

Neo-liberal education policies in Turkey and transformation in educationⁱ

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Abstract

As it is in many countries in the world, in Turkey the effects of neoliberal ideology have rapidly increased since the 1980s, and social and economic structure has been transformed. Education, which is the basic dynamic of constructing social and economic structure and regeneration, stands in the center of neoliberalism. In this process, what determines education is global policies and market relations rather than public. Every practice, such as privatization of education, decreasing public expenses, enforcing “flexible” working, leaving employees without insurance and making the curriculum more conservative is a result of neoliberal policies. Descending all these actions to the level of simple evaluation prevents a detailed analysis of the reasons for these policies while also hindering the response to these policies. In this study, neoliberal education policies practiced in Turkey and transformation in education are described with a critical perspective.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, neoconservative, globalization, critical pedagogy

Introduction

In Turkey, the Economic Recovery Program that came into effect on 1980 January 24th is considered the milestone for economic and social transformation. With the decisions made on this date, reduced public responsibility in the economy and transfer to market economy were greatly accelerated and the provision of social services such as education, health and social security was shifted from the public to the private sector. It is not a coincidence that this transformation in public services in Turkey started in the 1980s. Capitalism tried to overcome the crisis experienced in the 1970s through neoliberal policies known as “restructuring.” Within this framework, “structural adaptation programs” and neoliberal policies offered as by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) globally opened public

service areas to the market. In carrying and spreading neo-liberal policies in the public sphere, the European Union (EU) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are the main actors, along with international commerce and investment agreements, and international organizations such as World Bank (WB), International Money Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Neoliberal policies implemented are guaranteed by being treated in global free commerce within the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The EU encourages policies in this respect, OECD develops strategies about how to be administered, and the WB opens credits for implementation (Keskin & Demirci, 2003). The power does not belong to the countries anymore but to the multinational capitalist class formed by these supranational organizations. The purpose of the multinational legislator class is to “determine” capital, ensure its accumulation and also defend and advance the rising global bourgeoisie and the new global-capitalist – historical bloc (McLaren, 2007, 43).

Multinational, or in other words, global actors give priority in drawing public services away from the public.

The restructuring of public services is based on the fact that the globalisation process results in great social, economic and political transformations, and thus there is the requirement that the quality of public services should be assessed again. Due to the fact that the services sector has a more significant place in developed economies than agriculture and industry, global capitalism gives utmost importance to the services sector.

Turkey confirmed the GATS Treaty in 1995 and pledged to the WB that liberalization would be realized in occupational services as communication, health-tourism, environment, education and sub-sectors. Within the scope of these commitments, education (which has a public aspect and which is realized as a result of the public service approach), health, telecommunication, transportation and such fields either started to be privatized rapidly or opened to the market (Keskin & Demirci, 2003,42). Today, as in many countries in the world, the education/education service in Turkey has been transformed from a human right based on equality into a commodity from which everyone benefits according to their class. The aim of education to assist and develop individuals toward freedom is contradictory and incompatible with an education concept based on market values. In this article, the enforced neoliberal educational policies and transformation in education Turkey are challenged from a critical

perspective and the necessity of continued critical policy analysis and a critical pedagogy is emphasized.

Neoliberal Policies in Education and Transformation

Hill (2007; 2012) classifies the reflection of neoliberal policies implemented on a world scale under two main headings, neoliberal policies and neo-conservatism. Neoliberal policies are as follows: “privatisation”, “cut public spending”, “marketisation”, “vocational educational for human capital”, “new public managerialism”, “competitive between workers”, “casualisation, “attack on trade unions/workers,” “management speak” and “denigration”; while neo-conservatism emerges as “control of curricula”, “control of pedagogy”, “control of students”, “control of teachers”, “brute force”, “tear gas” .

Following Hill (2007; 2012), the neo-liberal policies implemented in Turkey can be reviewed under the following headings:

Privatisation and Commercialization of Education

Methods like privatization/commercialization are not divided by strict lines, but it can be said that privatization is a broader concept covering commercialization, while commercialization includes the marketing activities directly targeting students, parents and teachers (Aksoy, 2011,8). Privatization practices in education are *Load shedding, asset sale, volunteerism, self-help, user fee, contracting, franchising, voucher, grant/subsidies and deregulation* (Murphy, 1996).

The *Load shedding* method, where the state delegates service delivery to the private sector, is one of the most common privatization methods practiced in Turkey. The extent of this privatization can easily be seen from the continuous rise in the number of private schools at all levels of instruction. While the number of private middle schools and high schools is increasing rapidly, primary schools are also affected by privatization policies. Even the WB keeps primary schools apart from other levels of education, citing the reason as they have a higher social benefit, and proposes states cover their funding. Although, as per Item 42 of 1982 Constitution, primary school education in Turkey was determined as a public right that each child must benefit from, free of charge, the total school attendance percentage in primary schools in 2011 was 98% (tüik.gov.tr). It can be surmised that the 2% lost cannot go

to school due to poverty. Even if primary school education is offered in public schools, families need to spend a certain amount on their children. Due to these neoliberal policies, the hope of poor families that their children may have a better future thanks to education has been lost. For in neo-liberalism, benefiting from the right of education or school selection is directly related to class position, poor families may prefer their children work to bring in money instead of going to school. The predictive value of class position in middle school and high school is even more rigid. That is, there is inequality in schooling that affects the poor. The WB explains the reason for this inequality by people at the lower economic level of society choose not to benefit from middle or high school (Colclough, 1996, cited: Ercan) and argues that if education services were offered by the private sector, fair distribution of limited sources would be possible (Psacharopoulos 1994, cited: Ercan, 1998,28). Within this framework, the number of private schools at all levels of education in Turkey has rapidly increased. At the primary school level, the number of private schools was 26 in 1980; this number then increased by approximately 34 times to reach 898 in 2010. At the middle school level, the number of private schools was 260 in 1995, which rose to 774, increasing three fold. In higher education, the number of private universities was three in 1995 and 62 in 2011, an increase of twenty-fold (meb.gov.tr; Günay & Günay, 2011). Parallel to these increases in the number of private schools, it can be understand that the number of students increased as well, with parents spending more and more on private schools. In the privatization method defined as *self-help*, the government encourages individuals to make use of private education services.

In neo-liberalism, central/competitive tests are valued more; so preparing students for tests is left to private courses. Courses are commercial businesses that prepare students at raised prices for the higher education/middle school entrance exams. While, generally, the children of wealthy people attend these courses, some poor families send their children to the courses, limiting the family's basic needs, with the idea that as a result of the education their children will receive, they will enter a good profession. In fact, these courses have no real benefit except for deepening the education inequality in a society where transfer between social and economic strata of education depends on tests. (Gök, 2005, 103). There is great competition among courses similar to the one between public-private schools or among the private schools, and courses differ based on the class of the family. While more wealthy children go to expensive courses, poor children who cannot attend a course or who attend a cheaper one are destined to be unsuccessful in this exam race, and their chances of gaining a place at

middle school or higher education decreases. In this respect, courses are an exclusion method used by institutions managing capitalist eliminating mechanisms, privatized social machinery which privileges the already advantaged.

Families in Turkey spend a considerable amount of money on the courses. For example, in a study (TED, 2005) it was revealed that with the money spent on courses in the year 2004, 17 quality universities with 3500 students could have been established. The number of courses, which was 43 in 1965, became 4099 in 2011 (tüik.gov.tr.;meb.gov.tr); in other words, there has been an approximately 100% increase in the number of institutions. It can be assumed that as the courses become more common and their prices become higher, the ruling parties commit themselves to removing the courses in order to be seen as egalitarian. However, far from actually closing, courses will continue to become widespread as long as neoliberal policies are pursued and entrance exams become more and more important.

In the *voucher* method, the government assists consumers financially and encourages them to seek service from the private sector. This method is used in the field of Special Education in Turkey. Since 2006 special education is covered under mandatory education; however, the government has been directing the students who need special education to special education schools instead of opening new schools or classes. While special education experts need to work in these institutions, people who have no experience in the field are allowed to work for a very low salary. On the other hand, some poor families send their children to these institutions by making an agreement with the special education institution to receive money as a benefit from the State. The number of these institutions that started operating in 2006 was 1697 in 2012 (meb.gov.tr). No data could be found regarding the number of students studying in these institutions and money spent on these institutions by the government.

Contracting and franchising methods are among the common privatization methods. In the former, the state buys the service, pays the price of the service, or makes the institutions who buy the service pay. Within this scope, cleaning services in all public schools from preschool to higher education were privatized. This practice generally takes place in schools, except in higher education, by collecting money directly from parents. At schools in poor regions, generally the parents of the students clean the school. In one study, a school principal stated that “students’ parents are poor, and since the school cannot collect money from them, the school is cleaned by the teachers as well as the principal himself” (Polat, 2007). In the method

Franchising, people purchasing the service pay for the price of the service. Within this scope, food and accommodation services previously provided for university students are now privatized. Food and accommodation services at public universities have been transformed so that they now almost resemble a hotel and restaurant; school life has been marketized. Thus, capitalism is always produced through relationships; it is normalized and stays in our minds assumes ideological power as our consciousness is shifted to the new form, normalizing it.

Management examples at schools are not limited to those above. In the “user fee method” students are asked to pay for all social activities that take place at school. A fee is requested even for a trip within the scope of the lesson (for instance visiting a museum in the city), or a student might be sent back home instead of going on the school trip because they did not pay the fee. With “volunteerism” on the other hand, some benevolent citizens and large enterprises collect money, distribute materials or undertake one of the educational expenses under the heading sponsorship and social responsibility. For instance, as Aksoy (2011) discusses the advertising traps of big institutions that become sponsors, for the purpose of establishing health and hygiene awareness in education in Turkey and the formation of positive brand image. Additionally, they demonstrate, with the following words, why marketers choose children: “Children influence family spending, spend lots of money on their own and develop brand preference in childhood, and their loyalty, generally, continues or a lifetime (Molnar, Koski, Boninger, 2010; cited: Aksoy, 2011)”.

Cutting off/Reducing Educational Expenses

Cutting off/reducing educational expenses is one of the main phenomena of practices/policies in the downsizing of the state. The state’s role in this process is limited to internal, external security and justice services. Restricting the role of the state in this way means the other services would be maintained by the private sector and hence the state would not move towards new fields of investment. In fact, the state is in a position to make the biggest spending but the direction of spending has changed. During this period, while the state supports the bourgeois class with its spending, it also makes transfers to the capitalist class in return for interest, by means of debt policies. In other words, it spends again in the interest of capital (Kerman, 2006, 69-75). Indeed, the capitalist state intervenes in the accumulation processes in order for production relationships to be “produced” again. The intervention here is not the state’s intervention in social and economic fields for public welfare, but the state’s

taking the precautions that will facilitate market mechanisms; in other words it is the state's taking over the role of the regulator. Indeed, according to Friedman, who is one of the advocates of neoliberalism, the duty of the state is to ensure the sustainability of order and strengthened competitive markets (cited, Topal, 2011 70).

According to the neoliberal thesis markets are good and helpful, and any intervention, regardless of where it comes from is bad. Defining what is social and political within the economic field and pulling it into and the statements about the state's intervention in education being wrong are one of the strong weapons of the state. Indeed, Friedman asserts that the state's intervention in education decreases educational standards and increases costs with no profit to the society (cited, 2008, 171). By adding that public education is "old" and "old-fashioned", society has mostly been convinced that education is a service to be purchased (Unal, 2005, 5). Thus, besides privatization, services like social security, health, transportation and education, which are defined as public, accessible and open to the public, have easily been transformed into services with no spending or where spending is cut/reduced.

Two indicators that public spending has decreased is 1. the reduction in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 2. the state's halting investments towards infra-structure and production. While in 1997 the ratio of Ministry of National Education (MoNE) education expenses to GDP was 1.74, it was 2.75 in 2012. Similarly, in 1997 MoNE investment budget to GDP ratio was 0.53 and in 2012 the same ratio was 0.18 (meb.gov.tr). Although it seems like education expenses between the years 1997 and 2012 increased, the fact that investment expenses decreased shows that education expenses have not increased. For instance, the total number of students in 2000 was 17,427,007 (www.mebgov.tr) while in 2012 the total number of students was 25,429,670 (www.tuik.gov.tr). Under normal circumstances, it is expected that new classes will be opened and new equipment and materials will be bought in parallel with the increase in the number of students; however, the decrease in investment expenses means educating with incomplete equipment and materials in crowded classrooms, which directly affects the quality of education.

In neoliberalism, the reason given for why public spending is reduced/cut off is an increase in state debts. It is argued that a reduction in state spending affects society in two main ways: first, the individual is self-sufficient and will fulfill his economic and social requirements

himself. In case of insufficiency, his family or the social unit he lives in or social/religious organizations will voluntarily perform these functions (Kerman, 2006, 53). The second is the international organizations' discourse that contributions of people in education will increase the quality of education. These statements result in facilitating the social contribution in education and a considerable increase in social contributions in education. The Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI) performed the "Education Expenses Study" in Turkey for the first time in 2002. According to the related research, 64.45% of the total education expenses are covered by the central government while 34.75% by private sources. The astonishing point here is that 32.85 % of the ratio of 34.75% spending by private sources is performed by households. In other words, an important part of education expenses are realized by families. Household spending on education covers private courses, stationery, school buses etc., as well as money collected at public schools under different names. Striking findings were obtained in the studies conducted with regards to the money collected at schools. In one of these studies, it is seen that money is collected under 30 different names in public primary schools (Keskin&Demirci,2003); in another study (Yolcu, 2007) it was found out that money is collected under 60 different names like registration money, money for curtains, table cloths, diplomas, and other specific items.

Restructuring the Education System

The construction of neoliberal policies is based on deficiencies of the social state or conflicts of the social state. According to neo-liberals, the social state cannot serve its purpose in terms of democracy or social welfare and it cannot protect individual freedom. Also, the social state cannot produce efficient service with its structure, which has become unwieldy. Neoliberals argue that these problems can be overcome by the restructuring of the state or through precautions they call reforms and that these reforms will provide democratic principles like autonomy, participation, customer satisfaction, the right to choose, and transparency. As expected, Turkey is also affected by these practices and within this framework, the *Public Administration Reform (PAR)* packet, which includes a set of amendments and regulations, was brought to the agenda. The first and the most important in the PAR packet was the Public Administration Basic Law Draft that was enacted in 2003. As Güler (2004, 6) states, itⁱⁱ established regulatory state, governance and localization principles in the state organization. Although it is possible to see the reflection of these three principles on public services, here only the reflection with regard to education will be discussed due to the subject matter.

Although services related to education in the related proposed law are defined as duties and services to be executed by central administration, the execution task of these services are limited to providing educational unity and determining and developing the curriculum. As estimated, among the reasons why central administration is transferred locally is the discourse on downsizing of the state. Since the basic step of this downsizing is possible by breaking the centralized structure, the central administration should be eliminated. In fact, what is desired to be downsized is public service, not the state, which also makes up the basic axis of neo-liberalism. As stated by Ünal (2003, 111-115), by opening the way for local administration, profit increase in the market and carrying profitability to the global markets would be facilitated. Also, the mechanisms that will ensure that sources are used in the sovereignty area of the market far from central supervision will be legalized. Additionally, organizations that are effective in the market can direct the education services politically. For instance, it would be difficult to prevent the Muslim Industrial Businessmen Association (MUSIAD) being more effective on this issue or Islamic capital applying for education services. Indeed, in recent years, conservative policies in education support these tendencies.

The reflection of Public Administration Basic Law Draft on education may be reviewed in three levels (Kurul, 2012a, 214-215): The first one is “the problem of education monetary sources” which is linked with the failure of central government. Based on this, the opinions on shifting the financial burden of schools from central administrations to local administrations, business environments and families have become important. The second level is the discussion on the context of “effectiveness and efficiency”. The basis of this discussion is that central government increases costs and the requirement is that in order to decrease costs, schools should be open to families and local communities. The final level is “redistribution of political power”. It is claimed that distribution of political power will lead to outcomes such as its transfer from the center to the local and from one communal cluster to another. The establishment of the Total Quality Management (TQM) model, and change of direction of school-family co-operation, made these three levels transparent. The Ministry of Education claims that it applies the TQM model in schools, “with a desire to keep up with changes in science and technology, increase the quality in service production, and provide satisfaction for public groups benefiting from the service (MOE, 1999a). Within this framework, in each school a School Quality Management Team consisting of a teacher, student, local manager and parent was formed; and these teams were commissioned by creating sources to the

school. With the legal regulations about school-family co-operation that have been changed since the 2000s, parents of the students were held responsible for providing for the needs of the schools and income generating activities.

Another regulation included in the PAR package is the Civil Service Bill (CSB).

Neoliberalism, which adopts flexible production organization, will naturally adopt a flexible employment style parallel to this production type. According to neoliberal ideology, just like regulations that demonstrate “rigidity,” such as job security, specific work hours, payment equality in flexible production, organizations have been “flexed;” in a same way employees should be given flexibility with regulations such as job securities of the employees, increasing work hours and payment differentiation. The result is extortion of rights, such as unsecured working, payment according to performance, and no unionization. In Turkey, “non-standard employment”, which is the most significant application of flexible employment or with its other names unsecured/part time /temporary /irregular articulated employment, is being used widely. Other than the ones working continually, the ones that do tasks that require fewer skills, and the ones that are fired when not needed enter this category. Temporary employment is operated with contract and generally the period of this contract is one year. In order for the contract of the person to be renewed, his/her performance is expected to be high. Contracts are individual; therefore the employee to be organized is not rational. By being isolated, the employee is almost in a voluntary act of reacting to this isolation with competition and excess work hours. Especially when combined with performance related pay, the effect can be seen more clearly. (Belek, 2004; cited: Demir, 2010, 19) When the topic is reviewed with numbers, the tendency of the government in Turkey toward unsecured employment in recent years is seen clearly. According to TSI data, as of March 2012, a total of 3,111,660 people are working in the public sector in total, of which 2,435,169 are permanent (www.tuik.gov.tr). One of the reasons for flexible employment or temporary/contractual employment is explained to the public as there are many employees working in the public sector and therefore this puts a load on the public budget. However, only 4% of the population works for the government in Turkey, which has a population of over 70 million, and 2% of these people are working without security.

In Turkey, a large portion of workers working as civil servants in the public sector are teachers. In order to work as a teacher in the public sector, it is necessary to have graduated from one of the departments of education faculties that develop teachers, or if the candidate

graduated from another department, they must have received training on a “pedagogical proficiency certificate program” given by education faculties for one year. In addition to the conditions mentioned above, in order to work as a teacher in the public sector, preservice teachers first need to sit a multiple choice test called Public Personnel Selection Exam (PPSE) and obtain a certain score from this exam. In this competitive exam, assignments are sorted from the highest score to the lowest, and the ones that have high scores are appointed as permanent teachers. Rather than measuring knowledge and skills related to the teaching profession, this exam is an elimination exam done to avoid appointing preservice teachers on a permanent basis and attracting the reaction of the public.

In Turkey, teachers are employed under three terms: permanent, contractualⁱⁱⁱ and temporary (paid, expert educator, expert) (MOE, 1965). In the first employment type that is permanent teaching, employment is continuous and secured. All social rights of permanent teachers do exist. In the second employment type that is contractual teaching, as it is not continuous, employment is not secured. In the third employment type that is temporary teaching, those who have completed any higher education institution are employed in different ways. Of these, the ones that are paid^{iv} work for a class fee, without benefiting from any health service or “leave of absence” right. It is enough for expert educators from this group to be at least primary school graduates and to have at least eleven years of experience in the expert area they will teach, and these are more often employed in informal education institutions.

Flexible employment is not limited to teachers. In education services, employees such as clerks, cleaning staff, technical staff etc. are also employed temporarily instead of on a permanent basis. During the years between 2003 and 2008, while 141,438 of teachers together with other education workers worked as permanent workers, 87,500 (teacher and other education worker) worked as temporary (www.sgb.meb.gov.tr).

Together with the removal of contractual teachers, teacher shortage tried to be compensated by freelance, paid per lesson and not employed teachers

Marketization and Vocational Training Trend

Capitalization, which capitalized human beings with the understanding of “investment in the human is the best investment”, capitalized education as well, as a parallel to this

understanding. Capitalization in education differentiates with capitalization in other areas, and in two dimensions. First is that current public property to be opened to private capital use, and the other is the reorganization of universities with their focused knowledge and technological hardware to benefit the needs of industry/capital. Capitalism continuously needs to renovate technologically in order to survive in the competitive environment, and has the necessity to renew its investments via research-development activities, while investing in novelties. Against this necessity, capital searches for a solution to this problem by using the current infrastructure of universities (Ercan, 1998, 140). Universities, whose resources are decreased/limited/cut as a result of neoliberal policies, try to overcome this resource problem by producing product/service for industry and as industry wants; projects intended for industry are produced in the universities, and universities are oriented to product/service production for industry rather than producing science/education for social benefit. On the other hand, this dilemma into which the universities pushed, decreases education quality as well. In research that handles the transformation of the applied neoliberal policies on the universities (Aslan, 2008), it has been argued that very few of the universities in Turkey comply with the university concept; education level in other universities is at the “high school” level, together with resource decreases, commercialization and marketization increases in universities. Institutions who likenesses we see in the US or England, have started to become widespread. Although “entrepreneur university” model is shown as a new^v model in Turkey, its seeds were sown in 1995, and the seeds of this model were planted in 1995 through work in to build Technology Development Zones`s (TDZ) which gained legal status in 2001. Within this framework, technology and science parks that are known as Science Park, Research Park and Technopole in other countries or technoparks in Turkey slowly started to be settled. As of 2010, number of technoparks is 39 (www.tubitak.gov.tr). The duties of Technoparks are arranged by the TDZ laws. The target of this law has clearly been defined as the direction of science and technology as set by capital, but not by the public. According to the law, the duties of the technoparks are found at: (www.resmigazete.gov.tr)

“By bridging and making collaboration possible between universities, institutions and organizations and the producers; the technological knowledge production, commercializing the knowledge, supporting the technology of intense production and entrepreneurship, making the harmony possible between small businesses and enterprises, helping the technology to be transferred and preparing infrastructural

technological basis in order to accelerate and facilitate the influx of the foreign capital - the provider of high technology- into the country”.

According to the very same law technoparks to be put in practice, scientists can work in the technopark permanently or part-time. Similar appliances are performed by USA, Canada, UK and Australia. In these countries the economic growth and management are encouraged through higher education policies, commercial investigations, and occupational programs; the value of the higher education emphasized in any and all national activities; for some of workers some market oriented activities are in vogue (Slaughter, 2004; cited, Gümüş & Kurul, 2011). According to Slaughter (2004) the policies of these four countries are shifting towards those “academic capitalism” that focuses on what keeps the external resources secured (cited, Gümüş & Kurul, 2011). It is obvious that this new kind of education, which came out by pacifying universities and teachers, will create a different university that will be welcomed gladly by the corporations, but not by academia. Thus, it will be normal for the employees, who are selected according to their work understanding rather than their knowledge, to focus more on profit. With the transformation of academicians into social entrepreneurs in this way, education is transformed into a commercial enterprise and teaching is transformed into a profit making sales area (Giroux, 2007, 89). As a matter of fact, areas/department and programs in social sciences that cannot get commercialized, such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, literature and history, are disappearing. Quotas in so called programs cannot be filled in the recent years; they are not preferred by students^{vi}. In particular, those that come from lower socio-economical class, rather than spending on higher education for a profession that “they will not be able to earn from in the future”, they either prefer to go to colleges that give vocational education or they leave the education process by not preferring higher education at all.

In Turkey in recent years, both public and private sector’s interest in junior technical colleges (JTC) increased. While one after another JTC is opened in public universities, private number of JTCs in the last two years is seven (www.yok.gov.tr). As mentioned above, these colleges are the schools preferred by low income students who want to have a profession in a short time instead of spending money on university education. Students head for these schools, thinking that they will be more advantaged with a college diploma than a vocational high school graduate. Accreditation of JTCs started with the Bologna process in 2001 in Turkey, which is after the opportunity of marketing its young population in vocational education as

cheap and qualified workforce in the international labor market. With this process, some departments turned to a modular system that the Bologna process requires. According to this system, even if the student does not complete his/her education, he/she will be able to search for jobs, work, and be included in the job market as soon as possible (Çakır & Çınar, 2010).

Another education institution that is marketed is vocational high schools. Vocational high schools are institutions, in which those from lower socio-economic levels who are accepted as “unqualified” in the axis of neoliberalism, are equipped via education with technical skills that are required by the market. “Reintegration of these unqualified ones via a profession” is according to a politics report published by WB in 1991, “both a contribution to economical productivity and equalization function for those who come from poor class” (cited, Polat, 2012). In order to adapt to an era, in which economic and technological changes occur, countries need to increase their productivities and productivity increases are enabled by the improvement of “human resources.” While raising a workforce in the private sector is also possible, it is essential to continue vocational training in public schools because of the limits of on the job training (cited, Özdemir, 2010,64-65). In an idea originating from the World Bank, one of the main purposes of education policy in Turkey became increasing both vocational technical education school numbers and student numbers. For instance, this command of the WB is in the agenda of MOE for 20 years, as 65% vocational high schools and 45% general high schools. In 2001 in secondary education, 1,487,415 students continued to general secondary education and 875,528 students continued to vocational technical education. In 2012, however, 2,666,066 students continued to secondary education and 2,090,220 students continued to vocational technical secondary education (MOE, 2012, 11; HEC, 2007, 221). Besides the increase in the number of students in vocational technical education, in the recent years the EU, WB and large capital institutions raise employees needed by the industry via education by many projects; and these kind of projects are shown to the general public as education efficiencies that increase solely skill/talents or as they are done with the purpose of helping the government. Moreover, these kinds of projects are welcomed by teachers and education managers with appreciation (Polat, 2012). In a critical theory of these shifts, realities are shrouded, ideological. In short, Human Capital Theory that advocates “the best investment is done among human beings”, transformed labor into an investment tool by putting labor under the dominance of capital stock; and formed human relations and social values according to the market. As Marx stated below (2011);

“Finally, there came a time when everything that men had considered as inalienable became an object of exchange, of traffic and could be alienated. This is the time when the very things which till then had been communicated, but never exchanged; given, but never sold; acquired, but never bought – virtue, love, conviction, knowledge, conscience, etc. – when everything, in short, passed into commerce. It is the time of general corruption, of universal venality, or, to speak in terms of political economy, the time when everything, moral or physical, having become a marketable value, is brought to the market to be assessed at its truest value”.

Transformation of the Curriculum and Conservatism

In Turkey, studies towards changing the curriculum started in the 1990s with pointing on concepts such as competition, adapting to technological changes, learning to learn, entrepreneurship, vision and mission; in 2004, however, it was completely changed. In March 2012 in Turkey, despite the strong opposition of critical educators and some parts of the society, a new Education Law was legalized, and education system was completely changed. Education was separated to three levels as 4+4+4; primary education beings at 5.5 years of age. This change in the education system is a change backwards and parallel to this regress, new arrangements were done in the current curriculum. The conservative dimension of the newly accepted education law is emphasized once more under this heading, since reactionary/religious additions to the neoliberal structure of the current curriculum are continuing and the curriculum has not been completed while this study is being written.

With the new Education Law, besides the current required religion courses in the secondary school curriculum, Quran and Life of the Prophet courses, which are allegedly elective but as is well-known it becomes as required courses. Although there are verdicts of the European Court of Human Rights stating that schools in Turkey include discrimination in terms of religion education, religious education in schools is continually insisted upon. With this education law, a child who will start secondary school at nine years of age to take elective religion courses in addition to required religion courses has no pedagogical or scientific base. In the discussions about increasing or decreasing the education period in terms of Turkish education history, increasing the education period is argued on pedagogical grounds and decreasing it is argued on economic and political grounds. While this law has no grounds, in reality the main reason for identifying primary school education as four years with the mentioned law is to give children early religious education (Kaymak, 2012).

The gift from the 12 September 1980 military coup in Turkey has been to adopt global neoliberalism and local conservatism^{vii}. Today, the one that best synthesizes this is the JDP (Justice and Development Party). In this process, the JDP made a serious attempt to eliminate problem-making elements for globalizing capitalism. Its efforts are directed towards transforming Kemalist ideology that is in cooperation with liberal arguments and governmental understanding (Uzgel, 2009, cited: Kurul, 2012b, 331). In this inclination, “Market Islam” that has gained power since the 1990s in all Islam-Arab countries has taken effect. Here, Market Islam has been an agent in eliminating social wealth government via privatizations, rather than being a potential Islamist government or Muslim canonical system of law (Haenni, 2011, akt: Inal, 2012, 87); one of the other ways of eliminating the social state is revising curriculum in the education system. As McLaren (1989) stated, “curriculum is more than a study program or course text”. It represents a specific life style. It serves to prepare students for the current dominant or lower statuses in the society. Curriculum prefers a specific knowledge type to others and affirms the dreams, desires and values of selected student groups. However, there is also the need to take care of how definitions, discussions and presentations in the textbooks, program materials, course contents and social relations are expressed in classroom applications (cited, Gülmez, 2010, 88)”. With these statements, McLaren attracts attention to the reality that curriculum is the topic of both politics and pedagogics. Knowledge/codes that are transported via open/hidden curriculum that is, statements produced by governments, are adopted and internalized by the society quickly and easily are transformed into social behaviors. In reality new religious additions in the curriculum are not for raising believers, but for raising individuals for the market who have adopted the conservative order via education. As part of neoliberal conservative ideology, while education produces the entrepreneur, competitive workforce that the market needs, it also must have the ideological/pedagogical content to raise moderate, obedient, conservative workforce. The role of elective courses about religion in creating an obedient workforce is obvious: a workforce that is disciplined in the market and that is loyal to the employer instead of unionizing, that transfers work accidents, and unfair opportunities to God, and sees demanding justice as otherworldly and describes the world and its order, not socially constructed, and therefore open to reform, but rather as the product of divine will. (İnal, 2012, 88).

Instead of a Conclusion

When academicians, researchers, teachers and families stay quiet it gives an opportunity for the neo-liberal ideology to survive and thrive. “Voice” is a very important pedagogical concept, since it refers to the cultural grammar that the individual interprets and puts into words, and the background knowledge. Each individual voice is formed with the owner’s personal cultural history and experience. The voice of the teacher is important also in terms of exposing the social relationships of teachers operating in the public and private areas of their lives (Giroux, 1989,cited, Esen, 2005). The most important invisible effect of neoliberalism on education, or on the elimination of other public services, is that “they are part of a process that aims to eliminate public areas, in which social problems can be resolved by democratic ways (Giroux, 2007, 102)”. Capitalism, on the other hand, which weakened millions by impoverishing, steals the hopes of the laborers, while exterminating all the historical gains of the working class and social democracy. This tyranny of capitalism paved the way for millions to ask the questions of “what should happen”, “what can happen”. Just like the answer to the question “what can happen” may be fascism or a military dictatorial regime-- it may also turn into searching for the answer of “what should happen” with strategic activism, and organization that academicians, teachers, students and other workers will form together (Hill, 2012). Education plays a crucial role in reproducing the life ideology of neoliberalism. Even ways of producing and transferring information today has varied; as institutions with no alternatives, schools and education institutions have a strategic importance in transforming information to power. For this reason, the main reason for opposing neoliberal education policies, which remove the education rights of workmen and the poor, should be public education. There is no reason for the resistance, which unifies multi-dimensional problems of education in the target of getting education socialized and places education right in the center, to get the support of large social sections (Sayılan, 2006).Education is a collective service. Because of this quality of service, access of all sections of society to education services, which are under the dominance of the market, can only be realized with a collective struggle. It is obvious that concept of the liberal education never tolerate such collective struggle. Critical pedagogy shows us how to perform such struggle. Critical pedagogy refuses separation of pedagogy from politics. Education either works and uses as tool in order to facilitate the abidance of people to the existing system or become as discovered tool to how to participate to the changing of transforming them or their world and as a “practice of freedom”. According to Freire (1991) the basic purpose of the

education is for students to gain a critical concept about social awareness and make conscious their own capacities to transform society. Development of such consciousness will engender and open the road to change the structures which dehumanize the human being and create people who build a new society toward freedom and liberation, not narrowly focused on a corporate business class, but for the good of all.

ⁱThis study is the expanded version of the presentation *The Neoliberal Education Policies Implemented in Turkey and Transformation in Education*, which was presented in The 2nd International Conference on Critical Education, on 10-14 July 2012, in Athens-Greece.

ⁱⁱ The Law Draft was protested by civil workers and worker unions. The education works of the union, meetings, demonstrations, anti-campaigns started on the Internet turned out to be a massive demonstration with broad participation. www.kamuyonetimi.org.

ⁱⁱⁱ Justice and Development Party (JDP), which was again in power before the general election in 2011, promised to appoint all contractual teachers as permanent and right before the election appointed all teachers as permanent staff. Since that time, contractual teachers have not been employed. When the abovementioned CSB is realised, since all employees will not have security, the only reason for it not to be mentioned nowadays is kind of political hockey pokey and eyewash.

^{iv} Together with the removal of contractual teachers, teacher shortage tried to be compensated by freelance, paid per lesson and not employed teachers. Even those who have graduated from a higher education institution (for instance engineering) are employed as paid teachers for a class fee, and payments are very low. While the number of these teachers are not exactly stated, in one of his speeches the Minister of Education stated that 53,453 teachers are employed as paid teachers.

^v The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) announced an “entrepreneur and renovative universities list” for the first time in October 2012 and it was announced to the public that this list will be announced each year. In addition, on the same day, the draft bill was presented for public opinion and was sent to parliament for legislation, which discriminates against universities and academicians by increasing insecure, “casualized” employment, and which foresees payment according to performance for academicians and disregards the social responsibility of universities,

^{vi} In Turkey faculties of arts and sciences, which educate in areas such as physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology, transformed into faculties that students avoid under the fear of not being able to find jobs after graduation. There are either no students or very few students in these departments in the faculties. Closing these departments is on the agenda. On the other hand, in all universities, faculties giving education in religion are being opened quickly; instead of philosophy graduates, theology faculty graduates are even preferred as researchers in philosophy departments.

^{vii} Before 1980, religion courses were not compulsory in schools; they were kept elective. After the 1980 military coup, religious culture and education was included as part of the compulsory set of courses in schools.

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