Unzipping The Educational Strategic Plans in Türkiye:
Threats and Opportunities in Disadvantaged Cities

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ABSTRACT

Strategic plans are administrative tools that help implement policies in an effective fashion in educational organizations. Through these, elements of threatening sort can be eliminated, and making a maximum use of educational advantages becomes possible. Strategic plans constitute a map particularly for disadvantaged cities. As a country with plentiful disadvantages, Turkiye has been benefiting from strategic plans in the field of education for a long time. Howbeit, the limited nature of the studies examining opportunities and threats in educational strategic plans in the literature is striking. Thereupon, in the present research, an outlook was adopted at the intersection of these components. Document analysis, one of the qualitative research designs, was employed in the research. Educational strategic plans of disadvantaged cities in Turkiye are examined using MAXQDA 2020. Results show that a fair number of strategic plans contain similar statements, which is considered a hindrance to authenticity. Moreover, factors regarding principal hiring-development process, stakeholder support, attitudes of families-parents, and socio-cultural activities come to the fore as a threat for education in the disadvantaged cities. However, the importance attached to the professional development of teachers, utilizing an equity-based approach, and educational investments are amongst the remarkable opportunities for those cities. The research contains several implications about the strategic plans as well.

Keywords: Strategic plan, opportunity, threat, Turkiye, disadvantaged cities.

Türkiye'deki Eğitimsel Stratejik Planların İncelenmesi:
Dezavantajlı Şehirlerdeki Tehditler ve Fırsatlar

Öz

Stratejik planlar, eğitim örgütlerinde politikaların etkin bir şekilde uygulanmasına yardımcı olan yönetsel araçlardır. Bu araçlar sayesinde tehdit oluşturan unsurlar ortadan kaldırılabilmekte ve eğitimsel avantajlardan maksimum düzeyde yararlanılabilmektedir. Stratejik planlar özellikle dezavantajlı şehirler için birer yol haritası özelliği taşımaktadır. Bünyesinde pek çok dezavantajlı şehir bulunan bir ülke olarak Turkiye de uzun süredir eğitim alanında stratejik planlardan yararlanmaktadır. Ancak literatürde eğitim alanındaki stratejik planlarındaki tehditleri ve fırsatları inceleyen çalışmaların sınırlılığı dikkat çekicidir. Bu nedenle mevcut araştırmanın bu bileşenlerin kesişim noktasında yürütülmesi benimsenmiştir. Çalışmada nitel araştırma desenlerinden doküman incelemesi kullanılmıştır. Turkiye'deki dezavantajlı şehirlerin eğitim alanındaki stratejik planları MAXQDA 2020 kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Sonuçlar birçok stratejik planın özgünlükten uzak olup benzer ifadeler içerdiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca yöneticilerin işe alımı-mesleki gelişim süreci, paydaş desteği, ailelerin-ebeveynlerin tutumları ve sosyo-kültürel faaliyetleri Turkiye'deki dezavantajlı şehirlerde eğitimi tehdit eden faktörler olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Buna karşın öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimlerine verilen önem, hakkaniyete dayalı bir yaklaşımın benimsenmesi ve eğitim yatırımları bu şehirler için dikkat çeken fırsatlar arasında yer almaktadır. Araştırma stratejik planlar hakkında belli başlı çıkarımlar da içermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Stratejik plan, fırsat, tehdit, Turkiye, dezavantajlı şehirler.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Schools are non-profit organizations directing development, and providing unique services. They assume priorities like exploiting their resources efficiently and producing high quality outputs. However, schools have recently been criticized for being ineffective in fulfilling the priorities mentioned. Further supporting such criticism is the ever-growing number of studies on the reasons why education systems are in their current state. One issue that both national and international authorities concentrate upon is the inadequacies of the strategic plans in education, and the problems encountered in their implementation.

Strategic plans are managerial tools deployed by various organizations, including educational institutions (Cooper, 1985). These are prepared resorting to policy documents, development programs, and academic studies (Chang, 2006). Countries use strategic plans to discuss issues like accountability (Gleeson & Donnabhain, 2009), effectiveness (Lane et al., 2005), productivity (Sara et al., 2021), and sustainability (Bieler & McKenzie, 2017). In Turkiye it is intended to improve the key indicators, namely, enrolment, and academic success, and to enhance administrative effectiveness through strategic plans (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2019, p. 11), which is supported by legal regulations. A significant policy document, the 2023 Education Vision underpins that educational organizations will be strengthened, and their policies will be made more applicable via planning (MoNE, 2018). This imposes critical roles on strategic plans i.e., foresight, developing alternatives, and decision-making. Thereby, educational conditions are analyzed with the help of strategic plans, and policies are developed (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020b, p. 14). Nevertheless, researchers exist who defend that these roles are not carried out sufficiently. Studies have also shown that educators may perceive strategic plans as dysfunctional (Arabaci et al., 2015), and as tools that generate responsibility (Coskun & Pank Yildirim, 2018), and workload rather superficially (Cetin, 2014). Strategic plans are oftentimes (and need to be) based on comprehensive analysis though. They deal with weaknesses and opportunities that concern educational organizations e.g., in the form of threats (OECD, 2020a, p. 18).

For strategic planning, *opportunities* are external factors providing *advantages*, whilst *threats* are those that cause *disadvantages* (Pickton & Wright, 1998; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2010a). To exemplify, the same strategic plan could consider developed transportation services as an opportunity, and insufficient technological facilities as a threat. Through opportunities and threats, scenarios are produced. Educational organizations gain foresight, and make projections relying on such scenarios. Particularly, disadvantaged cities that try to come up with solutions to their problems with limited resources carry out their activities using strategic plans.

Disadvantaged cities are settlements that are poorly developed, with various demographic, economic, and sociocultural issues (Cheshire & Zappia, 2015). In parallel with the context of plans, these cities in Turkiye, are referred to as *Regions with Priority in Development* or *Centers of Attraction*. Indices such as education, employment, quality of life, and innovation capacity developed by national authorities and international organizations such as the World Bank, OECD, United Nations are not at the desired level (Ministry of Development [MoD], 2013). Often located in the east and southeast of Turkey (p. 72), these cities are said to be in dozens (Ministry of Industry and Technology [MoIT], 2020; Resmi Gazete, 2006). Through plans, researchers examine each risk, and advantage that pertain to disadvantaged cities to prepare budgets (Goldstein, 2012), and develop projects (Aypay, 2015; Karakutuk, 2020). In developing countries, strategic plans are referred to with a view to developing national (MoNE, 2019; Ministry of Treasury and Finance [MoTF], 2020), and international (Pickton & Wright, 1998; OECD, 2020b; Schleicher, 2018) indices that are pertaining to disadvantaged cities too. Whence, necessary actions are taken against threats, and efforts are made for social inclusion (Acar et al., 2019). Considering the educational benefits of strategic plans (Lane et al., 2005; McCune, 1986; Raffaele & Knoff, 1999), threats and opportunities in these can gain particular importance for disadvantaged cities.

Through this research, it is attempted to analyze the threats and opportunities in strategic plans prepared by the educational authorities of the disadvantaged cities in Turkey. In the relevant line of research, the functioning (Bayram, 2021; Egitim Reformu Girisimi [ERG], 2020, 2021; Ozgan & Yalcin, 2011), development (Babaoglan, 2015; Cekic & Dilber, 2020; Isik & Aypay, 2004; Ozmantar, 2011; UNESCO, 2010b), and significance (Cornut

et al., 2012; Kaufman & Jacobs, 2007) of strategic plans have been focused on. Addedly, some studies make philosophical (Hargis, 2014; Tiwari & Winters, 2016) as well as conceptual-methodological analyses (Chang, 2008; Ozdemir & Toz, 2021). Yet, the literature in Turkiye still possesses a striking lack of studies on the threats and opportunities in strategic plans for disadvantaged cities. Thusly, it is believed that the present research, conducted at the intersection of the components aforementioned, is deemed essential. It is also expected that the current study will raise more awareness of researchers, educators, and public authorities respecting strategic planning.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Plan is the organization of certain activities to achieve the desired results. They are made use of to be able to coordinate organizational activities (Robbins et al., 2016, pp. 8-9). Besides, the future of organizations is shaped by plans (Fayol, 1918/2016, p. 78). Schools are amongst such organizations shaping the(ir) future with plans (Bryson, 2004). The plans used in schools are divided into specific types depending on their purpose, content, and duration. One of the said plans is strategic plans (Karakutuk, 2020, pp. 17-19).

Strategic plans are administrative tools through which organizational functioning and predictions can be analyzed (UNESCO, 2010a, p. 8). In fact, decisions are put into practice by virtue of strategic plans (Steiner, 1979, pp. 12-15). Additionally, these are acknowledged to make capacity, productivity, and efficiency more competitive-innovative. In Turkiye, efforts toward strategic planning were initiated in 2003 by the MoNE, and by its affiliated educational organizations. Doing so, it is endeavoured to control the negativities affecting schools, and to seek any opportunities. Hence, schools around the country implement their own strategic plans, considering the one by the relevant provincial directorate of national education. Thereupon, it is strived to manage every element of education by dint of strategic plans (ERG, 2020; McCune, 1986). Strategic plans are then designed as unique topics thanks to detailed analysis. Threats and opportunities are among the topics in question.

Threats are harmful or undesirable conditions, whereas opportunities are attributed to suitable times and desired conditions. Regarding strategic planning, *threats, and opportunities* are external factors achieved through a *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities,* and *Threats* (*SWOT*) *Analysis* (UNSECO, 2010c). Threats identified through *SWOT Analysis* point to disadvantages, and opportunities indicate organizational benefits (Leigh, 2009). To illustrate, for a school, to have a fair number of refugee students can become a threat, having experienced teaching staff, an opportunity.

In strategic plans, threats and opportunities are scrutinized to direct educational policies (Chang, 2008). Schools where strategic plans are implemented in this way (Bryson, 2004) catering to the cities they belong to (Maier, 2021) attain their goals easily. Disadvantaged cities try to respond to expectations through strategic plans (pp. 231-232; Muijis et al., 2004). Therefore, the threats and opportunities within strategic plans hold a special meaning for those cities.

Disadvantaged cities are settlements with lower indicator values than desired in areas like economy, health, and employment (Cheshire & Zappia, 2015; Lupton, 2004). In tandem with the context of the relevant programs in Turkey, these cities are often entitled *Regions with Development Priority* or *Centers of Attraction*. Excessive in number, disadvantaged cities are behind national and international averages in their education indices (MoD, 2013) since the schools there face a good deal of physical, administrative, and fiscal problems (Gore & Smith, 2001). Strategic plans help eliminate such problems (Mintzberg, 1994) maximizing the use of organizational capacity (Liedtka, 2000). Thence, strategic plans are revolved around in disadvantaged cities.

Numerous studies (e.g., Acar et al., 2019; Leigh, 2010; MoNE, 2019; Schleicher, 2018) demonstrate that strategic plans help eliminate threats, and assist in making use of the opportunities. Bearing in mind their magnitude (Lane et al., 2005; McCune, 1986), and the existence of schools (Chang, 2008; Carvalho et al., 2021; Gleeson & Donnabhain, 2009; UNESCO, 2010a) as to strategic plans, the correlations between the variables become clearer. Nevertheless, literature reviews suggest that the threats and opportunities in strategic plans for disadvantaged cities are not investigated adequately. Verily, when the research is dwelled upon, no such study is detected. The lack of analysis on strategic plans on the basis of educational institutions (Chang, 2006; Ozdemir & Toz, 2021), threats, and opportunities (Bryson, 2004; UNESCO, 2010c), and disadvantaged cities (Lane et al.,

2005; Maier, 2021; MoNE, 2019) catches attention. Accordingly, in this research the threats and opportunities in strategic plans in regard to disadvantaged cities are studied.

This research intends to analyze the threats and opportunities in the strategic plans of the disadvantaged cities in Turkiye. Previous studies emerge as the ones on preparation processes (Arabaci et al., 2015; Cetin, 2014; Ozmantar, 2011), human resources management (Sara et al., 2021), strategic change (Liedtka, 2000), and sustainability (Bieler & McKenzie, 2017). Studies on threats and opportunities are centered on job performance (Di Pietro et al., 2014), manager attitudes (Jackson & Dutton, 1988), and principal perceptions (Polat et al., 2019). Research on disadvantaged cities (and regions) are rooted in the framework of leadership behaviours of principals (Ozcan et al., 2018), school engagement (Karabag Kose, 2019), and school conditions (Lupton, 2004). That said, no study is encountered investigating the threats and opportunities in strategic plans, grounded in disadvantaged cities. This implies there is a gap in the literature. To this end, we aim to fill this very gap. In this way, the threats and opportunities in the strategic plans of disadvantaged cities can be evaluated with a more holistic approach. Our research also addresses ways to raise the awareness of researchers, educators, and policy makers. For this purpose, answers are sought to the following:

1. Which themes do the educational threats and opportunities in the strategic plans of disadvantaged cities cluster in?

2. Do these educational threats and opportunities significantly bear any resemblance to each other?

2 | METHOD

In this research, document analysis, one of the qualitative research designs, was preferred. In this way, it is made possible to examine the materials within the scope of the research (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016, p. 190). As strategic plans are documented/digital materials, this has been decisive to perform the relevant process. Various researchers (e.g., Merriam, 2018, pp. 132-133; Patton, 2015, p. 312) have pinpointed document analysis is indeed suitable to examine documents like strategic plans.

DATA COLLECTION

This study pursued to analyze the strategic plans developed and implemented by the provincial national education directorates of the disadvantaged cities in Turkiye. Nonetheless, it was witnessed that the (number of) cities included in each document varied. Table 1 gives information in this direction.

Table 1. Information About The Universe of The Research

No.	Cities	Regions with Development Priority [*]	Socioeconomic Development Ranking [**]	Centers of Attraction Program [***]
1	Adiyaman		•	•
2	Agri	•	•	•
3	Ardahan	•	•	•
4	Batman	•	•	•
5	Bayburt			•
6	Bingol	•	•	•
7	Bitlis	•	•	•
8	Diyarbakir	•	•	•
9	Elazig			•
10	Erzincan			•
11	Erzurum			•
12	Gumushane			•
13	Hakkari	•	•	•
14	Igdir	•	•	•
15	Kars	•	•	•
16	Kilis			•
17	Malatya			•
18	Mardin	•	•	•
19	Mus	•	•	•
20	Siirt	•	•	•

21	Sanliurfa	•	•	•
22	Sirnak	•	•	•
23	Tunceli			•
24	Van	•	•	•
Total		16	17	24

Source: *Official Gazette, 2006*; **Acar et al., 2019*; ***MoIT, 2020.*

As seen in Table 1, these documents report different numbers of disadvantaged cities, i.e., 16, 17, and 24, making it difficult to clarify the actual number. Be that as it may, the cities included in the *Centers of Attraction Program* seem to cover all. Furthermore, it is known that the above-mentioned categorization is prepared in light of the latest data. On this account, it would be appropriate to take those cities as disadvantaged.

For sampling, the homogeneous sampling method was selected. *Homogeneous sampling* is a purposive sampling method examining similarities/differences between documents/participants' views with common characteristics (Patton, 2015, pp. 607-608). All the cities in the aforementioned program are considered disadvantaged. In that case, their strategic plans are chosen for the research. The strategic plans were accessed from the website of each relevant provincial directorate of national education with the exception of three viz. Bayburt, Sirnak, and Van.

The research was conducted using the qualitative research stages proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994/2019, pp. 10-11). These consist of (*i*) data reduction, (*ii*) data displaying, (*iii*) drawing conclusions and verification. *Data reduction* means the simplification, organization, and thematization of the obtained information. At this stage, the threats and opportunities in the strategic plans of the disadvantaged cities were identified, and isolated from a number of distinctive components. *Data displaying* can be defined as the compression and consolidation of sizable and dispersed information. This stage was executed using tables in the research. For the *visualization,* tables were prepared. *Drawing conclusions and verification* is defined as explaining what the information means, and as justifying the correlations. In our research, this stage was for making comparisons (p. 154). The Findings section presents the results, and the Discussion & Conclusion section comprises of in-depth analyses of the findings.

For the thematic process of the research, the concept coding and subcoding techniques were exercised. Concept coding was embraced for its structure as it helps facilitate categorization, and allows for an examination of the documents (Saldana, 2019, p. 119). Subcoding, on the other hand, was applied with concept coding, as threats and opportunities in strategic plans encompass a good number of subcategories (p. 69). In this way, a detailed classification was targeted (pp. 91-92).

TRUSTWORTHINESS

The present research casts light on the current strategic plans, all of which are accessible. In doing so, it is hoped to use reliable and valid sources. For the data analysis, MAXQDA 2020 was exerted. In this way, it was aimed to avoid any potential bias (Merriam, 2018, p. 152). The compatibility between the coders was checked all throughout. To ensure this, new themes were created when necessary or the emergent themes were combined with others. Therefrom, it is meant to fortify the consistency of the thematic structure. Withal, the data obtained were examined by the authors who had previously been engaged in qualitative studies. The themes on which consensus could not be achieved formerly were then clarified (Guest et al., 2012).

RESEARCH ETHICS

In our research, the researchers as the authors obey the principles of publication ethics. Participant views are not consulted in the present research. Instead, the strategic plans of public institutions were analyzed by accessing their web pages. Ergo, the stable data, obtained from primary sources, were delved into. Moreover, ethical permission of the research also was approved by Social, and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Samsun Ondokuz Mayis University decision dated 31/12/2021, and issued 2021/1077.

3 | RESULTS

THEMATIC FINDINGS

Code matrix to answer the first research question, that is, which themes do the educational threats and opportunities in the strategic plans of disadvantaged cities cluster in, was studied, and 1375 codes in 21 strategic plans were accessed. Themes were formed from these codes. The theme with the highest number of codes (n: 133) was stakeholder-based opportunities, and the theme with the lowest number (n: 7) was opportunities related to security. Table 2 gives details in this regard.

Table 2. *Threats and Opportunities*

	Themes	Subthemes	
Threats	Infrastructural	Physical	-Housing, sociocultural, sportive, classroom, workshop, or laboratory inadequacy.
		Housing	-Rapid, and unplanned urbanization, inadequacy/unsuitability of school areas.
		Technology	-Inadequacies of data, information, and document archiving, non-renewable equipment.
	Individual	Families-Parents	-Low education level, insensitivity, lack of communication, having too many children.
		Teachers and Principals	-Reassignment/relocation, paid/contracted teachers, professional reputation.
		Other Staff	-Reassignment/relocation, lack of experienced staff, out-of-field employment.
	Economic	Budget	-Lack of funding, lack of school budget, high costs.
		Employment	-Unemployment, migration, low-paid Syrians, cheap labor demand.
		Investments	-Increasing costs, insufficient private sector investments, infrastructure problems.
	Awareness and Interest-Based	Families-Parents	-Perception of vocational education, role of media, lack of guidance, and direction.
		Students	-Insufficient level of perception, knowledge, and equipment related to school types.
		Teachers and Principals	-Low awareness of special education, perceptions of school types.
		Society	-Focus on success, cultural codes, ignoring interests, and abilities.
	Immigration-Based	Migration	-Agricultural/educational migration, rural migration, school dropouts, and absenteeism.
		Emigration	-Increasing number of Syrians, urbanization problems, cultural differences.
	Security-Based		-Abandoned buildings, violence against teachers, substance abuse/addiction.
	Equity-Based	Awareness, and Interest	-Low awareness of special education, family indifference, absenteeism, sensitivity.
		Socioeconomic	-Economic inequalities, problems in income distribution, inequality of opportunity.
		Sociocultural	-Inequality of opportunity, rural-urban differences, literacy culture.
		Legal	-Policy inadequacies, access issues, regulatory deficiencies.
	Media-Based		-Information pollution, biased news, violent content, bad examples.
	Stakeholder-Based	Local-Regional	-Low support, budget indifference, feudal pressures, lack of funding.
		National	-Excessive number of stakeholders, limited stakeholder support, external interventions.
	Political	Reassignment and Relocation	-Timing issues, workforce turnover, paid/contracted teachers.
		Budget	-Lack of school funding, cost increases, budget shortfalls.
		Vocational Education	-Problems in student counselling, estimation difficulties.
		Legislation	-Highly frequent regulations/changes.
		Curriculum	-Very frequent regulations/changes.
		Test system	-So often changes of test systems, focalizing on educational/academic achievement.
		Mobile Teaching	-Inspection problems, physical-psychological effects, lack of qualified personnel.
		Approach-Philosophy	-Political interventions, changes in education policies, vocational education approach, transition to higher education approach, prioritizing academic success.
	Social	Socioeconomic	-Low income, income distribution problems, socioeconomic inequalities.
		Sociocultural	-Focus on success, perceptions/interests of parents, limited cultural opportunities.
	Harmful Habit-Based	Internet Addiction	-Unconscious use of social networks, and technological tools, online war games.
		Substance Abuse	-Substance abuse, escalated use of tobacco, and tobacco products.
Opportunities	Infrastructural	Physical	-Facility investments, individual training studies, repair works.
		Technological	-New technologies, and social networks, hosts, and applications.
	Individual	Families-Parents	-Demand for higher quality education, importance given to vocational education.
		Teachers and Principals	-Boosted number of teachers, young, and dynamic staff.
		Other Staff	-Personnel support from government, increased supply of general, and technical staff.
	Financial	Budget	-Increased budget for education, allocation of new resources.
		Grants-Projects	-Agencies, European Union (EU) studies/grants.
		Investments	-Projects, allowances, contributions of stakeholders, physical, and structural innovations.
	Awareness, and Interest-Based	Families-Parents	-Enhanced awareness of quality, parent involvement, and interest in education.
		Students	-Increased interest in education, increased demand for high quality education.
		Teachers and Principals	-Elevated demand for high quality education.
		Society	-Change in interest in vocational education, increased social awareness.
	Security-Based		-Work of security units, school security practices.
	Equity-Based	Access	-Development of access opportunities, legal regulations.
		Investment	-Public grants/incentives, legal regulations.
		Approach	-Education policies, transportation-access regulations, consideration of differences.
	Human and Geography-Based	Population	-Young population, low class attendance.
		Transportation	-Ease of transportation, ease of physical access.
	Media-Based		-Support by local, and national media, widespread use of social media.
	Professional Development	In-service	-In-service training institutes, and studies.
		Postgraduate	-Presence of universities, and academics, research in education.
	Stakeholder-Based	Local-Regional	-Private/public sector, local government, professional organizations, and philanthropists.
		National	-Largely stakeholder based, public institutions, agencies.
		International	-EU programs.
	Political	Qualification	-Promotion of higher quality, occupational standards, certificate-based programs.

	Legislation-Legal Regulations	-Legal facilities/regulations, *2023 Education Vision* goals.
	Curriculum	-Updates within the scope of *2023 Education Vision*.
	Schooling	-Primary education's being compulsory, inclusive education studies.
	Incentives and Projects	-Grants/supports, *Regions with Development Priority* approach, EU funds.
	Approach-Philosophy	-Equity, and inclusive education studies, education-oriented policies, EU harmonization studies,
Social	Families-Parents	-Encouragement being of family members, moral-cultural values that prioritize education.
	Cultural	-Presence of libraries, sports facilities, theatres, museums; touristic activities.

As is seen in Table 2, the educational threats in the strategic plans of the disadvantaged cities consist of 12 themes, and 33 subthemes. Of these themes, *security-based,* and *media-based threats* contain no subthemes. Likewise, the theme *awareness and interest* are composed of subthemes concerning stakeholders. Similarly, the theme *political threats* arises with its subdimensions, legal bases and policy elements. Educational opportunities combine 12 subthemes, and 30 subthemes appertained to these themes. Of these, solely the *media-based threats* theme has no subtheme. The *awareness and interest-based opportunities*, and *stakeholder-based opportunities* themes present quite comprehensive subthemes. The themes *security-based opportunities,* and *professional development-based opportunities* are the simplest ones.

The codes in the subthemes to give an answer to the second research question ("Do the educational threats and opportunities in the strategic plans of disadvantaged cities significantly bear any resemblance to each other?") were compared, and the findings of threats and opportunities were analyzed, and later demonstrated.

FINDINGS ON THREATS

When the *physical* subtheme of *infrastructural threats* is explored, the inadequacy of sociocultural activities and sportive facilities is evident in Bitlis, Sanliurfa, Hakkari, Kars, and Mus. Another similarity was diagnosed between Diyarbakir and Tunceli, which is the lack of workshops and classrooms. For the subtheme of *housing*, Batman, Diyarbakir, and Kars have limited and unsuitable areas for building schools. For the *technology* subtheme there is a consensus on high hardware costs.

The *families-parents* subtheme of *individual threats* signifies the lack of knowledge of families about education. For all that, it is affirmed that broken families in Ardahan, and Elazig, and crowded families in Mus are considered as threats. In Sanliurfa, families have certain attitudes that appear to harm girls. The strategic plans of Erzincan, Igdir, Kilis, Malatya, Mardin, and Sanliurfa criticize the awareness of teachers, principals, and families with respect to special education. This is also present in the subtheme *teachers, and principals*. The subtheme *teachers, and principals* are on reassignment and relocation of teachers. Almost all the strategic plans have negative statements about contracted or paid teachers. Unlike other cities, the relocation of principals is highlighted in the plans of Hakkari and Kilis. The subtheme *other staff* involves qualified staff issue.

For the subtheme *budget* within *economic threats*, the strategic plans of Agri report a lack of school budgets. The plans of Erzurum, Batman, Elazig, Erzincan, Erzurum, Kilis, Malatya, and Sanliurfa declare inadequacy for school budgets with congruent statements. But unlike other cities, Mus underlines bureaucratic problems. For the subtheme of *employment*, problems caused by migration emerge as a threat in Adiyaman. Low wages of Syrian refugees in Adiyaman appear to have negative effects on education. For Erzurum, Gumushane, and Sanliurfa there exist problems apropos of a nonconformity between education and employment. In the *investments* subtheme, for all the cities except Erzurum and Siirt, the inadequacy of private sector investments as a threat to education is stressed. This, accommodating public investments in Hakkari's strategic plan, impacts a high number of issues from cultural activities to archiving studies.

The *families-parents* subtheme of *awareness and interest-based threats* theme points low interest of parents in their children's education is truly expressed in almost all the strategic plans. In *students* subtheme Adiyaman, Batman, Bingol, Erzincan, Igdir, Malatya, and Sanliurfa state that the knowledge about business life is not adequate. The *teachers, and principals* subtheme is along similar lines in all the strategic plans to the height of employee turnover. Critical determinations, such as *families-parents* subtheme, are at the forefront in the reviews of the *society* subtheme.

For the *migration* subtheme of *immigration-based threats*, agricultural migration to Adiyaman, Agri, Batman, Bingol, Elazig, and Sanliurfa seems to influence education negatively. In Diyarbakir, immigration to the city centre

impacts education in a negative manner. For the subtheme of *emigration*, the case of Syrian refugees is raised as a threat.

Considering the *security-based threats*, internet cafes are perceived as a crucial problem in Bitlis, Erzurum, Mardin, and Mus. Again, In Mus, violence against teachers is considered a threat. Substance abuse/addiction is another threat for Bitlis, Elazig, Erzincan, Erzurum, Malatya, and Mardin.

The *local-regional* subtheme of the theme *stakeholder-based threats* exhibits restricted and low-level support by philanthropists as an eminent threat in Adiyaman, Elazig, and Igdir. Only Sanliurfa perceives pressures by feudal elements as a pivotal threat. The commonality is the limited support by local governments and professional organizations for education. For the *national* subtheme, the plans of Erzincan constitute expressions that reflect the lack of stakeholder support. In Elazig's, the effects of external interventions on education were reported.

The details of the *reassignment and relocation* subtheme of *political threats* theme have found a place in the plans. Batman, Erzurum, and Mardin differ from the others in that they highlight timing-scheduling problems. For the *budget* subtheme, Adiyaman and Agri consider the lack of school funding as a fundamental threat. In a similar vein, Adiyaman, Agri, Batman, and Igdir express problems in *vocational education* orientation. For the subthemes of *legislation, curriculum,* and *test system*, all agree that regulations in legislation are very frequent. Adiyaman, Agri, Batman, Bingol, Erzincan, Kilis, and Sanliurfa mention challenges vis-à-vis resting on success with parallel phrases. For *mobile teaching*, for Erzurum, the lack of inspection, and for Hakkari the scarcity of experienced staff are serious threats. For *approach-philosophy*, Kilis announces frequent changes in education policies. Erzurum and Hakkari have a critique of special education policies in their strategic plans.

In connection with the *socio-economic* subtheme in *social threats* theme, all conceptualize low income as a threat. Bingol and Erzurum enclose statements about inequalities. The *sociocultural* subtheme puts forth parents' attitudes. Consistently, the deficit of cultural facilities is seen as a threat in all.

It is regarded the themes *harmful habits-based* and *security* have a close correlation. For the subtheme *internet addiction*, the unconscious use of social networks is underlined in Erzurum and Siirt. The strategic plan of Mardin differs by asserting cyberbullying. For the subtheme of *substance abuse*, Tunceli stands out by bringing out tobacco/tobacco products, and Sanliurfa, drug use.

FINDINGS ON OPPORTUNITIES

For the *physical* subtheme of *infrastructural opportunities*, satisfaction with public support manifests itself. This subtheme shares an evident importance given to the construction of classrooms, and facilities. For the *technological* subtheme, all perceive internet-based applications as an advantage. What is more, increased social media literacy, the works of hosts, and networks are accepted as opportunities.

For the *families-parents* subtheme of *individual opportunities*, the common finding is the escalated demand for higher quality education by parents. Ardahan, Batman, and Mus are different from others by clearly italicizing an interest in pre-school education. For the *Teachers, and principals* subtheme, Batman alludes to higher policy documents in relation to teacher, and principal competencies, unlike the others. The plans of the others similarly integrate the improving situation of teacher supply. For *other staff*, Diyarbakir, Elazig, Kilis, Mus, and Sanliurfa accentuate the support for staff by dissimilar public institutions.

For the *budget* subtheme of *financial opportunities*, all perceive the raised financial resources allocated to education as an opportunity. With reference to this subtheme, Batman differs via punctuating the budget provided by different institutions. For the *budget* subtheme, Siirt spotlights an enhanced share of family budget spared for education. The subtheme of *grants-projects* portrays a similar picture. All reports detailed satisfaction with the opportunities that the grants, and projects the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and EU create. All announce their being prioritized in development, and the legal regulations that support this are effective opportunities. For the *investments* subtheme, all assert the presence of constructions like school buildings, and other facilities.

The theme of *awareness, and interest-based opportunities* incorporates the subthemes *families-parents*, *students, teachers, and principals,* and *society*. In all, interest in education is counted as an opportunity. Demand

for a quality education is uttered in the plans too. Especially in the *society* subtheme, the increase in education is divulged together with development, and workforce.

The *security-based opportunities* theme embodies the argument that Adiyaman, Bitlis, and Mus are safe. In the plans of the relevant cities, this becomes an opportunity. Specifically, for Mus, the school safety connected to education is commented on.

For the *access* subtheme of *equity-based opportunities*, Hakkari, and Mus focus attention on harsh geographical conditions. In Siirt's plan, the weight on educational regulations differs from the others. For the *investments* subtheme, Bitlis, and Mus foreground the physical investments catering to the disabled. Uniformly, the *approach* subtheme carries opportunities provided by inclusive policies, attending to the handicapped, and to their special education needs in Bingol, Bitlis, Gumushane, and Mus.

The subtheme of *population* in *human, and geography-based opportunities* brings in the learning age population as an opportunity. Differently, the strategic plan of Ardahan accents the presence of young teachers. For the *transportation* subtheme, the contributions of public investments are noteworthy.

For *media-based opportunities*, all recognize in their strategic plans that social media is an opportunity. With that being said, Adiyaman, Ardahan, Batman, and Elazig underscore more the local press, while Bitlis, and Kars, the national press.

In the *in-service* subtheme of *professional development opportunities*, merely the strategic plans of Gumushane, and Mus sound like they find the in-service trainings offered by the MoNE quantitatively adequate. For the *postgraduate* subtheme, a significant portion of the cities see universities' allowing the academic development of the educational staff as an opportunity.

For the *local-regional* subtheme of *stakeholder opportunities*, all unfold they receive extensive support from their regions. All the plans disclose local support as an opportunity. In the *national* subtheme, this is summarized as support from philanthropists, non-profit organizations, agencies, universities, and the public. For the *international* subtheme, the educational opportunities that are offered by the EU are visible.

For the *qualification* subtheme of *political opportunities*, the approach prioritizing higher quality education is welcome as an opportunity. The strategic plan of Gumushane brings attention to the alterations to the understanding of rearing principals, unlike the others. The plan of Kars recognizes legal regulations with the EU harmonization program studies as an exceptional opportunity. The subtheme of *legislation-legal regulations* subsumes limited data arguing an exceedingly flexible bureaucracy could become an opportunity. For the subtheme of *curriculum*, Adiyaman, and Bitlis touch on the advantages of curriculum updates. For the *schooling* subtheme, efforts to support student attendance are appreciated. For the *incentives, and projects* subtheme, the support for the cities improves education in every sense acting as an opportunity. Another subtheme is *approach-philosophy* where inclusive education services, legal regulations, and individual education studies are opportunities. A great many cities communicate through commensuration account the shifting philosophies of their policies are an opportunity.

For the *families-parents* subtheme of *social opportunities*, Bitlis, Mardin, Mus, and Sanliurfa take strong family ties as an opportunity, unlike the others. For the *cultural* subtheme, Elazig limelights the number of individuals registered to postgraduate education with Elazig as their place of registry. In this subtheme, Erzurum, Kilis, and Mus count the city libraries, and Diyarbakir the state theater as an opportunity.

4 | DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This research was designed to analyze the threats, and opportunities within the educational strategic plans of the disadvantaged cities in Turkiye. First, the themes of threats, and opportunities were detected. Afterwards, if the threats, and opportunities differed imposingly was investigated.

The educational *threats* affecting disadvantaged cities in Turkey come off in 12 themes, and 33 subthemes, whilst the *opportunities* in 12 themes, and 30 subthemes. This distinguishes the research from others in Turkiye (e.g., Arslan & Kucuker, 2016; Cekic & Dilber, 2020; Ozdemir & Toz, 2021) in view of the context, and approach.

Though they do not drew on strategic plans purely, the studies on educational threats, and opportunities have often concentrated on schools (Ozmantar, 2011), teachers (Akbaba & Yildizbas, 2016; Carvalho et al., 2021), or principals (Polat et al., 2019). This research is exclusive for it inspects stakeholders, official authorities, families, and educational policies.

The literature review has painted a scattered picture on the relevant subjects, be it educational opportunities, and threats, or disadvantaged cities. This research can be conducive to improving this view with its attention to disadvantaged cities. The plans handled are local-scaled ones, though they have the concern of being both national, and international. Notwithstanding, no statement respecting the COVID-19 pandemic is observed in the plans. Both national, and international studies give credence to strategic plans with their compelling role in the functioning of the Turkish education system (ERG, 2021; OECD, 2020). This leads to doubts about the quality of the strategic plans, which are obviously not revised, even during/after extraordinary times like the COVID-19 pandemic period.

For the second research question, the first issue standing above is problems about the authenticity of the plans. Most plans by the authorities of the disadvantaged cities have almost the same expressions. This hints at the designs-applications based on these plans are far from being innovative/situational bringing the research closer to others in the field that are sceptical about the contribution of plans to the development of disadvantaged cities (Wyne et al., 2020).

The paucity of socio-cultural activities, and sportive facilities in some cities catches sight too, and is consistent with the literature (MoNE, 2019; TEDMEM, 2021). Issues on threats that are found in the literature are high hardware costs (ERG, 2020), indifference of parents (Kara, 2020; Sulak & Ergun Kaplan, 2017), migration, and immigration (Han et al., 2019; Topaloglu, 2020), school budgets (Altunay, 2017; Karakutuk et al., 2019), violence against teachers (Neyisci et al., 2020; Sungu, 2015), contracted, and paid teachers (Cinkir & Kurum, 2017; Guzelyurt & Gonul, 2019), constantly changing legislation, and policies (Aypay, 2015; Kara, 2020), limited local government support (Uzun, 2015), principal reassignments, and relocations (Recepoglu & Kilinc, 2014; Celik et al., 2018). The presence of feudal elements, inequalities in special education needs, and extremism in stakeholder interventions are threats.

The advancement in the construction of classrooms, and facilities are conspicuous, unalike the assertions about threats. Educational opportunities raised are proportional to what the literature stresses: increased teacher supply, and improved budgets (MoNE, 2020), policies that prioritize higher quality (Lupton, 2004; Toran & Sahin, 2020; MoNE, 2018), school security studies (Yildiz Akyol, 2015), national, and international grants, and projects (Colakoglu, 2018; Yilmaz 2018). The topic of investments, software-based, and system-based, both contradicts the literature (e.g., with the research of Akin, 2009), and overlaps with it (e.g., with Mart & Kartal's, 2021). The inclusiveness of education policies, and the existence of legal regulations realized towards flexibility of education bureaucracy are opportunities. Whereas in some cities it was an opportunity, the temporary support personnel provided by public institutions may signal a threat. The issues about professional development may be an opportunity through universities, but doubts about the quantitative, and qualitative status of in-service education provided by the MoNE can be voiced.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This research has certain implications for education, strategic planning, and disadvantaged cities. First off, the research offers original information about the strategic plans of the disadvantaged cities hence at the same time increasing the awareness of wider audience. Results suggest that educational authorities should rely on strategic plans to improve the educational conditions of disadvantaged cities. In particular, the main duty of local education authorities should be to make the strategic plans operative, and practical for educational opportunities to be given attention. The similarity of many threats in different cities, and regions imply that common mechanisms to be formed for the preparation, and praxis of strategic plans would be suitable to overcome the educational challenges inherent in these cities. Our findings may also assist educators who are engaged in the work of demanding practicum related to *political* issues such as *budget, vocational education, curriculum, qualification, schooling* in the context of threats, and opportunities. Accordingly, educators who have experiences with the salient issues of

the disadvantaged cities could participate in studies on the suggested mechanisms. Education authorities, from school administrators to members of the Ministry can engage the educators in meaningful, and purposeful activities like professional development, and training so that the motivation necessary to move forward gaining novel insights in education becomes achievable. According to specific studies the positive impact of educators in the cities thay are employed with disadvantaged students is very much notable (Goldhaber et al., 2015; Konstantopoulos & Chung, 2011). This can also be linked to the potential power of strategic plans. In addition to these, the results of our research provide perceptions into backgrounds of strategic plans, and the factors that interfere with the disadvantaged individuals' statuses (Du et al., 2020). More specifically, warranting the realization of realistic, and customized educational strategic plans can be effective in welcoming local or regional opportunities while minimizing threats in disadvantaged cities for developing countries such as Turkiye where there are pivotal regional inequalities.

Despite the fact that it offers implications for the area, this research is limited to the threats, and opportunities sections of educational strategic plans of solely the disadvantaged cities in Turkiye. Since different sections may affect educational institutions in these cities (Lumby, 1999), future studies may inquire into the ways through which the other sections of educational strategic plans intervene in the development of these regions or the status of the individuals there by assuring larger samples. Another obvious limitation of this research may be that it has the sample consisting of the disadvantaged cities in a non-western country. To this end, the results can be generalized only in a limited manner. In this direction, the findings should be further fortified to fulfil the demands of researchers, educators, or policy makers in other countries. In the future, these studies should provide quantitative or qualitative evidence to clarify the relations among educational threats opportunities, and disadvantaged cities in terms of strategic planning. As a matter of fact, comparative studies can provide better understandings as to how strategic planning affects disadvantaged cities, and societies through multiple sourcing or carrying out research at multiple time periods. Finally, the data of the current research was obtained from the strategic plans formulated prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. A great many threats, and opportunities in the field of education are known to be reconceived after March 2020. Within this frame of reference, it is advisable for researchers to explore the coming plans after the COVID-19 pandemic.

STATEMENTS OF PUBLICATION ETHICS

RESEARCHERS' CONTRIBUTION RATE

Contribution rate of each author specified table in the below.

Researchers' Contribution Rate

Authors	Literature review	Method	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Results	Conclusion	(Other)
Author 1	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
Author 2	☒	☐	☒	☐	☒	☒	☒
Author 3	☐	☒	☐	☒	☒	☒	☐

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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