

Being a Teacher in the East of Turkey

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Abstract

In today's Turkey, the problems faced in the provincial regions have several causes and dimensions. At first glance we can count a set of them: insufficiency of the resources allocated to education and the inability to use the education budget effectively with proper planning; frequent central restructuring of the education system without taking immediate necessary practical steps especially in the provincial regions; difficulties in retaining the experienced teachers in the provincial regions as a result of the problems in teacher appointment system and the socio-cultural and economic conditions of these undeveloped regions. This study is a qualitative research based on general descriptive research design. The research's study group consists of teachers and school administrators working at public schools at the primary, secondary and high school levels in Diyarbakır, Muş, and Yüksekova cities of the eastern part of Turkey during the 2013-2014 academic year. In this study, educational problems experienced in the eastern part of Turkey are examined and discussed based on the teachers' opinion within its historical and social context by focusing on the hardship and educational problems faced by the teachers in the region. In the first section of the study, information related to the research and explanations about the research method is presented. In the second section, findings of the study and interpretations of them are put forward. In the last section of the study, the results based on the findings of the study are summarized and several suggestions focusing on teachers' problems are made with regard to establish a systematic and effective education system in the eastern part of Turkey.

Keywords: *Teacher issues, education reform, neo-liberalism, and Kurdish problem.*

Introduction

We were excitingly waiting for the teacher assignments in a seaside town of Aegean region. Arzu graduated as a primary-school teacher, and spent many hours in the Civil Servant Selection Examination (KPSS)¹ preparation course. Arzu also applied for the limited number of teacher quota announced by the Ministry of Education with the exam score she got. It is very difficult for her to find a chance to be assigned among tens of thousands of primary-school teacher graduates! If she was appointed, we would not care for the rest. We presented our choices. Our choices were restricted to the eastern part of Turkey. Very few positions

were announced in the western part of Turkey. Villages, towns, cities, distant and far away locations, inconvenient and more inconvenient ones along with the fear of not being assigned... Our last choice was “anywhere vacant”. It was the times that a tough political climate dominates the eastern part of Turkey: news on clashes and deaths, urban demonstrations, closed shutters, masked demonstrators, armoured police vehicles, and tear gas.

We are people of modernity! We would not leave our destiny to the hands of any “authority” other than ourselves! In fact, we try to riot against our destiny by choosing the position to be given to us! Our choice was Hakkari –Yüksekova! And yes we won! Arzu’s hometown is Edirne, a city in the far western part of Turkey. The province she was assigned to is one of two provinces in the far eastern part of Turkey! Beyond the border is Iran. Approximately 35 km.

The Ministry of Education could not fit into the calendar again! Recently assigned teachers had to reach the locations they were assigned as soon as possible, and start to work. We planned to go by plane to Van. However, there were no available seats in Turkish Airlines flights. There were two private companies. One’s flights were full; and the other one demanded half of a teacher’s salary for a single seat. We got on a bus from Izmir, in the Aegean region. We passed through Turkey horizontally from one end to the other. If everything was alright it would take 18-20 hours. At last, we were in Van. It seemed as if we went to a different country! The damages of the October 2011 big earthquake disaster were not relieved yet; half-damaged buildings to be demolished, desperate people living in containers along the road ... Yüksekova minibuses had already grabbed our luggage. The one who grabbed the luggage also took the passengers! We were again on the road. We were climbing up in company with Kurdish ballads. Naked mountains, deep valleys, an empty geography, then came the Zab River, so it was that ruthless river subject mentioned in the ballads... Military control points that are not very strict! We were searched three times in three hours! Controls on papers and luggage, the gun barrels pointed at us from the shielded observation towers... At last we arrived in Yüksekova. There were no vacant rooms at the teacher’s lodge. Several hotels in poor quality, recently assigned teachers rushing around as they dragged their suitcases and parents after them with anxious eyes...

We had to rent a flat, buy household goods, settle down, and surrender to the “security gate” of the town’s National Education Directorate! The town was big, what we needed was available, people were friendly; but the poverty stretched out in front of us like a hand of a little child as soon as we step out of the minibus, and relatively crowded traffic full of luxury autos for such a town; widespread poverty on the one side, and a concentrated prosperity, and dust and mass on the other. Here was Yüksekova!

It was hard to find an apartment for rent because we were late. The good ones had already been rented. There were almost no condominiums. Buildings belonged to a single person. The rents were relatively high considering the town was in a rural geography. Tradesmen were very affectionate and helpful to us, since they consider us as their benefactor. Yet, they were not as greedy as their counterparts in metropolises! It took days to find an apartment for rent, but we could; we provided vital commodities, sorted out the details, and at the end, Arzu could start to work. Then, it was time for me to go back. The one who remained was sad and anxious, so was being a teacher in the eastern part of Turkey, it started for my wife Arzu, as I explained above. However, it is wrong to claim that this issue is unique only to the present day Turkey. Yet, the problem has a deep historical and a very complex social background. One of the fundamental and persistent problems of the Ottoman-Turkish modernization process, which has a history of two centuries, is the failure to create a systematic and effective education system in the peripheral regions of the country. This has been such a chronic problem that there are still quite serious educational problems ongoing in the peripheral settlements of Turkey.

In today's Turkey, the problems faced in the provincial regions have several causes and dimensions. At first glance we can count a set of them: insufficiency of the resources allocated to education and the inability to use the education budget effectively with proper planning; frequent central restructuring of the education system without taking immediate necessary practical steps especially in the provincial regions; difficulties in retaining the experienced teachers in the provincial regions as a result of the problems in teacher appointment system and the socio-cultural and economic conditions of these undeveloped regions.

In Turkey where the population and demand for different types and levels of education have been increasing rapidly, a proportion of the National Education Ministry's budget in the

central state budget has also been growing. However similar steady increases were not observed in the share of the National Education Ministry's budget in National Income during the same period. For the above mentioned period during which a comprehensive educational restructuring project has been on the table, it is clear that the size of the education budget was/is not sufficient to reach the desired objectives.

One of the reasons behind the teachers' problems in Turkey is the frequent, rapid and radical modifications in the structure and operation of the education system initiated and implemented by the governments. In recent years, education system in Turkey has been being restructured rapidly but generally without any previous detailed preparations and without any appeal to the opinions of the relevant social segments, experts, unions and universities. As a corollary of such modifications, a couple of educational problems inevitably emerge.

By the enactment of 1997 Dated and 4306 Numbered Law, as of 1997-1998 academic year, 8 years-long compulsory education system was established in Turkey. During the period when this educational policy was initiated, there were ongoing efforts to overcome such problems as teacher deficit and educational inadequacies. When time clicked on 2012, the formal education system in Turkey went under a new restructuring process (famously known as 4+4+4 regulation) with a series of amendments made in the Law No 6287, the Law No 222 of Primary Instruction and Education and the National Education Basic Law No 1739. The above-mentioned regulation redefined the length of compulsory education as 12 years composed of 3 consecutive 4 years-long periods corresponding to primary, secondary and high school levels. Regulations based on the Law No 6387 did not only lead to pedagogical risks such as disrupting the educational integrity or problems in the mobility between stages but also to serious infrastructure problems (İnal, 2012).

Most important reasons behind the inability to establish an effective education system in the provincial settlements are associated with teacher employment, creation of suitable educational and living conditions for the appointed teachers and the retention of qualified teachers in such regions.

Until 1980's, deficit in the number of teachers in almost every field of education was a chronic problem for which various solutions in different periods were proposed and tried to be implemented in Turkey. However starting from 1980's, the deficit problem turned into its

opposite, a surplus in the number of teachers and mass unemployment of the teachers became a major actual problem. Because of the surplus problem, the state started to make selection examinations first of which was held in 1999. Later, these examinations were incorporated into a statewide and more institutionalized form known as "Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS)" which is held on regular periods today. KPSS for Teaching Staff is an examination developed to sort the teacher candidates for the teaching positions announced by the Ministry of National Education. Due to their KPSS scores, applicants were appointed to the limited number of vacancies announced by the ministry or remain unemployed if their exam scores are below the bottom line.

According to the National Education Ministry's data, by September 1st 2013, there were 69.415 administrators (of education institutions) and 809.014 educators 739.595 of who were tenured teachers on the payroll of National Education Ministry. If we add the number of untenured wage teachers (the exact quantity of which is unknown but estimated to be around 50.000), it can be claimed that for about 860.000 educators were on the Ministry's payroll in 2013. 40.000 new teachers' appointments that took place in the first period of 2014 should be added to this number and the number of teachers who left the system in this period for various reasons such as retirement, resignation and death should be deducted from it. Based on the announcement of the Ministry, teacher deficit is 100.000. On the other hand, due to calculations -based on OECD standards- made by the trade unions organized in the fields of science and education, deficit is more than twice the number the Ministry have announced. Furthermore teacher deficit is mainly a problem of the provincial regions and especially of the schools in the eastern parts of the country.

According to the "Teachers' Appointment and Displacement Regulation (2006)" Turkey's geography is divided into 3 service regions by grouping together the provinces due to their similarities in terms of teacher requirements, geographical positions, economical and social development levels, transportation facilities and public service objectives. In each service region, regarding the difficulties in teacher appointment and retention, education institutions which are officially affiliated to the provincial and district administrations and are similar and close to each other are grouped further into 6 service regions. For the appointed teachers, there's a compulsory service term liability varying between 3 to 7 years depending on their service points based on the place and the field of appointment. Teachers who don't exhaust the

compulsory service term cannot apply for a new appointment except for some serious reasons such as health problems, separated family, etc.

Vast majority of the teacher positions, which the Ministry announces annually are in the provincial regions especially at the schools in Eastern Turkey. Yet the teacher deficit problem in these regions is far from being solved. While one of the reasons of this situation is the obvious difficulty of appointing sufficient number of teachers to such regions, another more important reason is that it is extremely difficult to retain the appointed teachers in those settlements under such unfavourable conditions.

For some regions of the Eastern Turkey, which are distinguishable from other provincial regions with their peculiar features, we can add the tensions between the local people and the state's national education approach and policies, ethnic compositions (mainly Kurdish and Zaza) and the corresponding politicization styles to the above-mentioned conditions of the deprived regions. The roots of this tension can be traced back to the Turkish modernization process characterized by the nation-creation policies as one of its main components.

Education in the modernization process refers first of all to an activity performing the function of socializing the individuals in accordance with the nation-state forms. For Gellner (1992), making basic education compulsory is critically important from the perspective of nation-creation processes. Standardized formal education plays an important role in the functioning of modern society. Through compulsory education, the values and aims specified by the nation-state as desirable are internalized by the citizens. Linguistic and cultural unity are the two important objectives of nation-creation policies. Regarding these objectives, Smith (2004) claims that the ideal of nationalist union which is based on the wholeness of the country and the nation attributes a special importance to the linguistic unity.

After the collapse of Ottoman Empire, the administrative cadres who established the State of Turkey and shaped the hegemony system moved with the idea of establishing a modern nation-state and of creating a modern nation, that was why, they took the historical development of western states and especially that of France as reference points.

Administrative cadres of the Republic understood the main goal - which they encoded as "renewal, modernization and catching up with the modern civilizations" - as establishing a modern nation-state, creating a nation having the secular values and is internally homogenous

in terms of language, culture and belief systems. Therefore, during the Republican period, while the reform efforts which had started with Mahmut II were continued with the then newly added objectives such as secularism and nation-creation / nationalism, the educational reforms aiming at the multidimensional development of the education system occupied a special and significant space among the other republican reforms.

Throughout its history, social reactions based on conservatism, religion and ethnicity accompanied the "republican period of the Turkish modernization process". As the results of the state administrators' perception of such reactions as threats against the regime and / or of the expression of some of these reactions in the form of upheavals, the political establishment became more authoritarian and cracked down these reactions. However, in 1960's, social reactions and movements some of which also had an ethnic base in eastern part of the country surfaced again and also under the effect of globalization, in the eastern part of the country, a bloody armed conflict has emerged in 1980's that have been going on for decades. During this violent process characterized by an armed struggle between the state's security apparatuses and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which was established in 1978 but mainly became an effective force in the middle of 1980's, tens of thousands of people were killed and the security became a major concern in the region. Among the ones who lost their lives were several state officials and many teachers. In the east, security remained as a problem during 2000's as well. Such problems took the forms of kidnapping of teachers, arsons targeting schools and boycotts organized by the PKK. Security problems in the east got relatively relieved with the initiation of the "solution process"ⁱⁱ by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) (which have been in power since 2002) during its third term in 2011. However, it is not clear how this process - which is being proposed as a solution to the Kurdish problem and "a cure to end the terror" - will proceed.

In this study educational problems in the Eastern Turkey was examined and discussed by focusing on the work-related and educational problems of the teachers working in such regions and by emphasizing the historical and social context framing these problems and by appealing to the opinions of these teachers. In the first section of this study, readers were given information about the study in general and the methods utilized. In the second section, findings and the interperetations of them were presented. The last section of this study included the results obtained based on the findings and the suggestions about possible ways to

establish a systematic and effective education system in the East along with suggestions focusing on the problems of teachers working in such regions.

Method

This study is a qualitative research based on general descriptive research design. General descriptive model is a research approach aiming to describe a present or past situation as it is (Karasar, 2009). Qualitative research is a kind of scientific inquiry wherein a qualitative process is followed to reveal the perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic manner in their natural settings via the utilization of qualitative data gathering methods such as observation, interviewing and document analysis (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). In this study, semi-structured interviewing method was used.

In this research, study group includes the teachers and the school administrators working at the primary and secondary public schools and public high schools in Turkey's eastern cities of Diyarbakır, Muş, and the town Yüksekova during the 2013-2014 academic year.

There are seven administrative regions in Turkey. These three cities where the participants of this research were selected are located in East Anatolia and South-East Anatolia. These cities can be said to be the most deprived regions of Turkey in terms of a set of factors. For instance, according to the Turkey Statistical Institute (TSI) data (2013), education and health indicators in these regions are relatively bad; unemployment rates are substantially higher than the country average; per-capita income is lower than the country average; there are serious infrastructure problems; distribution of income is worse than the countrywide average; population growth rates are higher than the average and therefore the rate of young population is high.

Having population of more than one million, Diyarbakır is one of the two largest and relatively more developed cities (the other is Gaziantep) in South-East Anatolia. But this city exhibits stereotypical features of Eastern Turkey. According to TSI data (2013), unemployment rate in Diyarbakır is 18.7 %, while the country average is 9.7 %. There are also serious educational problems in the city such as a high student - teacher ratio, big class size and teacher shortage in general.

With a population of 150,000, Muş is an underdeveloped city in East Anatolia. Like Diyarbakır, Muş also has the typical features of Eastern Turkey. According to TSI data (2013), unemployment rate in Muş is 10.4 %. There's a significant level of teacher shortage in certain fields and the number of students per teacher is above the country average.

Although Yüksekova is administratively a province of the city of Hakkari, its population is almost twice the population of Hakkari. According to the official numbers (2014), the city has a population of 80,000 people. Like in the above-mentioned two cities, unemployment is rampant also in Yüksekova. Economic and social life is characterized by a general backwardness. Educational indicators are awful. Student – teacher ratio is highly above the average. According to the “Address-Based Registration System” (2012), 10.832 people have never been enrolled in the school system in Yüksekova. 7.052 of these people are female.

Diyarbakır, Muş and especially Yüksekova are the centers of Kurdish politicization. Depending on the political conjuncture, serious security problems concerning the teachers arise from time to time. Muş and Yüksekova are quite far away from the Turkey's developed centers. While the existence of airports in Muş and Diyarbakır are significant advantage for the residents, there's no such facility in Yüksekova. Accommodation facilities in both cities are in sufficient and underdeveloped, making it hard to find comfortable houses. Moreover, social and cultural facilities are very limited compared to the western centers.

65 teachers and 9 school administrators participated in this research who are working in the cities of Diyarbakır, Muş and Yüksekova. In the Table 1 you will find some indicators about participants of the study;

Table 1. The Numbers of Teachers and School Administrators with Respect to Various Variables

Variables	Levels	n
Education Level	Primary School	42
	Secondary School	21
	High School	11
	Total	74

Gender	Woman	39
	Man	35
	Total	74
Working Status	Teacher	65
	School Administrator	9
	Total	74
Work Experience	1-5 years	56
	6-10 years	11
	11 years and more	7
	Total	74
The place where her/his wife/husband or fiance lives	In her/his work vicinity / close to her/him	9
	Outside of her/his work vicinity / far away from her/him	11
	Total	20
Marital Status	Bachelor	54
	Married	16
	Engaged	4
	Total	74
The place where her/his family lives	In her/his work vicinity / close to her/him	25
	Outside of her/his work vicinity / far away from her/him	49
	Total	74
Her/his hometown	East/Southeast towns	21
	Other towns of Turkey	53
	Total	74

42 % of participants work in the primary schools as seen above, 21 % of them in secondary schools and 11 % of them in high school according to education level variable; 39 of them are women and 35 of them are men. According to working status, 65 of them are teachers and 9

of them are administrators. 56 of them have 1-5 years of work experience, 11 of them have 6-10 years of work experience, and just 7 of them have work experience of 11 years or longer. 54 of participants are bachelor, 16 of them are married and 4 of them are engaged. 11 of 20 married and engaged participants' spouses or fiancés are out of or far away from their work vicinity, and 9 of them are in or near their work vicinity. 49 participants' families live out of or far away from their work vicinity and 25 participants' families live in or near their work vicinity. Finally 21 participants' hometowns are in East or Southeast of Turkey and 53 participants' hometowns are in other parts of Turkey.

For data collection, two different interview forms were developed for this study. While developing, rewriting and reorganizing the questions, first relevant literature was searched, secondly the questions were modified according to three academicians' critics and suggestions who are experts in the research area, and then four interviews with teachers were verification of the questions.

The first part was designed to gather the personal and demographic information and the second part contained semi-structured questions. In this study, semi-structured questions were mainly in two subject areas; first category was about educational environment and problems in the schools; second part contains teachers and administrators' perception about living conditions in the city. Two main questions and a set of sub-questions about these categories were asked to the participants. In this way, based on the self-reflective opinions of teachers, researchers aimed at determining the concrete problems related to being a teacher in eastern part of Turkey. Also there were some other questions about teacher perspectives about the solutions of the problems. Participants were interviewed and the collected data were analyzed and described. While performing descriptive analysis, data based on the answers to each question were encoded in the form of themes, the frequencies of these themes were calculated and the unique replies were separately reported and interpreted. In addition to these, collected data were evaluated in relation to the personal information of the participants.

Findings and Interpretations

In this section, gathered data were analyzed descriptively, salient themes were determined and through the use of content analysis these themes were interpreted together with the topics they're related to.

Educational Problems and the Solutions Proposed

The first question asked to the participants were about the educational problems they face in the region they are working which was followed and detailed by sub-questions about the physical conditions of their school, the characteristics of the students and of their families and the school administration. According to the answers given by the participants, the most emphasized themes appeared to be the lack of sufficient state funding allocated for the schools and the resulting negative situation in terms of equipment and physical conditions of the schools (n=54). In this context, we can enumerate some of the typical statements as follows:

Resources provided for the school are not sufficient. Money is being collected from the families. And this makes the teacher and the family confront with each other.

Equipment in the school is insufficient, there are no physics and chemistry laboratories, no library, sport room, etc., nothing. Playground for the children is limited. After 4+4+4, all the closed areas in the school were converted into classrooms in order to keep teachers busy.

Ministry tries to satisfy our needs only in the form of materials. For example it gives coal, but transportation is our duty. It does not give any wood at all. At the beginning of the year, it gives dye but the painter is the teacher; once in a year it gives cleaning material but this year it did not hire any school-worker.

When the topic is evaluated from a technical point of view, this theme expressing the inadequacy of the public funds, poor physical conditions and the insufficiency of equipment can be linked to then new social and economic policies of 1980's. Since 1980's a set of fundamental modifications have been being carried out in the field of education in Turkey. These processes have been transforming the fundamental economic and social policies and restructuring not only the field of education but the entire public sector (Güler, 2003). Public sector reform policies which became effective in Turkey in 1990's and were started to be implemented in close relation to the similar global regulation policies which themselves were the product of permanent global crisis, made the education become the object of a holistic transformation like the other fields of public services and resulted in important changes in basic dimensions of it, that is, in its aims, structure and processes.

Today, the field of education in Turkey is being regulated on the one hand via the neoliberal policies targeting the transformation of the field in accordance with the market-oriented principles and methods and on the other hand through the neo-conservative policies trying to fill the authority and legitimacy vacuum created in social sphere by the neoliberal policies.ⁱⁱⁱThe more the neoliberal policies are getting widespread, the more the education is

being treated as a form of commodity and pulled into the field of market relations in terms of both financing approaches and the educational content. In this way, while limiting the space which the state occupies in the field of education is a high valued policy preference and it is frequently being proposed that the state should provide educational services in accordance with the market relations (public management), the field of education is being restructured as a profitable sector creating economic value. During this process which can be called as the "structural transformation of education in Turkey", the resources which the state allocates for the education becomes more and more inadequate and insufficient for the provision of high quality education. Therefore, the schools have chronic financial problems. This problem is one of the main barriers on the way to an effective education practice in the socially and economically deprived regions (Soydan, 2006; 2012; Polat, 2013 ; İnal, Akkaymak and Yıldırım, 2014).

Rapid increases in student numbers because of high fertility rates in Turkey, ensuing efforts and regulations for increasing the schooling rates and the increased duration of education all necessitate the allocation of continuously increasing amounts of public resources for the education. Yet the Education Ministry's budget is far from providing sufficient financial resources for the schools. Hence the school system is either destined to provide low quality education or forced to search for the resources on its own in order to improve the conditions. Relevant examples can be found in the scientific literature. For instance, the study of Yolcu (2007) revealed the fact that at the primary education level, the schools appeal to 13 different extra-budgetary sources/types of financial resources. The most frequently appealed source is the families. Yet, according to the Article 42 of the Turkish Constitution that is in force since 1982 "primary education shall be compulsory and free for all citizens, men and women" and due to the Article 2 of the "Primary Education and Education Law" 222 of 1961, "primary education shall be provided at schools; be compulsory for the girls and boys at the school age and free at public schools".

In the following table, spanning the period between 2003 and today, proportions of the National Education Ministry's Budget in General Budget and in National Income are presented for the readers.

Table 2. The Proportions of the Budget of the National Education Ministry in the Central Budget and in National Income

Years	Proportion of The National Education Ministry's Budget in General Budget (%)	Proportion of The National Education Ministry's Budget in National Income (%)
2003	6,91	2,85
2004	8,53	3,00
2005	9,53	3,07
2006	9,50	2,95
2007	10,42	3,40
2008	10,51	3,13
2009	10,64	2,51
2010	9,80	2,74
2011	10,92	2,81
2012	11,16	2,74
2013	11,76	3,02
2014	12,77	3,24

Source: Compiled from the National Education Ministry statistics.

As shown in the Table 2, while in 2003 when the effects of the big 2001 crisis was still going on, the share of the National Education Ministry Budget in the General Budget was 6.91 %, this ratio took the values in the interval of 9 - 13 % in the following years. For 2015, this ratio was planned as 11.3 %. Based solely on this data, it can be claimed that the National Education Ministry's budget has a significantly high share which has been increasing year by year. However, these ratios do not indicate any substantial improvements achieved compared to past. For instance between the years 1990 and 1995, this ratio was much higher (in 1992, it was 14.56 %). It should also be mentioned that the share of the Ministry's budget in National

income did not change significantly during the above-mentioned years. While this ratio was 2.85 % in 2003, it was 3.40 % in 2007 and 3.24 % in 2014.

An important problem related to the physical conditions of the schools is the over-crowded classrooms and schools. In crowded classrooms, it is almost impossible to provide an effective instruction and education for the students and in crowded schools, there are substantial problems in the utilization of school facilities such as canteens, libraries, laboratories, toilets, sport fields and the school gardens if these facilities ever exist. The solution of these problems rely on the construction of new schools and classrooms and on the improvement of the existing ones with the funds that should be provided by the Ministry. That's why the investment budget of the National Education Ministry is extremely important. The share of the investment budget in the Ministry's overall budget is far from being sufficient. While the share of the investment budget was 19.90 % in 2000, it decreased to 14.53 % in 2003; to 9.68 % in 2004 and to its minimum value 4.58 % in 2009. Because of the urgent need of new schools and classrooms as the result of the then new regulation known as 4+4+4 in 2013, this ratio increased to 8.33 % in 2013 and approximately to 9 % in 2014. Nevertheless, these amounts are still not sufficient for an adequate improvement in the physical infrastructure of education.

When the answers of the participants to the question on "educational problems" were analyzed, it was observed that the second most frequently emphasized theme (n=47) is the inadequate social and economic conditions of the parents negatively effecting the educational competencies of the students. In this respect, some typical statements are as follows:

Economic conditions of the families are very bad, most of them cannot satisfy even their basic needs, and they are also unconcerned about their children and their education.

Education should not be provided only in school. Families should also support the education process. But the socio-economic conditions of the families are inadequate.

Extended family type is widespread, there is polygamy, there are too many siblings, children are in desperate need of love and concern.

School district is home to people who have been forced to migrate, could not properly adapt to their new environment and have bad social and economic conditions. Families do not have sufficient financial power to support their children's education and not have adequate consciousness and competence to deal with their education.

According to Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI) data labeled as "Regional Poverty Numbers and Ratio due to Income-based Relative Poverty Limit (2006-2013)", for the year 2013, while the poverty ratio is 2.4 % in West Marmara Region and 5.3 % in Ege Region; it is 32.5 % in South-East Region. When the provinces in Turkey are classified into 7 categories due to the poverty index, it is observed that the provinces in East and South-East Regions generally fall into the top 1st or 2nd - poorest provinces- categories. Muş, one of the cities where the participants of this study were selected, is one of the 4 worst provinces in terms of human development level. Diyarbakır and Hakkari which Yüksekova is officially part of are members of the group having the second worst level of human development.

The 1st poorest group of provinces of which Muş is a member is assumed as poor due to the indicators related to education, health, accommodation, infrastructure, etc. In these provinces, demographic indicators such as the ratios of rural population, youth dependency and mother/baby death rates are above the country average. These provinces are also in poor conditions compared to the country average in terms of all educational indicators except the student number per academic staff and the rate of schooling in preschool level. All the health indicators of these four provinces are below the country average. Moreover, the proportion of the population which is outside the social security system in these provinces is significantly higher than the country average. Along with Diyarbakır and Hakkari, in 13 cities all of which are in eastern Turkey and are members of the second poorest group, illiteracy rate is above the country average. All of the health indicators are positively correlated with the poor economic indicators in most of these cities (Doğan, 2014, 109-112).

When the above-mentioned data is co-evaluated with the statements of the participants, it is not surprising to find out that the families cannot provide sufficient support for their children because of their inadequate socio-economic conditions. Some of the teachers who took part in this study are working at schools where the children of migrant families are enrolled. Families who were forced to migrate either because of the difficulties of rural life or of the political tensions and armed struggle related to the Kurdish problem have worse living conditions compared to the settled families. Poor and deprived conditions of these people who generally live in the peripheral districts of the cities have negative effects on their children's education.

The population growth rate in Eastern Turkey is significantly high; especially in South-East Anatolia, the average number of children per family is way above the country average

because of widespread male polygamy via religious marriage. The situation is so rampant that it is easy to have many students from the same family at the same school or even in the same classroom. Hence, it can easily be claimed that the families living in poor socio-economic conditions and having many children at the same time are able to neither financially nor psychologically support their children.

Another most frequently emphasized theme is the students' and their families' ignorance about Turkish language or their inability to use it effectively (n=39). Some typical statements concerning this problem are as follows:

More than half of the students learn Turkish in school. And this is a fairly exhausting process for us, the teachers.

Language problem is quite important, most parents do not know Turkish, that's why, we have communication problems. Even if the kids are able to read in Turkish, they have substantial problems in comprehending and conveying what they read.

Most important problem from the educational perspective is the inability to respond to the needs of students. The low levels of the students' perceptual capacities. The reason is speaking in Kurdish at home and Turkish at school. We have problems in making students perceive even the seemingly simple words and sentences.

As would be understood from the above statements, language problem stands before us as an important educational problem. A significant portion of the participants stated that children whose mother language is Kurdish start learning Turkish only after they step in the school system, use Turkish only at school or even only in classroom environment, speak Kurdish outside the school environment and especially at home and that the parents don't know Turkish properly at a sufficient level either. We can claim that starting to learn Turkish in school environment, then continuing their education via this language which they only use in their school life lead to important learning problems for the students whose mother language is Kurdish and to instructional problems for their teachers. Therefore, finding illiterate children at the level of even the 4th class is not a rare phenomenon in Eastern Turkey because of the language problem and of the higher teacher circulation rate in this region.

In addition to these, becoming literate technically in a new language does not seem to be a cure for the pedagogical problems the children experience. Each language inhabits a "meaning world" in itself and cannot be regarded as only a simple instrument of communication. Therefore, as seen in the above-mentioned statements, no matter the children

whose mother language is Kurdish can read Turkish, they would still have serious problems in comprehending and conveying what they read and their teachers would find it difficult to make them understand even the seemingly simple words and sentences. That's because these kids were born into another language inhabiting a different world of meaning.

As one of the most important components of the Kurdish problem, the issue of education in mother language has strong historical and social roots in Ottoman-Turkish modernization processes. For today, according to the Article 42 of Constitution of Turkish Republic "no language other than Turkish can be the taught to and utilized by the Turkish citizens as a mother language at the education and instruction institutions". During the 3rd term of Justice and Development Party, within the context of a political initiation named as "Solution Process" targeting the "solution" of Kurdish problem, instruction of / in Kurdish language was allowed within certain limitations.^{iv} Apart from this seemingly ineffective step in terms of solving the problem, hot debates on the issue of education in mother language are going on in Turkey.

Another educational problem mentioned frequently by the participants is the high circulation rate of teachers (n=16). Typical statements are as follows:

I'm the teacher of 4th grade primary school students. There are illiterate students. In my opinion, the reason of this situation is that the kids have a different teacher every year.

The key element for the solution of educational problems is the human factor. The ones who come here are the newly appointed people without any knowledge. We're the people who think about whether to leave in February or in August immediately after we come here. Even the students ask teachers about when they will leave.

The cities where there are teacher deficits are generally located in the eastern part of Turkey. That's why, new teachers are mostly appointed to these cities. Appointed teachers fulfill their compulsory service duties in accordance with the durational requirements and the stipulated conditions depending on the place of service. Teachers who accomplish their compulsory service or manage to claim valid excuses based on separated family, health and security problems etc. have officially recognized right to apply for a new appointment.

Until 2012, the regulation known as "provincial administration order" allowed provincial national education directorates to appoint the teachers - who arrive their area by using officially recognized excuses such as the "separated family excuse" and become redundant in

this newly arrived area - to the places where they are needed or to keep their new workplaces unchanged in case that there's no need for them at the schools in that administrative zone. Accompanied by a justification stating that there were excessive numbers of teachers accumulated in certain regions, the above-mentioned regulation was nullified in 2012. Therefore, after 2012, it became significantly difficult for teachers to change their service places by using the excuse of separated family. This issue was discussed from many angles. For instance, it was claimed that it is unconstitutional to prevent displacements based on separated family problem because according to the Article 41 of Turkish Constitution "Family is the basis of Turkish society ..." From another perspective it can be claimed that making it difficult for the teachers to change their place of work based on separated family excuse is contradictory with the political-ideological identity of the ruling Justice and Development Party which defines itself as "conservative democrat" and frequently emphasizes the importance of the unity and preservation of family.

The above-mentioned contradiction can be regarded as an example for the intermittent tensions between neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism. In other words, from a neo-liberal perspective it can be claimed that displacements due to separated family excuse result in the accumulation of teachers in certain regions and increase the number of redundant teachers which in turn increases the amount of payments made for such employees leading to higher costs, a factor that contradicts with the efficiency principle of the neo-liberal agenda. From a neo-conservative perspective, it can be stated that separateness potentially harms the family unity and contradicts with the ruling party's frequently emphasized and promoted policy of "families with many children".

Besides the circulation problem, there's another important problem related to the continuity of education: A typical academic year in East is shorter and follows an intermittent course because of the delays at the opening of schools as the result of the frequent political tensions (in recent years, schools in Eastern Turkey are usually opened after weeks-long boycotts organized around the demand for education in mother language) and because of the medical reports taken by the teachers before, during and after the academic year.

The main victims of all these conditions are the students. While it is by itself a serious problem that the first work places of inexperienced teachers are almost always the eastern cities of Turkey (as the teaching profession like many other professions can be performed

better as a person becomes more and more experienced), the interruption of education because of absent teachers who frequently take medical reports or official leaves deteriorate the problems.

Lack of proper positive interventions of the provincial education directorates on the functioning of schools and on teachers' problems is another frequently pointed theme (n=14). It can be claimed that a positive correlation exists between the amount of experience and success in the performance of administrative tasks like in teaching. However, as it can also be inferred from the above-mentioned statements of participants, directorate and school level administrators in Eastern Turkey are generally composed of people who are at the early years of their professional careers. That's why, concerning also the frequent and significant modifications put into effect in the education system along with the above-mentioned factors, it's natural for the teachers to have a set of administrative problems in those regions.

Other factors also contribute to the intensification of the problems. National Education Ministry does not have a properly operating educational calendar. In other words, Ministry affairs ranging from teacher and administrator appointments to other displacements never follow the previously announced calendar. For instance, in 2014-2015 academic year, while the schools were opened in September, approximately 40.000 newly appointed teachers were able to be at their schools not until October.

It's highly probable that the problems in the administration of education in Turkey will get deteriorated with new ramifications. According to the Article 22 of the "Law on Amendments in National Education Basic Law and in Some Laws and Decree Laws" which came into force after being published in Official Journal on 14th March 2014, directors of schools and institutions shall be appointed by the governor via the official proposal of the head of provincial national education directorate; the chief-assistant and assistant school directors shall be appointed again by the governor via the written official proposals of the director of the relevant school or institution and of the head of the provincial national education directorate. Appointments due this Law would not create new vested rights in terms of personnel affairs, appointments and promotions. "Regulation for the Appointment of the Administrators of Educational Institutions affiliated to National Education Ministry" of 10th June 2014 prepared according to the statutes of the above-mentioned Law, appointment of school administrators was fundamentally modified. Accordingly, school administrators would

be appointed for 4 years; for both new appointments and re-appointments of the administrators who complete the 4 years term, there would be performance / condition appraisals based on questionnaires and only an oral exam would be held instead of written and oral examinations both of which had been stipulated in the previous regulation.

These regulations were put into practice and tens of thousands of school administrators were scrutinized. While most of the administrators who are the members of EğitimBir-Sen which is the largest trade union in the field of education and known to be close to the government were evaluated as successful and retained their positions; most members of TürkEğitim-Sen known with its Turkist ideology and those of Eğitim-Sen which holds a stance on leftist/socialist side were evaluated as unsuccessful and appointed as teachers.

In this study, participants were not only asked about the work-related problems but also about how such problems can be solved. The opinions pointing at the responsibility of the state in providing sufficient financial support for the schools in order to improve the physical conditions and to solve the physical equipment problem were frequently uttered by the participants (n=49). Regarding this theme, some typical statements can be enumerated as follows:

National Education Ministry should allocate more allowances for the schools in East, students in this region should be supported more. Because families' economic conditions are very bad.

First problems should be determined, next sufficient amounts of resources should be transferred to the schools. Investment is required for the improvement of the physical infrastructure.

Everything changes very fast in the national education system. But the tasks required by these are not being performed. Modifications should be realized in a planned manner and resource problem should be taken into account.

As would clearly be understood from the above statements, participants' opinions are such that regarding the problems, the state should take new responsibilities or expand the scope of the existing ones. Opinions emphasizing the need to increase the investment budget of the Ministry in order to relieve the problems related to the physical conditions and equipment at the schools seem quite plausible and well-judged.

Besides these opinions, there are also views calling for more contributions by the environmental actors such as increased responsibilities that should be taken by the wealthy

people (n=8) and more participation of the families (n=6) in school affairs in order to improve the conditions of the school.

It can be claimed that these opinions are based on the approaches demanding a state with lower responsibilities in the field of education. According to these approaches all of which can be put in the framework of neo-liberal educational policies, diversifying the sources of educational finance, increasing the contributions of non-governmental organizations, benevolent persons, business circles through mechanisms like sponsorships and having families participate in covering the costs of education are necessary to narrow down the responsibility of the state in the field of educational finance. Involving parent-teacher associations in such affairs can also be counted as another example. With the National Education Ministry Regulation on School Councils No 28199 of 2012, procedures and principles related to the financial resources gathered through campaigns and courses organized at the schools, to the conditions for receivable donations, to spending of such resources and relevant auditing processes, to the distribution, spending and auditing of incomes earned via operating or having some agent(s) operate canteens and similar income-generating places were all regulated. No matter it is clearly stated in the Article 15 of the Regulation that school councils can in no way force parents to donate and collect aid money from them during the opening period of schools, it is not a secret that there's a widespread type of forced donation called as "compulsory donation" in the school system in Turkey.

The second most frequently stated argument (n=29) about the educational problem is that the state should be involved more in the problems related to the students' educational competencies which are negatively being effected by the inadequate social and economic conditions of the families.

In this theme, pointing at the primary responsibility of the state, participants mentioned 2 inter-related solution proposals: raising the awareness of families through education and supporting them via social policies... A male secondary school teacher who has been working in Muş for two years suggested a solution, slightly different than the above-mentioned ones. He emphasized the need to encourage family planning, namely, raising the consciousness' of families about not having children more than they can look after properly. According to the Article 41 of Turkish Constitution, state is held responsible to take the necessary precautions to educate people about family planning and to put it into practice. However, it is not possible

to claim that this responsibility is being translated into policies in today's Turkey. While family planning had been being encouraged before 1980s when the "domestic markets-oriented" economic policies based on development plans had been the mainstream, policies promoting population growth started to be preferred when export-oriented capital accumulation regime became dominant wherein labor is the main cost item and having a large population is a competitive advantage for a country as it creates a downward pressure on wages. Justice and Development Party which is in its 3rd term encourages families to have more children by referring to religious themes (e.g. according to Islam religion each child brings with her/him her/his own fortune) at discourse level and via the financial regulations such as paying families a certain amount of money per child at the material incentives level.

Remarkably, only a few numbers of solutions were proposed by the participants about the linguistic problems of students and parents, namely, about the difficulties in comprehension and/or utilization of Turkish language. The reason for this situation may be the result of the fact that this problem is at the center of a major political tension in Turkey making the participants uneasy because of their official statuses. For this problem, most frequently stated proposal is the need for tolerance and patience on part of teachers (n=11). A few numbers of participants mentioned the need to search for a new model about education in mother language (n=7). Some typical statements about the linguistic problems are as follows:

Teachers should be tolerant about the disinterestedness of families to defeat the language problem.

The roots of the problems should be found. For instance, a flexible educational approach compatible with the social and cultural structure of the people should be developed in mother language problem.

Participants also proposed some solutions about the teacher circulation problem (n=12).

Participants mentioned the need for some incentives, especially the material ones that should be provided for the teachers in order to motivate them to work in deprived regions. Actually, there are already some incentives like higher service points assigned to deprived regions. For instance, while a teacher is given 10 points for one year of service in Ankara, the capital city, this value increases to 22 points in Yüksekova for the same length of service. Nevertheless, higher service points do not create financial advantages, though are important in some transactions such as appointment place preference privileges.

With the Decree Law No 285 of 1987, a Regional State of Emergency Proconsulate was established comprising the cities of Bingöl, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkâri, Mardin, Siirt, Tunceli, Van to which Batman and Şırnak would be added with the Decree Law No 426. All civil servants - including teachers - working in this region received financial incentives under the title of "Emergency State Compensation". The borders of this region have changed in time and this practice was abandoned on 30th November 2002. Since then, only the security forces has been receiving the financial incentives but not any other categories of civil servants including the teachers. In today's Turkey, as the result of huge imbalances in teacher numbers between East and West and between cities and countryside, the need for new regulations that will encourage the teachers to work in deprived regions are under discussion.

In this study, it was observed that no salient proposal was made for the administrative problems in education by the participants who remained silent about the issue or commented only on the competencies of administrative personnel (n=7).

Residential and Living Problems and Proposals for Solution

Within the scope of the research, the participants are asked about what the residential and living problems they faced are while living in the residential places they work; and this main question is elaborated with sub-issues, which are housing facilities, providing living necessities, security conditions and satisfying social and cultural needs.

Based on the responses given by the participants, deficiency and inadequacy of housing facilities is the main subject emphasized most (n=49). From this perspective, some of the typical expressions are as follows:

Number of public houses is inadequate. The staff living in the public houses are high-ranked managers. They do not grant public houses to us, although we apply every year.

The rents of good houses are almost half of the teachers' wage. When the demand for house is high, then rents become higher.

The physical conditions of most of these houses are not well. Furthermore, rents are high due to the excess demand. The cost of heating is too much during winter.

As seen from the expressions above, participants usually talk about the limited availability of public housing, unfair allocation of available public houses, high level of rents and physical inconvenience of some of the houses. Together with the widespread use of new liberal

economy and social policies after 1980, in Turkey, social state policies (in fact, what is mentioned in the second article of Turkish Constitution and one of the articles those “cannot be changed and even cannot be proposed to be changed” is the social state principle) were abandoned step by step and at the same time the public houses reserved for civil servants were either sold or certain charges were started to be requested in exchange for the use of public houses. In a process where much less public houses were constructed compared to the officials’ needs (one exception of this situation is the public houses allocated to the law enforcement officers in certain centers due to the security problems), civil servants faced significant housing difficulties.

In settlements like the cities selected for the working group of the research, as seen from the typical expressions quoted, public officials (and university students) are considered as a source of income and the prices of goods and services these people pay are higher compared to those inhabitants living there pay. Rents have risen significantly due to both this situation and inadequate number of housing in the cities. Another reason for the rise in rents is climate conditions. Generally in the eastern part of Turkey, especially in the residential districts high above the sea level such as Yüksekova and Muş, continental climate is dominant. In these settlements, winter conditions are prevailing in 7-8 months of the year. Accordingly, heating costs are added to the cost of housing and teachers who only earn just above the lowest wage of public officers face serious difficulties.

The difficulties in satisfying vital needs is the second topic that participants addressed (n=45). From this perspective, some of the typical expressions are as follows:

When the shutters are closed, the city fills with unrest. People experience problems in satisfying their basic needs.

The shutters are often closed; there is no cargo opportunity, even daily newspapers arrive one day late and sometimes even the fax system does not function.

Teachers are considered as fiscal income here. Economic expenses are so many here. Books are expensive, heating, dues everything is abnormal.

As seen from the expressions above, participants usually mention that they have difficulty in maintaining their life because the shutters are usually closed, it is not possible to reach some needs or reach very late and the local people apply different price lists to them as it happens in rents. Diyarbakır, Muş and Yüksekova are such cities where Kurdish politics is dominant, as

the leading actor of this politics PKK has substantial grounds in the community and PKK can shape the vital processes such as letting shutters be closed or open. Consequently, in such residential units, in certain times, from supermarkets to banks, work places close their shutters and it becomes almost impossible to find open places other than bakery and pharmacy shops.

Within the scope of the research, we can see some thoughts that consider closing shutters, which is often mentioned as one of the obstacles to meeting vital necessities, as reasonable by deeming it as a social reaction. For instance, a male primary school teacher from eastern part of Turkey, who has been working for 2 years in Diyarbakır, states that he is not disturbed about closed shutters, these actions can be accepted as a social requirement, law enforcement officials use too much pepper gas and this situation is too irritating.

One of the topics that participants put emphasis on is frequent power cut and water cut (n=30). Participants usually mention power cut and therefore water cut as vital problems. Researcher, within the several weeks when he stayed in Yüksekova, as a person who had to stay in the candle light without electricity and realized that the stars were observed better in the darkness, can easily say that this situation is one of the crucial vital problems. Besides frequent power cuts, especially in winter, low and volatile voltage usually damages household appliances and due to the power cut, main water system does not function.

The reason that participants often speak about power cut is “illegal use of electricity”. In the East of Turkey, electricity is commonly used without being priced with a counter, and hence without paying the cost of electricity. Because, in winter, electric heaters are widely used, the electricity infrastructure is insufficient and not of high quality (although the production and distribution of electricity are assigned to private sector in this region, as in other regions of Turkey), this situation leads to power cuts, low voltage and volatility in voltage.

The main problem could be poverty of the people. In eastern part of Turkey, heating expenses cost too much and generally speaking, the families are poor. Furthermore, due to costly electricity bills and political tension, as well as lack of inspection, "illegal use" of electricity facilities has become common.

Difficulties in satisfying social and cultural needs and deficiency of these kind of facilities is another prominent topic (n=31). From this perspective, some of the typical expressions are as follows:

“Quality of life is very low, social and cultural activities are very limited.”

“Social and cultural activities are quite limited. Socialization environments are inconvenient.”

“There is no cinema, theatre and cultural activity.”

“After certain hours, I do not stay out. Because, the local people’s thought about me may change unfavorably.”

As seen from the expressions above, participants state that they encounter serious problems in meeting their social and cultural needs. Although teachers express certain opinions about inadequacy in facilities such as cinema, theatre, concert hall and library, they mainly emphasize the adequacy and inconvenience of socialization environment (such as café or bar). In other words, the thing that participants deem as social and cultural needs is the places where they socialize with their friends out of the house. The female participants speak out that they have some hesitations about being at such places and staying at these places after certain hours. As in many regions of Turkey, in the eastern region, women may be subject to negative social perception because of spending time at night in places such as café and bar, especially in groups of girls and boys.

Another problem participants often stress is the problems they experience when they commute to their hometown or family (n=23). The transportation from eastern part of Turkey to other regions is delivered by coach and airplane. Even if it does not reach all residential units, there is an old rail system. However, because the number of trains is not sufficient, they are very slow and accordingly rail travel is uncomfortable and takes many hours; this way of transportation is not preferred by teachers. Because travel with train takes a lot of hours, teachers generally prefer to travel by plane, however, during holidays, due to both inadequate number of flights and higher ticket prices, teachers experience significant inconvenience.

Security conditions is another topic that participants often stress (n=21). From this perspective, some of the typical expressions are as follows:

“We cannot go out after certain hours due to security problems.”

“On the tensioned days, a lot of pepper gas is used and we can hardly walk on the street.”

“We encounter problems due to the reason that situations threatening our security happen while we explain some issues during classes.”

“We have to be careful while talking on the road with the fear of misunderstanding.”

Within the scope of the research, the frequency of mentioning security issues is below the expectations. Yet, the first concern in the mind of teachers and especially their families who are appointed to the cities in the eastern region of Turkey and coming from other regions is most probably security problems. The fact that the research was carried out during a period, called as “solution process” when the political conflict and tension is relatively low, may reduce the importance of the theme in this research. On the other side, it can be said that there is a gap between the real situation and the security perception formed outside the region with the effect of media.

As discussed previously, there is a tension resulting from the Kurdish issue in the region. The style of politicization of the local people is reflected on the education atmosphere and teachers. The organization (PKK) is easily observed to be very effective among the families and society who think that the education curriculum is designed to teach the government’s approach to their children. The statement “*We have to be careful while talking on the road with the fear of misunderstanding.*” quoted above can be seen as a sample for the political surveillance of the organization. Again related to this topic, the statement of a male secondary school teacher working for 2 years in Yüksekova is important: “*Because I pushed a child at 7th class, I had to meet the head of the youth branches of the party. You think the rest.*”

The thoughts about security conditions involve some attention-grabbing details and demonstrate some originalities. When we look at the statements of a female primary school teacher who has been working for 2 years in Yüksekova, whose hometown is in Central Anatolia and who is far away from her husband:

Do I feel secure? No. It is unclear what happens when. When I am outside, I am concerned about whether an incident happens, shutters close, a stone comes on me; If it happens, what should I do, which friends should I go to, should I trust that friend; the mobile phone in our hands, we are walking on alert and ready to call a taxi. Especially when you have a child... I have one and my major concern is not to let him see or hear the incidents. My child now uses gas bomb, stone and police vehicle while he plays. There is no park he can play in.

On the other hand, a male primary school teacher who works as a teacher candidate in Yüksekova and whose hometown is in the west of Turkey tells that he feels very comfortable

with regard to security and the situation in Yüksekova is presented incorrectly by the media. Similarly, according to a male primary school teacher who has been working for 4 years in Yüksekova and whose hometown is in the west of Turkey:

Yüksekova is not like a city as we prejudicially assess. Here is a livable place. The only problem is the distance from our families. Social facilities are not that bad. There is security concern but again it is not that bad.

Some of the participants complain that they do not have sufficient and qualified health facilities (n=9). From this perspective, not having sufficient and qualified health facilities is a vital problem. The truth that almost all cities in the eastern part of Turkey are in the group of the first and second worst cities among the cities of Turkey which are categorized in 7 groups with regard to human development is an indication that this situation (health problem) is not surprising.

The participants are asked about what they think on possible solutions to the problems in the cities they work, in other words, how they could solve the problems they face. As in the issue of education problems, not many and clear solution proposals are put forward on this matter.

Some of the participants suggest that public houses both sufficient in quality and quantity should be constructed to solve the housing problems (n=18), a small number of participants suggest that the available public houses should be allocated fairly (n=7). Again, some of the participants recommend that the teachers should be given some social aid such as rent and heating subsidization (n=5) and finally there are some participants who draw attention to the measures to be taken to increase housing stock in the city (n=4).

Apart from the housing problems, with regard to problems experienced in meeting social and cultural needs, it is mentioned that new places should be opened like cinema, theatre and concert hall (n=15), local authority and administrative units such as mayor/local governor should take the responsibility to increase social activities (n=11) and the Ministry of Education and its relevant departments should put effort on this issue (n=7).

During the times political tension turns into street demonstrations, it can be seen that some of the participants have certain practical solutions to overcome problems experienced in meeting vital needs due to closed shutters. For instance, a male primary school teacher who has been working for 4 years in Yüksekova states that shopkeepers inform them when the shutters will

be closed, hence they can supply their needs beforehand. Again, a female secondary school teacher serving as candidate teacher in Yüksekova states that she buys dry legumes, milk, canned foods and some vital materials in advance and stores them at home.

It can be seen that there is no clear suggestion in solving the problems about security. For example, a female secondary school teacher who has been working for 2 years in Yüksekova and whose hometown is in Central Anatolia puts this opinion forward: *“It is like there is nothing to do with security. How it can be solved, closed shutters, stopping demonstrations, I have no idea. Just a wish, I hope it is resolved in the future.”*

A male primary school teacher who has been working for 2 years in Diyarbakır and whose hometown is in the southwest of Turkey states that there is a connection between solution of Kurdish issue and the social and cultural problems of the region, saying that *“I think these facilities will develop when the peace is ensured”*. According to this teacher, *“How it is going to be is maybe a question; however there should be peace between the government and people in one way or another.”*

Other than expressed above, some individual suggestions are made such as signing a protocol between Ministry of National Education and Turkish Airlines to solve transportation problems, doing infrastructure work about power and water cuts and preventing illegal use of electricity.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In this research discussing the living problems of the teachers working in the East of Turkey by categorizing these problems into two main streams and evaluating them based on the thoughts of the participants, in the educational problems category, the problem that government does not allocate sufficient funds and therefore that schools have deficiencies with regard to equipment and physical conditions is the principal problem area. Regarding this issue, participants state that central governments should take and increase their responsibility.

In Turkey, radical and comprehensive changes have often been made in the education field; however necessary steps have not been taken with regard to fiscal requirements of these changes. The inadequacy of the budget of the Ministry of Education and especially the portion

allocated to investment is of great importance. Lack of new school buildings and classes and inconvenient educational settings bring about crowded classes, lack of units such as library, laboratory and counseling room; and lack of money allocation from budget to schools subjects administrators and teachers who are thriving to find out resource to students' parents.

The issue that families of students have disadvantageous social and economic conditions, which is reflected on the educational abilities of the students, is one of the crucial problem areas. On this topic, participants declare two interconnected solution proposals which are raising awareness of parents via education and supporting them with social policies, by pointing out the primary responsibility of the government. For a problem which is basically related with injustice in income distribution of the country and poverty and deprivation which takes an agonizing appearance in the East of Turkey, there needs to be changes in policies at the macroeconomic level, together with questioning the aspects of social order. Besides all these, encouraging family planning and raising awareness of families to have enough number of children they can look after are also actions to relieve the problem.

The situation that the students and their families do not know Turkish sufficiently, or cannot use Turkish effectively is a vital educational problem. The reality that the students whose mother language is Kurdish first learn Turkish, and after that continue their education with a language that they use only at the times they spend at school brings about significant learning problems for students and teaching problems for teachers. We can talk about historical social roots of mother tongue based education problem related to the policies to build a nation during the Ottoman-Turkish modernization. The situation that this issue becomes a subject of political tension and this disturbs teachers in connection with protecting their status-quo has caused teachers to talk less on the topic and express less solution proposals. The thought that teachers should be understanding and patient gains importance as a solution proposal. It can be said that the issue of education in the mother tongue ought to be discussed, different country experiences ought to be utilised, and a model convenient to Turkey in this regard ought to be sought. The Kurdish problem in Turkey is not limited to a single region. In today's Turkey, number of Kurds living in the Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia is equal to number of Kurds living in the metropolises and the rest of the country. Thus the model to solve the issues like education in the mother tongue has to be comprehensive and integrated, which would have country-wide outcomes.

The circulation of teachers, which often happens, becomes a crucial educational problem within the context of research. While appointing inexperienced teachers to the East as the first working place is itself a problem, it aggravates the problem that appointed teachers are continuously circulated and do not go to school often with excuses like medical report and leave. On this issue, some incentives (especially material ones) and facilities (such as public housing and transportation service) can be provided to teachers to channel them to work longer periods of time in inconvenient places and convince experienced teachers to go to these places. It will be advantageous to choose the teachers that will work in the region among the ones who have experienced the region's conditions and know Kurdish.

It is an important educational problem that City and County National Education Directorates are incapable of getting involved positively with school mechanism. It is suggested that competent and experienced personnel should be assigned to City and County National Education Directorates. It can be said that there is a linear correlation between experience and success in the managerial posts as in teaching posts. Consequently, considering that there are always major changes in the education system, it can be suggested that personnel should be given in-service training and should be supported with several incentives to prevent them to look for opportunities to go another place.

In the residential and living problems category, inadequacy and inconvenience of housing facilities is the most-mentioned subject. Generally, participants mentioned about limited number of public housing and unequal/unfair allocation of available public houses, high rents and inconvenient physical conditions of some houses. Participants suggest that public houses both sufficient in quality and quantity should be constructed; the available public houses should be allocated fairly; teachers should be given some social aids such as rent and heating subsidization and finally some measures should be taken to increase housing stock in the city to solve the housing problem. All of these suggestions are meaningful. However, it is a considerable suggestion that Turkey, describing itself as a social state, should provide secure and livable public housing to public officials, especially in disadvantageous regions.

Difficulties in meeting vital needs is another problem mentioned within the context of research. On the one side of this problem, there are reasons resulting from political tensions such as frequently closed shutters, and on the other side, there are the cities worked in inconvenience with regard to provision of goods and services and shopkeepers self-seeking

approach towards teachers. The issue of closed shutters is related to the resolution of political tension. For other problems, there can be suggestions such as “teacher cooperatives” once widely used in Turkey. “Teacher cooperatives” were enterprises that provided their members with some advantages not with respect to production but with respect to consumption.

One of the issues participants emphasized related to the difficulties they face in their life is frequent power cuts and accordingly water cuts. The wide use of illegal electricity is mainly a matter connected with poverty of the society. The problem that illegal use of electricity leads to power cuts results from the insufficiency of electricity distribution infrastructure. And this inadequacy is related with lack of investment and at last privatization of electricity distribution channels. It can be suggested that electricity distribution should be nationalized again and infrastructure should be strengthened. Besides, the state could subsidize the electricity for poor section of public with respect to its constitutional obligation of being a welfare state. Taking into consideration the fact that the wide illegal use of electricity in the winter is especially for the purpose of heating, the problem with electricity could be eased by the states action of taking responsibility of the poor sections of publics’ heating demand via the local administrations.

The difficulties faced in meeting social and cultural needs and insufficiency of these facilities is another substantial issue. On this topic, majority of the participants talk about the insufficiency and inconvenience of the places that they can socialize with their friends outside the home. The female participants speak out that they have some hesitations about being at such places and staying at these places after certain hours. In fact, the abovementioned problems are common in many cities of Turkey except certain places. On the one hand, the social culture in Turkey is determined by traditional reflexes and shaped through new conservative policies which have become dominant recently and on the other hand it has fallen apart from the civilized social values.

Another problem participants often stress is the problems they experience when they commute to their hometown or family. Transportation vehicles are limited and flight ticket prices are high especially during certain periods. Not many clear solution proposals are put forward on this matter. It will be an important step if Ministry of National Education signs a protocol with Turkish Airlines, which is a subsidiary of the government, in favor of teachers to solve their transportation problems.

Security problem is one of the subjects participants relatively emphasize on. The frequency of bringing security issues forward is below the expectations. The fact that the research is carried out during a period, called as “solution process”, when the political conflict and tension is relatively low may reduce the importance of the theme in this research. On the other side, it can be said that there is a gap between the security perception formed outside the region with the effect of media and real situation. It can be seen that there is no clear suggestion about solving the problems about security. From one perspective the resolution of the security problems depends on removal of the political tension. From another perspective, on the other hand, teachers’ respectful attitudes towards the residents’ cultural values and successful establishment of dialogue with them may be thought as an alleviant approach to the problem.

Finally, a female primary school teacher who has been working in Yüksekova for 2 years and whose hometown is in the North of Turkey approaches to the issues dealt above fairly in a different way. The aforementioned participant’s thoughts are as follows:

I have never been to so many social environments in my life as in Yüksekova. I did my sporting activities at the Youth Sports Center at weekends. I met so openhearted and warm people that I have never met before. My flat is within a new building which has central heating, a generator and elevator. I have never experienced a heating problem. Also, I have never faced with security problems. We, four friends together, commute to our school every day via a taxi driver we know well. I can find whatever I need. In the middle of the winter, we can even get watermelon from Iran.

As seen from the expressions above, when said being a teacher in the East of Turkey, many of the issues dealt within this research can be approached in a different way!

ⁱThe Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS) is the centrally held elimination exam that has to be taken by every candidate for the civil offices, except for some posts. Teacher candidates, after graduation from education faculties and various other faculties, which is one of the pre-requisites to be a candidate, take the PPSE and according to the scores they get, they are assigned to or rejected for the offices that are announced by the Ministry of Education.

ⁱⁱSince 2012 there has been “no clash” between the state and the PKK, which has not been officially nominated and some legal and administrative reformations have been brought to the agenda. Known as the “resolution process”, the process, to some assessments, has been forced by both the legal and illegal Kurdish political actors to make the state solve the “Kurdish problem” on a legal-democratic basis. To some other assessments, on the other hand, its general framework has been determined by the global actors such as the USA that are influential in the region’s politics, taking into consideration the political developments in the Middle East.

ⁱⁱⁱSee Soydan, T.&Abalı,H. H. (2014) and Aydoğanoglu, E. (2012) for the neoliberal transformation in Turkey and its effects on the area of education.

^{iv}According to a new legislative regulation, if demanded by sufficient number of students, elective Kurdish courses can be opened in the secondary school level. These courses are limited by two hours a week. But the staff who will give the courses is ambiguous. Because there is not any higher education institution that can graduate the qualified staff who can teach Kurdish.

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