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Opinions of School Administrators about the Transition System to Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

Research Article

The purpose of this qualitative research was to examine the transition system to secondary education from the views of school administrators and to offer solutions to the problems identified for the improvement of the system. The study group of the research consisted of 10 administrators working in public secondary schools in Ordu province in the 2020-2021 academic year. A semi-structured interview form consisting of 5 questions prepared by the researchers has been applied to the school administrators involved in the research. Interviews with administrators were carried out over the internet and telephone since face-to-face meetings may create negative situations about the course of the epidemic due to the Covid-19 epidemic. Taking into account the relevant literature, content analysis was conducted on the data obtained as a result of the interviews. It has been concluded that the school administrators involved in the research generally have a negative perspective towards the transition system to secondary education. They also criticized the administration phase of the exam. Having indicated that the Make-up Exam application, which was administered in the past and then abolished, should be put back into practice, school administrators stated that the Address-Based Registration System caused some downsides during the implementation phase. In addition, they stated that each change has been made in the existing system hurt the students and their parents and undermined their trust in the system. In their suggestions to correct the system's deficiencies, they stated that the necessary planning for the change should be made in the long term and the system should be restructured.

Keywords: School administrators, transition system to secondary education, central examination, system change, make-up exam, address-based registration.

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Introduction

Today, in parallel with the development of science and technology, the need for qualified people is increasing day by day. The States, which are in constant competition with each other, have to keep their education policies up-to-date and raise people who can meet the needs of the century in order to reach this qualified manpower. In this context, they need to rearrange their education policies and keep it up-to-date. In countries with a high young population, students who wish to study in qualified schools must undergo a certain ranking process. Students are ranked at their own level according to certain criteria and are prepared for a higher education institution in the schools they are placed in. However, the transition systems administered have both positive and negative aspects. The thoughts of the administrators of the schools where the students are prepared for the secondary education transition system are important in order to determine and correct the failing aspects of the system. That is why, the views of school administrators on the transition system to secondary education were tried to be determined in this study.

There are different types and levels of education. Each type and level changes different individual gains and this increases the demand for education. People who wish to benefit more from these gains that education offers to the individual, therefore, demand to study in more qualified educational institutions. Therefore, countries introduce policies to increase education supply in order to increase their welfare levels (Güvendir, Satici, & Özkan, 2016). From this perspective, education can be thought of as an activity that allows the individual and the society to develop and progress.

Within the twelve-year compulsory education, which entered into force in 2012 and is still being implemented today, students attend primary school for four years, secondary school for four years and high school for four years. The aim of the state is to send students to a higher education level according to their interests, skills and abilities, to prepare them for the difficulties they may encounter in real life, to ensure that they are happy individuals and to acquire a profession in which they can increase the level of happiness and welfare of the society by considering equality of opportunity in education (MEB Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, 2018). When it is necessary to classify and rank the cognitive abilities of students, central exams appear as an effective tool. Reducing the margin of error in shaping the future of the student and ensuring impartiality are among the main objectives here (Karataş & Özkan, 2016). The process of selecting and placing students by categorizing the objectives is very important to monitor students' progress over time and to give them feedback on how much they have improved (Erdem, 2015). The quality and qualification of education increase with each student who is given feedback about his/her progress (Gürbüzürk, 2019).

Each supply creates its own demand, but the increase in the demands of parents and students for quality education makes the implementation phase of the student selection method very difficult. This situation makes it necessary for the measurement tools in force in our country to change suddenly and the system to change by keeping up with this situation (Çolakoğlu, 2005). While it is a natural situation that the system needs to be updated in order to respond to expectations, random changes made without giving enough thought to the problems caused reactions in the society (Şahin, 2014). These reactions, which are very normal, still exist today. The intensity of emotions and stress experienced by students who think that the change made in the exam system coincides with them is increasing due to the fact that they are in adolescence (Başal & Peker, 2016).

The transition time of a student from middle school to high school also coincides with his/her adolescence period. As it is known, this period causes many psychological, sociological and physiological changes in the student. This situation makes it more important for them to be directed to an educational institution parallel to their own interests and skills

(Tulunay, 2016). The performance of the student while transitioning to secondary education is also important in terms of being a sign of his/her performance while transitioning to higher education. This situation makes the transition to secondary education even more important for families (Bal Ö. , 2011).

As in the world, the constantly developing and changing science and technology in our country makes the applied education system inadequate and requires changes in itself. In parallel with these changes, it is expected from the student to maximize his/her interests, abilities and attitudes, and to discover how he/she can use it most effectively by recognizing his/her potential.

When talking about the changes in the education system in Turkey, it is seen that the education process between the years of 1923-1997 includes five years of primary school education, three years of middle school and three years of high school education. In the period from 1997 to 2012, primary and secondary school levels were combined and eight-year uninterrupted and compulsory education was started. In 2009, all of the general high schools were transformed into Anatolian High Schools and the three-year high school education period up to that date was increased to four years (Coşkun, Çelik, & Gür, 2013).

The secondary education level is in a very crucial position in the eyes of the parents in terms of being a bridge between the primary education, in which formal education is added to the semi-informal education that the student receives from his/her family, and higher education, which is an important step for having a profession in which he/she will continue his/her life (Biçer, 2014). Uncertain of what awaits them in the future, children and their parents realize that the key point is the quality of the education received. For this reason, they focus on institutions that provide quality education in the transition period from primary education to secondary education. Since there is no equality in educational quality among the educational institutions in the country, a ranking is made among the students included in the system, and the students are ranked according to their success, and this situation causes a serious competitive environment.

In order to eliminate the negative effects of the transition process to secondary education in our country, the relevant literature has been examined and the transition systems used in other countries have been examined from various aspects and the positive and negative aspects of these systems have been discussed. As a result of the literature review, it is seen that in these countries, transition with and without exam, transition according to teacher evaluation, final exam and transition implementations are used, sometimes a single application is not enough, but several applications are used together (Bal & Başar, 2014; Bay, 2014; Biçer, 2014; Duran & Sezgin, 2014; Korkmaz, 2014; Zayımoğlu, 2014). When the education policies and systems they maintain and the transition systems of the countries that are successful are examined, it is seen that they are not in line with each other and in fact they are quite different from each other. It is a fact that every transition system has its own consistency and that the system that brings success to one country may not be successful in another country. Therefore, it is fundamental to create a system that does not ignore the realities of our country.

When we look at the studies aiming to get to the root of the problems existing in transition systems, it is seen that these problems are not independent from each other. The first of the main problems in these systems is the excess number of students (Derinbay & Yavuz, 2014). The lack of stability in certain issues in the applied central exams caused sudden changes and this brought different problems with it. The fact that there is no long-term planning on the system also makes the current process more difficult. These problems negatively affect the psychology of students and their parents who are included in the system. The belief of students, parents and teachers in the current system is weakening day by day and

their trust is decreasing. These people, stuck in the technical details of the current system, witness that education is moving away from its main purpose and function every day.

It is thought that seeking the opinions of school administrators regarding the transition to secondary education will be an essential step in finding solutions to existing problems. Recognizing and understanding the problems observed by the school administrators will facilitate the solution of the problems.

Political, economic and demographic indicators of our country pave the way for the continuous change of our system of transition to secondary education (Şahin, 2014). The fact that the system constantly changes on a slippery ground draws the reaction of the society and in this respect, our education system is constantly criticized. The relevant literature shows that many studies have been carried out in order to reduce the reactions to our system and to find solutions to existing problems (Buluç, Çelik, & Uzun, 2014; Ergün, 2014; Dönmez, 2009; Güneş, 2014; Küçüker, 2017).

The only reality in the universe is the change itself. Systems that resist change, on the other hand, are inevitable to disappear. However, the hasty making of some changes without careful consideration is viewed negatively by the society (Çelik, 2015). In order for the changes to be effective, the people affected by them must internalize, adopt and implement this change. It is thought that the reason for the increase in the number of studies on the secondary education transition system in the literature is the desire to find solutions to these problems by identifying the faulty aspects of the system.

This study aims to contribute to the literature in order to increase the effectiveness of the secondary education transition system, which affects the students and their parents in the system directly and the rest of the society indirectly, in the light of the opinions of the secondary education school administrators, and to correct the faulty areas. Determining the opinions of the administrators would contribute to the determination of the failing sides of the transition system and to propose solutions to them. It is among the main objectives of this study to shed light on a possible system change and contribute to the literature.

The purpose of the research is to examine the positive and negative aspects of the transition systems implemented in Turkey and to analyze the problems caused by the current system and to determine the solution proposals to reach a better transition system. The sub-objectives related to this main purpose are listed below:

1. What are the opinions of the school administrators about the transition system to secondary education?
2. How do school administrators think that students and parents are affected by the transition process?
3. What are the thoughts of the school administrators about the outputs/results of the transition to secondary education?

Method

Model

The phenomenology design was used in the study. This method is one of the most suitable methods for investigating cases that we cannot define fully but are not completely unfamiliar with (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2013). The focus of phenomenology is what the truth is, and experiences of people form its basis. The important and essential thing here is to name the facts by avoiding generalization (Akturan & Esen, 2008). The phenomenology design is based on the interviewee's experiences and observations of events, but also deals with the meanings that the person assigns to them (Kuş, 2012). This study was carried out qualitatively as it aims to identify the failing aspects and situations about the secondary education transition system based on the experiences of school administrators.

Study Group

This study was conducted with 10 secondary school administrators working in public schools of Ordu province in the 2020-2021 academic year and voluntarily participated in the study. School administrators working in the education system are considered to be the people who know the process of the secondary education transition system best and are already involved in the implementation. Information about the study group was given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Personal information about the administrators participating in the research*

Type of Variable	Type of Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Female	2	20
	Male	8	80
Level of Management	Principal	6	60
	Deputy Principal	4	40
Seniority	Less than 10 years	2	20
	Between 10-20 years	5	50
	More than 20 years	3	30
Educational Status	Master's Degree	10	100
Seniority in School	Less than 2 years	4	40
	3-4 years	5	50
	More than 5 years	1	10

When the personal information of the administrators in Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the majority of the participants in the research are principals and men, they have a seniority of more than 10 years and all of them have a master's degree.

Data Collection Tools

When the literature on the topic was reviewed, it was concluded that the method that would serve the purpose of the study and was suitable for its nature was the interview. It is seen that this method is mostly preferred in qualitative studies. The purpose of this method is to examine the attitudes of people towards them based on their perception of events and situations. Here, it is aimed to reach information that cannot be reached by observation (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2013). In qualitative studies, the concepts of validity and reliability are handled differently from quantitative studies (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2013). Krefting (1991) stated that in qualitative studies, the expressions of credibility and the competence of the researcher are more appropriate to use instead of expressions of validity and reliability. Guba & Lincoln (1982) also stated that there should be credibility rather than validity and reliability in qualitative research, and they determined some criteria in this regard. These criteria are called golden standards in the literature and are grouped under the titles of credibility, reliability, confirmability and transferability (Başkale, 2016).

In order to ask the administrators participating in the research, 5 open-ended questions thought to serve the purpose were prepared by the researchers and a semi-structured interview form was developed. In order to determine whether the questions serve the purpose and to ensure credibility in the form, the opinions of 2 faculty members were taken, errors and deficiencies in the questions were determined and corrected through the pilot study, and credibility was ensured in the interview form. It was determined that the expression "About changing exams" in the third of the interview questions was not clearly understood by the administrators during the pilot study, and the statement was changed to "About the changed/renewed exams" and made more understandable. To make it more understandable by the administrators, the expression "Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the

Transition System?” in the fifth question was corrected as “*Do you have any suggestions for a better transition system? If any, please specify.*” With these changes, the measuring tool was given its latest version. After the interview form was given its latest version, it was administered to the participants within the scope of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

A semi-structured interview form was administered to the interviewees participating in the research so that they could freely express their thoughts. These forms are one of the most effective ways to learn people's thoughts about the events they encounter. The fact that the questions posed are open to interpretation contributes to understanding the real opinion of the interviewer about the matters and making certain inferences (Türnüklü, 2000). Volunteering was taken as a basis while determining the school administrators participating in the interview. It was emphasized to the interviewees that their personal information would be kept secretly and the data obtained would not be used outside of this study. Interviews were conducted online or over the phone by asking the interviewees to make an appointment at a suitable time for the administration of the form. In order to interpret the answers given to the questions asked in the interview form in detail, permission was requested from the school administrators to record audio and the interviews were then recorded. Even after the interview was over, the contact information of the researcher was printed in the interview form in case there was something they wanted to add to their answers. Interviews lasting an average of thirty minutes were conducted with each of the school administrators participating in the interview. In cases where the answers needed to be given in more detail, the interviewer asked the administrators to explain the issue a little more or to answer the question with an example and the interview process was supported by the researcher. It was avoided to ask guiding questions to the school administrators who participated in the interview and the answers were recorded as they were.

After the data were collected, codes such as E1, E2 were given to each of them. The participant was coded as E if male and as K if female. Abbreviations have been used, provided that the essence of the answers to the questions is preserved. The obtained data were subjected to content analysis. This analysis method helps us to understand the obscure aspects by moving from the understandable aspects of the matter (Gökçe, 1994). Integration of data that has commonalities allows for a broader interpretation (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2013). Findings and comments were tabulated through descriptive analysis. Comments that require attention are given under the tables by preserving the original content. The concepts in the collected data were classified and codes were created. The answers given to the codes within this theme are systematically grouped, with each question sentence being a main theme. In order to strengthen the comments made, direct quotations were made from the opinions of the administrators participating in the interview and these were indicated in italics.

Findings

The thoughts of the school administrators about our transition system to secondary education, how students and parents are affected by the situation when the system is changed, their own thoughts about the change of exam systems, their thoughts about the address-based registration system, and the suggestions they can bring for a better functioning of the transition system are the matters discussed in the findings section.

Opinions of Administrators about the Transition System to Secondary Education

The question of “*What are your general thoughts about our transition system to secondary education?*” was asked in order to determine the thoughts of the school

administrators participating in the interview about the transition system to secondary education, and the answers were given in Table 2 below.

Table 1. *Opinions of administrators about the Transition System to Secondary Education*

Answers	<i>f</i>
Supplementary courses contributed positively to the process.	E2, E7, E5, E10
Having a 12-year of compulsory education has a negative effect.	E2, K3, E6, E10
Failure to implement the make-up exam is an important shortcoming.	E1, E7, K9
Schools not having equal opportunities cause a crucial problem.	E1, E8
Due to the increasing young population, exams are inevitable.	E1, K3
Exams cause stress for students and parents.	E6, E10
The scarcity of qualified schools is an important problem.	E4, K9
Exam-curriculum mismatch is a major problem.	E2, E7
Exams make rankings rather than assessments.	K3
Schools differ from each other in terms of quality.	E1

As can be seen from the data in Table 2, the school administrators mostly shared the answer “Supplementary and Preparation Courses have a positive contribution to the process of transition to the secondary education” ($n=4$) about the Transition System to Secondary Education. For instance, E2 and E5 shared the following views with similar expressions: “*I think that the exam for the transition to secondary education and the course curriculum do not fully overlap. In other words, the objectives given and the questions measured in the exams do not exactly match. For this reason, it is necessary to cover some topics in the extra-curricular lessons. This is the main reason why Supplementary Preparation Courses are offered, which is to prepare for the exam; that is, to deal with exam preparation topics different from the topics covered in the lessons.*” The administrators emphasized that the objectives of the questions students encounter in the exam do not match the objectives in the annual plans, and therefore, the supplementary courses provide teachers with an extra time to cover the objectives for the exam. Another opinion was expressed by E7 as follows: “*I think that the only positive side for students during the exam preparation process is the Supplementary Courses held on the weekends. Owing to this, children from families with insufficient financial conditions could have equal opportunity to some extent. In addition, there is a noticeable increase in performance in school lessons.*” This means that the benefit of Supplementary and Preparation Courses for students with insufficient financial conditions was underlined and it was emphasized by the school administrators that it created equal opportunities in education. Based on these views, the Supplementary and Preparation Courses carried out by the Ministry of Education provide benefits to teachers and students in various aspects and are positively received by the school administrators.

It is seen that the school administrators gave the answer of “Having a 12-year of compulsory education has a negative effect ($n=4$) in their thoughts about the Transition System to Secondary Education. When some of the noteworthy opinions expressed by administrators were examined, the answer given by K3 was as follows: “*I don't think it makes much sense to make 12 years of education compulsory and turn the transition to high school*

into a torture. I think the inclusion of high school in compulsory education deeply damages our educational quality. I think that the problem of academic success in our high schools will decrease a lot if those who really want to study enroll in high school.” Similarly, E10 gave the following answer: “I think that the compulsory education of students until high school graduation forces the system, and students who don't really want to receive an academic education put the schools in big trouble in terms of discipline.” Although there is a compulsory high school education, the administrators have a negative opinion against the determination of the high school to be educated according to the exam results. In line with these views, it can be said that the compulsory 12-year education has a negative effect on students and schools, which are the center of the education system.

There are participants ($n=3$) who stated that “Make-up Exams should be started again”, which was applied in the past and was expressed as a positive practice by the participant school administrators. Here is a striking view of participants expressed by E9 as follows: “I see the absence of a make-up exam as a major shortcoming. The state of the world may experience a mishap that will not happen to the child that day, let’s say, he may be too ill to take the exam. In such a case, we are throwing away the child's years without thinking, and the child feels treated unfairly.” School administrators unfavorably perceive having no make-up exam for students who have a mishap in the Transition Exam to Secondary Education, which is the determinant of which school they will receive their high school education, which will in turn ascertain their academic careers and how their future lives will go on.

In addition, other opinions expressed by school administrators are as follows: “Educational institutions across the country do not have equal rights and opportunities” ($n=2$); “Due to the increasing young population, it is obligatory to take exams” ($n=2$); “Exams cause stress in students and parents” ($n=2$); “Insufficient number of qualified schools” ($n=2$); “Exam and curriculum mismatch” ($n=2$); “Exams rank rather than evaluate” ($n=2$); “The fact that some schools are differentiated from each other by the adjective ‘Qualified’ added to their names” ($n=2$).

Opinions of School Administrators about How Students and Parents Are Affected by the Transition Process

The question of “How do you think students and their parents are affected by the constant change in the system?” was asked by the school administrators who participated in the interview in order to find out how students and parents were affected by the transition process, and the answers were given in the following Table 3.

Table 2. *Opinions of administrators about how students and parents are affected by the continuous change of the system*

Answers	f
The frequency of change has a negative effect.	E1, E2, E8, E10
It has a negative effect on motivation.	E2, E6, E7, E8
It undermines trust in the system.	E2, E4, E8, K9
There is a lack of notification about the changes.	K3, E5

Table 3 displays that the school administrators mostly shared the opinion of “the negative effect of the frequency of change on the students and their parents” ($n=4$) about how students and parents are affected by the transition process. As an example, E1 gave the following answer to this question: “Students are making preparation by thinking, I wonder

what kind of change will happen this year?'. In addition, students do not only prepare in the final year, they start in the 7th grade or even in the 6th grade. Students' efforts are wasted in such changes. For this reason, parents are very uncomfortable with the changes. Constant changes reduce confidence in the examination system." With this comment, he also emphasized that the changes in the exams that are being carried out reduce the confidence of the students and their parents in the exam system. Emphasizing that the changes to be made should not be too sharp, E8 expressed his opinion on this issue as follows: "Unfortunately, in our country, system changes are made on average every 4 years, especially in education. When it comes to this issue, parents and students get confused, as well as administrators and teachers. In this process, it would be more appropriate to create a very modern and objective-based system and to make it sustainable with minor changes in the system." Regarding the "negative effect of the continuous change of the system on student motivation" (n=4), E6 used the following statement: "The constant change of the system reduces their motivation to prepare for secondary education with an uncertainty starting from the 5th grade. Teachers also find it difficult to follow the system while guiding students." He stated that the fact that they were not sufficiently informed by the Ministry about the changes made in the system caused various problems, and also underlined that the motivation of the students was negatively affected by this situation. E3 answered this question similarly as follows: "When systems change, we are not given enough information. We are trying to learn the features of the system with our own efforts so that we do not make mistakes while guiding our students. This situation causes confusion and the students are not sufficiently informed in institutions that do not have guidance teachers. Also, changing the system again without picking its fruits is a mistake in itself." Thus, he emphasized that the changes made in the system negatively affected not only the students and their parents, but also the school administrators.

Opinions of School Administrators about the Changes Made in Exams

The question of "What are your thoughts on the changed/renewed exams?" was asked in order to determine the opinions of the school administrators who participated in the interview about the changes made in the exams, and their answers were given in Table 4 below.

Table 3. *Opinions of administrators about the changed/renewed exams*

Answers	f
There are positive opinions about the TEOG System.	E1, E7, K9, E10
The logic of the transition process needs to be changed.	K3, E7, E10
There is distrust of the system.	E2, E8
The scope of the examination process is narrow.	E1, K9
Students experience exam anxiety and stress.	E1, K9
There is little positive opinion about the current system.	E5
Curriculum improvement is needed.	E4
There is a problem of distinctiveness in the exam.	E6

As can be seen in Table 4, the school administrators expressed a positive opinion about TEOG rather than the LYS system in effect (n=4). Emphasizing the importance of the transition system not only with an exam but also with the performance of the student during

the secondary school education process, E7 expressed the following view as the prominent administrator's opinion: *“Although it is difficult to follow, being both parents and teachers, or rather, being in this profession makes us closely follow the system changes. In my opinion, the most logical and right one of these systems was the TEOG system. Because the exam our children take is used both as a written grade and as an exam score, and its positive side is being a system spread over 3-4 years. Other exam systems are limited to a few hours and cause students to experience both written and exam anxiety.”* Considering that children who do not know how to cope with stress yet forget what they know with the excitement they experience in the exam, it is thought that this situation will be in favor of the student.

There are also school administrators ($n=3$) who expressed their opinion that the logic of the transition system to secondary education should be changed. K3 expressed his opinion on this issue as follows: *“As long as the changed and renewed exams only change in terms of quantity and name, it will be a meaningless wait for a new result. If the aim is to change the result, then changing the name or number of the exam and/or the exam time and the number of sessions will not have a meaningful result. Because these changes made on the exams do not change the reality or the method of the exam. It is necessary to evaluate student achievements, yes, but while doing this, we need to question our method and, in my opinion, change it. At the end of the 4-year education period, we may have chosen students who achieved this academic success with an exam in which we tried to measure only the academic achievements of the students and who partially demonstrated this in the exam. However, other competencies and qualifications that we cannot choose / do not aim to choose will affect us in the medium and long term as human capital loss and waste.”*

Some administrators, on the other hand, do not trust the exam system, and they state that it causes unfavorable situations in terms of the fact that the process covers one year and creates exam anxiety on students ($n=2$). In parallel with this view, E2 expressed his opinion as follows: *“Frankly, I have parallel thoughts with parents and students. The student prepares for the exam for 2 years, the exam system changes in the final year and the student is starting from scratch again. We have students whose older brother/sister has experienced this. When we try to motivate the student for the exam, they cannot be motivated by saying ‘It will change again anyway.’ Only the students who have just started the 5th grade should be included in that exam system when the exam system changes. Otherwise, there will be no confidence in this exam.”*

Emphasizing that although he is optimistic about the system, E4 emphasized the need for improvement in the curriculum and shared his following opinion on the system: *“It is pleasing that the new types of questions asked in the new exam are logic questions that encourage students to reason away from memorization. However, the curricula that prepare our students for the exam also need to be improved in this direction. Curriculum improvement should not be limited to middle school, but should start from primary school.”* Although another positive opinion about the system was expressed by E5, he stated that the lack of distinctiveness of the exams caused some students to feel alienated from the lessons and to decrease their motivation in a broader sense. He said that *“While there were extremely easy questions in the TEOG period, the exam has been made quite difficult in the current system. This created a handicap especially for students in transition period. In general terms, I think that the current exams are more decisive compared to the past.”* Similarly, after saying that the non-distinctive exams cause some students to feel alienated from the lessons and, in a broader sense, to decrease their motivation, E6 continues his statement as follows: *“The distinctiveness of the exam, especially from the mathematics course, alienates middle-level students from mathematics. It should be distinctive from each course.”*

Opinions of School Administrators about the Address-Based Registration System

In order to determine the opinions of the school administrators who participated in the interview about the Address-Based Registration System, the question of “*What are your thoughts on the Address-Based Registration system?*” was asked and the answers were given in the following Table 5.

Table 4. Table showing administrator answers about the Address-Based Registration System

Answers	f
Placement is unfair.	E2, K3, E4, E5, E7, K9
There is inequality in the distribution of school types.	E1, E10
Placement results are inconsistent.	E4, K9
There are difficulties encountered in practice.	E1, E10
Teachers’ grading differences cause inequality.	E6, E8

When the data in Table 5 are examined, it is seen that the school administrators focused on the answer that the “Address-Based Registration System is an unfair practice” ($n=6$). On this matter, E3 and E4 stated the following views with similar expressions: “*Although it is a structure that does not make much sense, perhaps it is a system that is intended to offer goodwill and equal opportunity among students, its results show that it is not. On the one hand, it is contradictory to give the right to enroll in secondary education institutions, based on their addresses, to students who are told that they did not pass the exam, while ranking the students for qualified schools, which is a flawed statement in my opinion. Although it is not a qualified (!) school, these schools are ranked among themselves by students, parents, teachers and administrators. In other words, the search for a better school shows itself here as well, and even though it is called address-based registration, this rule is broken by many unethical ways. In summary, not only the students living in the registration area but also the children of families with influence and economic opportunities attend our schools, which are said to receive registration based on address. The last word on this subject is; that’s not scoring!*” K9, on the other hand, stated that “*I do not think it is a placement fair in unqualified address-based schools, since each school’s exam and even each teacher’s grading style is different.*”

Two administrators stated that the distribution of school types is not equal in every province. E1 expressed his opinion on this subject as follows: “*It seems logical when we think about families and students, but what about the type of school in the place of residence and the quality of the school? Is there every type of school in every neighborhood or in the middle of several neighborhoods? Of course there isn’t. In some neighborhoods, there is no school at all, let alone any type of school, and existing schools can be very far away. The system looks nice, but its applicability is questionable. On this issue, I think that it would be more appropriate if a few neighborhoods, such as universities, are determined and an education campus is built in their middle areas.*”

Besides, two administrators stated that the placement results were not consistent. Regarding this issue, K4 stated that “*There are students who do not appear in the system due to the absence or insufficient number of schools in the slums, gradually fading and disappearing. I think the ministry needs to deal with this situation urgently. We had to get used to a different system where the deserving could not go and the undeserving settled. We lived in a time when it was not clear what is what, and even things got worse. Things can get*

even more complicated in the Covid epidemic. Chaos like this one and getting things more complicated is worrying for student motivation.”

Suggestions of School Administrators about the Transition System

In order to determine the thoughts of the school administrators who participated in the interview about the transition system to secondary education, the question of “Do you have any suggestions for creating a better transition system? Please specify, if any.” was asked and the answers were given in Table 6.

Table 5. Opinions of administrators about creating a better transition system

Answers	f
The transition system needs to be made consistent.	E1, K3, E5, E7, E10
Physical improvements should be made.	E1, K3, E6, E8
The number of qualified schools should be increased.	E4, E6
The quality discrimination in schools should be ended.	E7, K9
Curriculum and material improvements are needed.	E2

It is clearly seen when Table 6 is examined that, first of all, administrators made suggestions that the transition system should be made consistent (n=5). In this regard, E1 said, “A contemporary and objective examination system should be planned and no head-turning changes should be made”, while E3 stated that “Now our transition system should be consistent and give confidence to everyone.”

There are administrators who stated that physical improvements should be made (n=4). In this respect, E3 and E6, who used similar expressions to each other, put forward the following suggestion: “The physical conditions of the schools should be improved, great attention should be paid to the accessibility of schools, and it should not be forgotten that although it is advantageous to build the schools outside the province/district, it brings a burden to the parents in transportation.” Unlike these views, E8 expressed the following opinion: “Expecting for systems that have been successful in other countries to be implemented and worked in our country results in the waste of our material and moral wealth. I think that a system suitable for the realities of our country put into practice and then should not be changed any more. Every government that takes office should not be able to shape our education policy according to their own will. It’s not about anything else, it’s about education! Even if minor changes are made with the changing conditions and technology, we should have an education policy that is basically solid. I see the constant change of exam systems as making fun of students and parents, as an attitude of “it didn’t work, let’s try this, this didn’t work, let’s try this way.”

Moreover, the administrators offer two different suggestions about the concept of qualified school. On this matter, for instance, E6 made the following suggestion: “The determination of high schools for address-based enrollment should not be based on distance in kilometer, the transportation network should be prioritized, and science high school and qualified high school exams should be separated. Provinces should be divided into regions and the number of qualified high schools should be increased on a regional basis.”

By stating that “I think all schools in the country should achieve equality, rather than dividing them into qualified and unqualified schools”, E7 tried to express that the word

“*Qualified*” separates schools and instead the physical conditions of all schools in the country should be improved equally.

According to E2, the curriculum improvement to be realized would make the system better. He thus indicated that “*In addition to the textbooks, the question bank should be distributed free of charge to the students for solving questions. Besides, instead of giving optional courses, exam preparation courses should be offered by increasing the weekly course hours for the classes preparing for the exam, and these courses should not be optional.*”

Results and Discussion

When the findings obtained from the interviews with the school administrators are examined, it is seen that the administrators do not have optimistic thoughts about the current transition system to secondary education. They examined and criticized the existing system from many aspects based on their own points of view. Only one of the interviewed administrators expressed a positive opinion about the system. Demirbilek & Levent (2019) pointed out in their research that school administrators have a negative view of the system due to some downsides.

The fact that the administrators are not in favor of the changes leads to problems in practice (Aksoy & Arık, 2017). Argon & Soysal (2012); Karadeniz, Er & Tangülü (2014); Coşkun, Çelik and Gür (2013); and Şinik Biba (2010) identified that students experience feelings of failure, hopelessness and insecurity about the future during the transition to secondary education.

According to the school administrators participating in the study, sudden and unplanned system changes affect the transition process negatively, push the students, parents and teachers into a hopeless perspective and lose their confidence in the system. The fact that the stakeholders are not involved in the process of change in the system and that they are not informed enough about the changes is another situation that negatively affects the process. Changing the systems created in short periods of time, without adequate observation, without knowing exactly how the effect will be on the students in the future, is also unfavorably received by the members of the society (Şahin, 2014). It is the future of society that is most affected by these changes. It is necessary to be very careful in the changes to be made and to make great considerations before any change (Çoban & Dinç, 2014). All of the interviewed administrators stated that the constant change in the system reduces the motivation of the students and their parents are very uncomfortable with these changes. Demirbilek & Levent (2019) revealed similar results to our study and found that the changes made in the examination system undesirably affects the motivation of the students. Akbaba (2006) underlined that motivation directly affects student achievement. They also stated that these changes had a negative impact on the image of the Ministry, teaching curricula and textbooks. The concept of change, by its nature, disrupts the balance, and after each change, it becomes difficult to recover the disrupted balance (Çolakoğlu, 2005). The changes made cause uncertainty on course topics and put pressure on students (Özen & Özenç, 2017). Aksoy & Arık (2017) stated that not taking the opinions of the relevant people while making a system change causes the change not to be supported by the parents and students and causes problems during the implementation. In their study on high school students, Karataş ve Özkan (2016) discovered among the same high school students that 9th grade students entered high school with TEOG, 10th grade students with one-stage SBS, and 11th and 12th grade students with three-stage SBS. This study is a striking example of how frequently the system changes in our country.

The school administrators who expressed negative opinions about the concept of “qualified” high school stated that high schools are not equal in terms of facilities and technology. The fact that the “Quality” title added to names of some educational institutions creates a perception of “quality” was negatively considered by the school administrators participating in the interview. Removing the title of “quality” from the names of schools will help eliminate this negative perception. The administrators do not support the separation of schools as qualified and unqualified, and they state that the Ministry personnel who cannot work in qualified schools are devalued by the Ministry itself. As a suggestion, they state that the qualifications of all educational institutions in the country should be brought to an equal level and that this distinction between qualified schools should be eliminated as soon as possible. They think that if this proposal consists of such a difficult process that it cannot be realized, qualified schools in cities should be distributed equally to the regions. There are some studies that find the distinction between qualified and unqualified schools irrelevant (Coşkun, Çelik & Gür 2013; Demir & Yılmaz, 2019; Zayimoğlu 2014). Additionally, Çakioğlu (2019) indicated that the participants perceive the naming of qualified schools negatively because it creates a perception of quality and poor quality.

It seems that the “Make-up Exam” practice, which was applied while the TEOG system was in effect and was quite right thing to do, remained specific to that exam only. However, it is quite normal for a student to have a misfortune before the exam. According to views of the administrators who participated in the research, the Make-Up Exam should start to be applied again. In a study, students’ taking the TEOG exam in their own schools, the spread of the exam in two semesters, and the administration of a make-up exam reduce the exam stress and anxiety of the students (Şad & Şahiner, 2016). The school administrators participating in the research stated that it is a good thing for the students to go to a school in their place of residence, but that the quality of the schools changes according to each location which makes some students suffer. Based on the statements of the interviewees, it is seen that the most liked system was TEOG. Yet, Atila ve Özekin (2015) stated in their research that TEOG creates future anxiety for students and causes financial difficulties. According to the study of Zayimoğlu (2014) and Diken (2018) a decrease in the number of exams increases anxiety and stress in students, while an increase in the number of exams reduces anxiety and stress. Based on the findings obtained from the study, Supplementary and Preparation Courses are considered helpful in the transition to secondary education. These courses increase the motivation of the students and affect their performance in a positive way in general.

The school administrators participating in the study mentioned that the large number of classrooms in schools had a negative impact on the exams. A person’s right to education is a requirement of being human and is among the basic duties of the state. The ratio of the young population in the countries to the total population directly affects the quality of educational services provided to them (Boobekova & Erman, 2016). Therefore, it is normal for countries with a high young population to have low quality of education and to experience educational problems (Karakütük, 1998). However, it is a fact that Japan has achieved success in education despite its young population (Ekinci, 2010). The fact that the population growth rate in Turkey tends to decrease is an essential issue to consider when planning the transition systems to be made in the coming years (Telatar & Terzi, 2010).

Implications

In this study, some implications were made for a more efficient a transition system, in which the views of the school administrators on the transition system to secondary education were examined:

- The changes to be made in the systems should not be implemented suddenly without in-depth analysis and research, and the change should be created as a result of long-term planning.
- Exam pressure and stress experienced by students should be reduced with more than one exam and midterm assessments instead of administering a single exam.
- Qualified/unqualified denominations that create the perception of hierarchical structuring in schools should be removed from school names.
- Studies should be carried out to remove the inconsistency between the curricula of educational institutions and the central exam.
- For the sake of equality of opportunity in education, the resources required for the exam should be distributed free of charge to students in disadvantaged regions.

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