).

Especially attending to prestigious high schools brings positive results both academically and as a good citizen (Fine & et al., 2004). Students and their families, who are accepted as “privileged” due to the type of secondary education program in which they are placed, consider themselves highly competitive in the process of admission to post-secondary institutions. However, there is an intense pressure on the most successful students in schools, which are accepted as more distinguished than others, to receive admissions from the most selective universities (Weis & Cipollone, 2013). It is stated especially in regions where the upper middle class lives, families have started to position their children at post-secondary institutions at a very early age. These families are concerned with specific job positions, considering that their children are privileged at a very young age, besides buying a house that can be considered as one of the most advantageous school districts (Weis & Cipollone, 2013, p. 706). On the other hand, it is stated that students from lower social classes have very low motivation to go to university or to continue after secondary education (McKillip, Godfrey, & Rawls, 2012). The families of children from this social class have no experience with the university, and parents’ distrust or discontent with the school limits their future expectations. In many high schools where children from the lower social class attend, there is a peer culture that academic success is something that is not fashionable. According to McKillip, Godfrey, and Rawls (2012), in their research in which they sought ways to build a guiding culture in these high schools, all the staff working in high schools (teachers, administrative staff, administrators etc.) develop a culture that guides the university in the school, and they reached the conclusion that they should make efforts to increase their expectations (Reay, Crozier, & James, 2011).

After 80s, researchers turned to studies aiming to reveal how schools reproduce social inequality (Weis & Fine, 2004). When the studies conducted with high school students in multicultural societies are examined, it is seen that these studies are gathered around the areas of racial discrimination and the accompanying social justice issues. The Brown decision, which is accepted as the main victory of the human rights movement in the USA, is considered to eliminate racial discrimination in education and provide equality and social justice in education. According to this decision, students of different ethnic backgrounds can study in the same schools. However, despite this decision, especially young people who form a minority culture in the USA state that racial discrimination, social injustice, and inequality of opportunity prevail in schools despite years after this decision (Fine et al., 2004). In the study of Fine et al. (2004), 90 percent of the youth coming from racial / ethnic groups stated that the university is important for their future. However, these students are concerned about the future because students stated that standard exams and their economic conditions limit their dreams of attending university.

It would not be a mistake to claim that, the type of school that students attend to is closely related to socio-economic background. However, one should also keep in mind that this is a pattern and there are many cases that would disturb the boundaries of this pattern, especially in Turkey. Having said that, in this paper, through focusing on experiences of high school students as well as their narrations about their future plans, family backgrounds and expectations, it was aimed to understand how achievement gaps could be understood in high schools.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

In this study, phenomenological design, one of the most frequently used approaches in qualitative research, was adopted. The philosophical and methodological foundations of the phenomenology are based on Husserl and Schutz’s work. Schutz’s phenomenological method can be seen as an effort to understand the details of everyday life experiences (Creswell, 2005). In general, the aim of the phenomenological study is to understand how people make sense of their experiences. As this research aims to understand manifestations of social formations embedded into schooling practices through daily life experiences, phenomenological design was adopted as a strategy to conduct research.

3.2. Participants

The participants of the study were determined through convenience sampling. Within the scope of the study, 11th grade students were interviewed, attending schools in central district at Ankara. Ninety-six high school students attending six different high schools were interviewed. These school are Science (SH), Anatolian (AH), Vocational and Technical Anatolian, (VH) Fine Arts (FAH), Social Sciences (SCH), and Anatolian Imam and Preacher High Schools (IPH). Eight girls and eight boys were selected from each high school to compose study group. Convenient sampling method was adopted in the study. While choosing the students, no criteria have been used to capture the regularity of experience. The students who are volunteered for the study were recruited and interviewed.

3.3. Data Collection

Semi structured interview forms were used to interview the students. Interview protocols were prepared by researchers who are experienced in the field of qualitative research studies. Ethics committee located at Ankara University reviewed and confirmed that the study is in line with the ethical issues. Pilot studies were conducted to determine whether the questions are appropriate to yield data for the purposes of the research. After final version of the form were determined, legal permissions were acquired, interviews are conducted in each school through the help of school staff and without any interference with the course schedules of the participants.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis is conducted through employing phenomenological analysis technique. Experiences of students, first, are reduced to the level of single units which represents specific lived experience of a daily life in school settings. Later, the central theme of each experience is determined. Revealing structures and themes were constructed from these experience chunks. Finally, their experiences are compared and contrasted in an attempt to reach phenomenological patterns.

3.5. Validity and Reliability (Trustworthiness)

Strategies such as triangulation, long-term interaction, researcher positioning, expert review and participant verification are recommended to ensure credibility in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Meriam, 2009; Patton, 1990). In order to ensure credibility in this research, “experts” who are knowledgeable about the research and “qualitative research methods” were asked to examine the research in various dimensions. In the meeting with experts, all the processes of the research were discussed. Then, the collected data, the obtained results were shared with the experts and the validity of the researchers’ own approach and thinking style were evaluated with the experts. Experts asked questions about the research process, reviewed the raw data and gave feedback on the appropriateness of these processes.

3.6. The Role of Researchers

The research was carried out by a university professor and 12 research assistants at the University of Ankara Faculty of Educational Sciences. Preparations for the research began one and a half years ago before the actual research is conducted. In order to establish the theoretical foundations of the research, firstly, researches related to high school and high school types, national and international exams, statistics related to high school types, possible theories used in the research were examined and reported and presented in the study group. Then, the logic of phenomenology, theoretical background, data collection and analysis methods and phenomenological researches are examined. Researchers came together 3 hours a week for a year to establish the theoretical background of the research. Within the scope of the research, a scientific research project was prepared and presented, and the proposed project was accepted.

Interview questions, interviews, and analysis of the data were carried out by researchers (doctoral students) who took the courses of "Qualitative Research Methods in Education" and “Advanced Qualitative Research” and a faculty member who had expertise in this field. Within the scope of the research, questions to be asked to students were prepared and permission from local authorities was obtained to ask these questions to students. Face-to-face interviews with students were held in environments where they could easily express themselves. Interview records were transcribed verbatim. The data were themed by adhering to the theoretical framework and included in the findings section.

4. Findings

4.1. Expectations from students

When we look at the two opposite poles of the achievement gap, one can argue that while on the one side, science schools are located, the other side is occupied by vocational high schools. Expectation from students turn to be the most visible form of how differential distribution of knowledge is legitimated. In other words, in relation to low expectations from students, some teachers may tend to teach “just enough” in alignment with the level of such expectations. “Pygmalion effect” (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968) is also in charge in schools. One of the vocational high school students expresses this very frankly.

Since we are vocational high school students, some of our teachers, - of course, we are not as successful as Anatolian high school students, unfortunately- say that "you are a vocational high school, you don't have to know this, it is very normal that you don't know this. You don't have any math foundation to understand this. In those cases, I have no expectation from my school. What can you expect with a teacher speaking like this in a school like this? (VH1)

As it was expressed by the student, the low expectation of teacher embodied by the argument that "they don't need math because they are not going to use it anyways", reflect on the self-evaluation of students as well. In other words, even the most optimistic students about their future do not tell what is expecting them next. Interestingly, students attending these schools seem to plan to get different jobs than they are learning in high school.

My plans for the future are... if I cannot do anything on the field of mechanics, I probably cannot. I mean, physical education sports college. Because I tend to go that way. So sports, all kinds. So I have played all of them from volleyball to handball. So I want that side so much (VH 1).

Which department I want to go? Now I quit thinking about health, my enthusiasm for it passed. Because I could not enter. Now I want psychology. I hope I can do it. After I graduated from this school .. In the future .. I don't know how it will affect? (Laughing). I think it will affect according to my degree at school. (VH 3)

On the contrary, expectations from science high school students are very high, albeit not surprisingly. Therefore, the language that is used to address what is going to happen to them in schools is also closely related to the expectations. Interestingly, while success in vocational high schools is thought as the problem of individual, in science high schools, success of the students is very important for the rest of the group as well. This could be related to the desire of sustaining school's reputation.

Generally, there is a sentence that is already said to us, it is said very often, "You are a student of Science High School". Because, their expectation from us is to be more successful in mathematical and scientific issues, this is the general characteristics of Science High School. We are in scientific matters; We are better at math, physics, chemistry, biology, than other subjects (SH1).

This is reflected to their self-efficacy and the way they talk about their future as well. Almost all of the students were pretty sure what they will be doing in the future after they graduated from the school.

My plans for the future, I am almost sure that I will now choose from a numerical place through the lessons we have seen. I think of medicine, in general, we are currently working with a biology professor. So I'm thinking of going to the medicine, but the person we're working with right now is the biologist and he has a veterinary clinic, I wonder if my thoughts have shifted since. But I usually want to read something about biology.

4.2. Limits and possibilities of social mobility

Education is one of the areas where the reflection and reproduction of the dominant ideologies is seen in the society. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), school are functioning as reproduction mechanisms for the study. Reproduction may take different forms. Giddens (1991) states that in cultural reproduction, schools help maintain social and economic inequalities across generations and affect values, attitudes and habits through educational programs and hidden curriculum. In contrast, social mobility is defined as the change of social positions of individuals and cultural factors (Sorokin, 1959). Today, however, education and knowledge are among the precursors of individuals' social mobility. In terms of high school types, it is seen that students attending some high school types caught to the trap of reproduction while having a naïve expectation to move to the upper layers of social class. This does not mean that the students are unaware of the situation.

Regarding the job, I actually attended the food department very enthusiastically but I want to study law I do not think that I will get a high score in the university exam, but I have some friends, they are deceiving themselves by thinking that "I am a vocational high school student but I would go to private courses and I would go to university". There is not such a thing, the highest score of the vocational school student can get in the university exam is between 350- 360 points (VH 2).

There are many students who want to follow the footsteps of their parents, particularly if they occupy prestigious positions such as doctors, lawyers, and judges. In other words, students coming from upper middle class families observe their parents and want to stay in close connection with their jobs.

I frankly want to study law and then take exams to be a judge. Also, my father has many cases because he has a private company. I promised to take his cases first. This is all I want. I do not intend to write another department. (AH7)

My mother is a psychiatrist; I want to study psychology. I want to do a PhD in clinical psychology. Then I want to go through steps like a master's degree, but I want to do this abroad. My mom has a lot of publications. I want to write publications like her. (SCH15)

However, two school types could be an exception for the last claim. Students attending vocational high schools and Imam and Preacher High Schools. Students of vocational high schools expressed sort of an obligation either working with their fathers or own their business. And yet, many of them said that they do not want to do the jobs they are attending. Especially boys attending vocational high schools mentioned that they want to join military or become a police after their graduation.

I want to be a police, that's my purpose. Sport has an effect on this choice. I think a protection branch, my job is already ready if there is no profession, my father has a shop, our own shop. (VH 6)

In school there is no difference, diversity. For example, you are stopping 10 people and ask 8 of them, they will say they are going to work on his father's shop in Ostim. How should I say? In industry. "What will you be?". "I will work with my father." (VH 13)

Yes, actually. I am currently studying in the industry department, but I will not be a lathe fitter, I am going to go to mechanical engineering. Of course, when you graduate from here, it is easy to get a certificate and open a shop and make your own livelihood. our work is ready. (VH 4)

Students attending Imam and Preacher high schools, regardless of their exam scores they take, mention that their families motivated them to join this school type. In the narrations of the students, attending Imam and Preacher high school has different reference points when it is compared with the other school type. Their expectations about future positions are also pretty high, and it would be a mistake to think these schools with the same reality of vocational schools, although it was indented to be.

The most important reason for me to come here was that my father was graduated from Imam Hatip. My father also encouraged me because he wanted his own child to be as well. I thought it is quite ok. I got 450 points when I came to middle school 3rd grade. My average was 445. Enough for Science high school. Finally, somebody whispered to my father's ear about this school, I suppose. Since my father was an imam, this was a privilege. Good thing I came here. (IPH10)

Fine arts students do not have much choice but to attend the same field at the university. However, skills could be more important than going to university for some.

If I hadn't graduated from here, I would have already wanted another place in the university, now I want a conservatory. So it is ... If I can win, I want ITU Turkish Music Conservatory. If I cannot win, I will try another place .. Gazi, Yıldırım Beyazıt or something...(FAH1)

I have a lot of plans for the future. So, as I said, I want to go behind my teacher, I want to be a law artist. I want to go further on my instrument. (FAH5)

While the students studying at vocational high schools state that they want to continue their family jobs in the future, students studying at the imam preacher told that their families were influential among the reasons for choosing the school and that some of their family members had previously studied at this school. It can be said that these children are effective in the reproduction of society by preferring the professions that exist in their families and environments. Among the reasons for this trend in vocational high schools are the low level of students' belief in entering the university due to the lack of academic achievement, and their absence from taking risks, and their involvement in

continuing the profession they see from their families. Students in the Fine Arts High School follow their schools' paths and shape their future in a similar way. It is seen that students of every high school type are trying to move upper layers of social class.

For example, I would like to start "metrapola" again, get out of there and become a trainer. If I could not, I would like to be an engineer. I have economic freedom when I get married, you don't look at you husband's hand. When you spend money, you don't have to explain. When my father asked my mother where she spent the money, it was the moment that I understand that I need an economic freedom. (VH 4)

My plans for the future... Galatasaray is a prestigious university, METU, Boğaziçi, and Bilkent. If I don't go to one of these four, there's no point in going to university.(SCH5)

I want to be a diplomat. Apart from that, it can be anywhere when you graduate from law. There are people who have ranked in this school.(AH16)

As I said I want to be an engineer. If I can win, if we enter the first four sides, Boğaziçi, if not at METU or something... We may not be able to win METU, but I would like METU if it is not Boğaziçi. Other than that, if I can move forward and move forward rather than an ordinary engineer, I want to go ahead and become a manager. I want to be a manager rather than a constant engineering. (SH14)

It is seen that the most important determinants of the students' will to social mobility is universities, especially those who prefer prestigious universities that are accepted in the society and can be reached with high scores. In addition, in order to avoid the deficiencies they see in their families and to be free in the society, it can be said that the students are in a social class jump and they see schools as a tool for this. In a nutshell, students see the schools they study in as a step in social class hierarchy.

4.3. Distinctions: What is school for?

Future expectation is one of the factors affecting the individual's life. Individual's experiences change the quality of expectations. In this process, the high school is expected to serve as a bridge for students' future. However, it is seen that the function of the school is different in terms of high school types. Especially for students studying in Anatolian high schools, it is understood that the high schools they attend have no important function in structuring their future.

I do not expect much from this school. As a result, everything is up to me, not school. No matter how good the school is, I can come somewhere if I work. (AH1)

I don't have much expectations from this school. I just want to go to college. My only expectation from this school is to enter the university.(AH5)

Last year, too, the 12th grade went to open high school to go to the private courses, so as not to waste time. I don't want to be an open high school graduate. (AH7)

I just wanted to go to a university, I don't expect much from this school. This school cannot match expectations. It just never happens only with school. (AH9)

The school I am studying has nothing to do with my plans. The point of view here is this, It is not a very developing place. As the average age of the teachers is a bit too high (over 40), they cannot renew themselves. After that, that update is no longer coming. Except for a few teachers.(AH10)

This school obviously does not meet my expectations. I was more hopeful when I started this school. It passes well, teachers are good. What should I know? I won Anatolian High School. Anatolian High School had expectations. I came to school, so there is no difference with my old school. (AH11)

As it is understood from the above narrations, students in Anatolian high schools do not regard the school as sufficient in structuring of their future and they turn to alternative methods such as private courses and open high school. In this sense, school is just a medium for the next step in education, which is a university in this case. They believe that they can provide the bridge for their future especially with the private courses. This shows that students

studying in Anatolian high school have difficulties in connecting to school. The reasons for this situation can be the conversion of regular high schools to Anatolian high schools and removal of base scores.

Compared with Anatolian High School, students attending in social sciences high school, science high schools and imam preacher high schools establish a strong connection between their schools and their future. It can be said that they see the high school they attend as a key that opens the door of their future.

I think I should look at Imam Preacher High School then, I would not look at it as a school. I think it is a privilege to study at an Imam Preacher High School. Because one takes both religious education and takes the academic courses he should take. We take more lessons, we take 16 hours of lessons. I think this is the privilege... It educates us both socially and in terms of education.(IPH1)

Imam and preacher high schools created a political controversy over the years since their inceptions in early Republican period. However, this controversy took another dimension and students are not immune to those discussions. Therefore, some clearly articulate that they will be holding prestigious positions in society in relation to these political conditions.

So they expect a lot from this school. Here they think the prime minister is a school that can take out the president. (IPH11)

It should be noted that there is also internal hierarchy over school types, as some schools are designed as “Project schools” and some are not. Therefore, school types are not homogenous, but rather quite diversified. Such designation seems to create a distinction not only in terms of achievement but also social and cultural. Against this background, one needs to be very careful about developing an argument about the comparison of school types. Although, the purpose of this article is not to make such a comparison since the schools selected for this research are considered among the top within the pool of their category.

Nevertheless, science high school and social science high schools are both the production of macro educational policies in a sense that both schools are aimed to serve to the “best minds” of societies, albeit, this idea has its own problems. Students of these schools know their difference and in some cases, use it as a social distinction from other school types. The feeling of “belongingness to school” is very high in these schools as it is expressed that belongingness has nothing to do with what is happening to one during school years but rather what is going to happen after the school. In other words, in schools where the sense of belongingness very high and visible in many respect, so does the entrance scores and expectations from the future.

I think science high school is like the "Platinum Card" given to you, this is the way it is. So, if I make an effort, there is something that graduation from here, is also very important for your CV, and people know that you graduated from here and that this is a more qualified high school. So I think it will open the door for more jobs and research projects; because at least one Science High School lecturer at all of the big universities I know, at least one Science High School doctor in every hospital and he understands us and we have it in our Alumni Association. I think it is a school that is supported in this way, frankly, I think it is a lucky school. (SH1)

Graduates of science high school become either engineer or doctor. I want to be a doctor too. I want to be a researcher later. Currently, the head of the departments or the rectors of many universities are graduates of our school. In this respect, I think that when I need to work in universities or want to participate in a project, being a science high school graduate will help me to communicate with previous graduates more easily and prepare a foundation for me more easily. There is also something like this. For example, this is the truth. People tend trust the people who have the same education they have.. Because they know they have the same foundation. In this way, I think that being a high school will contribute me. (SH9)

First of all, it gives a business card, it provides an network/environment. Science High School graduates are in great solidarity. Science High School graduate who I want to help in any subject, also helps, just because we share the same school and the same environment. In this respect, I expect it to be helpful. Apart from that, I expect it to be helpful in courses. (SH3)

On the similar vein, students from social science high school articulated very similar thoughts in regards to what their school would bring to them in the future. Both school types are very successful at university entrance exam, also, during our interviews it appeared that there is a sort of competition among them. In both schools, students think that school provides them a relatively brighter future in comparison to other school types, Imam and preacher school is

being an exception because of the reasons mentioned above. However, such an expectation in science high schools are twofold: networking and academic success while in social science high school is expected to provide a “cognitive elitism”, a condition that locates graduates at the upper levels of intellectual hierarchy.

I am also sure that we will come to a good position in the future and go to very high position in the future; because even if no one mentions it, even if no teacher of ours say this, we come here to be the leader. We come to this SBL culture to make a difference in some things. Again, we have a few friends who are aware of this, and they are fighting in it, they are dealing with something. I am sure when I say I am graduated from SBL 20 years later, when I show my graduate badge from SBL, they will say “okay,” like Mülkiye's badge, I am absolutely sure of it. (SCH1)

The narration above tells us very clearly where social science high school students locate themselves in “primary league”: Mülkiye (Oldest Political Science Department in the country). Social science high schools are relatively new in comparison to other school types, particularly their counterpart science high schools. Thus, they do not have the big network that science high school students expect to become part of. But, they think that where they are going to be in the future could be sensed even today, just by looking at what they are doing. It is observed that social science high school students are the most confident ones about their distinctive properties particularly in regards to intellectual abilities.

It can be noticed even now, it can be felt even now that there is no such thing as not being felt in the future. We are talking to graduates who go to university, they are even aware, I have a friend who reads philosophy, says someone who reads psychology, I have more philosophy knowledge than him. If I follow this footstep, logically I should be there as well. (SCH11)

Students in the social sciences, science, and imam preacher high school see their schools as a business card from different angles. For example, students studying at imam preacher high school are high-level graduates of imam preacher students in the country, students of social sciences high school think that they are trained as senior management candidates, students studying in science high school have their own graduates in many top positions, and the communication with them continues and they think that it is a door to the future of their schools because the school provides a good education. It can be said that the sense of belonging to their school is very high, as the students studying in these three types of schools think that their schools act as a bridge in carrying them to the next level.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

One of the key challenges we face in education is the gap between social and academic that interplays within the educational practices. Although, diversification in school types was not intended to create a social inequalities, it has been arguably the case that it does create such a hierarchy in society. Thus, the functioning of school resonates the functioning of society, albeit such argument seems to be cliché. On the other hand, the issue of who is going to which school cannot be discussed without looking at who is already there. This research study attempts to shed some light on this issue through looking at expectations from students, limits and possibilities of social mobility and distinctions across school types. As it was presented, all these issues are shaped and manifested in accordance with the school type. At the same time, perceptions of students towards their school and school work in general are closely related to this argument. We can take the argument further and claim that achievement gaps across schools are also related to issues discussed in this paper. The gap in academic achievement between schools is perhaps among the most important problems of our education system. It is observed that the differences in achievement between schools, especially across school types, are quite wide in both international exams and national exams conducted locally in the country (Bozkurt, 2016). The reasons for achievement gaps can be addressed in many forms and levels. However, an important way to address the issue with empirical data is to look at how the differences in achievement look within school and how they are understood by students. It should be noted, however, that this is not the only way. We can easily handle the issue at the macro level because, many macro-level factors, especially the socio-economic level, can provide important clues about the causes and consequences of differences in success across schools (Weis, 2014). On the other hand, considering the issues of success and failure as a process, understanding how these are experienced by students and, more importantly, what are the forms of their establishment in schools would provide us with important advantages to develop intervention strategies.

In our study, it is understood that the differences in achievement between schools were actually established somewhere outside the school, but they were enforced and reproduced by the school right after their entrance to the borders of the school. On the one hand, as the preference level (and required test scores) of the school decreases, the

beliefs and expectations that the students will be successful decrease, on the other hand, as the preferability of the school increases, this situation reverses. In other words, students attending schools with high scores, have almost no hesitation in regards to attending a good school at the next stage of their education. It is understood that this expectation also resonates in teachers' attitudes and expectations. The school climate created by this expectation functions with a similar character. From the point of view of in-school practices, it is seen that low expectation is reflected on these in many ways. For example, it is understood that the level of expectation has an impact on from which topic teachers will teach, to what level they will teach about this topic. We can see this approach as an output of prejudices about where students will be in the future life.

Another point that maintains differences in success between schools, seems to be related to what extend students are exposed to various realities they are not familiar with within schools. This process could be defined as exposition to difference. Students who come from different backgrounds can transfer their social and cultural capital in the form of experience to others to a significant extent. For this reason, it is understood that groupings between students were also established on these axes. Nevertheless, such phenomenon is not the reality of every school. Schools with high achievement operate the mechanisms of experience transfer through many ways including graduate days, special occasions, rituals and ceremonies.

Achievement gaps across schools seems to be related to how free children are which is an another area where differences are embodied. It is often narrated in both science and social sciences high schools that freedom of expression is major part of their educational life. In particular, in social sciences high school, it is explained that expressing their ideas publicly carries the function of personal development in that they have the opportunity of feature. The implementation of ideas expressed by the students does not stay on the realm of expression but realized particularly more in high-success schools. In other words, teachers and administrators put efforts to implement students' opinions on a particular subject.

Schools build a bridge between the past and the future, and this bridge is not built randomly. In other words, it is seen from the narrations of participating children that the schools that these children will attend have been determined much longer ago. In this sense, it is possible to say that schools choose students that are suitable for them, with some exceptions. So, it is possible to say that the school chooses the student, not the student. This argument does not only express a negative reality. For example, going to science high school still requires a very specific score. In fact, it cannot be said that a student going to science high school made a free choice as well. In many cases, it is understood that families do not directly tell the students where to go when choosing a school, but instead they provide the options. As long as students stay within these borders, no problems emerge between student and the family.

School is also supported by out-of-school activities. It can be said that this support varies according to the type of school. In schools where the focus is on academic success also continues out of school activities. In this sense, students of academic success-oriented schools take private lessons or go to private courses from a very early period starting at 9th grade. In terms of in-school activities, it is seen that activities such as theater and cinema are carried out in all schools. However, it is seen that the main difference occurs about the invitation of some important people to school. It can be said that people who are invited to schools, especially successful graduates of the schools, are quite effective on students in future planning and vision.

Efforts to ensure equal opportunities in education have been on the agenda of educational policies, such as improving school participation (Hurn, 1993) and increasing educational participation by making primary education compulsory for all, such as improving the physical conditions of the school, reducing the number of students per teacher, and increasing teacher qualifications. However, in order for students to participate in education and training processes and achievements in line with the objectives of the curriculum, to demonstrate a similar pattern, in other words, in order to equalize educational outcomes, policies and practices towards improving school's physical conditions, ensuring educational participation and increasing schooling rates are not sufficient. It is not possible to think of the school and other processes related to the school regardless of the social environment in which the school is located and the socio-economic and cultural background brought to the school by the students. Coleman (1968), in his extensive educational research, concluded that differences in educational success were created by families, not by schools. Many educational researches reveal that the socio-economic background is the main disadvantage that directly affects educational achievement. Indeed, the most obvious difference in the schools we worked with is the socio-economic background. This situation also affects the forms of relationships that families establish with school and their participation in school processes.

6. Declaration of Conflict of Interest and Contribution

Each author contributed equally in the preparation of the article. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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