

**RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY OF EMPLOYEE  
OPINION IN THE TURKISH CEMENT COMPANY**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Since the beginning of modernisation in the 1920s Turkey has had a large public sector. In the 1980s structural adjustment programmes were introduced, a feature of which was to increase the size of the private sector. In keeping with developments in other countries, and not least in the UK, a plan to privatise public enterprises was introduced in 1986. In 1994 the **Economic Measures Implementation Plan** was introduced with the purpose of giving increased momentum to privatisation. Despite the centrality of privatisation as a strategy of the current Government, remarkably little is known about how employees view privatisation and related matters.

This paper briefly reports the views of employees on the following matters:

- the principle of privatisation;
- the difference between the private and the public sectors;
- the general effects of privatisation;
- the effects of privatisation on their own company.

The survey upon which this report is based was conducted in 1994 by members of the Department of Sociology at the University of

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Ankara. The research took place at a cement company which had been privatised in 1989. The Government's initial targets for privatisation had been public companies which were profitable. The cement sector had been among the first to be privatised. The Ankara team's survey largely follows the lines of the research previously conducted in the UK with employees in the privatised water and gas industries. <sup>(1)</sup> The following account of employee opinion reports data for all employees (N = 110); for manual employees only (N = 84); and for trade union members only (N = 77). In the case of employees' views about the effect of privatisation on their own company, data is also provided separately for those employees who had worked in the company both before and after privatisation (N = 34) and for those who were recruited after privatisation (N = 76). Both the company and its employees are treated anonymously.

All tables report percentages. Totals may not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

### **PERCEIVED MERITS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATIONS**

1.1 Employees were asked for their views on whether public or private sector organisations were more likely to tolerate trade unions; provide better working conditions; protect the environment; utilise new technology; provide better quality products; and develop skill. Out of all these possibilities there was a very strong consensus that private firms were more likely to develop new technology. As can be seen from Table 1, this view was adhered to by over ninety per cent of all employees, manual workers and trade unionists. Such thinking is in line with the commonly made observation that Turkish public organisations have tended to be inefficient, to lack investment and new technology.

1.2. Private organisations were also likely to be rated above public sector organisations with respect to three other matters: the provision of better quality products; the development of skills; and the protection of the environment. However, in each case, at least a quarter of all employees were of the view that there was no difference between the performance of private and public sector organisations. In these respects employees would seem to be critical of both public

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(1) Theo Nichols and Julia O'Connell Davidson 'Privatisation and Economism' *The Sociological Review* 41 (4): November 1993 : 707- 30.

and private sector organisations. But it is perhaps worth noting that it is also the case with respect to quality of product, skill development and the protection of the environment, that both manual workers and trade union members are somewhat less likely to subscribe to the view that the private sector performs better.

1.3 Employees' views on aspects of their working conditions need to be distinguished from their views on economic performance. Only a quarter of all employees see the private sector being more likely to provide better working conditions. The majority of all employees view the public sector being better or both public and private sectors being the same. There is some evidence that trade unionists and manual workers are more likely to hold these views. The same applies to the question of whether the private or public sector is more likely to tolerate trade unions. Nearly two thirds of all employees agree that the public sector is more likely to tolerate trade unions, with higher percentages of manual workers and of trade union members agreeing that public sector organisations are more likely than private ones to do so.

**Table 1: Perceived Relative Merits of Public and Private Sector Organisations**

**In general, do you think public sector organisations or private firms are more likely to:**

	public	private	same	NR
<b>Utilize new technology?</b>				
All Employees	5	91	0	4
Manual	2	92	5	0
TU	5	90	5	0
<b>produce better quality products?</b>				
All Employees	14	50	32	4
Manual	11	47	36	6
TU	17	43	34	7
<b>develop skills?</b>				
All Employees	17	49	27	7
Manual	15	48	29	8
TU	21	43	29	8
<b>protect the environment</b>				
All Employees	22	35	38	5
Manual	20	31	44	5
TU	26	26	42	7

**Table 1: continued**

**In general, do you think public sector organisations or private firms are more likely to:**

	public	private	same	NR
<b>have better working conditions?</b>				
All Employees	37	24	34	5
Manual	39	23	35	3
TU	44	18	34	4
<b>tolerate trade unions?</b>				
All Employees	64	10	15	11
Manual	67	10	15	8
TU	70	9	16	5

## **2. THE PRINCIPLE OF PRIVATISATION**

2.1. As can be seen from Table 2, a majority of all employees accept that it is right in principle to privatise state owned organisations in general and to privatise state economic organisations in particular. But, in both cases, support is lower amongst manual workers and it falls to under half in the case of trade union members.

2.2 Half of all employees, and of manual workers only, and of trade union members are of the view that it is right to privatise municipal services like gas and water. It is possible that these views are a product of the direct experience of poorly run municipal services in Turkey. Whatever the case, there are some respects in which employees did not accept the principle of privatisation.

2.3 Over half of all employees did not accept that it is right in principle to privatise education and health services. Moreover, these views, which were held by a majority of manual workers and trade unionists, commanded even higher levels of support from non manual employees (62 per cent) and non trade union members (67 per cent).

2.4 Nearly six out of ten of all employees did not accept that it is right to privatise public services such as electricity and telephones, though this time the views of manual workers (61 per cent) and trade union members (64 per cent) fall in line with the more usual pattern

that has been in evidence so far - that of manual workers and trade union members giving rather less support to privatisation and rather more to public provision.

**Table 2: The Principle of Privatisation**

	yes	no	DK	NR
<b>Is it right in principle to privatise state owned organisations?</b>				
All Employees	58	27	14	1
Manual	53	33	13	1
TU	48	35	17	0
<b>Is it right in principle to privatise state economic enterprises?</b>				
All Employees	59	29	10	2
Manual	55	35	8	2
TU	48	39	10	1
<b>Is it right in principle to privatise municipal services like gas and water</b>				
All Employees	55	37	7	0
Manual	51	41	8	0
TU	52	39	7	0
<b>Is it right in principle to privatise education and health services?</b>				
All Employees	39	56	5	0
Manual	39	55	6	0
TU	42	52	7	0
<b>Is it right in principle to privatise public services like electricity and telephones?</b>				
All Employees	35	59	6	0
Manual	33	61	6	0
TU	30	64	6	0

### 3. THE GENERAL EFFECTS OF PRIVATISATION

3.1 Employees were asked their views about the general effects of privatisation. There is evidence that, as far as conventional measures of economic performance are concerned, privatised companies in general were positively rated. For example, a clear majority of all employees, and of manual workers and trade union members, agreed that privatised companies were in general likely to be more efficient. Again, about half of all employees agreed that privatisation generally improved customer service, and that it generally improved product quality (albeit with trade unionists tending to be very slightly less likely to agree).

3.2 There are also some perceived negative features of privatisation. In particular, six out of ten employees agreed that privatised companies sell off to the few what used to belong to everyone. This interpretation of events is more strongly endorsed by manual workers and trade union members respectively.

3.3 Above all, there was widespread agreement among employees that privatisation would in general reduce job security in the industry. This view was shared by 82 per cent of all employees; by 85 per cent of manual workers; and by 88 per cent of trade union members. It underlines the importance to employees of a secure job, whatever the improvements said to have been made to economic performance as judged by conventional economic indicators.

**Table 3: The General Effects of Privatisation**

Do you agree or disagree that:	agree	disagree	same	DK
<b>privatised companies are more efficient?</b>				
All Employees	70	5	17	8
Manual	68	5	19	8
TU	70	5	14	10
<b>privatisation improves customer service?</b>				
All Employees	52	19	24	5
Manual	51	19	24	6
TU	47	21	27	5

**Table 3: Continued**

	agree	disagree	same	DK
<b>privatisation improves product quality?</b>				
All Employees	54	9	28	9
Manual	54	8	29	9
TU	52	10	26	11
<b>privatised companies sell off to a few what used to belong to everyone:</b>				
All Employees	60	19	11	10
Manual	64	14	10	12
TU	66	16	6	12
<b>privatisation reduces job security in the industry?</b>				
All Employees	82	7	8	3
Manual	85	6	8	1
TU	88	4	5	2

#### **4. THE EFFECTS OF THE PRIVATISATION OF THE EMPLOYEE'S OWN COMPANY**

4.1 One of the most commonly expressed views of the effects of privatisation on the employees' own company concerns economic performance (Table 4). There is clear agreement that the company's economic performance has been enhanced. For example, there is strong agreement among all employees, no matter whether they be manual workers or trade unionists, that, following privatisation, their company has made more investment for the future. This view is shared by those who worked for the company prior to privatisation, whose opinions are separately reported here as a test of the validity of the company-specific data.

4.2 The views are widely endorsed that overall productivity has improved following privatisation and that there has been increased emphasis on maximising the productivity of workers.

4.3 It is in keeping with the finding that there has been more emphasis on increasing the productivity of workers that all

categories of respondent agree that privatisation has meant that they have to work harder. It is also in keeping with this that there is a fair measure of agreement that since privatisation management has monitored performance more closely.

4.4 About half respondents agree that privatisation has led to an improvement in wages. About half also agree that privatisation has led to improved product quality; and that it had made workers more careful with company equipment.

4.5 Responses in connection with some other matters reveal some positive but not very extensive indications of support for privatisation. For instance, there is some inclination to the view that management has given more information about company performance since privatisation, but about a third of respondents see no difference in the extent of information provided before and after privatisation. There is much the same pattern of response to the idea that since privatisation the factory has been run by people who understand the industry. Only four out of ten employees agree with this view. Three out of ten see no change. And the pro-privatisation view is endorsed less by those who have personal knowledge of the factory before privatisation, and also less by trade unionists and by manual workers.

4.6 There is no widespread support for the view that since privatisation the company has worked more to the benefit of the people. Only about one fifth of any of our categories of employee subscribe to such a view. Most replies suggest that since the company was privatised it has worked less to the general benefit, or that it has done so only to the same extent as previously.

4.7 There has generally been little participation in company affairs by workers in Turkey, either before or after privatisation, and whether in the private or the public sector. The fact that the largest category of respondents see the amount of say that they have in company affairs to be the same before and after privatisation has to be considered in this context. There is a similar pattern of response concerning the attention paid to health and safety, although it is noticeable that manual workers and trade unionists are even less likely to express the view that there has been more attention to health and safety post-privatisation.

4.8 It was seen earlier (Table 3) that employees were of the view that privatisation generally posed a threat to job security. It can be



seen from Table 4 that employees also see the privatisation of their own company to pose a threat to their jobs. Over sixty per cent of all respondents hold the view that, following the privatisation of the company, there is less job security. This view is held by about two thirds of manual workers and by three quarters of trade union members. For many of them this increased threat to their livelihood coexists, not only with the experience that they are working harder, but with the feeling that privatisation has not led management to value their work more highly. Only 15 per cent of all employees agree that management now values their work more highly than before. Only 13 per cent of manual workers think this. Only a mere 9 per cent of trade unionists do.

4.9 There is evidence that, whatever privatisation may have achieved in the eyes of employees with respect to economic performance, they do not believe that management treats them as they would wish. Three quarters of all employees - and of those with five years or more experience, as well as of manual workers and trade unionists - believe that management respects them 'not very much' or 'not at all'.

	all employees	manual employees	TU members	employees with over 5 years service
<b>does management respect you?</b>				
yes	16	18	13	18
not very much/not at all	76	75	81	77
don't know	7	7	6	4

4.10 Whether what employees feel about the way that they are regarded by management will turn them to militancy will depend on many factors. But it is worth noting a widespread opinion which exists in the workforce about trade unions. Asked whether trades unions had too much power in the 1970s, about half of all the categories of employee reviewed here agreed that trade unions did then have too much power. But, when employees were asked whether they thought trade unions are strong enough today, at least three quarters of those in each of the categories reviewed in this Report replied that they were not strong enough. These views on trade unions today, as opposed to the 1970s, are similar to those found in the earlier study of privatisation in the UK (Nichols and O'Connell Davidson 1993: 722).

4.11 In drawing comparisons between employees' views in Turkey and the UK it is necessary to bear in mind general differences of political economy and also differences between the public and private sectors in the two countries. For instance there is reason to believe that the Turkish public sector lacked investment and modern technology to a considerably greater extent than was the case in the UK. The provision of municipal services was also probably significantly less efficient in Turkey. Health and safety was neglected generally in Turkey when compared to the UK, and so on.

4.12 Subject to the above important qualifications, it is nonetheless the case that there are broad areas of consistency in the results of the Turkish and UK surveys. In particular, in both Turkey and the UK, it is clear that whereas employees may positively endorse privatisation in some respects, they may make a different evaluation of the effects of privatisation on themselves and the work that they do. Yet more particularly, it is a common feature of both Turkish and UK employees, that manual workers and trade unionists were less likely to view privatisation positively.

**Table 4: The Effects of Privatisation on the Employees' Own Company**

**has investment for the future following privatisation of your company been more, less or the same?**

	more	less	same	NR
All employees	85	4	6	5
Manual	83	4	7	6
TU	87	4	5	4
Over five years	85	4	7	4

**has the privatisation of your company improved overall productivity?**

	agree	disagree	same	NR
All employees	74	4	20	2
manual	75	4	20	1
TU	77	2	21	0
Over five years	75	3	21	1

**has the privatisation of your  
company meant more, less or the  
same emphasis on maximising  
workers' productivity?**

	more	less	same	NR
All Employees	65	5	24	6
TU	69	2	25	4
Manual	65	5	24	6
Over five years	66	3	77	4

**do you agree or disagree that  
the privatisation of the company  
has made you work harder?**

	agree	disagree	same	NR
All employees	68	5	25	2
manual	69	5	23	3
TU	70	5	22	3
Over five years	67	6	24	3

**do you agree or disagree that  
privatisation has meant  
management monitors  
performance more closely?**

	agree	disagree	same	NR
All employees	64	11	17	8
Manual	62	11	24	7
TU	64	10	18	8
Over five years	61	9	18	12

**do you agree or disagree that  
privatisation improved wages?**

	agree	disagree	same	NR
All employees	56	17	24	3
Manual	52	18	27	3
TU	50	18	31	1
Over five years	53	16	31	0

**Table 4: continued**

**do you agree or disagree that  
privatisation of your company  
has improved product quality?**

	agree	disagree	same	NR
All employees	52	10	33	5
Manual	51	10	33	6
TU	52	9	34	5
Over five years	50	9	36	5

**do you agree or disagree  
that privatisation has made  
workers more careful with  
company equipment?**

	agree	disagree	same	NR
All employees	56	14	26	4
Manual	51	17	27	5
TU	55	17	25	3
Over five years	55	15	25	5

**has privatisation meant giving  
employees more or less information  
about company performance?**

	agree	disagree	same	NR
All employees	43	10	31	16
Manual	43	9	31	17
TU	45	10	33	12
Over five years	46	8	34	12

**do you agree or disagree that  
privatisation has meant that  
the factory is run by people who  
understand the industry?**

	agree	disagree	same	NR
All employees	41	21	31	7
Manual	39	23	32	6
TU	36	22	33	9
Over five years	43	24	36	6

**Table 4 continued**  
**has privatisation meant the**  
**company working more or**  
**less to the benefit of the people?**

	more	less	same	DK
All employees	20	37	31	12
Manual	17	42	27	14
TU	17	42	31	10
Over five years	15	47	26	12

**given us more say in how**  
**the company is run?**

	more	less	same	DK
All employees	25	23	40	12
Manual	21	24	43	12
TU	21	22	44	13
Over five years	26	18	45	11

**has privatisation meant more**  
**or less attention to health and**  
**safety in the company?**

	more	less	same	NR
All employees	33	22	37	8
Manual	27	24	42	7
TU	25	27	42	6
Over five years	37	18	41	4

**has privatisation meant more**  
**or less job security in the company?**

	more	less	same	NR
All employees	21	63	9	7
Manual	19	65	11	5
TU	20	74	5	1
Over five years	18	65	6	12

**has privatisation meant**  
**management places more**  
**value on your work?**

	more	less	same	NR
All employees	15	63	14	8
Manual	13	61	18	8
TU	9	66	17	8
Over five years	16	62	16	6

**Table 4: continued****do you think unions had too much power in the 1970s?**

	yes	no	DK
All employees	50	23	27
Manual	54	19	27
TU	54	21	25
Five years plus	54	25	21

**are trade unions strong enough today?**

	yes	no	DK
All employees	11	76	13
Manual	11	77	12
TU	8	83	9
Five years plus	10	79	11