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AN EVALUATION OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION (PRIMARY) IN TURKISH NATIONAL EDUCATION IN JOINING PROCESSES AT THE EUROPE UNION

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ABSTRACT

This study is a descriptive study and aims to an evaluation on Compulsory education in Turkish National System. Compulsory education in the Turkish National Education System is the education that is given freely and equally, to all citizens who have reached the school age, for an 8 year period by the state. However, this application has not been realized sufficiently as defined qualitatively and quantitatively because of some special conditions in Turkey. There are numerous factors which are responsible for this consequence. The application of joint classes and transportable education in primary schools is very important in the system of Turkish National Education. Education in joint classes and transportable applications are considered a problem of compulsory education in the rural areas of Turkey. Compulsory education policies and applications in the Republic era have lots of inadequacies with respect to the creation of quality in the compulsory education system. This problem of quality mainly results from the education circumstances in rural schools, the inadequacy of the applied program and the insufficiency of material – human resources.

KEYWORDS: Turkish National Education System, Instruction of Joining Classroom School, Primary School Curriculum, Transportable Education Application

AVRUPA BİRLİĞİNE KATILMA SÜRECİNDE TÜRK EĞİTİM SİSTEMİNDE ZORUNLU EĞİTİMİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışma Türk Eğitim Sisteminde zorunlu eğitimin değerlendirilmesi üzerine betimsel bir çalışmasıdır. Zorunlu eğitim, Türk Milli Eğitim sisteminde bütün vatandaşlara sekiz yıl olarak, devlet tarafından parasız verilmektedir. Bununla birlikte, Türkiye'deki birçok özel faktörden dolayı bu uygulama nicel ve nitel olarak etkili bir şekilde gerçekleştirilmemektedir. Birleştirilmiş sınıflarda öğretim ve taşınabilir eğitim Türk Milli Eğitim Sisteminde çok önemli yer teşkil etmektedir. Birleştirilmiş sınıflarda öğretim ve taşıma uygulamaları Türkiye'de kırsal alanların bir problemi olarak kabul edilmektedir. Zorunlu eğitim uygulamaları ve politikaları cumhuriyet döneminde birçok yetersizlikler göstermektedir. Kırsal alanlardaki eğitimin bu temel yetersizlikleri madde-insan kaynakları ve programın uygulamasından kaynaklanmaktadır.

ANAHTAR KELİMELER: Türk Milli Eğitim Sistemi, Birleştirilmiş sınıflarda öğretim, İlköğretim programı, Taşınabilir eğitim uygulaması

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INTRODUCTION

The National Education System, determined by National Education Basic Act No. 1739, consists of two main parts, namely “formal education” and “non-formal education” in Turkey. Non-formal education in accordance with the general objectives and basic principles of national education, but not conducted within a school. Especially, it is conducted via short term public education applications. For instance, vocational, nursing, home management, etc courses for women, men, elderly. Other hand, formal education is the regular education conducted within a school for individuals in a certain age group and at the same level, under programs developed in accordance with the purpose. Formal education includes pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education institutions. All of them only primary education is compulsory for all Turkish citizens, and its process includes 8 years period. That level education is ruling two kind policies. First application styles teach in the schools, second is through distant education.

Primary Education by Schools: Primary education involves the education and training of children in the age group of 6 to 13. Primary education is compulsory for all male and female citizens and is free at State schools (Kod 4306). The objective of primary education is to ensure that every Turkish child acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, behavior and habits to become a good citizen and is raised in accordance with the concept of national morals and that he/she is prepared for life and for the next level of education in accordance with his/her interests, talents and capabilities. In the last educational semester of primary education, necessary studies are carried out by guidance services in order to inform students on which schools and programmes in secondary education pave the way to which professions and the living standards these professions shall provide to them. Primary education institutions consist of eight-year schools where continuous education is provided and primary education diplomas are awarded to the graduating students.

Open Primary Education by Distant Applications: It is an institution providing for citizens who graduated from primary school before but could not attend junior high school for various reasons the opportunity to complete primary education via distance education method. School, class and teacher are not available due to system (M.E.B.2008-2009).

As a requirement of compulsory education in Turkish National education and instruction applications of the Republic era, the reality of education in joint classes has not been well realized and evaluated. Education in joint classes, which has been a constant aspect of the system, is an important factor that needs to be studied. This fact needs to be researched and developed scientifically as well as administratively. It has been observed that during the qualitative and quantitative creation and development of compulsory education in Turkish National education in Republic era, joint classroom applications have been undervalued.

Problem

This research aims to expose both, the general view of compulsory primary education in Turkish National Education and the general principles, problems and implementation of joint classroom application, which is an important aspect of this process. Thus, the aim is to contribute to the solution of these problems of compulsory education in Turkey by facilitating a discussion on educational literature.

METHOD

This study is a descriptive research, and aims to explain compulsory education (primary) in Turkish National Education system. Research data has been obtained through a review of literature and document. This chapter is based on my personal experiences during the 23 years I have spent as a lecturer in the Turkish educational system and National Education Statistics.

FINDINGS

General View of Compulsory Education in Turkey

The concept of “compulsory education” has been used under different terms in Turkish History of Education. It is observed that through educational activities the aim has been to teach students reading, writing, and calculating abilities and to present them the knowledge required for being good citizens (The law of Basic Education, nu. 222).

Education has a considerable place in providing people of a country with certain qualities. Even an education concept in which the concept of education combines with school concept may be in question (Taşdemir, 2005). In the regions where technological developments and mass media means are not followed adequately, the request of the public to have education has been increased on a large scale and this kind of education is considered unique and has no alternative. The development level of countries, their democratic status and geographical properties have a considerable effect on the widening of education to be given at a balanced and sufficient level and also on the educational services. These defined general factors are the realities which still affect the Turkish education system.

Numerical data of schools, students and teachers from the regions where Turkish National Education is applied are given in Table 1.

Table 1. 2008 – 2009 Education Year Numerical Status of Primary Schools According to School and Settlement Regions

Number of Schools			Number of students			Number of teachers		
Total	City	Village	Total	City	Village	Total	City	Village
33769	11503	22266	10709920	8150518	2559402	453318	329453	123855

When the data of compulsory education levels in the year 2008-2009 are compared with the distribution of this application in cities and villages, villages have a considerable surplus. However, when the number of students in cities and villages is compared, the number of student in cities is approximately three times bigger than the number in villages. Although this surplus is an advantage for village schools, in fact it is important to display the population and number of students of villages.

In the Turkish National Education System, the concept of spreading compulsory education and its applications have still been a problem. As the Turkish population is very young and the birth rate is increasing continuously, the numbers of students who are at the age of receiving compulsory education have increased considerably. Furthermore, the differences in the intensification of population have evident effects on both balanced spreading of education services and the quality of education that is given. This immoderate distribution results in village-city differences in schoolings and numerous difficulties in cities. Educational problems based upon the excessive density of student population in the city schools have been observed, whereas educational problems based on the scarcity of students in rural regions have been experienced (Taşdemir, 2005). When the number of teachers and students is examined, there are important differences in the number of students per teacher according to regions. As can be seen in Table 2, regions where immigration has been intense, and geographical and development differences are evident, the number of students per teacher has a negative result when compared to other regions.

Table 2. 2008 – 2009 Education Year, Number of Students per Teacher at Primary School Level According To Regions.

Region	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Student/Teacher Rate
Marmora	4824	3032599	114137	26,6
Aegean	3863	1174623	58967	19,9
Central Anatolia	4596	1497059	73071	20,5
The Mediterranean Sea	3985	1398061	61197	22,8

Black Sea	4762	934904	50332	18,6
East Anatolia	6108	1096708	44391	24,8
South East Anatolia	5116	1575663	51183	30,8
TOTAL	33769	10709920	453318	23,6

There has been a large immigration from villages to cities on the basis of the socio-economic developments in Turkey. Population intensification, which was in favor of villages at the beginning of the Republic age, has changed recently in favor of cities. This change has gained a noticeable acceleration in the last quarter of the century, and has recently in reached a peak. The factors causing this change are:

- desire to live rarely by depending on the land,
- big difference between the social lives in villages and cities,
- a difference in the level of people's income,
- desire to live in a secure place.

These factors accelerate the immigration from villages to cities in Turkey.

When the development process of compulsory education application in the late Republic era for 80 years is considered, significant developments in the Turkish National Education System are observed. However, these developments have resulted in a remarkable increase in the number of students and teachers, whereas the number of schools has not reached the same level. The data in Table 1, 2, and 3 demonstrate the distribution of village-city, regions and school-teacher-student. As can be seen, the distribution is not parallel.

Table 3. Primary School Statistics between 1923 And 2009 Regarding the Compulsory Education Application in Turkish National Education System at Republic Era

Number of schools		Number of students			Number of teachers			
1923-1924	2008-2009	Increase	1923-1924	2008-2009	Increase	1923-1924	2008-2009	Increase
5010	33769		351835	10709920		11292	453318	
5010	<i>State Schools</i> 34262		-	10123457		11292	428449	
-	<i>Private schools</i> 907	6,7	-	239988	30,4	-	24889	40,1
-	<i>Remote Education</i> (<i>Open Education</i>) 1		-	346475		-	-	

Generally, the duration and quality of the compulsory education services that countries present to their citizens could be an indicator of the general development levels of countries. When Turkish National Education is considered from that point of view, there are two main points in compulsory education applications (Tasdemir, 2005) which are;

1. Efforts to increase duration of compulsory education
2. Efforts to increase the quality of compulsory education.

Efforts to Increase Duration of Compulsory Education in Turkey

Efforts to increase the period of compulsory education in Turkey have been a continuous problem until the Republic era (Baltacıoğlu, 1939, Tasdemir, 2005). It has been observed that the duration of compulsory education was different from time to time in village schools and city schools. These differences in the historical development process have been in the forms of village schools for 3 years and city-center schools for 5 years; primary schools for 5 years and primary schools for 8 years. The length of compulsory education has been a continuous problem that still bothers the agenda of our country. Increasing the length of compulsory education to 8 years and to spreading it the whole country was realized by August 16, 1997. This increase in length combined with law number 4306 was a big effort in developing education during the contemporizing process. According to the 1st article of this law, the length of primary schools 8 years; and in these schools, there is a continuous / uninterrupted education and the graduates receive a primary school diploma. Even though the quality of the compulsory education is debatable, increasing the duration of compulsory education to 8 years is an important development for Turkish National Education system. Nevertheless, it seems as if this law will be a current issue of Turkey's agenda for a long time. When the realities of country are primarily considered, the request to continue or discontinue compulsory education continuously or discontinuously is utilized unfairly by politicians.

Once the “5 year and 8 year obligatory education discussions” are left behind, extending the length of compulsory education to 8 years in the whole country is a hopeful starting point in spite of all deficiencies. The role of decision makers in the following process is to realize the required regulations which will reduce the problems resulting from the application of this law. Discussions regarding this law are in fact meaningful because they display the sensitivity of Turkish society regarding their education. During this discussion process, many opinions and discussions regarding extending the obligatory education process to 8 years have been expressed by educators and politicians, and this situation can signal applications of various compulsory (obligatory) education with different lengths in the following days. These discussions will have an important impact on education application in the future.

Despite these positive developments, there are evident examples which demonstrate that Turkey could not realize the 5-year compulsory education applications successfully. Some examples of these failures can be seen in: village schools where there are no teachers, attorney teacher applications, education by transportation system, double and triple system applications, and education in joint classes (Fidan, 1987, Akyuz, 1999, Tasdemir, 2005, Gelişli, 2005). Same problems have still been observed recently. Statistical values regarding the compulsory education applications do not have significant differences but still continue at approximate values. As displayed in Table 4, there is not a very general and diffused education with boarding schools where people could be educated in their regions. When educational data are evaluated, nearly more than half of the Turkish schools have the joint classroom system. Same data are also valid for teachers in that these schools are providing joint class education with one or two class/teacher.

Table 4. Number of Students and Teachers in Primary Schools in 2008 – 2009 Education Year

School Tour	schools	students	teachers
Primary school(Normal)*	32861	10123457	428429
Primary school with joint (Combined) classes)*	16069	561975	26470
Regional school with dormitory	593	262838	11433
Remote Education (Open Education)	1	346475	-
TOTAL	33769	10709920	453318

*Because of the have not been observed in the 2008-2009 MEB statistics, there fore these data is 2006-2007 education year.

Table 5. Number of Students and Teachers of Joins (Combined) Classroom in Primary Schools in 2006- 2007 Education Year*

Schools	Number of		Together with two classrooms		Together with three classrooms		Together with four classrooms		Together with five classrooms	
	Teacher	Student	Teacher	Students	Teacher	Students	Teacher	Students	Teacher	Students
16069	26470	561795	11062	214398	8007	167053	1065	16035	7551	164309

*Because of the have not been observed in the 2008-2009 MEB statistics, there fore these data is 2006-2007 education year.

In Turkey, the compulsory education application has facet many problems due to the density of student population in regions and institutions. An attempt has been made to solve this problem by double education applications. However for the solution of education problems of schools where joint classrooms and other application problems have been observed, transportable education system has been mostly applied together with the boarding and dormitory school education. Transportable education system was started in the 1989-1990 education year in two cities by transporting 12 schools and 305 students and has reached a significant level in the last 20 years (Table 7). By this system, poor neighborhood schools both in villages and city centers have been transferred daily to certain transport centers. However, this application can easily be affected by the political decisions and has a changeable system. Settlement areas and schools that have transportable center characteristics are far from being a “center of attraction” where a qualified education will be given. A school which is at the center of a city and has only 5 classrooms could be a transport center and the need for further improvements could be ignored. Therefore, these centers and the education given at these centers can be matter of continuous discussion with regard to both quantity and quality, especially distant willages in the country’ (Tasdemir, 2005, Gelişli, 2005).

Data with respect to the compulsory education in Turkish National Education demonstrate that in most of the primary schools there are double and joined classrooms.

Table 6. Number of Students According To the Settlement Places and Education Policy in 2006-2007 Education Year*

	City Centers				Village		
	Total	Normal	Double	Total	Normal	Double	
							34990

*Because of the have not been observed in the 2008-2009 MEB statistics, there fore these data is 2006-2007 education year.

Table 7. 2008-2009 Education Year Numerical Data Concerning the Transportable Primary Education in Compulsory Primary Education in Turkey

Number of transporting central schools	Number of transported school	Number of transported student
5851	25025	683415

There is a need to solve the problems related to educational problems that have surfaced when the compulsory education length was increased. This problem requires the urgent proposals of Turkish administrators and educators. This problem, at the same time, is important since it is an open subject to be discussed as an educational problem in the field of educational science.

Efforts to Improve the Quality of Compulsory Education

While the efforts to distribute compulsory education in Turkey by raising its quality are continuing, creating a standard quality of service has become an important problem. When the length of education is taken into consideration as an important factor that affects the educational applications which are planned to be realized, the length of compulsory education has been short in Turkey during its history of nearly a century. However, assigning qualified teachers and creating an adequate and suitable educating-learning situation are very important factors that object the quality of education. During the historical development, the application of compulsory education in Turkey has resulted in certain problems in this respect.

The development process of applications for spreading compulsory education has extensively been evaluated by different researchers. However, the length of education in schools should not be considered as the only factors that affect the application of this education process. A well-educated and qualified teacher is also an important factor. Even though this fact is recognized by everybody, educating and paying a teacher for compulsory education in Turkey still could not be tied to a certain policy. Connecting the quality of education to the teacher is an accepted opinion in the society. This concept can assign functions to teachers which are well over their capacities, as has been witnessed during the historical process. Especially, there have been more expectations from teachers in villages. The demands on teachers can be generalized by statements such as “leadership or society development”, “a school means a teacher”, “there are not any students who could not learn but there are teachers who could not teach”. These general demands that were made on teachers, at the same time, imposed important responsibilities on them for the solution of general educational problems in Turkey. However, during the education and payment of teachers who are charged with these responsibilities, application with respect to before service and in service education are faraway insufficient to create the required quality in teachers.

When the education and designation of teachers that has been applied so far is considered, it is very obvious that Turkey has not followed a consistent policy on these matters. These inconsistencies have been observed significantly in the education and designation of advisor teachers. Since long term planning and realistic criteria of teacher education policies have not been taken into consideration during the Republic era, filling the teacher deficit by populist policies and different sources was suggested (Kaya, 1984, Akyüz, 1999, Taşdemir, 2005).

Though the role of a well-educated and qualified teacher in the process of education is well recognized by everybody, decision makers for the designation and payment of the teachers give importance to the quantitative point instead of qualitative features. Despite all these negative examples the tremendous work that was done for educating advisor teachers in the Republic era should not be forgotten. When the education process of teachers is considered, we see the progress from the secondary school level of education, to the university level; furthermore, a post-graduate level of education was obtained. Thus, this development process could be an important sign showing that the education process of teachers has reached a considerable level. In spite of these positive developments, which will contribute to the quality of educated teachers, an approach with the same mentality for the payment of teachers has been always undervalued. A considerable number of teachers in Turkey are hired without considering their specialties and abilities. This application is, especially, observed in the primary schools teachers' position. These kinds of applications, observed during the whole of the Republic era, have had significant effects on the quality of primary education.

Creating an adequate and suitable teaching-learning environment is an important factor which affects the quality of educational activities (Alkan, 1985, Taşdemir, 2005). If a teaching environment has adequate and suitable materials for education, then it will have more contributions to the quality of education. It is the common dream of all educators in Turkey to provide an education that is adequate. However, the fact that village schools lack the adequate and suitable educational materials is a reality. This reality is mostly observed in village schools. Nowadays, most of the people consider having a school and a teacher sufficient even though the quality of the education may be debatable. The factors that affect these people negatively are insufficient classrooms in village schools, and thus, an insufficient education system in those schools.

As a result of the wrong settlement policies for years in Turkey, people are permitted to settle in small and diffused settlement regions and distorted settlement policies are followed. Thus, schools with one or two classrooms that have enough facilities are opened in most of these small settlement regions because of these applications (Aytona, 1936,

Baltacıoğlu, 1939, Cicioğlu, 1981, Binbaşıoğlu, 1983, Tekisik, 1986, Fidan, 1987, Başaran, 1993, Taşdemir, 2005). As a result of immigration from villages to cities after 1960's, schools in the centers have also developed very important problems. City schools are over pressured on the capacity and this has had negative effects on the educational environment. In these schools, overcrowded classes, double or triple education systems, and even joint classes applications have been observed. This situation turns the schools into education centers where lessons are memorized and can not be put into practice in real life (Akyüz, 1999, Taşdemir, 2005). As Akyüz (1999) and Varış (1985), to taught the new revolutions, primary education had to the most important in the Republic era in Turkey. Therefore, primary education policies to have important role in the education era of the country'

In consequence, compulsory education application during the Republic era in Turkey could not achieve quantitative and qualitative development as a result of not only excessive student population in city centers, but also problems resulting from the scarcity of students, teachers and other material-human source inadequacies

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

Compulsory education in state schools is free of charge and compulsory in the first eight years. There has been an attempt to implement this education in a vast area of land, varying in social, cultural, economic and geographical aspects with a centralistic point of view in planning and administration.

The composition of the population and the difference between urban and rural life, have caused significant qualitative and quantitative issues in the implementation of compulsory education. In this process of compulsory education, the inadequate number of schools, classrooms, teachers and other material-human resources has caused difficulties in education. Such problems have resulted in the need for education in joint classes.

In Turkey, after the eighty years following the declaration of the Republic, an immense inner migration has been seen. Compulsory education can hardly be executed even in urban areas due to the migration movement caused by the enormous differences of development between rural and urban areas. The Turkish education system is stuck in a deadlock because of this ongoing problem, which not likely to be solved in the near future.

For the last thirteen years, the education system with free transportation has offered an alternative to the compulsory education methods. An attempt has been made to effectively spread this system of education throughout the country. In spite of all these intense efforts, approximately half of the schools applying joint class education system at the beginning of the 90's were geographically too far away from any other settlement for an economical free transport to be feasible on a daily basis. In these areas, this system of free transport does not offer an alternative. Another option in such cases may be boarding schools, which could not be effectively spread, due to the high costs.

Effective policies to help solve the compulsory education system in the Turkish education system haven't been implemented. Conclusively, compulsory education programs in villages and smaller settlements and the reality of joint classes will remain unchanged for a long time.

The program prepared for independent classes being used as it is in joint classes is not consistent with the preparedness of students.

Chaos is being experienced in the Turkish education system especially concerning village school programs. This situation is even more severe in school programs with joint classes.

Considering the rural areas equal to urban areas, in the process of developing and implementing education programs in the Turkish education system despite all of their differences, has long been the common attitude of ongoing education policies. It is obvious that a program developed with such an attitude is likely to cause problems. According to this attitude, a program for normal classes can be imposed on a joint class. This can cause important learning problems in joint classes where there are students at different levels of preparedness.

In conclusion, it can be stated that compulsory education in Turkey during the Republic era has not been able to develop adequate qualitative and quantitative characteristics due to the density of student population in schools in

urban areas, and scarcity number of students in schools in rural areas, and of course due to the lack of human resources.

Suggestions

- Adequate schools and teachers must be provided rapidly in order to reduce the number of students per teacher.
- Boarding schools and schools with dormitories should be widespread.
- Education with free transport should be supervised qualitatively and quantitatively in order to provide students with education in places where they live as soon as possible.
- As a consequence of compulsory education in the Turkish education system joint classes, which will remain for long years, should be revised as a program subject and start being developed according to modern programming techniques. However, new application principles, learning chapters and course contents must be developed for joint classes in order to prevent the existing disorder and to provide the basis of relative facilitation during the transitional period.
- One of the factors discriminating compulsory education in Turkey is the persistence in offering education service in less population districts. This fact is one of the most discussed and unsolved educational problems of Turkey in the 20th century. The solution to this problem can only be achieved by putting an end to determining all educational decisions and plans of a vast and diverse geographical area from a centralistic point of view, ignoring the particular differences of such areas. This will also determine the success of this application executed in joint classes and in near distance of the habitation. Those who determine the education policies of Turkey can regionalize education programs and give their support to those programs taking into consideration the particular facts of the country, by acknowledging ways by which to offer qualified education despite all the significant differences all around the country.

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