

RESEARCH
ARTICLE**Restructuring Attempts in the Turkish Education System from 1980 to the Present****Neriman Martı Emel**

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Abstract

Developments in science, technology and culture in the world have created a need for qualified education in Turkey and have led to searches in this context. Many innovations have been made in different periods in order to develop the Turkish education system. Despite these innovations, it has not been possible to see the expected development in the quality of education and structural transformations. This situation negatively affects the development of the Turkish education system. In this study, the prominent educational practices from the 1980s to the present are discussed.

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Introduction

The developments in science and technology and the changes that societies experience in social, economic and cultural areas create a need for qualified education. In today's world, human resources are seen as the most important wealth, while the quality of people is accepted as an indicator of development. The education of the human power required for social development is directly proportional to the discovery and guidance of the interests and talents of young people. ¹Therefore, it is important to direct and develop human qualities correctly. It is at the forefront of the duties of education that people can be shaped and conscious in line with their talents, gain an honorable, respected and healthy personality, and that countries can become distinguished, participatory and effective members of contemporary civilization. ²In this context, the duty of raising qualified people is at the forefront of the duties of today's education system. In fulfilling this duty, the activities of restructuring education according to the requirements of the age are of great importance.

Restructuring education is the organization of the education system by redefining its structure and functions in line with predetermined economic, political and even ideological goals. This does not mean that the system is renewed

¹Alaaddin Dinçer. (2012). A Discussion on 4+4+4. *Journal of Education Science Society*. 10 (38), 137-160. p:156.

²Halil İbrahim Özsoy and Aydoğan Ataüinal. (2001). *What Kind of Person and How?* Ankara: 20 May Education, Culture and Social Solidarity Foundation Publication No:7. p:9.

spontaneously, but that it is rebuilt in a sense, through a direct and conscious intervention in the area to be restructured.³

When the education system is reorganized according to the “requirements of the age”, it is thought that other public service areas will automatically adapt to this arrangement, so the education system can serve as a locomotive for the reorganization of other public areas. Therefore, “restructuring the education system” is of great importance for the system as a whole to renew itself. ‘So, to what extent do the recent reforms in the Turkish education system contribute to this process? In order to understand how the reforms in the Turkish education system affect the process of restructuring the education system and what kind of contributions they make to the overall performance of the education system; it is necessary to examine and understand the characteristic periods from a political perspective separately. In this study, the restructuring activities of the Turkish Education System from 1980 to the present have been discussed, and the quantitative and qualitative changes and developments in the field of education during this period have been tried to be determined.

The Özal Years (Post-1980 Period)

Turgut Özal served as prime minister between 1983-1989 and as president between 1989-1993 . During the period when Turgut Özal came to power alone with the Motherland Party after the 1980 coup, a new period began in the field of education in Turkey, as in every other field. In order to understand the contribution of the Özal era to the Turkish education system, it is first necessary to understand Turgut Özal's vision. When we look at it in general terms; Özal largely transferred the pragmatist working style in the private sector to the state. He saw public bureaucracy as one of the biggest obstacles to development. It cannot be said that he paid much attention to the price of change. During his first term as prime minister, he opened up to the world in many areas and brought Turkey to a point where it could no longer be closed in on itself for a long time, even if it was desired. ‘Özal, who was aware of the direction the world was changing, prepared Turkey for this in a way.

On the other hand, the years of Özal were spent in Turkey, which was a predominantly agricultural society, in an effort to complete the necessary infrastructure for industrial transformation, as well as to integrate with a post-industrial world dominated by high technology. He wanted to fit the process that Western European countries had gone through in a few centuries into a shorter period. ‘However, it is possible to see the transformation experienced in the world and in Turkey and the effects of Özal's vision directly on the Turkish education system.

During the Özal period, efforts were made to pave the way for people's talents and entrepreneurial tendencies and to provide them with the necessary freedom in this area. Because in order to ensure the structural transformation towards becoming a 'civil society', it was desired to provide opportunities for the development of people who were self-confident, did not hesitate to express themselves, and had the determination and excitement to implement their entrepreneurial talent. ‘Therefore, in order to develop such people, privatization practices were also reflected in educational institutions. Özal, who was stated to be extremely fond of overthrowing the old and establishing a new structure, tried to transform the educational system in this direction in order to create the type of individual he dreamed of. One of the most important policies implemented in this direction was to pave the way for private schools. The increase in the support given to private schools by the state led to the spread of private schools at all levels of education. ‘Thus, a single-type educational institution profile was moved away from, and with the support given to foreign language learning, Anatolian High Schools and Super High Schools gained educational programs at a level that could compete with private schools.

Anatolian high schools were seen as rivals to private schools due to the quality education provided and foreign languages taught. So much so that, with the transition to eight-year continuous education, Anatolian High Schools, whose middle sections were included in primary education, were left only as high school sections; it was even suggested that they be made fee-based. It was suggested that a fee be charged at least half or 1/3 of the market

³Education Sen. (2012). *10th Year of AKP in Education*. Ankara: Mattek Printing House. p:80.

⁴Erkan Aydoğan. (2008). Restructuring and Privatization Steps in the Education System . *National Politics and Administration* . Volume:3 Issue:6. (166-187) p:170.

⁵Veysel Bozkurt. (2001). Future Society, Transformational Leadership and Tugut Özal. İ.Sezal &İ.Dağı (Eds.) *Who is This Özal?* Istanbul: Boyut Publishing House, p:351.

⁶Veysel Bozkurt. (2001). *ibid* . p:358.

⁷İsmail Doğan. (1997). *Science and Culture in a Changing Turkey* . Ankara: İmaj Publishing House . pp : 32-33.

⁸Fuat Ercan. (1999). Neo-Liberal Education Economics; A Critical Framework Attempt. F.Alpkaya, T.Demirer, F.Ercan, H.Mihçı, İ.Önder, S.Özbudun and M.Özügür (Eds.) *Education: What for? University: How? YÖK: Where to?* Ankara: Ütopya Publishing House. p:80.

average, although not as much as the fee charged in private schools, but it was not accepted. On the other hand, Anatolian High Schools, which were opened up to the districts, lost this efficiency as they increased in number.

In addition, starting from the 1985-1986 academic year, Anatolian Imam Hatip High Schools began to be opened in line with the new structures in secondary education. The normal secondary school program was applied in the secondary schools within the Anatolian Imam Hatip High Schools, which had the characteristics of a secondary education institution in terms of program and status, and the Quran and Arabic courses were added to the program as compulsory elective courses. In the high school section, the course and teaching program of Imam Hatip High Schools was applied exactly the same, with one more course (Foreign Language). ⁹In the following period, Anatolian Imam Hatip High Schools produced students who could compete with or even surpass students in Anatolian high schools and super high schools; however, these students were stuck with the coefficient barrier in university entrance. One of the prominent educational practices in the Özal years was the course passing and credit system. The course passing and credit system was one of the educational reforms implemented in the secondary education level and left its mark on the Özal period. The class passing and exam system was applied until the year it was put into practice. The class passing system is based on the assumptions that the student's development is a whole and that the part of the courses in the curriculum for a year is organized accordingly; that students who fail one or more of the courses in a certain year will have significant deficiencies in the others. ¹⁰In the course passing system, the decision of success or failure regarding a course is independent of the other courses.

The course passing and credit system, which was put into practice in the 1991-1992 academic year, was abolished after the 15th National Education Council. Starting from the 1995-1996 academic year, the "grade passing system" was gradually put back into practice.

With the passing and credit system, Imam-Hatip High Schools were restructured as eight-term schools where a common culture, common vocational and elective course programs were applied. There were discussions on the subject of 'field determination' and the phrase 'Social Sciences and Literature' was written in the field section of Imam-Hatip High School diplomas. In the 1995-1996 Academic Year, as in other schools, the class passing system was returned to Imam-Hatip High Schools. ¹¹In the Passing and Credit System application, in line with the general purposes and principles specified in the National Education Law, it was aimed to provide all students with a minimum, common general culture at the secondary education level; to prepare them for higher education or for both a profession and higher education in line with their interests, talents and preferences; and to ensure their successful adaptation to life and business fields. ¹²Instilling democracy in students as a way of life is among these goals. ¹³However, it has not been possible to achieve these goals under the conditions in Turkey. Due to reasons such as limited physical facilities, the problem of evaluating free time and the fact that young people are unaware of what they want to focus on, the credit system application was shelved and; The "field selective program" application has been put into effect.

February 28 Process

The military intervention that took place on February 28, 1997, which was recorded in Turkish history as a postmodern coup, also caused many changes in the Turkish education system. During this process, the duration of primary education was increased to eight years without interruption and made compulsory; thus, the middle section of Imam-Hatip High Schools had to be closed. In fact, Imam-Hatip High Schools were not the only type of school whose middle section was closed. The same practice also affected Anatolian High Schools, and students lost the chance to start intensive foreign language learning at a young age. In addition, the application of different coefficients for non-field preferences in entering higher education and the bans on headscarves were also practices brought by this period.

When the reflections of the period on education are considered, it is seen that the most effective decision taken was eight years of uninterrupted compulsory primary education. The uninterrupted extension of primary education to eight years was made possible by the law enacted by the ANAP-DSP-DTP Coalition Government on 18.08.1997. ¹⁴The decision for eight years of basic education envisaged in the National Education Basic Law No. 1739 was reinforced by the discussion of the model called the 'New Turkish National Education System'

⁹Ramazan Buyrukçu. (2007). *Professional Religious Education-Teaching in Turkey*. Isparta:Faculty Bookstore. p:53.

¹⁰Yaşar Baykul et al. (1993). *Course Passing and Credit System Research*. Ankara: National Education Printing House. p:20.

¹¹Ramazan Buyrukçu. (2007). *ibid*. p:55.

¹²A.Feray Karaçelebi. (1994). *Course Passing and Credit System*. Ankara: Yöntem Publishing House. p:11.

¹³Said Taş. (1998). *Changes Caused by Passing Courses and Credit System in High Schools (Burdur Province Example)*. PhD Thesis. Hacettepe University Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara. p:16.

¹⁴Yahya Akyüz. (2011). *Turkish Education History*. Ankara: Pegem Publishing. p:351.

established at the 10th National Education Council (1981) based on the policies and principles determined in the Fourth Five-Year Development Plan. Accordingly, primary and secondary school programs were integrated into basic education programs in accordance with the developmental characteristics of the child, criteria were introduced for teacher selection, and in addition to the arrangement of a functional program that would direct students to higher education and working life at the second stage, it was decided to take into account the knowledge, skills and local characteristics to be acquired by students who would not continue high school.¹⁵ Therefore, the infrastructure for eight years of uninterrupted compulsory primary education had already been prepared years in advance. What was done during the February 28 process was to spread this throughout the country.

The fact that education was seen and used as a tool in the creation of a state and society structure based on religious rules was the main reason for the process that started on February 28, 1997. The subsequent Eight-Year Uninterrupted Compulsory Basic Education Law No. 4306 dated August 18, 1997 was a step that tried to re-establish the education system on a secular line.¹⁶ This was a big step for the Turkish education system. Because, the justification of the Eight-Year Uninterrupted Compulsory Basic Education Law was to raise good citizens, free-thinking individuals, and professional people who adopted national cultural values. A period of 5 years was not enough to raise a free-thinking person who had national cultural values. In addition, when this law was passed, Turkey was one of only 12 countries in the world where compulsory basic education was 5 years.¹⁷ In the following period, the scope of the concept of compulsory education gradually expanded. Compulsory education, which was initially 5 years, later became 8 years, and today it is 12 years. Compulsory education should not be understood as the obligation for every child to go to school, but as the state preparing educational opportunities for every child. Because education is everyone's right, not their duty.¹⁸ Although this situation initially seems to provide equal opportunities, reduce the number of child laborers and include girls more in education, it can also be said that the state's perspective on the right to education has gained a different dimension in the process. In the following process, it was aimed to lighten the burden on the state's shoulders regarding the right to education by offering and encouraging a private school option in a clear manner. In addition, citizens have always been able to have this right within the means provided by the state. In other words, if an exam was required, students who did not have the money to enroll in a private school were not able to choose a school by taking the exam, being forced to go to religious vocational high schools or other vocational high schools, or due to the address-based registration system.

Especially after the 2000s, children with higher socio-economic status have had a higher access to secondary schools that accept students by exam instead of general secondary schools.¹⁹ Due to their financial comfort, they have had the opportunity to attend courses/private teaching institutions to prepare for such exams and also have the option of private schools. Children with lower socio-economic status, on the other hand, are not as successful in general exams because they cannot benefit from such opportunities and struggle with adverse living conditions.

On the other hand, when moving from primary school to secondary school, students who showed high level of success were selected for Science and Anatolian High Schools. However, these students who were selected found themselves in an ordinary education environment instead of the attention they deserved. It can be said that they passed from such an environment to the next level by decreasing their potential even more. Because there is no mechanism that forces schools to provide an education and training that will meet their potential.²⁰ In the schools where they are accepted, a program close to the standard is applied; perhaps a difference is tried to be made by adding a few more courses. In such schools, success is provided by the determination of the students there rather than the methods currently applied or the courses given. However, it is not possible to say that this determination gets the satisfaction it deserves. Because what is defined as success is not the general equipment of the students; it is only their exam success.

Until 1997, the transition to secondary schools, which were passed through an exam after primary school, was made according to the results of the central selection and placement exam applied at the end of primary school.

¹⁵ Mehmet Gültekin. (1999). *Alternative Program Models for the Second Stage of Basic Education*. No:1103 Eskişehir: TC Anadolu University Publications. p:24-25.

¹⁶ Şerafettin Yamaner. (1999). *National Education in Atatürkist Thought. (From Religious and Traditional Education to Secular and Contemporary Education)* Istanbul: Social Transformation Publications. p:166.

¹⁷ Şerafettin Yamaner. (1999). *ibid* . p:171.

¹⁸ Nihat Bilgen. (1994). *Contemporary and Democratic Education*. Istanbul: MEB Printing House. p:95.

¹⁹ Serdar Polat. (2009). *The Effects of Education Policies on Inequality of Opportunity in Turkey* . (SPO Expertise Thesis) No:2801 Ankara: DPT Publications . p:27.

²⁰ İrfan Erdoğan. (2006). *EU Vision, Education in Turkey. EU Vision, Education and Private Schools in Turkey* (Ed.İrfan Erdoğan). İstanbul:Neta Printing House. p:56.

After the regulations in 1997, the selection and placement exam began to be held for the transition to secondary schools. The transition to secondary education was made according to the results of the high school entrance exam conducted by the Ministry of National Education every year under the name of Secondary Education Institutions Exam (OKS) and attended by 8th grade students. In 2008, OKS was abolished and Level Determination Exams (SBS) began to be applied within the scope of the Transition to Secondary Education Institutions System (OGES). The secondary education placement score consists of the weighted combination of SBS scores and school success scores. SBS was centrally applied by the Ministry of National Education at the end of 6th, 7th and 8th grades, limited to the achievements included in the curriculum of that year, and was gradually abolished as of 2010.²¹ After this date, the TEOG application began. TEOG is a practice in which 7th and 8th grade students are placed in secondary education institutions based on the scores they obtain from the exams they take each semester during the academic year.

Different educational programs include different mechanisms where different types of education are created in order to gain different qualifications and to move on to higher education or employment. While academic fields make it easier to move on to higher education, vocational fields make it easier to move on to certain jobs in the labor market.²² In Turkey, the primary preference of families for their children has been schools that require entrance exams, provide academic education and facilitate transition to higher education. Therefore, young people who 'do not intend to study, are not thought to be successful in higher education entrance exams' are directed to vocational high schools with the idea that they should at least acquire a profession. Although there is no obstacle for students graduating from vocational high schools in this period in terms of moving on to higher education, the coefficient difference applied when calculating the scores has created a disadvantage. Although this situation is the same for all vocational high schools, it has also been reflected as if it is specific to imam hatip high schools. The purpose of the coefficient regulation is to provide support for those who will advance in their own fields in higher education. This situation poses a negative situation for those who do not make a choice in their own fields.

The increase in the duration of compulsory primary education to eight years has also affected foreign language education. When we look at the problem of foreign language education in general, it is seen that foreign language education in Turkey was at a better level until the 2000s. Because until this period, Anatolian High Schools served as educational institutions that provided 5 years of primary school plus 1 year of preparatory class, 3 years of middle school and 3 years of high school education. The closure of the middle sections of Anatolian High Schools along with the implementation of eight years of compulsory primary education and the abolition of preparatory classes in 2004 have been disadvantages for foreign language education. Although the 2-hour foreign language course taught in 4th and 5th grades was increased to 3 hours in 2007 and foreign language education was also reduced to lower grades in the following years, sufficient efficiency was not achieved.

AKP Period

The AKP has been determined in its goals regarding education from the 58th to the 65th governments and ensured the continuity of the implemented projects. During the three terms it has been in power, the AKP government has implemented practices that are almost completely opposite to the decisions taken during the February 28 process. Especially in the third term, which is called the "mastery period", radical changes have been made to the Turkish education system. The extension of high schools to 4 years, the New Primary Education Program, the extension of the compulsory education period to 12 years in the form of 4+4+4 with interruptions, changes regarding the celebration of official ceremonies, the regulation of coefficients, the change in the conditions for attending Quran courses, the amendment to the Basic Law of National Education numbered 1739, the removal of the National Security Information Course are the summary of the practices brought by this period.

The education systems of countries are largely shaped by the policies of the political parties that govern the country. The main determinant of party policies is the ideological tendencies of political parties. The written form of this ideological tendency is the party programs. In terms of educational philosophy, it can be said that the AKP stands on a line close to philosophical idealism. When religious education and headscarf freedom are considered, it can be said that the AKP has become significantly conservative and even Islamist; when it comes to social

²¹A.Seda Saracaloğlu, Ali Yakar and Betül Altay. (2014). Problems Experienced in the Transition Process to Secondary School in Turkey and Private Tutoring Institutions: Student-Teacher-Parent Views (Muğla and Aydın Examples). *International Congress on Transition Between Levels and New Models in Education from the Foundation of the Republic to the Present*. Ankara: Atatürk Research Center Publications. p:351.

²²Serdar Polat. (2009). *ibid.* p:91.

support for education, it stands close to a social democratic line; and due to the financial incentives in its attitude towards private education, it stands at a very liberal point.²³

The AKP has ensured that Turkey has made significant progress in the field of harmonizing general education policies with social policies; it has fulfilled many promises in the party program and the Tenth Development Plan. The AKP governments have taken important steps in areas such as the distribution of free textbooks and school milk, determination of registration circles and procedures in schools in an electronic environment, provision of internet access and information technology tools in village schools, renewal of the primary school curriculum, unification of inspections under a single roof, extension of the foreign language teaching period to the 2nd grade of primary school, reduction of the number of students per classroom and teacher, reduction of the dropout rate especially among girls, increase in support provided to children with disabilities and those in need of care, expansion of special education services, release of education activities in the mother tongue in private educational institutions, the FATİH Project, transportation education, distance education opportunities, and overseas mobility of teachers.²⁴ The free textbook application was first initiated in primary schools; in later years, it was expanded to include secondary education institutions. In addition, the AKP Government, which pursues *an education system* policy that is open to change and development, has taken the necessary steps to provide 550 thousand computers and internet support to schools. Because , *and believes that the basic condition for development is widespread and quality education* . 'Let's Go to School Girls Campaign' and '100% Support for Education Project' are also products of this belief.

During the AKP government, a program development process has been experienced in the national education system since 2004. All primary and secondary education programs have been changed. The first problem experienced in this process was related to the gradual transition. The implementation of the program throughout the country was quite late.²⁵ In order to increase the quality of education and to shift from a rote-learning education approach to a questioning, critical and investigative approach, constructivist education was brought to the agenda and accordingly the entire curriculum from kindergarten to university was gradually changed.

When the program development process in the Turkish education system is considered, it is seen that the 1968 Primary School Program continued to be used in primary education until 2004. There was a reform attempt with the primary education program that was tested with a pilot application in 9 provinces in 2004. The 2005 program, which was prepared based on the constructivist approach, criticizes the rote-learning and teacher-centered teaching approach and adopts teaching methods and techniques where the student is at the center. For the 2005 curriculum, which is quite different from other programs in terms of course content, achievements, teaching methods and techniques, instead of giving the student the necessary information and expecting appropriate behavior, teachers who can create the necessary equipment for the student to structure the information were needed. The teacher is not a person who transfers information; he is a guide who teaches students how to learn. Although in theory it is intended to raise individuals who are thinking and critical in accordance with the needs of the age; the extent to which this is realized in practice is relative. When the new curriculum, which was seen as a glimmer of hope for international exams such as PISA, did not meet expectations with the first exam results in 2006, it was claimed that the achievements would become visible in the long term.

The new primary education program, which was put into practice in 2005-2006 and is based on a constructivist approach, emerged as a result and necessity of neo-liberal economic policies. The new program, which clearly demonstrates that being based on economic interests and logic in a globalizing world is possible through the development and individualization of human capital, was introduced as a very serious 'reform' or even 'revolution' in education by the AKP government's Minister of National Education and the Presidency of the Turkish Commercial Code, and it aroused widespread repercussions in the media. The claim that the change made was a reform or revolution was explained by the claim that the educational philosophy of the Turkish education system had been changed. Accordingly, the new program was not based on a Newtonian-style scientific understanding based on a logic such as 'flat', 'linear', 'monist', etc., but on 'probabilistic', 'multi-causal', 'educational', etc. Quantum theory.²⁶ In addition, the ministry states that this new program takes into account the changes and developments in

²³Mehmet Emin Usta. (2015). Education Policies According to Political Party Programs. *TYB ACADEMY Journal of Language, Literature and Social Sciences*. Year: 5 Issue: 13. p: 72. (55-73)

²⁴Mehmet Emin Usta. (2015). *ibid* . p:70.

²⁵Irfan Erdogan. (2009). *On Education* . Ankara: Pegem Publishing House. p:201.

²⁶Kemal İnan. (2006). Critique of Neoliberal Education and New Primary Education Curriculum. *Praxis* . Issue:14. Footnote Printing Publishing Marketing Co. Ltd. Ankara. p:273. (265-287)

the world, the European Union norms and understanding of education, the results of the evaluations of existing programs and needs analysis.²⁷

The Ministry of National Education has aimed to raise individuals who research, use, produce and continuously improve information with the new programs it has implemented since 2005. Multiple intelligence, student-centered education, brain-based learning, sensitivity to individual differences, spiral and thematic approach, skill and activity approach, etc. approaches and models have been utilized. ²⁸Freely distributed textbooks and EBA contents to be created in the future have also been created accordingly.

Common skills have been determined for all courses, such as using Turkish correctly, critical and creative thinking, communication, problem solving, research, using information technologies, entrepreneurship and decision making. With the 2005 programs, a transition has been made from a rigid, subject-centered and behaviorist program to a mental, cognitive and constructive understanding. The primary aim of the programs has been determined as helping students gain basic life skills and develop positive personal qualities. ²⁹With the 2005 programs, it was aimed to move students from a passive learning process to an active learning environment where they can participate, make comments and use their knowledge and skills.

In the constructivist approach, instead of memorizing the content of the courses, it is essential to direct students to research, to establish connections between what they already know and what they will learn, and to use teaching methods that enable students to develop their thinking skills. The teacher is the person who guides the class and directs students in constructing their knowledge. The New Primary Education Program, which is shaped according to the constructivist learning approach, is based on a progressive education philosophy that emphasizes individuality and emphasizes individual work as an educational philosophy.³⁰

With the new program, a measurement and evaluation approach has been put into practice where the process is evaluated and observed, not the result. This process includes activities such as collecting information about the student's development, focusing on student-centered activities, and helping the student improve himself. ³¹In the textbooks, a scale has been placed at the end of each unit for the student to evaluate himself. In this way, the student can evaluate how much progress he has made in the given achievements and become aware of his deficiencies.

In the new program, not only teaching but also education is emphasized. By saving students from rote learning, it is aimed to raise individuals who think critically and creatively and can solve problems. Reading slips in primary school have been removed; students begin learning to read and write with sounds, not sentences. Sounds are not taught in alphabetical order either. In other words, a very different application has begun.

When the applicability of the new program is considered professionally, the lack of infrastructure, the fact that teachers trained with classical methods are left in this application without receiving sufficient in-service training - and even their hesitation in the face of the diversity of measurement and evaluation methods - and the difficulty of reducing the role of the teacher to guidance and direction in the current education system have been disadvantages in the applicability of this program.

Another application of the AKP period that has caused serious changes in the Turkish education system is the 4+4+4 system. With the change in the "1st paragraph of Article 7 of the Primary Education and Training Law No. 222 dated 05.01.1961", the compulsory education period was increased to 12 years and the levels were divided as 4+4+4. The increase in high schools to four years is directly related to the AKP's goals of extending the duration of compulsory education from eight years.

With this new system, 8 years of continuous education became 12 years of compulsory but interrupted education. While primary school was reduced from five years to four years, secondary school level was brought back to the agenda. After the problems experienced regarding the age of starting primary school, the age of starting was accepted as 6. Due to the inadequacy of the buildings, most schools have double-shift education, so lessons start and end in the dark.

²⁷Kemal İnan. (2006). *Ibid*. p:276.

²⁸Firdevs Güneş. (2014). Wars between the Education System and the Examination System. *International Congress on Transition Between Levels and New Models in Education from the Foundation of the Republic to the Present* (Eds. Ash Akdoğan, Bulut İnsan, Aynur Yavuz Akegin) Ankara: Atatürk Research Center Publications . p:457.

²⁹Firdevs Gunes. (2014). *ibid* . p:461.

³⁰Hasan Ünder. (2009). Constructivism: Presentation, Application and Reactions in Turkey. *Proceedings of the International Congress of Philosophy of Education* . Ankara: Eğitim-Bir-Sen Publications. p:657.

³¹Firdevs Gunes. (2014). *ibid*. p:461.

Among those who have a supportive stance regarding the 4+4+4 system, Eğitim-Bir Sen is at the forefront. In the 18th National Education Council, Eğitim-Bir Sen's proposal that the education process until higher education should be 13 years in the form of 1+4+4+4 was accepted and turned into a council decision. The ³²fact that council decisions, which are generally advisory, were enacted so quickly and the step taken to end 8 years of uninterrupted education as soon as possible was described as the "will of the people" that ended the "tutelage mentality". The fact that the proposal to return to interrupted education from the 8-year uninterrupted education practice introduced with February 28 was brought to the agenda by the civil society organization known as Eğitim Bir Sen, which is known to be pro-government, ³³led to speculation that the 4+4+4 law was made to erase the traces of February 28.

The Turkish education system was intended to be renewed from scratch with the 4+4+4 arrangement, which divided the education levels into three separate parts as primary school, middle school and high school and caused them to be discontinuous. However, this concept of 'renewal' does not mean that the system or structure has undergone or will undergo a progressive transformation. ³⁴Again, a process was faced with a decision being made suddenly without having its infrastructure prepared. Many new problems were encountered, from the age of starting school to the inadequacy of buildings, from the norm of teachers to the rearrangement of course content.

Although the 4+4+4 system has found supporters, it has always received more criticism. Negative reactions from democratic mass organizations as well as universities have been reflected in social media and the press. The issues most subject to negative criticism are: school starting age, early orientation to the profession, distance education, elective courses and the situation of teachers.

By bringing the age of starting first grade forward by one year, children aged 60-72 months starting primary school instead of preschool education was considered pedagogically problematic, and as a result of these reactions, flexibility was introduced to the issue.

The law allows orientation to begin in the 4th grade for elements that are shaped by basic education, such as talent, interest, and expectations from life, which become clearer only at the end of adolescence, and to continue to programs that provide vocational training from the 5th grade onwards. However, this is a very early period for children who are not aware of their talents and who are not yet equipped to choose a profession. Such an application, which is not suitable for the nature of the child, has received negative criticism, especially considering that it was done with the enthusiasm of opening the middle section of Imam Hatip High Schools.

Another unsatisfactory issue regarding the law is the issue of 'distance education'. The inclusion of non-formal education within compulsory secondary education has made it possible for students to have opportunities such as open education and home education at the high school level. This situation jeopardizes the quality and control of education, and can also be considered a disadvantage in terms of the child's standing and socialization in society as an individual.

To summarize, increasing compulsory education to 12 years with the 4+4+4 system, decreasing the guidance service to the first level of primary school, taking foreign language and elective courses at the primary school level and diversifying them, and allowing elective education in different-local languages can be seen as positive developments.

Conclusion

In the period from 1980 to the present, which is the subject of the study, various educational reforms have been implemented in order to ensure the development of the Turkish education system, to eliminate its deficiencies, to eliminate its negativities and to meet its needs. With the reforms made in different periods, quantitative developments such as the physical structure and technological equipment of schools, as well as class sizes and teacher-student ratio have been achieved; and teaching programs and methods have also been renewed. Despite these renovations, it has not been possible to achieve the expected development in the quality and structure of education. In fact, it has been observed that the individual changes implemented under the name of reform by both the governments after 1980 and the AKP since 2002 have been insufficient to provide structural solutions to education-teaching problems. This situation is clearly evident in national and international studies evaluating students' performances.

³²Battal Odabaşı. (2014). Thoughts on the New Law (4+4+4) Change in the Turkish Education System. *Çukurova University Faculty of Education Journal*. Volume:43 Issue:2 (103-124). p:107.

³³Alaaddin Dinçer. (2012). A Discussion on 4+4+4. *Journal of Education Science Society*. 10 (38), 137-160 . p:148.

³⁴Kemal İnal. (2012). AKP's Reform Logic and Ideo-Pedagogical Critical Analysis of '4+4+4'. *Education Science Society Journal*. Volume:10 Issue:39 (78-92) p:79.

It is seen that the reforms carried out within the scope of the restructuring process of education were made within the framework of regulation studies aimed at daily discussion topics rather than addressing structural problems. On the other hand, it has not been possible to ensure stability in the Turkish education system with the constant changes. Because the decisions taken are not implemented by conducting trial studies, spreading them over a long period of time, discussing and maturing; new changes are made without seeing and evaluating the results in a healthy way. On the other hand, the implementation of the educational idea produced by Western countries without taking local conditions into account; has neither increased the quality of education nor solved the structural problems of education. In addition to the fact that 100% rate of schooling has not been achieved like in EU countries; inequalities of opportunity continue between districts, provinces, regions, classes, ethnic communities and genders. Since the examination systems are constantly changing, they have caused the teacher-parent-student trio to face problems. Anatolian high schools have become ordinary and foreign languages are still not taught at the desired level.³⁵ This situation negatively affects the development of the Turkish education system.

Any changes to be made to the Turkish education system, taking into account the needs of the age, should not be affected by political winds. After a preliminary evaluation is made with pilot applications for the restructuring of the Turkish education system, the applications to be spread to the general public should be put forward by taking the opinions of experts, education workers, students and parents.

Education is a very important issue that is the cornerstone of economic growth and development, and social progress. In this respect, the ultimate goals of political parties and governments on education are united in solving the fundamental problems related to education and achieving quality and modern education.³⁶ In order for the restructuring of the education system to be successful, efforts to increase the quality of the education system should continue. The implementation process of the new education regulation should be monitored by relevant institutions and independent organizations, research on this subject should be supported, and suggestions for the development of the system should be shared with the authorities.

However, the reflection of the differences in methods and principles between the parties and the party missions on education can lead to different or contradictory practices. In order to prevent this, those who direct education policies should not forget that they are also designing the fate of all of Turkey; for this, they should nationalize our education and make it a state policy above parties.³⁷

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³⁵Kemal İnal. (2012). *Ibid*. p:83.

³⁶Mahmut Tezcan. (2002). *Education in Postmodern and Global Society*. Ankara: Amı Publishing. p:53.

³⁷Yusuf Ekinci. (1994). *National Education in Government and Political Programs 1920-1994*, Ankara , p:168.

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