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Okulda Geçirilen Zaman Asla Kayıp Zaman Değildir: Karşılaştırmalı Bir Çalışma

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Öz

Ülkeler arasındaki sosyal, coğrafi ve ekonomik farklılıklar göz önüne alındığında eğitim sistemlerinin planlama ve değerlendirme süreçlerinin ve dolayısıyla ülkeler tarafından benimsenen eğitim politikalarının farklılık göstermesi kaçınılmaz bir durumdur. Bu sosyal, coğrafi ve ekonomik farklılıklar aynı zamanda ülkelerin eğitim takvimlerinin düzenlenmesini de etkileyen önemli bir faktördür. Bu bağlamda, her ülke kendi koşullarına göre eğitim süreçlerini şekillendirmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki eğitim öğretim yılı takvimini OECD ülkelerindeki ile karşılaştırarak eğitim sürelerini incelemektir. Verilerin toplanmasında nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden doküman analizi tekniği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmaya ilk olarak seçilen ülkelerdeki eğitim süreleri ve tatillerin analiz edilmesiyle başlanmıştır. Ardından, sınıfta geçirilen saatler ve tatil sürelerindeki farklılıklar ayrıntılı bir şekilde ortaya konmuş ve bu farklılıkların eğitim kalitesine etkisi ele alınmıştır. Bu aşamadan sonra Türkiye'nin 180 günlük eğitim öğretim yılı takvimi incelenmiş ve ara tatil sisteminin artıları ve eksileri değerlendirilmiştir. Yapılan incelemeler sonucunda OECD ülkelerine göre Türkiye'nin daha uzun yaz tatili, bununla birlikte daha kısa ders saati uyguladığı tespit edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak eğitim öğretim yılı takviminin Türkiye'de OECD standartlarıyla uyumlu hâle getirilebileceği ifade edilmiştir. Bu doğrultuda; eğitim süresinin artırılması, uzun tatillerin kısaltılması, sosyal etkinliklerin artırılması ve performans değerlendirmelerinin iyileştirilmesi faydalı olabileceği vurgulanmıştır. Bu araştırma, genel olarak Türkiye'deki eğitim politikalarının etkinliğini artırmayı ve rekabetçiliğini güçlendirmeyi amaçlayan bir optimizasyon önerisi sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Eğitim politikası, eğitim süresi, eğitim takvimi, okul tatili, ders saati.*

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Time Spent at School is Never a Waste of Time: A Comparison Study

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Abstract

Given the social, geographical and economic differences between countries, it is inevitable that the planning and evaluation processes of education systems, and therefore the education policies adopted by countries, will vary. These social, geographical and economic differences are also an important factor influencing the organisation of countries' academic calendars. In this context, each country shapes its educational processes according to its own conditions. The aim of this study is to examine the duration of education by comparing the academic calendar in Türkiye with that of OECD countries. Qualitative research methods, specifically document analysis, were used to collect data. The study began with an analysis of the duration of education and holidays in the selected countries. Then, the differences in class hours and holiday periods were revealed in detail, and the impact of these differences on education quality was discussed. After that, Türkiye's 180-day academic calendar was examined, and the advantages and disadvantages of the mid-term holiday system were evaluated. The findings have revealed that Türkiye has longer summer holidays and shorter class hours compared to OECD countries. In conclusion, it has been stated that the academic calendar in Türkiye can be made compatible with OECD standards. In this regard, it has been emphasised that increasing the duration of education, shortening long holidays, increasing social activities, and improving performance evaluations can be beneficial. This research presents an optimisation proposal aimed at increasing the effectiveness of education policies in Türkiye and strengthening competitiveness.

Keywords: *Education policy, duration of education, academic calendar, school holiday, class hour.*

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Introduction

In today's world, it is observed that there is a diversity in determining the minimum education and teaching periods within the general education scope in different countries. The approaches of education systems in different countries to determine these periods reflect the diversity of national education policies and regulations. This diversity in education can make it difficult to compare the education and teaching periods and experiences that students are exposed to internationally. While it may not always be possible to compare programs based on categories with different characteristics such as program duration and content according to school type or grade level, it is possible to compare these classifications in terms of duration and content.

This research examines the academic calendars of countries, which include full-time compulsory general education teaching periods, and focuses particularly on the recommended minimum education and teaching periods for compulsory education programs stated in educational authorities' regulations or policy documents. The study aims to compare the academic calendars across different nations to analyse the duration of compulsory education periods and the alignment with global standards for academic requirements. By focusing on the regulations and policy documents from educational authorities, the research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of the minimum teaching periods mandated for students in various countries. This research also considers how different countries structure their academic years, exploring both the length and distribution of instructional days throughout the academic terms. It highlights the importance of ensuring that compulsory education programs meet the recommended minimum instructional time to promote consistent academic achievement worldwide. Through this examination, the study identifies trends and differences in how educational systems allocate time for learning, which can inform future policy decisions for improving school calendars.

Child education is one of the oldest and universal responsibilities of humanity (Yigit, 2025), however it is observed that practices vary on this matter when the starting age for compulsory education is examined at the country level. For instance, while in some countries, preschool education is included in compulsory education, in a significant part of European Union [EU] countries, students start compulsory education at the age of six, in the meantime the duration of compulsory education ranges from 8 to 13 years. (European Union, 2023a). Croatia has the shortest compulsory education period with 8 years while the country with the longest period is France with 15 years (EU, 2023a). On the other hand, the age

of starting secondary education in the EU varies between 14 and 16 depending on the country (EU, 2023b), and accordingly, the age of completing secondary education ranges between 16 and 19. Türkiye's total compulsory education and teaching period of 12 years is longer than that of many countries in the EU while the age of completing secondary school education is similar to the average of other countries (OECD, 2021). The total education and teaching period proposed to cover the entire full-time compulsory general education for each country is generally planned in a traditional academic calendar format, which includes a summer holiday of 10-12 weeks (Farbman, 2011). The consistency of these educational structures highlights the diverse approaches taken by different countries to balance educational demands with developmental needs.

Given the distinct characteristics of each country worldwide, this diversity is also reflected in their education systems. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate each system within its context and conditions. Understanding these variations can provide valuable insights into the global educational landscape and highlight best practices. For this reason, this research is distinct in that it offers a comparative analysis of the time allocated to education and instruction across different countries. By identifying the key determinants in the planning process and outlining the current state of education in Türkiye, it is anticipated that the findings will serve as a valuable reference for education policymakers, providing a framework for the development of future strategies.

This research aims to understand the processes of determining compulsory education and teaching periods in different education systems and identify areas of development to align our current academic calendar with international standards. The sub-objectives of this research are to examine the relationship between the time allocated for holidays and teaching, addressing all its positive and negative aspects primarily, and secondarily, to determine the effectiveness of the flexibility provided in the implementation of calendars in meeting regional needs during the educational process.This analysis can be considered as an important step to understand the reasons behind the diversity in education and contribute to the more effective coordination of education policies internationally.

Methodology

Comparative analysis of education systems provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of different policies and practices across countries. Marmor, Freeman, and Okma (2005) described three main goals when looking at policies across

different countries: understanding national systems and policies, discerning the reasons behind their configurations, and drawing insights from other nations for potential application elsewhere. When studying systems and policies in foreign contexts, the focus is on spotting both differences and similarities; however, such assessments usually stay at a descriptive level (Cacace et al., 2013). The research that compares countries aims to grasp how systems, processes, and progressions operate in one set of nations to inform policy learning in others (Cacace, 2013). Typically, the focus is on a common policy challenge across countries, examining how various systems tackle it to pinpoint optimal approaches or the feasibility of transferring policies or practices between nations (Rose, 1991). Comparative countries serve as valuable sources of experience that can be leveraged to devise policies and systemic solutions for domestic policy dilemmas.

This research focuses on national academic calendars within a comparative perspective, comparing Türkiye with other OECD countries. These countries are selected based on their geographic location, population, and centralized systems. It is focused on three specifics: school starting and ending dates, application of midterm breaks, and school hours. These categories can also be classified as compulsory parts of any academic calendar. Examining different academic calendars allows for the comparison of similarities and differences in national educational policies and practices across various countries. Therefore, in this research, document analysis is conducted. The method, known as documentary scanning or document analysis, aims to obtain data by examining existing records and documents (Karasar, 2005). In other words, document analysis can be defined as the review of written materials that contain information about the topic or topics on which the research is focused (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). This methodology includes the scrutiny of many documents, such as books, newspaper articles, academic journal publications, and institutional reports that possesses the potential for qualitative analysis within this framework (Patton, 2015). As emphasized by Bowen (2005), this analysis is not merely about quoting; it is a process of developing knowledge based on the information obtained. In order to ensure validity and reliability in line with the research's objectives and sub-objectives, the study was conducted systematically by reviewing similar studies previously conducted, utilizing verified datasets, and consulting the literature (as cited in Kıral, 2020). This approach ensures confirmability and transferability, key aspects of qualitative research, especially in document analysis, which supports the use of information in other contexts (Arastaman, Öztürk Fidan & Fidan, 2018). This

methodology strengthens the reliability of the study as similar findings will be achieved by different researchers (Başkale, 2016).

In terms of country selection, countries with similar school schedules and education systems to that of Türkiye are considered. In this regard, datasets shared by official sources of the OECD and internationally accepted ISCED classifications are utilized (ISCED 2011). By analyzing data sets prepared for other OECD countries and understanding the differences in academic calendar systems in education, this research also presents an applicable and dynamic education and teaching calendar for Türkiye. Countries with similar population density (such as Germany, France etc.) and geographical conditions (such as Italy, Spain, Greece etc.) to and geographical conditions to Türkiye are selected from OECD countries within the scope of the study (OECD, 2023). It should be noted that the study is limited to countries that stand out especially in international exam rankings. Expert opinions are sought after the completion of the study to avoid bias in the study (Kıral, 2020) and all deficiencies based on the feedback received are addressed.

Findings

This part is organized into two sections. The first section entitled "*Elements of the Academic Calendar*" discusses holidays, annual instructional day counts in formal education, and average daily class hours in formal education. The second section entitled "*Current Situation in Türkiye*" introduces and evaluates the 180-day school calendar in Türkiye.

Elements of the Academic Calendar

It is crucial to establish a successful strategy for planning the academic calendar. The total number of official holidays, the annual number of instructional days in formal education, and the average daily teaching hours are primary considerations in the planning process (Northern Illinois University, 2024; School Europaea, 2024).

Holidays

A common feature highlighted in various definitions of education in literature is its organized nature. Intermittent breaks in educational activities are a natural part of this organized process. In formal education, each country typically plans the total duration of education, including a traditional academic calendar, which usually includes an 8-12 week summer holiday recommended for the entire compulsory full-time general education (Farbman, 2015). Administrative dynamics, regional variations, climate, and geographical conditions can sometimes be decisive factors

in these variations in the calendar (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012; UNICEF, 2022). For instance, in countries such as Türkiye and Italy, where the Mediterranean climate prevails, tourism significantly influences the determination of summer holidays (Ehmer et al., 2008). Conversely, in Northern European countries where winters are harsh, the academic calendar is planned accordingly (Burç & Karakuyu, 2020). Regardless of any changes in dates, it is essential to ensure that the minimum required teaching hours are met by the end of the year to maintain the integrity of education activities nationwide.

It is clear that the variations reflect the distinct educational priorities and socioeconomic contexts of each country. The underlying reason for the variations in the durations of official holidays across different education levels in different countries lies in the grouping of different school levels by countries. Various classifications are encountered to create coherence in this regard. In this study, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), a reference framework used for classifying formal education at international levels, as adopted by UNESCO, is employed. ISCED 0 refers to the pre-primary level, ISCED 1 to the primary level, ISCED 2 to the lower secondary level, and ISCED 3 to the upper secondary level (European Union, 2023a). When considering the ISCED classifications, it is observed that in Belgium's French Community, Denmark, certain German states, France, the Netherlands, certain Swiss cantons, Liechtenstein, and Norway, summer holidays do not exceed eight weeks. In Ireland (ISCED 2 and 3), Greece, Latvia, Malta, Portugal (ISCED 2), Albania, Iceland (ISCED 2-3), and in most regions of Italy, students have summer holidays lasting more than 12 weeks (about 3 months). In some countries, the length of summer holidays varies according to the education level. For example, students in primary education in Lithuania have two weeks more holiday than students in general secondary education. Based on the level, in Portugal, there is a difference of one month, in Lithuania two weeks, and in Cyprus one and a half weeks more holiday for students in primary education compared to those in general secondary education. The opposite situation, where students in general secondary education have longer summer holidays, is observed with a difference of two weeks in Iceland and approximately four weeks in Ireland. When analyzing the data sets retrieved from European Commission [EC], it can be concluded that countries prioritize planning summer holidays to not exceed a duration of 12 weeks (EC, 2023). Statistics organized under the guidance of this data are indicated in Figure 1.

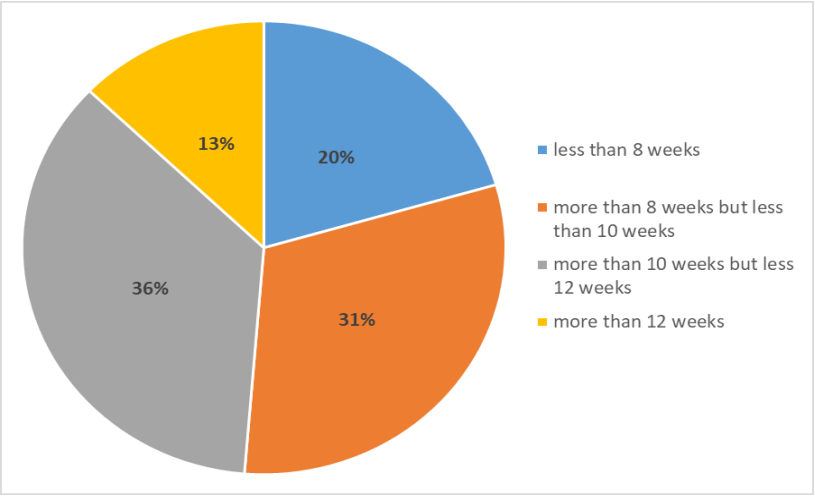

Figure 1. *Average time allocated to summer holidays in countries according to their academic calendars (Adapted from EC, 2023)*

Based on EC's dataset (2023), countries that implement summer holidays lasting less than eight weeks are identified as Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. As seen in the mapping in Figure 2, these countries, predominantly located in Northern Europe, have shorter summer holiday durations compared to other OECD countries, which can be explained by their geographical locations (see Figure 2).

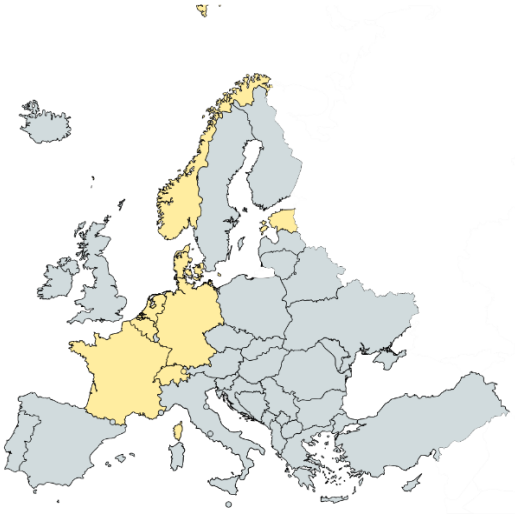

Figure 2. *Countries that implement summer holidays of less than 8 weeks (Adapted from EC, 2023)*

It can be seen that countries identified based on EC's dataset (2023) as having planned summer holidays lasting more than twelve weeks are Ireland (ISCED 2-3), Greece, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Portugal (ISCED 2-3), Albania, and Iceland (ISCED 2-3), except for Ireland, Latvia, and Iceland, all these countries are located in the Mediterranean region, where students are kept in closed school environments for the minimum time during the summer period due to current climatic conditions (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. *Countries that offer summer holidays longer than 12 weeks (Adapted from EC, 2023)*

Based on the information given above, Türkiye, following similar practices, plans a 10–12-week summer holiday, like other countries such as Bulgaria, Cyprus (ISCED 1), Lithuania (ISCED 1), Hungary, Spain, Portugal (ISCED 1), Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland (ISCED 1), Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia. The representation of these countries, marked on the map, is provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4. *Countries with average summer holidays duration similar to Türkiye (Adapted from EC, 2023)*

In summary, the variations in school holiday durations across different countries reflect the diverse educational priorities, socioeconomic contexts, and geographical conditions that influence the planning of academic calendars (EC, 2023). Despite these differences, the key objective remains ensuring that the minimum required teaching and learning hours are met to maintain educational integrity and quality. By understanding these diverse approaches, the worldwide scope of academic calendars can be better appreciated. This understanding might enable us to seek and adapt the best practices to our specific context, fostering an educational environment that balances both local needs and global standards.

Annual Instructional Day Counts in Formal Education

The duration spent within an educational system throughout an academic year is as crucial as the total time students dedicate to their educational levels. The duration of educational activities offered to students throughout an academic year is a significant factor influencing the level of achievement of program objectives and the quality of learning-teaching processes (Farbman, 2015). Therefore, the literature examines the number of instructional days and learning days within a year, as well as the daily and annual actual teaching hours, comparatively from various perspectives. The count of instructional days indicates the number of days students attend school in a country (OECD, 2016). Finland, renowned for its

consistently top-performing schools worldwide, keeps its schools open for 188 days (about 6 months) within the academic year (Helsinki, 2024; Saavedra, 2018). In Ireland, schools have the freedom to commence and conclude the academic year whenever they meet the minimum required instructional days, which are 183 days (about 6 months) for primary schools and 167 days for secondary schools (EC, 2015). Although the minimum instructional day requirements aim to allow families to plan better during widely observed holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and mid-term breaks, they generally provide local authorities adaptability in regulating schedules (Schulferien, 2024; UK Government, 2024; Office Holidays in USA, 2024). In Türkiye, as per the Circular No: 2023/25 dated 07.07.2023 (MoNE, 2023) (see http://meb.ai/UJDiAeQ), the prescribed academic calendar consists of 180 days (about 6 months), with the current schedule outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

The current academic calendar for the year 2024-2025 that consists of 180 days in Türkiye (MoNE, 2023)

	Dates	**N. of working days**
Fall term	*September 9-30:16 days*	*44,5*
	October 1-31: 22,5 days	
	November 1-8: 6 days	
	November 11-15: fall term mid-break: 5 days	
	December 2-31: 22 days	*44*
	January 2-17: 12 days	
	Fall term N. of total working days	*88,5*
January 20-31 midterm break: 10 days		
Spring term	*February 3-28: 20 days*	*40*
	March 3-28: 20 days	
	March 31-april 4: spring term mid-break 5 days	
	April 7-30 18 days	
	April 15-30: 12 days	*51,5*
	May 2-31: 23 days	
	June 3-14: 10 days	
	Spring term N. of total working days	*91,5*
N. of total working days		*180*

As seen in the Table 1, with the recent changes, the academic calendar in Türkiye consists of 88.5 days in the first term and 91.5 days in the second term, totaling 180 days. According to the Ministry of National Education's (MoNE) 2023 Circular, the Ramadan Holiday in 2024 will be from April 9th to 12th, lasting 3.5

days, with 3.5 days falling on working days. The Sacrifice Holiday will be from June 15th to 19th, coinciding with the summer break and lasting 4.5 days. Republic Day on October 29th, National Sovereignty and Children's Day on April 23rd, and Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth, and Sports Day on May 19th are considered working days due to school ceremonies. According to MoNE regulations, the academic year for secondary, preschool, and primary education institutions must consist of at least 180 working days. The year is divided into two terms, with breaks in each term. If the 180th working day falls on a weekday, the academic year is extended to the last working day of the week. The schedule is approved by local authorities based on these dates (MoNE, 2023).

Average Daily Class Hours in Formal Education

The number of daily class hours derived from the total number of teaching hours divided by the number of instructional days in a academic year serves as an important indicator for cross-country comparisons (Levy, 2015). Based on previous information, the mandatory periods for primary and lower secondary education levels per year are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Mandatory periods for primary and lower secondary education levels / year (Adapted from European Commission, 2023)

Country	***Grade***	***Year***	***Total***
Türkiye	*Primary*	*4*	*8*
	Lower secondary	*4*	
Finland	*Primary*	*6*	*9*
	Lower secondary	*3*	
Ireland	*Primary*	*6*	*9*
	Lower secondary	*3*	
Netherlands	*Primary*	*6*	*9*
	Lower secondary	*3*	
Germany	*Primary*	*4*	*9*
	Lower secondary	*5*	
Poland	*Primary*	*4*	*8*
	Lower secondary	*4*	
Australia	*Primary*	*4*	*8*
	Lower secondary	*4*	
Japan	*Primary*	*6*	*9*
	Lower secondary	*3*	

As shown in Table 2, Türkiye, Poland, and Austria have compulsory education periods totaling eight years, with four years each for primary and lower secondary education levels. Looking at the selected other countries in the same table, it is noticeable that, except for Germany, all the given countries above have compulsory education periods at the primary level longer than those at the lower secondary level (EC, 2023).

All data presented in this section have been filtered and interpreted from datasets made publicly accessible, namely by the European Commission (EC, 2023). Guided by this information, the total teaching hours for primary and secondary education levels in OECD countries average 7,634 hours. Reviewing the overall rankings of OECD countries, it is evident that the total hours allocated to education in 14 countries fall below this average. Nearly all these education systems entail full-time compulsory general education lasting eight or nine years at the primary and secondary levels. Exceptionally, Australia with 11 years, and Denmark, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, and Scotland, with 10 years, deviate from this pattern. A closer look at the Australian system reveals that while children are required to start school at six years old, most begin at four and a half years old. The duration of primary education for 6 or 7 years depends on different regions and types of schools in Australia. The transition to secondary school has been mandatory since 2010, requiring students in all states and territories to complete the 10th grade and participate full-time in education, training, or employment until at least age 17. Upon completing secondary school, students can attend vocational or higher education courses and/or start working. In summary, it is mandatory for students in all states and territories to complete the 10th grade and participate full-time in education, training, or employment until at least age 17. (Australian Government, 2017). The total duration of compulsory full-time general education, lasting ten years or more in the six countries listed, ranges between 7,616 hours in Iceland and 11,000 hours in Australia.

In general, countries plan their teaching hours to range between 30 and 60 minutes, necessitating standardization for comparative purposes. Consequently, the European Commission converts each teaching hour to 60 minutes in calculations. Thus, in Türkiye, six lessons, each lasting 40 minutes, are conducted per day at the primary level, equivalent to a total of 240 minutes of instruction. According to OECD calculations, this amounts to four hours of education per day. Therefore, students receiving four hours of education per day complete 720 hours annually based on a 180-day work plan. Accordingly, a total of 2,880 hours of

instruction are provided in four years of compulsory primary education, and 3,371 hours in four years of compulsory secondary education (EC, 2023).

According to the aforementioned data published by EC (2023), in OECD countries, the average compulsory education time is 4,561 hours in total for the primary level, and 3,073 hours in total for the lower secondary level, whereas in Türkiye the total average compulsory education time at the primary and lower secondary levels is 6,251 hours in total. The average education hours/year for the primary and lower secondary levels in OECD countries are 805 and 916, respectively. In Türkiye these figures are 720 and 843, respectively. Based on this data, Türkiye's compulsory education hours are below the OECD average both annually and in total hours. For instance, while countries like Australia and Denmark have compulsory education times exceeding 10,000 hours at both primary and lower secondary levels, others like Hungary, Latvia, and Poland have less than 6,000 hours. The year and hour-based figures of Türkiye's compulsory education hours compared to OECD averages are provided in Table 3.

Table 3

The year and hour-based figures of Türkiye's compulsory education hours (Adapted from European Commission, 2023)

School type		***Türkiye***	***OECD average***
Primary school	*Total compulsory education duration (years)*	*4*	*6*
	Total compulsory education duration (hours)	*2.880*	*4.561*
	Compulsory education duration (hours/year)	*720*	*805*
Lower Secondary school	*Total compulsory education duration (years)*	*4*	*3*
	Total compulsory education duration (hours)	*3.371*	*3.073*
	Compulsory education duration (hours/year)	*843*	*916*

Given the information in Table 3, while the primary level in OECD countries lasts an average of six years, totaling 4,561 hours of education, Türkiye, with its four-year primary education, offers a total of 2,880 hours of instruction. Consequently, Türkiye falls short by 1,681 class hours compared to the OECD average. Additionally, compulsory lower secondary education spans an average of three years across OECD countries, with a total compulsory education time of 3,073 hours. In Türkiye, however, compulsory lower secondary education lasts four years, totaling 3,371 hours annually. When considering both primary and lower secondary

levels as compulsory primary education years, Türkiye's total of 6,251 hours falls below the OECD average of 7,634 hours (EC, 2023).

Current Situation in Türkiye

180-Days-Academic Calendar in Türkiye

The Ministry of National Education, which currently supervises educational activities in 70,383 state schools, is responsible for critical issues such as curriculum development, teacher appointments, and the academic calendar. With 18,710,265 students and 1,168,896 teachers, education is centrally managed across all regions and provinces of Türkiye (MoNE, 2024a), including the academic year discussed in this research report. The updated schedule for the academic year 2024-2025 is provided in Table 4 (MoNE, 2024b).

Table 4

The updated academic calendar for the academic year 2024-2025 in Türkiye (MoNE, 2024b)

Timeline	***Start date***	***End date***	***N. of weeks***
Fall term	*September 9, 2024, Monday*	*January 17, 2025, Friday*	*19*
Fall term break	*November 11, 2024, Monday*	*November 15, 2024, Friday*	*1*
Mid-term break	*January 20, 2025, Monday*	*January 31, 2025, Friday*	*2*
Spring term	*February 3, 2025, Monday*	*June 20, 2025, Friday*	*19*
Spring term break	*March 31, 2025, Monday*	*April 4, 2025, Friday*	*1*
Summer holiday	*June 20, 2025, Monday*	*September 8, 2025, Friday*	*12*

According to Table 4, the current academic calendar consists of 180 days (about 6 months), with each semester comprising 19 weeks and a one-week break every 10 weeks, resulting in two semesters of 18 weeks each. Since the 2019-2020 academic year, the system has incorporated mid-term breaks. As per this arrangement, five-day mid-term breaks are implemented in both the autumn and spring terms. In addition to these mid-term breaks, there is also a two-week semester break once a year.

Evaluation of the Current Academic Calendar of Türkiye

At this part, it is provides a comparative analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the five-day mid-term breaks in the autumn and spring terms as well as summer breaks. Among the studies reviewed, those indicating an increase in overall motivation as a positive outcome of this practice stand out (Doğuş, 2022).

Summer holidays are typically viewed as periods when students engage in play, and gain new experiences, enhancing their fundamental social skills (Stewart et al., 2018). Studies have shown a positive attitude toward these holidays, which could also extend to other breaks (Gökbulut & Eroğlu, 2021). Indeed, there are studies indicating student satisfaction with the current mid-term break system in Türkiye. Teachers, like students, believe that the break is a respite (Kılcan et al., 2023) to create a more positive attitude towards school in students upon returning from holiday and create an efficient education and training environment (Burç & Karakuyu, 2020; Doğuş, 2022; Özcan, 2022). Teachers also perceive mid-term breaks as a chance to recharge, leading to a more positive attitude toward school among both students and them upon their return, thereby creating a more productive learning environment and recognizing holidays as significant opportunities for maintaining overall well-being among teachers. It can be inferred that there is a need for such breaks (Çağlar & Kayalar, 2019). Regardless of the duration, whether it's mid-term, mid-semester, or summer breaks, each holiday provides an opportunity for parents to spend more extended and quality time with their children. By strengthening family bonds, mid-term breaks have been found to enhance family relationships by allowing parents to spend more time with their children (Kaya, 2020). Mid-term, mid-semester or summer season regardless of the length of the process, every holiday is an opportunity for parents to spend longer and quality time with their children (Eker, 2016).

Despite the shortened summer holiday, mid-term breaks allow students to engage in continuous learning through frequent but brief breaks. Consequently, teachers can maintain a more cohesive teaching process without prolonged separation from students (Burç & Karakuyu, 2020). Similarly, mid-term breaks can help teachers' professional and personal development, and build stronger bonds with their colleagues in the school environment (Doğuş, 2022; Kaya, 2020; Sezgin et al., 2020).

Additionally, some countries officially designate religious holidays like Christmas in the first term and Easter in the second term as public holidays, interrupting education (Office Holidays in USA, 2024; Schulferien, 2024; UK Government 2024. As reported by Doğan (2020), 19 countries include mid-term breaks in the first term while 20 countries include them in the second term, suggesting that Türkiye's adoption of this practice aligns with European Union Harmonization Laws (2016).

On the other hand, while mid-term breaks provide opportunities for teachers to benefit from seminars, there is a need for more effective planning to ensure their

productivity. However, teachers generally express satisfaction with the professional development programs offered during mid-term breaks (Atalay & Kepenekci, 2022). Hence, there might be a need to tailor these seminars to meet teachers' needs. In addition, it is also important for teachers to be aware of their share what they have learned with their colleagues as well as what they have learned on their own increases their motivation by improving their positive attitudes towards the profession (Collinson & Fedoruk Cook, 2000).

Another area of concern is absenteeism before mid-term breaks, which can disrupt the continuity of education, particularly for disadvantaged students, leading to learning loss. Mid-term breaks can adversely affect the academic and social development of students in this group (Doğuş, 2022). Moreover, children without alternative caregivers when their parents are working are more negatively affected during mid-term breaks. Students often spend mid-term breaks doing homework, limiting their playtime and rest opportunities (Koşar et al., 2022). Additionally, many students cannot participate adequately in scientific, cultural, artistic, sports, and other activities prepared for them during these breaks (Gökbulut & Eroğlu 2021). Therefore, there is a need for families to temporarily rearrange their lives to support their children's participation in cultural and artistic activities during mid-term breaks. The mid-term break system aims not only to provide holidays but also to support students with scientific, cultural, artistic, and sports activities. Based on the findings of various studies, it is highlighted the positive and negative aspects of the current year academic calendar in Türkiye, suggest that the strengths and opportunities of the mid-term break system outweigh its developmental challenges.

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

The duration of education provided to students plays a significant role as a critical factor in the learning process. Berliner (1990) defines learning level as the time spent on learning, and the time needed for learning as the ratio of the time needed. In this equation, the learning level will increase or decrease in the right proportion depending on the time spent on learning is stated. From this point of view, time is an important factor for increasing the level of learning variable (Gökçe, 2012). Current scientific evidence suggests that (Aronson et al., 1999; Brühwiler & Vogt, 2020; Kidron & Lindsay, 2014; Lockheed & Komenan, 1989) the quality of instruction and the time allocated for learning can positively influence student achievement. Moreover, it has been determined that during this process, students

can compensate for their abilities, motivations, and other deficiencies (Ainley, 2012). Research indicates that while an increase in the time allocated to a specific discipline can enhance student performance by increasing their interest in the subject, it is essential to consider that the relationship between instructional time and student achievement has a complex structure (Burns et al., 2022). This complexity is due to other variables inherent in human nature. Also, there are studies reflecting that long summer breaks affect academic achievement and socioemotional health of students especially from needy families (Peng et al.,2019) and factors such as the quality of school resources, how the additional time is utilized, and the students' backgrounds are crucial in determining the effectiveness of policies that increase instructional time. Therefore, factors such as the quality of school resources, how the additional time is utilized, and the students' backgrounds are crucial in determining the effectiveness of policies that increase instructional time (Barriso-Fernandez, 2022).

Certainly, examples exist demonstrating the possibility of flexibility in educational activities depending on learning needs, school structure, and the surrounding environment (Müller, Mildenberger & Steingruber, 2023). Additionally, it has been shown that increasing instructional time, supported by various measures such as remedial courses, significantly impacts the academic achievements of disadvantaged students. For instance, Lavy (2015) has examined the relationship between PISA test results in different subjects and the time spent on these subjects among students in the same school. The study has observed that differences in student achievement were associated with variations in instructional time, especially for students from low-educated families and children of second-generation immigrants. Similarly, Dobbie and Fryer (2013) have found significant differences in academic achievements among students in New York schools. Battistin and Meroni (2016) have also concluded that increasing instructional time in schools where students with inadequate academic performance predominantly positively influenced the mathematics exam results of disadvantaged students in their research in Italy. Research has also shown that an increase in the amount of instructional time allocated to a particular discipline can improve students' performance by increasing their interest in that subject. It is important that the relationship between instructional time and student achievement can be complex (Patall, Cooper & Allen,2010; Sanz & Tena, 2021). This is due to the fact that there are other variables (such as gender, parents' education and occupation, financial issues etc.) that must be considered in this relationship.

In most OECD countries, primary education lasts less than six years, with an average total compulsory education time of 4,561 hours (OECD, 2023). Türkiye, along with Austria, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia, is one of the countries where primary education lasts four years (OECD, 2023). Due to the four-year duration of primary school, the total compulsory education time allocated to primary education in Türkiye, with 2,880 hours (about 4 months), is lower than the OECD countries' average. However, the duration of lower secondary education in OECD countries averages three years, with a total compulsory education time of 3,073 hours. In Türkiye, lower secondary education lasts four years with a total of 3,371 hours (about 4 and a half months), exceeding the OECD countries' average. However, when comparing the total durations allocated to primary and lower secondary education in terms of years and hours, Türkiye falls below the OECD countries' average. Türkiye thus lags behind the OECD average for the overall length of time students spend in elementary and lower secondary school. (OECD, 2023). In Türkiye, the yearly average required schooling durations are 720 hours for primary and 843 hours for lower secondary education, but in OECD nations, the corresponding figures are 805 hours for primary and 916 hours for lower secondary education.

It is apparent that the concept of formal education duration remains a priority in countries. While Türkiye has fewer education hours than the OECD average, it stands as one of the countries with the longest average summer holiday duration of 90 days, causing a significant interruption in education. As in other countries, several official holidays that further interfere with schooling in addition to this extended summer break. However, the five-day mid-term breaks given in each main term in Türkiye contribute to constructive criticism of the process in pedagogical and academic terms.

Therefore, a general assessment of the topic within Türkiye indicates that while the duration of summer holidays exceeds the OECD average, the number of days/hours per lesson falls below that of OECD countries. Therefore, it is expected that the remedial education programs prepared by the Ministry of National Education will support students' talents and learning motivations more systematically during this process, thus enhancing the quality of education and student achievement. Considering the intensity of the educational curriculum in Türkiye, it is proposed to extend the time spent in school. In implementing this extension, the three-term academic calendars used in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, and Portugal can serve as examples. Research conducted

by Arı (2004) indicates that dividing the academic year into three terms is largely supported by teachers as an alternative model. When planning school time, countries tend to manage this process locally rather than centrally. Countries like Switzerland, Brazil, Belgium, and Germany designate local authorities to differentiate academic calendars. Similarly, in Türkiye, the academic calendar can be customized across different provinces, provided that the maximum number of school days is maintained. Given Türkiye's vast geographical spread, each region has unique topographical and climatic features. These physical conditions inevitably impact the lifestyles and daily habits of the local population.

The differences in school holiday durations among countries reflect varying educational priorities, socioeconomic factors, and geographical conditions that influence the design of academic calendars. Despite these variations, the primary goal is to ensure that the minimum required teaching and learning hours are met, maintaining the integrity and quality of education. By examining these diverse approaches, it can be gained a deeper appreciation for the global landscape of academic calendars. This insight can guide Türkiye in adapting the best practices to his own context, creating an educational environment that strikes a balance between local needs and international standards.

In conlusion, certain flexibilities that can more effectively address regional characteristics and issues could be provided, subject to the approval of governors. In this context, provincial governorships can make local adjustments considering the specific needs arising from the unique characteristics of their regions. For example, a province facing challenges such as transportation or access to school during harsh winter months due to its climate can start the academic year earlier and end it later to compensate for mid-term breaks. Depending on local needs and conditions, governors can adjust school hours and make other arrangements to meet student needs better. To maximize daylight, schools in Eastern and Western provinces can start at different times.

Ethical Statement

The article titled *"Time Spent at School is Never a Waste of Time: A Comparison Study"* is original research; we as the authors of the article have acted according to scientific ethics, principles, and rules at all stages of the research (preparation, literature review, data collection, data analysis, presentation); we have included all of the works used in this study in the references; we have not made any changes to the data while using the data; the research does not contain plagiarism; we state

that we have complied with ethical duties and responsibilities by accepting all the terms and conditions of the Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive of Higher Education Institutions and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Principles; we state to accept all moral and legal consequences in case any situation contrary to our statement regarding our research is detected.

Ethics Committee Approval

We state that the article titled *"Time Spent at School is Never a Waste of Time: A Comparison Study"* is among the studies that do not require ethics committee approval due to the fact that the article does not involve any experimental procedures, interviews with participants, or observational data collection. We hereby confirm that the research has been conducted in full compliance with the principles of academic integrity and ethical research standards.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The article titled *"Time Spent at School is Never a Waste of Time: A Comparison Study"* has no conflict of interest with any person, institution or organization, nor is there any conflict of interest between the authors.

Author Contribution Statement

As the authors of the article titled *"Time Spent at School is Never a Waste of Time: A Comparison Study"*, we state that our contribution rates are as stated below.

1.Idea/Concept (creating an idea or hypothesis for research)

2.Design (Planning the method to reach the research result)

3.Supervision/Consultancy (Taking responsibility for the organization and supervision of the course of the research)

4.Resources (Provision of personnel, participants, venue, financial resources, equipment for the research)

5.Materials (Providing materials for research)

6.Data Collection/Processing (Collection of research data and processing of data)

7.Analysis/Interpretation (Analyzing and interpreting data)

8. Literature Review (Taking responsibility for literature review)

9. Article Writing (Taking responsibility for writing the whole or the main part of the research)

10.Critical Review (Critical review of the research not only in terms of spelling and grammar but also in terms of intellectual and academic content before submitting the research)

Table 5

Author contribution statement

Contributing author	***Contribution type and contribution rate***
Seda Yilmaz	*4-7-8-9 %100, 5-6 %50*
Ayhan Ozturk	*1-2-3-10 %100, 5-6 %50*

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