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Socio-economic Status and School Types as the Determinants of Access to Higher Education

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the impact of socio-economic status and the type of secondary school at which a student studied, on their access to higher education. The conceptual framework around this is discussed within the framework of Bourdieu's theory of reproduction. The study was carried out in two complementary stages where different research approaches were used. In this study we used sequential explanatory design as a mixed method strategy, which uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Based on the mixed model approach, our research involved two study groups. The study group, which was part of the quantitative research, consisted of 983 newly enrolled first year students at Trakya University, in 2017. The study group, which was used for the qualitative part of the research, consisted of 26 students from eight different faculties, two different colleges, and four different vocational schools affiliated with Trakya University, in the spring semester of the 2018 academic year. The quantitative data was collected by the "Determinants of Access to Higher Education Survey," which had been developed by the researcher. A Chi-Square test was used to test whether students' opinions differ according to the departments (faculties and colleges) in which they study. Qualitative data was obtained through "the focus group" interview and analyzed using a descriptive analysis technique. The results of this study indicate that: 1) The socio-economic status of students, the quality of pre-higher education experiences, students' preparation process for higher education, and higher education decisions, are contingent on students' ability to be decisive and efficient. 2) There is a significant relationship between social class, as determined by the education level of the family, the parental profession, and family income, and the faculty/field of their higher education. 3) Lower class students and their families view higher education as a human capital investment which can help to improve their income and living conditions in the future. When the overall results of this research were evaluated we were able to understand that an individual's social, economic, and cultural capital, was the main determinant of access to higher education.

Keywords

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Introduction

In this study, we assessed the role of higher education in the reproduction of social inequalities, by centering the discussions among students in order to understand their decisions about higher education and the value they attach to it based on the relationship between their socio-economic origins and the department they were able to enroll in. In this context, access to higher education is affected by social class and educational inequalities rather than being a problem of distribution due to a supply-demand imbalance (Kılıç, 2014). Such an approach will help to focus on the importance of the democratization of higher education in its ability to reduce social and educational inequalities, rather than "educational opportunities" created by a mass system to be achieved through the broadening of the higher education sector (Özsoy, 2004). Several studies reported in the literature surrounding higher education in Turkey, reveal significant results in terms of access to higher education. The results of this valuable research reveal that the most important determinants of university enrollment opportunity are affected by such factors as the education (Buyruk, 2008; Ekinci, 2011; Özsoy, 2004; Şahin, 1999; Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK], 1997) and income levels of the parents (Şahin, 1999; Tomul, 2007; YÖK, 1997). In addition, the region (Çetingül & Dülger, 2006; Özgüven, 1975; Özsoy, 2004; Şahin, 1999; Turanlı, Cengiz Taşpınar, & Bozkır, 2012), the type of school, the quality, and socio-economic area of their pre-tertiary education (Bilgili, Uçan, & Çetin, 2003; Çetingül & Dülger, 2006; Özgüven, 1975) and special courses (Köse, 1990, 2007; Tansel, 2013; TED, 2005; YÖK, 1997), affect the possibility of benefiting from the right to university education. Socio-economic aspects in Turkey not only affect the education service provided but also the self-perception of students and their way of approaching education. Consequently, students not only have to consider whether they meet the requirements of the higher education application process but also how appropriate their choice is in terms of socio-economic characteristics (Ekinci, 2011). In other words, students' past experiences that can be regarded as social and economic capital, determine their educational preferences (Tunç, 2011). Social inequalities in education can be explained by the concept of reproduction within the framework of social mechanisms that create and reproduce inequality. However, in order to analyze how these inequalities are produced in everyday life practices, it is necessary to understand how students experience this reality in their personal experiences (Buyruk, 2008).

Conceptual Framework

Social Class and Higher Education

Demand for tertiary education in the world, especially in developed countries, has been increasing rapidly. However, increasing demand and enrollment rates are not indicative of the fact that all segments of society benefit equally from higher education. There are still many differences in the rate of participation of social and cultural groups in access to higher education, in many countries. In spite of the various projects and policies of governments, institutions, and other political entities, social inequality has been experienced in access to higher education in many countries (Ball, Davies, David, Reay, 2002; Boliver, 2011; Brennan & Nidoo, 2008). The variables affecting access to higher education are numerous and complex. These are, in fact, a reflection of the social inequalities in the daily lives of individuals. In effect, social, economic, and cultural situations affect the relationships of individuals with education, and the lower social classes do not have the same advantages as the middle and upper social classes (Archer, Hutchings, & Ross, 2003; Archer, Halsall, Hollingworth, & Mendick, 2005; Boliver, 2011; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2014; Buyruk, 2008; Field & Morgan-Klein, 2013; James et al., 1999). In many analyses of higher education, the existence of both economic- and culturally-based inequalities and hierarchies has been observed. As in the past, inequalities in entry to and attendance at higher education constitute the research agenda of researchers in many countries of the world. Recent studies have attempted to uncover the reasons for the inequality in higher education and determine what needs to be done in order to reduce inequality. In many of these studies, inequality in higher education is caused by social stratification, and class discussions have identified (Alon, 2009; Archer et al., 2003; Argentin & Triventi, 2010; Ball, Davies, David, Reay, 2002; Blanden & Machin, 2004; Boliver, 2011; Chesters & Watson, 2012; Dear, 2003; Field & Morgan-Klein, 2013; Gale ve Tranter, 2011; Hillmert &

Jacob, 2003; Konstantinovskiy, 2017; Liming, 2014; Lynch & O'riordan, 1998; Naidoo, 2004; O'sullivan & Tsang, 2015; Pelle, Patel, & Leung, 2015; Reay, Davies, David, & Ball, 2001; Reisel, 2011; Sianou-Kyrgiou & Tsiplakides, 2011; Sullivan, Parsons, Wiggins, Heath, & Green, 2014; Triventi, 2013; Werfhorst, Sullivan, & Cheung, 2003). In addition, in some studies, inequalities in higher education; It focuses on variables such as: *Gender* (Davies & Guppy, 1997; Jacobs, 1996), *race/ethnicity* (Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Angelo, 2015; Ayalon, 2005; Ayalon, Grodsky, Gamoran, & Yogev, 2008; Reay vd., 2001), *region* (Croll, 2008; Forsyth & Furlong, 2003; James et al., 1999; Li, 2016), and *social exclusion* (Wang, 2011). The findings of these studies demonstrate that socio-economic and socio-cultural factors, such as income level, education level of parents, and region, are the determining factors for young adults persevering to gain access to higher education. In particular, we can see that the difference between the rates of university entry of individuals from different social classes, has been growing, and the problems arising from these social differences have gradually been deepening.

The criteria for determining socio-economic status are not an agreed variable in the relevant literature. However, socio-economic status includes social, economic, and cultural variables related to class differences. At an international level, various approaches are used to determine socio-economic status. These approaches take criteria, such as parents' profession and educational level, family income level, and place of residence, into consideration (Centre for the Study of Higher Education [CSHE], 2008). In particular, income status, occupation, and educational level are considered to be three main components of social positioning, as well as control over resources. Individual/family income can be effective in meeting individuals' direct educational costs and meeting other vital expenses. The educational and professional characteristics of the individual and the family affect the career expectations of the individual and his/her perspectives on education (Andrews, 1999). Family income level influences the evaluation of future education alternatives, especially at the end of the compulsory education period. The economic situation of families from different social classes, determines the direct and indirect costs of their children continuing their education and their children's trends in living standards (Goldthorpe, 1996).

While the impact of socio-economic background on educational outcomes has, for many years, been among the most studied area in literature, little progress has been made toward understanding *how* this relationship is produced (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). However, Bourdieu and Passeron (2000, 2014) in 1964 and 1970, Bernstein (2003) in 1971, Bowles and Gintis (2002), and Bourdieu, again, in 1984, studied how to reproduce culture and education in the social space. The studies, which were carried out to examine the contribution and the concept of reproduction in this direction, contributed to a better understanding of the process created by the social stratification system. Research on the effects of social stratification on higher education has focused on lower social class students' access to higher education and the disadvantages they face in the system, and aims to reveal the role of educational qualifications in the reproduction of social inequality. The works of Bourdieu and Passeron have been particularly popular, as these studies have brought a new perspective on the role of families' cultural and social resources in creating educational inequalities (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Similar to other thinkers of reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2000, 2014; Bernstein, 2003; Bowles & Gintis, 2002), Bourdieu considers the education system within the framework of the "reproduction of social classes." According to Bourdieu (1995), education mediates the social reproduction process by playing a role in the accumulation of social, cultural, and economic spheres of dominant social classes. Thus, there is a strong correlation between the process of division of education and social classes. The process of social division protects the given structure, which, in other words, is the difference between students who are not equal in social and economic capital. For a more precise explanation, education divides those who have acquired social and economic capital through inheritance, through a process of segregation from those who lack this capital (Tunç, 2011) According to Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural reproduction, on which these views are based, the explanation of inequalities in education lies in the distribution of "cultural capital." The concept of cultural capital, which is defined as high-status cultural signals used in cultural and social selection, was first developed

by Bourdieu and Passeron to examine how culture and education contribute to social reproduction (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Bourdieu states that cultural capital involves the predisposition to and familiarity with the dominant culture in society. The rate of ownership of cultural capital differs according to social classes and the education system guarantees this level of cultural capital (Werfhorst et al., 2003).

In this study, the social class status for access to higher education was determined according to the socio-economic characteristics of the students, themselves, and their families. In this study, the socio-economic characteristics of the students were evaluated according to the social class approach, defined by Bourdieu (1979, as cited in Ünal, 2017, p. 381). Bourdieu describes the class as follows: "The real class... is the homogeneous entity, adopting the homogeneous arrangements, producing homogeneous trends, intermingling with the class habitus of all the actors who possess the whole of common property." The class habitus, as in this definition, is the producer and distinctive basis of the lifestyle . Bourdieu proposed four new variables instead of the income, occupation, and training variables used in previous class analyses. These are classified as economic capital (financial resources), social capital (social relations networks), cultural capital (education and information facilities), and symbolic capital (norms and values that affect the person). In accordance with these variables, Bourdieu differentiated the classes as the upper class (the ruling class/dominating class), the middle class (petty bourgeoisie) and the lower class (Sezal, 2003). According to Bourdieu, the upper class possesses all kinds of capital sufficiently, considers itself to be deliberately differentiating itself from the other classes, and continues to exist by imposing its own values and norms on the lower classes. Bourdieu named the middle class as the "new petty bourgeoisie" that had imitated the upper class. Bourdieu defines cultural diversity as cultural capital-intensive, but argues that these are relatively unregulated or non-standardized, and that they are specialized in the production of symbolic goods and services. According to Bourdieu, the economic, cultural, and social capital of the lower class is weak. The members of this class have a habitually determined habit, which is determined by the necessity of adapting to this necessity and thus by the assessment of physical power. This class defines the working class, which has the lowest total capital volume (Swartz, 2015; Ünal, 2017).

In Bourdieu's studies, there are important determinations about higher education. Bourdieu argues that tertiary education has increasingly become a sector that enables its activities to be distinguished from other parts of society by their functions (Dear, 2003). According to Bourdieu (1995), the function of education, in the process of the division of social classes, becomes increasingly evident at the level of higher education. The preferences of the social classes, at this stage, differ markedly (Tunç, 2011). From this point of view, the focus of Bourdieu's study on higher education is the desire to emphasize higher education as a powerful aid to the restoration and restructuring of social inequality. This inclusive focus has provided important theoretical and experimental contributions to the social perspectives of the relations between university and society. In his attempt to understand and explain how education functions as one of the mechanisms that reproduce the social stratification, Bourdieu uses the concepts of space, habitus, and cultural capital to explain this process of reproduction. Bourdieu also tried to explain the functioning of higher education through the development of these basic concepts connected to each other. These central concepts are brought together in a relational framework to show exactly how the social reproduction function of higher education is achieved through relative autonomy and hierarchical structure (Naidoo, 2004). We have attempted to explain these basic concepts in the discussion section where the findings of the research have been interpreted.

Determinants of Access to Higher Education in Turkey

Of particular note was the demand for tertiary education, which began in the 1950s and gained momentum in the 1980s, in many countries, and which led to the expansion of field of higher education in Turkey. Accordingly, the number of students and institutions, in higher education, increased rapidly (Bülbül, 2016; Tanrıkulu, 2011; TED, 2005; YÖK, 2005).

Table 1 shows the change in the number of students in higher education in Turkey, between 1984 and 2018.

Table 1. Number of students in higher education in Turkey (1984-2018)

Year	Two Year Degree	Undergraduate	Graduate	Formal Education in Total	Open Education and Distance Education	Total	Population of Turkey	Rate of Higher Education Students' Number to General Population %
1984-1985	45.642	287.087	19.156	351.885	65.456	417.341	50.664.458	0.82
1989-1990	62.671	353.869	40.665	457.205	228.295	685.500	56.473.035	1.21
1999-2000	218.099	713.259	84.054	1.015.452	488.569	1.503.981	67.803.927	2.2
2009-2010	613.077	1.152.265	206.775	1.972.117	1.557.217	3.529.334	73.722.988	4.8
2014-2015	896.031	1.897.692	406.817	3.200.540	2.862.346	6.062.886	78.741.053	7.7
2017-2018	1.096.421	2.264.196	527.065	3.887.682	3.672.689	7.560.371	82.003.882	9.2

Source: Gürüz, 2003; ÖSYM, 2015; YÖK, 2015, 2018; TURKSTAT, 2015, 2018.

The total number of higher education students, with 2,914 in 1923, the date of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, and later rising to 346,476 during 1977–1978, started to decrease to 237,369 during 1980–1981 (Gürüz, 2003). As seen in Table 1, the number of tertiary students, which has continued to increase, reached 7,560,371 in the 2017–2018 academic year. In 2018, the total number of students was 6,963,903 in state universities and 596,468 in private universities. 4,047,302 of the students were male and 3,513,069 were female. The number of higher education institutions, in Turkey, has increased, as has the number of students. This increase has gained momentum, especially since 1992. As of 2008, the availability of universities has been extended to all cities in Turkey. In 2018, the number of higher education institutions in Turkey reached 206, including 129 state universities, 72 private universities and five vocational schools (YÖK, 2005, 2018).

In Turkey, the higher education enrollment rate has led to an increase in the number of higher education institutions over the years. The increasing rate of higher education institutions in Turkey is 5.6% in 1980, 9.4% in 1990, 17.9% in 2000, 35% in 2010, 35.6% in 2015, 39.5% in 2015, and 42% in 2017 (Turkey Statistical Institute [TURKSTAT], 2015; YÖK, 2005, 2015, 2018). Although the 42% schooling rate in higher education is above the world average, it is still below the average for developed countries. One of the indicators, that show that the schooling rate in higher education is not at the desired level, is the number of students who applied to the university. Table 2 shows the number of students who applied to the university entrance exam in the period between 1980 and 2017.

Table 2. The Number of Students Applying for University Entrance Examination and Gained to Right to Enroll between 1980 and 2017 in Turkey

Year	Number of Applicants	Number of Enrolled Students	Enrolling Rate %
1980	466.963	41.574	8.9
1985	480.633	156.065	32.5
1990	892.975	196.253	22.0
1995	1.265.103	383.974	30.4
2000	1.407.920	439.061	31.2
2005	1.844.891	688.840	37.3
2010	1.587.866	874.306	55.1
2015	2.126.684	983.090	46.2
2017	2.265.844	825.397	36.4

Source: ÖSYM, 1997, 2015; YÖK, 2018

As shown in Table 2, 32.5% of university applicants in 1985, 30.4% in 1995, 37.3% in 2005, and 36.4% in 2017, were able to enroll in a department in a university. This data, comprising students wishing to study at a university in Turkey, reveals that most of them failed to reach their objective. The fact that the supply of higher education has not increased in parallel with the demand, highlights the issue of access to higher education (Tanrıkulu, 2011). Yet, it would not be correct to consider the problem of access only as an agglomeration in front of the university, in other words, as a quantitative problem (Bülbül, 2016), because access to higher education is related to ensuring that those who wish to benefit from higher education can study in the programs allowed by their characteristics without any constraint other than their personal efforts and abilities. Expansion and participation in higher education is expected to serve this purpose (Ekinci, 2009, 2011). In this context, we need to pose the question about who stands to benefit from higher education and how do individuals' socio-economic characteristics affect this process (Bülbül, 2016).

One factor, affecting the higher education goals and decisions of individuals with higher education, in Turkey, is the training they have received prior to the impact of their socio-economic background. Especially true is the fact that the quality of educational service received at the secondary level, in Turkey, can directly affect the targets of higher education (Bilgili et al., 2003; Bülbül, 2017; Çetingül & Dülger, 2006; Eğitim Reformu Girişimi [ERG], 2010; Özgüven, 1975; TED, 2010). The results of several studies, conducted in Turkey (Bilgili et al., 2003; Buyruk, 2008; ; Köse, 1990, 1999), have revealed the effect of high schools on higher education. The reason for the differences in students' choice of higher education lies in the quality gap between the universities (Berberoğlu & Kalender, 2005; Bilgili et al., 2003; Çetingül & Dülger, 2006; Özgüven, 1975; TEDMEM, 2017a).

In Turkey, there are certain national and international examinations that reveal the difference in quality among types of schools in secondary education, and target to evaluate types of schools in terms of academic achievement. In the context of these examinations, when types of schools in secondary education are examined in terms of academic performance, it is seen that the performances in higher education placement (exam) are parallel to academic performance of these schools (Oral & McGivney, 2014). For instance, considering students' Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) performances between 2003 and 2012, the gap between the schools' academic achievement rates can be observed and the best performance rates belong to science high schools, Anatolian high schools and teacher training high schools, while the lowest rates are seen for multi program high schools, vocational high schools and general high schools (Bülbül, 2015). The structural difference between the school types, at the same educational level, gives rise to the difference in educational outcome of students, relating to their socio-economic status (Tunç, 2011). Particularly interesting is the contrast of the outcomes for the science and Anatolian high school students, which is supported by such assumptions as "these students will be better in terms of the quality of education they get and the need of the country that will contribute to the training of qualified manpower." However, students enrolling in the high schools that are not "elite," nor "prestigious," have been disadvantaged. This disadvantage contradicts an education policy based on equality and social justice (TED, 2010), since the data and research in Turkey reveals that access to these schools is related to socio-economic factors.

Some research, based on data from the PISA test, reveals that socio-economic segregation between schools and school types, is huge. For instance, the results of two separate studies, carried out on PISA results in 2009 and 2012, indicate that the difference in social classes is not distributed equally between different school types. In PISA, half of the students studying in vocational and technical schools, which are the lowest performing school types in 2009, are in the lowest socio-economic segment (40% of the overall number). Only 8% of the students in this type of school are in the high socio-economic quintile. On the contrary, 65% of the students in the science high schools, which are some of the most distinguished schools, are in the highest (20%) socio-economic class (Aedo, Naqvi, & Cahu, 2013). The nature of the educational environment varies greatly from one school type to another. Students who are studying at the science high schools, which have the best school environment, have scored an average

of 147 points higher than those in vocational high schools, where the lowest results have been obtained. This difference was measured over the course of three school years. Similarly, in the PISA test of 2012, 51% of students in science high schools and 42% of students in Anatolian high schools came from families with the highest socio-economic level. On the other hand, 23% of the students in vocational high schools and 30% of the students attending other secondary schools belonged to the lowest socio-economic class. This was also demonstrated in the "MoNE 21st Century Student Profile" survey, conducted by Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2011). The research report, which studied secondary school students in Turkey, looked at the properties owned by the families of the student community to determine whether economic and cultural characteristics play a significant part in the students' achievements. In general, students in these three groups of high schools differ in comparison with each other, in terms of their academic characteristics and their social and psychological characteristics, such as attitudes, values, and expectations. According to the research report, as observed in many societies, secondary education institutions in Turkey regard the properties owned by the students as homogeneous as well as heterogeneous among themselves. The most important and striking result to be drawn from this table, is that students from disadvantaged families enter schools that are considered below standard in terms of performance and quality. Thus, we can conclude that the likelihood of breaking the inequality and poverty cycle, is quite low (Oral & McGivney, 2014). The linear relationship between success in schools and socio-economic status in secondary education shows that the students actually split up in class in the transition from primary to secondary education. In a sense, children who attend general high schools and vocational high schools often do not have the opportunity for social mobility (ERG, 2009).

Based on this general framework, this study attempts to understand the connection between socio-economic status and access to higher education, for Trakya University students. A significant observation about certain socio-economic status characteristics within faculties and fields, which was made during the research, has been taken as an indicator that faculty and field preferences are related to socio-economic status, however heterogeneous distribution has been taken as an indicator that socio-economic status is not related to faculty and field preferences. In this respect, the research can be considered as a test of Bourdieu's theory of reproduction, on a limited sample.

Purpose

This study aims to evaluate the impact of students' socio-economic status and the type of secondary school attended, on their access to higher education. In this context, the following questions have been raised:

1) Does the distribution of students' choice of faculty/field differ according to their socio-economic origins?
2) Does the distribution of students' choice of faculty/field differ according to their pre-tertiary education experiences?
3) What are the views of the students about the purpose of entrance to higher education?

Method

Research Model

This research is a screening model because it attempts to describe a situation that existed in the past or exists in the present (Karasar, 2014). In this study, we have tried to reveal how students from different social classes are affected by disparate origins that may be the determinants of their access to higher education. The research was carried out in two phases, using different approaches. In the first phase of the study, the data was used to describe the role of the students studying in different departments of the same university, and their access to tertiary education was evaluated by, in a sense, removing their profiles. In the second phase of the study, focus group interviews were conducted to discuss the phenomenon of inequality in higher education, by describing the individual perceptions and common characteristics of the students who came from different backgrounds and to understand how they perceived their subjective experiences about their situation.

Universe and Sample

The population of this study consisted of students studying at Trakya University. During the 2017–2018 academic year, Trakya University had 48,695 students, 1705 faculty members and was one of Turkey's major public universities with 1511 administrative staff. As of the 2017–2018 academic year, the university also provides education to 2,636 foreign students, with the majority of them from the Balkans. In the 2016–2017 academic year, Trakya University students mostly studied in the "Vocational and Technical Basic Area (41%), followed by the Basic Area of Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences" (26%). In the Basic Sciences of Education and Teacher Training, the student density is 8% and in the Basic Sciences and Mathematics it is 4%. The density of students in the Basic Area of Vocational and Technical Education stems from the objectives of opening programs for the training of intermediate staff due to the close proximity of the industrial areas of Trakya (Trakya University, 2018). The first phase of the research consisted of 10,374 first year students who had newly enrolled in Trakya University, in 2017. In this study, a disproportionate stratified sampling technique (Erkuş, 2013) was used to determine a sample with equal weight among all faculties and colleges in the sample universe. In order to determine the sample size in the study, the sample determination chart, developed by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), was used. The sample size was 964, which could represent the sample universe, considering the 95% confidence level and 3% deviation amount in the 10,000-member sample universe. In this context, 1,100 questionnaires were applied, and 983 questionnaires were used for the research after those with missing information and sloppy responses were removed from the returned questionnaires. Table 3 presents the sample of the first stage of the study, and the distribution of 983 students according to gender and faculty/field of study.

Table 3. Distribution of students by gender and by the faculty / field

Gender	**Frequency (f)**		**Percentage (%)**		
Female	595		60.5		
Male	388		39.5		
Total	983		100.0		
Distributionof Students to Faculties/Schools	**f**	**%**	**Distribution of Students to Departments**	**f**	**%**
Faculty of Letters	60	6.1			
Faculty of Education	61	6.2			
College of Physical Education and Sports	52	5.3	Faculties in Social Sciences	266	27.1
Faculty of Divinity	49	5.0			
Faculty of Fine Arts	44	4.5			
Arda Vocational College	50	5.1			
Health Service	55	5.6	Vocational Schools	225	22.9
Social Sciences	59	6.0			
Technical Sciences	61	6.2			
Faculty of Dentistry	49	5.0			
Faculty of Pharmacy	51	5.2	Faculties in Health Sciences	142	14.4
Faculty of Medicine	42	4.3			
Faculty of Economics & Administrative Sciences	70	7.1	Faculties in Economics / Trade and Tourism	129	13.1
School of Applied Sciences	59	6.0			
Faculty of Science	51	5.2	Faculties in Science and Auxiliary Health Services	111	11.3
Faculty of Health Sciences	60	6.1			
Faculty of Engineering	54	5.5	Faculties in Engineering	110	11.2
Faculty of Architecture	56	5.7			
Total	**983**	**100.0**	**Total**	**983**	**100.0**

In the research, two study groups were used, based on the mixed model. One study group consisted of 983 first year students who were newly enrolled in Trakya University in 2017. Of these, 60.5% were female and 39.5% were male. Among these students, 142 were in health sciences, 110 were in engineering, 266 were in social sciences, 129 were in economics/commerce and tourism, 111 were in the sciences and auxiliary health services faculties, and 225 were in vocational schools.

The study group involved in the second part of the research consisted of 26 students from eight different faculties, two different colleges, and three different vocational schools affiliated with Trakya University in the spring term of the 2018 academic year. Selection of participants was made using the criterion sampling technique as a sampling method. In this type of sampling, the basic method is to study all situations that meet a predetermined set of criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). One of the criteria in the research was that students had to be from different faculties/colleges and genders. As a result, the study included 26 students from each faculty, college, and vocational school. Two female students, included in the sample, could not attend the planned focus group interview, and, consequently, they were replaced by two male students. In total, there were 12 females and 14 males among the students interviewed.

Data Collection and Analysis

The quantitative data of the study were collected by the "Determiners of Access to Higher Education Survey," developed by the researcher. When developing the questionnaire, a questionnaire consisting of 40 questions was prepared, considering the related literature. The questionnaire was submitted to gain the opinion of the faculty members who were working in the field of Educational Administration, Measurement and Evaluation and expert opinions were received regarding the validity of the questionnaire, and the necessary corrections were made in accordance with the feedback. The questionnaire was applied to a group of students studying at the Faculty of Education at Trakya University. In light of all these evaluations, the resultant questionnaire was composed of 27 questions. The developed questionnaire was applied in May, 2017, after obtaining approval from Trakya University Ethics Committee (Date of Decision: 08.03.2017, Decree no: 217.03.11). The Chi-Square test was used to test whether students' opinions differed according to the departments (faculties and colleges) in which they studied. The opinions of the students on the purpose of entrance to higher education were analyzed by using the percentage and frequency values.

The data in the second step of the research were obtained through "focus group" interview. This type of interview was preferred due to the fact that the participants had in-depth knowledge, experience, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and attitudes about the subject, determined in accordance with the general characteristics of the qualitative research (Çokluk, Yılmaz, & Oğuz, 2011). The prepared interview form was presented to garner the opinions of faculty members with expertise and experience in the subject and the questions were formulated on the basis of the feedback. The preliminary application of the form was carried out with four students and corrections were made to two questions that could not be clearly understood and were confusing. It will help to reveal the experiences and meanings in the process of higher education choice of students after pre-practice. A total of eight questions were included in the thematic framework, consisting of three dimensions: "pre-tertiary education life," "higher education preferences" and "expectations from higher education." The focus group meetings, which had been planned within the scope of the research, were conducted in three sessions, in May, 2018. Ten students participated in the first focus group interview, and eight students participated in each of the second and third interviews. Each focus group interview lasted between 120 and 140 minutes. Interviews were recorded with a voice recorder, with the consent of the participants. In order to eliminate the possibility of any disruption in the registrations and to take into account the non-verbal aspects of the interviews, notes were taken by two co-reporters. During the interview,

students were prevented from neglecting the data collection process. The role of the researcher was the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the findings.

The qualitative data, that reveals the perceptions and experiences of the students, were analyzed using descriptive analysis, because the themes that will form the basis of the conceptual structure and analysis of the research, are predetermined (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In the analysis of the qualitative data, the voice recordings were transferred to the computer. The voice recordings and scripts on the computer were then given to an expert and checked to ensure the data were correctly transferred to the computer. After this stage, the data were placed in the descriptive data indices created by the researcher, and grouped and interpreted under the determined themes. The themes and sub-themes, obtained as the last step of the analysis phase, were presented to gain the opinion of an expert in the fields of educational sciences and qualitative research, and the inter-coder reliability analysis was performed on the themes obtained. In this process, reliability = [Consensus / (Consensus + Disagreement)] X 100 formula (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was used, and the reliability between the encoders was calculated as 92%. In order to ensure the transferability of the results obtained in the study, the data have been described in detail and supported by direct quotations. In the direct quotations, the real names of the participants were kept anonymous and the direct quotations were expressed as P1, P2, etc. The research report was examined by two experts for the purpose of confirming the compliance of the raw data with the findings and interpretations.

In this research; the level of parents' education, family business and income level of family indicators are accepted as determinants of social, cultural and economic capital. It has been noted that selected indicators are evaluated within the framework of the social and economic structure in Turkey. In this study, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was used to classify the educational levels of parents. Developed by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), ISCED is designed as a suitable tool for the collection, compilation and presentation of educational statistics and comparable indicators, both nationally and internationally. ISCED provides standard concepts, definitions, and classifications (YÖK, 2019). According to the level of education): 1) Level 0–2 (0: Early Childhood, 1: Primary, 2: Secondary), 2) Level 3–4, completed secondary education (3: High school, 4: Post-secondary non-university education), 3) Level 5—8, higher education (5: Vocational School, 6: Bachelor, 7: Master, 8: Ph.D. and equivalent) ISCED 2011 (2012) represents individuals who have completed these levels. These three categories can be labeled as low education, secondary education, and higher education, respectively (Arslankurt, 2013). In this study, in the classification of parents' education levels, we use the following: low education level includes illiterate and primary school graduates who are located in the lower socio-economic segment; secondary education level includes people with secondary education; associate degree graduates are included in the middle socio-economic level; and finally, higher education, undergraduate and graduate education graduates are included in the upper socio-economic level. The parents' jobs of students in research is determined based on TURKSTAT (2012) job classifications properley Bourdieu's format this research, the occupations evaluated as part of the upper class are: 1) Health professionals (doctors, dentists, pharmacists); 2) Other professional members (engineers, architects, judges, prosecutors, attorneys, senior officers, faculty members, writers, artists); 3) Business people, traders; and 4) Senior managers. Professions evaluated in the middle class are as follows: 1) Officers, 2) Tradesmen, 3) Assistant professions (private sector paid) and 4) Pensioners. The professions in the lower class are: 1) Farmers, 2) Workers and 3) Unemployed. Another indicator used in the study is the family income level, which is classified according to the "Income Distribution and Living Conditions" statistic issued by TURKSTAT (2017) and based on household disposable income in Turkey, in 2016 (Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of annual household usable income by 20 percent groups, 2016 (Dollar)

	First %20 Poorer	Second %20 Poor	Third %20 Middle Income	Fourth %20 Above Average	Last %20 Most Wealthy
Household Annual Income	4333	7338	10.482	14.919	31.937
Household Monthly Income	360	612	873	1243	2661

Source: TURKSTAT, 2017 Income Distribution and Living Conditions Statistics.

Based on these data, families with income in the first and second 20% groups were considered as in the lower; third and fourth 20% in middle income; and families with income in the fifth 20% segment in the wealthiest group.

Results

The results of the study were given under three dimensions as "socio-economic characteristics," "pre-tertiary education life," and "the goal of access to higher education" within the scope of the research.

Results Related to Socio-economic Characteristics of Students

In the first instance, we have included in our research a description of the socio-economic characteristics that we have used, such as educational status, profession, and income status of the students, all of which are assumed to be effective in the higher education preferences. Table 5 shows the distribution of faculties/fields pertaining to the students' major, according to the parents' educational level.

Table 5. Distribution of Faculties/Fields According to Parents' Education Levels

	Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		Total	
Mother	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Lower Class	33	23.2	48	43.6	173	65.0	62	55.9	65	50.4	144	64.0	525	53.4
Middle Class	70	49.3	43	39.1	82	30.8	42	37.8	57	44.2	76	33.8	370	37.6
Upper Class	39	27.5	19	17.3	11	4.1	7	6.3	7	5.4	5	2.2	88	9.0
Total	142	100	110	100	266	100	111	100	129	100	225	100	983	100
χ2: 132.61, sd:14, p: .00														
Father	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Lower Class	20	14.1	33	30.0	118	44.4	44	39.6	52	40.3	87	38.7	354	36.0
Middle Class	62	43.7	41	37.3	120	45.1	49	44.1	67	51.9	124	55.1	463	47.1
Upper Class	60	42.3	36	32.7	28	10.5	18	16.2	10	7.8	14	6.2	166	16.9
Total	142	100	110	100	266	100	111	100	129	100	225	100	983	100

χ2: 149.16, sd:14, p: .00

Lower class: Not literate- elementary school graduate. Middle Class: Secondary-High School graduate. Upper Class: University Graduate- MA.

The distribution of students by faculty and field shows significant differences in the parents' education status, which is one of the social class criteria (mother: $\chi 2 = 132.61$; $p < .01$, father: $\chi = 149.16$; $p < .01$), namely, social sciences (mother: 65%, father: 44.4%) and vocational schools (mother: 64%, father: 38.7%). We understand that most of the parents of the students are "illiterate/elementary school graduates" who are classified as being in the lower social class. The health sciences (mother: 49.3%, father: 43.7%), economics/trade, and tourism (mother: 44.2%, father: 51.9%) had the highest proportion of parents with educational levels evaluated as being in the "middle social class." The highest

proportion of mothers and fathers with an educational level evaluated to be within the "upper social class" belong to the health sciences (mother: 27.5%, father: 42.3%) and engineering (mother: 17.3%, father: 32.7%). The percentage of those whose mother is a university graduate, is very low in units other than the health sciences and engineering.

Table 6 shows the distribution of faculties/fields of students' major area of study, according to parents' occupation.

Table 6. Distribution of Faculties/Fields Student Major According to Parents' Occupation

	Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		Total	
Mother	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Lower Class	102	71.8	88	80.0	228	85.7	92	82.9	111	86.0	195	86.7	816	83.0
Middle Class	34	23.9	20	18.2	35	13.2	18	16.2	18	14.0	28	12.4	153	15.6
Upper Class	6	4.2	2	1.8	3	1.1	1	0.9	-	-	2	0.9	14	1.4
Total	142	100	110	100	266	100	111	100	129	100	225	100	983	100
χ^2 :23.14, sd:10, p: .00														
Father	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Lower Class	38	26.8	39	35.5	92	34.6	55	49.5	58	15.0	107	47.6	389	39.6
Middle Class	81	57.0	61	55.5	164	61.7	54	48.6	64	49.6	112	49.8	536	54.5
Upper Class	23	16.2	10	9.1	10	3.8	2	1.8	7	5.4	6	2.7	58	5.9
Total	142	100	110	100	266	100	111	100	129	100	225	100	983	100

χ^2 : 56.94, sd:10, p: .00

Lower Social Class: Farmer / Worker / Housewife / Unemployed, Middle Social Class: Officer / Tradesmen / Private sector wage / Retirement, Upper Social Class: Professional, Business person, Senior executive

The distribution of students by faculty and other areas, as well as educational status, varies significantly according to the parental profession (mother: $\chi2 = 23.14$ =; $p < .01$, father: $\chi2 = 56.94$; $p < .01$). The highest proportion of mothers with occupations in the "lower social class" is the vocational high schools (86.7%), while the highest proportion of fathers with occupations in the "lower social class" is in the sciences and auxiliary health services faculties (49.5%). The areas with the highest proportion of parents with occupations in the "middle social class" are social sciences (mother: 13.2%, father: 61.7%) and health sciences (mother: 23.9%, father: 57%). The ratio of the mothers and fathers with occupations in the "upper social class" is very low (mother: 1.4%, father: 5.9%). The highest proportion of parents with occupations in the .1 upper social class oran is in health sciences (mother: 4.2%, father: 16.2%). In other areas, the ratio of mothers and fathers to upper social class occupations, is quite low.

Table 7 shows the distribution of the faculties/fields according to family income.

Table 7. Distribution of Faculties/Fields Student Major by Income (Monthly, USD)

Social Class	Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		Total	
	f	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Lower	35	24.6	34	30.9	119	44.7	42	37.8	68	52.7	127	56.4	425	43.2
Middle	82	57.7	66	60.0	133	50.0	65	58.6	55	42.6	90	40.0	491	49.9
Upper	25	17.6	10	9.1	14	5.3	4	3.6	6	4.7	8	3.6	67	6.8
Total	142	100	110	100	266	100	111	100	129	100	225	100	983	100

χ^2: 71.41, sd:10, p: .00

Lower Social Class (0-400 USD), Middle Social Class (401-1400 USD), Upper Social Class ($1401 and above)

The distribution of students to faculties and fields varies significantly according to their families' income ($\chi 2 = 71.41$ =; $p < .01$). When we looked at the total number of students who participated in the study, we could see that almost half of the families (43.2%) had a monthly average income at the lower social class level. The majority of the families of students in the vocational school (56.4%) and economics/commerce and tourism services (52.7%) have a level of income assessed at the lower social class level. The highest proportion of families with income levels evaluated in the "upper social class" is in the health sciences (17.6%).

Results Related to Pre-higher Education Experiences of Students

In order to understand the quality of the students' pre-tertiary experiences, we used questionnaires and focus interviews to obtain results pertaining to the students who participated in the research.

Table 8 shows the distribution of faculties/fields of the students' major according to type of high school from which they graduated.

Table 8. Distribution of Faculties/Fields Students Major by High School Type

	Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Anatolian HS	45	31.7	47	42.7	75	28.2	56	50.5	57	44.2	35	15.6	315	32.0
Vocational TS**	4	2.8	13	11.8	70	26.3	7	6.3	34	26.4	147	65.3	275	28.0
Others	27	19.0	10	9.1	70	26.3	19	17.1	4	3.1	9	4.0	139	14.1
General HS*	15	10.6	12	10.9	39	14.7	17	15.3	22	17.1	25	11.1	130	13.2
Private HS	18	12.7	21	19.1	11	4.1	10	9.0	10	7.8	9	4.0	79	8.0
Science HS	33	23.2	7	6.4	1	0.4	2	1.8	2	1.6	-	-	45	4.6
Total	142	100	110	100	266	100	111	100	129	100	225	100	983	100

χ^2: 444.24, sd:25, p: .00 *HS: High School, **TS: Tech. School

The distribution of students to faculties and fields shows significant differences according to the type of high school from which they graduated ($\chi 2$: = 444.24 =; $p < .01$). When the distribution of students according to the type of high school they graduated from is examined, it is seen that the graduates of "Anatolian High School" are in the first place with a ratio of 32.0% and the "Vocational Technical High School" graduates are next with a ratio of 28%. The ratio of "Science High School" graduates in the total number of students, is quite low (4.6%). The highest proportion of science high school graduates is in health sciences (23.2%) while "Private High School" graduates have the highest ratio of choosing engineering departments (19.1%). The highest proportion of graduates of vocational high schools is in vocational undergraduate programs (65.3%) The ratio of "Science High School" graduates in areas other than health sciences, is very low.

Table 9 shows the views of the students participating in the research, on the quality of high school education.

Table 9. Students' Views on the Quality of High School Education

		Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		χ^2	sd	p
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			
I received good high school education	Yes	72	50.7	43	39.1	79	29.7	50	45.0	33	25.6	73	32.4			
	Not entirely	59	41.5	49	44.5	132	49.6	44	39.6	64	49.6	104	46.2	36.14	10	.00
	No	11	7.7	18	16.4	55	20.7	17	15.3	32	24.8	48	4.9			

Table 9. Continued

		Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		χ^2	sd	p
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			
I got an effective orientation in high school.	Yes	64	45.1	39	35.5	67	25.2	46	41.4	30	23.3	51	22.7			
	Not entirely	48	33.8	41	37.3	93	35.0	38	34.2	47	36.4	87	38.7	44.97	15	.00
	No	30	21.1	30	27.3	106	39.9	27	24.3	52	40.3	87	38.7			
If I had studied at a better high school, I could have received a better education	Yes	44	31.0	48	43.6	143	53.8	50	45.0	82	63.6	146	52.2			
	Not entirely	55	38.7	45	40.9	59	25.9	34	30.6	32	24.8	61	27.1	67.76	10	.00
	No	43	30.3	17	15.5	54	20.3	27	24.3	15	11.6	18	8.8			

The views of the students regarding the quality of high school education showed significant differences according to their areas of study. Half of the students in the health sciences (50.7%), engineering (39.1%) and science and auxiliary health services (45.0%) believed that they had received a good education in high school. The highest number of students who did not think that they had received a good education in high school was in economics/trade, tourism (24.8%), and social sciences (20.7%). Nearly half (45.1%) of the students in health sciences thought that they were given effective direction toward university, while almost a quarter (22.7%) of the students from vocational schools believed they were given effective direction in high school. Students in economics/trade and tourism (63.6%), socials sciences (53.8%) and vocational high school (52.2%) students were of the opinion that most of them would have been able to enroll in a better department at the university if they had studied at a better high school.

Students in the focus group interviews were asked questions about their high school education in order to support the findings obtained from the student questionnaire regarding the quality of high school education and to contribute to an in-depth understanding of various situations in this subject. The findings of these interviews are presented below.

A good high school is the gateway to a good university

All of the students participating in the focus group interviews were of the opinion that the quality of education received in high school was very important and that the education received in high school is an important determinant of their ability to undertake higher education. For these reasons, students stated that the decision-making process about their high school choice was a very important one, and that the quality of education among high school types had a direct effect on their future education pursuits due to the fact that the quality of education was very different.

> *"I think the quality of high school is very important for entering the university and determining the profession. I had friends who were studying at my vocational high school, and the teachers there told my friends that they should not have study at university and they should have a profession. For that reason, I wanted to enroll in Anatolian high school and I can say that my reading in Anatolian High School had a direct effect on my entry into higher education" (P9: Literature, Male, Lower Grade, Anatolian High School).*

> *"My brother made the wrong choice for me. I was in general high school instead "Anatolian High School", which directly influenced my future. I started school with negative energy. I think the quality of high school education is very important. I'm on the same level with my friends in many different sections now. The high school period affects people's future, makes people dull or advance" (P20: Faculty of Health Sciences, Female, Lower Class, General high school).*

Most of the students stated that different factors were determinative in their choice of high school. One factor was the close proximity of the school, and another was their attainment in the entrance exam. In particular, the majority of students coming from lower social classes stated that they were not able to get sufficient direction while they were doing their high school preferences.

> *"High school choice is a very important process, we have the right to enter the university exam a hundred times, maybe a thousand times. When you have the right to enter the university exam more than once, a 13-14-year-old child has a one-shot chance for the high school. This is also a great responsibility, I think. If a child turns to a high school with a wrong choice, he will start his education level which will affect his future. When I made my choice, my family said we're going to read it because you don't understand what you want" (P23: Applied Sciences, Male, Lower Class, Vocational High School).*

> *"I wanted to enter Anatolian High School, but my score was not enough. I wanted this because Anatolian High School had a better education opportunity but it didn't happen. I went to general high school for a while. Then I moved to basic high school"(P5: Economics, Male, Middle Class, Elementary High School).*

Due to the existence of standardized testing for entry into tertiary education, students in Turkey are doing their utmost in the preparation process for the university entrance exams, in more ways than just getting a high school education. The nature of this preparatory process is very differentiated because students have different socio-economic roots. In light of this, we have examined how students prepare for entering into higher education.

Table 10 shows the distribution of faculties/fields by students' major, according to their preparation for the university entrance exam.

Table 10. Distribution of Faculties/Fields Students Major According To Preparation for University Exam

	Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
PM	47	33.1	31	28.2	125	47	33	29.7	55	42.6	134	59.6	425	43.2
PTI	54	38	53	48.2	106	39.8	53	48.2	52	40.3	54	24	372	37.8
NP	12	8.5	14	12.7	17	6.4	7	6.3	6	4.7	26	11.6	82	8.3
IT	18	12.7	6	5.5	14	5.3	8	7.2	12	9.3	9	4	67	6.8
PTI&IT	11	7.7	6	5.5	4	1.5	10	9	4	3.1	2	0.9	37	3.8
Total	142	100	110	100	266	100	111	100	129	100	225	100	983	100

χ^2: 91.47, sd:20, p: .00

IT=Individual Tutoring: PTI=Private Teaching Inst.: PM=Prepared myself : NP=No Preparation : PTI&IT= Private Teaching Inst. & Individual Tutoring

The distribution of students to faculties and fields shows significant differences according to the preparation form for university ($\chi 2 = 91.47$ =; $p < .01$). When the total number of students participating in the study was examined, we could see that the majority of the students prepared for the university exam without receiving any support (43.2%) or going to the classroom (37.8%). The highest proportion of students, who stated that they had been preparing for the exam, was highest in the science and auxiliary health services (48.2%) and economics/trade and tourism (40.3%), while the lowest was in vocational school (24.0%). Very few (6.8%) students stated that they were taking private lessons. Health sciences (12.7%) had the highest proportion of students who had undertaken private courses before taking the exam.

Table 11 shows the distribution of the expenses students incurred in preparation for the university exam.

Table 11. Distribution of Students According to Expenditure Made for Preparation for University (Annual / Usd)

	Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
0-600	70	11.6	44	40.0	171	64.3	53	47.7	77	59.7	189	84.0	604	61.4
601-1200	41	28.9	39	35.5	59	22.2	43	38.7	37	28.7	24	10.7	243	24.7
1201-1801	14	9.9	9	8.2	16	6.0	8	7.2	8	6.2	3	1.3	58	5.9
Above 1801	17	12.0	18	16.4	20	7.5	7	6.3	7	5.4	9	4.0	78	7.9
Total	142	100	110	100	266	100	111	100	129	100	225	100	983	100

χ^2: 100.16, sd:15, p: .00

The distribution of students to faculties and fields shows significant differences according to the expenditure made for preparation for university ($\chi 2 = 100.16 =; p <.01$). While the areas with the least expenditure in their preparation for university are vocational schools, social sciences and economics/trade and tourism, we can see that a significant portion of the students in the health sciences and engineering fields spent an annual amount of $1200 or more. The views on the preparatory process for higher education were taken from the students participating in the focus group discussions. .

Impossible without private education support

The majority of the students believed that the continuation of their pre-university education or any other preparatory process was one of the basic requirements for entering university. Students who had expressed their opinions in this direction thought that they could get the necessary training for the university entrance examination in the high schools they had attended. In addition to preparing for the university entrance exam as part of their courses, the students stated that they received guidance in the areas pertinent to being selected by the university and that this guidance was effective in helping them achieve their preferences. Some students stated that the guidance they received in the university preference process was sometimes at a level that could put pressure on them. The students with this opinion thought that this was due to their inadequate knowledge of the university and the department process.

> *"I think the private education support is effective when I enter university. They directed us and told us what to do, they tried to fulfill the gap in our understanding of the subjects" (P4: Faculty of Science, Girls, Lower Class, Imam Hatip High School).*

> *"We've all experienced private education support along with the school. My parents were primary school graduates because they were not very knowledgeable, they would go to the classroom and get information from me about the school. From there they would try to learn how. I think that the decision for the type of departments and universities is made in these institutions with the teachers rather than with family. They guided us. Classrooms also put pressure on families to specify what kind of preference we should make. That's how I got it. I can say that my preference was actually made almost only by them" (P19: Health Sciences, Male, Lower Class, Science High School).*

Some of the students stated that they were prepared without getting private education support for the university entrance exam. Some of the students who expressed their opinions in this direction stated that they did not go to these institutions voluntarily, while others stated that they could not attend them due to economic reasons.

"I didn't get this private institutional support, but I took a few private lessons. I just received a few private lessons from mathematics. The reason I did not get this service was due to financial issues". (P21: Vocational School of Social Sciences, Girl, Lower Class, İmam Hatip High School).

Results Related to Decisions on the Goal of Access to Tertiary Education

In this section we discuss the findings related to the purpose of students' entry into higher education. Table 12 presents the opinions of the students about the determinants of higher education choices.

Table 12. Students' Views on the Purpose of Entrance to Higher Education

	Health Sciences		Engineering		Social Sciences		Science and Auxilary Health Sciences		Economy /Trade /Tourism		Vocational School		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Ease of employment	89	62.7	65	59.1	105	39.5	86	77.5	79	61.2	135	60.0	559	56.9
Interest in the Department	75	52.8	63	57.3	169	63.5	63	56.8	20	15.5	75	33.3	465	47.3
Prestigious job desire	96	67.6	60	54.5	96	36.1	30	27.0	70	54.3	59	26.2	411	41.8
Determining the score of the university exam	49	34.5	43	39.4	78	29.3	31	27.9	61	47.3	102	45.3	364	37.1
Request to pursue an academic career	59	41.5	29	26.4	115	43.2	34	30.6	43	33.6	36	16.0	316	32.2
The request of the family, friends, etc.	32	22.5	7	6.4	31	11.7	11	9.9	13	10.1	32	14.2	126	12.8
Faculty&Hometown Closeness	6	4.2	7	6.4	16	6.0	11	9.9	9	7.0	18	8.0	67	6.8

More than half of the students who participated in the study (559 people, 56.9%), stated that they had come to the university with the expectation of finding a job in the future. "Interest in the department" (465 people, 47.3%) was also a factor. The number of students who expected to work in prestigious jobs (411 people, 41.8%), was also quite high. When the opinions of the students participating in the research, were examined, the most frequently mentioned factor for the reason for coming to the university, in fields other than health sciences, was the ease of being able to secure employment. The most common reason for enrolling in health sciences was "the desire to work in prestigious jobs (67.6%)".

The data collected on the social and economic characteristics of the families of the students, provide important clues about the students according to their chosen fields/departments in higher education. In addition, the effects of the economic and cultural characteristics of the students' families on the students' educational experiences can contribute to the in-depth knowledge of the social dimensions of inequality in higher education. In this respect, during the focus group interviews, we asked students from different backgrounds what effects different educational experiences had on their families. Almost all of the students in the study thought that their families had an important effect on their educational life. The students stated that they received valuable support from their families, especially in terms of achieving higher education and making higher education decisions. However, the nature of this support and the expectations of parents about their higher education varied significantly according to the socio-economic background of their families.

Study to save yourself

Our study showed that the families of the students from the lower social classes consider higher education to be a human capital investment that can help to improve their future income and living conditions. It has the capacity to enable children with higher education to look forward to having better living conditions in the future for their families, and, in particular, to prevent them from experiencing their own economic difficulties. It is understood that the children of the parents who offered this opinion stated that they could possibly find a job in the "public arena" and "work in more qualified jobs" by completing university. The students stated that their families went to a lot of effort to fulfill such requests, but that, after a while, this situation put pressure on them.

> *"Higher education was very important in order to become a civil servant in my place, to have a job in order to obtain a high level of place. For this reason, I was forced by my family to go to university" (P15: Education Faculty, Male, Middle Class, Vocational High School).*

> *"I'm the one who went to the college first in our family. My whole family has started business in very early ages. The reason I study is that I have been told by my father from an early age that I could barely save my future with education and I should not be like them in this term. It is especially important for our people to have occupations with "suits". Because I have heard a lot of statements in the form of an officer, because they are respected by society" (P23: Applied Sciences, Male; Lower Class, Vocational High School).*

> *"My parents are both retired and have worked hard throughout their lives. For that reason, they expressed their expectations from me as being better, more comfortable. But this has given rise to more pressure on me. After a while, I got rid of this pressure and started to turn to my own preferences" (P25: Vocational School of Technical Sciences, Male, Lower Class, General High School).*

I've chosen departments that guarantee employment in the future

A significant number of students emphasized that economic factors are determinative when making departmental choices. The students of this opinion stated that it was an important factor for them to have the option of finding a job after graduation.

> *"I can say that the idea of being employed as soon as possible is the decisive factor for my preference. Maybe I didn't want this department too much. I mean, it wasn't in the first place, but it was also determinative to have the opportunity to find a job for my decision" (P20: Faculty of Health Sciences, Female, Lower Class, General high school).*

> *"While I was choosing my department at the university, I thought I should build my business and create my life as soon as possible" (P17: Science Vocational School, Male, Lower class, General High School).*

All of the students participating in the interviews thought that their families supported them when making educational decisions. The students stated that their families made sacrifices by providing both material and moral support. However, almost all of the students from the lower social classes reported that they were not able to get adequate guidance from their families due to their high educational level and that the families could not provide adequate support in making educational decisions.

> *"I think that the level of education of the family is important on educational decisions. Let me give you an example; In my high school preference, my family did not guide me but the neighbor's child. In this case, it is revealed that my family cannot provide necessary help in terms of education. I think if my family was a high school graduate or university graduate, it could have been very different. So, I think my family couldn't do much with this level of education" (P23: Applied Sciences, Male, Lower Class, Vocational High School).*

"I think that educating the family is important in educational decisions. In making our educational decisions, if our family were a little more knowledgeable, we could make better decisions. Because when you make decisions about yourself, they are always the closest people" (P21: Vocational School of Social Sciences, Girl, Lower class, Imam Hatip High School).

"I never complain about my family, but if they had made a better guidance since primary school, maybe I could have studied much better departments, I think I could have enrolled in better departments then" (O9: Literature, Male, Lower Class, Anatolian High School).

Some students stated that they received more specific guidance from their families, especially for their university preferences. We understand that the students who took such guidance, were students from the middle and upper classes. Students who expressed their opinions in this direction, stated that their families had a direct effect on their university preferences and that their parents put some pressure on them to change their preferences.

"I think my parents have been financially supportive and approached friendly to me. They wanted me to study engineering. They wanted my brother to study engineering. He studied computer engineering. I always wanted to be a teacher. But my parents did not support this choice. I chose engineering as their request" (P12: Engineering, Female, Middle class, Anatolian High School).

"The first year I entered the exam and I chose dentistry due to the request by my family. I studied there for a year, but I couldn't adapt. Then I made a decision about medicine, so I decided to change the department. My family was a little worried about this decision. Can you do it or not? When my sister had studied medicine, they knew that it was difficult to study in medicine. I don't know, maybe they didn't want me to prefer medicine in the first year. Actually, I'm kind of misguided. I couldn't adapt at the other faculty and one year went in vain" (P13: Medicine, Female, Middle class, Anatolian High School).

Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

The results of this study reveal that the socio-economic status of students affects the quality of pre-tertiary education experiences and school type preferences. The distribution of students in the various faculties and fields shows significant differences according to the type of high school they graduated from and the quality of their education in high school. It is understood that high school students, such as those from health sciences and engineering, have graduated from high schools such as Science High Schools and Anatolian High Schools. The students from these kinds of high schools think that they have received a good education throughout their school life and face an effective orientation toward university. On the other hand, the majority of students studying in areas dominated by students from the lower social classes, such as Vocational School of Higher Education and Social Sciences, have the opinion that they cannot get a good education in high school, and that if they had studied in a good high school, they could have had the right to be enrolled in a better part of the university. The students who participated in the focus group interviews also drew attention. These students believe that the quality of the education received in high school is very important and that it is an important determinant of one's ability to enter higher education.

The decision on school type, for students continuing on to secondary education, is determined by a centralized examination that is based on ranking and elimination (Başaran Tican, 2005; ERG, 2013; Küçüker, 2017; TED, 2010; TEDMEM, 2013, 2017a, 2017b). Placing students in schools based on centralized examinations results in intensification of student achievement and the emergence of differences in competence between school types and schools. The difference between the increase in quality and socio-economic status becomes more decisive at this time. Over the years, these processes have experienced reciprocal causality, and school-level segregation by socio-economic background has

been observed (ERG, 2010). Children from upper class families who have been raised by special teachers after secondary school, can, in secondary education, increase their chances of entering the department of their choice at university by entering foreign language-based private schools, Anatolian High Schools and Science High Schools. Thus, the employment opportunities and high-level wages of medicine, engineering, and such areas, are reserved for some privileged families (Âdem, 1999). In this way, as stated by Bourdieu (1995), a functioning school system actually performs the function of elimination (sorting) among the students and continues the functioning of the school reproduction mechanisms by eliminating students from the lower class. Students are categorized according to their fields after they are separated according to their social, economic, and cultural characteristics, by means of examinations and selection mechanisms. In a sense, the student's educational route, starting from the environment of his birth, the family's economic and cultural features, and continuing with the type of primary and high school attended, all influencing each other, is mapped out in a chain-like way. Students involved in the "fail" group also assume responsibility for failure by developing various resistance mechanisms (Buyruk, 2008). The socio-economic status of schools in Turkey leads to further deepening the differences between this form of separation of student achievement (ERG, 2010) and the formation of stratification between school types (Aedo et al., 2013).

Another result of this study shows that the socio-economic status of students participating in the study has affected their preparation process for higher education. The distribution of students within the faculties and the fields shows significant differences according to their preparation for university and the expenditure made for university. Students in secondary education face the difficulty of the entrance exam. For the students who cannot benefit from a qualified education in secondary education, the high score needed to be attained at the university entrance examination, is very important. For this reason, many students and families make an effort to evaluate this "last opportunity." However, in order to get the rights to tertiary education, the preparation process for higher education is not able to be achieved equally by each student, as it is in secondary education. In this process, new inequalities arise depending on the socio-economic origins of the student. The study results also support this situation. The highest percentage of students who stated that they sat for the university exam with support from the private institutions, are in the fields of Science and Auxiliary Health Services and Economics/Trade and Tourism, while the ones who did not get this support achieved the lowest scores, resulting in enrollment in vocational schools. Very few of the students stated that they were preparing for the exam by taking private lessons. The highest proportion of students preparing for the exam by taking private courses was in health sciences, where the middle and upper grade students took out most of the places. The areas where the students spent the least amount of money in their preparation for university were the Social Sciences and Economics/Trade and Tourism and Vocational Schools. Similar results to those of Turkey have been achieved in studies on larger samples selected from the group in general. According to the findings of the YÖK (1997) study, the percentage of students attending exam preparatory courses increased as income level increased. Similarly, the TED (2005) study found that classrooms in Turkey showed an increasing concentration of upper income group families preparing students for the exam. These results indicate that alternatives, such as educational services run by private institutions and private lessons, are crucial to securing university entrance. The students who participated in the focus group meetings shared their opinions on this aspect. The majority of the students believe that the continuation of pre-university courses or any other preparatory process is one of the basic requirements for entering university. Some of the students who participated in the focus group interviews stated that they were preparing for university without any support or attendance. Some of the students who expressed their opinions on this did not attend a private school by their own volition and some of them stated that they were not able to attend for economic reasons. These results show that middle- and upper class students, in the preparation process for the private institutions and lessons, are at a much greater advantage than their lower class peers.

Inequalities, resulting from the examination system and the preparatory phase, reinforce the existing inequalities in entry to higher education (Buyruk, 2008). The greatest expenditure item for households, therefore, is for private education services in families that can afford them. This situation has led to the expansion of the "exam preparation" sector (TED, 2005). Individuals who want to achieve in this competitive environment are not content with the education they get in secondary education, but have turned to institutions and practices that may be alternatives to schools in order to increase their success in university examinations (ERG, 2009). The applications, referred to by different names, such as lectures, courses, studies, private lessons and student coaching, have been the alternatives that families spend money on in order to enable students to take the lead in the university entrance race (Bülbül, 2016). In addition, the reduction of the examination system to a technical level, by ignoring the economic and social impacts of the university entrance system, makes the studies to improve the system, inefficient. For this reason, university entrance should be considered in terms of social, economic, and political consequences (Özden, 1997). Otherwise, the education system, supported by the "student selection" processes at each stage, will make the capitalist system invisible and at the same time reproducing the differences and inequalities created and deepened by society (Ünal, 2005).

The results of the study show that there is a relationship between the education level of the family, which is considered to be social class criteria, parental occupation and family income status, and the department that a student has chosen in their higher education. According to the results of the research, we understand that the students from the middle and upper social classes have more prestigious and better earning opportunities in the fields of medicine, pharmacy, and engineering, while students from a lower social class are educated in faculties for vocational training at vocational colleges. In other words, as the socio-economic level of the family increases, the quality of the departments where the students are studying, increases. The fact is that students from the middle and upper social classes are more involved in departments that will bring them to professions, referred to as "white-collar" and "professional fields." In this case, Bourdieu's statement assumes a function as a "sorting machine" of higher education, which selects students according to a secret social classification and re-shapes them according to a clear academic classification that is very similar to this classification (Naidoo, 2004).

The relationship between socio-economic origin and the department studied (Ball et al., 2002; Chesters & Watson, 2012; James et al., 1999; Sianou-Kyrgiou & Tsiplakides, 2011; Van de Werfhorst & Kraaykamp 2001; Weiss & Steininger, 2012; Werfhorst et al., 2003) has been researched and the nature of this relationship has been demonstrated by examples from different countries. In the study conducted by Ball, Davies, David & Reay (2002), social class variables were found to be the main predictors of studying in tertiary education. In Davies and Guppy (1997), the results of the research indicate that students with good socio-economic status and cultural status are more likely to enroll in prestigious universities and higher education programs, and Van de Werfhorst and Kraaykamp (2001), found, in their study in the Netherlands, that children from the upper class prefer prestigious departments that pay well after graduation. Werfhorst et al. (2003) found, in their study in the UK, that children in economic elites tend to go to departments that are likely to provide a high level of commercial and financial skills or a high income in the labor market, in terms of class reproduction. Where the level of capital ownership is relatively low, they have determined that people are mostly oriented toward technical departments. The research results of Sianou-Kyrgiou and Tsiplakides (2011) have shown that middle-class children tend to prefer more prestigious university areas than lower class children. Some results of research conducted in Turkey reveals the similar socio-economic characteristics of their impact on their decisions about access to higher education. Şahin (1999) as a result of his research, found that students with families with a high education level had studied in more prestigious departments. According to the results of the research conducted by Buyruk (2008), the children of families who have

high levels of education and high living conditions tend to continue their higher education programs. The results of the research carried out by Ekinci (2011), are similar, showing that higher income and educated families are represented at higher rates in areas where children are considered to be more prestigious. The results of Tunç's study (2011) are consistent with the results of many studies that discuss the social origins of preferences in higher education. As a result of this study, we could see that the social and economic composition of the students in the Faculty of Technical Education was in parallel with the characteristics of the lower social class.

The results of this study have further revealed that the socio-economic status of the students had a decisive and influential effect on higher education decisions. All of the students who participated in the research thought that their families provided them with both material and moral support in their educational decision-making as well as in other areas. However, a significant number of lower class students reported that they were not provided with adequate guidance from their families due to their high educational level and that their families could not provide adequate support in making educational decisions. On the other hand, some of the middle- and upper class students stated that they were given more specific guidance in their university preferences. Students expressing their opinions in this area stated that their families had a direct impact on their university preferences, and that their families put some pressure on them to change their choices. These results, in Bourdieu's words (1990, as cited in Ball, Davies, David, Reay, 2002, p. 57), reveal that quality of education, which has become the main determinant of culture and social capital accumulation, directly affects the educational life of children. Nevertheless, the influence of the families of middle- and upper class students, on the other hand, could be interpreted as Bourdieu's emphasis on 'intentionality without intention', because middle-class students do not need to take part in a rational struggle to achieve the goals most appropriate for them. Therefore, the decisions made by their families are decisive for them (). This can be explained by "habitus," one of Bourdieu's (1984) basic concepts. Habitus is a form of knowingness that does not require consciousness, an unplanned intention/orientation, and a practical mastery of the regularities in the world that make it possible for a person to turn to the future without expressing it. In Bourdieu's own words, habitus is the vital and unifying origin that expresses the inherent and correlative features of a position in an integrated lifestyle; that is, an integrated set of choices about people, places, and practices.

This study has also revealed that the families of the students coming from the lower class regard higher education as a human capital investment that can help to improve their future income and living conditions. Higher education will potentially allow students to have better living conditions in the future and prevent them from experiencing economic difficulties. These results show that income level, like the education level of the family, also shapes educational preferences and expectations. As Özsoy (2004) stated in his research, inadequate income, poor conditions, and a low level of education, affect the expectations of the family and the student's future. Similarly, in Buyruk's (2008) study, the effect of the family on children's higher education preferences was found to be indirect. The dominant culture of the middle and upper social classes allows these families to place more importance on education and to plan their future through education, as opposed to families of other social classes. Therefore, these groups are more supportive of their children attending higher education and increasing their academic achievement (Goldthorpe, 1996). The middle and upper social classes take advantage of their knowledge and their awareness of the education system and understand the paths to higher education, and they use this knowledge to maximize the educational choices of their children. This knowledge and awareness, which may be based on economic and social capital, enables middle and upper social class children to take the lead in the educational game (Archer et al., 2005). The parents with limited cultural capital accumulation may have a limited view of education and labor markets and thus may prevent

their children from making healthy decisions in their pursuit of higher education. In other words, limited cultural capital of families may be an obstacle to their children's preference decisions for university and their tourism choices that could be transformed into higher levels of social and economic capital (Tunç, 2011). However, a high level of cultural capital accumulation in the family encourages children to be successful in these disciplines (Werfhorst et al., 2003). According to Bourdieu, in this respect, a diploma of higher education is not merely a high value item in society; it also plays a role as an institutionalized form of cultural capital (Gieser, 2012).

Student's opinions were also sought, in this research, on their overall views regarding their reason for studying at a university. More than half of the students stated that they had come to the university with the expectation of making it easier to find jobs in the future. "Interest in the department" and "working in more prestigious jobs" were the frequently encountered themes that came out of the answers. A significant number of the students who participated in the focus group interviews, emphasized that economic factors were determinative when making their departmental choices. The students who were of this opinion stated that it was an important factor for them to have the option of being easily employed after graduation. Nearly all of the students who thought this way were from the lower social class. These results show students experience restrictions in their higher education decisions according to their socio-economic status, resulting in different expectations of higher education. Bourdieu and Passeron (2014) stated that they were aware of the fact that some areas of education were costly and that it was not possible, in some instances, to turn to certain professions without the accumulation of material. In the literature, there are studies that show that students from the lower social classes differ in their expectations about the benefits of higher education, compared with the upper social classes. Tunç (2011) found that students from lower social classes tended to concentrate on fulfilling their expectations of university, in terms of security and working conditions. According to the author, in the context of social reproduction, it is evident that the lower social classes cannot use social and cultural capital effectively, and, therefore, give priority to the issues related to their economic capital, which are directly related to their existence. In this respect, it can be seen as a requirement of their habitus that the lower social classes tend to strive to gain and maintain a standard level of work and income.

Many studies have examined the effect of socio-economic status on higher education education (Buyruk, 2008; Özsoy, 2004; Tunç, 2011), and when the results of this research are examined, we can see that, in this case, the way to benefit from the right to higher education, for the students studying at Trakya University and constituting the sample of this research, depends on the social, economic and cultural capital owned and there is a permanent relationship between socio-economic status and access to higher education. Although these results include a particular university and a limited number of students, as Bourdieu and Passeron's (2000) emphasizes, it makes visible the invisible effect of social origin in directing individual preferences. These results also show that the relationships between the education system and social origins are not fictitious, but the support provided by the school legitimizes the social class order. However, the diversity of the social origin characteristics of the students participating in the research, according to the faculties/fields they are studying, also carries clues to the privileges (work, income, working conditions, status etc.) that these students may have in the sharing of future social resources. These results are similar to Bourdieu's research results for the higher education category. Bourdieu and Passeron's research on university students in France in 1964, revealed that different social classes are unevenly distributed in higher education. Statistics in higher education show that the system of education objectively implements a complete elimination mechanism as we move toward poorer classes. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (2014), the mechanisms that ensure that children from the lower and middle classes are eliminated in the process, operate more effectively

than ever (but implicitly) in a situation that makes subjects from all social classes formally "equal" at the school. Although students seem to make faculty/field preferences by taking exams in formal equivalent conditions, student characteristics continue to be one of the main determinants of success and failure, as demonstrated in this research as well as previous studies. Bourdieu's 1970s research revealed that the theory, which underlies the reproduction of all of the results obtained in studies today, shows that the similarity, with full study results on a sample of universities in Turkey, is unlikely. However, as emphasized above, when the results obtained within the scope of this study are evaluated in general, the social, economic, and cultural capital that students have in determining the inequalities at the higher education level, is determined, by Bourdieu's emphasis, to spread the ground of legitimacy to social inequalities by spreading inequalities related to education and social origin. It has been observed that it continues.

The increasing number of students and higher education institutions in Turkey shows the trend toward popularization (Bülbül, 2016). The massification of higher education is a necessary but inadequate condition for democratization. For the democratization of higher education, benefiting from the right to higher education should not depend on the socio-economic origin of the individual, and the university student profile should proportionally reflect the general population structure of the society (Özsoy, 2004). The socio-economic characteristics of the families of the students still play a decisive role in the availability of higher education because the existing education system is insufficient to eliminate the disadvantages of the socio-economic status of the family on the student's success and orientations. Therefore, in order to limit the impact of socio-economic characteristics on entry into higher education and to enable input based on skill and effort, one of the primary education policies should be to increase and expand similar educational opportunities before higher education (Ekinci, 2011). Social origin, which defines one's completely different living or working conditions and chances of success, is the most decisive factor that manifests itself at all levels and areas of student experience, especially in terms of existence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2014). It is not possible to eliminate the full impact of socio-economic origin on inequalities in education, in a short time. However, understanding the source of the problem correctly may be the primary step that should be taken to eliminate inequalities. In many national reports in Turkey, and in research generally (MoNE, 2011; TED, 2005, 2010; TOBB, 2012; YÖK, 2007), such measures as reducing the types of schools, improving the quality of secondary education, counseling, and referral services, transforming the structure of high schools that implement a common program, as well as the higher education enrollment rate, are listed as steps to eliminate inequalities. These steps are correct but not enough. In addition to eliminating inequalities in access to schools, the determinants of the quality of education provided in schools are: the quality of teachers should be increased, and the physical facilities, such as teacher/student ratio, and number of classrooms, should be equalized. However, an even more important step may be the abolition or minimization of the central examination system, which leads to a deepening of inequalities, particularly at secondary level (Bülbül, 2015). With these concrete steps, measures to reduce social inequalities at the macro level should be taken, in order to solve inequality in education.

Today, successful education systems are defined as those systems where access to education, quality in education and equality in education, are the most common attributes. In order to achieve this, strategies are needed to provide more appropriate environments for the masses who need more educational support. In other words, there are systems that eliminate both inequality and show that it is possible to provide qualified education (Fındık & Kavak, 2013). Aedo et al. (2013) noted, in some of their inferences in the report, that Turkey is less stratified than some other countries (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom). In these countries, systems with one type of school exist, and in some cases, the school offers the opportunity to choose between

different academic programs. Educational inequalities in the higher education system will not be overcome by eliminating the set of barriers that arise on the approach to higher education. The measures that can be taken in this case should not be limited to university entrance, but at this level, measures should be taken to resolve the injustices in question. For this reason, all individuals and community groups should be able to benefit equally from the right to higher education. Starting at the primary education level, individuals should be informed about higher education; they should be guided and the obstacles in front of them should be removed (Bülbül, 2016; James et al., 1999). Higher education is a stage that every secondary education graduate should benefit from within the framework of the right to education. The conditions of benefiting from the right to higher education should be established in a democratic, egalitarian and justice-based social order (Gök, 2005). In this respect, the only condition for the transition to higher education, from a problematic level, is that education should be removed from being a process that reproduces the social division of labor on the basis of class separation, and should have an effective role in eliminating inequalities (Buyruk, 2009). In this process, the public responsibility for uncovering the conditions that prevent the equal use of the right to education, for all segments of society, and their elimination by effective policies, should never be forgotten. In recent years, despite being a little inadequate, transformations in Turkey's economic, political, and cultural fields have been observed in the field of education. Although stable and devoid of holistic features, the Ministry of National Education has been trying to make some important changes in the field of education in recent years. For instance, the "constructivist approach" model, which has been adopted since the 2005–2006 academic year and has a learning-oriented feature rather than a teaching-oriented one, will be able to follow the constantly changing world, reach out and use the knowledge generated, research-questioning, critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making skills, which aim to train individuals, regardless of individual differences (MoNE, 2011). In order to achieve this goal, the principles that will enable improvement and development, in many areas of the education system, should be determined. Accordingly, equality should be one of the most important principles in the provision of educational services, because, equality is an indispensable condition for the provision of education services that ensures that everyone can realize their individual potential and take on constructive roles in social life (ERG, 2009).

In this study, we tried to understand the roles that socio-economic status and the type of secondary school students attended, play in their access to higher education, for students at Trakya University. The research was designed based on the screening model. The analyses were conducted by using descriptive statistical techniques. This kind of approach allows us to construct an important opinion on the subject by not describing the situation as it exists. However, further comprehensive research, including long-term and including different universities, will be planned on the basis of different variables that may have an impact on the process of access to higher education.

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