

## MANAGERIAL PERCEPTION OF EDUCATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Assist. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Metin ARSLAN  
Kirikkale University  
Kirikkale, TURKEY

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to determine the educational NGO managers' perceptions of education in the city of Kirikkale. The sample of this qualitative research, which has been conducted on a case pattern basis, comprises managers from 13 educational non-governmental organizations in the province of Kirikkale. Data were collected by the researcher himself through direct contact and interview with the participants. The interview form was developed based on the opinions from experts in the field. The concordance between the sentential codifications was checked by an independent observer and the researcher in order to ensure data reliability. The coefficient of concordance between the observers was calculated as .87 for the sociopolitical perceptions dimension of education and .90 for the perceptions regarding the position and importance of the organizations, which were included in the present research, in the system. Participant confirmation method was used for the validity of the data. Some remarkable results of the research are as follows: The participants

- failed to relate the aims of educational organizations to the general public,
- basically engaged in aid-oriented activities,
- expected aid from the government,
- tended to look at education and its problems from an economic viewpoint,
- neglected the philosophical and scientific dimensions of the problem, and
- made individual assessments with no relevance to the social context.

**Keywords:** *Civil Society, Non-Governmental Organizations, Perception of Education*

### INTRODUCTION

The notion of civil society is a many-sided notion which has gained recognition through a process of historical and intellectual development and has contemporary relevance. It also draws the attention of academia and is a matter of discussion. It has achieved perfection and its modern significance by acquiring a status in which it can act separately from the State but still retain an understanding of a citizenship built on a basis of equal rights and influence the political authority by creating a public opinion in compliance with its own rules and principles. Civil society's realm of existence and domain have expanded in the historical process and it has become one of the widely debated issues in the global world. (Eraslan, 2008;11). Today, civil society, with its organized structure based on volunteers and the societal cooperation and acting independently from the government and bureaucracy, constitutes a democratic living space due to its capacity to influence political and social life in a country and its characteristic as a power in its own right. This space is where public awareness can be fostered and democratic participation is allowed. It is an organized and social space

which is open to communication, solidarity and participative (Özalp, 2008; 15). Non-governmental organizations, whose aim is to obtain and sustain the social good and which are formed by the friendly and selfless cooperation of volunteers in order to find solutions to social problems, are autonomous entities free from the state influence (Gültekin and Bitirim, 2006; Akgemici, 2007).

When the development of the notion of civil society in Turkey is examined, it is seen that an understanding in which the state is expected to be the driving force rather than a notion of self-motivated civil society has always prevailed due to the influence of the "change from the centre" model (Güneş and Güneş, 2003; 130–133). According to Wedel (2007), tools for the development of civil society have not been produced. This is because politicians and intellectuals have differed within themselves in terms of their political and ideological preferences. Starting from this point, Wedel explains the delayed development of civil society in Turkey with the fact that politicians focused their attention on intellectuals and elitist groups instead of the media and the groups reflecting public opinion(Wedel,2007;154).

The Associations Act of 1946 and the transition to a multiple-political party system had an important place in the development of civil societies, the indispensable organizations in democratic societies, in Turkey. Labor organizations' gaining prominence in the 1970s and the efforts to create many environmentalist and non-governmental organizations after the resolutions of Stockholm Conference in 1972 which emphasized the fact that "the living habitats of the world were being destroyed" were some other important advances. (Güneş and Güneş,2003; 138). Apart from these changes, prohibitions regarding organic relationship and cooperation between such non-governmental organizations as political parties, unions, associations, foundations, professional chambers and cooperatives were lifted in 1995 with the amendments to the Constitutions of the Turkish Republic and the notion of civil society began to be discussed widely. Especially in recent years, the non-governmental organizations, defined as the third sector in reference to public and private sectors(DPT, 2000; 203), have made their presence felt in education, a social system, as they did in other fields.

Most of the NGOs in Turkey provide services in the field of education directly or indirectly. This is because education is a very comprehensive field and it is related to many other fields. The NGOs in the field of education play such roles as advocacy, opposition, devising and developing projects and monitoring the programs and policies of the Ministry of Education. They hold meetings, conferences and campaigns through unions and their members to perform these roles. In cooperation with the media, they exert influence on educational policies and contribute to the improvement of the society's level of education by creating an awareness in the general population. The educational NGOs are organized into associations, foundations, trade unions, cooperatives and unions. Educational organizations in Turkey generally operate under an umbrella of 'associations'. These educational NGOs are classified by Eraslan (2008) as follows: "Education-Research-Project", "School-Preservation-Development", "Graduates", "Supporting Religious Education", "Supporting Neighborhood-Region-Rural Education", "Special Education of the Handicapped", "Education on Environment and Health", "Training on Earthquake and Search and Rescue", "Scholarship-based" and "Career Education-based" associations.

It is remarkable that the researches on NGOs and Education are quite limited both in their number and scope. Yatlı (2003) tried to determine the extent of the support the 196

educational NGOs gave to education in his qualitative research on the contribution of educational NGOs to education. In this research conducted in the city of **İstanbul**, the contributions to education and the projects devised by NGOs were defined in two main groups: formal and non-formal education. The fact that NGOs take part in the solution of the problems of education as the third sector after the public and private sectors was emphasized in the research.

Karatas (2008) carried out a research using the mixed method in the city of Istanbul on the place and functions of NGOs in the Turkish education system. The results obtained by analyzing the data from the managers of schools and NGOs in the research can be summarized as follows:

- A perception of NGOs in the Western sense has only recently begun to take shape in Turkey. It is predicted that the influence of these organizations in shaping the relationships between the state and the society will increase in the future.
- The educational NGOs are generally “unknowledgeable” and “inexperienced” of education and can not establish a healthy relationship with the society.
- School headmasters are “inexperienced” and “reluctant” to cooperate with NGOs.

In another research done by using the mixed method on the assessment of educational NGOs in Turkey, the goals, structures, policies and functions of these organizations were investigated from the education viewpoint. Some noteworthy results of this research, with a sample which comprised participants from such organization types as associations, foundations and unions all over Turkey, are as follows (Eraslan, 2008):

- Educational NGOs limit their campaigns and projects to certain fields and they always employ the same methodology.
- They perform such traditional activities as giving scholarships, providing financial support or aid in kind, building schools or classrooms, giving literacy courses or organizing extracurricular activities.
- NGOs have been assigned such apolitical roles as charity, volunteer work, creating social awareness instead of social opposition, advocacy, offering alternative outlook and acting as pressure groups since late 1990s.

When we look at the results of researches, we can argue that educational NGOs began to take their places in the education system actively. Their participation in decision making in educational policies, collaboration with the public and private sectors, their efforts to fill in in lifelong learning practices and diversify educational services and being a financial source to education are remarkable.

The main aim of this research in this context is to reveal the local and educational NGO managers' perceptions of education in the city of **Kırıkkale**. Answers to the following two questions were sought by interviewing the managers of local and educational NGOs:

1. What are the managers' sociopolitical perceptions of education?
2. What are the managers' perceptions of their organization's place and importance in the education system?

## **METHOD**

### **The Design of the Research**

The present research is a qualitative phenomenological research. Phenomenological research is an approach which focuses on things we are aware of but do not have an<sup>197</sup>

in-depth and detailed understanding of. The aim of this approach is generally to unveil individual perspectives and perceptions of a certain phenomenon and interpret them (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). The phenomenon investigated by this research is the “educational perceptions” of local and educational NGOs by looking at the views of their managers.

### **Participants**

The participants were selected using the “snowball sampling” approach according to their corporate and scope diversities and power of influence from among educational NGOs in the city of Kırıkkale. By asking the question “Who can possibly be the most knowledgeable person on this topic?” regarding the problem of the research, the snowball sampling approach makes it possible to pick up prominent individuals and gain access to rich data sources (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008;111). The corporate identities of the interviewees were defined as association, cooperative and club. The aim of the NGOs whose managers are the interviewees is education in its broadest sense. But special care was taken to ensure the participants represent the NGOs which provide services in formal and non-formal education. The list of the participants was formed by examining the charters of the afore-mentioned organizations and identifying their managers. A total number of 13 participants took part in the research. 6 of them were females and 7 were males. The ages of the participants varied between 33 and 55 and the average of their ages was 44. 4 of them were from education by profession and 9 were from other professions.

### **Data Collection**

The data of this research was collected by semi-structured interviews. “Their perceptions of the right of education” and “their perceptions of the goals and functions of their organizations and public or private civil organizations” were established as two main themes of the research. The open-ended questions of the interview were designed with these two themes on their focus. 6 field experts were consulted to ensure that the draft questions were fit for the purpose. The 11 questions to be asked to the interviewees were given their final forms taking the expert opinion into account. The managers of two NGOs in a different city were interviewed to test the understandability of the interview questions. The questions proved to be understandable and answerable.

The managers were interviewed in person in their offices and answers were sought to the questions prepared beforehand. More comprehensive and reliable answers were aimed to be obtained benefitting from the advantages of face-to-face interviews. The interviews were not conducted sticking to a fixed questionnaire form but rather topics were investigated as they cropped up during the course of interviews. The interviews were recorded by the permission of the participants with an audio recorder. The interviews with the managers of 13 NGOs took a total of 380 minutes(6 hours and 20 minutes). The average duration of interviewing one participant was 29 minutes. Then, these recordings were written down and the written documents were approximately 87 pages long. All interviews were done in May 2010.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data collected with the semi-structured interview technique was analyzed by inductive codification technique and descriptive analysis. The following steps were followed in the analysis of the data. Each interviewee was given a number starting from 1. The answers each participant gave to each question were grouped together; the data obtained from these groupings were classified under three main headings: 1)

demographic data 2) sociopolitical perceptions of education 3) perceptions of the place and importance of NGOs in the system of education

The data under the headings "Sociopolitical perceptions" and "perceptions of the place and importance in the system" were grouped together systematically and a generalization was aimed to be achieved through inductive method. The participants

were quoted directly without any changes to what they said in order to maintain the internal reliability and validity of the data. Firstly, an independent expert (observer) was made to transcribe the interview recordings selected randomly and concordance with the earlier transcription of the recordings was checked. It was seen that they were concordant. Then, the concordance between the results of the descriptive analyses done by the researcher and the independent expert were examined on a sentential basis. For this purpose, Miles and Huberman's (1994) following formula was used;  $\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{consensus} + \text{difference of opinion}}$ .

The codifications by two observers were done for each of the dimensions; "Sociopolitical perceptions" and "perceptions of the place and importance in the system" separately for the reliability analysis, which is also known as the concordance between independent observers. The coefficient of concordance between the two independent observers was calculated as .87 for the "Sociopolitical perceptions" dimension and .90 for the "perceptions of the place and importance in the system" dimension. These results were considered as the proof of the reliability of the data, which was obtained by the researcher and which was the material of the analysis.

Lastly, excerpts were taken from the transcribed documents of the interviews and shown to the participants and their confirmations were taken. A second confirmation of the truth and validity was elicited from the participants when they were shown the findings after the research was completed.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Demographic Data**

Of the 13 participants, 6 are females and 7 males. They are the managers of the NGOs they represent. 1 of them has a master's degree, 4 are university graduates. 1 has associate's degree and the remaining 7 are high school graduates. 11 of the participants are the managers of associations, 1 of a cooperative and 1 of a club. All of the NGOs they represent operate locally and are the leading NGOs in terms of their fields of operation.

When the demographic data is assessed in general, it is seen that the distribution of the participants according to their sexes is nearly equal. It is significant that women are the managers of associations, which are traditionally male-dominated societies. The age interval of the participants is within that of the active population. When their professions are concerned, it is striking that most of them are not from the education sector. 4 of them work in the education sector, 6 are housewives, 2 are public officials and 1 is a shop owner. 10 of the participants have been members of their organizations for 5 years or less and 3 have been members more than 5 years.

### **Sociopolitical Perceptions of Education**

Sociopolitical perceptions of the participants were tried to be determined with seven open-ended questions on education, the right of education, national educational

policies, equality of opportunity in education, compulsory education and localization of education.

### 1. "What is education? What does the idea of 'the right of education' suggest?"

Most of the participants answered this question after a few minutes of deliberation. Taking the personal development aspect of education, they generally used, to define education, such phrases as "self-realization", "individual's growth", "preparing for the future", "moving from one level to another", "shaping individuals", "elevating individuals a notch higher", "in addition to the intellect, the thing which makes humans humans" and "teaching people what they do not know". Some of the interesting definitions are as follows:

*I would say education is what an individual has to do to improve themselves at all times and on all conditions or their improving themselves. (P02)*

*I think education is one's improving oneself and gaining consciousness in order to make oneself knowledgeable..(P04)*

*What I understand from education is one's preparing oneself for the future. Education reminds me of the future. ( P06)*

Some participants drew attention to the social aspect of education and gave the following definitions:

*Education is shaping an individual, preparing them for the future and teaching them how to live and be happy in life and how to be successful in life. ( P09)*

*Education is the future of a society, an individual, a family, a nation and their living peacefully and happily. It is the future. The quality of education is judged by the quality of the society. ( P11)*

Participants stressed four points in their definitions of "the right of education"; a) enforcement by the state, b) as an inalienable right, c) going to school d) its relation to the human rights and democracy:

*Education is an inalienable right for everyone. Using this right can not be left to people's will. The state has to make regulations so that every citizen uses this right. ( P06)*

*The right of education is something like this. Going to school is using this right. ( P07)*

*The state bears the responsibility to provide education for the citizens in the best possible way. Denying the right of education is unacceptable in this day and age. I think this right is closely related to the human rights, democracy and freedom. ( P08)*

*Every Turkish citizen should benefit from the right of education whatever the conditions are. I don't mean that it should happen at all costs, of course but it should happen in compliance with the state regulations. ( P11)*

### 2. "What policy of the national education is a current matter of debate?"

In answer to this question, the participants argued that the testing policy of the national education and the private courses sector were the problems. Some responses they gave are as follows:

*Private courses play an immense role in preparing for the university entrance test. The process is a time-consuming one. Kids are successful or unsuccessful and*

*families are happy or unhappy. It takes its toll on both kids and their families. Think of the kids, who should be out in the playground, feverishly studying for tests. It could be traumatic. (P01)*

*"... those students have to go to private courses to prepare for the test because of the inadequacy of the school curriculums. The private courses exist only because of the inadequacy of education in the state schools. (P02)*

*In the first place, private courses do not contribute to students' progress much. Parents spend substantial amounts of money so that their children can go to private courses to supplement their education. This can be a hindrance to their receiving a proper education from the state schools. Because, high school students in their last year do not go to school but go to private courses to prepare for the university entrance test. This is outrageous! (P05)*

*Our educational system focuses only on exams and tests. Students find themselves in a rat race to secure a place in good high schools and universities from a very early age. Parents, too, join in this race. Schools get their share of the bad influence of private courses. To me, the most urgent question which needs solving is the tests in our country. (P06)*

*Why do they have to go to private courses? There are parents who simply can't afford to send their children to private courses. That students from families with money can go to those courses and students from poor families can't is not what I understand from equality of opportunity. (P07)*

The national quality of education, guidance, development of educational programs and the ban on headscarves were mentioned as the other debatable issues of education. Of the problems the participants drew attention, the "non-national quality of education" ranked second to the problem of private courses.

*I mean there is a system that is tried to be taught. There is neither a national sensibility nor education in their true senses in Turkey. The question "What is national education?" needs to be discussed in the first place. (P09)*

*We have to instill a national sensibility in students. National education should foreground the society's values, culture and history. Besides, we should see to it that students going through a period of compulsory education, which lasts until they are 14, should receive proper guidance in deciding the course of their later education. (P11)*

While a few participants mentioned about *the inadequacy of programs*, one participant saw the ban on headscarves as a problem.

*I can say that educational programs have to constantly be improve because, the inadequacy of programs influences personal development negatively. ( P03)*

*Everybody busies themselves with the ban on headscarves. Some say it should be banned and others say it should not. But, this should not be reflected on education. ( P13 )*

### **3. "What are your opinions on the statement "the aim of education should not be producing doctors, engineers and judges"?"**

7 of the participants responded to this question from the viewpoint of work ethic.

*The aim of schools should not be teaching only. They should be mediums through which students can recognize and channel their abilities and potentials. Then again, we*

*have to answer the question "Who will do the other jobs if everyone becomes doctors?". (P03)*

*Everyone wants their children to become doctors, but not caretakers for example. When they finish high school and fail to enter a university, we want them to become police officers. What I want to suggest is that it is impossible for everyone to become doctors or engineers. We should bear in mind that the society needs the services of other jobs, as well. People tend to realize what they have failed to do, as a result of either lack of money or other hardships, in their children. This is one reason why people want their children to become doctors or engineers. The other reason is the desire to acquire status through prestigious jobs. But, what matters is being a good person, really. If you are not one, it does not matter how prestigious or well-paid job you have. It is worthless. (P06)*

*Of course, schools should produce doctors and engineers. But, they should be morally good people. A compassionate doctor working mainly for the good of people not for money or an engineer whose aim is to make life comfortable for people and society... (P09)*

*Turkey is not all about doctors, engineers, judge or soldiers. There is a whole lot of other jobs. We need them, too. What our system of education should do is to help students understand where their abilities, potentials and interests lie. If someone is to be, say, a butcher or a glass-cutter for that matter, why not be a butcher or a glass-cutter with a diploma. But, the thing is they should do their jobs well and in a humane way. (P 11)*

#### **4. "Do you think there is equality of opportunity in education? If not, how can we maintain it?"**

Most of the participants responded to this question with a social state approach. They pointed out that education was a social right and the state failed to fulfill this responsibility adequately. They thought there was not such thing as the equality of opportunity. Some of their remarks are as follows:

*I don't think it exists. Although it is a social right, we can't claim that everyone benefits from it. We always talk about human rights and the right of education. But still, we have difficulties in providing even primary education in some parts of our country. You can read it in papers that the number of children with no access to schools is quite high. (P02)*

*I have a radical stance on this. Education should be privatized completely with government control only. Why privatize education? Think of this. The state gives the amount of money a first grader costs the state to the parents of a student and the family sends their children to a private school. Isn't it better? (P11)*

*Everybody has a right to get an education. But, politicians in our country look at it as an election strategy to be exploited. Some of the factors which have a direct bearing on the inequality of educational opportunities are as follows: Economic power of the state, income inequalities, education budget, an equitable system which allows every citizen equality of opportunity, poverty, differences between urban and rural settlements and east and west, population density, sexual discrimination, quality of teachers and educational settings, testing system. (P 12)*

The opinions of the participants on the solution of problems are all economy-related. They used such phrases as "paid education", "easy money", "education should be free", "students should be supplied with more scholarship opportunities." and "supporting education". One of the participants saw the civil society as a solution:

*Organizations like us had better focus their efforts on activities aimed to create equality of opportunity such as providing support to education and more scholarships to students. (P 05)*

*You have to be organized when you intend to offer an opportunity. You have to be selective. NGOs and the state, too, have to play important roles. Since NGOs live in the society, they know needy families. For example, some kids come to us to ask for help. They are really brilliant kids and they have to be helped. (P06)*

*Some has the money and the others simply don't. The civil society comes in when someone can't afford to pay their tuition fee. This is the way it has to be. Either the civil society or the state has to help the smart students with no money. This, at least, alleviates the gravity of the problem. (P09)*

### 3. "How long does compulsory education have to take?"

Most of the participants responded to this question by expressing that it should take 12 years including the secondary education. A few of them stated that 8 years was ideal and guidance should be prioritized from the fifth grade onwards.

*It has to be 12 years and it should be divided into three equal periods. You get to know the kids in the first four-year period and observe them in the second period to determine their potentials and abilities. They prepare for university and you help them choose their future careers in the third and last four-year period. This system is practiced in Spain and Germany very efficiently. (P03)*

*It has to be at least 11 years but on the condition that students must be guided according to their abilities and interests. This has to happen when they are at sixth grade. After the sixth or eight grades and for the next three years, they must be taught classes in the areas of their choice. Specialization has to begin in the primary education. (P11)*

*Experiences of early childhood affect the way the brain works. For this reason, pre-schooling, too, must be compulsory and compulsory education has to be 12 years. (P 12)*

*I saw kids who couldn't read or write after they finished the eighth grade. They couldn't even write their name because there is no such thing as repeating the class. They finish their schools without learning to read and write. So, it doesn't matter how long compulsory education should be if we can't teach them to read and write. I think we need hardworking and self-sacrificing teachers in education. (P02)*

*What should be discussed in Turkey is whether primary education should be diversified. If this happens, students can be guided from the fifth grade onwards. I think it would be beneficial. (P06)*

*Education doesn't take place in the classroom only. I think 8 years is enough. (P09)*

### 6. "What do you think of localization in education?"

When their responses to this question were examined, some of the participants were seen to have worries about localization in education although the "localization" concept was explained to them before they were asked the question. But, still most of them expressed positive opinions about localization:

*Frankly, I am against the idea that it should be manipulated by local authorities. Because, local authorities are pretty much involved in politics. Their political orientations will be the driving force behind educational policies. This would have a203*

*negative influence on education. Instead, if NGOs are encouraged and strengthened, the gap will be filled within a short time. (P01)*

*We have an educational cooperative model in mind. Instead of local authorities, education should be left to the responsibility of parents through this cooperative. I think the Ministry of National Education should be freed of the burden of schools and schools should be immediately privatized. They should not be left to big companies, of course. Instead, parents should be involved because they are the true owners of schools and very much interested in the education of their children. Outsiders would not do much good because their primary concern would be to make money. What is certain is that schools should not be left to the mercy of local authorities. We have to keep schools out of politics. (P02)*

*Everything is expected from the state. But, help has to be provided from the local community. I was the chairman of the Parents and School Board of Atatürk Primary School. Schools really have a lot of problems. The Ministry can't meet all the needs of schools. Parents' support is absolutely necessary. Schools would have difficulty preparing for education at the beginning of an academic year if it weren't for the help of parents. NGOs are essential organizations to schools and education. Local authorities and private institutions should help schools. (P04)*

*You are talking about providing services locally, I guess. This is where associations and foundations come in. Supporting schools is necessary. If we expect the state to provide services, they come late. People should take responsibilities in educational services. Policies and decisions taken centrally sometimes create problems in the periphery. (P05)*

*Localization is a debatable issue. It can be advocated if you mean providing support locally be it the governor or the mayor. But, a country may have some sensitivities and future plans. Localization without taking those sensitivities into consideration may lead to the rise of ethnic values and demands. This may be a problem. (P06)*

*Authorizing local governments on establishing educational policies may lead to protests from certain circles. If you give education according to the demands of each region in Turkey, you may cause problems. Financing education locally by NGOs or local governments can be a good solution but they shouldn't interfere in making policies and decisions. That should be the central government's responsibility. (P07)*

*Of course, I have worries about localization because our country is home to a lot of different ethnic groups. Eastern region has a different cultural pattern and so does the Black Sea region. Central Anatolia is again different from the others. Localization in this context could create problems. But, it also has its advantages. For example, the people of Kirikkale will be more concerned with the betterment of education in their city. (P08)*

*There are a lot of reasons why localization is not favored in Turkey. The most important of them all is the efforts to create stereotypical citizens. In order to achieve this, the other types of citizens were not encouraged. It seems to me someone doesn't have faith in Turkish people. (P09)*

*Local authorities and mayors are the elected people. Besides, our culture is different from the Western culture. When you free people from being dependent on politicians in this country, you can trust local authorities with the management of education. We have to make sure politicians are not seen as sources of livelihood and financial favors. Only then can we trust local authorities with the management of education. But if we do so now in the current state of things, a total disaster is inevitable. Those in the mayor's good books will be rewarded amply and those in his bad books will be condemned to eternal damnation. (P11)*

*Localization with a fresh outlook on administration is what we have to achieve. Local authorities especially municipalities have to be strengthened and given more active roles. It is essential for this purpose that legal framework should be prepared and that municipalities create the necessary infrastructure. (P12)*

### **7. What are your opinions on distance education?**

Participants were observed to have difficulty answering this question. Therefore, idea of distance education was explained to them in general terms and the interviews resumed. They had two different approaches towards distance education. While seven of the participants associated distance education with technological advances, three of them thought that it was a kind of open education and was conducted through television broadcasts. The remaining three expressed no opinions. Some of the participant opinions are as follows:

*The internet now reached as far as villages. Studying through distance education and television is now available to all and learning languages and reading newspapers online is very easy. But, I have some reservations about distance education in that it may not yield the same results as face-to-face instruction and it may fail to help individuals realize themselves. What is more, we still have problems making individuals transfer what they learn into good behaviours through compulsory education let alone distance education (P. 2).*

*Of course, those who have failed to enter university can be included in the education system through distance education. However, it won't be of much help if people still can't get jobs. I mean, the objective should be enabling individuals to acquire something and not to busy them with useless things.(P.5)*

*Distance education is a kind of instruction in which student-teacher relationship ceases to exist. It is not the way you provide equality of opportunity and means. It looks to me more like an education in which you learn hobbies.(K.6)*

*Distance education is the most abstract form of education. If it involves such factors as open education, internet and mail, we should investigate the feasibility of it first. Who can claim that the educational opportunities offered in a city and a village are equitable? Of course, there are differences between face-to-face education and distance education. The Ministry of Education and millions spent for sustaining and building schools would be pointless if we could study by ourselves, wouldn't they? (11)*

*It can prove helpful in establishing the equality of opportunity. Because, most students go to universities in other cities. This creates extra burdens on them. Distance education is a solution to this and it must be put into practice immediately(12).*

### **Their Perceptions of the Place and Importance of NGOs in the System of Education**

Four open-ended questions were asked in order to determine their perceptions of the relationships between their organizations and the state, the society and the other civil organizations. Responses to these questions were summed as follows.

### **8. "How does the society view the educational NGOs?"**

Two different approaches stand out from the responses to this question.

The responses the participants gave of the first approach were "They are sympathetic.", "They are supportive.", "They like us.", "They have a very high opinion of us." and "They showed a great interest in us."; and the responses the participants gave of the second approach were "We are populist in spite of the population.", "They don't want us.", "They are suspicious of the motives of civil organizations.", "They are far from having an awareness." Some of their remarks are as follows:

*They are very sympathetic. They really are! And as a result, they are very supportive. Because they know that the more our organizations are active and involved in educational and sportive activities, their children will be at the receiving end of the benefits of our activities. (P01)*

*We face an insurmountable wall of educators in front of us. On the other side, parents hurled accusations at our cooperative and board let alone provide support. It seems to me that we are being populist inspite of the population. They simply don't want us. (P02)*

*The society has yet to put its trust in civil organizations. They are suspicious of our motives. The state is already doing what is to be done. They built schools and the staff. These kinds of activities by civil organizations aren't appreciated accordingly in the city of Kirikkale. But, the situation isn't that hopeless. There are at least those who appreciate. (P03)*

*I think they are positive. But, still it depends on the work and activities done by the association. I can say that we are very much approved by the people of Kirikkale. We really give importance to education. (P07)*

*The students from various schools, their parents and teachers have very high opinions of our association.( P08)*

*We have difficulties because our people are mostly ignorant of civil organizations. We are trying to make people aware of our motives and activities. The reason why our people are ignorant on these matters is that the idea of associations is new to them.( P 10)*

*The people working for 80% of the associations which claim to be supporting education have the sole aim to have a place of their own where they can have a friendly chat, have tea or coffee or play card games. But, we are different. People get interested when we talk to them about our goals. But, this is a very demanding work. It isn't proper for the chairman of the association to busy himself with another work or business other than his real duties. (P 11)*

#### **9. "What organizations are the stakeholders of your organization? What is the nature of your relationships with your stakeholders?"**

The participants had difficulty answering this question clearly. After the term "stakeholder" was explained to them by the interviewer, they talked about the organizations they interacted and collaborated. A few of the participants just gave the names of their stakeholders instead of talking about their relationships with them. Some of the participants grouped their stakeholders as internal and external stakeholders:

*Our external stakeholders are the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports and the Provincial Directorate for National Education. In addition to the other NGOs, the primary and secondary schools in the neighborhood are stakeholders. Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports is our primary stakeholder. Because, we are doing the same thing. (P01)*

*Our stakeholders are the Municipality of Kirikkale, the University of Kirikkale, the Provincial Directorate for National Education, the Governorate and the Police Department. We all have good relations and always act in cooperation. (P08)*

*Our relations with our stakeholders are based on collaboration, trust and fulfilling responsibilities mutually. (P 12)*

*You think there are such things as stakeholders in Kirikkale? You are badly mistaken, sir. (P13)*

#### **10. "What are the obstacles your organization has to overcome in providing educational services?"**

From the answers the participants gave to this question, it is understood that people are "prejudiced" and "cautious".

*Since our organization is one of a kind in the whole of Turkey, educational bureaucracy approaches us cautiously. And this makes it a bit difficult for us to achieve our goal. (P02)*

*There are always financial problems. We also find it difficult to understand and be understood. Being understood by the people correctly or getting people to see your image is very important! (P03)*

*In order to be able to give help in compliance with our policies, we have to know the person we are going to provide aid to. We have difficulty identifying the really needy. Associations also have problems within themselves regarding employment. They have to employ the right personnel for certain tasks to be able to work according to their regulations. But, this becomes a heavy burden on their shoulders. As a result, they can only perform those tasks making do with whatever means available. (P06)*

*Financial shortages are the main obstacles we face. We can't realize many of our projects due to lack of money. We try to realize most of what we have in mind. We do! If we had the means, we could do still more, of course. (K 8)*

#### 11. "What joint projects with other public or private sector organizations can you do to achieve your goals?"

Most of the participants responded to this question by saying that they hadn't done any joint projects with other organizations but were willing to do so. Some of the remarks they made on this were: "We haven't thought of it so far.", "Why not? But, I don't have anything in mind right now."

*We are negotiating with other organizations about what we can do together. Some of our stakeholders demand training from us. We are going to prepare projects of such activities. (P03)*

*We prepared as many as 15 projects of educational activities such as the education of mothers on child-care and patient-care and our partners are the Public Education Center and the local branch of the Employment Agency. We prepared educational programs about handicrafts that are dying and no longer practiced. The idea of educational cooperatives is new to people and therefore, they have reservations about us. (P02)*

*Our project was the research on the violence in schools. It was a fairly satisfactory work. We prepared the report of the research and sent it to the National Agency. We organized trips with small groups of 4 or 5 to five different countries in Europe in the framework of this project. In addition to teachers, people from the Police Department and the Provincial Directorate for National Education took part in this project, too. I think it was a very satisfactory undertaking. This year, we sent some students from the Vocational High School abroad for internship. We also sent 40 students in groups of 10 to four different countries for internship. They stayed abroad for nearly one and a half months in the framework a European Union project. They both learnt languages and did research in their prospective careers. This was a project which involved us and vocational high schools and the Provincial Directorate for National Education. (P08)*

*The name of our project is Campaign on Education. I briefed our Governor on this project. He appreciated it very much. With the help from several associations, we are going to reach people from all walks of life by means of radio broadcasts, newspapers and our website. (P10)*

*We intend to design an educational project. We are currently looking for organizations we can collaborate with. (P12)*

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results and commentaries based on the findings of the research are given in this part.

It can be said that the definitions generally do not focus on basic values and a common outlook does not exist when the local educational NGO managers' perceptions of "education and the right of education" are concerned. The reason why a majority of the participants look on education as an individual process is that they aim to encourage individual development. The fact that NGOs do not regard education as a social phenomenon and the right of education as a social reality led them to think of education on an individual basis. The participants were not told that education was a social right and the state must make arrangements for education and must make sure education is free at all levels (Antakyalioğlu et al., 2009;12). When the activities by their organizations are concerned, it is clear that providing financial support to individuals-scholarships, aids-in-kind- are fore grounded.

All of the participants have negative perceptions of the current matter of debate in the policies of national education. The reason why the participants drew attention to the testing policy and private courses as the current matter of debate is that students tend to increasingly favour sources of education other than schools in recent years. Private courses, the leading sources of education other than schools in our country, teach topics which are not normally taught in schools when preparing students for tests which are not based on school curriculums. Private courses, which foreground making students gain advanced reasoning skills, sometimes teach extracurricular topics. The reason for this is that tests are aimed to eliminate students. The participants' perceptions of problematic issues originate from the fact that the modern educational outlook can not answer the demands of the modern information society as a result of Turkish national education system's being trapped between modern and post-modern educational paradigms (Arslan and Eraslan, 2003; 104).

Participants stressed that professional guidance did not exist in the Turkish national education system. Guidance in Turkey pays attention to the progress a student makes during their education in a private course and does not aim to analyze their successes and failures throughout their education life. This is because those who are supposed to "guide" students look at human beings as "standard" entities rather than as individuals and academic and intellectual guidance comes up only when students have to decide what university they want to go. Besides, the present system encourages students to go for such traditional professions as engineering, medicine and teaching (Şimşek, 2006).

Most of the participants stated that equality of opportunity did not exist, education was a social right and the social state did not fulfill its responsibility to grant this right to its citizens effectively. This shows that the expectations of NGOs from the state are great. The participants looked at this matter from an economic perspective and believed that the state had difficulty financing education and as a result, many children could not get primary education. Although they thought NGOs could play an important role in solving this problem, they still expected help from the state.

The participants thought that there was an inequality of opportunity and of access to means and looked on education from this perspective. Some of them said that the208

education provided by the state was inadequate but still claimed that 8 years of compulsory education was sufficient. And this brings up the matter of what they expected from education.

It can be said that this is because the quality and content of education in schools are far from highlighting national sensibilities and fail to provide individual and professional guidance. Besides, their expectation that educational and cultural activities should be left to the responsibility of NGOs also adds to their stance on this ( Ozalp, 2008;66-68)

The participants expressed their worries about localization of education but did not offer opinions on the extent of authority the center and periphery should be allowed to exercise and how the periphery should be organized. Public opinion should be created on the necessity of the fact that dividing the authority between the centre and the periphery should be done taking the conditions of our country into account.

Rather than looking at distance education as an interaction among the individual, the society and technology, the participants regard distance education, a technology based practice, as a stopgap and a provisional solution where institutions of formal education can not function. Although they see distance education as a chance for those unable to get face-to-face education, they still have some worries about its efficiency. It is obvious that education can not be confined to classrooms only in today's world where knowledge is globalized and informatics technologies develop at a stunning speed. The researches in this area show that traditional classroom education is no more the best practice of institutional and global education(Kaya, 2002;23). Besides, the integration of computer and internet technologies expanded the limits of distance education immensely(Gürol ve Sevindik, 2004).

Two different approaches emerged in the participant assessment of how the society views educational NGOs. While the participants of the first approach stated that they were received very well by the society, those of the second remarked on the indifference and suspicion of the society. This proves that educational NGOs failed to inform the society of their intentions and goals and they themselves are not knowledgeable enough about education. These findings and results show similarities with those of Karataş's (2008).

When the relationships between educational NGOs and their stakeholders are concerned, it is apparent that the participants are not knowledgeable about the notion of stakeholder, either. This shows that local NGOs are not structured according to the strategic management principle and far from having an understanding of strategic management. They should do an environmental analysis and see their stakeholders.

The participants look on the problems educational NGOs face while they are trying to reach their goals in terms of receiving and giving aid. When the goals of practices of these NGOs are examined, it becomes apparent that some of them are engaged only in educational activities while others offer educational activities and aids. These organizations, which are largely engaged in traditional activities such as giving scholarships and aids-in-kind being influenced by the examples of foundations, stayed away from civil society activities such as social opposition, advocacy, offering alternative outlooks and acting as pressure groups in its Western sense. The findings and results of the research are in parallel with those of Eraslan's (2008). The educational NGOs, which are the outcome of the state's search for civil partners to share the burden of education which costs a lot of money, try to contribute to the field by 209

collaborating with public and private sector organizations. Public sector organizations are preferred to those from the private sector when it comes to joint projects. The expectation of collaboration and help from the public sector bureaucracy is strikingly high.

## SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions to NGOs can be made relying on the results of the research:

1. Through educational programs specially designed for the managers of civil societies, they can be taught that education and the right of education are shaped in the cross-section where individuals and the society.
2. Workshops with the collaboration of local educational NGOs can be organized where the latest issues of the national education policy can be discussed along with such matters as "inequality of opportunity and access to means", "compulsory education", "individual and professional guidance" and "localization of education".
3. Initiatives can be undertaken to create public awareness on the fact that civil movements should strive for social opposition, advocacy, offering alternative outlooks and acting as pressure groups in its Western sense along with traditional activities of charity, volunteer work, and social solidarity.
4. It can be ensured that local educational NGOs get expert help to carry out their campaigns and projects.
5. Local educational NGOs should endeavor not only to raise funds to achieve their goals but also they should try to produce ideas, projects and innovations.

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## BIODATA and CONTACT ADDRESSES of the AUTHOR



**Dr. Mehmet Metin ARSLAN** is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education, Kirikkale University, Turkey. His main research interest is Educational Administration.

Assist. Prof. Dr.M. Metin Arslan  
Faculty of Education,  
Kirikkale University,  
Yahşihan Yolu, Kirikkale, Turkey  
Email: [mm.arslan@mynet.com](mailto:mm.arslan@mynet.com)

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