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Türkiye's Education Policies Towards Syrian Students During the Syria Civil War*

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Abstract

Türkiye, while experiencing migration from neighboring Syria, is aware that meeting only the basic needs of children will be insufficient for refugee children to look to the future with hope without lost generations. Education is an important issue that needs to be emphasized in order to protect refugee children's right to education and to ensure that they can continue their lives as skilled individuals in the future without moving away from the origin of the society. In doing so, efforts to school refugee children are supported and the impact of civil society organizations on the process is observed. This study deals with the educational policies implemented for Syrian students who came to Türkiye as a result of the civil war and the cooperation with international institutions and organizations. This study, which employs a review design, reveals Türkiye's educational policies toward Syrian students during the Syrian civil war and draws attention to the importance of education in the integration of refugees into Türkiye. It has been concluded that there is a lack of integration between Türkiye's migration and education policies, that projects introduced as temporary solutions face significant challenges in becoming permanent, and that non-governmental organizations [NGOs] need to assume a more active role within these processes. Implementing these recommendations would contribute to a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education system capable of addressing the long-term needs of Syrian refugee students and promoting social cohesion within Turkish society.

Keywords: Education policy, migration, international education, public policy.

Introduction

Migration can be defined as a movement that involves individuals or communities relocating from their place of residence to another location, either temporarily or permanently, which in turn affects societies and the political policies of states (Tunç, 2015). Migrations occurring either between countries or within national borders due to social, economic, and political reasons have led to the comparison and coexistence of diverse cultures, often giving rise to various issues. Throughout history, societies have repeatedly been compelled to change their living environments for a variety of reasons. These movements have emerged either as a result of necessity or voluntary choice. In relation to population and migratory movements, different terms and concepts are used, particularly when compulsory or coercive factors are involved. Such terms often lead to confusion in everyday discourse and create challenges in understanding the phenomenon.

In this context, one of the most significant reference sources is the Glossary on Migration published by the International Organization for Migration [IOM]. Although the terminology may cause confusion in daily use, migration or population movement may be internal or cross-border, voluntary or forced, legal or illegal, and temporary or permanent - all of which entail different definitions and frameworks. Migration carried out through legal channels and under legal regulations is considered "regular migration" (IOM, 2009). One of the main reasons it is classified as regular is that it is conducted in accordance with a defined standard and under specified conditions.

In contrast, the term "irregular migrant" refers to individuals who enter a country without authorization or who remain in a country after the expiration of their legal stay. The concept of irregularity is particularly used for those who remain in or enter a country without planning or legal control. One of the most frequently confused terms is that of irregular

migrants and individuals under temporary protection. Especially in cases of mass migration, the condition of temporary protection may be perceived as irregular due to its rapid socio-economic impacts on the host country (IOM, 2009).

Migration is often encountered among segments of society that are, for various reasons, in a minority position. Minorities are defined as social groups that are numerically inferior, lack dominant status, and possess distinct ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics compared to the majority population. Although the minority concept is usually based on social divisions, it also applies to individuals who are politically marginalized and seek to migrate in search of better living conditions due to perceived discrimination. This situation particularly gives rise to what is known as “brain drain,” which refers to the migration of skilled individuals who, due to lack of equal opportunities or limited means for self-fulfillment, choose to migrate to another country to work in qualified professions (IOM, 2009).

In this context, the concept of labour migration also emerges, referring to the movement of individuals who seek to maintain their livelihoods through employment opportunities abroad. Although the terms “refugee” and “asylum seeker” are related to the aforementioned concepts, they often carry negative connotations. However, at their core, they refer to individuals who, due to their identity or the prevailing social conditions in their home country, do not feel safe and seek to live in another country (IOM, 2009).

Throughout history, the geography of Anatolia has become a central hub for numerous population movements, whether by necessity or choice. This region, frequently traversed by individuals and groups, has hosted a wide range of cultures, functioning as a space where various cultural identities meet, interact, and often blend. While such interactions may give rise to the emergence of new or hybrid cultures, they can also generate cultural tensions and competition between communities. One of the most significant manifestations of these tensions is the issue of integration. While host communities often strive to accelerate and deepen the integration of newcomers, migrant groups may resist such processes out of concern that integration could lead to assimilation, seeking instead to preserve their cultural identity and traditions. At this juncture, education emerges as one of the most crucial tools.

In 2011, due to the outbreak of civil war in Syria, over 3.5 million Syrian asylum seekers arrived in Türkiye (Anadolu Agency [AA], 2022). Initially, a temporary crisis management strategy was implemented to meet their basic needs. However, as the conflict persisted with no clear end in sight, efforts began to transform temporary measures into more permanent solutions, with the goal of promoting social cohesion. In addition to socio-cultural integration initiatives, efforts within the field of education have played a significant role in facilitating this process. A large proportion of Syrian refugees in Türkiye are children. In order to prevent the formation of a “lost generation” and to instil a sense of hope for the future, considerable emphasis has been placed on encouraging education and ensuring integration through schooling.

Türkiye has endeavoured to meet the essential needs of Syrian refugees. Yet, once it became apparent that their presence would be long-term, initiatives were launched to integrate them into Turkish society. Among these initiatives were efforts to enable Syrian students to

continue their education in public schools and to learn the Turkish language. Until 2016, Syrian students had the option of attending either Temporary Education Centers [TECs] or public schools. However, after 2016, policies were introduced requiring students to enroll in public schools, eliminating the choice between different educational institutions (Emin, 2016).

Türkiye has implemented a range of educational policies and programs aimed at supporting refugee students. While some of these efforts have achieved their intended outcomes, others have fallen short. Identifying the challenges encountered during the integration of Syrian children into the Turkish education system can help assess the effectiveness of existing programs, highlight areas of weakness, and contribute to the acceleration of the overall process of social integration.

Accordingly, the primary aim of this study is to examine the educational policies implemented for Syrian students who have migrated to Türkiye, as well as the collaborations established with international institutions and organizations. It seeks to emphasize the significance of institutional support throughout the policy implementation process.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] identifies the primary funding areas for refugees and asylum seekers as protection, food, education, health, basic needs, shelter, sanitation, livelihoods, and social cohesion (UNHCR, 2016; 2018; 2020). At the onset of the humanitarian crisis, host countries primarily focused on addressing refugees' basic living needs through context-specific strategies (Özdemir & Aypay, 2022).

In Türkiye, the policy of providing educational services to refugees in state schools and TECs has been implemented through coordinated efforts among the Ministry of National Education [MoNE], United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], UNHCR, donors, and non-governmental organizations (Özdemir & Aypay, 2022). Statistical evidence suggests that Türkiye's educational intervention is distinctive in two respects. First, the number of children under temporary protection requiring school enrolment is exceptionally high. Second, although the integration of Syrian children into state schools began relatively late, the number of enrolments increased rapidly following the implementation of the integration project (Arık Akyüz et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2019).

By the start of the 2020-2021 academic year, more than 768,000 Syrian children in Türkiye were enrolled in compulsory formal education (K12), and over 37,000 students had entered higher education (6.67%; global refugee average= 3%). Enrolment rates among Syrian children tend to decline with increasing age (primary school= 79.5%; middle school= 78.9%; high school= 39.7%). Socioeconomic factors, the transition to distance learning, language barriers, and challenges related to social integration have been reported to influence enrollment, attendance, and school participation among school-aged Syrian children, approximately 35% of whom are out-of-school (UNHCR, 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020).

Historically, for asylum seekers and refugees who are not culturally Turkish, permanent solutions in Türkiye have consisted of either resettlement to a third country or voluntary repatriation. For the Syrian refugee crisis, local integration emerged as a third permanent solution due to the impracticality of the first two options (Dereli, 2018). Following this policy

shift, several measures were implemented to integrate Syrian children into the formal education system. These included the creation of new learning environments, financial support for the operational costs of TECs, coverage of security and maintenance expenses for state schools with high numbers of Syrian students, distribution of educational materials, allocation of personnel, incentive payments for Syrian volunteer educators, teacher training and qualification certification programs, conditional cash transfers for families of enrolled children, and the implementation of remedial and Accelerated Education Programs for out-of-school children (UNICEF, 2019).

By mid-2019, the program, which facilitated school enrolment for approximately 500.000 refugee children, had a positive impact on enrolment and attendance rates, particularly in rural areas (OECD, 2020). Evaluations of the Promoting Inclusive Education for Kids [PIKTES] project indicate that interventions such as language instruction, supplemental education, and remedial training for school leaders positively influenced Syrian students' academic performance, absenteeism, grade repetition, and sense of belonging. Nevertheless, in subsequent years, significant challenges remain, including enrolling a greater number of school-aged refugee children and reaching approximately 400,000 children, most of whom are currently out-of-school at the secondary level (Özdemir & Aypay, 2022).

What distinguishes this study from others is its focus on identifying the educational policies adopted by Türkiye for Syrian students during the Syrian civil war, thereby demonstrating the crucial role of education in the integration of refugees into Turkish society. The study highlights the effectiveness of these educational policies in supporting the integration process and contributes to the broader literature by addressing a timely and increasingly important issue. As the integration of Syrian students into the Turkish education system continues to be a dynamic and evolving subject, examining it from multiple perspectives will help generate practical recommendations and guide future research.

Method

This study examines Türkiye's educational policies toward Syrian students during the Syrian civil war and employs a review-based research design. Review articles synthesize and critically examine studies conducted within a specific field or on a particular topic, organizing them according to the author's analytical perspective. The primary objective of such studies is to compile, analyze, and systematically present the existing body of knowledge on a given subject (Rowley & Slack, 2004).

The decision to adopt a review design is grounded in the nature of the research aim, which necessitates the compilation and analysis of data derived from public institutions' practices, official policy documents, academic studies, and statements issued by authorized officials concerning Türkiye's educational policies for Syrian students. Review studies should extend beyond the mere aggregation of information and instead be structured around fundamental concepts and overarching ideas. Accordingly, rather than addressing each source individually in detail, identifying and presenting the shared themes that connect these sources offers a more effective and coherent analytical framework (Karasar, 2009; Uman, 2011). The study examines the literature on the integration of Syrian students into the Turkish education

system, focusing on both its similarities and differences. Within this framework, the review article is organized into the following sections:

1. The Syrian Migration Crisis and Its Socio-Political Impacts on Türkiye,
2. Educational Barriers Faced by Syrian Refugee Children: A Conceptual Overview, and
3. Türkiye's Educational Policy Response to Syrian Refugee Students.

Ethical Permits of Research:

In this study, all the rules specified to be followed within the scope of "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were complied with. None of the actions specified under the heading "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, have been taken.

Ethics Committee Permission Information:

Since the research was conducted with publicly available documents, it does not require ethics committee approval.

Findings

The Syrian Migration Crisis and Its Socio-Political Impacts on Türkiye

The Syrian civil war has emerged as a major humanitarian crisis in the Middle East, where many people have been injured, lost their lives, or were forced to flee their homeland. Located within the Fertile Crescent, Syria has historically hosted a variety of civilizations. Its strategic location with access to warm seas has offered significant advantages in trade throughout history. Over time, Syria has come under various forms of governance and is home to a rich tapestry of cultures. In the 20th century, as political borders began to be reshaped, Syria's modern history included a departure from Ottoman rule, governance under the French Mandate, the era of the Syrian Republic, the brief union with Egypt under the United Arab Republic, and the rise of Ba'athist rule. Syria's complex political history has been heavily influenced by its diverse ethnic and religious composition.

The majority of Syria's population consists of Arabs, with the remaining population comprising ethnic minorities such as Kurds, Armenians, and Turkmen. In terms of religion, more than half of the population is Muslim, with significant Sunni representation, while the remainder includes Christians, Druze, and a small number of Jews (Dağ, 2013).

The outbreak of internal unrest in Syria eventually escalated into full-scale war, prompting mass displacement as citizens found themselves unable to meet even their most basic needs. This mass migration involved large groups of Syrians fleeing to neighbouring countries and beyond. Among the countries most affected by this influx is Türkiye, due to its geographic proximity and shared border with Syria. The forced movement of people away from their homeland under such circumstances is referred to as mass migration.

The Arab Spring, which reshaped political dynamics across the Middle East, led to regime changes in several countries. However, in Syria, the uprisings that began in 2011 escalated into a protracted civil war. Syrian opposition groups initially demanded reforms,

including the end of income inequality, expansion of individual rights, and the lifting of martial law. The Ba'ath regime rejected these reform demands and responded to mass protests with violent suppression. The subsequent militarization of opposition groups and their clashes with Assad's security forces triggered a civil war that soon drew global attention.

Türkiye, as a direct neighbour to Syria, became heavily affected by the civil war. The conflict brought internal and border security challenges for Türkiye, exposing the country to multiple regional threats due to its strategic position. As the war continued, Syrians began to flee in large numbers, seeking refuge primarily in neighbouring countries, including Türkiye (Kömürcü, 2024).

Türkiye has since experienced a significant influx of Syrian refugees. As of 2018, nearly 4 million Syrians were residing in Türkiye (UNHCR, 2018). This migration has had profound effects on Türkiye's social, cultural, and demographic structure. While efforts have been made to promote social integration and cultural coexistence, Türkiye has faced challenges related to disproportionate population growth in urban centers, and in key sectors such as healthcare, education, housing, and food security.

Moreover, this refugee crisis has had ramifications for Türkiye's foreign relations. The scale of the humanitarian burden has led Türkiye to engage in diplomatic dialogues and cooperative efforts with other countries in the areas of humanitarian aid, foreign policy, and international partnerships. However, the crisis has also had adverse impacts on Türkiye's economy, society, and national security. Initially perceived as temporary guests, the prolonged stay of Syrian refugees and the emergence of social tensions with host communities have been widely reported in the media. Communication problems between Turkish citizens and Syrian asylum seekers have surfaced, highlighting the need for policies aimed at reducing local hostility and preventing future social unrest – including the potential for the formation of refugee-based criminal groups.

Forced displacement, whether voluntary or involuntary, inevitably brings socio-cultural challenges. Despite Türkiye's historical experience with migration, the sudden and massive influx of Syrian refugees placed immense pressure on state institutions and social systems. The ambiguity surrounding the duration of their stay, combined with the complexities of integration, has created a host of challenges. Efforts to build a participatory culture of social cohesion have been undermined in some cases by the emergence of marginalized or violence-prone groups, which has had repercussions for social harmony and institutional stability in Türkiye.

Educational Obstacles Encountered by Syrian Refugee Children: A Predictive Overview

A significant proportion of the Syrian population that has migrated to Türkiye consists of children. The rapid and uneven increase in the student population, brought about by migration, has created serious challenges within the Turkish education system. These include a shortage of teachers, instructional materials, and classroom space, as well as behavioural issues and, most importantly, language barriers among students. According to the UNICEF, as of August 2018, approximately 1,7 million of the 4 million refugees in Türkiye were children.

Additionally, around 360,000 refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq were also residing in the country (UNICEF, 2018).

Language plays a critical role in the integration of refugee students into the Turkish education system. The rapid and effective acquisition of the Turkish language by Syrian students not only improves their academic performance but also facilitates communication with teachers and peers. It contributes to reducing behavioural issues in schools and enhances students' sense of psychological comfort and belonging, which, in turn, supports broader social cohesion beyond the classroom.

From a developmental perspective, adolescents appear to be the group most negatively affected by the migration experience. These students often find themselves torn between their own cultural identity and the dominant culture they are exposed to. Successful integration of adolescent refugees into society requires addressing their linguistic, cultural, and psychological needs. Exposure to war has left many Syrian students with deep psychological scars, often manifesting as introversion, aggression, sudden mood swings, and emotional outbursts. These traumas have contributed to anxiety and depression among refugee children, significantly impairing their learning processes. Economic hardships also hinder access to education for Syrian students. Due to low household incomes and economic insecurity, many children are compelled to enter the workforce at an early age to contribute to their family's livelihood. In the Syrian education system, compulsory education traditionally covered preschool, primary, and lower secondary levels, whereas upper secondary (high school) was not mandatory. Consequently, even though high school education is compulsory in Türkiye, the enrolment rate of Syrian students at the secondary level remains relatively low. Another challenge concerns early marriages, particularly among girls. In some cases, families continue the practice of child marriage even after relocating to Türkiye, which disrupts girls' education. Moreover, the Syrian education system does not follow a co-educational model, whereas Turkish schools are coeducational. This difference may cause resistance among some refugee families, thereby limiting school attendance, especially for girls.

Türkiye's Educational Policy Response to Syrian Refugee Students

Since 2013, the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation has begun integrating Syrian students into education by utilizing the physical facilities of its Quran courses. Initially, the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation employed nearly 100 Syrian teachers on a salaried basis, which laid the groundwork for the establishment of TECs. The primary barrier preventing Syrian students from being directly incorporated into the Turkish education system was the language problem. TECs were initially implemented as a temporary solution to educational challenges and rapidly expanded due to the disproportionate increase in the child population caused by mass migration. Although TECs made significant contributions to education, the indefinite duration of the conflict in Syria and the uncertainty regarding when the displaced population would return to their home country signalled the need to transform these temporary practices into permanent solutions. Additionally, issues such as the qualifications of educators at TECs, allocated budgets, and salaries posed disadvantages for the sustainability and longevity of the process (Özer et al., 2016).

While TECs continued the education of refugee students with support from civil society organizations and the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation, their supervision was gradually transferred under the MoNE, and the centers were progressively closed, with efforts focused on integrating Syrian students into the regular education system. Educators working in TECs were selected under the PICTES Project in 2016 through oral interviews based on Public Personnel Selection Examination [KPSS] scores, from among graduates of university programs such as Turkish Language and Literature Teaching, Guidance and Turkish Teaching, and Classroom Teaching. Selected educators participated in a 128-hour language instruction program at Turkish and Foreign Language Application and Research Center [TÖMER] and obtained language teaching proficiency certificates upon completion. Since 2016, a total of 2,600 teachers have assumed duties (MoNE, 2019). The management of the PICTES project is carried out by coordinators appointed by the Ministry. Supplementary materials for classes at TECs were derived from books used by the Yunus Emre Institute for teaching Turkish to foreigners. Despite distribution across all educational levels, these materials proved insufficient at the primary school level. The language instruction programs for Syrian students highlighted the inadequacy of resources available for teaching Turkish, underscoring the necessity for further development in this area. This recognition influenced improvements in resources during the transition to the PICTES project.

Ercan Demirci, Deputy Undersecretary of MoNE responsible for Syrian children, stated that: “As of 2015, it became evident that Syrian refugees were settling permanently in the country. Therefore, the education curriculum implemented at TECs was inadequate for meeting their needs, and these centers will be gradually closed. Since the curriculum at TECs was predominantly Arabic-based, it is not possible for refugee children to adapt to the Turkish education system or acquire a profession as they grow up. Efforts to integrate Syrian students into the Turkish education system are increasing” (as cited in Dursun, 2017).

Initial efforts in this area involved the gradual closure of TECs and directing refugee children into the Turkish education system through official letters sent to provincial administrations by the MoNE. Important steps towards the schooling of refugees were taken through the PICTES project.

Initially, temporary solutions were developed in education, based on the assumption that refugees would not stay permanently. However, uncertainty regarding the duration of the war and ambiguity about refugees’ return to their countries prompted the search for permanent solutions in education. Once it was understood that refugees would not return to their home countries, Türkiye undertook efforts to support the education of refugee children, particularly Syrians. Education plays a crucial role in refugee children’s adaptation to social life and in mitigating the effects of war trauma. For refugee children, education holds significant importance in life, enabling them to look to the future with hope, overcome the impact of traumatic experiences, and develop social relationships to create new environments for themselves (Özdemir, 2017). The initial activities included the gradual closure of TECs and systematic redirection of refugee children to public schools by MoNE through official communications with provincial authorities. The PICTES project marked significant progress in the schooling of refugees.

The primary objective of the PICTES Project has been to integrate Syrian refugee children under temporary protection, as well as other foreign nationals' children, into the Turkish education system. In 2016, MoNE launched the project for a two-year period in 29 cities with a high concentration of foreign students (Milliyet, 2021). PICTES is a joint initiative between the MoNE and the European Union [EU], funded by EU financial resources to integrate foreign children into the Turkish education system. Since 2016, the project has been financed through the The Facility for Refugees in Turkey [FRIT] financial aid program, with a total budget of 3 billion euros, contributed by both the EU and its members, and continues to receive funding. During the project's implementation, civil society organizations such as UNICEF, Disaster and Emergency Management Authority [AFAD], and the Turkish Red Crescent have also supported Syrian refugee children's education. Economic hardships have been mitigated by non-governmental organizations [NGO] through the provision of stationery, clothing, and other necessities. Aid has been coordinated by AFAD and distributed to Syrian students (Delegation of the European Union to Türkiye [EEAS], 2020). Furthermore, to promote social integration and help children overcome trauma, NGOs organize trips and workshops bringing Syrian refugee children together with Turkish children (Hayata Destek Association, 2016). By the 2021-2022 academic year, modifications were made in the implementation of the PICTES Project. A new phase known as the "integration class" practice was initiated and continues to be implemented.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the integration of Syrians into the Turkish education system, the perception among Syrian parents that education was not highly prioritized in their home country has influenced their attitudes towards education in Türkiye. Positive approaches by teachers towards Syrian parents and attention to cultural differences remain effective in fostering a harmonious atmosphere. When Syrian parents feel included, they become more supportive of schooling and education. However, coeducation in the Turkish education system poses challenges, particularly in relation to sending female students to school and the early marriage of young girls, which hinder girls' educational participation. Teachers' direct communication with Syrian parents about the integral role of education in life has been effective in alleviating prejudices. Support provided to ensure students' school attendance and meet their needs has contributed to increased enrolment rates.

Including Syrian parents and students in social activities facilitates social integration, although language barriers remain a significant obstacle. To enhance cooperation between parents and teachers, support should be provided to address language challenges, including directing parents to Turkish language courses. Peer support refers to children of the same age group communicating and helping one another. Social learning is accelerated through peer interaction, with play being the most effective means of communication among children. Friendships established among peers are critical for social adaptation and positively influence children's outlook on the future.

The phenomenon of migration should be examined differently for children. Changes in physical and social environments, including relocation from a familiar homeland, disrupt established routines and necessitate relearning. Adolescents and children are among the most

affected during migration due to the psychological and social adjustments they must make. Enrolling children in school and directing them towards education helps mitigate the traumatic effects of war. Peer education can be utilized in integrating Syrian students into the Turkish curriculum. Respecting cultural differences and promoting coexistence within classroom and school settings contribute to this process. Bringing children of different cultures and languages together in the same classes fosters mutual respect and tolerance. Harmonization activities between Syrian and Turkish students should be planned; however, language remains a major barrier. While such activities aim to enhance peer relationships, factors such as culture and ethnicity may complicate integration. Addressing the language barrier is essential to ensuring effective peer relations. Language difficulties have been identified as the most significant obstacle to Syrian students' integration into education.

An amendment was made in 2014 to the Foreigners and International Protection Law, which includes the Temporary Protection Regulation. Refugees were registered through temporary identity documents, enabling Syrian children to attend MoNE-affiliated educational institutions and TECs. Syrian students of university age were allowed to benefit from higher education as special students under the Council of Higher Education [CoHE]. Foreign students gained the right to education in Turkish institutions through temporary population cards and foreign identification numbers. Refugee students face challenges in adapting to education due to language barriers and economic inadequacies. To address language problems, the PICTES project, a partnership between the EU and MoNE, provided Turkish language instruction support. Turkish language teachers working on the project receive salaries funded by the EU. Economic deficiencies have been alleviated with NGO support, providing stationery, clothing, and other necessities. Aid is coordinated by AFAD and distributed to Syrian students.

NGOs across many provinces in Türkiye distribute educational materials, volunteer to teach Turkish, and support children's education through established centers. Furthermore, to promote social integration and help children overcome trauma, NGOs organize excursions and workshops bringing Syrian refugee children together with Turkish children. Education is one of the fundamental rights of children, and all children worldwide should have access to this right. Children who experience forced migration due to war should not be deprived of education but rather integrated into educational systems. This responsibility lies with both states and NGOs. Ensuring that children can exercise their fundamental rights is a collective responsibility of humanity.

This study aims to evaluate the educational policies implemented for Syrian students who migrated to Türkiye following the civil war in Syria in 2011. A literature review was conducted to examine the efforts made for the integration of Syrian students into the Turkish education system. The migration movement from Syria to Türkiye and the resulting challenges experienced within the Turkish education system, as well as the educational policies applied to Syrian students, were addressed. As a result of the examination, the following findings were identified:

-Structural deficiencies in Türkiye's migration policies and educational infrastructure were observed.

-There were shortcomings in the projects aimed at transforming temporary solutions in the field of education and migration into permanent ones.

-Although insufficient attention was given to NGOs, their contributions in managing the migration process became apparent through their activities over time.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several policy and practice-oriented recommendations are proposed to enhance the educational integration of Syrian students into the Turkish education system.

First, structural deficiencies in migration and education policies should be addressed through the development of long-term, sustainable frameworks rather than temporary or emergency-based solutions. Educational policies targeting refugee students need to be institutionalized and integrated into the national education system, with clear coordination mechanisms among the MoNE, local administrations, and relevant stakeholders.

Second, teacher training programs should be strengthened to improve educators' intercultural competencies. Pre-service and in-service training should include modules on multicultural education, trauma-informed pedagogy, and inclusive classroom practices.

Third, language barriers—identified as the most significant obstacle to educational integration—must be systematically addressed. Expanding Turkish language support programs, such as preparatory language classes and supplementary courses, is critical. In addition, language support should extend to parents through free or accessible Turkish language courses, thereby strengthening parent–school communication and increasing parental involvement in the educational process.

Fourth, parental participation should be actively encouraged and supported. Integration efforts should not focus solely on children but also include families, particularly mothers, whose engagement has a direct impact on students' educational continuity. Schools should implement outreach programs that foster trust and cooperation between teachers and Syrian parents, emphasizing the long-term value of education, especially for girls.

Fifth, gender-sensitive policies are necessary to address barriers to girls' education, including early marriage and low school attendance. Targeted awareness programs, family counseling, and community-based interventions should be developed to promote girls' access to education and prevent early school dropout.

Sixth, peer-based learning and social integration activities should be expanded within schools. Mixed-group classroom activities, play-based learning, and extracurricular programs that bring Syrian and Turkish students together can foster mutual respect, reduce prejudice, and enhance social cohesion. However, such initiatives must be accompanied by language support to ensure effective communication and meaningful interaction.

Seventh, the role of non-governmental organizations should be formally recognized and strengthened through institutional partnerships. NGOs have demonstrated significant capacity in providing material support, psychosocial assistance, and educational services.

Establishing structured collaboration mechanisms between state institutions and NGOs would improve efficiency and sustainability in addressing refugee students' needs.

Finally, given the low likelihood of large-scale return migration, integration policies should be designed within the framework of universal human rights and the best interests of the child. Differentiated integration programs should be developed for children who migrated to Türkiye and those born in the country, taking into account their distinct socialization processes and educational needs.

Implementing these recommendations would contribute to a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education system capable of addressing the long-term needs of Syrian refugee students and promoting social cohesion within Turkish society. As a limitation of the study, it should be noted that it does not address all socio-economic challenges faced by Syrian asylum seekers; rather, the scope has been restricted to issues specifically related to the field of education.

According to official statistics, approximately 4 million Syrian refugees reside in Türkiye, with a significant portion being children. Additionally, children born during this period have now reached school age, resulting in societal integration challenges. At this point, it is more appropriate to implement different integration and adaptation programs for those who migrated and those born in Türkiye.

Due to social structures and cultural habits, integrating only the children into the education system is insufficient; the involvement and integration of families, especially mothers, into the process are essential.

Despite ongoing debates about children who came to Türkiye and those born there, considering their return to Syria is unlikely, integration programs should be implemented within the framework of universal human rights.

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There is no conflict of interest among the individuals involved in the research.

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Suriye İç Savaşı Esnasında Türkiye'nin Suriyeli Öğrencilere Yönelik Eğitim Politikaları



Özet

Türkiye, komşusu Suriye'den yaşanan göç sürecini yaşarken, sadece çocukların temel ihtiyaçlarının karşılanmasının, mülteci çocukların kayıp nesiller olarak yaşamadan geleceğe umutla bakabilmeleri için yeterli olmayacağını farkındadır. Mülteci çocukların eğitim hakkını korumak ve onların gelecekte toplumun kökeninden uzaklaşmadan becerikli bireyler olarak yaşamlarına devam edebilmelerini sağlamak için eğitimin vurgulanması gereken önemli bir konu olduğu görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda, mülteci çocukların okullaşma çabaları desteklenmekte ve sürece sivil toplum kuruluşlarının etkisi gözlemlenmektedir. Bu çalışma, Suriye iç savaşı sonucunda Türkiye'ye gelen Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik uygulanan eğitim politikaları ile uluslararası kurum ve kuruluşlarla yürütülen iş birliklerini ele almaktadır. Derleme tasarımına sahip olan bu çalışma, Suriye iç savaşı sırasında Türkiye'nin Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik eğitim politikalarını ortaya koyarak mültecilerin Türkiye'ye entegrasyonunda eğitimin önemine dikkat çekmektedir. Araştırma sonucunda, Türkiye'nin göç ve eğitim politikaları arasında entegrasyon eksikliği olduğu, geçici çözümler olarak sunulan projelerin kalıcı hâle gelmesinin önemli zorluklarla karşılaştığı ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarının [STK] bu süreçlerde daha aktif bir rol üstlenmesi gerektiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu önerilerin uygulanması, Suriyeli mülteci öğrencilerin uzun vadeli ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabilecek ve Türk toplumunda sosyal uyumu destekleyecek, daha kapsayıcı, adil ve sürdürülebilir bir eğitim sistemine katkı sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitim politikası, göç, uluslararası eğitim, kamu politikası.

Giriş

Türkiye'ye 2011 yılında Suriye'de yaşanan iç savaştan dolayı gelen yaklaşık olarak 3,5 milyondan fazla Suriyeli sığınmacının (Anadolu Ajansı [AA], 2022) hayati gereksinimlerini karşılayarak geçici süreli bir kriz yönetimi yapılmıştır. Savaşın süresinin belirsizliği ile sığınmacılar için geçici çözüm yollarını kalıcı hale getirmek ve toplumsal uyumu ağırlamak için çalışmalar başlamıştır. Farklı kültürlerin bir arada yaşaması için sosyokültürel uyum çalışmalarının yanında eğitim alanında yapılan çalışmalarla desteklemek uyum süresini kolaylaştırmaktadır. Türkiye'ye sığınan mültecilerin büyük bir kısmını çocuk sığınmacılar oluşturmaktadır. Suriyeli çocukların kayıp nesiller olmasının önüne geçmek ve geleceğe umutla bakmaları açısından eğitime teşvik ve entegrasyon çalışmalarına önem verilmiştir. Göçle beraber gelen Suriyelilerin hayati ihtiyaçlarını Türkiye karşılamaya çalışmıştır. Fakat Suriyelilerin kalıcı oldukları anlaşılınca onları toplumsal hayata entegre etme yönünde girişimlerde bulunulmuştur (Emin, 2016). Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitimlerine devlet okullarında devam etmeleri ve Türk dilini öğrenmeleri yönünde çalışmalar yapılmıştır. 2016 yılına kadar Suriyeli öğrenciler geçici eğitim merkezi ve devlet okullarından eğitim alacakları yerleri kendi istekleri yönünde seçerken 2016'dan itibaren seçim olmadan devlet okullarına devam etmeleri için uygulamalar yapılmıştır (Emin, 2016). Mülteci öğrenciler için Türkiye birçok alanda çalışmalarla beraber politikalar yürütmektedir. Sığınmacı öğrencilerin okul hayatının devamı ve eğitiminin vazgeçilmez olmasına rağmen bazı çalışmalar hedefine ulaşırken bazıları bu

konuda yetersiz kalmıştır. Suriyeli çocukların eğitim sürecine entegrasyon sürecinde ortaya çıkabilecek sorunların belirlenmesinde çalışmaların hedeflerine ulaşmasında, çalışmalardaki eksikliklerin belirlenmesinde ve toplumsal uyum sürecinin hızlı bir şekilde gerçekleşmesinde tespitler yapmak etkili olacaktır.

Bu doğrultuda çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'ye göç eden Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik uygulanan eğitim politikaları ile uluslararası kurum ve kuruluşlarla yapılan iş birliklerini tespit edip, eğitim politikalarının uygulama süreci boyunca süreçte kurum ve kuruluşların desteklerinin önemine vurgu yapmaktır.

Yöntem

Suriye iç savaşı esnasında Türkiye'nin Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik uyguladığı eğitim politikalarına odaklanan bu çalışma, bir derleme tasarımıdır. Derleme makaleleri, belli bir konu ya da alanda yürütülen çalışmaları, yazarın kendi araştırma perspektifi doğrultusunda düzenleyip ele alan çalışmalardır. Bu tür makalelerin temel amacı, belirli bir konuda mevcut bilgileri derlemek, analiz etmek ve sunmaktır (Rowley & Slack, 2004). Araştırmanın derleme tasarımı ile yürütülmesinin nedeni Türkiye'nin Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik eğitim politikalarının incelenmesi amacıyla kamu kurumlarının yapmış olduğu uygulamalar, resmî politika evrakları, literatürdeki çalışmalar ve ilgili hususta yetkililerin yapmış oldukları açıklamalardaki bilgilerin derlenmiş, analiz edilmiş ve sunulmuş olmasıdır. Derleme türündeki çalışmalar, tüm bilgileri topluca sunmanın ötesine geçerek temel kavramlar ve fikirler doğrultusunda organize edilmelidir. Bu nedenle kaynakların ayrıntılı biçimde tek tek ele alınması yerine, onları birleştiren ortak temaların ortaya konması daha etkili bir yaklaşım sağlar (Karasar, 2009; Uman, 2011). Araştırmada Suriyeli öğrencilerin Türk eğitim sistemine entegrasyonu sürecine ilişkin literatür benzer ve farklı yönleri açısından ele alınmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, derleme niteliğindeki makale şu bölümlerde sunulmaktadır:

1. Suriye Göç Krizi ve Türkiye Üzerindeki Sosyo-Politik Etkileri,
2. Suriyeli Mülteci Çocukların Karşılaştığı Eğitim Engelleri: Öngörülen Bir Genel Bakış,
3. Suriyeli Mülteci Öğrencilere Yönelik Türkiye'nin Eğitim Politikası Tepkisi

Araştırmanın Etik İzinleri:

Bu çalışmada "Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi" kapsamında uyulması gerektiği belirtilen tüm kurallara uyulmuştur. Yönergenin ikinci bölümü olan "Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine Aykırı Eylemler" başlığı altında belirtilen eylemlerin hiçbiri gerçekleştirilmemiştir.

Etik Kurul İzin Bilgileri:

Araştırma, kamuya açık dokümanlarla gerçekleştirildiği için etik kurul onayı gerektirmemektedir.

Bulgular

İstemli veya istemsiz olsun, zorunlu yer değiştirme kaçınılmaz olarak sosyokültürel zorlukları beraberinde getirir. Türkiye'nin göçle ilgili tarihsel deneyimine rağmen, Suriyeli mültecilerin ani ve kitlesel akını devlet kurumları ve sosyal sistemler üzerinde büyük bir baskı oluşturmuştur. Kalış sürelerinin belirsizliği, entegrasyonun karmaşıklığıyla birleşince bir dizi zorluk yaratmıştır. Sosyal uyumun katılımcı bir kültürünü oluşturma çabaları, bazı durumlarda marjinalleştirilmiş veya şiddete eğilimli grupların ortaya çıkmasıyla baltalanmış ve bu da Türkiye'de sosyal uyum ve kurumsal istikrar üzerinde sonuçlar doğurmuştur.

Suriye eğitim sisteminde zorunlu eğitim geleneksel olarak okul öncesi, ilkökul ve ortaokul seviyelerini kapsarken, lise (üst ortaöğretim) zorunlu değildi. Sonuç olarak, Türkiye'de lise eğitimi zorunlu olmasına rağmen, Suriyeli öğrencilerin ortaöğretim seviyesindeki kayıt oranı nispeten düşük kalmaktadır. Bir diğer sorun ise, özellikle kız çocukları arasında erken evliliklerdir. Bazı durumlarda, aileler Türkiye'ye taşındıktan sonra bile çocuk evliliği uygulamasına devam ederek kız çocuklarının eğitimini aksatmaktadır. Dahası, Suriye eğitim sistemi karma eğitim modelini izlemezken, Türk okulları karma eğitim vermektedir. Bu farklılık, bazı mülteci aileleri arasında direnişe neden olarak, özellikle kız çocukları için okula devamı sınırlayabilir.

Türk Eğitim Sisteminde Çocuklar İçin Kapsayıcı Eğitimin Desteklenmesi Projesi [PIKTES], yabancı çocukları Türk eğitim sistemine entegre etmek amacıyla AB mali kaynaklarıyla finanse edilen, Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı ve Avrupa Birliği [AB] arasında ortak bir girişimdir. 2016 yılından bu yana hem AB hem de üye ülkeleri tarafından katkıda bulunulan toplam 3 milyar avroluk bütçeyle FRIT mali yardım programı aracılığıyla finanse edilen proje, fon almaya devam etmektedir. Projenin uygulanması sırasında, UNICEF, Afet ve Acil Durum Yönetimi Kurumu [AFAD] ve Türk Kızılayı gibi sivil toplum kuruluşları da Suriyeli mülteci çocukların eğitimini desteklemiştir. Sivil toplum kuruluşları [STK] tarafından kırtasiye, giyim ve diğer temel ihtiyaçların sağlanması yoluyla ekonomik zorluklar hafifletilmiştir. Yardım, AFAD tarafından koordine edilmiş ve Suriyeli öğrencilere dağıtılmıştır (Avrupa Birliği Türkiye Delegasyonu [EEAS], 2020). Ayrıca, sosyal entegrasyonu teşvik etmek ve çocukların travmayı atlatmalarına yardımcı olmak amacıyla, STK'lar Suriyeli mülteci çocukları Türk çocuklarla bir araya getiren geziler ve atölye çalışmaları düzenlemektedir (Hayata Destek Derneği, 2016). 2021-2022 akademik yılına gelindiğinde, PIKTES Projesi'nin uygulanmasında değişiklikler yapılmıştır. "Entegrasyon sınıfı" uygulaması olarak bilinen yeni bir aşama başlatılmış ve uygulanmaya devam etmektedir.

Tartışma ve Sonuç

Suriyelilerin Türk eğitim sistemine entegrasyonunda, Suriyeli ebeveynler arasında, kendi ülkelerinde eğitimin öncelikli bir konu olarak görülmediği algısı, Türkiye'de eğitime yönelik tutumlarını etkilemiştir. Öğretmenlerin Suriyeli ebeveynlere yönelik olumlu yaklaşımları ve kültürel farklılıklara gösterilen özen, uyumlu bir ortamın oluşmasında etkili olmaya devam etmektedir. Suriyeli ebeveynler kendilerini sürece dahil hissedince, okul ve eğitim konusunda daha destekleyici hale gelmektedirler. Ancak, Türk eğitim sisteminde karma eğitimin varlığı, özellikle kız öğrencilerin okula gönderilmesi ve genç kızların erken evlilikleri

gibi konularda zorluklar yaratmakta ve kızların eğitimine katılımını sınırlamaktadır. Öğretmenlerin, eğitimin yaşam içindeki bütünsel rolünü Suriyeli ebeveynlere doğrudan aktarması, ön yargıların giderilmesinde etkili olmuştur. Öğrencilerin okula devam etmelerini sağlamak ve ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak için sunulan destekler, kayıt oranlarının artmasına katkıda bulunmuştur.

Suriyeli ebeveynler ve öğrencilerin sosyal etkinliklere dahil edilmesi, sosyal entegrasyonu kolaylaştırmakta olsa da dil engelleri hâlen önemli bir engel olarak varlığını sürdürmektedir. Ebeveynler ve öğretmenler arasındaki iş birliğini artırmak için, dil sorunlarının giderilmesine yönelik destek sağlanmalı ve ebeveynler Türkçe kurslarına yönlendirilmelidir. Akran desteği, aynı yaş grubundaki çocukların birbirleriyle iletişim kurması ve yardım etmesi anlamına gelmektedir. Sosyal öğrenme, akran etkileşimiyle hızlanmakta ve oyun, çocuklar arasında en etkili iletişim aracı olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Akranlar arasında kurulan arkadaşlıklar, sosyal uyum için kritik olup, çocukların geleceğe bakışını olumlu yönde etkilemektedir.

Göç olgusu, çocuklar açısından farklı bir şekilde ele alınmalıdır. Tanıdık bir vatanın terk edilmesi gibi fiziksel ve sosyal çevredeki değişiklikler, oturmuş rutinleri bozmakta ve yeniden öğrenmeyi gerektirmektedir. Ergenler ve çocuklar, göç sırasında psikolojik ve sosyal uyum süreçleri nedeniyle en fazla etkilenen gruplar arasında yer almaktadır. Çocukların okula kaydedilmesi ve eğitime yönlendirilmesi, savaşın yol açtığı travmatik etkilerin hafifletilmesine yardımcı olmaktadır. Suriyeli öğrencilerin Türk müfredatına entegrasyonunda akran eğitimi kullanılabilir. Kültürel farklılıklara saygı göstermek ve sınıf ile okul ortamlarında birlikte yaşamı teşvik etmek, bu sürece katkı sağlamaktadır. Farklı kültür ve dillerden çocukların aynı sınıflarda bir araya getirilmesi, karşılıklı saygı ve hoşgörüyü geliştirmektedir. Suriyeli ve Türk öğrenciler arasında uyum etkinlikleri planlanmalı, ancak dil hâlen büyük bir engel teşkil etmektedir. Bu tür etkinlikler, akran ilişkilerini güçlendirmeyi hedeflese de kültür ve etnik farklılıklar entegrasyonu zorlaştırabilir. Dil engelini aşılması, etkili akran ilişkilerinin sağlanması açısından hayati öneme sahiptir. Dil sorunları, Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitim sistemine entegrasyonunda en önemli engel olarak belirlenmiştir.

2014 yılında, Geçici Koruma Yönetmeliği'ni içeren Yabancılar ve Uluslararası Koruma Kanunu'nda bir değişiklik yapılmıştır. Mülteciler geçici kimlik belgeleriyle kayıt altına alınmış ve Suriyeli çocukların Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı'na [MEB] bağlı eğitim kurumları ve Temel Eğitim Merkezlerine [TEM] devam etmeleri sağlanmıştır. Üniversite çağındaki Suriyeli öğrenciler, Yükseköğretim Kurulu [YÖK] kapsamında özel öğrenci statüsüyle yükseköğretimden yararlanabilmiştir. Yabancı öğrenciler, geçici nüfus cüzdanları ve yabancı kimlik numaraları aracılığıyla Türk kurumlarında eğitim hakkı kazanmıştır. Mülteci öğrenciler, dil engelleri ve ekonomik yetersizlikler nedeniyle eğitime uyum sağlamakta zorluk yaşamaktadır. Dil sorunlarını çözmek amacıyla Avrupa Birliği [AB] ve MEB iş birliğiyle yürütülen PIKTES projesi, Türkçe dil eğitimi desteği sağlamıştır. Projede görev yapan Türkçe öğretmenlerinin maaşları AB tarafından finanse edilmektedir. Sivil toplum kuruluşlarının [STK] destekleri ile kırtasiye, giysi ve diğer ihtiyaçların karşılanması ekonomik yetersizlikleri hafifletmiştir. Yardımlar AFAD tarafından koordine edilip Suriyeli öğrencilere dağıtılmaktadır.

Türkiye'nin birçok ilinde STK'ler eğitim materyalleri dağıtmakta, Türkçe öğretmek için gönüllü olarak görev almakta ve çocukların eğitimine merkezleri aracılığıyla destek sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca, sosyal entegrasyonu teşvik etmek ve çocukların travmayı atlatmalarına yardımcı olmak amacıyla STK'ler, Suriyeli mülteci çocukları Türk çocuklarıyla bir araya getiren geziler ve atölye çalışmaları düzenlemektedir. Eğitim, çocukların temel haklarından biri olup, dünyadaki tüm çocukların bu haktan yararlanabilmesi gerekmektedir. Savaş nedeniyle zorunlu göç yaşayan çocuklar eğitim hakkından mahrum bırakılmamalı, aksine eğitim sistemlerine entegre edilmelidir. Bu sorumluluk hem devletlere hem de STK'lere düşmektedir. Çocukların temel haklarını kullanabilmelerini sağlamak, insanlığın ortak sorumluluğudur.

Bu çalışma, 2011 yılında Suriye'deki iç savaş sonucunda Türkiye'ye göç eden Suriyeli öğrencilere yönelik uygulanan eğitim politikalarını değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla kamu kurumlarının yapmış olduğu uygulamalar, resmî politika evrakları, literatürdeki çalışmalar ve ilgili hususta yetkililerin yapmış oldukları açıklamalardaki bilgiler incelenmiştir. Suriye'den Türkiye'ye göç hareketi ve bunun Türk eğitim sistemi içinde yarattığı zorluklar ile Suriyeli öğrencilere uygulanan eğitim politikaları ele alınmıştır. Yapılan inceleme sonucunda aşağıdaki bulgular tespit edilmiştir:

-Türkiye'nin göç politikaları ve eğitim altyapısında yapısal eksiklikler gözlemlenmiştir.

-Eğitim ve göç alanında geçici çözümleri kalıcı hâle getirmeye yönelik projelerde eksiklikler bulunmaktadır.

-STK'lere yeterince önem verilmemesine rağmen, göç sürecinin yönetimindeki katkıları zaman içinde gerçekleştirdikleri faaliyetlerle belirgin hale gelmiştir.

Öneriler

Resmî istatistiklere göre, Türkiye'de yaklaşık 4 milyon Suriyeli mülteci yaşamaktadır ve bunların önemli bir kısmı çocuklardan oluşmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu dönemde doğan çocuklar artık okul çağına gelmiş olup, toplumsal entegrasyon sorunları ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu noktada, göç eden çocuklar ile Türkiye'de doğan çocuklar için farklı entegrasyon ve uyum programları uygulamak daha uygun olacaktır.

Sosyal yapı ve kültürel alışkanlıklar nedeniyle yalnızca çocukları eğitim sistemine dahil etmek yetersizdir; ailelerin, özellikle annelerin sürece katılımı ve entegrasyonu gereklidir.

Türkiye'ye gelen çocuklar ve burada doğan çocuklar konusunda devam eden tartışmalara rağmen, Suriye'ye geri dönmelerinin olası olmadığı göz önünde bulundurularak, entegrasyon programları evrensel insan hakları çerçevesinde uygulanmalıdır.