



Education Incentive Policy for Private Education Institutions in Turkey:

Examining Rationales and Outcomes (2014-2017)

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Özel Öğretim Kurumlarında Uygulanan Eğitim ve Öğretim Desteği Politikası:

Gerekçe ve Sonuçların İncelenmesi (2014-2017)

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Education Incentive Policy for Private Education Institutions in Turkey:

Examining Rationales and Outcomes (2014-2017)

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Abstract

There are diversified experiences among countries with respect to formulation, implementation and outcomes of voucher policies around the world. Education Incentive Policy (EIP) was introduced as a privatization mechanism in Turkey in the 2014-2015 school year to expand the share of private education. This study aims to describe and evaluate the first four-year implementation period of the EIP applied as a voucher-like scheme for students attending private education institutions. A qualitative case study design was applied to explore the goals, rationales, and the intended outcomes of the EIP through policy documents and national statistics as data sources. The results showed that Turkish voucher case used the neoliberal economic rationales which are efficient use of resources, increasing equity for disadvantaged students, and enhancing quality by class-size reduction and competition among schools. The eligibility criteria to benefit from the incentive had a targeted feature for a beneficiary profile of low-to moderate income families. On the other hand, the transformation process of Private Tutoring Institutions (PTIs) into private schools had significantly contributed to the expansion of the share of private education. Further, since the government paid less money per pupil, opportunities aroused to increase the education quality in public education. The EIP needs to be examined how the policy consequences have affected quality and investments rising in public schools.

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Keywords: Education incentive, Education policy, Private education institutions, Privatization in education, Voucher

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Özel Öğretim Kurumlarında Uygulanan Eğitim ve Öğretim Desteđi Politikası: Gerekçe ve Sonuçların İncelenmesi (2014-2017)

Öz

Kupon uygulamaları, politika oluşturma, uygulama ve sonuçları açısından dünya üzerinde çeşitli ülke deneyimlerinin olduđu eğitimde özelleştirme mekanizmalarındandır. Türkiye’de eğitimde özel sektörün payının artırılması amacıyla 2014-2015 eğitim-öğretim yılında özel okullara devam edecek öğrencilere yönelik Eğitim ve Öğretim Desteđi politikası uygulamaya konulmuştur. Bu çalışmanın amacı, özel okula devam edecek öğrencilere uygulanan Eğitim ve Öğretim Desteđi Politikasının ilk dört yıllık uygulama sürecini, amaçları, gerekçeleri ve istenilen sonuçları açısından betimlemek ve değerlendirmektir. Nitel durum çalışması olarak tasarlanan araştırmada veri kaynađı olarak, Eğitim ve Öğretim Desteđi Politikasına ilişkin politika belgeleri ve ulusal istatistikler kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, Türkiye kupon örneğinde kullanılan neoliberal ekonomik gerekçeler, kaynakların etkili kullanımı, dezavantajlı öğrenciler için eşitliđin artırılması ve sınıf mevcutlarının azaltılması ve okullar arası rekabetin artırılmasıyla eğitim kalitesinin artırılmasıdır. Teşvikten yararlanacaklar için belirlenen ölçütlerin düşük-orta gelir grubu ailelerden oluşan bir yararlanıcı profiline yönelik özellik taşıdığı görülmektedir. Diđer taraftan, dershanelerin okula dönüşümü sürecinin, özel öğretimin eğitimdeki payının artmasında önemli katkısının bulunduđu görülmektedir. Ayrıca, devletin eğitim teşviđi ile öğrenci başına daha az harcama yaparak, eğitimde kalitenin artırılmasına yönelik yeni yatırım fırsatları yakaladığı söylenebilir. Eğitim-öğretim desteđi politikasının sonuçlarının, devlet okullarında niteliđi ve yatırımları artırma açısından nasıl etkisi olduđu incelenmesi gerekir.

Makale Bilgisi

Anahtar kelimeler: Eğitim ve öğretim desteđi, Eğitimde özel sektör, Eğitim politikası, Kupon sistemi, Özel öğretim kurumları

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Introduction

The privatization mechanisms in education has received critical attraction, since the right to access quality education is questioned within the context of freedom of choice (UNESCO, 2015). The market based reforms use privatization as a policy driver and strengthen their argument with the neoliberal economic rationale, which is choice, and then apply the voucher as education mechanism into schools (Adamson & Astrand, 2016). This is how initially Milton Friedman proposed a different way of financing education, providing parents a government scholarship that can be used to pay for tuition fee at any approved school (Spring, 2015).

Policy scholars have found out different results about the impacts of privatization on education considering the relationship between private education and different variables such as equity, quality in education, and efficient resource allocation (Adamson, Astrand & Darling-Hammond, 2016; Gauri & Vawda, 2003). For example, voucher systems increase private enrolment and targeted ones raise equality of opportunity while it strengthens the social segregation due to selectively admissions, creaming and peer effect in private schools (Arenas, 2004; Patrinos, Barrera-Osorio & Guaqueta, 2009). Moreover, there are diversified experiences among countries in respect to formulation, implementation and outcomes of voucher policies around the world (Peterson, Campbell & West, 2002). Thus, policy process as to privatization and specifically vouchers in each country requires special attention to understand country related rationales and consequences.

Taking the education incentive policy (EIP) as a voucher-like scheme, this study aims to contribute voucher policy discussion by describing and evaluating the first four-year implementation period of the EIP applied in Turkey as a qualitative case study. For this purpose, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What are the goals and rationales of EIP?
2. How does the EIP work in terms of its intended consequences?

Voucher Arguments

There are many voucher policy implementations across the world; thus, countries have different experiences in terms of policy consequences. Several arguments appear from these cases for opponents and proponents of voucher programs (Arenas, 2004; Levin, 2002; Patrinos et al., 2009; Vawda, 2000; Witte, 2009). Taking the Turkish context into account, here, those arguments are introduced in three sub-sections as access and equity, quality, and efficiency.

Access to Education and Equity

A normative argument exists related to if education is a public or common good since educational right should not be depending on family income or wealth to purchase better or high quality of education (Jones, 2013). Proponents of voucher claim that it improves the equality of opportunity by supporting low-income group families (Metcalf & Legan, 2002). Witte (2009) states that advocacy for voucher program use this argument to provide vouchers only to low-income families. In addition, targeted voucher model examples aim usually to increase equity based on income and achievement; however, gender and spatial inequality of opportunity to access education still exists as a major problem in terms of educational right around the world including Turkey (Gümüş & Gümüş, 2013; Kavak, 2010; Maya, 2013).

Another dominant discourse for the advocacy of voucher programs states that the law would give parents more options to choose the right school for their children. Parental choice that gives opportunity to families to choose the types of education in a school where their children are exposed to certain values (Metcalf & Legan, 2002). Parental choice or school choice additionally leads to competition among schools since they try to attract students. Thus, equality goes with the opportunity to pursue competitive excellence (Jones, 2013). On the other hand, Witte (2009) emphasizes that parents cannot easily afford to depart from public schooling system which forces children to attend a school assigned according to residential location instead they can only move to send their children to better schools.

Quality in Education

Increasing education quality is one of the crucial arguments of voucher advocacy. Reducing class-size and competition among schools are two factors which are said to increase the quality in education. First, voucher systems are believed to support public education by reducing class size in public schools. In addition, for parents, class size in private schools is one of the effective rationales on school choice (Schwartz, Zabel & Leardo, 2017). Furthermore, as Ann and Brewer (2009) indicate, benefits of small class size also include better and easier classroom management for teachers, enabling more attention per student, more time on curriculum topics, and diminished interruptions. Also, Yatmaz (2012) suggests that voucher policy reform can reduce class size and education quality in terms of their causal relationships.

While there are considerable arguments of voucher opponents associating class size with quality, related literature also reveals contradictions about class-size reduction. First, while reducing the class size is immensely popular and demanded by stakeholders, it is often the most expensive policy reform in education. Moreover, there is also considerable research demonstrating that class size has very little impact on student performance (Ann & Brewer,

2009; Hoxby, 2000; Krueger, Hanushek & Rice, 2002; Whitehurst & Chingos, 2011). Further, class-size reductions is far from assuring the same effects in every school system (Woessmann & West, 2006).

Another argument of voucher opponents is the school choice, which is claimed to bring a more competitive school market in many countries. To attract parents and students, competition motivates public and private institutions towards the development of more quality and innovative practices in education (Shakeel, Anderson & Wolf, 2016). In the U. S. educational vouchers, for example, the competition among private schools to attract students and their vouchers results in efficiency and innovation in education, since schools have fiscal vouchers to increase and maintain the enrolment ratio (Levin, 2002).

There are mixed results of numerous studies ranging from positive to no difference between voucher and public schools in terms of achievement (Witte, 2009). PISA 2015 results showed that school type has no relationship with the performance of students (OECD, 2017). On the other hand, in many developing countries including Ghana, India, Kenya, Nepal, and Pakistan, studies showed that students attending private schools perform better than the ones in public schools (UNDP, 2016). Hence, there is no strong evidence to show a difference in student performance in public and private schools (OECD, 2012).

Besides student performance, educational enrolment, retention and graduation rates are used to discuss the effects of voucher programs in the world. For instance, Washington D.C. voucher program study found that students receiving vouchers were 20% more likely to graduate from high school (Wolf et al., 2010). Studies from Milwaukee and New York City have found similar positive effects of voucher programs on high school graduation rates and college enrolments (Chingos & Peterson, 2012; Wolf, 2012). In Turkey, education upper secondary and higher education faces educational attainment and retention issues based on the rapid growth (Aypay, Çekiç & Boyacı, 2012); thus, voucher systems can be effectively used for the disadvantaged groups at these education levels.

Efficiency

Efficiency is another concern in policy evaluation based on the discussions in education finance. A policy program is called efficient if resources are used in the best way. When beneficiaries of the program are required to pay for the program themselves, it becomes unacceptable to support (Bickers & Williams, 2001). Therefore, how much the government spends per pupil in a school year gives clue about whether the government profits from the implementation or not (Shires, Krop, Rydell & Carroll, 1994). However, Woodhall (1994) notices that education plays a significant role in the income distribution in society which might be the transposer of the status quo or a tool providing equity. The opponents of voucher programs also criticize that voucher programs cause to move public money/funds to private schools instead of improving public education quality. Proponents, on the other hand, advocate that competition in marketplace would promote efficiency and reduce educational costs (Spring, 2015).

Voucher-like Scheme in Turkey

The education incentive policy was stated first in the amended 1st article of the Private Education Institutions Law No. 5580 dated 1/3/2014 (Official Gazzette, 2007). It says:

Within the context of this Law, students with Turkish Republic citizenship attending primary, secondary and upper secondary level private education institutions [private schools] giving formal education might be provided education incentive only if it does not exceed the regular educational period for each level according to school type. The beneficiaries attending pre-primary private schools must be between 48 and 66 months old and they could just receive the incentive maximum for one school year.

Education incentives are allocated taking into account the minimum number of students per classroom at each educational level and the maximum number of students determined per classroom in any case. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance collectively determine total number of students who would benefit from education incentive policy every year.

Education incentive quotas are allocated according to several criteria such as priority degree of the region in development and its developmental status, household income of student, number of students in educational region, and achievement level of supported student and the private school they attend. The Ministry might evaluate these criteria separately or together.

In the meantime, in 2014, the ruling party passed the Law No. 6528 Articles 12th and 13th related to close down PTIs and to transform them into upper secondary level private schools (Official Gazzette, 2014). The schools were given the opportunity to transform into private schools, called as ‘basic high schools’, if they meet the necessary legal standards for private schools within a four-year period by the end of school year 2018-2019. In other words, the initiation of EIP overlapped with the policy of closing down PTIs. The reason for this was that PTIs transformed into the temporary upper secondary level private education institutions (basic high schools). In consequence, this situation affected the share of private education directly by increasing the number of private schools and the students attending these schools.

The 1st article of the Private Education Institutions Law No. 5580 enabled pre-primary and K-12 level private education institutions [private schools] and students attending these schools to benefit from the incentive. Additionally, The Ministry of National Education (MEB) takes into account several criteria separately or together to allocate the education incentive quotas across the country and among schools. The criteria were mainly based on:

- (1) priority degree of the region in development and its developmental status,
- (2) household income of student,
- (3) number of students in educational region,
- (4) achievement levels of beneficiary students and private school they attend, and
- (5) privileged students.

The MEB formulated the eligibility criteria for the beneficiaries of education incentive according to the amended 1st article in the Law No. 5580. Further, the application score of a student composes of several criteria based on:

- Student achievement
 - Academic achievement at the previous school year
 - Social achievements
- Representation in the international Olympics
- Awards in the national competitions (1st, 2nd, and 3rd order)
- Awards in the provincial competitions (1st, 2nd, and 3rd order)
- Household income (total income for a month)
- Family-related
 - Siblings attending school
 - Parents' marital and vitality status
- Special conditions.

Figure 1 illustrates application and placement process of the education incentive scheme according to the policy-relevant Law and statuses. It shows the flow of policy process including the phases that applicants must follow.

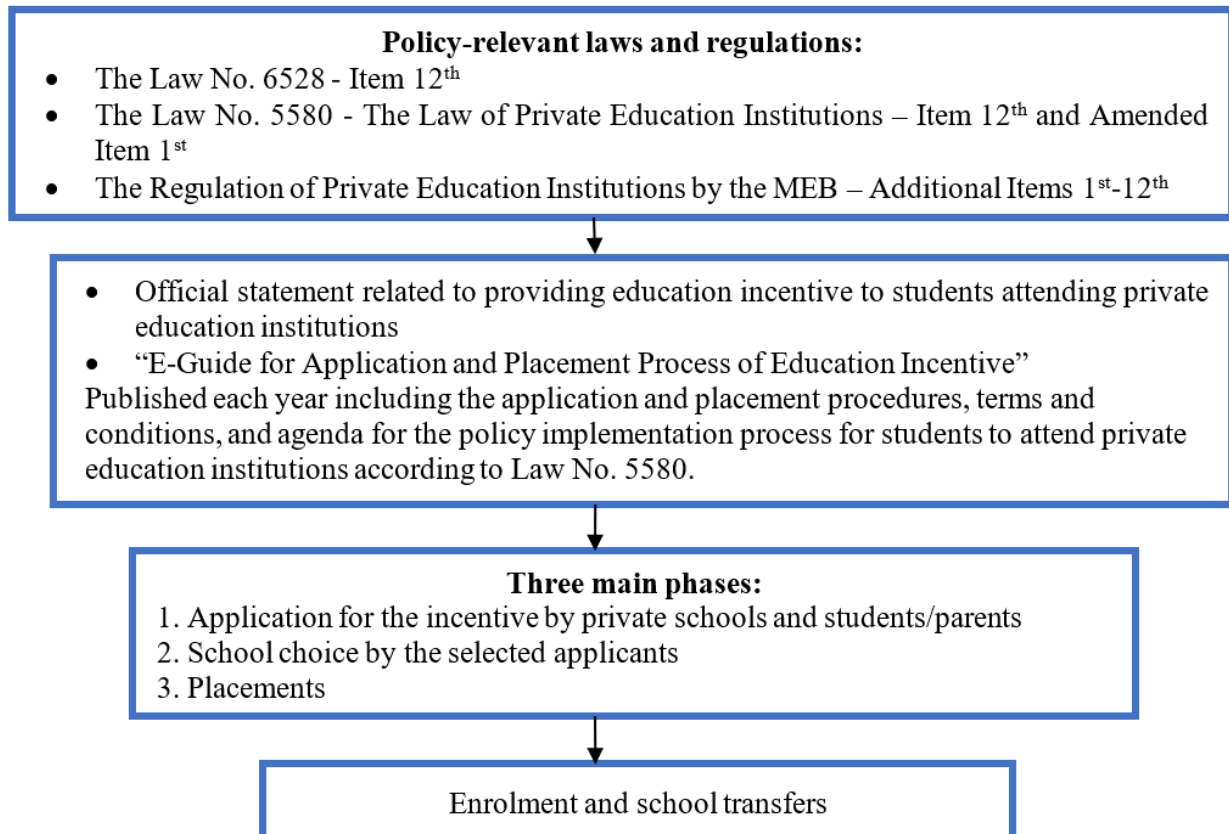


Figure 1. The flowchart for implementation process of the EIP

The education incentive amount is determined cooperatively by The MEB and the Ministry of Finance every year. The Ministries take into account the number of beneficiary student cap in the provinces and school types. The incentive amount cannot exceed one and a half times more than the public spending per pupil in public pre-primary, elementary, and high schools. The government uses previous year's data in the calculations. The incentive amounts according to the school year and education level were given below in Table 1.

Table 1. Incentive amounts according to school year and educational level (2014-2017)

No.	Education Level	Incentive Amount (TL)			
		2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
1	Pre-primary	2,500	2,680	2,860	3,060
2	Primary	3,000	3,220	3,440	3,680
3	Lower secondary	3,500	3,750	4,000	4,280
4	Upper Secondary	3,500	3,750	4,000	4,280
5	Basic High School	3,000	3,220	3,440	3,680

Source: OOKGM (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

According to education level, the lowest amount belongs to pre-primary level. The incentive amounts for private primary and basic high schools are the same. Besides, the incentive amounts for lower and upper secondary level private schools are the same. In addition, the change in the incentive amounts in all education levels indicated that they increased nearly 20% in the four-year period. The maximum number of beneficiaries for education levels was determined each school year. The recipient caps for the education incentive according to education levels in four-year period were given below in Table 2.

Table 2. The recipient caps according to school year and educational level (2014-2017)

No.	Education Level	Recipient Cap				
		2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	Total
1	Pre-primary	50,000	20,000	6,000	6,000	82,000
2	Primary	50,000	50,000	15,000	15,000	130,000
3	Lower secondary	75,000	50,000	15,000	15,000	155,000
4	Upper Secondary	75,000	110,000	15,000	15,000	263,000
5	Basic High Schools			24,000	24,000	
	Total	250,000	230,000	75,000	75,000	630,000

Source: OOKGM (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

According to Table 2, at the first-two school years, the maximum number of beneficiary students for the incentive was higher than the last-two years. The beneficiary cap in the third year decreased one fourth of the cap when compared to the one in the first-two years. The recipient cap for pre-primary level private schools decreased in years. On the other hand, the recipient caps for upper secondary level increased in total. Specifically, the caps for private basic high schools in the first-two years were given combined with upper secondary level while it was given separately in the last two years. When we look at the proportion of basic high school cap in total for the last two years, it shows that one third of total beneficiary cap composed of the beneficiaries that would attend basic high schools. The explanation for this was related to the governmental support for the transformation of private tutoring institutions [PTIs] into private schools (Hürriyet, 2013).

Methodology

This study aims to describe and evaluate the first four-year implementation period of the EIP applied in Turkey as a qualitative case study. According to Yin (2014), the case study method is an inquiry-based investigation employed when the researcher has little control on a contemporary real-life context of a phenomenon. The EIP has the characteristics of a descriptive and single case with embedded units including education levels and application years. Therefore, school year and education level were considered units of analysis, which is important to keep data in the context in case studies (Meriam, 1998).

Data Sources

Yanow (2007) states that policy documents are one of the useful data sources enabling to understand and interpret the policy process. Therefore, policy documents and national statistics were used to describe the goals and rationales, and the consequences of the policy as data sources. After deciding the convenient data sources for the study, institutional

websites were used to reach to the related documents and national statistics. The data sources used in the current study were as follows:

1. General Directorate of Private Education Institutions (OOKGM)
 - a. Related laws, regulations and documents related to EIP application
2. The Ministry of National Education (MEB)
 - a. Strategic Plan 2010-2014
 - b. Strategic Plan 2015-2019
 - c. National Statistics between 2012-2017
3. The Ministry of Development
 - a. Development Plan 2007-2013
 - b. Development Plan 2014-2018
4. Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK)
 - a. Expenditures per pupil for compulsory education levels

Data Analysis

A descriptive document analysis was carried out on policy documents and national statistics considering the research questions. During the analysis, phases described in Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) were followed. After gathering necessary documents online, these documents were first checked, and the originality of the data was ensured. Related parts of the documents were then iteratively read in line with the research questions in order to comprehend the overlapping and contradicting perspectives in the documents. Following this, the data were analysed through the research questions. For the first research question, goals and rationales were clustered under one theme. For the second research question, themes (access to private education, equity, education quality, and efficiency) were identified based on the arguments given in the literature review section. National statistics were also analysed in this phase to reflect how the selected policy works as to its intended consequences. Finally, findings were organized through text, tables, and visualization and interpreted to demonstrate goals, rationales and intended consequences of the EIP.

Findings

What are the goals and rationales of EIP?

The Ministry of Development emphasizes the goals in their development plans in terms of the expansion of private sector and encouragement of entrepreneurs to provide services. First, in the last decade, the 9th Development Plan 2007-2013 by the government stated some goals (587th and 597th items) related to the development of education system and human capital (The Ministry of Development, 2006). Second, the 10th Development Plan 2014-2018 mentioned the policies to increase the share of private sector in providing education. For this purpose, the Ministry of Development highlighted the increasing role of private sector in provision of education service. It is stated in the following (The Ministry of Development, 2013):

Alternative education finance models will be developed. Private sector will be encouraged to open educational institutions. Private sector and professional organizations will also be motivated in providing vocational education in terms of administrative and financial participation (156th item).

Class-size was used as an indicator to monitor progress in education quality in the policy documents. Table 3 shows the developments and goals in education sector for K-12 levels given in the 10th Development Plan.

Table 3. Developments and targets as to education in 10th Development Plan 2014-2018

	2006	2012	2013	2018
The number of provinces in which class-size is 30 or below				
Elementary level	51	63	66	76
Upper secondary level	57	55	57	66
Gross school enrolment ratio in pre-primary education level (4-5 years old) (%)	24,0	44,0	47,0	70,0

Source: The Ministry of Development (2013)

According to the Plan, the Ministry aimed at reducing the maximum class-size to 30 students at 76 provinces, out of 81, at elementary school level and 66 provinces at upper secondary level by 2018. Therefore, it was expected that an increase in the number of provinces in which class-size is 30 or below can be reached due to the growing number of private schools and students attending private schools. Moreover, another indicator given in the plan was the gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary education level. The incentive policy aimed to increase the access to private education at K-12 and pre-primary education levels; thus, increase in the enrolments in private pre-primary schools would contribute to pre-primary gross school enrolment ration at this level.

The goals set in the policy documents constituted the policy drivers for the expansion of private sector in education. Besides development plans, The MEB posited private sector in education under the heading of access to education (MEB, 2009, 2015). The Strategic Plan 2010-2014 had strategic goals and strategies related to private education expansion as the following (MEB, 2009, p.112):

Strategic Goal 5: To make private sector invest in education to increase the share of private education in total, to create technologically and physically up-to-date learning environments under the regulatory, supportive and inspector roles of the government, to meet the changing and diversified educational demands of the public, and to make contribution to educational development in the country.

Strategy 5.1. To increase the proportion of the government-dependent private education institutions [private schools] from 5.21% to 9% by the end of the planning period to benefit from the financial sources of the private sector.

Strategy 5.2. To increase the share of students in private education in total from 2.76% to 5% by the end of 2014, with comparison to the number of students in public education.

Strategy 5.3. To provide incentives to private tutoring institutions [PTIs] for their conversion into private education institutions [private schools] at 70% by the end of 2014.

The strategic goal 5 above refers to the expected innovative role of private education in terms of learning and teaching methods, which can also be transferred to other schools. Similarly, the Strategic Plan 2015-2019 pointed out that private sector investments in education had not been in the desired level. The relevant strategy was stated as: “*Incentive mechanisms will be developed to increase the share of private sector in education. Related departments will empower monitoring and evaluation of these incentive and finance applications*” (p.76). Table 4 shows the developments and goals for the share of private education as to educational levels given in the Strategic Plan 2015-2019.

Table 4. Goals for the share of private education in the Strategic Plan 2015-2019

Education Level Share of private education	2012	2013	2014	2019
Pre-primary	6.18	7.81	9.16	23
Primary	2.77	2.99	3.33	6
Lower Secondary		3.16	3.51	7
Upper Secondary	3.62	3.34	4.78	12

Source: (MEB, 2015a)

The implementation of EIP was initiated in the 2014-2015 school year with several goals indicated in the policy documents given above:

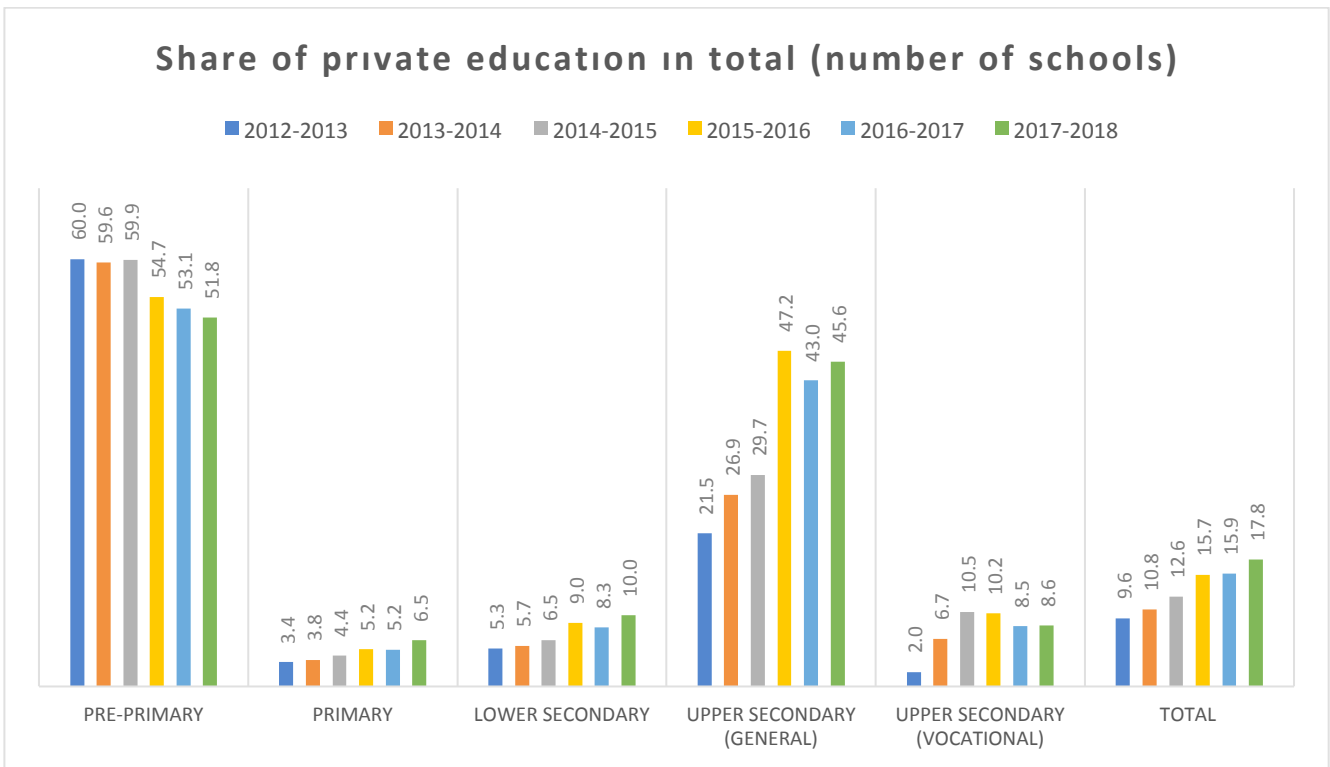
- To increase the proportion of private schools and students attending these schools in total
- To benefit from the financial sources of private sector
- To support conversions of PTIs into private schools
- To increase education quality by competition and class-size reduction
- To make contribution to educational development by up-to-date learning environments and innovative applications of private schools

How does the EIP work in terms of its intended consequences?

Given in the first research question, the policy goals of access to private education, equality of opportunity/equity, education quality, and efficiency were evaluated in the context of the intended consequences of the EIP.

Access to private education: The government intended to widen access to private education. To evaluate this, the share of private schools and students attending private schools in total are indicators to see the change in four-year period. To examine this, first, the change in the share of private schools in the last six years (2012-2018) including the EIP implementation was analysed.

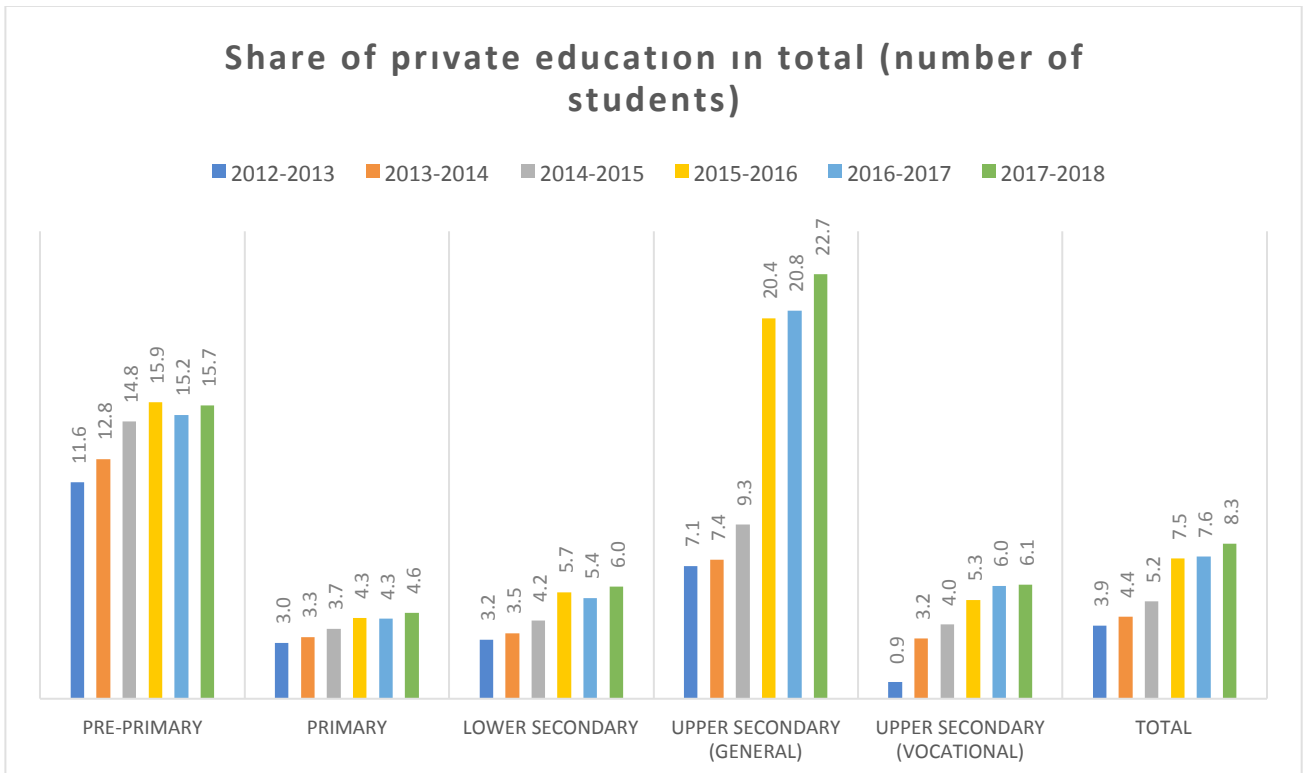
As shown in Graph 1, the percentage of private schools in total increased from 9.6% to 17.8% in the six-year period since 2012-2013 school year. Considering education levels, there is a rapid increase at upper secondary (general) level between 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. The reason for that was the transformation of PTIs to private schools (basic high schools). After the introduction of the EIP at the 2014-2015 school year, it appears that the increase was more visible in lower secondary and upper secondary level private schools.



Graph 1. The percentage of private schools in total according to educational level.

Source: National Education Statistics (MEB, 2015a; MEB, 2016, 2017, 2018).

From the governmental perspective, the use of the financial sources of private schools was one of the principal elements of the EIP. Therefore, increasing the number of students attending private schools gained importance. Graph 2 indicates the percentage of students attending private schools in total in the last six years (2012-2018).



Graph 2. The percentage of students attending private schools in total

Source: National Education Statistics (MEB, 2015a; MEB, 2016, 2017, 2018)

Graph 2 demonstrates that the percentage of students attending private schools increased from 3.9% to 8.3% since 2012-2013 school year. The goal of the government was to reach 12% by the end of 2018-2019 school year

(MEB, 2015b). The increase was 2.3% after the introduction of the EIP between the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years. Thus, it was unable to pursue the goal by the 2018-2019 school year with this rate of increasing, which was 8.7%. According to education levels, there was a steady increase in the numbers of students attending private schools in each school year except for the 2016-2017 at pre-primary and elementary levels. The reason for this decrease in 2016-2017 might be related to the closing down some schools due to the coup attempt and its reflections on educational institutions. Similarly, the rapid increase was seen at upper secondary level schools in the 2015-2016 school year after the introduction of the EIP.

Equity: The government designed the eligibility criteria to reach socioeconomically disadvantaged families with the goal of increasing equity. Table 5 below compares the scoring points of the eligibility criteria and their percentage in total score in four years.

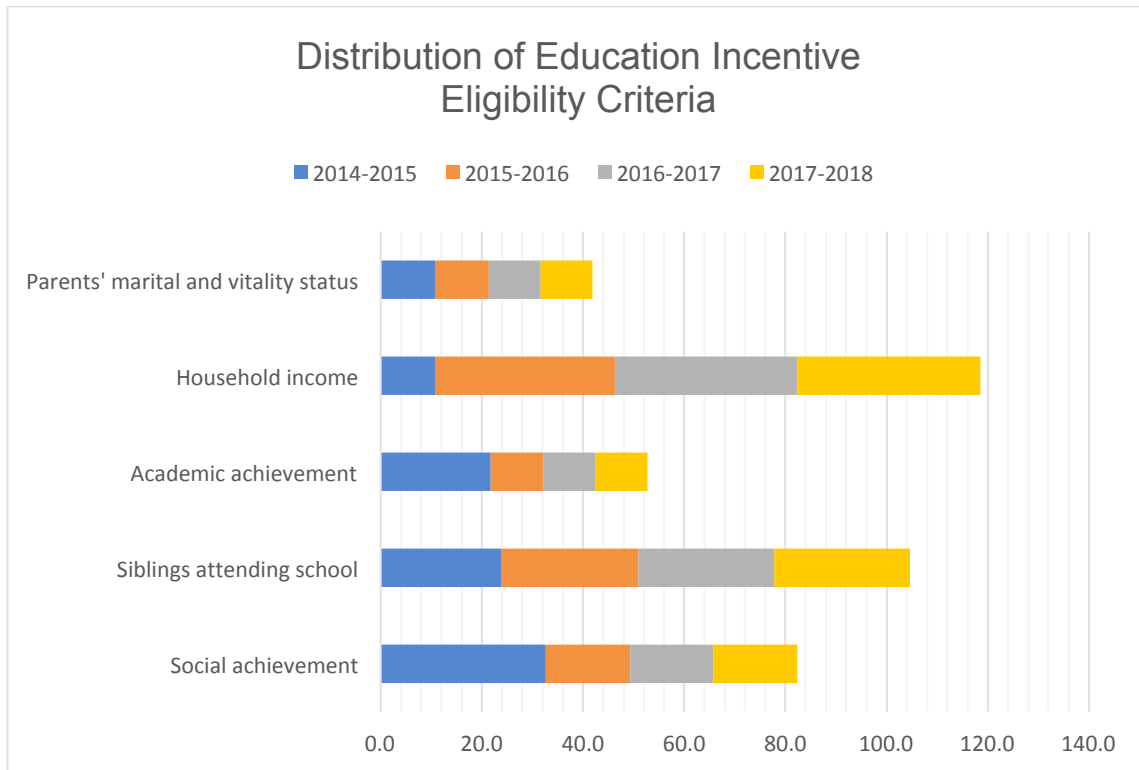
Table 5. Distribution of the eligibility criteria in the maximum application score

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Scores for the evaluation criterion*							
	2014-15	%	2015-16	%	2016-17	%	2017-18	%
Academic achievement at the previous school year	20	21.7	100	10.4	100	10.3	100	10.3
Social achievements	30	32.6	160	16.7	160	16.5	160	16.5
Household income	10	10.9	340	35.4	350	36.1	350	36.1
Siblings attending school	22	23.9	260	27.1	260	26.8	260	26.8
Parents' marital and vital status	10	10.9	100	10.4	100	10.3	100	10.3
Maximum Total Score	92	100	960	100	970	100	970	100

*The maximum scores of each criteria group and percentages are not the exact values.

Source: Calculated by the researchers using the guides published by OOKGM for the application and placement process of the education incentive.

The criteria for special conditions were not included in distribution since they were not common for all school years. With the purpose of making a comparison of eligibility criteria distribution, the maximum points for each item in the criteria were considered except for special conditions. For this reason, the total scores were not complete scores. Later, the percentages of each criteria group in total were examined. Graph 3 below reveals the difference in years.



Graph 3. The eligibility criteria distribution for the EIP (2014-2017).

The most striking change among eligibility criteria groups in Graph 3 was among household income, academic achievement and social achievements. The change happened between the school years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. While the percentage of household income increased in the second year, the percentages of academic and social

achievements decreased. The distribution of the criteria was settled in the third year (2016-2017) since there was not any change in the eligibility criteria distribution and even as to the content in the 2017-2018 school year.

Regarding the results in Graph 3, while academic and social achievements outweighed in the school year 2014-15, it shifted to household income criterion by the school year 2015-2016. Academic and social achievements had made up 22 and 33 percent of the eligibility criteria (which equals to more than half) in the first year. While the criterion of total household income for a month represented only 11% initially, in the last three years, household income had the largest portion (around 35% in average). Siblings attending school followed it with 27%, then students' social achievements came (17%), and academic achievement and parents' marital and vitality status (10%) were the last two.

Quality: Another goal was to increase the education quality by reducing class-size in public schools. Table 6 demonstrates class-size in public schools between 2012 and 2017.

Table 6. The number of students per classroom in public schools (2012-2017)

School Year	Pre-primary*	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary (General)	Total (Formal Education)**
2012-2013	25	24	44	30	31
2013-2014	25	24	42	33	30
2014-2015	25	24	35	29	28
2015-2016	24	23	31	26	26
2016-2017	67	21	32	26	27
2017-2018	67	22	31	25	26

The 2012-2013 school year is the initiation of '4+4+4' policy, which divided the basic education period into three equal parts.

* Number of pre-primary schools does not include the nursery classes in the private education institutions [private schools].

** Open education statistics are not included.

Source: National Education Statistics (MEB, 2015a, 2016, 2017, 2018).

As it is seen from Table 6, the number of students per classroom in public schools had a tendency to decrease slightly until the 2016-2017 school year. There is an extreme increase in the number of students per class at the pre-primary level in 2016-2017 and it continued in the next year. This increase might be related to the policy initiated for the expansion of compulsory education as including the pre-primary level in pilot provinces in the country. Furthermore, while the number of students per classroom decreased, other potential variables in this decrease should also be discussed. Although EIP might have played a role in this development, it is hard to attribute the whole change to the policy.

Efficiency: One of the benefits of EIP for the government was to provide education for all students with less public spending. From the efficiency aspect, Table 7 shows the incentive amounts and expenditures per pupil according to education levels.

Table 7. Incentive amount and expenditure per pupil for education levels (2014-2017)

School Year	Pre-Primary		Primary		Lower Sec.		Upper Sec. Total		Basic High Sc.	
	IA ¹	EPP ²	IA	EPP	IA	EPP	IA	EPP	IA	EPP
2014-2015	2,500	4,672	3,000	4,777	3,500	4,090	3,500	4,392	3,000	4,392
2015-2016	2,680	5,924	3,220	5,282	3,750	4,741	3,750	5,025	3,220	5,025
2016-2017	2,860	5,806	3,440	6,349	4,000	5,026	4,000	6,567	3,440	6,567
2017-2018	3,060	7,328	3,680	5,782	4,280	5,846	4,280	8,750	3,680	8,750

*IA refers to Incentive Amount and EPP refers to Expenditure per Pupil.

Source: (1) OOKGM (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017), (2) TUIK Statistics (TUIK, 2016, 2017) (Only 2017-2018 EPP data were received from TUIK, 2017)

The comparison of the education expenditures per pupil (EPP) and incentive amounts in the table above reveals that the government spent less money for the incentive policy implementation than public spending per pupil. The ratio of incentive amount for public spending per pupil changed between 0.4 and 0.8 in school years. For example, the government spent half of EPP per pre-primary level students receiving incentive and attending private schools, while spent 0.8 times less for lower secondary in three school years. In addition, the government formulated the policy so that it can increase the incentive amount up to 1.5 times of EPP (MEB, 2012). Therefore, the government spent less money for the students attending private schools in the four-year period.

Discussion

The education incentive case in Turkey can be summarized in Figure 2 below according to Adamson et al.'s (2016) key elements for national education systems: policy drivers, neoliberal economic rationales and education mechanisms.

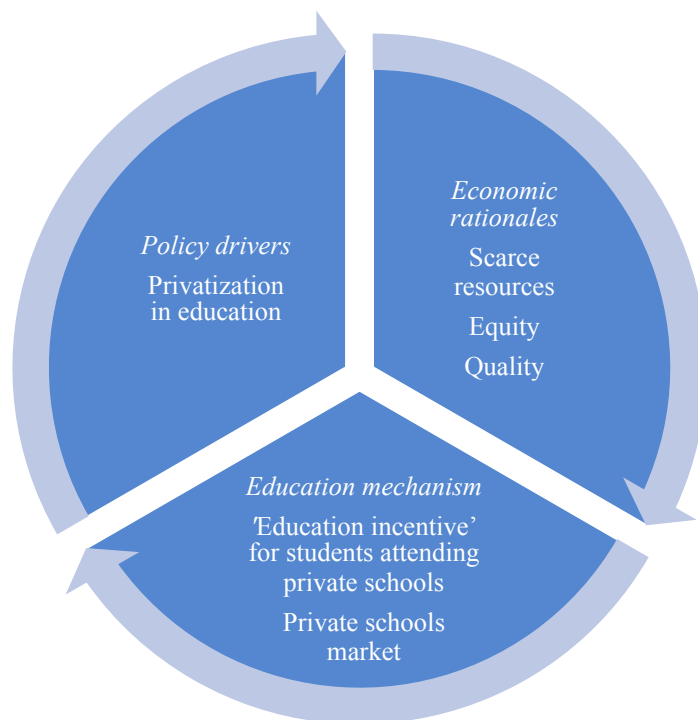


Figure 2. An overview of Turkey's education incentive case.

Source: Adapted from (Adamson & Astrand, 2016)

Accordingly, Turkish government introduced the incentive as a mechanism for translating policy driver and the neoliberal economic rationales into schools. In other words, public-private partnerships served as the mechanism enabled privatization for the policy driver in this case. Thus, the government shared the responsibility of providing education with privately operated organizations and legitimized private education development. In addition, the main goals of the government for the policy demonstrated the neoliberal economic rationales. The policy text showed that the government aimed to widen the access to private education using a targeted incentive implementation. Additionally, they expected to increase education quality by reducing the class-size in public schools and increasing the competition among schools. Further, the education incentive led to an expanded private school market for students and parents considering the growing number of private schools and students attending these schools.

In terms of access to private education, the percentage of students enrolled in private schools showed that private schools benefited from the incentive and the number of students attending private schools has increased. Students attending basic high schools, specifically, have taken the advantage of benefiting from the incentive with high recipient caps. Regarding its low tuition fee, the reason of increase in this school type can also be explained through that targeted voucher programs for low-income students are usually seen to attend low-tuition private schools in developing countries around the world (ERG, 2017; Shakeel et al., 2016). Considering much more reasonable tuition fees of basic high schools, the transformation process of PTIs can also be seen as a factor in the Turkey's case influencing the use of EIP and access to private education.

Concerning the distribution of eligibility criteria, the policy revealed a merit-based feature in the 2014-2015 school year, while the distribution indicated a need-based trait in the last two school years. On the other hand, the difficulty in determining of household income of applicant families has resulted in equity and accountability issues since income statements of families are used for household income criterion (Sayıştay, 2017; TEDMEM, 2018). This brings a discussion about using public resources for wealthy families while the EIP was more intended to increase the share of low income families (ERG, 2017). It is therefore important for policy makers to observe the ground level experiences (e.g. application and placement process, beneficiaries) of the policy to enhance the policy process regarding its intended consequences.

Low class-size appears as an important consideration for education quality in schools as well as it is seen one of the factors affecting parental preferences on school choice between public and private schools (OECD, 2016;

Özmen, 2019; Schwartz et al., 2017). However, class-size reductions does not guarantee the similar effects in different school systems (Woessmann & West, 2006). Yet, with regard to education quality, voucher systems have also a positive impact enabling public schools to learn from the best experiences of private schools (Witte, 2009). Although EIP has been terminated by the 2018-2019 school year, a competitive private school market has been formed to meet changing and diversified educational demands of public. One can claim that class size had a significant influence on this competition, considering that class-size was also used as an indicator of quality in the EIP policy documents. On the other hand, limited interpretations of quality based only on quantitative indicators may lead to underestimation. Hence, policy makers should also consider contextual and individual factors as indicators of quality and enhance the rationales through different variables.

The results show that the government made profit from the implementation since the incentive amount paid is less than the public spending per pupil. Otherwise, school administrators and parents emphasized that the incentive had no effect on parents' decisions to send their children to private school as the incentive amounts were far below private school tuition fees (ERG, 2017; TEDMEM, 2018). As opponents of voucher programs assert that economically well-off families use vouchers rather than those who need them the most (Arenas, 2004; Gauri & Vawda, 2003). Having spent less amount of money per student, the MEB has the opportunity to invest in enhancing equity and quality in public education system.

Conclusion

With the goal of expanding the share of private education, the EIP was introduced using mostly neoliberal economic rationales that are efficient use of resources, equity and quality. The policy makers arranged and transformed eligibility criteria for a targeted beneficiary profile of low-to-moderate income families. However, as the transformation process of PTIs into private schools was also contributed to the expansion of private education share in this period, the influence of EIP especially on different private school types should be further investigated. In addition, the government made profit from the implementation process as spending less money. Yet, increase in the investments and quality in public schools in the same period needs to be examined to understand the changes during EIP's implementation completely. Furthermore, this study is limited with the first four-year implementation of the EIP, and EIP was implemented five years in total. Researchers can also study EIP including the changing outcomes in time.

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