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The Reflection of Neoliberal Economic Policies on Education: Privatization of Education in Turkey *

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Abstract: This research reflects neoliberal economic policies by demonstrating the privatization of education in Turkey. The increase in the number of students of private schools and private schools in Turkey along with the relationship between public education investments and household income of education have been explained by using the document analysis technique from qualitative research methods. As in many countries, public education in Turkey has been removed from the basic human rights and commercialized and transformed into a commodity that has been bought and sold. Neoliberal transformation aims to generate a strong and dependent structure that eliminates political and economic freedoms. The documents published by the Ministry of National Education and the Turkish Statistical Institute were obtained from the relevant institutions and the data were analysed. It has been concluded that education has undergone a rapid privatization in Turkey, while investments in public education have decreased rapidly. Also the funds required to be allocated to public schools have been transferred to private schools, and the education rights of the children of poor families have been diminished.

Keywords: *Neoliberalism, education policy, privatization in education.*

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Introduction

As in many countries, public education in Turkey has been removed from the basic human rights and commercialized and transformed into a commodity that has been bought and sold. The -education was re-adapted to the interests of global capital and restructured in accordance with neoliberal policies in line with the interests of international actors such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Although Neoliberal policies have made some improvements to the economy from time to time, it has caused the economy to weaken by dragging the economy into deep crises especially in the long run (Uckac, 2010). The World Bank (WB), OECD and the European Union, with the loans they have extended, have obtained the power to structure the education systems of developing countries as they want. With these loans, they have configured the education system in line with their own wishes to the finest detail. This can be regarded as an indication that developed countries have maintained the existing regime of exploitation by controlling both underdeveloped and developing countries (Yilmaz and Sarpkaya, 2016).

Neoliberal transformation aims to generate a strong and dependent structure that eliminates political and economic freedoms. Uckac (2010), states that " the conditions required by these policies for the Turkish economy are to reduce public spending and to realize privatization. However, these transformations in the economy lead to incomplete employment and further deepen the unjust distribution of income". Aydoğanoglu (2003,27) states that the most important step in institutionalizing the free market economy, the first pillar of structural adjustment policies, is to redefine the services carried out by public, constructed with concepts such as public utility, public service, by abandoning the market relations within the framework of the profit principle.

The economic decisions taken on 24 January 1980, the IMF stand-by agreement with the World Bank's adjustment loans, structural adjustment programs and projects, the OECD's regulatory public reports, accession partnership documents, and progress reports are some of the instruments of privatization of education in Turkey. According to Uckac (2010), the liberalization of the economy based on neoliberal policies in line with the economic decisions of 24 January 1980 and the policies imposed from outside, especially from the IMF and the World Bank, have led to a deeper

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experience of capitalism in the country. In this context, education has gradually emerged itself as a market and commercial activity (Unal, 2005). Carnoy, (1995); (Cited in; Sayilan, 2006). In education, liberalization policies have been raised all over the world by structural adjustment programs implemented under the supervision of the IMF and the World Bank since the 1980s. Since the beginning of the 1980s, "reforms" aimed primarily at redefining the purpose and content of education at all levels in line with market demands, and secondly, financing education and training, and thirdly, redefining the role of education in social mobility and its equal political function. It is expressed that these are implemented as a package of structural adaptation programs.

The concept of privatization in education also enabled the commercialization of education, that is, the integration of education into trade. Hirt (2007) stated that Molnar divided commercialization into three categories within the scope of education privatization. The first category is to sell goods and services to schools. The second category is to sell goods and services within the school. It means goods and service providers have entered the school and interact directly with consumers (students). The third and final category is the sale of schools. The privatization is completed with this final stage and the educational institution has emerged itself as a business entity. In fact, a market spontaneously occurs for schools to meet their equipments such as table, desk and heating needs. Today, this market is engaged in the provision of services such as computers, needs of multimedia and cleaning and maintenance of schools and school canteens (Yirci and Kocabas, 2013). According to Kishan, (2008) privatization in education requires that the state exerts less intervention and control in the field of education, and the private sector becomes more involved in the field of education. The role of privatization implies that the government reduces its responsibilities and ensures that the private sector and local authorities have a more efficient structure in decision-making on management, curricula and finance.

Education is one of the basic human rights and a public service. The fact that education is regarded as a right and the use of this right imposes responsibility on the state. It is expected from a democratic state to fulfil this responsibility without any discrimination such as race, religion, language, colour, sex, economic and social position (Sahin, 2007). Keskin (2004) argues that international organizations such as the IMF, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and regional organizations such as the European Union introducing international trade and investment agreements in the movement and spread of neo-liberal policies into education have played an important role. However, the World Trade Organization has secured the service trade with GATS with the aim of making it a global free trade theme, the European Union has encouraged policies in this direction, the OECD has developed prescriptions on how to manage it, and the World Bank has opened loans for implementation

The public aspect of education that has been exposed to radical transformation all over the world is tried to be completely liquidated by privatization practices. As Dikkaya and Ozyakisir (2006) stated, it is thought that the continuation of basic human rights education through the state is contrary to neoliberal approach and that success in this area and the increase of profit will be achieved by privatizing education. In Turkey, through the pretext of 4 + 4 + 4 education system and by closing the private teaching institutions, the privatization is completed. In addition, resource transfer to private schools for every student enrolled in private schools is also causing the acceleration of privatization. The elimination of barriers to the marketization of education, continuous tendencies towards privatization and regarding education as a purchasable commodity make lower income groups drop out of the education system (Yilmaz and Sarpkaya, 2016).

The aim of this research is to analyse the privatisation of education in Turkey as a reflection of Neoliberal economic policies. In line with this aim, we sought to answer the questions of what processes were followed for the investment in education, how many students enrolled in private schools and how many private schools were opened.

Methodology

Research Model

This research is qualitative research in a descriptive/historical analysis model because it aims to describe the existence. Historical model examines a certain history, event and the effects of this event to the present day. Descriptive/historical models are the methods used in the investigation of events and cases that occurred in the past or in the investigation of a problem in relation to the past. Historical research is the process of critical examination, analysis and to produce information, in other words interpretation of the past critically in order to find the truth (Mayring, 2000, 143-148).

The aim of qualitative research is to be able to look at the research object in a holistic and in-depth manner, to examine it in complexity and to understand it in its context. Qualitative research is sensitive to the context and process and the local as well as the exposed experience. Quantitative research, however, conceptualizes reality in terms of variables and relationships between variables (Punch, 2014, 183-228). In order to express social reality better, the method of qualitative research, which has been followed and become increasingly popular in recent years has been adopted in this research. Document analysis method, among the qualitative research methods, was used. Document analysis covers the analysis of written materials that contains information about the targeted investigated phenomenon or concepts (Mayring, 2011, 47).

Analysing of Data

The data used in the study were obtained from primary (original) data sources. There is no intermediary between the source and the researcher in such data. The primary data used in this study were obtained from the Ministry of National Education statistics books and from public institutions. It is important to reach the primary sources in terms of reliability. Statistics were taken as a starting point two years before 2012, which was the beginning of 12 years of interrupted education, by terminating 8 years of compulsory basic education. Before starting the research, it was determined which documents would be needed and from which institutions these documents would be accessed. The authenticity of the documents obtained by the researcher, the data contained in the documents were checked by the researcher with the criteria as to whether the data included in the study was the primary source, whether the original documents were the same or not and according to the criteria as to where they were printed. These documents were classified for the purpose of the research and the relevant tables were formed accordingly.

Findings / Results

This section contains the findings related to the research.

Table 1. Number of private schools.

Training and Education Year	- (Primary School- Secondary School)*		High School	Vocational Technical Education (Vocational School)
2010/2011	898		774	24
2011/2012	931		840	45
2012/2013	992	904	907	126
2013/2014	1071	972	1007	426
2014/2015	1205	1111	1174	429
2015/2016	1389	1555	2504	419
2016/2017	1274	1414	2208	368

*Source: MEB statistics (2017). *Primary and secondary schools were not divided until the 4+4+4 policy.*

When Table 1 is examined, it is observed that there is an increase in the number of private primary schools, high schools and vocational high schools. The number of primary schools, which was 898 in 2010, increased rapidly (divided into two categories as primary and secondary schools in 2012), and reached 2688. While the number of private high schools was 774 in 2010, this number reached 2208 in 2016/2017. When the table is examined, it is seen that there is a huge increase in vocational education. The number of private vocational high schools, which was 24 in 2010 reached 368 in 2016. Through the Law numbered 6287, which is one of the most important keystones of privatization studies in education, (4+4+4 law), The model of uninterrupted education was introduced in 2012, and by placing the conservatism, which is indispensable of neoliberal policies , into the educational system, all school types were converted into religious schools. With this law, there has been a double increase in the number of private schools. Of course, it can be said that this number will increase several times when the Law on the transforming of private teaching institutions into private schools is passed.

Table 2. Number of students enrolled in private schools.

Training and	Number Of Students	Number Of	Number Of	Number Of Students in
2010/2011	267.294		128.446	1.951
2011/2012	286.972		133.816	4.348
2012/2013	167.381	164.214	138.811	17.854
2013/2014	184.325	182.019	140.610	56.053
2014/2015	203.272	208.424	164.281	75.890
2015/2016	232.039	278.089	373.394	99.217
2016/2017	213.183	287.928	389.243	111.198

Source: MEB statistics (2017).

Table 2 indicates that the years between 2010 and 2017 the number of private primary school students increased from 267,294 to 501,111 and the number of private high school students increased from 128,446 to 389,243. The number of students studying in private vocational high schools increased from 1.951 to 111.198. The total number of students at private schools, corresponding to 425,136 in the previous year before the enactment of the 4 + 4 + 4 intermittent compulsory education legislation in 2011 increased to 563,007 with the enactment of this law in 2012. In particular, Law 6287 (4+4+4) opens the door to privatization in education.

Table 3. The Ratio of Investment Budgets of the Ministry of National Education to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Consolidated Budget between 2010 And 2016

Year	Gross Domestic Product (TL)	Consolidated Budget (TL)	Investment Budget Of Ministry Of National Education (TL)	The Ratio of Investment Budget Of Ministry Of National Education	
				to GDP (%)	to Consolidated Budget (%)
2010	1.364.922.650.048	354.887.748.433	1.926.902.569	0,14	0,54
2011	1.385.642.300.899	337.986.245.951	2.080.638.622	0,15	0,62
2012	1.426.001.000.000	350.898.317.817	2.599.999.996	0,18	0,74
2013	1 559 160 000 000	404 045 669 000	3 955 000 000	0,25	0,98
2014	1 719 000 000 000	436 432 901 000	5 192 300 000	0,30	1,19
2015	1 945 000 000 000	472 943 000 000	5 494 000 000	0,28	1,16
2016	2 207 000 000 000	570 507 000 000	6 284 628 000	0,28	1,10

Source: Budget Revenue and Expenditure Realizations (2010-2016),

National Education Statistics 2010-2017. Ministry Of National Education Publications, Ankara, 2017.

The ratio of the Investment Budget of the Ministry of National Education to the Consolidated Budget and Gross Domestic Product is one of the indicators of the size of expenditures made on education. For this reason, how the investment budget of the Ministry of National Education has improved during the period examined is presented in Table 3. Accordingly, the investment budget of the Ministry of National Education, which was TL 1.926.902.569 in 2010 with fixed prices of 2010, increased in 2016. While the ratio of the investment budget of the Ministry of National Education in the consolidated budget was 0.54 % in 2010, it corresponds to 1.19 % in 2014. This ratio decreased to 1.16 % in 2015 and to 1.10 % in 2016. The educational investment rate in the Gross Domestic Product of the state during the period 2010-2016 was 0.14 % (2010) as a minimum and 0.30 % in 2014 as a maximum. It is observed that this ratio decreased to 0.28 % in 2015 and 2016.

Table 4. Household Education Expenditures by Years (2010-2015).

Income group shares of consecutive 20% groups in expenditure types according to income, Turkey, 2002-2015	Total	1. % 20	2. % 20	3. % 20	4. % 20	5. % 20
			100,0	3,3	6,3	10,7
2011 Education services	100,0	3,3	5,2	11,0	18,2	62,3
2012 Education services	100,0	2,3	5,6	9,0	16,3	66,8
2013 Education services	100,0	2,5	6,2	10,8	17,1	63,5
2014 ⁽²⁾ Education services	100,0	2,2	5,6	10,6	16,9	64,7
2015 ⁽²⁾ Education services	100,0	1,6	4,3	8,6	16,6	68,9

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, Household Budget Survey

(1) New population projections have been used since 2007.

(2) Since 2014, the new administrative division has been taken as basis on the design of sample.

When table 4 is examined, it is concluded that household education expenditures are 3.3 % in the poorest 20 % and 60.2% in the richest 20 %. While the education expenditures of the poorest 20 % decreased systematically from 2010 until 2015, the education expenditures of the richest 20% systematically increased. This is a sign of inequality in education. While the children of the wealthy families benefit more from the right to education, the children of the poorer families have difficulty in benefiting from the right to education. In other words, it can be said that wealthy families spend more education for their children and poor families cannot pay enough money. The facts make this clear.

Table 5 Private School Support of MEB by Years

Year	Pre-school		Primary School		Secondary School		High School / Basic High School		Total Studentd	Total Amount Of Support
	Number of students to be supported	Amount Of Support	Number of students to be supported	Amount Of Support	Number of students to be supported	Amount Of Support	Number of students to be supported	Amount Of Support		
2014-2015	50.000	2.500	50.000	3.000	75.000	3.500	75.000	3.250	250.000	765.625.000
2015-2016	20.000	2.680	50.000	3.220	50.000	3.750	110.000	3.750	230.000	770.530.000
2016-2017	6.000	2.860	15.000	3.440	15.000	4.000	15.000	3.440	75.000	266.100.000

Source: National Education Statistics 2010-2017. Ministry Of National Education Publications, Ankara, 2017.

When Table 5 is examined, it can be seen that public resources are transferred to private schools. 765.625.000 TL in 2014-2015 education year, 770.530.000 TL in 2015-2016 education year, 266.100.000 TL in 2016-2017 education year, money was transferred to private schools. Compared to Table 3, while the investment in public schools is decreasing, the resources transferred to private schools are increasing.

Table 6. Education Expenditures

Country	Annual Education Expenditure per Student (\$ (SAGP) (2010)		Annual Educational Expenditure per Student (Share in GDP Per Person) (2010)		2000	2010
	Primary School	Secondary School	Primary School	Secondary School	(Public) (GDP share)	(Public) (GDP share)
Korea	6.601	8.060	23,0%	28,0%	unknown	5,0%
Poland	5.937	5.483	30,0%	27,0%	5,0%	5,1%
Malaysia	NA	unknown	unknown	unknown	6,0%	5,8%
Egypt	NA	unknown	unknown	unknown	unknown	3,8%
Turkey	1.860	2.470	12,0%	16,0%	2,6%	3,4%8

Source: Human Development Index (HDI) 2012, UNDP, Education at a Glance 2013, OECD

When Table 6 is examined According to the purchasing power parity (PPP), while the average education expenditure per student of OECD is \$ 7.974 for primary education, \$ 9.014 for secondary education, the average education

expenditure per student of 21 EU countries is more. In our country, while the share of education expenditure per student and its share in GDP is the last among all OECD countries, Luxembourg is the first country in the list with spending of \$ 20,000 in primary and secondary education. (Türkiye Sınai Kalkınma Bankası [tskb], 2016; URL-1).

Discussion and Conclusion

With Neoliberal economic policies and the implementation of education policies, while public education investments are reduced, private schools are on the increase with public support. Privatization efforts are accelerated especially with the economic decisions of 24 January 1980. With the economic and educational policies determined by international institutions, education and health, which have rapidly become public, have lost their publicness feature in The trends of change in education cannot be evaluated independently of the transformation process taking place worldwide. It should be noted that these trends, which are realized simultaneously at the world level, are the results of a structural process, namely the level of the dynamics that are specific to capitalism today. International organizations played the most important role in the transformation of the policies implemented in Turkey after 1980 in education investments. The reason for the decrease in education investments can be expressed as the accumulation of policies aimed at privatizing education with commercialization, such as free market and other public services.

In the historical process, with the emergence of the capitalist system and its transformation as an upper form into imperialism, crisis phenomenon has always maintained its existence in the economic cycles experienced. As a way of getting out of these crises, the ruling classes, by applying state policies, imposed certain restrictions on capital movements, and, sometimes they released these movements through the policies which they call as liberalism. Whatever name these policies are called, the aim was to keep imperialism alive in the long run. The solution, which was triggered by the 1970 oil crisis and which had been escalating in the 1980s as a way of getting out of the crisis, by imperialism was to implement its policies by adding “neo” or “new” prefix in front of the policies called “liberal” (Aydoğanoglu, 2003). Although there is not something new that is changed in the nature of the system, the integration of the backward countries into imperialism and exploitation has deepened and the peoples have begun to be suppressed in the claws of the IMF and the World Bank. Privatization is one of the ways in which imperialist policies, called “neoliberalism”, are implemented (ivmedergisi, 2014; URL-2).

Policies towards the commercialization of education services have been raised by the “structural adjustment programs” and “restructuring” implemented by the IMF and the World Bank since 1980, and most of them are carried on with the name of “reform”, “modernization”. The background of the neoliberal structure in the education system of Turkey dates back to the structural adjustment and stabilization programs implemented after 24 January 1980 (Aksoy, 2011).

The aim of the “restructuring” practices in education is to transform education management into a profitable investment. In this way, all stages, from what kind of information will be given in the education process to how the teacher behaves in the classroom, have been rearranged and this process has transformed the education right, the basic human right, into a commodity that can be benefited only by the ones who have money according to the demand on the market.

With the neoliberal education policies implemented, education is no longer a right, but rather has become a commodity that can be bought and sold. Both the deteriorations in the income distribution and the reduction of public expenditures through these policies bring harm to the right to education. It leads to the transformation of education into a privilege that only the rich can benefit. Furthermore, these privileges in education lead to increased inequalities existing in society.

Education is the most fundamental right that enables all people to develop, without any discrimination, so that everyone can enjoy the right of qualified, public education only within the framework of public service. The public aspect of education should be brought back to the fore and a qualified education service should be provided at all levels.

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