

Reading Strategies and Library Services for Children and Young Adults in Turkey

Ayşe YÜKSEL-DURUKAN, IASL Middle East & North Africa Regional Director, School Librarian, yukse.ayse@gmail.com
 Dr.Berrin KÜÇÜKCAN, Faculty Member, Adıgüzel Vocational School, Istanbul, berrinb1@gmail.com
 Asst. Prof. Dr. İlgin VERYERİ-ALACA, Faculty Member, Media and Visual Arts Dept., Koc University, Istanbul, ialaca@ku.edu.tr

Abstract

While school libraries stir a critical debate on reading habits in Turkey, it is also useful to make an overview of libraries and reading promotion programs that exist. For instance, public libraries do not always offer sufficient programs and contemporary resources for children, young adults (0-18) and their families. Pre-school enrollment is lower than Europe and emergent literacy strategies are often not utilized by general public. Since the Ministry of Education distributes text books in schools for free which is advantageous for low income families, searching for new books beyond the given ones does not turn into a vital agenda for especially these families and children. A policy entitled, 100 Basic Literary Works that have been advised by the Ministry of Education for children from 1st grade to 8th grade leads to a rich number of variations to be published while mostly leaving contemporary children's and young adult literature out of school context. Since the list is often regarded as an approved resource, utilizing books beyond the list is at times not preferred by the teachers.

- How is the school library integrated into the school curriculum?
- What is the role of the school librarian?
- How can the Ministry of Education support the school library?

The country not only faces shortage of contemporary school libraries but also trained and certified school librarians which is a major issue. Z-Libraries (Z for Zenginleştirilmiş : Enriched Libraries) is a recent attempt of the government to rejuvenate school libraries in Turkey, emerged recently with almost 500 pilot libraries in schools. While this project offers attractive and colorful library atmosphere for children, strategies for building a sustainable and rich collections of high quality books that will be part of these libraries is a work in progress.

Given that PISA (The Program of International Student Assessment) scores of Turkey have room for improvement, and reading skills and critical thinking is an important part of the PISA assessment, new strategies may be vital to have a variety of materials in school libraries that students can choose from. Since research draws connections between PISA scores and preschool reading habits, kindergarten libraries and reading programs in relation to them seem to be vital and under numerous organizations' consideration in Turkey.

Number of Schools in 2013-2014

Primary Schools-28,532
 Middle School-17,019
 High School-3744

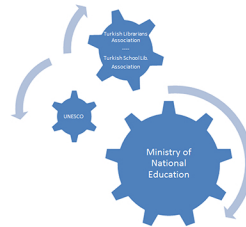
Reference: Turkish Statistical Institute, http://tutk.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KilapDeyi&KT_ID=08KITAP_ID=160

PISA Findings

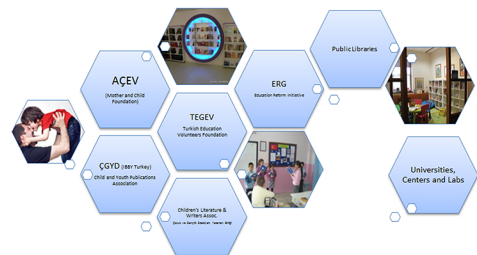
Reading performance (PISA) boys, Mean score, 2012 Source: PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment



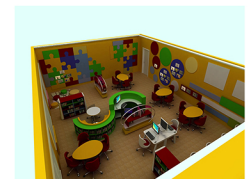
Major Actors



Selection from Other Actors



Enriched Library Project in Schools



Children's Library in Afyon



Further Suggestions and Conclusion

- Each school may benefit from having a professionally trained school librarian.
- Each school library may benefit from enriched resources and rich collections that can attract the child.
- Education for school librarians in Turkey can be further developed in the form of graduate degrees.
- School librarians would benefit from further pedagogic training as well as workshops on new technologies.
- Parents can be supported to create a literacy environment at home that is in connection to the school library.
- School libraries may be enriched with effective reading activities at times tailor made for different age groups and summer times.
- An important question is how to build strong foundations of reading culture via school libraries.
- While MoNE (Ministry of National Education) plays a centralized role in the case of Turkey, input by other actors (NGOs, private sector) could be beneficial in terms of jumpstarting reading culture and encouraging children to recognize the joy of reading.
- School libraries would benefit from Lifelong Learning Programs.