

UNOFFICIAL ACTORS IN PUBLIC POLICY: THE ROLE OF TURKISH EDUCATION UNIONS IN 4+4+4 EDUCATION SYSTEM¹

**KAMU POLİTİKASINDA SİVİL AKTÖRLER: TÜRK EĞİTİM
SENDİKALARININ 4+4+4 EĞİTİM SİSTEMİNDEKİ ROLÜ**

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Abstract

Education is crucial in the development of individuals and in the construction of a country's future. At this point, states can shape individuals with the educational contexts according to their development philosophies. Governments that govern the states consider the demands of their electors while formulating the education policies as in many other public policies. Thus, educational issues can be used for election propagandas, and can be shown as legal bases for ruling parties. In this context, especially in developing countries like Turkey, the conflict between ruling and opposition parties can be seen especially in educational aspects as well as in many others. Justice and Development Party (JDP) that has been in ruling position for around 12 years has made a serious change in education with the 4+4+4 system, and received harsh criticisms from the opposition. Even though there is not a direct connection between political parties and unions, it is known that they are organically connected. As the unions are non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they can reflect positive or negative ideas of people to ruling and opposition parties. Unions in Turkey that work in the educational areas try to affect the ruling party with their own ideology during the educational changing process. However, it is hard to say that this effect movement has a scientific base. In this paper firstly, structural reforms performed in the duration of compulsory education, especially in the last 20 years, will be discussed. Later on, the effects of unions in different countries on educational fields will be explained with various examples. Lastly, relations between ruling and opposition parties in terms of

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4+4+4 system will be handled dealing with the biggest 3 unions in number of members in Turkey. In this context, ideas and the criticisms of selected unions about the changes in 4+4+4 system will be scrutinized through their published reports.

Key Words: Union, Education Policy, 4+4+4, Public Policy, Unofficial Actors

Özet

Eğitim, bireylerin yetişmesinde ülkenin geleceğinin inşasında oldukça önemlidir. Bu noktada devletler, kuruluş felsefelerine uygun eğitim içerikleriyle bireyleri şekillendirebilmektedir. Devletlerin yönetimindeki iktidarlar, diğer birçok kamu politikası alanında olduğu gibi eğitim politikalarında da kendi seçmenlerinin taleplerini göz önünde bulundurmaktadır. Devletlerin yönetimindeki iktidarlar, diğer birçok kamu politikası alanında olduğu gibi eğitim politikaların şekillendirilmesinde kendi seçmenlerinin taleplerini göz önünde bulundurmaktadırlar. Dolayısıyla, eğitim ile ilgili konular seçim propagandasında da kullanılabilmekte ve iktidara gelen siyasi partiler açısından meşruiyet kaynakları arasında yer alabilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, özellikle, Türkiye gibi gelişmekte olan ülkelerde iktidar-muhalefet çekişmesi birçok alanda olduğu gibi eğitim alanında da yaşanmaktadır. Türkiye’de yaklaşık 12 yıldır iktidarda bulunan Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), 4+4+4 ile eğitimde ciddi bir değişikliğe gitmiş ve muhalefetten de oldukça ağır eleştiriler almıştır. Siyasi partiler ile sendikalar arasında doğrudan bir bağ bulunmasa da organik olarak bağlı oldukları bilinmektedir. Sendikalar, sivil toplum kuruluşu olması nedeniyle halkın birçok olumlu ya da olumsuz görüşünü iktidar ve muhalefet partilerine yansıtabilmektedir. Türkiye’de eğitim alanında faaliyet gösteren sendikalar, eğitim politikasında yapılan değişiklikler sürecinde, iktidarı kendi ideolojileri çerçevesinde etkileyeme çalışmaktadır. Ancak, söz konusu etkileme hareketinin bilimsel bir temele oturduğunu ifade etmek güçtür. Bu çalışmada ilk olarak, Türkiye’de özellikle son 20 yılda zorunlu eğitim süresinde gerçekleştirilen yapısal reformlara değinilecektir. Daha sonra, farklı ülkelerdeki sendikalarının eğitim alanına olan etkileri çeşitli örneklerle açıklanacaktır. Son olarak, üye sayısı bakımından Türkiye’de faaliyet gösteren en büyük üç eğitim sendikası ele alınarak 4+4+4 politikasında iktidar ve muhalefetle olan ilişkileri irdelenmeye çalışılacaktır. Bu bağlamda, seçilmiş sendikaların 4+4+4 değişikliğine ilişkin görüş ve eleştirileri, yayınladıkları raporlar üzerinden incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sendika, Eğitim Politikası, 4+4+4, Kamu Politikası, Sivil Aktörler

INTRODUCTION

Education is a crucial tool in conveying cultural, political and social experience of societies to their future generations. In this respect, the functionality of the education is very significant. While the education is transferred into the next generation, it allows the state to check and direct individuals in the specific areas. States draw certain boundaries for the society through the education in which they spread their founding philosophy to the society. By creating new individuals with changes and transformation in the field of newly established education made by them, states force individuals to change especially in modernization. The civil society, gained importance with enlightenment movement and began to symbolize a stance against forced imposition which was applied to citizens by state. In the process of public policy, from agenda setting to implementation, NGOs have played an active role in many aspects which is worldwide. With this aspect, on the one hand NGOs try to protect the rights of citizens; on the other hand they play a guiding role for assigned and elected officials. In this study, it is aimed to analyse the effects of unions on public policy formulation process of education system in which the changes occurred in 2012.

1. THE EDUCATION CONCEPT AND THE CHANGES IN TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education plays a fundamental role in the transmission of culture and development of the society to the future generations. Considering the definition of education; the education provides the necessary information, skills and understanding to children and youth for them to take their place in the community life and help them to develop their personalities directly or indirectly inside or outside of school (tdk.gov.tr). According to another definition; the education is the sum of the processes in which s/he develops his/her skills, attitudes and other positive behaviour patterns (Tezcan, 1985, s. 4). Education is an old concept in human history. It can be accepted that the first formation of modern educational institutions came true in the second half of the 18th century in which the industrial revolution occurred with the enlightenment period in the West. From the date in which education was institutionalized in modern sense to today, it is possible to argue that the education and the true meaning of the role attributed to education do not show any dissimilarity. The establishment of the state and redefinition of ideology of the industrial revolution in the modern sense have identified the role and functions of education. The forces having power to manage the state have interfered in education to raise the human model they wanted and actually when looked from this angle; a visible change was not seen (Akin and Arslan, 2014, s. 81-82). Education, except being a social and cultural vehicle, is located among the state's ideological apparatus (Althusser, 2002; Ozdel, 2012, s. 25). States use tools such as ideology and education to ensure presence and continuity in the social sphere founded on the principles of legitimacy (Cetin, 2001: 201). Either the social change influences the education or the changes in the education have impact on the society, or even they affect mutually each other; at the end, those who will determine all actors involved in the interaction process should act in accordance with the roles and people who decide on this issue should be the ones governing the society. What functions to be imposed on education should be and how the related community is managed are directly related with the dominant political regime (monarchy, dictatorship, constitutional governance, democratic governance and so on.) into the society (Ağaoğullari, 1985; Tezcan, 1985; Akşit, Şen and Çoşkun, 2000; Dinçer, 2003; Parlak, 2005; Şentürk and Turan, 2012; Akgündüz, 2013; Demir Güneş, 2013). The Ottoman Empire turned its way of education into Europe especially with the modernization movement. The reforms carried out in the military area also showed itself in the field of education. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the effects of the American model in primary and secondary education have begun to be seen since the 1950s while European-oriented education policies is being maintained. Continuing this effect in 1960s, with the transition to the planned development, the plans have been made in order to meet the needs of qualified labour force in education. In 1961, by changing "Primary Education Law", the three years in the village primary school education period was extended to five years. In 1973, Law No. 1739 'National Education Basic Law' ³ was enacted. In 1991, with another change, the education in high schools was

³ The main objective of the Turkish National Education in Law No. 1739 Turkish National Education Basic Law are listed in the following way:

Article 2 – The overall objective of the Turkish National Education, get all members of the Turkish Nation

1. **(Amended: 06/16/1983 - 2842/1 art.)** to raise citizens, depending on Atatürk's reforms and principles and the nationalism of Atatürk expressed in the Constitution; adopting, protecting and improving; The Turkish nation's national, moral, humanitarian, spiritual and cultural values; loving his/her family, land, nation and always elevating them, knowing his/her duties and responsibilities towards the human rights and the Republic of Turkey based on the fundamental principles at the beginning of the Constitution and a democratic, secular and social state of law;

introduced into the American model 'Course Promotion and Credit System'. However, due to defects seen in practice, this practice was abandoned after a short time. Taken up again in 1997, the primary education was defined as the basic education period lasting eight years. According to this model, three-year junior high schools which was the first circuit of the secondary education was combined with five-year primary school, eight-year 'uninterrupted, compulsory' elementary school was implemented. With the defects observed in this system and the idea of extension of compulsory education, the compulsory education became twelve-year formulated as $4 + 4 + 4 = 12$ with a new law enacted in 2012 (Şen, 2013).

1.1. The Content of 4+4+4 Education Policy

With the Law No. 6287 on the "Amendment of Some Laws of Primary Education Act", $4 + 4 + 4$ amendment was enacted in 2012 by being published in the Official Gazette. With the mentioned law, the following laws, the Law No. 222 Primary Education and Education, the Law No. 1739 Basic Law of National Education and Primary Education and Education, Basic Law of National Education, the Law of Vocational Training and Apprenticeship, Law on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of Education with the Amendment of the Law numbered 3418 and dated 24.03.1988, the Law of contribution payments to Education on some documents and transactions were changed. On the issue, the changes made with Law No. 6287 are as follows (the resmigazete.gov.tr): Compulsory primary school age covers children in the 6-13 age groups. This age starts with the end of September on which the child completes the five ages and ends with the end of the school year in which the child completes 13 ages and starts to 14 ages (Article 3).

Primary education is a national education, so an educational institution consists of four-years compulsory primary school and four-years compulsory secondary school (article 7). Primary education institutions are composed of four-year compulsory primary schools and four-year compulsory secondary school, which allows choosing different programs between secondary school and theology. In the secondary school and theology secondary school optional courses will be created according to the student's skill, development and choice and support for the high school. In the secondary schools and high schools, Quran and the life of the Prophet are taught as optional courses. Other optional courses which will be taught in the school and program options to be created for the secondary school and theology secondary school will be determined by the Ministry of Education (Article 9). Secondary education covers all of the general, vocational and technical education institutions which give compulsory four-year, formal or informal education based on the primary school; those who completed this school are given the diploma of the secondary education (Article 26). "Eight years of uninterrupted primary education" phrase located in Law No. 4306 dated 16.08.1997 and the provisional Article 1 (A) of paragraph (2) subparagraph (c) of subparagraph was changed as "Elementary

2. to raise constructive, creative and productive individuals, having an extensive world, independent and scientific thinking power and a personality and character physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and emotionally balanced and healthy way developed, respectful for human rights, giving value personality and enterprise, having responsibility towards society;
3. to provide a profession which enable them to prepare for life by giving them the habit of work by developing interest, aptitude and ability to the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and work together that will make them happy and to contribute to society's happiness;
4. Thus, to improve the welfare and happiness Turkish citizens and Turkish society; on the other hand, to support and accelerate of economic, social and cultural development within national unity and integrity, and finally make the Turkish nation of outstanding partner of contemporary constructive, creative, civilization.

Education and Secondary education" and "uninterrupted eight years" phrase located in the article was omitted from the article text (Article 13).

2. UNIONS AS UNOFFICIAL ACTORS IN PUBLIC POLICY

Public policy, although less studied than other areas in the public administration, is considered by many scholars in different ways. Dye's (2008, s. 1) definition "whatever governments choose to do or not to do" that widely cited in the literature is broad and inclusive in public policy. On the other hand, public policy is purposeful action style to provide a solution to any problem conducted by a number of organizations and individuals (Anderson, 2014, s. 7). Various actors are involved in from agenda setting stage to all other stages in public policy. It is expressed that the official and unofficial actors have important places in the policy process (Kingdon, 1984; Howlett and Ramesh, 1995; Peters, 1996; Birkland, 2005; Knoepfel, Larrue, Varone and Hill; 2007; Eroglu, 2013; Yildiz and Sobaci, 2013). Unions which have a functional importance in the public policy process are among the NGOs. Since NGOs are active in a wide range of areas from poverty to human rights and from environmental degradation to economic and political development (Brown et al., 2000, s. 8), they are defined as pressure groups (Babaoglu, 2013). The concept of union is defined as "organizations are established to protect, develop the rights of common interests of the employees and solve the problems related to working life." (Gunes, 2013, s. 63). Unions, classified as labour, public servant and independent unions, offer services in many fields from local governments to culture and art services and from education to health. According to Law No. 4688 "Public Servant Unions" law, Article 3 Paragraph F, it is expressed "unions having legal personality are organizations which are created to protect and develop common economic, social and occupational rights and interests of public servants". In public policy process, it is not easy to claim that the unions are politically neutral. From the discourses of the majority of unions and the reports that they have presented, their political side can be understood. That is, while political parties offer their policy proposals in parliament, they take the views of unions into account to have more effective policies (Göksu and Bilgiç, 2003, s. 58; Öztürk, 2013, s. 271).

The unions operating in the field of education in the different countries around the world have serious impacts on the policies. For example in the USA, teachers' unions have taken an important step on many issues from improving of salaries to increase the number of members and have remarkable achievements (Coulson, 2010, s. 155). Moreover, teachers' unions make a notable contribution to their member's rights by establishing strong associations with political parties (Moses, 2011). In Argentina the teachers' unions, to which 55 % of teachers became members, have been in the education sector since 1892. In this context, teachers' unions affect the school and are operating in areas such as training of teachers, salary, job security, employment, health insurance (Murillo, Tommasi, Ronconi and Sanguinetti; 2002). Education unions in South Korea improve especially socio-economic status of teachers and defend the rights and interests. Furthermore, they work on issues such as in-service training, working conditions for their members (Kim and Han, 2002). In England, Association of teachers and Lecturers (ATL) which is one of the most important unions in England has 160.000 members. This union's major aim is to provide education policies, teachers with advice, information and legal support (www.atl.org.uk).

3. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is to analyse how the unions attempt to affect the public policy process by examining the reports of the three unions having the most members in

Turkey⁴ within the framework of the changes being considered in 4 + 4 + 4 education policy. Methodologically, to make a comprehensive analysis, narrative model which is commonly applied in public policy analysis was used. In qualitative research methods, data's were collected by observing events and phenomena. Through this method, by obtaining identification of the target audience, feelings, characteristic structure and evidence that was their right, the real was analysed. The target audience may be a person or a group. Narrative analysis approach which is a technique for the assessment is the subject of individual or group-specific perspective (Atay, 2007, s. 73).

4. THE SELECTED UNIONS AND THE ANALYSIS OF THEIR REPORTS

The education unions which were selected according to their number of members published crucial reports about 4+4+4 education system. In these reports, it is feasible to find out basic clues of their opinions about the new education system.

4.1. Egitim-Bir-Sen

The union, known for its proximity to the government, has 251,110 members, according to data from the month of July 2013 (www.dpb.gov.tr). According to a report issued by Egitim-Bir-Sen:

➤ In the implementation process of the law, The Ministry led to the more radical changes by taking some decisions in the education system. The first of these decisions is the withdrawal of the compulsory school starting age is 66 months although there are not any changes on the age of the start of school in the law. It depends on the request of family if the children are older than 60 months. Decisions about school starting age have been criticized unnecessarily much. Due to the withdrawal of starting age school early, first-class curriculum is updated to improve the integration of the children who start school early to school and a 14-week orientation program has been prepared (4 + 4 + 4 Education Reform Monitoring Report, 2013, s. 67).

➤ With 4 + 4 + 4 education reform, the decomposition of elementary schools as primary and secondary and the differentiation of children's physical environment in different age groups are met very positively by school administrators, teachers and parents (4 + 4 + 4 Education Reform Monitoring Report, 2013, s. 68).

➤ 4 + 4 + 4 arrangement has quite a privileged place in the history of education in Turkey. The present arrangement has been the most comprehensive education reforms carried out directly by the civilians in the recent history of Turkey. It is seen that the decisions made critical decisions about education in Turkey's recent history by judiciary and military rather than elected political power. Unlike earlier laws specifically enacted as a result of pressure from the military tutelage, in the process of the law of 4 + 4 + 4 from the day it was presented as a first draft until its enactment, it was seen that a certain change lived within the public debate and some changes in the law done the first case and new issues added (4 + 4 + 4 Education Reform Monitoring Report, 2013, s. 35).

⁴ Number of members of the union are as follows(<http://www.dpb.gov.tr>):

Educators Union (Egitim-Bir-Sen): 251.110

Turkey Training, Education and Science Services, Public Employees Union(Turk Egitim-Sen): 225.250

Education and Science Workers' Union (Egitim- Sen): 124.380

As understood from the content of the report, the union claims that this is a very crucial reform of the education history rather than it criticizes the new reform. Although they sometimes have some points to criticize, these criticisms are usually constructive and in the form of advice.

4.2. Eğitim-Sen

The union, known for its proximity to one of the opposition party, has 124.380 members, according to data from the month of July 2013 (www.dpb.gov.tr). According to a report issued by Eğitim-Sen:

➤ Because JDP hastily brought to agenda imposition of 4 + 4 + 4, the first half of the 2012-2013 education year is a term in which the problems, coming from the past, increased dramatically in terms of general education system, in particular students, teachers and parents, and it became a term full of ideological anxieties and closing eyes for scientific facts (Impose of 4 + 4 + 4 Education, 1st Period Report, s. 2).

➤ That age of 60-66 months, 72 months and 83 months children start the education in the same period, in the same class, even in the same desk cause the emergence of very important issues that training will create the same environment in children of different ages furthermore the overcrowding of classes and schools significantly pass through bilateral education (Impose of 4 + 4 + 4 Education, 1st Period Report, s. 2).

➤ The ministry, that invites 60-month children to school, did not make necessary preparations to be arranged accordingly the physical conditions of these children in the schools and left schools alone by themselves in this arrangement. Experiences in this regard show that teachers and also parents of students have been left in the a difficult situation and granting children receive education in an appropriate environment (Impose of 4 + 4 + 4 Education, 1st Period Report, s. 6)

➤ The negation of the mandatory religion classes is in conflict with the basic understanding and scientific education and in public, secular, democratic education. In schools, even as through state and mandatory, it is only taught to a particular religion and a particular sect. This case leads to the emergence of many problems in multicultural, multi-religious and multi-confessional societies such as Turkey. It should be noted that politicization of religion and the prevention of an instrument of political interests in Turkey is only possible by fully drawing the hands of the state from religion as possible (Impose of 4 + 4 + 4 Education, 1st Period Report, s. 9)

➤ While the Public Procurement Agency (PPA) are being disabled in many areas such as from the tablet to smart board and from content software to the internet under Fatih Project, about 100 billion liras annuity is said to provide. At least 12 million students are planned to be distributed tablet and sale of an internet connection. Within the next 15 years when calculated as the lowest 10 TL per connection per month will be spent. It is claimed that Fatih project is opening new doors with just over 15 billion US dollars annuity for only internet connection (Impose of 4 + 4 + 4 Education, 1st Period Report, s. 15).

If the description in this report is analysed, it is possible to indicate that a critical attitude to the ruling party and the 4 + 4 + 4 education system is seen. Having said that JDP government enacted this system with fully ideological concerns, regardless of scientific facts. As

regards the position of religion classes in the new law, it again has brought about an instrument of the political interests. About the Fatih Project initiated by this reform, it is expressed that this project would be an annuity new door in the disclosures still targeting the government. In short, its rhetoric is politicized instead of talking about whether it is the norm in the world or variable scientific evidence.

4.3. Turk-Egitim-Sen

The union, known for its proximity to one of the opposition party, has 225.250 members, according to data from the month of July 2013 (www.dpb.gov.tr). According to the press release made by Turk- Egitim- Sen:

➤ This system will drag Turkey into chaos. This system will practice deep wounds, where there is no consensus, not accepted by all segments of society, is prepared with the logic that I did, not being discussed thoroughly before being considered. Education is the job of educators. In collaboration of unions, civil society organizations, academics, educational scientists, shortly social partners should work to put the sanest and the most accurate system applications. A system, which does not receive the opinion of the parties of education and ignore them, on which consensus can not be achieved. The ruling should provide work opportunities for educators in this regard and prepare in consultation with the social partners covering the whole environment (<http://www.turkegitimsen.org.tr>).

➤ Looking at education with ideological glasses and ruining the future of education with the wrong step are unworthy for the people governing this country. In the subcommittee, listening to the views of unions and civil society organizations are not sufficient. Furthermore, it seems very clear that ignoring the others' opinion in the process today. However, it is extremely fundamental to be treated more carefully in a matter of directly concern of the lives of millions of students and families, and not aggrieving of any student and teacher. This is also a requirement of democracy. (<http://www.turkegitimsen.org.tr>).

➤ The rulers of our country has ignored all these years of our experience, sentenced the education into obscurity, and led the education to a path of no return by not examining well the disadvantages of the system. However, it is not too late for nothing. Our interlocutor in this issue is Mr. Prime Minister from now on. Education does not come in a hurry. Education is not the work of novice politicians. With common wisdom and common agreement we can renegotiate on this system and we can establish a system that will be accepted by a large segment of society. Turkey has enough extensive experience and qualified educators' knowledge about it (<http://www.turkegitimsen.org.tr>).

According to the Turk-Egitim-Sen, the style of the government is a more political bickering than an education reform debate and criticizing the government with slogan words of 4 + 4 + 4 reforms. Looking at the section from this disclosure, it is emphasized that this system of ideological concerns issued and it is claimed that the country will be dragged into chaos.

CONCLUSION

Union's discourses on 4+4+4 reform demonstrate the fact that unions in Turkey are politicized. Unions which are included in the analysis, do not meet a common denominator. The explanations stated, the reports presented to the public vary according to the related union's ideological and political connections. The statements of the unions that known for their proximity to two opposition parties, they directly target the government with very harsh

criticism to take power and referring to more extreme at some point they discuss the concerns with the future of the country and the regime. On the other hand, in the statement of Eğitim-Bir-Sen known for its proximity to the government, emphasizes the positive sides of the reform and evaluates this reform as one of the most important education movements of the country. Moreover, Eğitim-Bir-Sen's criticism constitute a recommendation in which reforms are wished to be made better. Unions which are the sub branch of the NGOs, that have quite importance in the preparation process of public policy, act with ideological concerns out of scientific data in 4 + 4 + 4 education reform. In this context, the unions in Turkey are distant approach of their main functions. The assessment whether the reform in the education is good or bad can only be made in later years. Because the results, outputs and the impacts of the changes made in social, political and economic areas will be feasible to be analysed after a decade or more (Sabatier, 2007, s.3). From this standpoint, debates arisen in the current situation related to the reform without scientific basis can be expressed as meaningless.

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