

**LACK OF SUFFICIENT PLANNING AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE TO COMPULSORY EDUCATION  
IN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN TURKEY**

*Süleyman DOĞAN\**

**İLKÖĞRETİM'DE ZORUNLU EĞİTİME GEÇİŞTE  
PLANLAMA VE MEKAN YETERSİZLİĞİ**

**ÖZET**

Son on yıl içinde Türkiye'de ilk öğretimin kalitesini artırmak için çeşitli girişimlerde bulunulmuştur. Farklı yeni politikalar hayata geçirilmiştir. Bununla birlikte bu makalede eğitimin kalitesini olumsuz yönde etkileyen yapısal eksikliklerden kaynaklanan problemler kadar planlama eksikliklerini ortaya koyacağım. Bu problemi iki örnekle açıklayacağım:

Birinci olarak; zorunlu eğitimin 1997'de 5 yıldan 8 yıla geçilmesi bazı problemleri ortaya çıkardı. Fazladan üç yıl için yeterli planlama ve yeni binalar yoktu. Sınıflardaki öğrenci sayısı artarken öğretmen başına düşen öğrenci sayısı fazlaştı. Bu doğal olarak eğitimde kalitenin düşmesine sebep oldu.

İkinci olarak; problem kırsal kesimde yaşandı. Öncelikle öğrencilerin az olduğu köylerde okulların düzenle bir şekilde işletilmesi zorlaştı. Böylece devlet bazı okulları kapatmayı ve merkezi yerlere öğrencileri taşımayı kararlaştırdı. Oluşturulan bu merkezi okullara öğrencilerin taşınması imkanı sağlandı. Bununla birlikte bu yeni sistem de bazı problemlere neden oldu. Bu merkezler ulaşım özellikle kış şartlarında çok zordu. Öğrenci aileler çocuklarının güvenliği ve zor durumlarıyla ilgili çok endişelendiler ve gönderip göndermemekte tereddüt etkiler.

Sonuç olarak; yetersiz planlama ve yapısal eksiklikler eğitimi olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir. Bu

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durumlar öğrencilerin daha iyi gelecek endişesi taşımaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Zorunlu eğitim, ilköğretim, öğretmen, öğrenci, plan.

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**ABSTRACT**

In the last decade there have been several attempts in Turkey to improve the quality of the primary education. Various new policies have been introduced and put into practice. However, as I will discuss in my paper, due to lack of planning as well as insufficient infrastructure there arise some significant problems which influence the quality of the education negatively. I will examine two such problems:

First of all, extension of the compulsory education from 5 years to 8 years in 1997 has led to some difficulties. Since initially there was not sufficient planning and new buildings, existing school buildings have not been adequate for this extra 3 years of education. The classrooms became overcrowded and the number of students per teacher has increased. This naturally led to a sharp decrease in the quality of the education.

A second problem is encountered in the countryside. Previously some small villages had a low number of students and therefore it was not feasible to run schools there. Thus, the state decided to close down some of them and assign some schools in more central regions. Students from these small villages have been provided transportation. However, this new system too has led to some problems. In some cases, as the new schools were too far away, the students had to struggle to reach their schools and faced great problems especially in harsh winter conditions. Inevitably, parents often worried about their children's safety and well-being and sometimes became reluctant to send them to the school.

In brief, insufficient planning and lack of infrastructure brings about adverse consequences for the

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education. These issues should be addressed for a better future of the children.

**Key Words:** Compulsory education, primary school, education, teacher, student, planing.

### **Education in Turkey**

The aim of the education, in its broadest sense, is to bring up happy individuals who had the change to be prepared for the life and have an idea about the past as a whole. In a sense, the history of man begins with his educational process. This critical process gains importance when combined with physical space. Civilizations have made a history with their educational institutions they set up and created a sense of pride through the activities they carried out.

The aim of the primary education is to provide for each Turkish child to be good citizens equipped with basic knowledge, skill and behavior and also to be raised in accordance with the national moral values, thus preparing them for upper education. As of 1997, an 8-year uninterrupted educational system has been adopted. The main goal here is to educate 6-14 year old student groups and then maintain an education according to the model adopted by the Ministry of National Education.

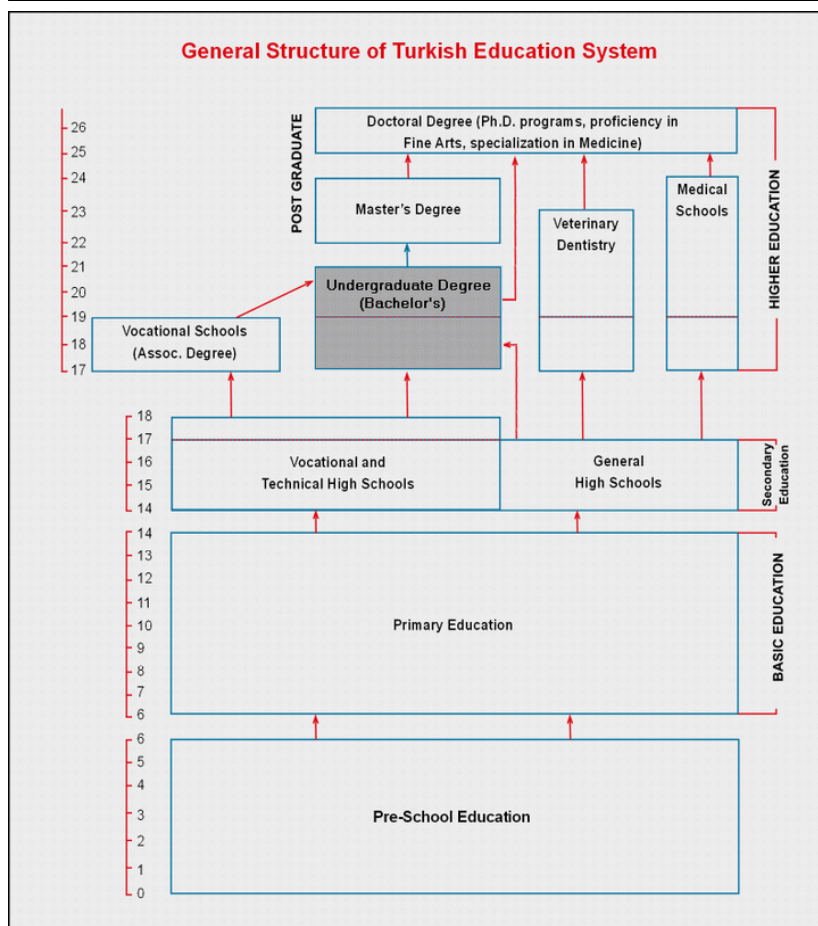
It is hard to know how many staff members are needed for the country and in what fields. As this planning was not made properly in the past, too many and biology graduates were brought up, though not needed. This, every year, added up to the number of university graduates who were unemployed.

Ten years ago, in order to cover up the shortage teacher, even the graduates of agriculture, and veterinary departments were all assigned as teachers. Actually, if a serious planning had been made, the shortage of teachers would have been compensated the graduates of educational faculties. The village schools which were set up during 1960-70 due to the populist politics have come to a point of being closed.

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Source: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, MEB (2007) Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, Ankara.

### Physical Environment

The need for the use of technology in designing and constructing of the school building has been determined now. During the period when a great stride is required in education through this basic educational project, it is of great importance for the student to have an education in an environment which has all the means of technology and for the country to make a progress in all areas (Uçar, 1999:150).

Physical environment ascertains the characteristics of the area allocated for the educational activities. Materials like desk, tables, cabinets, etc., empty spaces, a set of agents like

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heat, light and color designs constitute the physical factors of the space.

Teacher student relations are affected by these physical factors and therefore, the order of the space is of great importance in educational activities when internal objects of a class unite with student and thus gaining a value, it will be functional as long as it contributes to the education. In his article called "Educational Buildings", Hathaway says that, "Firstly we give a shape into the buildings and later they give us a shape" (Eşsiz and others, 1998:104).

This importance for school, because educational building have a number of potential power in contribution to the learning and skill or even in the prevention of both, when looked from that angle, physical environment makes up a livable surrounding for both the teacher and the student and become humanized in the relations between them. Cohen, Manion and Morrison state that physical environment forms up the skeleton of the teacher and it can contribute in advancing the learning as well as it can prevent it (Bolayır, 1994:206).

They also emphasize that the teachers should have a control over the situation as much as he/she can. Actually, for teaching the arrangement of the physical environment properly is up to the skill of the teacher and that will improve his/her personal capacity within the class as well (Resmi Gazete, 1993:18192).

### **The Element of Physical Environment**

When the talk about physical environment, we, on the one hand, bring into agenda the concordance of a man with his environment and on the other hand the peace in his internal world and with the things he perceives from his environment. With the involvement into this surrounding, he sometimes becomes confined into his internal world, psychologically irritated, and, in the end, be a restless individual. Although it looks so simple when we study it from outside, it has to be perceived as a problem area which may cause serious effects in one's life.

The physical environment, a class for instance, where teachers and students mostly spend their time, is supposed to have some features. The suitability of physical environment is

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an inseparable part of an effective learning and teaching process. As surrounding, a school, or the system of physical environment can affect the people's health, his sensual world and his performance positively and also negatively.

In educational institutions, the arrangement should be made keeping an eye on the elements of physical environment such as the order of settlement, the number of students, the colour harmony, proper lightening and heating, the cleanliness, the lack of noise and finally the aesthetics.

In Turkey, the two main reasons of having to apply a dual education system can be determined as lack of classrooms and inefficiency of planning. These two basic factors came out to be prime problems of compulsory elementary educations. The factor that aggravated the situation can be designated as the need for enough teachers and classrooms and the population movement and increase of 8-year compulsory education system was introduced as of 1997-98 school year. The disability to reach the goals determined during the period of planning is attributed to the incapacity in using the optimal resources.

The main reason for the inadequacy of teachers and classrooms comes from the mismanagement of distribution of teachers according to need. In another words, it is the lack of planning. Considering the amount of student which has already dropped under the standard of 40 students in countrywide distribution in extreme low and high levels can be observed on the base of institutions. This makes a difference according to the provinces. For instance, while in Istanbul there is only one teacher for 43.5 primary school students, countrywide average is 37.5.

When we approach the matter on the base of institutions and the surroundings the movements to the extreme points can be observed. Dual education, first of all, is the problem of big cities, especially the cities with extreme levels of population density due to the fact that there are internal migrations from villages into cities. Under these circumstances, in some schools, it seems necessary to prevent the accumulations of students.

Today all the trends and the decision aim at increasing the level of learning and schools are being constructed according to the arrangements made physically such as the

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choice of school land, the construction of buildings, the amount of students, the types of school, the materials used in teaching, open-air classes and specifically the use of instruments.

Increasing the educational quality causes rising of cost. In order to prevent the cost, lowering the number of the classrooms leads to other adverse alternatives mentioned above. To increase the number of the schools according to the educational policy, the application of typical project on the buildings of primary education has already been started.

But in the end of this project, unhealthy buildings emerged which house only classrooms in it and disregarding the factors of the surrounding.

In order to overcome this difficulty faced in dual educational system, some temporary ways can be implemented such as the following renting classrooms, making use of the classrooms belonging to other institutions, diminishing legal procedures in utilizing classrooms affiliated to general directorates and finally producing a system called "Portable Education" which means transporting students of different villages whose school are closed down for various reasons such as insufficient infrastructure and lack of teachers, to the schools in towns and cities.

Planning in primary education is a must and also holds some legal obligations planning as a term used in education, can be defined as having essential criteria be drafted out on a piece of paper, a head of time, and then be evaluated as the success achieved.

Education, by itself, is a planned activity. No matter how experienced a teacher can be, he/she can not work without a plan, since education is not an accidental process. An education attempted to be made with having no plan is nothing else but spending the time in vain.

### **The Necessity and the Importance of Planning**

Educational policy is an overall action plan which has a guiding rote in carrying out work for the personnel of system of educational production such a plan comprises a general approach and concept relating to the educational arrangements to be applied within this production system (Hesapçioğlu and Özcan, 1995:152).

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In macro level, the determinants of education can be put forward as follows: The constitution general frame, development plans, the program of the political parties which come to power, educational councils, the reports of educational meetings made in nationwide or internationally and the general philosophy (MEB,1999:4).

Training and teaching to attain to a desired goal, can only be achieved through a unity in education and supplying integrity, conducting the services within a plan, a program and in an order.

Since attaining to certain acceptable goals is essential in education, studies made without a plan and a program turn away the training and education from its aim.

Plans are prepared according to the character of the educational activity. It doesn't depend on certain and limited pattern. A plan should be not much detailed but a one functional value rather than becoming rigid and formal. Studies on planning are prepared an executed so as to provide training and teaching in a best way and a certain time but keeping in view the relations between the school and the surrounding (Şen and Tokay, 1998:74).

Another factor that breaks up the planning is the reality of immigration. In reason with the school intensity having been found mainly in cities, the inefficiency of classrooms makes itself felt strongly in cities which receive immigration. When the fact of immigration is added to the increase of population, the demand for education increases as well and thus the application of dual education which arises from lack of classrooms keeps its continuity (Uludağ, and Odacı, 2002:153).

Under the light of these facts, when we examine closely the picture, in primary education, there is a big difference between the public and the private schools in terms of space and planning. Although it has been 10 years since we began experiencing 8-year compulsory training and teaching system, the lack of physical space and planning continues (Hesapçioğlu, 1994:124).

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**NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE 2006-07  
SCHOOL YEAR**

TYPE OF SCHOOL	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF STUDENTS			NUMBER OF TEACHERS
		TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS	
Primary	34,656	10,846,930	5,684,609	5,162,321	402,829
Open Education Primary Schools	1	287,350	159,985	127,365	-
Public Primary Education Schools	33,898	10,346,509	5,408,525	4,937,984	381,354
Private Primary Schools	<b>757</b>	<b>213,071</b>	<b>116,099</b>	<b>96,972</b>	<b>21,475</b>
Private Turkish Primary Schools	621	206,988	112,815	94,173	20,263
Private Special Education Primary Schools	95	2,566	1,545	1,021	717
Private Minority Primary Schools	30	2,420	1,165	1,255	326
Private International Primary Schools	9	1,056	556	500	162
Private Foreign Primary Schools	2	41	18	23	7
General Directorate Of Primary Education (Public)	33,645	10,330,690	5,398,759	4,931,931	377,343
Primary Schools	33,042	10,048,558	5,230,771	4,817,787	364,506

Source: MEB, 2007.

According to the above table, when we consider the fact that at least 1500 village schools were closed down, that means a public school has 350 students while a private school has 281 students. And again, only one teacher has 37.5 students in a public school while it is 9 students for one teacher in a private school.

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While 100 students fall per school in some towns and small sized cities, this number is 3 to 4 thousand students per school in big cities. With another words, about 80 students will have an education in a class in big cities. This proves an inefficiency of planning and physical space.

### **The Outcome**

Presently, application of registration system according to the school regions is confusing. With certain pressures the registration of the students to the school coming out of their regions are being made and in the end, student accumulations, at so called qualified school, can not be prevented. Due to that, these schools were reduced to jamming in a classroom about 50 to 60 students. By putting a limit to neighborhood, the problem couldn't have been solved. Some of these schools have remained. In the regions where people have less socio-economic powers continue to carry out their educational activities with nearly 20 to 30 students. The basic solution is to transform the educational environments into a kind of campus settlements.

Specifically in cities where excessive population density is experienced, centrally located buildings which are in good conditions should be sold and in place of them, outside the city new campus areas which will be bought through expropriation should be kept at hand. This campus area will have to cover necessary buildings which can include alt the education departments. The area should be connected with the city through service roads. The necessary capital can be financed by the above mentioned buildings when they were sold with their real values. In addition to that, the regional project can be financially supported through the collection of contribution shares for the education (Uçar, 1999:101).

In bringing up qualified teachers, by allocating extra funds, the institutions of Ministry of National Education can be supported. Another problem is the insufficient practical education given for the candidates of teacher. Training courses of the teachers are being given only at central schools. Those teachers who have never seen a village or a town in their life are experiencing hard times when they were assigned as teacher to these places.

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The board of Higher Education (YOK) who is aware of these problems is renewing the programmers of the faculties of education.

### **Suggestions:**

**In order to make up for the deficiency of planning and space in primary education, primarily, under the leadership of Ministry of National Education and along with the central administration local administration, self-assertive establishments, and private sector should increase their contributions. In addition to that, the portion allocated from the budget for education should also be increased.**

**For some years, the portion allocated from the budget for education overtook the Defense. Although this is a promising development, it is not sufficient. In this congress, in order to make up for deficiency of planning and space in primary education in Turkey, I want to make some suggestions hoping to be taken into consideration. I believe these suggestions will help in dealing with the deficiencies within that field.**

1. The materialistic needs of the school such as classroom, library, laboratory, infirmary, etc can not be considered as sufficient by the teachers, so studies should be made in order to improve the physical means of schools. Within a plan or program new schools and classrooms should be devised.

2. Pre-primary school education should be spread out, and become complimentary, and should be made compulsory within the primary education.

3. In order to eliminate advises of the boarding schools, the cooperation of school and parent which is insufficient at these schools, should be improved the parents should be enlightened for getting interested in with their children, and activities which will weld the students together should be given a priority.

4. The physical structure of schools should be arranged in accordance with the new curriculum and be equipped with proper devices.

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5. Out of 5 children who are not attending school but are in school age, three girls. For the girls to be sent to schools should be given special emphasis.

6. The transition rate from primary to secondary education which is 86.5 % for Turkey average should also be increased. And a priority should be given to the provinces where this percentage is below 70 %.

7. Primarily starting from the provinces where the Turkey average is high in terms of the amount of students per classroom, physical sub-structure should be made in a plan.

8. The support campaign for the education (100 %) which was started by the Ministry of National Education should continue.

9. For the educational institutions to be effectively used, the standards and the joint use of means should be improved.

10. According to the studies made, 80 % of mental and spiritual improvement of a child is completed at the age of six. This age group is the beginning of primary education. While a rate of 17.5 % increase was achieved within the last five years, the number of the students was doubled as well. The problem of orientation and crowded classrooms which has not been solved in primary education should be dealt with soon.

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