

Education Policy Actions by the Ministry of National Education after the Earthquake Disaster on February 6, 2023 in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

One of the largest earthquake disasters in Turkish history occurred on February 6, 2023. The earthquakes impacted ten provinces greatly, which increased its destructive effect. Immediately following the earthquakes, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) began providing education services and humanitarian assistance. By utilizing its human resources and production capacity, the MoNE was able to mitigate the effects of the earthquakes. The purpose of this study is to assess the support provided by the MoNE to the continuation of education services after the earthquakes as well as assistance to the citizens affected by the disaster, taking into account the global frameworks. It was observed that MoNE institutions played a major role in providing humanitarian assistance in the earthquake area. MoNE has taken on the majority of the production and distribution of food, shelter, and heating. To ensure that education services are provided as quickly as possible, the MoNE has developed education areas and appointed teachers and psychological counselors. As education services were rapidly launched through tents, containers, and prefabricated schools; preparations were made for the transition to face-to-face education. Students were able to continue their education during the course of their treatment in hospital classes. The transfer for students who wish to study in other cities was facilitated and free boarding facilities were provided. Based on the guidelines for education in emergencies frameworks by INEE and UNESCO-IIEP, it may be concluded that the MoNE effectively implemented the suggested policies for the continuation of education, and utilized its experience in the Covid-19 outbreak in providing social assistance.

Keywords: earthquake, education, Ministry of National Education

6 Şubat 2023 Tarihinde Türkiye’de Yaşanan Deprem Sonrasında Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Tarafından Atılan Politika Adımlar

ÖZ

Türkiye, 6 Şubat 2023 tarihinde, tarihindeki en büyük deprem felaketlerinden birisiyle karşılaşmıştır. Deprem etkisi 10 ile yayılmış ve bu durum depremin yıkıcı etkisini artırmıştır. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB), depremin ilk gününden itibaren eğitim hizmetlerinin başlatılması ve insani yardımların sağlanması için harekete geçmiştir. Bu kapsamda sahip olduğu insan kaynağı ve üretim kapasitesini depremin etkilerini azaltmak için kullanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, afet sonrası dönemde eğitim yönetimi ölçütlerini dikkate alarak MEB’in 6 Şubat 2023 depremi sonrasında eğitim hizmetlerini sürdürme ve afette etkilenen vatandaşlara sunduğu destekleri değerlendirmektir. Deprem alanında sunulan insani yardımlarda MEB kurumlarının ilk günden itibaren ana üretici konumunda olduğu gözlenmiştir. MEB kurumları deprem alanında yemek, barınma, ısınmaya yönelik üretimlerin ve dağıtımların büyük kısmını üstlenmiştir. MEB, eğitim hizmetlerinin en kısa sürede sunulabilmesi için gerekli alanların oluşturulmasını, öğretmen ve psikolojik danışmanların görevlendirilmesini sağlamıştır. Çadırlar, konteynerler ve prefabrik okullar aracılığıyla eğitim hizmetleri hızla başlatılırken okullarda yüz yüze eğitime geçiş için hazırlıklar yapılmıştır. Hastane sınıfları oluşturularak öğrencilerin tedavi sürecinde eğitimlerine devam etmesi sağlanmıştır. Diğer şehirlerde eğitim almak isteyen öğrenciler için nakil süreci kolaylaştırılmış, bu öğrencilerin parasız yatılı hizmetlerinden ücretsiz yararlanmasını sağlamıştır. INEE ve UNESCO-IIEP tarafından geliştirilen afet sonrası eğitim çerçeveleri dikkate alındığında MEB’in deprem sonrasında eğitim için önerilen adımları atarken sosyal yardımların sağlanmasında da Covid-19 salgınındaki tecrübesini etkin şekilde kullandığı görülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: deprem, eğitim, Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı

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INTRODUCTION

Disasters, either naturally or man-made, lead to deep scars on society (Arcaya, Raker & Waters, 2020; Bradshaw, 2004; United Nations, 2019). In these terms, disasters have created an enormous risk of destruction for humanity throughout history. Especially natural disasters lead to big risks due to uncertainties about their process and development (The World Bank, 2005; United Nations, 2010). As a matter of fact, the damage of natural disasters is grouped into four as life loss, physical destruction, displacement of people and economic losses (Deryugina, 2022). According to the data of the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), 780.000 people died due to natural disasters between 2000 and 2010, almost 2 billion people were directly or indirectly affected, and at least 960 billion dollars of damage was incurred United Nations, 2010).

The increase in climate change on a global scale leads to an increase in natural disasters (CRED, 2015; Goldstein, 2021). According to Goldstein (2021), humanity encounters natural disasters more frequently than ever before: the number of natural disasters due to climate change has increased approximately 5 times in the last 50 years. According to CRED's (2015) report, while the frequency of disasters due to geographical movements was similar to previous periods, climate-related disasters such as floods and storms increased by 44% compared to the previous period.

Earthquakes have unique characters due to uncertainty about their timing and destructive power (United Nations, 2010). In a short period of 20 years between 1998 and 2017, approximately 750.000 people died due to earthquakes and more than 125 million people were affected in various aspects by earthquakes (WHO, 2022). Earthquakes caused more deaths during this period than all other natural disasters combined. The destruction caused by earthquakes deeply affects social processes as well as human health (Arcaya, Raker & Waters, 2020; D'Amico, 2016). Transport, health, education, agriculture, and other sectors are adversely affected by the disaster (FAO, 2015; Mavrouli et al., 2023; McCullough, 1994). People in earthquake-prone areas are particularly challenged to access services due to the problems encountered in these sectors. For this reason, the consequences that may occur after the earthquake are evaluated in various scenarios and rapid response programs are created (Guerin-Marthe et al., 2021; He, 2021).

For a long time, Türkiye has been referred to a “country of earthquakes” due to its location and geographical structure (Gündüz et al., 2013). Destructive earthquakes have occurred on active fault lines since the period of the Ottoman Empire (Mazlum, 2001; Ürekli, 2010). During the Republican period, many earthquakes occurred, especially in Hakkari in 1930, in Erzincan in 1939, and in Kocaeli in 1999, with a magnitude of over 7 Mw. Unfortunately, on February 6, 2023, Türkiye was struck by one of the most severe earthquakes in recent decades. The earthquakes struck in the Pazarcık District of Kahramanmaraş (7.8 Mw) and then in the Elbistan District of Kahramanmaraş (7.7 Mw) on the same day, and caused extensive destruction in 10 provinces (İTÜ, 2023). These earthquakes constitute one of the biggest disasters not just for their magnitude but also the size of impacted area including 10 provinces.

Education is one of the most effective tools with which countries can deal with the social trauma caused by disasters (Bensalah, 2002; GFDRR & The World Bank, 2019; Le Brocque et al., 2016). Also, education is among the foundational human rights that cannot be interrupted under any circumstances (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; Sinclair, 2007). Thus, countries have the responsibility to continue education and/or restart it as soon as possible if it is interrupted. A major reason for the rapid resumption of education after disasters is the fact that children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society (Le Brocque et al., 2016; Sinclair, 2007). The continuation of education is of vital importance in order to protect children from the psychological negativities. The implementation of mechanisms that will compensate for any learning deficiencies or psychological difficulties that may occur should begin as soon as these conditions are met. After an earthquake, these steps put a great deal of emphasis on education to help society as a whole to repair itself.

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) of Turkish Republic made a substantial contribution to the continuation of education and the mitigation of the social damage caused by the earthquake on February 6, 2023. As part of its efforts to assist earthquake victims, protect students' well-being, and continue education, the MoNE utilized all its units and production capacity. For this purpose, it used the post-disaster education management frameworks developed by international organizations as a guide (INEE, 2010; UNESCO & IIEP, 2010). This study focuses on the February 6 2023 earthquakes, and aims to evaluate the steps taken by the MoNE through the

analysis. The evaluation took into consideration the criteria for the continuation of educational activities after disasters developed by education stakeholders, especially INEE and UNESCO-IIEP, and the experiences in similar cases.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Earthquakes and Education

Although it contributes greatly to coping with disasters, education is among the sectors that suffer the most during a disaster. The damage to educational institutions caused by disasters, the inability to provide access to schools, and the inability to perform routine school services can all contribute to the difficulty in accessing education. In 2010, approximately 11,000 schools in Pakistan collapsed or were severely damaged by a massive earthquake (Chuang, Pinchoff, & Psaki, 2018). In the earthquakes that took place in Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, in 1985, nearly 25 school buildings collapsed, and 760 school buildings were severely damaged (Gratton et al., 1986). In both earthquakes, problems related to access to education were experienced due to the destruction of schools and transportation roads.

Studies on the impact of earthquakes on education show that there are significant relationships between exposure to disasters and educational outcomes. Bethke (2005) examined the long-term education outcomes of students who had to leave their region due to disasters or conflicts in the past and found that these students' primary education completion and employment rates were significantly lower. Shidiqi, Di Paolo, and Choi (2022) examined the impact of the 2006 earthquake in Indonesia on educational outcomes. The results of the study showed that the students affected by the earthquake had an average of 0.74 years less participation in education compared to their peers, and the primary and secondary school completion rates were 10% to 11% lower than their peers. A detailed analysis of the results revealed that the decrease in education year was related to the damage caused by the earthquake to educational institutions. There has been evidence that the earthquake negatively impacted human capital through education.

Caruso and Miller (2005) examined the relationship between the 7.9 Mw earthquake that took place in Peru in 1970 with educational outcomes. Based on the results, there was a decrease in the participation of children affected by the earthquake in education, which varied by gender. According to the findings, the education period of boys affected by the earthquake is 0.5 years shorter than their peers, and 0.8 years shorter for girls.

Wang, Yang, and Li (2007) examined the effects of the 7.8 Mw earthquake in Tangshan, China in 1976 and showed that access to education declined significantly. The findings indicated that the cohorts affected by the earthquake were between 14% and 21% lower than their peers. Depending on the decrease in the education year, it is predicted that the annual income of these generations will decrease between 3.5% and 4.8%. At the national level, the negative impact of the earthquake on GDP was estimated to be between 0.3% and 0.4%.

Cuaresma (2010) examined the relationship between disaster exposure with education and human capital outputs. According to the study, disaster exposure and participation in education have a strong and negative relationship. This relationship has been demonstrated to be especially strong in the case of geologically based disasters, including earthquakes. In addition, it was emphasized that the relationship in question showed significant differences between countries that experienced disasters.

Paudel and Ryu (2018) examined the relationship between the 6.9 Mw earthquake that took place in Nepal in 1988 with educational outcomes. It has been shown that students in the earthquake-affected regions have lower rates of both education attendance and education completion rates at secondary education levels. In the long run, the earthquake affected the quality of national human resources.

Education was defined as a fundamental human right in line with the International Declaration of Human Rights of 1949, which was also accepted by Türkiye, and the decision to continue education in cases of violence and disaster at the World Economic Forum in 2000 (GFDRR & The World Bank, 2019; Sinclair, 2007). As a result of the role that education plays in disaster management, education is given equal importance to other human needs such as nutrition and shelter. The multiple benefits of education in case of a disaster are listed as follows (Sinclair, 2007):

A. Accelerating normalization in society: Education activities have a wide network reaching all segments and stakeholders of society. Considering students, teachers, parents, school administrators and all individuals serving the education sector, the size of the group that education corresponds to in society can be easily understood. In order to reduce the negative effects of a disaster, the perception of "normalization" is essential. The rapid

resumption of educational activities contributes substantially to the normalization of a large part of society by creating a sense of "daily routine".

B. *Creating a safe space for students to leave their traumatic experiences behind:* After the disaster, the “school” provides an environment that brings students together with their peers and teachers. In a safe environment, students who have endured many traumatic events receive attention from both their peers and teachers, and a sense of togetherness is nurtured. The school becomes both a psychologically and physiologically safe environment for children, whether it is in the form of a tent or a container.

C. *Maintaining the impact of investments in education and increasing the quality of human resources:* Investments in education and human resource development today constitute a significant part of public and private investments. The physical destruction and psychological problems caused by the disaster greatly reduced the impact of these investments. Continuing education services or starting them as soon as possible accelerates the process of normalization and offers students an excellent opportunity to keep learning gaps to a minimum and to compensate for them. Otherwise, learning gaps may become chronic, and the cost of compensating for these losses increases.

D. *Ensuring the protection, registration and proper orientation of children:* After the disaster, children become one of the most vulnerable groups in society. In this period, one of the biggest priorities is to reach children as soon as possible, ensure their registration, and secure their safety. Children's access to education contributes to the solution of issues such as child abuse, the loss of children, and the inability to access education, which are common during natural disasters. In this context, education is the most effective means of reaching students, getting them to school, the safe area, providing psychosocial support, and ensuring that they have access to education.

E. *Protecting marginalized groups:* Even though all children are vulnerable after a disaster, children with disabilities, students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, immigrants, and students who are out of school are more likely to face a greater challenge. During disaster periods, these students' disadvantages become even worse. The provision of educational services to all children throughout this period can play an important role in minimizing the effects of these disadvantages. In other words, an "equalizing" educational environment is of vital importance for disadvantaged students, particularly following a disaster.

Standards and Recommendations of International Organizations in Post-Disaster Education Management

As explained in detail in the previous section, disasters lead to significant declines in educational outcomes, particularly access to education and academic performance. It also reduces the quality of human resources at the national level and limits the effects of investments in this field to a large extent. As a fundamental right, education provides the psychological and physiological well-being of children while minimizing these negative effects as well. International organizations, especially INEE and UNESCO-IIEP, have determined the minimum standards of education services after disasters and have made recommendations to reach these standards (INEE, 2010; UNESCO & IIEP, 2010). Table 1 shows the evaluation framework established by INEE and UNESCO and IIEP for the implementation of post-disaster education services (INEE, 2010; UNESCO & IIEP, 2010).

Table 1. Reference Frameworks for Education in Emergencies

INEE	Foundational standards
	Access and learning environment
	Teaching and learning
	Teachers and other educational personnel
	Education policy
UNESCO-IIEP	General standards and overview
	Access and inclusion
	Teachers and learners
	Curriculum and learning
	Management capacity

In Table 1, both frameworks referring to post-disaster education systems contain similar elements. There is a priority to ensure that education services could be continued uninterrupted and, if interrupted, re-started as

quickly as possible. In order to ensure that children have access to education and to determine their basic needs within the framework of INEE, all stakeholders are urged to participate in the process. In addition, the coordination of education stakeholders with other stakeholders in the field of disaster in the transition to education and the responsibility of maintaining coordination in the transition to education activities are assumed by educational institutions. As part of the UNESCO and IIEP framework, UNESCO and IIEP emphasized the importance of capacity building for education and the involvement of education stakeholders.

Another factor emphasized in both frameworks is the sending of experienced teachers who have adequate training in disaster management to the area of disaster. Immediately, school psychological counselors and guidance teachers should be sent to the region in order to provide psychosocial support to students. It is recommended that teachers continue their educational activities in cooperation with psychological counselors. During this process, students are put at the center of the process and distanced from traumatic events through the use of games and cooperative activities. There is also a particular emphasis on literacy and basic skills in the frameworks. As part of the applied training program, we should emphasize common values and behavioral skills.

Another area that is more emphasized in the framework presented by INEE is the adoption of a data-driven approach to identify training and human resource needs. In disaster situations, quick decisions must be taken, and continuous and accurate data is crucial in order for these decisions to be accurate. Consequently, the importance of collecting data directly from the field after a disaster was stressed. To achieve this goal, it would be beneficial to establish a data system where students, educators, and other stakeholders in the field of education can continuously track the needs of the students.

The last element emphasized in both frameworks is the support of post-disaster education management with permanent education policies. All the steps described so far should be implemented as soon as possible in order to make education systems more resilient to disasters. A number of important issues were addressed as part of the adoption of these disaster plans as an educational policy, including the construction of schools in accordance with all kinds of disasters, the creation of scenarios concerning possible disaster situations, the development of a data transmission system, integrating disaster education into the curriculum, and the transition to informal and distance education when necessary.

Contributions of the Ministry of National Education after the February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes

Following the two earthquakes that occurred in Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023, the MoNE took immediate action to provide support for the earthquake victims and to begin education services as soon as possible. In response to the earthquake, the MoNE established a crisis desk and partnered with the province's organization. In a short period of time, MoNE institutions have been the main providers of humanitarian aid, especially vocational education schools. As early as the first day, the necessary evaluations and preparations have been made to ensure a rapid start to education services. Through its social and humanitarian contributions, the MoNE has gone beyond education services to have a large impact on disaster management. Therefore, the contributions of the MoNE after the earthquake were categorized into four categories.

1. Contributions to Search and Rescue Operations and Providing Humanitarian Aid

Following the earthquakes, the MoNE began evaluating the conditions of students in 10 provinces. In search and rescue operations, 4,526 members of the Search and Rescue Unit (AKUB) affiliated with the MoNE participated. Furthermore, AKUB assisted in setting up tents, transporting and setting up aid materials, as well as distributing food. As part of this process, AKUB experts were divided into 225 separate teams in 10 provinces, and the activities of these teams were monitored live by officials of the MoNE.

A rapid assessment of the damage to institutions affiliated with the MoNE in the region has begun. Only 24 of 20,868 buildings of the MoNE collapsed, while 83 buildings had heavy damage. A series of schools, hostels, teachers' houses, evening art schools, practice hotels, and regional boarding schools were opened to earthquake survivors after risk evaluation. Shelter needs of earthquake victims have been met by these buildings. The number of people sheltering in the MoNE institutions, over 450.000, decreased to almost 84.000 by the fourth week of the earthquakes due to migration to other provinces and return to solid housing.

A preliminary damage assessment study conducted by the MoNE classified the 10 provinces affected by the earthquake into three groups based on the extent of damage to both educational institutions and the province. The starting date of education was postponed to March 27 in Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Adıyaman and Malatya, where the impact of the earthquakes were felt most intensely, to March 13 in Adana, Osmaniye and Gaziantep,

and to 1 March in Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa and Kilis, which were the least affected. The schools' needs and the general conditions in the provinces were considered during these postponements, and the shortest possible time was allowed for the transition to schooling. On March 1, education services began successfully in Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, and Kilis as a result of this approach. It is the responsibility of the MoNE to conduct all needs assessments and situation assessments at the school level to ensure the implementation of face-to-face education in schools as soon as possible, similar to the approach taken during the Covid-19 epidemic (Özer, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d; Özer & Suna, 2020; Özer et al., 2022a).

MoNE officially began using the vocational education institutions that it has transformed in recent years (Özer, 2019a, 2019b, 2020b, 2022a, 2023). Bread, hot food and packaged food production started rapidly in vocational education institutions and were delivered to 10 provinces. Additionally, 97 mobile kitchens and 7 mobile ovens have been established in earthquake-affected areas. Within a few days of the earthquakes, the MoNE institutions started to prepare more than 1.9 million hot meals, approximately 1.8 million loaves of breads and nearly 200.000 food packages a day. As seen in Figure 1b, the MoNE institutions produced and distributed more than 32.2 million loaves of bread, more than 22.4 million portions of hot meals, and more than 2.7 million packaged foods in a month as of March 3, 2023. In addition, as seen in Figure 1a, the MoNE has established “food service points” in 10 provinces to facilitate access to the food produced, and has begun to use these educational institutions as centers for both food production and distribution.

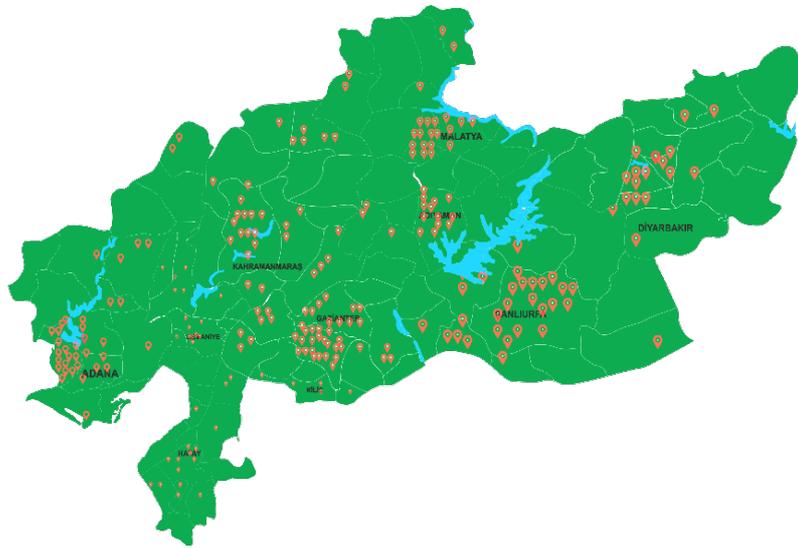


Figure 1a. Food service points of the Ministry of National Education

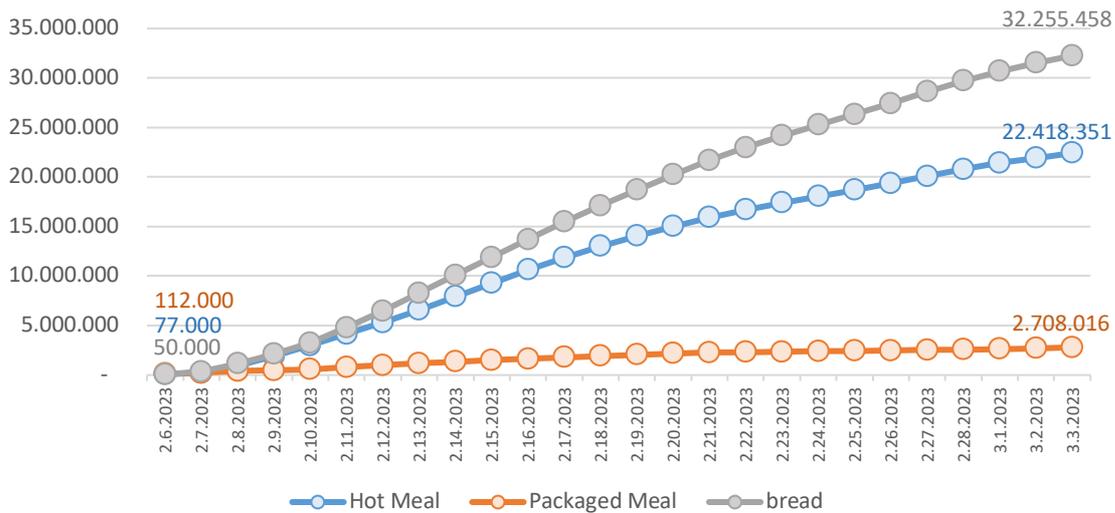


Figure 1b. The amount of food produced by the institutions of the Ministry of National Education*

*Cumulative number of food and meals which were produced by the MoNE institutions

Vocational education institutions have rapidly increased their production to support the sheltering needs of the earthquake victims. As seen in Figure 2, approximately 30.000 stoves, 115.000 blankets, 83.000 sleeping bags, and nearly 1.000 tents were produced and distributed during the first week following the earthquakes. In addition, after conducting R&D studies in vocational training, tent and container production was initiated within a short period of time. More than 280 containers and nearly 1,000 tents have been produced to date. More than 1,700 portable heaters produced by students and teachers who continue their education in Science and Art Centers (BİLSEM) were sent to the earthquake victims in 10 provinces.

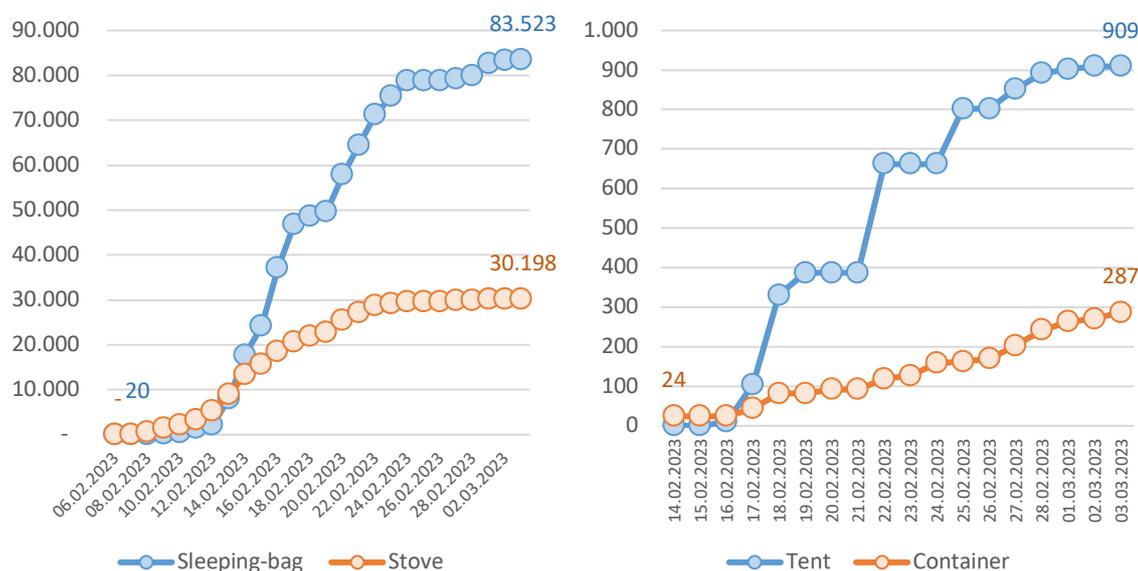


Figure 2. The sheltering goods produced by the institutions of the Ministry of National Education*

*Cumulative sheltering products which were produced by the MoNE institutions

1. Steps for Continuing Education

To ensure that earthquake victims return to school as soon as possible, the MoNE began conducting damage assessment studies on day one. In this context, the current state of schools and buildings of the MoNE was examined in 10 provinces. After examining the buildings affiliated with the MoNE in 10 provinces, it was determined that only 24 buildings were destroyed, and 83 buildings were severely damaged. Infrastructure support has been provided in order to make the undamaged buildings earthquake-resistant and ready for education as soon as possible. The second semester has begun in 71 provinces involving around 15 million students on February 20, 2023.

To provide education services to students in the living spaces created since the first day of the earthquakes, the MoNE has begun setting up "education, support and play tents" in 10 provinces with a high earthquakes impact. Almost 20.000 teachers and 4.000 psychological counselors have volunteered to provide education in the affected provinces. In the event that the schools were not available, the MoNE would assume the extra course payments of these teachers. These tents offered students psychosocial support and attempt to reestablish a "school routine" by supporting their basic skills. The establishment of 416 "psychosocial support tents" was completed by the third week following the earthquakes. These tents are staffed by psychologists and guidance teachers who work in institutions affiliated with the MoNE. As of March 3, the MoNE has provided education in 1.476 tents and containers, and 350 new container schools were preparing to be established soon. Students and their families have been provided with continuous services, particularly in the event of psychological problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder that can arise after a disaster. Further, the MoNE has taken responsibility for the transition of students to prefabricated schools, classrooms, and tents for education. As can be seen in Figure 3, more than 324,000 individual interviews, more than 293.000 group interviews, and nearly 180.000 parent interviews were conducted within the scope of psychosocial support in approximately three weeks.

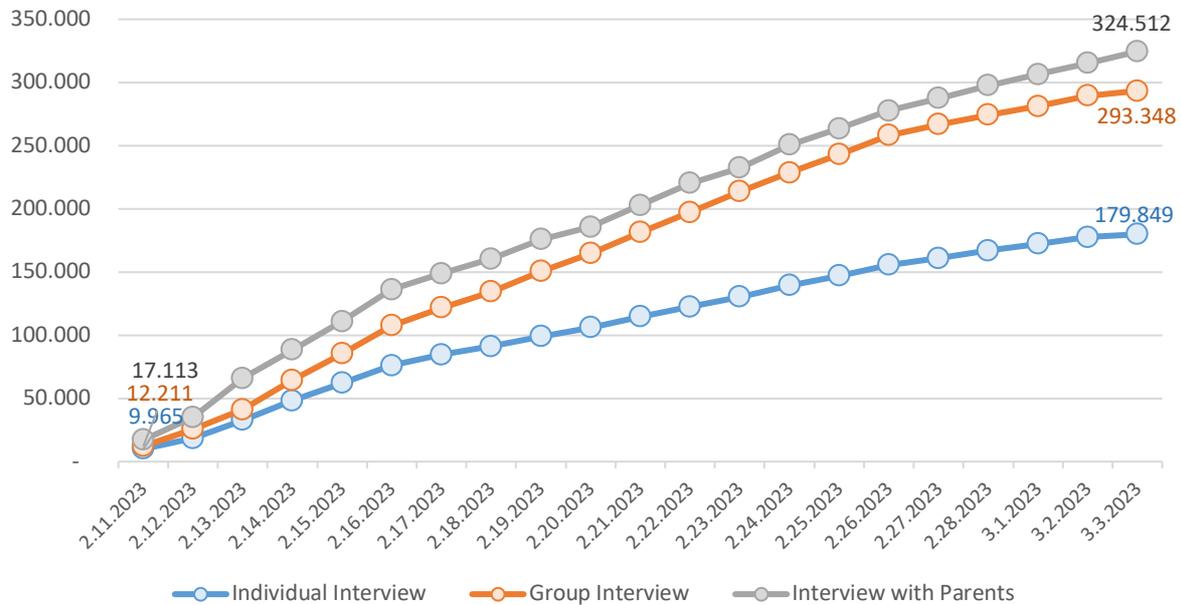


Figure 3. Number of Interviews by Experts within the Scope of Psychosocial Support

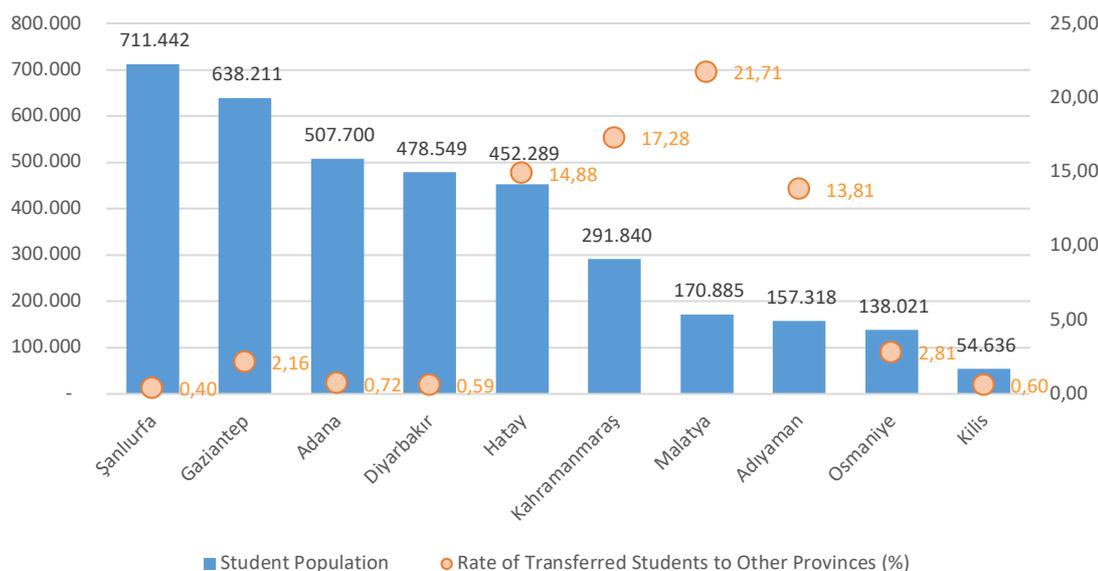
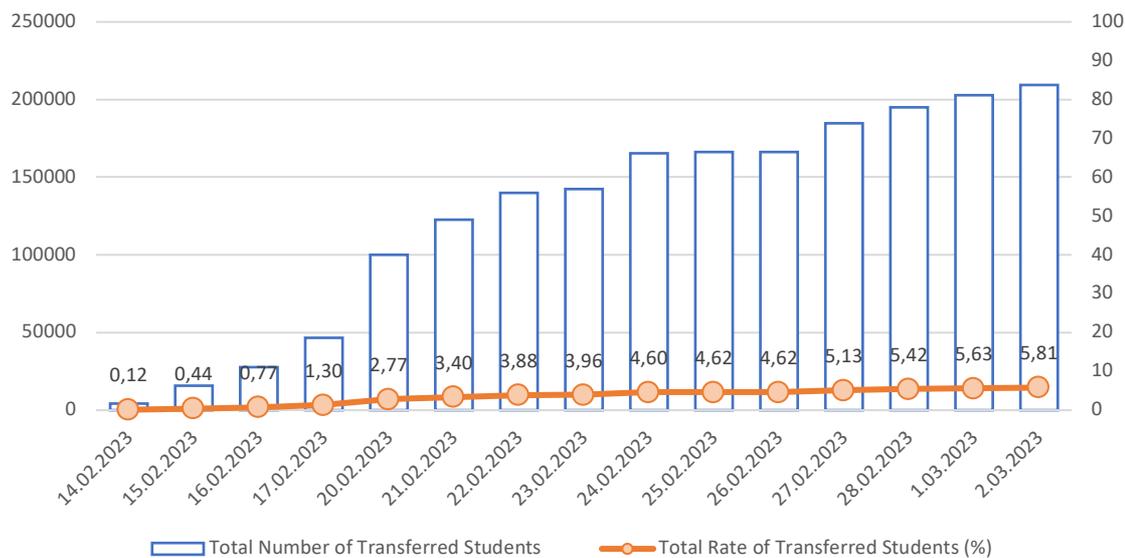
*Cumulative number of interviews which were conducted by the school counselors and experts.

Educational activities were started immediately in the living spaces created, especially in tent cities. As of the third week of the earthquakes, 236 pre-school education tents were set up, primary school education in 111 tents and secondary school education in 108 tents have been provided. After a short period of three weeks, two prefabricated schools were established and education began at different levels. Secondary school students continued to receive education in training tents and prefabricated schools. In this process, academic support programs were implemented at 510 points for students preparing for the high-stakes assessments. Training has been provided at these points as part of the Support and Training Courses (DYK) that have been implemented by the MoNE. In addition, the MoNE announced that these assessments would cover the content of the first semester only (before the earthquakes). Therefore, the high-stake assessments were revised to eliminate the possible inequalities between students.

Another significant step taken by the MoNE is the access to education of students who are treated in hospitals due to their health problems. There has been a rapid expansion of "hospital classes" in earthquake zones, which the MoNE has greatly increased in recent years. As of the third week following the earthquakes, 93 hospital classrooms had already been established. By setting up classes in hospitals, students are able to attend training sessions while undergoing treatment. At least two classroom teachers are assigned to all hospital classrooms in order to ensure continuity of education.

The MoNE has made arrangements to facilitate the transition of students who wish to continue their education in different provinces. Survivors of earthquakes in this context were accorded the right to continue their education in other provinces without being subject to school-to-school transfer criteria. A significant benefit that will be provided to students who wish to study in other provinces is that the rate of students receiving full scholarships in private educational institutions will increase. The MoNE has decided to increase the minimum rate of students receiving full scholarship education in private education institutions from 3% to 10% in the days immediately following the earthquake, following meetings with the administrators of private education institutions. The increase in the scholarship rate would only be allocated to survivors of the earthquakes. Consequently, more than 32.000 earthquake victims had the opportunity to receive education in private educational institutions free of charge until March 3, 2023. Additionally, these students were provided to benefit from student residences in other provinces free of charge. These opportunities, provided by the MoNE to students who wish to study in different provinces, have been increasingly utilized by students and their families. Figure 4 illustrates the growth in the number of students being transferred to study in different provinces over time. According to Figure 4, the number of students who continued their education in different provinces increased rapidly from 48.000 to

more than 202.000 in just three weeks. In the provinces, earthquake transfer commissions attempted to ensure that the most appropriate transition opportunities were provided by taking into account the needs of the students and the school quotas. The rate of students transferred to other provinces remained limited (less than 6 percent), thanks to the excellent efforts of the MoNE to move schools towards face-to-face education.



2. Steps to Improve Quality in Education

Through the establishment of training tents, psychosocial support tents, and prefabricated schools, the MoNE provided access to education. Therefore, the next focus was to enhance the quality of education opportunities offered. It was first of all important to deliver textbooks, notebooks, and educational supplies to all earthquake victims as soon as possible. Approximately 7.5 million textbooks, 5.5 million supplementary resources, and nearly 130.000 stationery sets have been delivered to earthquake victims as of the second week following the earthquake. All earthquake victims were provided with clothing and stationery sets as well.

While the deficiencies of the students were eliminated, the infrastructure of the training tents and prefabricated schools was strengthened. 5.500 televisions were installed in the containers so that students could

take advantage of distance education opportunities while maintaining face-to-face contact with their teachers. Students can access the contents of the Education Information Network (EBA) through televisions. Volunteer teachers, particularly psychological counselors and guidance teachers, were also directed to the region from the outset to provide training. As soon as the psychological counselors and guidance teachers have provided psychosocial support to the students, the main focus of education was on developing basic skills.

3. Data-Driven and Accountable Management of the Process

Immediately following the disaster, the MoNE reached out to the field with its managers to assess the situation. In the wake of the earthquakes, a crisis desk was established at the Ministry's headquarters, and an evaluation process was initiated based on information conveyed by managers. Teachers and administrators who are constantly on the ground have provided information to the crisis desk regarding humanitarian and educational needs in the earthquake area. The data is used to develop policies aimed at making the MoNE institutions suitable for sheltering people, producing food and shelter materials, developing education areas, fixing and meeting stationery and infrastructure needs, as well as providing shelter and educational opportunities for earthquake-affected families in provinces outside the earthquake zone.

To ensure transparency, the MoNE shares the data collected from the field with the public through a variety of channels in order to formulate policy. Daily contributions are posted on the MoNE's official website, social media accounts, and the provincial organization's accounts. Through digital channels, the public is continuously updated with the latest statistics and information on the number of students transferred, humanitarian aid and educational materials produced, the establishment of training tents and prefabricated schools, and the provision of psychosocial and educational services. This series of posts help other stakeholders cope with the disaster, and also increases accountability by explaining the reasons for the policies of the MoNE.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the largest earthquakes in Turkish history took place on February 6, 2023, causing extensive destruction in 10 provinces. Several humanitarian services, including education, were difficult to provide due to the size of the spread area created by the earthquakes. Following the earthquake, all units of the MoNE worked together in order to compensate for the negative effects of the disaster and to continue education, a fundamental human right. Education services have been prioritized along with all humanitarian needs within the MoNE as soon as possible under the approach 'Continue Education in All Conditions'.

To enhance the return to education as soon as possible, all flexible education models have been implemented in accordance with the recommendations of INEE and UNESCO. During the first week, training activities were conducted in tents, but within a short period of time containers and prefabricated schools were also used. Education was designed to provide psychosocial support, remind children of their school routine, and then reinforce their basic skills in the post-disaster period. Approximately 20.000 volunteer teachers, 4.000 psychological counselors, and guidance teachers offered psychosocial support. Students who wish to continue their education in a different city have been provided with the right of free transfer, and approximately 5% of the students in the region have taken advantage of this opportunity. It is important to note that 93 hospital classrooms have been established to provide access to education to students with illnesses or disabilities, thus ensuring all students' access to education. In the region, nearly 20,000 teachers met with students and their families to ensure that each child received the best education possible. Special education tents have been set up and equipped with the necessary equipment for students requiring special education. There are 93 hospital classrooms available for students who are receiving medical treatment in the hospital. Consequently, all facilities are provided to ensure the inclusion emphasized by INEE and UNESCO as well as IIEP and to ensure that all students receive education in accordance with their needs.

To minimize the negative impacts experienced by earthquake survivors and their families, the educational process began with psychosocial support. As specified in the INEE and UNESCI-IIEP frameworks, educational materials were reprinted and provided to the students, in addition to clothing and stationery aids. The educational process prioritized psychosocial support and basic skills and student-based processes were followed. It was announced in the fourth week following the disaster that the MoNE would offer scholarships to students who lost

their families or guardians. Education materials and financial assistance were provided as well as access to education for earthquake survivors.

Following a two-week break, the MoNE began the education in 71 other provinces, excluding earthquake-affected provinces, and categorized 10 provinces into three groups based on the extent of damage. It has prepared for the transition to face-to-face education in schools by maintaining the examinations at the district and institution levels. The transfer requirements for students who wish to study in different provinces during this period have been suspended as recommended in post-disaster education management frameworks. Through the provision of free education from private institutions, educational opportunities have been enhanced for these students. In a short period of time, education was resumed and flexible models were used to reach all students, reducing the number of students transferring to other provinces for instruction. In earthquake-prone areas, MoNE intensifies its preparations to ensure normalization and to make schools ready for use. Education options in other provinces have been expanded to minimize the difficulties that students displaced due to disaster may experience.

Türkiye's vocational high schools rushed to assist in these difficult times, and produced the essential products. The MoNE had undertaken the greatest responsibility in meeting the urgent food needs in 10 provinces by providing an average of 1.9 million hot meals per day, nearly 200.000 food packages, and approximately 1.8 million loaves of bread per day. Furthermore, MoNE institutions produced a wide range of urgently needed products, including sleeping bags, tents, stoves, blankets, and even containers. Thus, MoNE institutions have once again demonstrated their ability to produce products which are urgently required by society, as was the case during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the contributions of the MoNE have expanded far beyond education and have become a key provider of humanitarian assistance.

As part of its efforts in recent years, the MoNE has taken a number of substantial steps that contributed greatly to the production of humanitarian aid and the resumption of education following the earthquake in February 6, 2023. Schools' physical infrastructure has been improved, the strengthening and reconstruction processes have been prioritized, and participation in the OECD project "Protecting students and students from earthquakes" conducted for the first time in 2014 with a self-assessment questionnaire (OECD, 2017) has made significant contributions to disaster preparedness as part of large-scale projects. Similarly, the dissemination of first aid training throughout Türkiye in large-scale studies, particularly in the "1,000 Schools in Vocational Education" and "10,000 Schools in Primary Education" projects, which have been prioritized in recent years, has also increased emergency awareness and response (Özer, 2021b, 2022b). Consequently, the MoNE's significant involvement in managing the consequences of the earthquakes in many dimensions is closely related to the policies and improvements implemented over the past few years.

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