

# **The Shadow Education System: Private Courses**

By

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study conducted in Turkey is to determine the opinions of those parents who have children in private courses with regard to these institutions. The research is a descriptive study based on the survey model. 784 parents are used as samples for the study. In the study "proportional cluster sampling" method is used. The participants of the study consist of the parents who have sent students to 54 different private courses active in Denizli, Turkey. The means of data collection has been prepared based on "The Survey of Determining Parents' Opinion of and Expectations from Private Courses". Frequency (f) and percentages (%) with regard to each sub-problem are found. The participant parents claim that private courses provide more exam techniques, that private courses will exist as long as there are exams and that private courses fill the gap left by schools. The most important expectation of parents from private courses is to get their children to enter university. Private course fees exceed the family budget of most parents. Yet, a majority of students who attend private courses are the children of families with either middle or low income. a great majority of parents seem to object to the frequently expressed idea of closing down the private courses.*

**Keywords:** *Private courses, university entrance examination, parents' opinions*

## **1. Introduction**

This paper reports a study conducted in Turkey. The fact that in Turkey the overall capacity of the higher education institutions do not increase parallel to the number of high school graduates and the demand for higher education, has forced universities to seek methods of selecting and placing students through standardised tests. Each year having hundreds of thousands of students finishing high schools has been increasing the demand for higher education (Atılım University, 2009). According to Center for Selecting and Placing Students (CSPS)'s data 1.895.479 students had applied to 2012 University Entrance Exam including undergraduate degrees, associate's degrees and Open Education Faculty, however only 865.482 of those applicants were placed in higher education programs (CSPS, 2012). The ratio between the number of students who apply to universities and who are placed keep increasing in favor of the applicants.

One reason for this increasing demand for higher education is that it is perceived as indispensable for a future with high living standards and a high level of welfare (Özoğlu, 2011). Therefore, competition among students keep on increasing day by day. In order to make the most profit out of this competition, both parents and students who are worried that the education provided in schools would not be sufficient, feel obliged to search for different methods. One of the preferred solutions to this problem is "private courses".

Bray (1999) also coined the word "shadow education" for the private courses since it develops parallel to the mainstream education but with different characteristics. "Shadow education" is a widely-used term that covers various forms of private courses. In recent decades shadow education has greatly expanded, and it has far-reaching economic, social and educational implications (European Commission, 2011).

### ***The Education System in Turkey***

Administrative legislation and inspection of formal and informal education system (except for higher education) are conducted by Ministry of National Education [MoNE] in Turkey. In both central and regional (local or provincial) level, the educational activities are carried out by provincial/local directorates of MoNE in accordance to the authority and responsibility levels given by national education legislation (Ozmusul, 2012).

The educational system is divided into two main sections as non-formal education and formal education. Non-formal education is organized educational activity outside formal systems. Non-formal education is the life-long process in which people learn from everyday experience, informal covers interactions with friends, family, work colleagues, etc. Formal education is linked with schools and training institutions.

The education system in Turkey consists of basic education, secondary education and tertiary education. Until 2012 basic education of eight years was the only compulsory level. In 2012 it was combined with primary schooling (4 years), middle schooling (4 years) and high schooling (4 years) and the total of 12 years became compulsory and called basic education. Secondary education consisting of general and vocational and technical high schools (Güzel and Coşkun, 2013).

Universities take 2-6 years depending on the program of study. Although state is the major provider, there are a number of private providers at all of the three levels of education. In view of the excess demand for the tertiary level education, government has been increasing the number of universities. As of 2013, there were 102 state universities and 52 private universities in Turkey (Council of Higher Education [CHE], 2013).

There are two national examinations in Turkey which determine who will advance to the upper levels of schooling? The first examination is called OKS (Secondary School Examination) in short. The second national examination is called OSS (Student Selection Examination) in short and determines the advancement to universities (Tansel, and Bircan, 2007). Private courses have significant impact on high school education. Sure, people who directly feel positive or negative reflections of this impact are high school teachers (Baştürk and Doğan, 2010).

### ***Private Courses***

Private courses are not institutions peculiar to Turkey. They also operate quite widely in countries such as Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Greece where there are competition-based exam systems in transition between different levels of education and entrance to universities is based on standardised exams. Recently, private lessons and courses have begun to spread in European and North American countries as well (Baştürk and Doğan, 2010; Doğan, 2002; Özoğlu, 2011).

Private courses in Turkey is provided by the private tutoring centers which are school-like organizations operating for profit. Professional teachers teach in a class room setting. These centers are called “dersane” in Turkish. It is called as “private courses”, “private tutoring”, “cramming school” “cursinhos” “buxiban” etc. in another countries. This is the most prevalent form of private tutoring with such centers being located all over the country. Although, they provide supplementary courses, to the mainstream school subjects of the elementary and secondary schools their main activity centers on examination oriented courses. Such examination oriented courses for the national examination for entry to the “special” high schools and for the national examination for entry to the universities (Baştürk and Doğan, 2010; Tansel, and Bircan, 2007). Private courses are supervised by education supervision in Turkey (Unal, 2012)

The purpose of the private courses in Turkey is defined as educating the students on the lessons they wish to succeed in and improving their level of knowledge, preparing them for the entrance exams of the next level educational institution, preparing them for the exams conducted either by public or private institutions, encouraging them to do research and analyses, and specialising in accordance with their

interests and abilities in order to make progress in particular fields (MoNE, 2000). These private courses which operate in line with this purpose has become educational institutions that the students and parents “anxious about the future” are greatly interested in today (Demirtaş, 2010). As a consequence of such great demand, both the number of private courses and their students continue to increase every day.

Especially beginning from the early 1980s, the private sector in Turkey is strong and rapidly growing (Tarman and Yiğit, 2013). This growth is also affected private courses. According to a report by The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey [TUCCE] (2012), the number of private courses which was 730 in 2.000 went up to 4.056 in 2011 with an increase of % 134, and the number of students went from 488.284 up to 1.234.738 with an % 153 increase (TUCCE 2012).

### ***Why Private Courses?***

Sending children to private courses is a prevailing fashion in Taiwan. The reasons that Sun (1993) proposed were: (a) Parents do not have time to take care of their children, (b) parents hope that their children will have high academic achievement in school, and (c) parents are not satisfied with public school education. Sun (1993) pointed out that parents send their children to private courses because they have high expectations for their children’s future.

Özoğlu (2011) relates the inclination of the students and parents in Turkey towards private courses to *the entrance exams between different levels of education, the defects of the educational system and to social factors*.

Considering the entrance exams, the fact that the university entrance exam is far from being selective-evaluative but is rather an elective and competitive exam, increases competition between students, and this competition increases the need for private courses. In Turkey both the students and their parents perceive private courses as the key to success. There is a widespread belief that it is next to impossible to succeed either in the exams or at school without attending private courses (Dağlı, 2006; Turkish Education Association [TEA], 2005b).

Another issue that increases the tendency towards private courses is the defects of the educational system. In Turkey there is an ever-increasing rate of secondary schooling. This increases the demand for higher education as well. The fact that in higher education the supply cannot meet the demand, intensifies the importance attached to the university entrance exam. Furthermore, the hierarchical ordering of the universities and departments in terms of quality and the higher employment, social status and income possibilities of particular occupations cause competition among the universities, faculties and even departments of choice. Significant differences between the quality and number of teachers, the class size, the physical infrastructure etc in different regions, cities and even residential areas in cities are other factors that lead the students and parents towards private courses (Dağlı, 2006; Özoğlu, 2011; TEA, 2005b).

Other issues that explain the inclination towards private courses are social and cultural factors (Özoğlu, 2011). In each society education is considered a way of attaining a certain status. The evaluation of a person’s status depends on how much and what kind of an education he/she has got. As the educational level of a person increases, a rise in not only his/her income but also his/her social status can be perceived. Respect for education is the same for everybody regardless of their social class. Even parents with low income and education insist on sending their children to universities because education not only provides income and occupational prestige, but it is a means of status on its own. “An educated person” has a role of his/her own. Among its other benefits, the rise in status that higher education provides has an important part in the huge demand on higher education in Turkey (Tezcan, 1985). The view that university education is necessary to gain social status besides acquiring a profession to live a humane life increases the meaning attached to the university exams. The dream of success in the exams brings together the interest in private courses.

### ***Opinions Regarding Private Courses***

One of the most controversial issues with regard to private courses is whether they cause inequality of opportunity in education. There are various opinions on this subject. For example, TUCCE Educational Council, claiming that private courses eliminate equality, express the following opinion: The need for private lessons cannot be decreased or eliminated through precautions. Parents' search for extra help shouldn't be found odd but should be supported. Private courses are the only alternative that the people with middle or low income who cannot afford private schools or private tutors have. There are students from rural Turkey who had attended private courses and were accepted into the best schools. For this reason, in the absence of private courses low and middle-income citizens would have to hire private tutors in order to place their children in good schools, and that would be even more costly for them (memurdan.net, 2012).

On the other hand, those who are against private courses are of the opinion that every kind of private education is more easily accessible for rich families from high socio-economic classes and that private courses have a negative effect on equality of opportunity (Baloğlu, 1995). Moreover it is indicated that since private courses mostly operate in big cities or counties and since students from rural areas cannot benefit from these institutions, an inequality of opportunity occurs (Özoğlu, 2011). It is claimed that private courses, private lessons and inequalities between public high schools help raise generations that would preserve the existing order based on inequality, rather than generations who would be useful for the development of the country (Keskin and Demirci, 2003).

In addition to the positive opinions on private courses, the negative influence of this sector on the educational system is also frequently expressed. For example, it is claimed that private courses are rather commercial, they make a lot of profit, they transfer good teachers from public schools and that they put the schools which require attendance in a difficult position. Furthermore, they are criticised for providing instruction but not education and for becoming almost an alternative to basic education by growing gradually in the gap that has been left by the state (Ankara Chamber of Commerce [ACC], 2004; Atılım University, 2009; Baştürk and Doğan, 2010). It is also emphasised as the negativities caused by private courses that students have a busy tempo starting from very early ages and that this situation keeps the students and parents away from social activities and occasions (Baloğlu, 1995; Öncü, 2010; TEA, 2005). In Turkey considering the budget that the parents reserve for education, it is another matter of criticism that a significant amount of the money goes to private courses, and educational expenses per person increases to the same extent (World Bank, 2005). Assuming that the parents pay 650 € to the private courses per student, it can be seen that the amount paid by parents to all the private courses in Turkey is approximately 782.600.000 € per year. The exam preparation publications of private courses on the other hand create a market of approximately 217.400.000 € (Kara, 2012). This makes the burden heavier. Some parents suffer a lot financially just to send their children to university (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2008). People who are imprisoned for not paying the private course's bills and children who commit suicide because of that (Güçlü, 2010) are the indicators of how deep an influence private courses have on society.

The scale of shadow education in the EU may be indicated by some figures: In Austria, an estimated 20% of parents pay for supplementary tutoring for their children. In Lithuania, 62% of university students surveyed had received private courses in their last year of secondary school. In Slovakia, 56% of students in a parallel survey indicated that they had received private courses. In Portugal, 55% of candidates for the national university entrance examinations had received tutoring in Grades 10 to 12. In the United Kingdom, approximately 12% of primary school pupils and 8% of secondary pupils are receiving tutoring. In France, the sector was estimated in 2007 to be worth approximately €2,210 million. In Germany, tutoring was indicated in 2010 to consume between €942 and €1,468 million. In Greece, tutoring was estimated in 2008 to consume €952.6 million (European Commission, 2011).

Since they have begun to spread in the mid 1960s in Turkey (Duman, 1984) private courses have become one of the most debated institutions of our educational system in relation to issues such as their place in the educational system, their significance and function. Those debated issues are also worth researching. Thus it is possible to come across various studies related to private courses in Turkey. These studies touch upon various issues such as the effects of private courses on the students' success in admission to universities (Morgil, Yılmaz and Geban, 2001), the contribution of pilot tests in private courses to the students' success (Morgil, Yılmaz, Seçken and Erökten, 2000; Özgüven 1977), the comparison of the general objectives of private courses and Turkish educational system (Büyükbaş, 1997), parents' opinions of and expectations from private courses (Dağlı, 2006), students' opinions of private courses (Cenk, 2005), the organisational attachment and occupational fulfillment of the private course teachers (Demirtaş, 2010), the functions of private courses (Duman, 1984), their place in the Turkish educational system (Doğan, 2002), the relations between university entrance exams and private courses (Ortaş, 2006), the contribution of private courses on geography (Turan and Alaz, 2007), mathematics (Umay, 2000), biology (Yeşilyurt, 2008) education. Further, there are studies which focus on private courses from different perspectives (Atılım University 2009; ACC 2004; Gök, 2006).

It is possible to come across various studies related to private courses. Chen (1978) and Wu (1978) are early investigators on this topic. They were followed more recently by Wang (1983), Stevenson and Baker (1992), Huang (1993), Wu (1993), Bray (1999, 2003, 2006), Bray and Kwok (2003), Silova and Bray (2006). Hsieh (2001) was research the effect of private courses on students' mathematics achievement. Chen (2002) and Bray (2007) also coined the word "shadow education" for the supplementary private courses since it develops parallel to the mainstream education but with different characteristics.

Debates on private courses continue today as they did in the past. The current agenda is to close down the private courses and turn these institutions into private schools via incentives. As Özoğlu indicates (2011), private courses are institutions which grow every year and currently educate millions of students. In our country the inclination of students and parents towards these institutions depends on rather complex and interrelated factors. Today, in order to have wholesome debates on private courses which are ongoing today and which come up again in each exam period, first and foremost the reasons behind the demand for private courses and then the social, pedagogical and economic effects of these institutions should be scrutinized.

### ***The Goal of the Study***

In this work, unlike in other works, private schools are discussed from the point of view of the parents. It is expected that the results of this work will help private courses evaluate themselves, will contribute to the debate of closing, keeping open or restructuring these institutions and will help the state question the place of not only its own schools but also private courses in the educational system. The purpose of this study is to determine the opinions of those parents who have children in private courses with regard to these institutions. To this end the study attempts to find answers to the following questions:

- The socio-economical and socio-cultural status of the parents in Turkey,
- The opinions of the parents on private courses,
- The parents' expectations from private courses,
- Their reasons for sending their children to these private courses

## **2. Method**

The research is a descriptive study based on the survey model. Survey models are approaches that aim at describing either a past or an ongoing situation as they exist. The event, individual or object subject to the study is defined within its own circumstances and as it is (Karasar, 2002). If the purpose of a study is to make descriptions related to many objects or people, the survey model is considered the most suitable model (Balci, 1995).

### ***Participants***

The participants of the study consist of the parents who have sent students to 54 different private courses (MoNE 2010) active in Denizli, Turkey in 2010-2011 academic year. Private courses in Turkey are divided into two groups as mass and group private courses. In mass private courses there are classes of 20-25 students or more, while in group private courses lessons are carried out in small groups of 3-5 students. Therefore the course fees vary. Group private courses enroll students for 4-5 times more fees than mass private courses. The subject of this study is the mass private courses.

In the study “proportional cluster sampling” method is used. Each of the six private courses chosen without prejudice among mass courses is considered a cluster and samples of similar proportions are gathered from each private course. As a result, 784 parents are used as samples for the study.

### ***Data collection***

The means of data collection has been prepared based on “The Survey of Determining Parents’ Opinion of and Expectations from Private Courses” developed by Dağlı (2006). The scale is divided into four parts. In the first part there are questions related to “Personal Information”. In the second part the questions are related to “The Parents’ Opinions of Private Courses”, in the third part to “The Parents’ Expectations from Private Courses”, in the fourth part to “The Reasons Parents Send Their Children to Private Courses”. The accepted reliability coefficient is calculated as .89 and thus the scale has been found extremely reliable, since having a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered an indicator of the scale’s reliability (Büyüköztürk, 2002; Gorsuch, 1983).

### ***Data analysis***

In data analysis SPSS 16.0 program is used. Frequency (f) and percentages (%) with regard to each sub-problem are found. Comments and suggestions are made in the light of the obtained data.

## **3. Findings and Comments**

### ***Personal Information***

Among the parents who participated 45,7 % are the fathers, 45,9 % are the mothers, and 8.4 % are the other relations (e.g. brother, sister, uncle) (Table 1). The fact that the percentage of the mothers and fathers who have filled the questionnaires are close, may indicate that everyone has an equal say in the family. In a similar study conducted by Dağlı (2006) 61 % of the questionnaires are filled by the fathers and 28 % by the mothers. The researcher’s comment on this result is that “there isn’t a democratic family structure and the patriarchal family structure dominates on the level of decision-making.”

**Table 1. The Parents’ Relation to Students**

Relation to Student	f	%
Father	358	45,7
Mother	360	45,9
Other	66	8,4
TOTAL	784	100

It is observed that most of the students who are sent to private courses are male (56 %) (Table 2). In Dağlı’s study (2006) too, most of the students who attend private courses are male (60 %). It may be assumed that the cause of this result is that parents are more persistent and supportive in their sons’ education, but that girls cannot get the same support from their families after a few failures, thus their parents don’t continue sending them to private courses. Therefore it can be said that students who continue private courses are mostly male, some of the female students do not continue their secondary education after primary school and consequently the effect of a male-dominated society is observed here as well.

In the MoNE (2010) data as well it is seen that the ratio of female and male students in primary education is not very different, however in secondary education the rate of male students are significantly high. It is possible that compulsory primary education may have prevented the gender difference to the male students' advantage. However, it is observed that as of today, since secondary education is not compulsory, male students have a higher rate of schooling. Thus the right to education which is mostly given to male students is the same for private courses as it is for schools. Male students are given the right to education by their parents more than the female students.

**Table 2. The Gender of the Students**

Gender of Student	f	%
Female	342	43,6
Male	442	56,4
TOTAL	784	100

Most of the students attending private courses (42 %) are students who attend public high schools (Table 3). It can also be seen in the research of Dağlı (2006) and ACC (2004) that students who attend private courses are usually public high school students. The fact that public high school students have lower academic success rates compared to the students of Private High Schools, High Schools of Science or Anatolian High Schools, has increased their demand for private courses; furthermore, the higher rate of schooling in public high schools may also be effective on that.

**Table 3. The Type of School Parents' Children Attend**

Type of School	f	%
Public High School	328	41,8
Private High School	24	3,1
High School of Science	20	2,6
Vocational High School	198	25,3
Anatolian High School	214	27,3
TOTAL	784	100

It is observed that nearly half of the participant students' mothers (45 %) and 28 % of their fathers only got primary education; 14 % of the mothers and 28 % of the fathers are university graduates. There is a similar finding in Dağlı's (2006) research. Nearly half of the mothers who participated in that research are either literate or got primary education (41 %), 37 % of the fathers are either literate or got primary education, and 21 % are university graduates. The education level of the mothers of students attending private courses are lower than the education level of their fathers. In other words, of the mothers the number of those who received higher education is one half of the fathers' (Table 4). As of 2008-2009 academic year, the gender gap in higher education is 6.7 %. Although gender ratio has increased from 0,71 to 0,81 in the last decade, the gender difference to the disadvantage of females still continues and it is extremely high (Kavak, 2010).

**Table 4. The Education Level of the Parents**

Education Level	Mother's Education		Father's Education	
	f	%	f	%
Illiterate	20	2,6	4	0,5
Primary School	352	44,9	186	23,7
Secondary School	134	17,1	156	19,9
High School	166	21,2	216	27,6
University	112	14,3	222	28,3
TOTAL	784	100	784	100

It is observed that among the families of the students included in the study mostly the fathers work (70 %) (Table 5). Very few number of working mothers may be a result of the fact that their spouses do not want them to work. Another possibility may be that the higher education level of the fathers makes it easier for them to find jobs, and the lower educational level of the mothers decreases their chances to work.

**Table 5. The Employment Status of the Parents**

Employment Status of the Parents	f	%
Both employed	176	22,4
Only the father is employed	548	69,9
Only the mother is employed	28	3,6
Both unemployed	32	4,1
TOTAL	784	100

When the average monthly income of the parents whose children attend private courses is taken into consideration, it has been determined that more than half of them (67 %) have an income below 650 € (Table 6). The result is not very different in the studies of Temel (2002), Dađlı (2006), Tansel and Bircan (2006). These studies indicate that most of the students who attend private courses are the children of either middle or low-income families. Regarding the fact that for 2010 February, when this study was conducted, the hunger threshold for a family of 4 was 396 € and the poverty threshold was 1.053 € (Memur-Sen 2010); it can be observed that the income of these families are below the hunger and even poverty threshold.

In Table 6 parents with less than 217 € monthly income can be seen (5 %). The question how these people send their children to private courses may come to mind. It might be possible to answer that question as follows: All private schools are legally obliged to educate at least 5 % of their students for free. The students of these parents may be the ones benefiting from the 5 % quota of the private courses. It should be emphasized that those attending private courses are the children of families with lower income. One reason for low-income families to send their children to private courses may be that they have no other choice than giving their children an education. As Dađlı (2006) also suggests, today universities are considered employment centers.

The fewer number of students with high-income families in the participant private courses may be caused by the following: These parents might be sending their children to private schools or providing them academic support by hiring private tutors. Another reason may be that these students are sent to group private courses which require higher fees and which are not included in this study.

**Table 6. Average Monthly Income of The Family**

Family's Monthly Income (Turkish Lira [TL] / Euro [€])	f	%
Less than 500 TL (217 €)	40	5,1
500-1000 TL (217-435 €)	310	39,5
1001-1500 TL (435-650 €)	178	22,7
1501 TL (650 €) and higher	256	32,7
TOTAL	784	100

When the opinions of the participants are considered, more than half of the parents (56 %) indicate that it is partially difficult for them to afford the course fees, and 24 % indicate that their budget is affected to a great extent. Those who indicate that their budget is not affected are a minority (21 %) (Table 7). The fact that the financial status of the families are not very good can be seen in the responses indicated in Table 6. Therefore it is natural for the budgets to be shaken. Apparently, families make serious sacrifices of their own living standards in order to have their children placed in universities (Dađlı, 2006). They do not want to deprive their children from this right so that they can have a better future.

**Table 7. The Effect of Course Fees on the Budget**

Effect of Course Fees on the Budget	f	%
Serious	186	23,7
Partial	436	55,6
No effect	162	20,7
TOTAL	784	100

Nearly half of the families of participant students (49,2 %) have one children in a private course. However it is seen that those who send 3 or more children to private courses are not many (9,3 %) (Table 8). It can also be seen in Dağlı's (2006) study that those who send one child to a private course are more in number (69 %). It has already been established in the light of previous data that the financial situation of the participant families were not very good. It may be for this reason that families give this chance to the more successful children or to their sons. This may also be the reason that the number of those who send one child to a private course is higher.

**Table 8. Total Number of Children Attending or Attended Private Courses**

Number of Children	f	%
1	386	49,2
2	324	41,3
3 or more	74	9,4
TOTAL	784	100

It has been determined that most of the students who attend private courses (70 %) are juniors or seniors in high school. It is observed that the freshman and the sophomores, and high school graduates attending private courses are lower in number (Table 9). During their transition period from primary to secondary school, the exams they study to enter a good secondary institution and the stressful situation they get in while preparing for these exams are overwhelming for the students. Therefore, the freshman and the sophomores may wish to have a rest after these exams and postpone preparations for a new exam. As another reason, the parents might be worried about decreasing their children's motivation by sending them to private courses for 4 years of their secondary education. High school graduates, on the other hand, when they fail after attending private courses for a while, might be choosing to prepare on their own without attending any course.

**Table 9. Grade of the Child Attending Private Course**

Grade	f	%
Freshman	44	5,6
Sophomore	94	12,0
Junior	224	28,5
Senior	322	41,1
Graduate	100	12,8
TOTAL	784	100

It is observed that more than half of the participant students (52,3 %) attend private courses for a year. ¼ of the rest attend for 2 years, and approximately 23 % attend private courses for 3 years or more (Table 10). As seen in the previous table, most of the attending students are seniors. Therefore, most of the students attending private courses for a year may consist of senior students.

**Table 10. The Duration of the Child's Attendance to Private Courses**

Duration of Attendance	f	%
1 year	410	52,3
2 years	196	25,0
3 years or more	178	22,7
TOTAL	784	100

It is observed that during this problem-solving process, when choosing the private course for the student to attend, the family makes the decision together with the child (78 %) (Table 11). This is a pleasing situation because including the children in the decision-making process of the family helps the children gain self-respect, become responsible and active citizens and individuals who communicate well, respect the rights of others, make and apply collective decisions for the society's benefit. Furthermore, this outcome indicates the improvement of democracy within the family.

**Table 11. Who Makes the Choice of Private Courses**

Choice of Private Course	f	%
Family and child together	612	78,1
Family alone (parents)	108	13,8
Child alone	64	8,2
TOTAL	784	100

### ***The Parents' Opinions of Private Courses***

Almost 67 % of the parents included in the study claim that private courses provide more exam techniques, more than half of them (58 %) claim that as long as exams exist private courses will exist, and that private courses fill the gap left by schools (56 %). Almost all the participants (89 %), on the other hand, oppose the view that "schools should be closed since students attend private courses as much as they attend schools." 78 % of the parents do not see private courses as an alternative to schools and a great majority of parents (82 %) seem to object to the frequently expressed idea of closing down the private courses (Table 12).

Other studies (Büyükbaş, 1997; Cenk, 2005; Dağlı, 2006; Baştürk ve Doğan, 2010) come to the conclusion that private courses rather teach exam techniques. Furthermore, in Dağlı's (2006) study nearly all of the parents indicate that private courses fill the gap left by schools and 77 % indicate that private courses will exist as long as there are exams. It can be understood, therefore, that the parents in either study do not have very different opinions on these issues. The conclusion of the research conducted by TEA (2005a) seems to support the present study. The students, parents and teachers who participated in that research indicate that attending private courses is absolutely necessary to succeed in the university exams; further, that school managers encourage students to attend private courses.

According to the questions that are answered, parents consider the function of schools and private courses as completely different. Private schools are seen as institutions that prepare the students for the exams and support the schools, whereas schools are institutions where the foundation of education is established and whose significance cannot be overlooked. Parents thus accept the schools as institutions which fulfil certain important needs of their children. Similarly, managers of private courses suggest that the function of these courses is not to replace schools but to complement them (Özdebir, 2000). It is understood that they have similar opinions as the parents on this issue.

**Table 12. Parents' Opinions on Private Courses**

Opinions	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
1. Private courses rather provide exam techniques.	524	66,8	260	33,2
2. As long as there are exams, there will be private courses.	454	57,9	330	42,1
3. Private courses fill the gap left by schools.	440	56,1	344	43,9
4. Private courses can't be closed down, they are a part of the educational system.	346	44,1	438	55,9
5. Private courses are more successful at helping students pass their exams.	326	41,6	458	58,4
6. Private courses are an alternative to schools.	172	21,9	612	78,1
7. Private courses should be closed down.	142	18,1	642	81,9
8. Schools should be closed down since students attend private courses as much as they attend school.	90	11,5	694	88,5

***The Parents' Expectations from Private Courses***

When the parents' expectations from a private course are considered, the most important expectation they have is that it should "help the children enter university" (71 %). Moreover, they expect a private course to "help the children acquire productive studying habits" (68 %) and to "help the children with their schoolwork" (65 %). It is understood that a majority does not expect a private course to "improve the children's abilities" (69 %) or to "value communication with the parents" (61 %) (Table 13). What they are most concerned with is to have their children enter a university.

As established also in the research of TEA (2005b), the perception that "success in life is not possible without university education" is rooted in society. Furthermore, it is seen as a necessity to have higher education in order for the children to gain a status in society (Cenk, 2005). Parents, by sending their children to university, in a sense, wish to guarantee their future. All those reasons may have led the parents to choose the "help the children enter university" item as their expectation from a private course.

**Table 13. Parents' Expectations from Private Courses**

Expectations	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
1. To help the children enter university	576	70,9	228	29,1
2. To help the children acquire productive studying habits	536	68,4	248	31,6
3. To help the children with their schoolwork	506	64,5	278	35,5
4. To give the children a good education	424	54,1	360	45,9
5. To provide good counselling for the children	402	51,3	382	48,7
6. To raise the children as successful individuals	348	44,4	436	55,6
7. To contribute to the personal development of the children	336	42,9	448	57,1
8. To provide good careers for the children	320	40,8	464	59,2
9. To value communication with the parents	308	39,3	476	60,7
10. To improve the children's abilities	246	31,4	538	68,6

***The Reasons Parents Send Their Children to Private Courses***

When the reasons for the participants to send their children to private courses are considered, the parents indicate that they do not send their children because transportation is easy (94 %), other people also send their children to private courses (92 %), the fees are affordable (89 %) or because they cannot send them to private schools (87 %); but they send them because they think it is very difficult to succeed in the exams without attending private courses (65 %), the education given at school is insufficient (53 %) and private courses provide good counselling (Table 14). In Dağlı's (2006) study as well, the parents say that they do not send their children "because everybody sends their children to private courses". The main

reason they send their children is the belief that “it is very difficult to succeed in the exams without attending private courses.” In TEA’s (2005a, 2005b) studies too a majority of students, parents and especially teachers reveal a hard truth about the educational system suggesting that school education is insufficient for success in the exams and that private courses are replacing schools. Also in other studies it is indicated that high school education is insufficient for success in the university exam (Cenk, 2005) and that one of the most significant reasons for the increasing demand for private courses is the lack of trust in the quality of education given in schools (UNDP, 2008). Thus there is a consistency between the present study and the other studies.

One of the most important reasons for the emergence of private courses as a sector and their proliferation is the exams for transition between different educational levels as well as the content and format of the exams (Özoğlu, 2011). Thus, students who want to succeed in the exams search for the remedy in private courses. Private courses are perceived as the main condition of success in the exams (Baloğlu, 1995).

**Table 14. Reasons Why the Parents Send Their Children to Private Courses**

Reasons	Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%
1. It is very difficult to succeed in the exams without attending private courses	506	64,5	278	35,5
2. School education is insufficient	412	52,6	372	47,4
3. Private courses conduct pilot exams	316	40,3	468	59,7
4. Teachers and managers are qualified	286	36,5	498	63,5
5. They contribute to the student’s personality development	278	35,5	506	64,5
6. They provide plenty of sources and documents	258	32,9	526	67,1
7. Sources and documents are of good quality	256	32,7	528	67,3
8. They value communication with the parents	228	29,1	556	70,9
9. To have my child make use of his/her spare time	184	23,5	600	76,5
10. They have dormitories and camping programs	178	22,7	606	77,3
11. They make social adaptation easier	170	21,7	614	78,3
12. I can’t send them to private schools	100	12,8	684	87,2
13. Fees are affordable	84	10,7	700	89,3
14. Everybody sends their children	60	7,7	624	92,3
15. Transportation is easy	46	5,9	738	94,1

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

In this study in Turkey, which focuses on the opinions and expectations of parents with regard to private courses, it is understood that the students who are sent to private courses are mainly male. Male children are given more opportunities to have higher education compared to female children. Female children should also made to benefit from the same opportunities.

Those who attend private courses are mostly public high school students and seniors. The family makes the choice of the private course together with the child. It is observed that on this issue families behave democratically.

The participant parents claim that private courses provide more exam techniques, that private courses will exist as long as there are exams and that private courses fill the gap left by schools. Just as the participant parents in this study, Baloğlu (1995) also believes that private courses are a separate branch as parallel institutions trying to compensate for the defects of schools. However, the parents think that private courses are not alternatives to schools and that in the educational system schools and private courses fulfil different functions.

The most important expectation of parents from private courses is to get their children to enter university. They also expect them to enable productive studying habits and help the child with his/her lessons at school. When their reasons for sending their children to private schools are considered, it is understood that parents think it is very difficult to succeed in the exams without attending private courses and school education is insufficient.

Considering the qualities of the participant parents, it is observed that the mothers rather have primary education whereas the fathers are either university graduates or have primary education, and that in most families only the fathers work. Private course fees exceed the family budget of most parents. Yet, a majority of students who attend private courses are the children of families with either middle or low income. Since these families would not be able to pay to private schools more than they pay to private courses every year, they force themselves to exceed their budget for one or two years and send their children to private courses. Thus they try to fill the gap their children have in their education. Institutions such as local administrations or non-governmental organisations may lessen the burden of these families to a certain extent by providing educational support to the children of the families in need within the scope of social welfare projects.

That most of the parents in the study declare they are against closing down the private courses may indicate that in fact they are the ones who make the most benefit from these institutions. Therefore, as Temel (2002) suggests, maybe the actual inequality of opportunity will occur if the private courses are closed down. In reality private courses can be seen as institutions which eliminate inequality of opportunity, since those who have good financial situation will one way or another provide a good education for their children. The ones who will have the real problem will be the families with low income. Besides, if these institutions are closed down, illegal institutions will emerge or private tutors will fill this gap in their homes. For this reason the issue of closing down private courses and turning them into private schools requires lengthy debates, asking the opinions of everyone who will be affected and deep research. Maybe the problems arising from issues such as the format of university entrance exams, the quality of education in public schools and the pass-fail grading system which create the need for private courses should be researched and these problems should be eliminated.

If there are negativities resulting from private courses, new standards might be determined and there may be a restructuring. Inspections can be increased to turn these into more functional institutions which contribute both to the society and to the educational system. Otherwise, as a result of turning private courses into private schools, these schools will be institutions from which only the children of the high-income families will benefit and the rest will remain on the outside. As a conclusion, not everyone will be able to benefit from educational opportunities to the same extent, thus social stratification will increase even further.

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