The View of Teachers on Child Delinquency in the TRNC
Kyrenia Sample

Ulku Beyoglu a*, Aysem Tombak b

a Teacher, OsmanTuray Nursery School, Ozankoy –TRNC
b Assistant Headmaster, Karaoglanoglu Primary School-TRNC

Abstract

The view of teachers, working in secondary education in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, on child delinquency is examined in this study. A questionnaire of 9 questions was applied to teachers working in junior high and high schools in the Kyrenia district. The questionnaire form contains a definition of child, causes of delinquency, ways of preventing it, types of delinquency that educators encounter around themselves and questions on trial and punishment. Some questions could be given more than one answer (for example the three most important ones). Laws have defined the conclusion of childhood in different ways. While the Constitution of the TRNC does not accept any citizen as of full legal age until the completion of 18, the Child Delinquency Act of the TRNC defines a child as someone under the age of 14. According to the first article of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child by the UN, every human being is a child until the age of 18 except the situation of becoming of legal age earlier, based on the law that can be applied to the child. The child is not accepted as a bad or good creature from birth. Being a tool for socializing for the individual, education also carries out an important function in developing the type of relationship and behavioral style. It is a comparatively new consideration taking place in society that children accepted as guilty, should not be judged under the same conditions with adults, should not be sentenced to the same punishments, and should be redound to the community through education. The study was carried out with a quantitative approach and a survey was applied. The study is of importance for observing the opinions of educators towards child delinquency.

Keywords: Administration, educational administration, administrator, administrator roles

* Ulku Beyoglu. Tel.: +90-533-858-2500
E-mail address: ulku.beyoglu@yahoo.com
1. Introduction

A child is a developing human offspring, a juvenile citizen not considered of legal age. Laws have defined the conclusion of childhood in various ways. While citizens under the age of 18 are not considered of legal age according to the Constitution of the TRNC, Child Delinquency Act of the TRNC defines a child as someone under the age of 14. According to the first article of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child by the UN, every human being is a child until the age of 18 except the situation of becoming of legal age earlier, based on the law that can be applied to the child. The child is not accepted as a bad or good creature from birth. Just like all living things, children begin to change and develop from the time of birth. Every individual gets into interaction with other individuals and sets his/her route. Therefore, it can be said that education and experiences determine the child becoming good or bad. Besides being a powerful tool for the socialization of the individual, education also carries out an important function in the creation of relationships and behavioral styles. It is a comparatively new consideration taking place in society that children accepted as guilty, should not be judged under the same conditions with adults, should not be sentenced to the same punishments, and should be redound to the community through education.

2. The aim and importance of the project

This study aims to establish the opinions of teachers and administrators working at secondary schools in the TRNC, on child delinquency.

This study is important for bringing out the views of educators on child delinquency.

It is expected that the conclusions of this study will help develop the opinions of experts on the subject, and incite new researches.

3. Methodology and Applications

The universe of the research comprises teachers and headmasters, assistant headmasters working at secondary schools in the Kyrenia district of the TRNC during the 2014-2015 academic year. There are five state secondary education institutions in the Kyrenia district. Total number of teachers and administrators is 197. Complete sample was used, as the number was suitable for the research. A total of 106 teachers completed the survey. Questions related to age limit for children, causes of crimes, ways of prevention, age of trial, and punishment took place in the 9-question survey form. Multiple answers could be given to some questions (such as the most important three).

The survey was applied by the researchers with permission from the Ministry of National Education. After photocopying, the surveys were applied to the educators at the schools in the sample, and completely filled surveys were collected. The returned surveys were examined, registered in the data tables, and obtained data were analyzed with the help of the SPSS program.

Frequency, percentage, arithmetical average techniques of descriptive statistical methods were used in analyzing and evaluating the responses and data related to the personal qualities of the participating groups.

4. Findings and Interpretations

56 of the participating 106 educators are male, and 50 are female. The average age of the participating group is 37. Average experience in the profession is 13 years. As for the branch of the educators, 96 are teachers, 5 are assistant headmasters, and 5 are headmasters. Looking at the question ‘until what age should an individual be considered a child’, only 31 educators (29.2%) answered the question correctly (according to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, by the United Nations, an individual is accepted as a child until the age of 18). The distribution of answers to this question is shown in Table 1.
It is thought provoking that only 29.2% of the participating educators know that individuals are accepted as children until the age of 18, and the others (70.8%) do not know this topic thoroughly.

Asked to state the most important 3 causes pushing children to delinquency, educators stated bad circle of friends (71.7%), family members being bad models (59.4%), and broken families (66%). Distribution of answers to this question is shown in Table 2.

While it was found in a study on the subject that the anti-social effect of peer group on the child increases as the effect of the family decreases (Ulugtekin, 1991:47), the literature review by Zimring and Reiss showed that actions of crime are committed in small groups of two or three rather than individually (Ercetin, 2006:29).

When educators were asked about the effective methods for preventing children from delinquent inclinations, the three most widely chosen responses were, increasing family and society education (85.8%), children in need of protection being protected by state (53.8%), and providing compulsory, free, continuous education (50%).

Table 1. Age of Childhood.

| Valid | Frequency (f) | Percent (%) |
|-------|--------------|-------------|
| 9     | 4            | 3.8         |
| 10    | 3            | 2.8         |
| 11    | 7            | 6.6         |
| 12    | 14           | 13.2        |
| 13    | 4            | 3.8         |
| 14    | 10           | 4.9         |
| 15    | 18           | 17          |
| 16    | 7            | 6.6         |
| 17    | 6            | 5.7         |
| 18    | 31           | 29.2        |
| 19    | 1            | 9           |
| 25    | 1            | 9           |
| Total | 106          | 100         |

Table 2. Reasons for Inclining to Delinquency.

| Valid                                              | Frequency (f) | Percent (%) |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Family being broken or dispersed                    | 70           | 66          |
| Low family income                                  | 16           | 15.1        |
| Inadequate education                               | 41           | 38.7        |
| Inadequate safety measures                         | 3            | 2.8         |
| Climatic factors                                   | 0            | 0           |
| Emigration, urban sprawl, squatting                | 14           | 13.2        |
| Child having to work at an early age                | 5            | 4.7         |
| Bad circle of friends                              | 76           | 71.7        |
| Family members being bad models                    | 63           | 59.4        |
| Child being inclined to hereditary delinquency     | 10           | 9.4         |
| Deficiency of psychological and physical development| 16           | 15.1        |
Table 3. Preventing Inclination to Crime.

| Valid                                    | Frequency (f) | Percent (%) |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Child supported economically             | 20            | 18.9        |
| Children in need of protection taken into state protection | 57            | 53.8        |
| Providing compulsory, fee, continuous education | 53            | 50          |
| Increasing punishment                    | 14            | 13.2        |
| Increasing family and society education  | 91            | 85.8        |
| Preventing migration to cities           |               |             |
| School supervising the child continuously | 6             | 5.7         |
| Child going into work life at an early age | 18            | 17          |

2 1.9

On preventing delinquency, educators gave proper proposals with their responses to increasing family and society education, providing compulsory, free education, the state protecting children in need of protection.

Evaluating the responses given to the question “At what age is a child put on trial according to the laws of the TRNC?” 8.5% of the educators gave the correct answer of 16 while 91.5% answered the question wrongly. The distribution of responses to this question is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Age of Trial of Children

| Valid | Frequency (f) | Percent (%) |
|-------|---------------|-------------|
| 3     | 1             | 0.9         |
| 10-11 | 5             | 4.7         |
| 12-13 | 9             | 8.5         |
| 14-15 | 39            | 36.8        |
| 16-17 | 13            | 12.3        |
| 18    | 36            | 34          |
| 19-20 | 3             | 2.8         |
| Total | 106           | 100         |

According to the Child Criminals Law of the TRNC, after the age of 16 children are tried as adults. It is observed that educators are not adequately enlightened about the penal legal arrangements for children.

When asked about where the convicted children should serve their punishments, educators said, jail for theft (11.3%), reform center (46.2%), a camp (12.3%), given back to the family 16%), given to a foster family 5.7%). For damage to property, educators said, the child should be put in jail (6.6%), put in a reform center (35.8%), placed in a camp (11.3%), placed in a dormitory (0.9%), given back to family (20.8%), given to a foster family 8.5%). For the crime of extortion, educators said that children should be put in jail (8.5%), put in reform center (49.1%), put in a camp (16%), placed in a dormitory (0.9%), given back to the family (9.4%), given to a foster family (5.7%). For the crime of beating someone, educators stated that children should be put in jail (11.3%), put in a reform center (41.5%), put in a camp (19.8%), placed in a dormitory (0.9%), given back to the family (6.6%), and given to a foster family (3.8%). As for the crime of murder, educators said that children should be put in jail (50%), put in a reform center (35.8%), put in a camp (3.8%). According to educators, children who threatened or attacked with a knife should be put in jail (17%), put in a reform center (53.8%), put in a camp (12.3%), placed in a dormitory (1.9%), given back to the family (2.8%), given to a foster family (0.9%). For sexual crimes, educators think children should be put in jail (27.4%), put in a reform center (46.2%), put in a camp (8.5%), placed in a dormitory (2.8%), given back to the family (0.9%), given to a foster family (1.9%). For the crime of disturbing people, educators said children should be put in jail (3.8%), put in a reform center (34%), put in a camp (0.75%), placed in a dormitory
(6.6%), given back to the family (27.4%), given to a foster family (10.4%). Educators stated that for the crime of carrying a weapon, children should be put in jail (21.7%), put in a reform center (49.1%), placed in a camp (6.6%), placed in a dormitory (0.9%), given back to the family (4.7%), given to a foster family (4.7%). For drug related crimes, educators believe children should be put in prison (12.3%), put in a reform center (44.3%), put in a camp (17%), placed in a dormitory (1.9%), given back to the family (4.7%), given to a foster family (3.8%).

Educators in the TRNC stated opinion that, apart from the crime of murder, children should be sent to a reform center. However, it is thought provoking that there is no reform center in the TRNC.

When asked if “Will an individual who commits a crime in childhood continue to commit crimes in the future?”, 7 of the educators (6.6%) said ‘no’, 20 of them (18.9%) said ‘yes’, and 79 of them (74.5%) said “I don’t know”.

In truth, 75% of children who commit crimes do not become permanent criminals (Rutter). In the case of petty crimes, it will be better to place children in state controlled observation homes, or with families – by explaining the notion of foster families to the people – instead of putting them in jail or reform centers, where they will learn new, and more organized crime.

To the question of whether children should be given reduced penalties, as compared to adults, 75 educators gave the answer ‘yes’ (70.8%), 12 educators (11.3%) said “no reduction should be made”, and 15 educators (14.2%) said “I don’t know”, while 4 forms were left blank.

When asked, “What kind of service could be offered to reintegrate children to the society while they are serving their sentences?” 59 educators said “they should continue their education”, 76 educators said “they should be given psychological support”, 56 educators said “they should be channeled towards occupational fields”, and 59 educators said “they should be channeled towards sports and arts”.

As to the question “What should be done to reintegrate children to the society, after they are penalized?”, 85 educators said “they should be directed towards sports and arts, suitable to their skills”, 34 educators said “they should continue their education at another school”, 15 educators said “they should be given a job”, and 14 educators said “they should continue education at their own school”.

In conclusion, the opinion was reached that educators do not have sufficient knowledge about the legal arrangements in the field of child delinquency and rehabilitation of children who committed crimes, and that they should be instructed on the topic both during their education and in in-service trainings. It is recommended that this research is developed, presented to the TRNC authorities, and legal arrangements, education and information is provided.

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