

AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROJECTS IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL STATE*

SOSYAL SORUMLULUK PROJELERİNE SOSYAL DEVLET BAĞLAMINDA BİR
DEĞERLENDİRME**

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to provide an account of the transformation of the social state following the enactment of neoliberal policies and the reflection of this transformation on social responsibility projects in Türkiye. Employing the document analysis method, the present study examined the education-related social responsibility projects of the six companies with regard to the cooperation in the projects, in attempts to explore whether these projects complied with the 10 high-priority targets related to education designated by Article 4 of SDGs (SDG4), which was enacted in the realm of education under the leadership of the United Nations (UN). In these projects, public institutions were the most common partners (n=13), followed by NGOs (n=5), private sector (n=3), and international institutions (n=1), respectively, whereas there was no cooperation with any institution in four projects. The results indicated that although the projects provided a social benefit in terms of social development and integration, they remained inadequate in terms of ensuring inclusiveness for all citizens and replacing the services carried out by the social state for the continuity and welfare of the society.

Keywords: Social Responsibility, Neoliberalism, Social State

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, neoliberal politikaların yaşama geçmesiyle sosyal devletin yaşadığı dönüşüm ve bunun Türkiye'deki sosyal sorumluluk projelerine yansımaları açıklamaya çalışmaktır. Fortune 500 Türkiye (2019) araştırmasında ilk 50'ye giren 6 şirket ve bu şirketlerin eğitime yönelik yaptığı sosyal sorumluluk projeleri araştırmanın örneklemini oluşturmaktadır. Doküman inceleme yönteminin kullanıldığı çalışmada, şirketlerin eğitime yönelik yaptığı sosyal sorumluluk projelerinin, Birleşmiş Milletler öncülüğünde ortaya konan ve Türkiye hükümetinin de sürdürülebilir kalkınma için kabul ettiği Birleşmiş Milletler Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Amaçları'nın (SKA) eğitimi ilgilendiren 4.maddesinin (SKA4) öncelikli 10 hedefiyle örtüşüp örtüşmediği, projelerde yapılan işbirliği üzerinden analizi yapılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, şirketlerin öncelikle kamu kurumlarıyla, ardından STK'lar ve özel sektörle iş birliği yaptığı, SKA4 konusunun öncelikli 10 hedefinden 6'sını destekleyebilecek içerikte faaliyetler gerçekleştirdiği, 4'üne ilişkin herhangi bir çalışma örneğinin bulunmadığı saptanmıştır. Kamu işbirliğinde 13, STK işbirliğinde 5, özel sektör işbirliğinde 3 proje ve 1 proje de STK ve uluslararası örgüt işbirliğinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Eğitime yönelik yapılan projelerin gerçekte toplumsal gelişim ve bütünleşme doğrultusunda bir sosyal fayda sağladığı; ancak sosyal devletin bütün vatandaşları kapsayıcı ve toplumun sürekliliği, refahı için yapacağı hizmetlerin yerini alması açısından yetersiz kaldığı tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Sorumluluk, Neoliberalizm, Sosyal Devlet

* This study does not require ethics committee permission.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of ‘state’ has thus far been subject to research with its various features such as its structure, organization, borders, origin, and shape, and there have been numerous attempts at its definition within the framework of different contexts. Relatedly, people and societies have been thinking upon and developing theories about the concept of state as well as its role, limits, and scope for the last several millennia. In line with these theories, the most widely accepted idea is that the state, as an institution, should fulfil basic duties in accordance with the internal dynamics and socio-economic structure of the society it exists in (Şaylan, 2003, pp. 97-98). The emergence of the state together with its evolution and transformation throughout history have generated different state models and policies. Particularly after the industrial revolution, the intensive exploitation of labor along with the low socioeconomic status of the working class entailed the concept of ‘social state’. From the historical development of the concept of social state, it appears that this concept primarily emerged from the resistance of the working class. It is also possible to assert that the resistance of the proletarians against the exploitation of labor and the fear that they would destroy the capitalist state and replace it with a socialist state softens capitalism (Özdemir, 2007, p. 55). Classical liberalism, which is the economic model of the capitalist state, adopts the necessity of minimizing the state intervention in economic activities, as expressed with the phrase “Laissez faire” coined by Adam Smith (Kazgan, 2016, p. 61). According to Smith, individuals carrying out economic activities for their own benefit automatically protect the interests of the society as well (Yayla, 2014, p. 164). From such notions, it is apparent that the concept of social state (or *welfare state*) has been further emboldened as a result of gradual exploitation of labor in line with the capitalist liberal state policies and also through the policies developed to solve the social problems arising from the impoverishment of laborers. Over time, the concept of social state has been acknowledged as a form of state characterized by strengthened human rights and individual freedom in social life as well as economic support provided to employees (Göze, 2016, p. 204; Kara 2013, p. 4). As such, social state is perceived as a system that does not only provide security and justice for all individuals in the society but also meets their basic needs such as education and health (Aktan & Özkıvrak, 2008, p. 45).

It is claimed that globalization, which arose in the 1980s and spread all over the world in the 1990s, and the neoliberal policies put into practice led to a change in the concept of social state (Krugman & Venables, 1995). It has also been observed that in line with neoliberal policies, the state has partially renounced its basic functions, leading to a regression in terms of human right and freedoms. In the meantime, the function of transnational companies, which emerged as a leading factor of globalization, to ensure the continuity of neoliberalism is highly noteworthy (Harvey, 2015, pp. 196- 429). On the

other hand, the intensive privatization of State Economic Enterprises (SEE) in this period brought about unemployment and poverty. As a corollary, it was seen that multinational companies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) started to take over the gap arising from the state's renouncement from its basic responsibilities. In the field of education, both private companies and NGOs undertook social responsibility projects, particularly providing support for disadvantaged individuals in the society to help them take part in education. In this way, both the private sector and NGOs began to be considered important stakeholders due to their growing role in the execution of services in the responsibility area of the state. One reason for such changes was the international acceptance of the concept of sustainability as well as the policies and activities introduced under the leadership of the United Nations (UN). In addition, another reason was the effect of the ongoing change in this direction in the world.

Social and economic problems experienced on a global scale motivate both governments and international organizations. In this regard, there have been attempts to enact sustainable policies on social issues on a global scale. Among the most salient examples for the implementation of the policies enacted within this framework are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were set forth under the leadership of UN and were undersigned by the participating countries in 2015 (United Nations, 2015, pp. 14-28). SDGs consist of 17 items and mainly aim at global development in areas such as combatting climate change and combatting against poverty. Following the participation of Türkiye along with other countries, the UN began to create a road map in this direction. In this regard, it was emphasized that each of the stakeholders such as the private sector and NGOs could contribute to the construction of a sustainable society. Through the driving force of both governments and international organizations, the private sector started to embrace SDGs and to implement social projects in this direction in order to fulfil its responsibility.

A review of the currently published literature indicates a large body of research on SDGs or global goals in Türkiye. In these studies, it is emphasized that the environment, healthcare, education, and social elements are indispensable elements of sustainable development and that the awareness of sustainable development should be raised among young individuals through education (Çelik, 2006; Özerdinç et al, 2022). Moreover, some authors investigated whether the social responsibility projects carried out by the private healthcare companies are concrete practices compatible with SDGs (Arslan, 2019, pp. 97-99). Some other authors have conducted studies aiming to open discussion on how private organizations and NGOs operating in various sectors are actually contributing to the development goals that are primarily imposed on the states, and whether the responsibility of some of the duties that the state is burdened with is directed to the private sector (Biter & Kocabay, 2021).

The aim of this study was to provide an account of the transformation of the social state following the enactment of neoliberal policies and the reflection of this transformation on social responsibility projects in Türkiye. Six companies listed in the top 50 companies in the Fortune 500 Türkiye report (2019) and the education-related social responsibility projects of these companies constituted the sample of the research. The reason for sampling these six companies was due to the fact that these companies have carried out more social responsibility projects in the field of education when compared to the other companies in the top 50 companies list. Another reason is that the companies on the Fortune 500 Turkey list have the resources to provide social benefits and are among the leading large companies in Turkey. Fortune Turkey magazine is used as a basis for the research population because it stands out as a reference for the business community worldwide and its research in corporate social responsibility is accepted in the literature.

1. Education Policies of a Social State

The social state, which emerged as a product of the evolving political, economic, and social conditions after the Industrial Revolution, was first coined as a concept by the British Archbishop William Temple in his book titled “Citizen and Churchman” in 1941. Though not adopted unanimously, the concept of social state is perceived as a state model that encompasses a number of criteria regarding human rights, freedom, equality, and particularly social justice and attempts to maximize the welfare level of all individuals making up the society. Beginning from early 20th century, numerous states, particularly the Western European states, revised their constitutions in line with this model, taking important steps regarding social justice, which is the ultimate goal of the social state. To exemplify, the Italian, German, French, and Turkish constitutions were revised to secure human rights in 1947, 1949, 1958, and 1961, respectively (Özdemir, 2007, p. 16).

The primary condition of qualifying for a social state is to develop social policies with the aim of distributing social welfare to all segments of the society. Throughout its history, the social state has undertaken responsibilities in various realms ranging from healthcare to education, social security, and fighting against poverty, and has produced various policies for this purpose and has protected its citizens to a certain extent. Its educational duty, which occupies an important place among the social duties of the social state, has emerged as a prominent public service, mainly because the provision of educational services based on equal opportunity is considered one of the high-priority services both at the individual and social level and is also regarded as a part of the development process.

The social state emerged as a consistently developing system in developed western countries and assumed critical roles in the provision of public services, particularly until the spread of neoliberal

policies. During this period, many European countries, namely Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands, placed a remarkable emphasis on social welfare services such as health education (Özdemir, 2007, pp. 73-109) and allocated the highest share to education among public expenditures.

Although Türkiye was belated in transitioning to the social state when compared to European countries, there have been numerous developments after transition, namely including the Labor Law enacted in 1936 and the developments in the field of social work (Soyyigit, 1920, pp. 25-26). Of note, one of the major developments was noted in the field of education in 1926, through which education became free at all levels and the right to education was ensured for every individual (Sallan Gül, 2006, p. 265). Additionally, the 1961 Constitution was a major development ensuring social justice and equality in education. With the enactment of this constitution, provision of education and the training needs of the individuals became one of the foremost duties of the social state. In addition, there were many other breakthroughs that determined the characteristics of a social state and introduced rights-based regulations for all the principles in the constitution (Özdemir, 2008, pp. 134-137).

2. Economic Impasse of the Social State

The social state, gaining momentum in many countries with the effect of the views of Keynes, the demands of laborers, and the new social order that emerged in Soviet Russia in 1917, continued its development alongside the rise of societies between 1945 and 1975 (Akyıldız, 2007, p. 140). In this period, economic growth was realized in the countries that applied the social state principle and public expenditures increased by reaching the full employment level. In this period, economic growth was accompanied by increased public expenditures induced by full employment. However, the financial crisis that broke out in the 1970s undermined the foundations of the social state through the impact of neoliberalism, which became widespread with the globalization process that began in the 1980s, on the social state, thereby facilitating the transition from Keynesian economics to neoliberal economics (Gümüş, 2010, pp. 363-367; İnsel, 2004, p. 179).

Notwithstanding, between 1945 and 1975, with the widespread acceptance of the social state, an increase was observed in social expenditures, particularly in western states, and until the end of the 1960s, significant developments were noted within the framework of the social state. In this period, inflation was kept at low rates through comprehensive state planning, and improvements occurred in public expenditures in such fields as social security and education. By dint of social concerns (Ela, 2007, p. 19), the inflation rate remained below 4% (Gough, 1987, p. 896) and the unemployment rate remained at very low levels (Pierson, 1991, pp. 131-132) until the end of the 1960s. The aim in doing so was to safeguard the people living in difficult conditions against various risks arising from the

market and also to ensure decent living standards for them. Another aim was to create a fairer and more peaceful society by accentuating social concerns. At this point, the social state reached its climax in the middle of the 1970s and faced up with transformation as it emerged as an unfavorable obstacle for economic growth as a result of successive global crises and the global competition created in the international capital and product markets (Kara, 2013, p. 288). This transformation began in the form of a shift from a social state to a competitive state. That way, a well-functioning system was seriously eroded in terms of its applications and its foundations were undermined. As a corollary to this, countries had adopted the concept of social state began to review their social policies. Subsequently, the state interventions, particularly in the realm of social expenditures, began to decline, ultimately leading to a reduction in the social opportunities offered by the state. Eventually, a process of moving from a system in which the social and economic rights of citizens were guaranteed against free market conditions to a market-based system that facilitated the activities of the market was initiated (Pierson, 2001, pp. 151-153; Şaylan, 2003, pp. 119-120-203-205).

In the meantime, with the effect of the globalization process and the reforms envisaged by neoliberal policies after the 1980s, the obstacles for entering the international market were eliminated and every state began to shift to the transnational market power in line with the neoliberal model of market priority regarding economic development. This situation directly reflected in the ability of the states to redefine the limits and scope of state intervention and to redefine their economic policies (Petenkaya, 2010, p. 37; Şaylan, 2003, pp. 181-183). In the subsequent period, the social state model weakened and became unable to respond to social problems, leading changes to the detriment of large segments of the society, ultimately resulting in remarkable gains for neoliberalism and market forces.

Consequently, the financial crisis that inflicted the states resulted in the transformation of the social state. Through the effect of the neoliberalism that developed in response to the crisis of the social state and the impact of globalization, the role of the state in public entrepreneurship, public service, and public interest was reduced and the dominance of the state was compromised in numerous areas through privatization practices. This transition process caused the market to become the main subject, to gain power, and to cause a loss among the weaker segments of the society.

3. Globalization and Neoliberal Policies

According to Anthony Giddens, globalization is an extremely dynamic and variable phenomenon that consists of a series of complex processes, both political and economic, and exerts its effects at varying degrees on nation-state systems, liberalization, and privatization policies, and transforms the institutions of the societies we live in (Giddens, 2000, p. 45). In addition, Noam Chomsky defines

globalization as a process that is brought into play by multinational companies seeking profit as a result of the internationalization of the economic system and the resultant fierce competition (Chomsky, 2001, pp. 110-111).

Globalization is accepted as a phenomenon that can be considered deeply rooted in the transformation of the social state model, which is the most important base against the erosion of social standards in international rivalry. For this reason, discussions on certain problems related to the social state can be explained by the phenomenon of globalization (Petenkaya, 2010, p. 46). On the other hand, in terms of the driving force that accelerates globalization and activates it, it is wise to assert that neoliberal policies and practices play a major role. With globalization, market economy was legitimized, the trade liberalization process was initiated in the world economy, and the neoliberal view gained importance almost everywhere in the world (Güç, 2022, p. 6).

Neoliberalism is believed to have primarily emerged as a reaction to the interventionism of the state and the social policies developed for it as well as a program to eliminate collective structures or as a concept that emerged as an alternative to social reformism (Dardot & Laval, 2012, p. 138; Giannone, 2016, p. 419). With neoliberal policies, basic interventions of the social state in economy and the social structure that emerged with it were blocked and the free market economy was strengthened (Kara, 2013, pp. 88-93).

With the implementation of neoliberal policies, market economy became functional and the policies aligned with individual interests, instead of the social policy practices implemented by the social state, were prioritized against the public interest (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2006, p. 62). This in turn led to the emergence of serious changes in the realm of public service, the dissolution of a segment that played a role in the provision of social services, the privatization of the services produced, and the emergence of an outwardly open economic order.

After the early 1980s, it became clearly apparent that the neoliberal model that glorified the market and advocated the opening of public services to the market and the neoliberal policies that heavily influenced almost the entire world economy affected Türkiye as well. In Türkiye, criticisms against the social state model and the cost of granting some social rights to the citizens in line with this model coincided with the decisions made on January 24, 1980, which included decrees regarding the severe economic crisis in 1977 and the ensuing implementation of neoliberal economic policies (Kara, 2013, pp. 61-62). This period, known as the first wave of neoliberal reforms, contained highly important clues regarding the new form of social state model in Türkiye. The first wave of neoliberal policies put into practice in Türkiye in the 1980s first started with the January 24 Decisions. These policies, which

were effective in seriously worsening social balances, subsisted until the 1990s. Since this wave of political reforms heavily focused on the market and economy management and developed a discourse to downsize the state, there were breaks in the social state principle, many state-owned enterprises were privatized, and practices such as the liquidation of social insurance services and tax reductions became the dominant policies of this period. Since the 1990s, neoliberal policies, known as the second wave, which focused on the state institutions and the state itself, were put into practice (Turgut, 2019, pp. 121-122). With these reforms, which expanded from the public sector to the private sector and solidified with practices such as privatization, marketization and flexibility, social policy-oriented studies entered a dormant period and became financially unsustainable in the 1990s (Gümüş & Koç, 2016, p. 331). In the end, as a result of policies that accelerated privatizations, limited the implementation of public services, and kept the disadvantaged social segments out of sight, the execution of numerous public services ranging from education services to healthcare services were handed over to the private sector directly or indirectly.

When considered as a whole, one of the most important goals of neoliberalism, as a policy that can be described as a trend that represents a victory in the world, is to reduce public investment expenditures by facilitating privatization, and hence to decrease government intervention in the economy. However, in turn, limiting the government intervention leads to the subordination of the public service and failure to provide the necessary resources for education and healthcare services which large sections of the society benefit from, ultimately resulting in compromised education and healthcare services.

4. Transformation in Neoliberal Policies and Social Responsibility Projects

A close look into the history of the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) reveals that CSR entered the field of interest of the business world after the Industrial Revolution. Moreover, it became even more important with the advent of neoliberal policies among businesses and NGOs, i.e. non-profit organizations, both of which became more sensitive about their CSRs and started to use corporate social responsibility as a strategic tool.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), since its introduction, has become one of the most commonly mentioned terms and an indispensable cause of competition in the constantly competitive business world, and hence one of the most fundamental elements in ensuring sustainability (Signitzer & Prexl, 2008, p. 2, cited in Kurt, 2019, p. 7). CRSs, which are frequently encountered in the literature, have been carried out through a novel strategic approach in recent years, in attempts to gain long-term profit, create a positive image in the eyes of society, and to provide competitive advantage (Kotler & Lee, 2017, pp. 8-11).

It is considered that the main reason as to why the business world pays due attention to social responsibility activities and renders such activities as the indispensable favorite factor of business elements is the change in function of the state in the provision of social welfare services and also the global acceptance of neoliberal ideas and policies. Taking advantage of this fact, businesses have seized social responsibility as an opportunity to gain profit in free market conditions and also to provide competitive advantage and sustainability (Akyıldız, 2007, pp. 155-156).

A number of studies suggest that some activities that the state had mainly undertaken alone until the 1970s began to be shifted to the private sector with the penetration of neoliberal policies. To illustrate, although every state used to assume a primary role in the provision of services such as education, healthcare, and social security at some levels, they found a way to fulfil its responsibilities through charity organizations, i.e. the private sector. To achieve this, they enacted privatization policies based on the justifications that they would create competition in the market, ensure economic efficiency, and make profit out of public services that were typically deemed complimentary. As in many other fields, with the opening of the education sector to the market and following the enactment of necessary regulations, various organizations, particularly private companies, started to fill the areas vacated by the states through social responsibility activities (Petenkaya, 2010, pp. 35-37-40-42). As a result, the neoliberal restructuring that began in the 1970s and became highly prominent in the 1980s led to a rapid change in social responsibilities of corporates.

Literature indicates that a number of critical radical steps were taken in Türkiye with the advent of the neoliberal reform movement in the world. Of note, a crack in the concept of the social state occurred during this period although the social area was not directly organized by the state (Boratav, 1991, pp. 121-122) and only some social state practices had been implemented since the 1980s (Petenkaya, 2010, p.72). In the same period, the state started to implement policies that included sharing some of its responsibilities with the private sector, particularly in the realm of social assistance and services (Gümüş & Koç, 2016, pp. 308-310). In a similar vein, corporates voluntarily started to share these responsibilities and provide social responsibility services, though in a limited fashion. The reasons for these developments were found to be the atmosphere created by the neoliberal phenomenon in the realm of the social responsibilities of the corporates and the rapid change experienced.

Notwithstanding, as Türkiye became more and more integrated into this new system and the global economy beginning from the 1980s, privatizations were accomplished as per the framework of the policies produced in the realm of education and there was a remarkable decrease in the services provided by the state in this field. Moreover, through the market-centered and vicious social policy arrangements introduced to the market, the right to education of individuals with limited opportunities

was adversely affected, and education, which is a leading means of providing equal rights, was converted to a paid service. As a result of these changes, the education sector, which is conceptually a public service, was thoroughly commercialized through a profit-oriented business approach and was made compatible with the activities of the free market (Yıldız, 2008, pp. 21-30). Ultimately, the marketization of public services brought about economic and social problems in large segments of society. In a related manner, the educational needs of individuals with insufficient financial means were fulfilled through projects and campaigns carried out in cooperation with NGOs and the private sector. Another remarkable point of concern is that if neoliberal policies had been successful, sustainable development would not be resonating on a global scale today. Due to this concern, there are global attempts to implement sustainable policies around the world.

The United Nations (UN) has been attempting to create a sustainable development agenda and strategy for a sustainable world since the 1980s. The last step taken in this direction was the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were designated within the framework of 17 goals based on the universal call to action, such as combating inequality and injustice, planned to be realized by 2030 (Erten, 2019, p. 890). A close look into SDGs reveals that they focus on areas such as economic inequality, peace, and justice, which implicates that concerns about these areas have increased and also the marketization policies have worsened the economic and social balances. Therefore, it is seen that being aware of social responsibility all over the world and sustainability has become an obligation rather than a choice. International companies initiate social responsibility projects for a sustainable life in many parts of the world. For example, Microsoft aims to provide more people with access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities by launching the Airband Initiative, which aims to increase internet access in rural areas around the world. The Ford Foundation engages in enabling initiatives to reduce social inequalities and support civil rights by providing major resources to projects that promote equality and justice (Sosyal Sorumluluk Projeleri Platformu, 2024).

5. Significance of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate whether the social responsibility projects carried out by private companies conform to the 10 high-priority targets of SDG4, which are based on three main themes including ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals, and to examine the cooperation established with other institutions in the projects carried out by private companies. The 10 high-priority targets of SDG4 are presented in the appendices.

The significance of the study is that it examines the efficacy of the social state and also provides a critical lens into the concept of social responsibility relative to free market conditions. In addition, the study is of high value since, to our knowledge, it is the first study in Türkiye to examine social responsibility projects of private companies in the realm of education with regard to their compliance with the qualified education theme among the 10 high-priority targets SDG4. Available literature indicates that there have been several studies on sustainable development goals in Türkiye investigating whether the social responsibility projects realized by the private sector are concrete practices compatible with SDGs (Arslan, 2019; Biter & Kocabay, 2021; Çelik, 2006; Özerdinç et al, 2022). However, here has been no study analyzing such projects relative to the qualified education theme among the 10 high-priority targets SDG4.

6. Sampling and Methodology of the Study

The sample of the study consisted of six companies selected among the top 50 companies listed by the Fortune 500 Türkiye (2019) survey and the social responsibility projects carried out by these companies in the realm of education. Descriptive data on the companies sampled is presented in the appendices.

Data analysis was performed using document analysis, which is a qualitative research technique, in attempts to investigate whether the social responsibility projects carried out by the six private companies conform to the 10 high-priority targets of SDG4 and to examine the cooperation established with other institutions in these projects. There are five main steps that should be followed while performing document analysis, including familiarization, validation of originality, data coding and organization, data analysis, and reporting (Forster 1995, cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). Document types included institutional reports, books, newspapers, brochures, diaries, and letters (Labuschagne, 2003). Additionally, the annual reports published between 2016 and 2021 on the websites of the six companies and also various internet-based websites were used for data collection. Since the information on corporate social responsibility practices is generally included in the annual reports of the companies, the data was mostly obtained from the annual reports.

7. Research Data and Findings

Both the social responsibility projects realized by the six private companies alone and those carried out by these companies in cooperation with governmental organizations or NGOs were included in the study.

Table 1. Education-related social responsibility projects and partner institutions

| Private Company | Project Title | Partner Institutions | Type of Partner Institutions |
|------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Tüpraş | Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System | Ministry of National Education | Public |
| Tüpraş | Our Energy is for the Future; I Code, Model, and Produce | Ministry of National Education | Public |
| Tüpraş | Our Energy is for Students | Ministry of National Education | Public |
| Tüpraş | We are Collecting Books for Children | | |
| Tüpraş | TEGV Firefly Education Program | The Educational Volunteers Foundation of Türkiye | NGO |
| Tüpraş | Koç University Social Sciences Excellence Scholarship Program | Koç University | Private |
| Ford OTOSAN | Honey Bees Become Engineers | Ministry of National Education, Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association | Public & NGO |
| Ford OTOSAN | I am Designing the Future for My Country | Koç Holding | Private |
| Ford OTOSAN | Dreams Entail Wisdom | Young Guru Academy and Twin, an educational technology initiative for children | NGO |
| Arçelik | Electric Household Appliances Technical Training Program-Arçelik Laboratories | Ministry of National Education and General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Training | Public |
| Arçelik | I am Designing the Future for My Country | Koç Holding | Private Sector |
| Arçelik | Digital Wings | Ministry of National Education General Directorate of Basic Education | Public |
| Arçelik | You are an Engineer, You are with Us | | |
| Turkcell | Turkcell Intelligence Power | Ministry of National Education | Public |
| Turkcell | Hello Hope! | | |
| Turkcell | Barrier-Free Education Program | Ministry of National Education | Public |
| Turkcell | Treasure Inside Me | Ministry of National Education | Public |
| Türk Telekom | Telephone Library | Assistive Technology and Education Laboratory for Individuals with Visual Disabilities | Public |

| Private Company | Project Title | Partner Institutions | Type of Partner Institutions |
|------------------|--------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Türk Telekom | Life is Easy with the Internet | The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye, Habitat Association, and United Nations Development Program | NGO & International |
| Türk Telekom | Daylight | Barrier-Free Living Association | NGO |
| Türk Telekom | Audible Steps | Boni Global | Private |
| Türk Telekom | Türk Telekom Schools | | |
| Doğuş Automotive | Traffic is Life | Ministry of National Education, General Directorate of Security | Public |
| Doğuş Automotive | Born Professional | Vocational High Schools, Yıldız Technical University | Public |

Note: NGO: Non-governmental organization

Source: Arçelik, 2017, p. 69; Arçelik, 2020, p. 97; Doğuş Automotive, 2021, p. 104; Ford Otosan, 2017, pp. 63-64; Ford Otosan, 2018, pp. 84-85; Ford Otosan, 2020, pp. 96-97; Turkcell, 2020, p. 88-90; Tüpraş, 2020, pp. 118-120; Tüpraş, 2021, pp. 88-89; Türk Telekom, 2021, pp. 158-159-160.

When the social responsibility projects in the table above are examined, it can be seen that there is coordination among the public institutions, NGOs, and the private sector and also one project, Life is Easy with the Internet was carried out in cooperation with an international organization (United Nations Development Program, UNDP). In these projects, public institutions were the most common partners (n=13), followed by NGOs (n=5), private sector (n=3), and international institutions (n=1), respectively, whereas there was no cooperation with any institution in four projects.

Table 2 below provides a checklist for the conformity of each project with the SDG4 targets. Accordingly, it can be observed that although the projects conform to the goals 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.a, and 4.b, they do not conform to the goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.6, and 4.c (Table 2).

Table 2: Conformity of the projects with the SDG4 targets

| Company / Project Title | SDG4 targets | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--|--|
| | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 4.a | 4.b | 4.c | | |
| Tüpraş | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System | | | X | X | | | | | | | | |
| Our Energy is for the Future; I Code, Model, and Produce | | | X | X | X | | | | | | | |
| Our Energy is for Students | | | X | X | X | | | | | | | |
| We are Collecting Books for Children | | | | | | | X | | | | | |
| TEGV Firefly Education Program | | | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Koç University Social Sciences Excellence Scholarship Program | | | | | | | | | | X | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Ford OTOSAN | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 4.a | 4.b | 4.c |
| Honey Bees Become Engineers | | | X | | X | | | | | |
| I am Designing the Future for My Country | | | X | X | X | | | | | |
| Dreams Entail Wisdom | | | X | X | X | | | | | |
| Company / Project Title | SDG4 targets | | | | | | | | | |
| Arçelik | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 4.a | 4.b | 4.c |
| Electric Household Appliances Technical Training Program- Arçelik Laboratories | | | X | X | | | | | | |
| I am Designing the Future for My Country | | | | X | | | | | | |
| Digital Wings | | | X | X | | | | | | |
| You are an Engineer, You are with Us | | | X | X | X | | | | | |
| Company / Project Title | SDG4 targets | | | | | | | | | |
| Turkcell | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 4.a | 4.b | 4.c |
| Turkcell Intelligence Power | | | X | X | | | | | | |
| Hello Hope! | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Barrier-Free Education Program | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Treasure Inside Me | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Company / Project Title | SDG4 targets | | | | | | | | | |
| Türk Telekom | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 4.a | 4.b | 4.c |
| Telephone Library | | | | | X | | | X | | |
| Life is Easy with the Internet | | | X | | | | | | | |
| Daylight | | | | | X | | | X | | |
| Audible Steps | | | | | X | | | | | |
| Türk Telekom Schools | | | | | | | | X | | |
| Company / Project Title | SDG4 targets | | | | | | | | | |
| Doğuş Automotive | 4.1 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 4.a | 4.b | 4.c |
| Traffic is Life | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Born Professional | | | X | X | | | | | | |

Source: Arçelik, 2017, p. 69; Arçelik, 2020, p. 97; Doğuş Automotive, 2021, p. 104; Ford Otosan, 2017, pp. 63-64; Ford Otosan, 2018, pp. 84-85; Ford Otosan, 2020, pp. 96-97; Turkcell, 2020, p. 88-90; Tüpraş, 2020, pp. 118-120; Tüpraş, 2021, pp. 88-89; Türk Telekom, 2021, pp. 158-159-160.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 2016, consist of a total of 17 items. Article 4 (SDG4; Qualified Education) concerns education. The 10 high-priority targets of SDG4, which are essentially based on three main themes including ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals, are presented in the appendices.

7.1. Tüpraş

Tüpraş, a company listed among the largest industrial companies in Turkey, holds education among its priorities and has carried out numerous social responsibility projects within the framework of the United Nations 2030 SDG4. As seen in Table 2 above, the projects carried out by Tüpraş in collaboration with other institutions conform to five SDG4 targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.b (Tüpraş, 2017; Tüpraş, 2018, pp. 106-109; Tüpraş, 2019, pp. 112-115; Tüpraş, 2020, pp. 118-120; Tüpraş, 2021, pp. 88-89).

Of these projects, the project titled Strengthening the Vocational Education and Training System, which was carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education (MNE), provided vocational internship opportunities for students in İzmir, İzmit and Kırıkkale Oil Refineries, in attempts to transform the students' theoretical knowledge into practice for the aim of generating qualified workforce. Another project that was also conducted in cooperation with MNE, titled Our Energy is for the Future; I Code, Model, and Produce, aimed to provide opportunities for students that would help them keep up with the changing world and plan their own future. Within the scope of this project, Robotic Coding, 3D Modeling, and Production Skills classes that could be used for the Technology and Design courses were established, in attempts to provide opportunities for students to become familiar with science, technology, and innovation at an early age and to improve both the students and teachers skills in the field of technological design. In another project, titled Our Energy for Students, four classrooms in separate schools in Kocaeli were transformed to laboratories by the employees of Tüpraş Research and Development (R&D) Center.

Tüpraş has sponsored the Firefly Education Program launched by the Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation (TEVF) since 2008, in order to contribute to the provision of basic scientific knowledge and skills to elementary school children. On the other hand, within the scope of Koç University Social Sciences Outstanding Achievement Scholarship Program, Tüpraş has granted scholarship to numerous students with outstanding achievement and also to needy students, in an effort to serve the development of social sciences in Türkiye and to offer equal opportunities in education for all students.

7.2. Ford Otosan

As revealed in Table 2, the social responsibility projects carried out by Ford OTOSAN, Honey Bees Become Engineers, I am Designing the Future for My Country, and Dreams Entail Wisdom, conform to three SDG4 targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5. Within the scope of these projects, trainings were provided to students, teachers, and parents in order to raise their awareness about selecting a profession and to embolden the importance of equal opportunity in education. Additionally, internship opportunities at Ford OTOSAN were offered to female students who preferred the engineering departments at universities. On the other hand, seminars were conduct to raise awareness regarding the importance of technology and digitalization, with the intention of contributing to the generation of qualified manpower (Ford Otosan, 2017, pp. 63-64; Ford Otosan, 2018, pp. 84-85; Ford Otosan, 2020, pp. 96-97). Of note, within the scope of the Honey Bees Become Engineers project, the total number of students reached in 64 provinces across Türkiye as of the 2016-2017 academic year was 13,854, including 8,386 female students.

7.3. Arçelik

As can be seen in Table 2 above, the social responsibility projects carried out by Arçelik in the realm of education conform to three SDG4 targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5.

As part of the Electric Household Appliances Technical Training Program-Arçelik Laboratories Project, Arçelik Laboratories equipped with cutting-edge measuring instruments and devices were created in a total of nine vocational high schools in Istanbul, Diyarbakır, Trabzon, İzmir, Ankara, Bursa, and Tatvan as of the 2015-2016 academic year. Of the 867 students who graduated from these high schools at the end of the that academic year, 157 students were recruited by Arçelik Authorized Household Appliances Services. Within the scope of the same project, Technical Training Booklets were prepared by MNE and were distributed to all provincial, district, subdistrict managers, vocational high schools, and lifelong learning schools via the intranet system, in order to assist the 3,500 high school students studying in the Electric Household Appliances department in Türkiye to have access to the up-to-date technical knowledge and skills, in an effort to generate qualified workforce that could meet the needs of the industry (Arçelik, 2017, p. 69). According to the 2019 annual report, a total of 1,243 students as of the end of the 2019 academic year, received the training that was delivered within the scope of the program by the technical instructors working at Arçelik Electric Household Appliances Technical Service departments (Arçelik, 2020, p. 97).

The Digital Wings project produced educational materials aligned with the educational goals designated by MNE for the Information Technologies and Software course delivered at fifth and sixth grades and the Technology Design course delivered at the seventh and eighth grades. These materials were integrated into devices such as tablets, computers, 3D printers, and coding software packs and the devices were donated to schools, and then teacher training seminars were conducted with the participation of 40 teachers from 20 schools (Arçelik, 2020, p. 98).

The You are an Engineer, You are with Us project, on the other hand, was initiated to support the R&D experience and to increase the number of women working in the field of engineering. The project is underway to achieve its target goals (Arçelik, 2020, p. 99).

7.4. Turkcell

The social responsibility projects carried out by Turkcell in the realm of education were found to conform to three SDG4 targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 (Table 2).

Within the scope of the Intelligence Power Project, which has been underway since 2016, Turkcell has established a total of 59 Intelligence Power classes in 41 provinces, has provided more than 200,000 hours of online training to 6,000 students through its face-to-face education portal, and has accessed

more than 50,000 students. Moreover, Turkcell has also been establishing Intelligence Power laboratories equipped with educational materials such as electronic and robotic coding sets, laptop computers, 3D printers, and smartboards in multiple schools (Turkcell, 2020, p. 88). In doing so, Turkcell attempts to promote a sustainable society by creating scientific development opportunities in the country.

With the Hello Hope! project, which aimed to improve the lives of Syrian refugees with mobile technologies, Syrian people living in Türkiye were supported to learn Turkish and to communicate in Turkish and Arabic. In contrast, the Barrier-Free Education Program and Treasure Inside Me projects reached thousands of fragile or disadvantaged students and conducted activities to meet their needs.

Within the scope of the Barrier-Free Education Program project, special classes have been created for students with visual, hearing, and mental disabilities in 104 schools in 45 provinces and also vocational workshops have been established to help students improve their knowledge and skills base in 68 special education and rehabilitation centers since 2015. In these vocational workshops, students with mild mental disabilities have been provided with after-school jobs in line with the vocational skills they have acquired. To date, approximately 30,000 students have benefited from this project. On the other hand, the Treasure in Me project created special classes and developed needs-based educational materials for autistic students and accessed nearly 1,000 students in 11 special education schools. Additionally, a mobile application was developed under the supervision of pediatric psychologists and trainers to support the mental, behavioral, and emotional development of children (Turkcell, 2020, p. 90).

7.5. Türk Telekom

The social responsibility projects carried out by Türk Telekom were also found to conform to three SDG4 targets 4.3, 4.5, 4.a.

With the Telephone Library project, Türk Telekom has offered approximately 1,750 auditory materials, audiobooks in different categories to the service of individuals with visual and speech disabilities through the mobile application in order to support their development. Since their introduction in 2011, these materials have been listened to for about 10,800,000 minutes in total (Türk Telekom, 2021, p. 160).

In addition, within the scope of the Daylight project, early intervention trainings such as advancing the visual health of the children and improving their eye coordination were given after determining their visual acuity. At the end of the project, it was noted that there was a 32% improvement in the physical activity levels of children aged five and over and an increase of 15% in their literacy skills. In addition,

a significant improvement was achieved in the rate of parents feeling more empowered and also a reduction was noted in the time they spent caring for their children.

The Life is Easy with the Internet project, which targeted adults aged over 25 years with limited or no internet skills and prioritized women, offered face-to-face internet literacy training to 50,000 participants, 61% of whom were women, in all 81 provinces in Türkiye. The training essentially included the use of services such as video communication, online banking, and e-government applications which provide significant benefits in the lives of the participants (Türk Telekom, 2021, pp. 158-159).

In the Türk Telekom Schools project, which was implemented with the aim of providing a modern educational environment to students, a total of 78 Türk Telekom training centers, 53 of which were schools, were built and most of them were turned over to the Ministry of National Education.

7.6. Doğuş Automotive

The two social responsibility projects carried out by Doğuş Automotive, Traffic is Life and Born Professional were found to conform to three SDG4 targets 4.3, 4.5, 4.7.

Within the scope of the Traffic is Life project, which was carried out in cooperation with MNE, 10 Traffic Safety training video series were prepared for children and were integrated into the Online Education Library and the EBA TV Education Library permanently. Additionally, 2-credit courses titled Traffic is Life were delivered in 14 universities (KSS Türkiye, 2020, p. 22) and also 25,000 students in 14 universities supported in terms of distance education during the pandemic period (Doğuş Automotive, 2021, p.104). The project also actively provided information on traffic safety issues via social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube.

With the Born Professional project, cooperation between vocational high schools and universities was established in order to generate qualified workforce. Moreover, trainings were organized and a total of 17 vocational high school students were provided with internship opportunities, and some of the participants that completed their training were employed in authorized services. In cooperation with Yıldız Technical University Continuing Education Center, 185 students from seven schools were certified by the Center after completing three different trainings (Doğuş Automotive, 2019, p. 104).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of “Quality Education” is to focus on providing people with equal access to education throughout their lives Ensuring access to quality education only depends on serious public investments Research shows that the proportion of Türkiye’is GNP allocated to qualified education is generally

below that of OECD countries, CıvıŖ (2021) made a comparison based on the 1970-2018 paths in terms of sustainable development and qualified education for Türkiye and selected OECD countries in terms of quality education within the scope of sustainable development goals. In general comparisons it has been seen that the ratio of Türkiye's GNP allocated to qualified education is below the general average of the selected OECD countries and the OECD, and the lowest ratio of public expenditures for qualified education belongs to Türkiye (CıvıŖ, 2021, s.116-120). When we look at other studies conducted in this direction the general consensus is that it is impossible to achieve success without the active role of the state and that expropriation should be strengthened. Linking it to campaigns to eliminate inequalities of opportunity in the execution of basic public services especially education services; It is clear that developing result-oriented "temporary" solution suggestions without getting to the root of the problems and without taking "continuity" into consideration will not bring success (Biter & Kocabay, 2021, s.110; Akyıldız, 2007, s.500). All of these are the results of the direct and indirect effects of neoliberal policies on education that have been implemented for a long time. Neoliberal policies have transformed the service areas within the scope of duty and responsibility of the social state into areas where private businesses advertise and make profits. Because companies that can successfully integrate sustainable development goals into their management styles can maintain their competitiveness and become more sustainable. For this reason, they carry out harmonization studies between business goals and sustainable development goals.

The aim of this study, by evaluating the transformation experienced by the introduction of social state through neoliberal policies and the effects of this transformation on social responsibility, aimed to investigate whether the social responsibility projects carried out by private companies conform to the 10 high-priority targets of SDG4 and to examine the cooperation established with other institutions in these projects. In doing so, it also aimed to reveal how the private sector and NGOs are involved in the provision of the education service, which is a leading issue in terms of equal opportunity.

The analysis indicated that the education-related social responsibility projects carried out by the six companies in cooperation with public institutions, NGOs, and the private sector conform to six high-priority targets of SDG4 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.a, and 4.b, while none of the projects conform to the goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.6, and 4.c. Both public institutions and NGOs actively participated in the projects as stakeholders and in these projects, public institutions were the most common partners (n=13), followed by NGOs (n=5), private sector (n=3), and international institutions (n=1), respectively, whereas there was no cooperation with any institution in four projects.

Taken together, the projects analyzed essentially aimed to strengthen the infrastructure of vocational education, to perform restoration and renovation in some schools, to create libraries and laboratories

for schools, to facilitate access to vocational training materials and internship opportunities, to create classes for individuals with special needs children with hearing impairment and autism who cannot participate in social life due to social and physical barriers, to promote volunteering activities, such as creating scientific environments, and to support the development of digital applications. It is an undeniable fact that such social responsibility activities are crucial steps in terms of social development. However, it would be unwise to consider that such activities could replace the services that the social state is liable to provide for all the individuals in the society to ensure their inclusiveness and continuity as well as their welfare. For such activities to become sustainable, constant volunteering and financial resources are essential. Otherwise, the business world or NGOs can only function as complementary elements in the fields that public institutions remain insufficient. Even in the realm of education service, which is among major issues regarding equal opportunity, the need for establishing cooperation with private companies and NGOs is an indicator of a deadlock and thus cannot be expected to provide permanent results. Although such an approach may ease the burden of the state, it is far from maintaining and sustaining equal opportunity and thus encourages a panhandling culture in the society.

Although the six companies have focused on supporting sustainable development as a strong theme in order to achieve their own sustainability, such an approach is not in return for a well-deserved protection, but rather corresponds to the modern philanthropy approach of neoliberalism, mainly because neoliberalism is an economy-based approach. On the other hand, education, which is a basic social right, has been commercialized with neoliberal policies, which in turn has prevented people from benefiting from educational opportunities, which are among most fundamental human rights, and has paved the way for carrying out basic public services via private charity.

The erosion of educational services in such a manner does not conform to basic rights of citizenship. Since the social state is liable to provide such services to ensure the protection of human rights, it is expected to conduct them in an appropriate manner. What is expected from the social state is not to encourage and stimulate commercial rivalry in every possible circumstance or not to fulfil its responsibilities through social responsibility projects conducted in cooperation with the private sector and NGOs, but the social state is expected to enact efficacious education policies to include all the citizens.

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Appendix A

10 high-priority targets of SDG4

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- 4.1. By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education
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- 4.2. By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
-
- 4.3. By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
-
- 4.4. By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
-
- 4.5. By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
-
- 4.6. By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
-
- 4.7. By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
-
- 4.a. Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
-
- 4.b. By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries
-
- 4.c. By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.
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Source: UNDP Türkiye, 2023, Küresel Amaçlar, . <https://www.kureselamaclar.org/amaclar/nitelikli-egitim/>

Appendix B

Characteristics of Sampled Companies

| Official Title | Fortune 500 Türkiye (2019) Ranking | Area of activity | Net Revenue (TL) |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
|----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|--|-------------------|
| TÜPRAŞ. Co. | 1 | Petroleum | 8,960,077,824,000 |
| Ford OTOSAN Industry Co. | 7 | Automotive | 3,920,901,734,400 |
| Arçelik Co. | 9 | Electric Household Appliances | 3,194,177,331,200 |
| Turkcell Communication Services Co. | 14 | Information and Communication Services | 2,513,713,561,600 |
| Türk Telekom Co. | 15 | Information and Communication Services | 2,365,710,745,600 |
| Doğuş Automotive Co. | 35 | Motor Vehicles Sale & Service | 984,413,286,400 |

Source: Fortune Türkiye (2019). Fortune Listeler. <https://www.fortuneturkey.com/Fortune500>