

Neoliberal Ideology in Primary School Social Studies Textbooks in Turkey*

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Abstract

This study examines the extent to which fourth and fifth grade primary school Social Studies textbooks published by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey between 1980 and 2009 represent neoliberal ideology. In an examination of changes following the restructuring of Turkish primary school education in 2004, this analysis compares pre- and post-reform textbooks according to the ways in which they communicate neoliberal discourse. Quantitative and qualitative content analyses of the textbooks show that the representation of neoliberal ideology in Social Studies textbooks has significantly increased since the implementation of the Turkish Primary School Education Reform of 2004. This paper argues that the content of the new textbooks has the potential to encourage students to think within the framework of neoliberalism.

Keywords: *neoliberalism, educational reform, social studies, textbooks, Turkey*

Introduction

A global shift in educational systems, geared to make content more compatible with the requirements and/or interests of the neoliberal market economy, has come to the fore over the course of the last decade. Developments in communication, coupled with rapid exchange of information made possible through technology, have transformed the skills individuals must now possess. Transference from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy further increases the sensitivity of

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educational systems to economic changes, necessitating their reorganisation with respect to the demands of contemporary world economy (Carney, 2008; Gültekin, 2007; Olssen and Peters, 2005). Several countries, such as Sweden, Norway (Aasen, 2003), China (Carney, 2008), and Uganda (Altinyelken, 2010), have brought education and economy together through educational reforms that address the needs of the market economy. It is my intention, in this paper, to contribute to the literature on neoliberalism and its impact on educational discourse, with a specific focus on curriculum reform in Turkey.

Discourse on market-driven educational reforms concentrates on “a rhetoric of curriculum change and modernization” (Bonal, 2003, p.170), which indicates that privatization is not the sole mechanism of neoliberalism-directed change in educational systems. Educational reforms made in the neoliberal era have focused on management, administrative systems, and the *educational process itself* (Karsten, 1999). Therefore, a critical exploration of neoliberalism must address the “transformation of its discursive deployment, as a new understanding of human nature and social existence” (Read, 2009, p.26). This paper explores how discourse on education in Turkey has changed since 1980, and how this corresponds to the implementation of neoliberal policies in the country. For this purpose, I have examined a) the extent to which neoliberal ideology has been represented in the fourth and fifth grade primary school Social Studies textbooks published by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) between 1980 and 2009, and b) whether or not the content of the textbooks has the potential to lead students to think within the framework of neoliberalism.

Although Turkey has practiced neoliberal policies since the 1980s, the first structural educational reform of the neoliberal era was initiated in 2004, when the Primary School Education Reform reorganised the existing primary school curriculum and textbooks. Amendments to the content of primary school education made by this reform have been severely criticized. Critics of the reform argue that the content of education was reorganised in accordance with market demands, and that consequently, neoliberal discourse has become dominant with

regard to both curriculum and textbooks (Adıgüzel, 2010; Yıldız, 2008). For instance, in their study of the 2004 reform in Turkey, İnal, Akkaymak and Yıldırım (2014) identified changes made in the curriculum and argued that the reform has integrated the neoliberal discourse in the curriculum. However, there exists no study that empirically investigates the relationship between economic policies and textbook content. In this paper, I build on and extend İnal, Akkaymak and Yıldırım's (2014) study by comparing the content of pre- and post-reform textbooks representing neoliberal discourse. Furthermore, so much of the literature on the restructuring of educational systems in the neoliberal era focuses on higher education (e.g. Giroux, 2002; Levidow, 2005; Olssen and Peters, 2005), but largely neglects primary school education. The overall goal of this paper is to broaden our knowledge on the impact of neoliberal policies on primary school education, and to provide alternatives to the neoliberal understanding of education. The first section provides a general overview of the relationship between neoliberal ideology and educational systems; the second focuses on the reform process in Turkey; the third presents the methodology of the present study; and the fourth discusses the findings of the study.

Neoliberal ideology in the educational agenda

The philosophy of neoliberalism is rooted in market rationality and the active encouragement of laissez-faire economic systems worldwide (Mitchell, 2004). Though scholars do not always agree on a conclusive definition of neoliberalism, it can generally be defined as a theory of political and economic practices that favour the liberation of individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills, all within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey, 2005). Even though neoliberalism as a political economic theory proposes a minimal role for the state, in reality, states still maintain a noteworthy role in relation to work, welfare, *education* and defence (Olssen, 2004, p.240). They also have a growing responsibility to ensure the reproduction of the economic system (Bonal, 2003), and this, in turn, necessitates a perpetual effort to actively shape the kinds of individuals who will eventually comply with that system (Olssen, Codd, and O'Neill, 2004). Education, as one of the most important ideological tools of the state (Althusser, 1971), is used by neoliberal governments to

promote the internalisation of state policies. In other words, education is always political (Apple, 2001; Giroux, 2008; Gök, 1999; Olssen and Peters, 2005), and the state serves the continuity of the economic system by making various amendments in the educational system, including its content (Hursh, 2005). In line with neoliberalism's ambition to create a culture of individualistic and market-oriented behaviour in people of all social classes (Soedeberg, Menz and Cerny, 2005, pp.12–13), the goal of education in the neoliberal era becomes promoting knowledge that contributes to economic productivity and producing students who are compliant, productive (Hursh, 2000) and capable of responding to the demands of the economic system (Gökçe, 2000). The focus of education, in this respect, has shifted from intellectual and moral questions to effectiveness and efficiency (Olssen, et al., 2004, p.191).

To better understand amendments to the educational system in the neoliberal era, we also need to look at the role of forces other than the states themselves. International aid agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and corporations all impact the way education is organised (Apple, 2001). Neoliberal governments and these social forces work together to reorganize educational systems according to the market economy. Indeed, reform initiatives in various countries verify the role of multiple forces in the transformation of educational systems. For instance, Carney (2008) analysed educational reform attempts in the People's Republic of China, and found that international policy organisations (e.g. the OECD) and multilateral development agencies (e.g. the World Bank) impacted the educational reform process in China. To prepare China for the global knowledge economy, educational reforms were developed in accordance with the demands of the market economy. Significantly, the 2004 educational reform in Turkey showed similarities to reforms implemented in other countries (e.g. Norway, Sweden, and China), both in terms of the participation of various forces in the reform process and the focus on economic necessities.

Educational reform in Turkey's agenda

Previously, the last time the MoNE had reorganised the primary school curriculum was in 1968. Instead of making a comprehensive

amendment, previous governments made only minor changes in the content of education system. As a result, Turkey practiced the same curriculum between 1968 and 2004. The necessity of a comprehensive educational reform was first underlined by the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2003. The Party began working on the primary school curriculum in early 2003, and the new educational reform was finalized in 2004.

The 2004 Primary School Education Reform changed the structure of the Turkish educational system from a behaviourist educational model to a constructivist (student-centred¹) educational model. The behaviourist education model is a teacher-centred model with an inflexible curriculum that prevents teachers from making any revisions. This educational process is based upon one-way transmission of knowledge from teachers to students. Consequently, it envisages passive students and authoritative teachers. An emphasis upon knowledge directs students to rote learning without allowing them to question the material (Altinyelken, 2010).

Conversely, the constructivist model values the individual, and does not favour rote learning. It highlights the importance of individual identity in education, and places learners at the centre of the teaching process (Carney, 2008). Teachers and students construct knowledge by applying problem-solving methods to contexts without fixed solutions (Popkewitz, 2000). In the constructivist educational model, the teacher maintains implicit control over students, and students are expected to rearrange and explore the learning context put in place by the teacher. This gives them a chance to control how they select and structure knowledge, which is indicative of the democratic nature of this model (Hartley, 2009, p.427). However, as Carney (2008) asserts, the aim of policymakers is “to create teaching and learning conditions conducive to the nurturing of creative, flexible and cooperative citizens and workers” (p.41) through the constructivist educational model. Even though it gives students an active role in the learning process, the constructivist model nevertheless restricts them within the framework of neoliberalism (İnal, 2008). Since the purpose of this article is not to discuss whether or not the model is pedagogically successful (see Altinyelken, 2011), it focuses instead on

the content of textbooks within the context of a constructivist educational model.

Following the 2004 reform, the curricula of the primary school *Türkçe* (Turkish) (grades 1-5), *Hayat Bilgisi* (Life Knowledge) (grades 1-3), *Fen ve Teknoloji* (Science and Technology) (grades 4-5) and *Sosyal Bilgiler* (Social Studies) (grades 4-5) were rearranged by the Board of Training and Education, the main body of the MoNE that prepares curricula and textbooks in accordance with the constructivist model. During the 2004-2005 academic year, a pilot study of new curricula was conducted in nine cities (Ankara, Bolu, Diyarbakır, Hatay, İstanbul, İzmir, Kocaeli, Samsun, and Van) and in 120 primary schools (MoNE, 2005a, p.47). The new model was then implemented nationwide during the 2005-2006 academic year.

Why a new reform?

Why did the JDP government initiate the 2004 Primary School Education Reform? To answer this question, I examined the JDP's party programmes and government programmes, written ministry documents about the reform, and critical literature on the topic.

The JDP, the single ruling party in Turkey since 2002, has underlined the necessity of a fundamental educational reform in a number of party documents. In its party programmes, for instance, the JDP labels the national educational system of Turkey as insufficient to fully respond to the requirements of the contemporary world. Specifically, they argue that Turkey's educational system is incompatible with technological developments, and thereby unable to develop the human capital necessary for today's world (see JDP, 2001). Party programmes further state that "according to our party, education is the main element of development that leads development in all other spheres. Therefore, societies which cannot use their human capital efficiently are consigned to lose their competitive edge" (JDP, 2001, n.p.). The party asserts that the "curriculum of contemporary education will be reorganised in accordance with the requirements of the century, with our necessities and with the skills that students will acquire" (JDP, 2002, n.p.). Emphasis on human capital development and global competition, however, is

unsurprising, as “global capitalism has placed education at the forefront of national competitiveness” (McGregor, 2009, p.345). Similar to governments in many other countries, the JDP responded with educational reform that was designed to address the needs of the global capitalist economy.

Although Turkey’s economic system embraced neoliberalism decades ago, the educational system only turned to neoliberalism in 2004. Consequently, I argue that its existence as a single-party government made it easier for the JDP to enact fundamental changes in the educational system.² The JDP states in its Emergency Action Plan, declared on 16 November 2002, and in other government programmes, that being a single-party government gives them the ability to produce *solutions* to previously unsolved problems in a short period of time.

In a report entitled *Changing Years in Education 2003-2004*, the MoNE explains the reasons for and targets of the 2004 reform:

Course programmes were not in line with present conditions, and that was one of the most problematic aspects of the national education system. Turkey had neglected all changes made in the educational sphere thus far. The curriculum was renewed 40 years ago... students will not be like a computer disk anymore, after the new curriculum. They will be educated to produce, question, think, follow scientific developments, and respond to the needs of social life (MoNE, 2005b, p.59).

Likewise, in the Education Bulletin, the Ministry elucidates its reasoning:

There are changes and improvements in individual, social and economic spheres of life throughout the world. These changes and improvements are also seen in demographic structure, scientific understanding, science technology, professional relations and labour force quality, localisation and globalisation processes of Turkey. It becomes

necessary to reflect all these changes and improvements into our educational system and programmes (MoNE, 2005a, n.p.).

The quotes above demonstrate that the Ministry considered the educational system obsolete, which in turn necessitated rearranging it in accordance with current economic conditions. Furthermore, the low success rate of Turkish students in international tests such as the PISA³, PIRLS⁴ and TIMSS⁵ called the behaviourist educational model into question (Akpınar and Aydın, 2007; Gültekin, 2007; TUSIAD, 2006). To illustrate, Turkey ranked twenty-eighth among thirty-five countries that took part in PIRLS in 2001 (Gültekin, 2007, p.486). While preparing for the 2004 reform, the Ministry was inspired by educational reforms in countries that achieved high scores on international tests and also utilized a constructivist educational model, just as Australia, England, Ireland, and Spain did (Akpınar and Aydın, 2007, p.84). The Ministry wanted a new curriculum to provide students with the opportunity to discover their own individual skills, develop analytical and critical thinking, and improve their problem-solving skills (TUSIAD, 2006, p.83). These changes correspond with the global tendency towards personal and emotional development, creative development, and lifelong learning in primary school education (Gültekin, 2007, p.485).

Additionally, various entities, particularly the European Union (EU) and the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD), have also stressed the necessity of reforming the Turkish educational system. In its annual progress reports in the early 2000s, the EU underlined the deficits of the Turkish educational system and listed several recommendations, including revising curriculum and teaching techniques (EU, 2002) and establishing a better connection between education and the job market (EU, 2004); and adapting educational systems to an increasingly knowledge- and competition-based economy. Similar to the EU, since the early 1990s, the business world in Turkey has been emphasizing the necessity of reforming the educational system. TUSIAD, which was founded by Turkey's biggest capitalists in 1971, has elucidated the importance of education for economic development in its various reports and called the state to reform the

educational system in accordance with a competition-based market to achieve sustainable growth and development in Turkey (TUSIAD 1990; 2006). Although neither the EU nor TUSIAD had a leading role in the 2004 reform process, both their emphasis on the necessity of implementing a new education model and their reports demonstrate their belief in the importance of adapting education to the market economy, and laid the groundwork for the reform, to which the JDP responded in its 2004 reform.

The present study

To determine the extent to which fourth and fifth grade Social Studies textbooks published since 1980 represent neoliberal ideology, I conducted quantitative and qualitative content analyses of the textbooks in 2010. I determined keywords and four main categories based upon the literature. The keywords were enumerated in the quantitative content analysis section, and the contexts in which these words are used were analysed in the qualitative analysis section. They are as follows:

- C/I-Enterprise: entrepreneurship, marketing, investment, advertisement, competition
- C/II-Consumption: consumer, consumption, shopping, purchasing
- C/III-Individual: individual success, career, vision, mission, leadership
- C/IV-Economic Activities: import, export, commerce, internal commerce, external commerce, privatization, producing, production.

Quantitative content analysis

Keywords were counted for frequency rather than presence. The number of times each word appears is assumed to be an indicator of its importance. After the enumeration, I created a table to illustrate the total number of times that each textbook used each word. In order to determine the significance of keyword inclusion differences between the pre- and post-reform textbooks, I conducted an independent sample *t*-test.

Qualitative content analysis

The contextual use of the keywords is analysed via qualitative content analysis, which includes both manifest and latent content analyses. While the former centres upon what the text explicitly states, the latter is concerned with what the text implicitly addresses (Krippendorff, 2004).

Population of the content analysis

The fourth and fifth grade primary school Social Studies textbooks published by the Ministry of National Education since 1980 constitute the subject of this study. Since 1980, the MoNE has published 60 social studies textbooks: 30 for the fourth grade and 30 for the fifth grade. Since the reform, it has published 5 workbooks.⁶ Even though the Ministry publishes textbooks annually, their content does not change every year. Years that correspond with changes to textbook content are 1980, 1990, 1998 and 2005. Therefore, the content analysis of the fourth-grade textbooks covers the years 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2006, and content analysis of the fifth grade covers 1980, 1990, 1999 and 2006. However, due to the absence of 1998 and 2005 textbooks in the Ministry of National Education's archive library, the analyses were made with 1999, 2000 and 2006 textbooks. All in all, ten textbooks were analysed in this study.⁷ All textbooks were published in Turkish; thus, content analysis was first performed in Turkish. Later, I translated the identified key words and quoted passages into English.

Findings and discussion

Quantitative content analysis

Quantitative content analysis showed that the keywords were used more than twice as often in the post-reform textbooks in comparison with pre-reform textbooks (Table 1). In order to determine if this difference is significant, an independent sample *t*-test was conducted. The keywords used in the 1980, 1990, and 1999/2000 textbooks were averaged to form an overall composite labelled as pre-reform textbooks. The analyses revealed that there was a significant difference between pre-reform ($M = 7.19$, $SD = 13.92$) and post-reform textbooks ($M = 19.36$, $SD = 29.88$), ($t(42) = -1.73$, $p = .09$). The difference between the textbooks was marginally significant, given the low sample size.

However, the analysis indicated that the keywords were used more frequently in the post-reform than the pre-reform textbooks.

Table 1. Sum total of keywords in each textbook

	1980	1990	1999/2000	2006
C/I-Enterprise	0	2	3	23
C/II-Consumption	29	20	21	156
C/III-Individual	0	0	0	8
C/IV-Economic Activities	126	195	79	239
Total	155	217	103	426

This result illustrates the fact that students educated with the new textbooks are exposed to more neoliberal discourse than students educated in the pre-2004 reform era. Based upon this finding, I argue that the post-reform textbooks familiarize students with neoliberal concepts, and therefore have the potential to direct them to think within the framework of neoliberalism.

Qualitative Content Analysis

The post-reform textbooks differ from the pre-reform textbooks with regard to their portrayal of the individual. The pre-reform textbooks define the individual as a member of family and society. There is a strong emphasis on the significance of living both in and for society and country. Less emphasis is found in the new textbooks about being a member of a family or of society. The focus shifts perceptibly from a society-based description to an individually-based description. For example, the pre-reform textbooks contain the sections *Ailenin önemi* (The Importance of Family), *Toplum içinde yaşamının önemi* (The Importance of Living in Society), and *Toplum hayatında işbirliği ve dayanışmanın önemi* (The Importance of Collaboration and Solidarity in Community Life). The pre-reform textbooks suggest that the well-being of society takes priority over that of the individual and, consequently, that the individual should work for the benefit of society. In contrast, post-

reform textbooks state that society appreciates successful individuals. There is no emphasis upon being a member of society, nor do post-reform textbooks include the idea that the individual lives for the benefit of their society; rather, they emphasize the concept of the self-fulfilling individual. This comparison demonstrates a shift from collective responsibility to neoliberal values (White and Wyn, 2008 in McGregor, 2009, p.347), supporting the argument that people of the neoliberal era are more prone to be competitive, self-interested individuals competing for their own material gain (Giroux, 2008, p.113).

The diminished emphasis on family in post-reform textbooks may appear contradictory with neoconservative character of the JDP government, yet I suggest that the JDP has developed ways of dealing with such contradiction. The idea of family and its importance, for example, is addressed by post-reform textbooks *only* to the extent which the emphasis would not overshadow the individualisation aspect of neoliberalism. As Apple (2006) reminds us, those governments who are *both* neoliberal and conservative aim to alter people's understanding of collectivism, and to replace the idea of membership of collective group with the idea of individualism which encourages everyone to maximize their own interests. The post-reform textbooks' diminished emphasis on family and also society, in this context, does not challenge the neoconservative side of the JDP, and shows similarities with policies implemented in other countries (see Hiroko, 2008; Lerner, 2000). Furthermore, as a way to serve both neoliberal and neoconservative ideology, the Party introduced the principles of neoliberalism into the education system with the 2004 reform and the principles of neoconservatism were integrated with the inclusion of a number of elective religious courses in 2012 (for a discussion on this amendment, see Güven, 2012).

The post-reform textbooks also differ in terms of their emphasis on the participation of businesses in public service. A section in the fifth grade textbook entitled *Onlar birer hayırsever* (They Are All Philanthropists) discusses the participation of the business sector in public service, stating that "well-known businessmen and companies of our country carry out social projects through their charitable foundations. They work

for the public by being active in different social spheres, such as education, health, art and sport” (Karagöz *et al.*, 2006a, p.150). The appearance of the business community’s participation in the public sphere in post-reform textbooks has several crucial implications. First, public services like education and health are presented as if the business world has responsibility for them. Second, this participation implies the privatisation of public services. Although the push to privatise public services has intensified since the 1990s, Turkey has experienced the major privatisation boom in the 2000s (i.e., during the JDP era) (Öniş, 2011). For this reason, it is not surprising that participation of the business world in public services was introduced as a topic of study with the 2004 reform. Third, the emphasis on “charitable foundations” disguises the functioning of the market economy and creates an illusion of understanding of the issue of privatisation. The keyword “charity” conceals the dependency of public services on the business community. Following privatisation and the decreasing role of the state, the share of the business community in major public services, such as healthcare and education, has intensified. The passages in the post-reform textbooks, in this context, normalize the involvement of the business sector in the delivery of these services, and familiarize students with the rationality of privatisation.

Another difference between the pre- and post-reform textbooks lies in the concept of citizenship. All of the textbooks published before the reform include a section defining the responsibilities of the state and citizens. Regulating social life, protecting the country’s security, and increasing the wealth of society are among the responsibilities of the state. In return, citizens are responsible for complying with laws and regulations, participating in elections, and paying taxes. Unlike the pre-reform textbooks, the post-reform ones do not mention the state’s responsibilities to its citizens. On the contrary, certain passages indicate that the responsibilities of citizens have been broadened. The pre-reform textbooks say that students are responsible for keeping their schools and neighbourhoods clean and tidy. In the post-reform textbooks, students have different responsibilities; for instance, they are encouraged to contribute to their schools’ budgets. The fourth grade textbook includes the section *Toplum hayatında dayanışma* (Solidarity in

Social Life), and the sub-section *Kermes* (Fair). This passage narrates the story of Zeynep and Kemal, two students who have experienced problems during the academic year due to deficiencies in their primary school. In order to avoid similar problems in the future, they decide to collect donations for their school by organising a fair. The passage states “In *Kermes*, students sold products they had made in the classroom during the year, along with items donated by neighbourhood shopkeepers. By the end of *Kermes*, they had earned a great amount of money, which was used for their school’s renovation” (Tekerek *et al.*, 2006, p.135).

This example illustrates that students are expected to adopt responsibility for the renovation of their school. It normalizes a situation in which students can and should provide the funding necessary for its reconstruction. An absence of these kinds of examples in pre-reform textbooks signals a change in the state’s expectations of its citizens. Existing studies in the literature have underlined that one of the major outcome of neoliberal policies is the individualisation of responsibility (e.g., Čeplak, 2012; Cheshire and Lawrence, 2005; Hiroko, 2008; Luxton, 2010), which refers to “the process of transferring responsibility for social and personal welfare from the state to individuals” (Čeplak, 2012, p.1098). I argue that the passage, *Kermes*, is an example of this process, as it addresses that the state no longer assumes sole responsibility for the welfare of its schools; instead, it aims to shape a particular type of individual who feels responsible for it themselves. The passage further reflects the amendments made in the structure of courses. For example, those materials that students develop as a part of their classroom activity and/or homework have turned into a commodity to be sold in *Kermes*. I suggests that commodification of students’ products shows us the changing relationship between students and their course materials, and exemplifies the preparation of students to the neoliberal economic rationality. An example below [i.e., *Yapıyorum, satıyorum* (I Make, I Sell)] from a fifth grade workbook further indicates the extent to which students are encouraged to see their products as a commodity.

The post-reform textbooks also provide several examples of production and consumption. Although sections in the pre-reform textbooks cover these subjects, they differ from those published in the post-reform period, which contain examples directing students to actively produce, consume, and sell. The fifth grade workbook contains an exercise called *Yapıyorum, satıyorum* (I Make, I Sell). This exercise is included in the curriculum as well (see İnal, Akkaymak and Yıldırım, 2014), however, its content has been extended in the textbook. It asks students to design a product, then draw a business card for their product in an empty frame on the page. They must then answer a series of questions. The second question of the exercise is, “For what purpose is your product used?” The third and fourth questions are the most interesting in terms of indicating an association between producing and selling. The third question asks, “How do you present your product to a consumer?” There are pictures of televisions, newspapers and radios representing alternative ways of advertising the product. A sub-statement suggests, “You may write advertising for all of these communication devices.” The presentation and advertisement of the product continues with a question that addresses selling, such as, “Where do you plan to sell your product?” The workbook provides options such as the bazaar, fair, home, school, neighbourhood, and other. The exercise ends with the questions, “While doing all this, at which stages did you have problems?” and “If you make another project, at which points will you be more careful?” (Karagöz *et al.* 2006b, pp.103–104).

This kind of example is not present in the pre-reform textbooks, which ask questions such as “What kind of agricultural products are produced in the region that you live in?” and “Are there any industrial organisations in your region? What do they produce?” The example from the post-reform textbooks shows that production now occurs with the express purpose of selling, and thus of earning money. As the new textbooks demonstrate, educational reforms in Turkey now encourage ten- or eleven-year-old children to actively think about their role in production, marketing and selling. One of the crucial points in the exercise is the presentation of schools as a place for students to sell their products. This implies that schools are not only places in which students are educated, but also where the market can enter. All these indicate that, in

the neoliberal era, education seeks to emphasize the importance of economic relations and aims to cause students to internalize consumption and production habits.

Furthermore, the first chapter of the fifth grade textbook mentions the association between advertising and making money. A passage at the beginning of this chapter stresses the importance and process of publishing a school magazine. It is written from the point of view of a student, and states, “we provide the money necessary to publish our magazine through advertisements” (Karagöz, 2006a, p.18). This stands in contrast to pre-reform textbooks, which do not include the concept of advertising at all. Advertisement entered textbooks with the 2004 reform. This was chiefly because of the fact that, as argues Hartley (2009), consumerism had become more important in recent decades. Addressing the impact of advertisements on human beings, Gitlin (1979) states that they make us believe and behave as if we are for the market, but not for the public, as if we are more consumer than citizen (in Apple, 1982).

Another example concerning advertisement can be found in the fourth chapter of the fifth grade textbook, which contains other key subjects such as encouraging students to compete, sell and mass-produce. Although it is a long passage, it is worth quoting in full.

We Are Also Producers

Bengisu, Anil and Cem learned that there was going to be a kite festival in their town next Sunday. Bengisu suggested that her friends make a kite together. First, they developed a plan and divided the labour. Anil offered to make some kites to sell. Their kite had to be different and of better quality than the others.

They designed the kite in a marbled pattern with a hexagonal shape and a colourful tail. They also found a name for their kite: ‘marbled kite’. They did not forget to prepare advertising posters.

There were many colourful and varied kites at the festival. However, the marbled kite attracted all the

attention. Their advertisements were a big contribution to this attention. The kids received five orders on the first day of the festival. They decided to get together every weekend to make new kites. Bengisu had a dream of working in aircraft engineering. She began to think about that more seriously.

They imagined themselves working in a plane company as designers of the most popular flying models. They even thought about setting up a plane factory and producing their own designs (Karagöz *et al.*, 2006a, pp.112–113).

At the very beginning of the passage, it is implied that the purpose is not only to attend the festival, but to sell a product. Even though this is only a festival and not a competition, emphasis is placed upon making ‘different and better-quality’ kites than the other students. This and other passages encourage students to compete through the focus of neoliberalism. Integration of these examples into textbooks verifies that the purpose of educational systems in the neoliberal era is the promotion of competition and self-interest (Giroux, 2008, p.113).

The focus on competition in the new textbooks also implies that it is necessary to be competitive in order to be successful. To be able to prosper in the competition-oriented neoliberal world, individuals must actually become entrepreneurs themselves. This signals neoliberalism’s perception of students as human capital (Apple, 2004, p.99; Read, 2009, p.28). Consequently, the main purpose of neoliberal reform in general is to transform the cultural perception of a good society and a responsible citizen. It seeks to produce a good student who will be compatible with the market through continual willingness to be enterprising (Apple 2001, p.414). Therefore, post-reform textbooks are full of implications concerning the entrepreneurial nature of the neoliberal world. For example, the subject of entrepreneurship is added during the specific days and weeks⁸ after the reform, while it does not appear pre-reform. Even though entrepreneurship does not feature significantly in the quantitative content analysis, there are several examples in the 2006 textbook that implicitly address the subject. The fifth grade workbook, for

instance, contains several examples addressing entrepreneurship. One exercise introduces a young entrepreneur, Mehmet, who is about the same age as the fifth grade students. The introduction of the exercise reads:

Mehmet is 12 years old and lives in Palamutbükü, Datça, Muğla. He dreams about establishing *chain stores* in the future which would *market* the organic products produced in his village. He believes that in order to make his dream come true, he has to have a *business administration* education [emphasis added].

After this explanation, students are asked the following questions,

Q-1: What products could Mehmet sell?

Q-2: By whom, where and how could Mehmet's products be produced?

Q-3: What could we do to contribute to our family budget?

Q-4: Mehmet wants to sell one more of his products. What do you suggest he do?

Q-5: What schools should Mehmet attend to get a business administration degree?

Q-6: Please draw an advertising poster in the blank at left for the promotion of Mehmet's products (Karagöz *et al.*, 2006b, pp.101–102).

The text exemplifies the presence of market-oriented discourse in the new textbooks. Gök (1999) argues that the current educational system serves as an internalisation of the state's ideology, in which schools prepare and direct students to the occupations necessary for the market economy. The examples given in the post-reform textbook indicate that students are led to think like entrepreneurs, salespeople and businessmen. They are expected to anticipate the need for a product, then design and market it. The post-reform textbooks verify the argument that states, in the neoliberal era, create appropriate market conditions, including the production of entrepreneurial individuals who are enterprising and competitive. The emphasis on entrepreneurship

and competition in post-reform textbooks indicates that the national education system aims for compliance with new skill demands, thereby helping the state become a competitive actor in the global and neoliberal world.

The findings of the present study show that the post-reform textbooks and workbooks possess a market-friendly structure; they were prepared specifically to adhere to the requirements of a global economy dominated by neoliberal ideology. Several passages, examples, exercises, activities, and assignments are designed to make students reflect upon the educational impact of neoliberal ideology. Since education is not a mechanical process (Apple, 1982), the integration of neoliberal discourse into the curriculum does not necessarily mean that all students educated with the new curriculum will be market-oriented. On the other hand, results of the analyses show that the new textbooks include a more neoliberalism-centred discourse, which may lead students to market- and cost/benefit-oriented thinking.

Conclusion

The practice and philosophy of neoliberalism is transforming educational systems. Educational reforms in many countries, including Turkey, show evidence of curriculum and pedagogical changes. These reforms, which have been structured on the constructivist model, are market-friendly, and seek to harmonize the content of education with neoliberal ideology. Regular focus on policy facilitates consideration of a significant fact of modern life: power is now exercised less through brute force, and more through knowledge and information (Popkewitz, 2000).

Neoliberalism is underpinned by a rise in the importance of knowledge as capital in the twenty-first century, thereby forcing countries to make amendments to their educational spheres (Olssen and Peters, 2005). This article elucidates the transformation of education through the analysis of the reform initiated in Turkey. The findings of the analyses of the Social Studies textbooks demonstrate that the 2004 Primary School Education Reform introduced neoliberal discourse into the Turkish educational system. In line with the argument that the educational system serves neoliberalism by leading students to skills and

competencies necessary to become part of the marketplace (Apple, 2001; Harris, 2007; Hursh, 2005; Read, 2009), several passages and exercises in the post-reform textbooks reference neoliberal language, including the concept of individualism. Changes in primary school Social Studies textbooks show that the Ministry of National Education seeks to promote neoliberal ideology by encouraging student conformity to market norms. Considering the target group of this reform, it is striking that children only ten or eleven years old are encouraged to comply with the neoliberal values.

In short, the educational system in Turkey provides a sphere for human freedom and social justice whose borders are determined by the requirements of the neoliberal market. However, the formation of individuals who fit into the current economy should not stand as the sole purpose of knowledge; instead, knowledge should focus upon the promotion of human freedom and social justice (Giroux 2008). Through the practice of a critical assessment of the acceptance of neo-liberalism in education, we should seek for alternative models of education. As argues Hill:

Spaces do exist for counter - *hegemonic* struggle - sometimes (as now) narrower, sometimes (as in Western Europe and North America, the 1960s and 1970s) broader. Having recognised the limitations, though, and having recognised that there is *some* potential for egalitarian transformative change, whatever space does exist should be exploited. Whatever we can do, we must do, however fertile or unfertile the soil at any given moment in any particular place (Hill 2003, p.23).

Despite a global shift in introducing neoliberal rhetoric into educational systems over the course of the last decades, there are still a number of countries, such as Venezuela (Griffiths 2010) and Brazil (Apple 2006), moving a counter direction and showing us that neoliberal policies in education can be interrupted with substantive policy alternatives. Similar to these countries, the education system in Turkey should be replaced

with a system promoting values of social solidarity, critical thinking, and critical pedagogy.

Notes

¹ Although constructivist and student-centered teaching models are not identical, they are interrelated. They share much the same instructional philosophy, and attempt to create and adapt curricula to meet the needs of learners, manage more active classrooms, and deal with accountability issues regarding students' learning (see Windschitl, 2002). In this article, I consider a method of instruction that focuses upon students, encourages them to participate in class activities through various exercises, and allows them to integrate the knowledge they gain at school into their daily lives within both student-centered and constructivist educational models.

² During the period between 1991 and 2002, Turkey was ruled by coalition governments.

³ The Programmes for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an internationally standardized assessment that was jointly developed by participating economies and administered to 15-year-olds in schools (visit: http://www.pisa.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_32252351_32235907_1_1_1_1_1,00.html).

⁴ The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an international comparative study of fourth-grade students' reading literacy (visit: <http://nces.ed.gov/Surveys/PIRLS/>).

⁵ The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) provides reliable and relevant data on the mathematics and science achievement of U.S. 4th- and 8th-grade students compared to that of students in other countries (visit: <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/>).

⁶ In the pre-2004 era, only main textbooks were used. However, since the reform, both a main textbook and a workbook are used.

⁷ Execution of the analysis by the researcher only can be considered a limitation, because there is no double check of the analysis; that is, there is a lack of inter-rater reliability. In order to minimize possible errors, overcome the limitation of being the sole researcher, and improve the reliability of the study, the textbooks were re-coded in May, 2010.

⁸ Within the framework of the Primary and Secondary Education Social Activities Regulation, certain days and weeks of the year are designated for the celebration and commemoration days of specific community values.

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