MUNICIPALITIES AND ADULT EDUCATION: ISMEK CASE

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Municipalities and Adult Education: ISMEK Case

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ABSTRACT

Municipalities and Adult Education: ISMEK Case

This study aims to understand how participation patterns and program areas in Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses (ISMEK), Turkey's most prominent municipal adult education institution, manifest in the neoliberal era. Data on ISMEK participants' demographics and program areas between 2019 and 2024 were analyzed for this aim. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data, organized into various tables using frequencies and percentages. Findings were discussed, considering the neoliberal transformation that affected all fields of education after 1980. Results revealed significant variety in vocational and technical education programs and higher participation in these programs from different demographic groups. As aimed in the neoliberal agenda, this indicates an educational orientation to serve to create the workforce demanded by the market rather than societal and personal growth. Also, higher female participation in the programs traditionally associated with women's interests and roles is a manifestation of the conservative function of neoliberalism in education. This study is expected to contribute to the research in municipal adult education activities, especially in today's Turkey, where municipalities are becoming increasingly involved in educational services.

ÖZET

Belediyeler ve Yetişkin Eğitimi: ISMEK Örneği

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de en önde gelen belediye yetişkin eğitimi kurumu olan İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Sanat ve Meslek Eğitimi Kursları (İSMEK) katılım örüntülerinin ve program alanlarının neoliberal dönemde nasıl tezahür ettiğini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, 2019 ve 2024 yılları arasında ISMEK katılımcı demografisi ve program alanları verileri analiz edilmiştir. Veriler, frekanslar ve yüzdeler kullanılarak çeşitli tablolar halinde düzenlenmiş ve betimsel analiz yöntemiyle analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, 1980 sonrası tüm eğitim alanlarını etkileyen neoliberal dönüşüm çerçevesinde tartışılmıştır. Sonuçlar, mesleki ve teknik programlarda belirgin bir çeşitliliği ve bu programlara farklı demografik grupların yüksek katılım gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu durum, neoliberal dönüşümde amaçlandığı gibi, toplumsal ve bireysel gelişim yerine, piyasanın talep ettiği iş gücünü oluşturacak bir eğitim yönelimini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, kadınların, geleneksel olarak kadın ilgi ve rolleriyle bağlantılı olduğu düşünülen alanlardaki yüksek katılımı, eğitimde neoliberalizmin muhafazakâr işlevinin bir tezahürüdür. Bu çalışmanın, belediyelerin eğitim hizmetlerine giderek daha fazla dahil olduğu günümüz Türkiye'sinde, belediye yetişkin eğitimi faaliyetleri üzerine yapılan araştırmalara katkıda bulunması beklenmektedir.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKP (Turkish)	Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*)
BELMEK (Turkish)	Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Vocational Training Courses (*Ankara Büyükşehir Belediyesi Meslek Edindirme Kursları*)
BELTEK (Turkish)	Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Technical Training Courses (*Ankara Büyükşehir Belediyesi Teknik Eğitim Kursları*)3
CHP (Turkish)	Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*)
EFA Report	Education for All: The Situation of Adult Education in Turkey in the Context of Access to Quality Basic Education For All
EU	European Union
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMM	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (*İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi)*
İŞKUR (Turkish)	Turkish Employment Agency (*Türkiye İş Kurumu*)
ISMEK (Turkish)	Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses (*Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Sanat ve Meslek Eğitimi Kursları*)
MEB (Turkish)	Ministry of National Education (*Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı*)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RP (Turkish)	Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*)
SEGE (Turkish)	Socio-Economic Development Index (*Sosyo-Ekonomik Gelişmişlik Endeksi*)

TUIK (Turkish)	Turkish Statistical Institute (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu*)
TUSIAD	Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association (*Türk Sanayicileri ve İş İnsanları Derneği*)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, adult education has been a topic of interest since the Republic's early days. After years of struggle through the war of independence, adult education was necessary to transform the old culture, establish the new republic, and inform the citizens about the new ideologies of a democratic young Turkey. Adult education, a means to eradicate prevalent ignorance, poverty, and illiteracy, was seen as such a significant and reliable tool for development that formal and nonformal education were given equal consideration in the early days of the new republic (Miser & Ural & Ünlühisarcıklı, 2013).

Turkey entered the second century of the Republic, and adult education still plays a crucial role in shaping the country's social, economic, and political landscape. Miser et al. (2013) point out that knowledge holds a significant value, especially in Turkey, where it is seen as a source of superiority for both the present and future. As a result, continuous learning is considered essential, with lifelong learning being highly emphasized. It is widely agreed upon by politicians and educators alike that learning should persist throughout one's life, and adult education stands out as a crucial aspect of this lifelong learning journey (Miser et al., 2013).

However, in time, adult education, which once connotated a valued means for the development of society and individuals, has lost its “noble” purpose attributed to it. Its humanitarian and egalitarian aspects transformed (Okçabol, 2007), becoming even more symbolic with the relatively new lifelong learning concept. Lifelong learning, though presented with an appealing facade (Ayhan, 2005), became market-centric with the influence of neoliberalism (Okçabol, 2007; Bağcı, 2015a; Yıldız,

2012; Kaya, 2015). Moreover, it turned into a tool for the government in power with its aspect of socio-political conservatism, merged with the new-right ideologies (Yıldız, 2008; Polat, 2013; Bağcı, 2015b; Işık, 2023).

At the beginning of the second century of the republic, it is essential to analyze the current state of adult education in the country to clearly understand today and the effects of neoliberal policies on adult education. The integration, as mentioned earlier, of neoliberalism and lifelong learning, along with neoconservatism, is now so widespread that it can even be recognized and implemented at any institution providing adult education. Starting in the mid-1990s, the localization trends brought about by the *new right* ideologies and the rapid urbanization process in Turkey resulted in extended rights and authority for municipalities, allowing them to offer educational programs (Yıldız, 2012; Tepe, 2007).

The scope of the thesis is limited to the adult education activities of municipalities in Turkey. This choice is also based on the fact that the state's dominant role in adult education has shifted to the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and municipalities within the framework of the neoliberal policies prevailing in Turkey after 1980 (Sayılan, 2009). Among these institutions, municipalities stand out not only for carrying the traces of neoliberalism and neoconservatism as urban environments (Demirci, 2021; Uçak, 2018) but also have a significant place in terms of the number of adult education programs offered and participants reached according to Education for All-The Situation of Adult Education in Turkey in the Context of Access to Quality Basic Education For All Report's (*Herkesin Nitelikli Temel Eğitime Erişimi Bağlaminda Türkiye'de Yetişkin Eğitiminin Durumu*[EFA Report]) ((Miser & Ural & Ünlühisarcıklı, 2010) and

Turkish Statistical Institute (*Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu* [TUIK]) (TUIK, 2010, 2014, 2016).

The increase in municipal adult education activities is also the result of neoliberal policies' influence on the decrease of state investment in education (Tepe, 2007; Uzunyayla, 2007; Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir, 2012; Aslan, 2014; Bağcı, 2014), aligning with fiscal decentralization principle (Kazancı, 2019). Thus, in recent years, municipalities, which have become increasingly active in adult education activities in Turkey, are especially interesting because they stand at the intersection of private and public adult education activities.

For this reason, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Education Courses (*Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Sanat ve Eğitim Kursları* [ISMEK]) has been selected to examine the current situation of adult education practices of municipalities. This choice is partly based on the fact that ISMEK was founded in 1996, under the influence of the social municipality approach, and during the mayorship of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a member of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* [RP]) at the time. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (*İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi* [IMM]) and consequently ISMEK, was administered by right-wing parties for 23 years and by the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [AKP]) itself for 15 years until the 2019 elections. Since 2019, it has been governed by the opposition party, The Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* [CHP]). Therefore, if there are any, ISMEK and data provided by ISMEK may show the approaches of different political parties in providing municipality-run adult education activities.

Political parties' expectations and objectives concerning education and municipalities' role in providing education vary based on their ideologies (Tamer,

2015). Nevertheless, in their study in which they discussed the educational perspectives based on election manifestos of political parties, Akpınar & Küçük (2022) observes that policies of political parties with regards to public education show more similarities, when compared with their views on formal education, as the concept of lifelong education seems well-established. For instance, AKP expresses that they aim to develop programs that will improve employability (AKP, 2015, as cited in Akpınar & Küçük, 2022), while in their 2011 Education Report, CHP also stresses the importance of municipalities' collaboration with the labor market to provide a smooth transition between education and employability (CHP, 2011, as cited in Akpınar & Küçük, 2022). In this context, AKP expressed that a total of 1705 public education institutions were established in 2018 (AKP, 2018, as cited in Akpınar & Küçük, 2022). In the same year, CHP advocated for the importance of establishing Urban Institutes and Lifelong Education Schools to meet the citizens' need for lifelong learning (CHP, 2018, as cited in Akpınar & Küçük, 2022).

ISMEK is the most established and comprehensive example of municipality organizations operating in adult education in Turkey (Istanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Enstitüsü, n.d.). ISMEK operates in Istanbul, the most populous city in Turkey, where people from many different social and cultural backgrounds live. The fact that its activities cover many different fields of education and that many people from various backgrounds participate in its programs makes it a very suitable organization for examining and seeing the latest trends in adult education by municipalities in Turkey.

Therefore, adult education courses in ISMEK between 2019-2024 are examined in terms of participation. Program areas and participation rates, the location of programs, and participants' data on gender, employment status, age, and

educational background are included in the analysis to understand the patterns of participation in the ISMEK case. Findings are discussed, considering the transformation of adult education in the neoliberal era.

1.1 Significance of the study

Adult education activities have been a case for diverse actors not only in Turkey but also all over the world, and they have gained popularity with the changes occurring in the world, such as neoliberalism and its outcomes in the economy and the labor market. Structuring of the systems was required for the emerging capitalist order, and adult education became an essential aspect of this transformation (Davies & Bansel, 2017) to the knowledge economy (Bowl, 2017). Moreover, these economic and societal changes were strategically balanced with conservatism and its values to fulfill any resulting gaps (Topal, 2002; Yıldız, 2008; Bağcı, 2015b).

Although there are studies examining the recent adult education situation under the influence of neoliberalism and conservatism in Turkey (e.g., İnal, 2002; Uzunyayla, 2007; Yıldız, 2008; Yıldız, 2012; Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir, 2012; Polat, 2013; Kaya, 2014; Bağcı, 2015b) focusing on adult education implementation in municipalities are relatively few. (for exceptions, see Tepe, 2007; Eser, 2010; Tamer, 2015; Uçak, 2018). Also, since the role of municipalities in adult education activities, technology, demands, and necessities of people are rapidly changing, up-to-date research will be helpful to see the most recent picture of the adult education practices by a prominent example of municipality education institutions, namely ISMEK.

Given the fact that ISMEK is a predominant example of a well-established, comprehensive, and well-known municipality institution operating in Istanbul and

having the potential to provide adult education to a considerable population, it requires detailed research to analyze participation in adult education activities and observe the reflection of neoliberal transformation in adult education, especially at the municipality level.

Therefore, the primary goal of this study is to identify patterns of participation in ISMEK adult education programs between 2019 and 2024 by examining program areas and participation rates, the distribution of programs across districts, and participants' data on gender, employment status, age, and educational background to understand how they occur under the influence of neoliberalism. More specifically, this study attempts to address the inquiry of how participation patterns and program areas in ISMEK adult education courses manifest during the neoliberal period.

1.2 Research questions

This study on the patterns of participation and program areas in ISMEK in 2019-2024 seeks to answer these questions:

I. What program areas were introduced by ISMEK in specified years?
    i. What are the program areas in specified years?
    ii. What is the number of programs each year?

II. In which district were the programs located between 2019 and 2024?
    i. How many educational centers does ISMEK have?
    ii. What is the distribution of educational centers by districts?
    iii. What is the number of participants in each district?
    iv. Is there a correlation between the participation rates of districts and their SEGE scores?

III. What are the demographic characteristics of the participants in the programs between 2019-2023 in terms of:
    i. Gender
    ii. Employment status
    iii. Age
    iv. Educational background
IV. How did the neoliberal transformation of adult education manifest in the program areas and participation patterns of ISMEK in specified years?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present related literature about the adult education field and its changes in the world and Turkey. For this purpose, first, I discuss fundamental concepts of adult education. After briefly portraying the historical background and the evaluation of adult education during the welfare state system, I present the cornerstone period of the change in the 1980s with its leading causes, namely, neoliberalism and its effects on adult education. Later, I write about the critical concept that has changed the approach to adult education and the term itself, i.e., lifelong learning, and the practical and ideological political changes it brings to the field. I then explain the role of municipalities in adult education activities in Turkey and focus on ISMEK as a leading example of municipal adult education.

2.1 Adult education

In this section, to thoroughly understand the concept of adult education, I write about fundamental notions such as who is an adult, the definition of adult education, other terms related to adult education, and changes in the definition.

2.1.1 Who is an adult?

Adulthood is primarily defined by age, and generally, people who are eighteen years old are accepted as adults, yet this definition may vary from culture to culture. World Health Organization (WHO) defines people over 24 years old as adults, even though it changes from country to country, and adulthood in Turkey officially starts at 18 years old (Gökkoca, 2001). In some cultures, people are accepted as adults at 14 in

legal cases and others at 16 according to the age of leaving school or 18. Also, societies distinguish between adults and childhood, explaining that an adult is someone who is not a child (Alan & Naomi, 2010).

Okçabol (2006) states that adulthood is based upon three primary features: biological age, spiritual maturity, and social functioning. Similarly, Miser (2020) writes that "an adult is a person who has assumed the responsibility of managing their own life and can make their own decisions and take responsibility for these decisions. This definition is also called the psychological definition of adulthood" (Miser, 2020, p. 18, own translation)).

The differences among ages, which are accepted as the starting point of adulthood, and varying expectations from people to behave as adults may need clarification about the definition of adults. Paterson (2010) clarifies this confusion to an adequate extent in his book by stating that we think of adults as people who show a wide range of mental talents, physical abilities, personal qualities, beliefs, likes, and ways of doing things. We consider them adults mainly because they are old enough that we expect them to show basic grown-up behavior. Being an adult does not mean you are always mature. However, we assume that adults should act maturely, and this assumption makes us see them as adults. So, when we talk about adulthood, we do not expect people to be mature but act accordingly (Peterson, 2010)

Merriam & Brockett (2011) affirm that adulthood is a product of social and cultural norms; what defines an adult is determined by the values and expectations of a given society at a given time. Thus, being an adult as the target group of adult education is subject to the norms of the society in which people live.

2.1.2 Adult education definition

Adult education has different definitions, just like the term adult itself and various related terms used in international and Turkish literature. Some of these terms are used interchangeably for the same meaning or with minor or significant differences in their approach to adult education. This section aims to highlight the changes in the field by clarifying the definitions of terms and showing how their meanings and usage have evolved.

Although educational activities for adults have been around for a long time, the study field of adult education is relatively new. The first usage of the term for different practices for the education of adults can be traced back to 1875 when it was used by Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian about the transition of scientific tradition from amateur scientists to local scientific groups (Ross-Gordon, Rose, & Kasworm, 2016).

The first appearance of Adult Education as a field of study in the literature, on the other hand, was in 1926 with Eduard C. Lindeman's book *The Meaning of Adult Education* (Knowles et al., 2014). In his book, Lindeman (1926) defined adult education as "The whole of life is learning; therefore education can have no endings. This new venture is called adult education—not because it is confined to adults but because adulthood, maturity, defines its limits" (Lindeman, 1926, p. 6).

Therefore, adult education differs from traditional education as it is not limited to a particular age group or formal setting, and it recognizes that learning happens at any time and in different situations.

Diverse definitions of adult education can be found in different contexts and historical periods. Some may not be inclusive of all people by defining adulthood in specific requirements, such as being old or mature enough; some may exclude the

social aspects of the term, like being a parent or having a job. These differences show us how the field, along with the definitions, is evolving in their social context (Ross-Gordon et al., 2016) and has various definitions since defining adult education is an ideological work rather than a conceptual one (Merriam & Cunningham, 1989).

Knowles (1980), who is a pioneer in the adult education field, argues that when we talk about primary education or higher education, people will have less difficulty than they have when they try to understand the adult education concept. According to him, this unclarity is because adult education has different meanings, and he systemizes these into three groups. Firstly, he defines it as a process of adult learning. The process includes all forms of learning and personal development activities undertaken by adults. This includes acquiring new knowledge, skills, attitudes, interests, or values. The process is self-directed, can occur in group settings, and is employed by various organizations to foster growth in their workforce or members. It is often integrated with other operational processes like production, politics, or service to enhance effectiveness and efficiency (Knowles, 1980).

Secondly, he defines it as a technical concept, a collection of structured initiatives conducted by numerous entities to achieve particular learning goals. This term covers all the formal educational arrangements such as classes, study circles, lecture sequences, structured reading classes, gatherings, seminars, training sessions, and distance learning programs that adults participate in (Knowles, 1980).

Lastly, Knowles (1980) defines it as a combination of these activities and processes as a social action movement. In this view, adult education" unites all the people, organizations, and groups involved in adult learning into a distinct social structure. They are seen as collaborating towards shared aims such as enhancing the

ways and resources for adult education, increasing the chances for adults to get an education, and raising the overall cultural standard.

For this study, I examine the technical concept of adult learning, as described by Knowles (1980), which involves organized educational activities led by different institutions, targeting specific learning goals and involving adult participants.

2.1.3 Related terms and changes in the definitions

While the international literature has different definitions, other terms were used instead of or interchangeably with adult education in Turkey. Okçabol (2006) states that public education (halk eğitimi) was almost only used in Turkey and France, and non-formal education (yaygın eğitim) and adult education were used as synonyms, if not with slight differences in the meaning in Turkey.

According to Hernandez et al. (1985), “In some countries, the term public education is used in the context of community development for activities that meet the needs of people who know how to utilize the resources of the society in which they live, where educators and participants are in a horizontal relationship and designed together with the participants. These are educational processes that aim to create a more democratic society with the function of protecting, developing, and transferring the values in which they live” (Okçabol, 2006, p. 17, own translation). As it can be understood, public education has a more inclusive meaning.

The term non-formal education often used interchangeably with adult education, is defined by Okçabol (2006) as educational activities outside of a traditional school setting. This type of education may be concurrent with formal education. It is noted for being organized but not necessarily within institutional frameworks; instead, it is frequently the responsibility of political, economic, and

private entities. Non-formal education aims for pragmatic goals that can be accomplished within a shorter time frame (Okçabol, 2006).

Also, there are other terms used for adult education in different contexts, such as continuing education, recurrent education, informal education, community education, lifelong education, and life-wide education (Miser, 2020; Okçabol, 2006; Duman, 2007). These terms may have minor contextual differences in meaning, but they have all been used instead of adult education.

When we look at current definitions of the term, we can see some alterations in the meaning. For example, Miser (2020) defines adult education as:

> …formal and non-formal education practices and informal learning arrangements strive to provide the learning of people who have taken responsibility for managing their own lives in order to solve the problems that arise in any period of their lives and to meet their interests by paying attention to the factors affecting their learning. (p.18, see Appendix C, 1)

In this definition, people are held responsible for their own lives and, thus, their own education. Contrary to public education, adult education today gives people the responsibility to get an education after deciding their needs individually.

Likewise, the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2011), in its glossary section, defines adult education as follows:

> Education specifically targeting individuals who are regarded as adults by the society to which they belong to improve their technical or professional qualifications, further develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge with the purpose to complete a level of formal education, or to acquire knowledge, skills and competencies in a new field or to refresh or update their knowledge in a particular field. This also includes what may be referred to as ‘continuing education’, ‘recurrent education’ or ‘second chance education’.

Therefore, the concept evolves ideologically and comes to different meanings accordingly. Public education has transformed from a secondary aim to an essential means in modern society, acknowledging the importance of education tailored for adults and emphasizing the diverse reasons individuals pursue learning.

Moreover, the definition of UNESCO underlines gaining new knowledge and skills, refreshing or updating one's knowledge in a particular field to catch up with the latest trends, and "updating" oneself to be compatible with what the current world wants people to do.

2.2 Adult education in the welfare state

According to Briggs (1961), a welfare state was controversially described as a type of government in which deliberate efforts are made through politics and administration to change how market forces operate in at least three directions, among which there is the premise of providing all citizens, regardless of their social status or class, with the highest standards possible for a set range of social services. This accessibility of the welfare system significantly influences the state's role in facilitating education and employment opportunities for adults, including vulnerable groups (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

On the other hand, Garland (2014) emphasized that the welfare state was distinctive from its predecessors not because of its aims but rather because of the new approaches and techniques it provides to manage the economy and population. Along with the promises of enhanced productivity and a better-quality life, some potential risks were forecasted by welfare researchers, such as marginalization of specific population segments and worsening socioeconomic disparities. At this point, it was argued that adult learning played a crucial role in addressing the problem of exclusion, and it provided a solution to adapt to the demands of the new economic model. (Esping-Andersen, 1996).

In parallel with the same pragmatic perception, adult education was highly valued in the early days of the Turkish Republic. Education was the most significant

tool for eradicating poverty and illiteracy, besides indoctrinating the ideals and values of the new Republic (Miser et al., 2013). It is not surprising for a newly founded republic to prioritize not only formal education but also adult education to implement the necessary reforms and maximize developments swiftly. Within this significant goal, there was a strong emphasis on increasing literacy rates under the title of public education, with the notion that a literate population was to form the basis of all social and economic progress (MEB, 1939, as cited in Bağcı, 2014).

As a result, the educational policies implemented in this era had objectives such as maintaining the unity of national culture, promoting citizenship education, and educating the qualified people that the new Republic needed (Kayman, İlbars & Artuner, 2012). Department of Public Decency, the first official organization for adults, was founded in 1926. It was then followed by some other institutions such as Public Classrooms in 1927, Public Schools and Evening Art and Trade Schools in 1928, Vocational Evening Schools for Women in 1929, Public Reading Rooms in 1930, Public Houses in 1932, and Rural Courses for Men and Women in 1938-39, Village Courses in 1939, Evening Schools in 1942, and Community Development Studies in 1961, and so on (Miser et al., 2013; Kayman et al., 2012).

Bağcı (2014) underlines that it is essential to note that even though the earlier years of the Republic required efforts and educational policies to increase literacy, the term public education has not been restricted to these efforts. As emphasized in the Report on Public Education in Turkey, prepared in 1951, public education goes beyond teaching literacy. It has the capacity to benefit society in crucial areas, such as providing better food, clothing, housing, income, and improved health for themselves and their children, and understanding and effective action on national and global issues (Bağcı, 2014).

Kayman et al. (2012) state that following these steps taken to institutionalize education and adult education, it can be said that the state's explicit acknowledgment of responsibility to provide all citizens with educational opportunities as a welfare state found its legal basis with the 9th provision of The Basic Law of National Education. Published in 1973, it emphasized the importance of lifelong learning for public and professional development. Moreover, it stated that it is the state's responsibility to implement measures ensuring that adults have access to continuous education, which aids them in navigating various aspects of life and business effectively (Kayman et al., 2012). Based on this declaration, it can be concluded that adult education is recognized as a fundamental entitlement for all citizens rather than merely being considered part of forward-looking sociopolitical reforms in educational policy planning and implementation.

Just as the notion that education should be equally accessible was debated and embraced as a welfare state policy during the 1960s and 1970s, the situation changed in the following decades (Sipahioğlu, 2020). The emphasis on economic power and market-based information became more critical as globalization gained more power worldwide (Şeker, 2016). According to her, education was forced to adapt to market demands at the junction of this changing environment. Adult education, an increasingly important aspect of education, inevitably felt the impact (Şeker, 2016).

2.3 Post-1980 era: Neoliberal transformation in adult education

Uçkaç (2019) indicates that globalization began as a concept in the 1960s but became more dominant in the 1980s, which coincided with the rise of neoliberal politics emphasizing market-based principles. Neoliberalism became an essential associate of

globalization, which formerly referred to universal values like democracy and human rights, alongside concepts such as quality education, lifelong learning, and knowledge-based society. Kaya (2014) states that although globalization seems to prioritize humanitarian values when examined, it represents economic functionality through increasing competition and facilitating the transformation to the new global order. According to her, this transformation requires transitioning from the welfare state model to capitalist states that adopt and implement neoliberal ideologies.

Yeldan (2011) explains this turn as a result of a crisis in leading capitalist countries, in which the pace of capital accumulation within national borders necessitated much higher profits to realize new investments. However, the profitability of capital was limited by the size of the national market. As stated by Yeldan (2011), the only option left was the rapid withdrawal of capital into financial investment areas and its internationalization. Consequently, a new wave of globalization began, which resulted in increased international competition and efforts of dominant nations to shape the global economy according to their interests.

As a result, it can be said that different economic, political, and technological factors combined in the 1980s were accompanied by the rise of neoliberalism in education. This process eventually shaped policies and education practices in many countries. In this section, I explain neoliberalism and how it affects educational policies, especially those concerning adult education. Then, I examine the reflection of neoliberal influences on adult education transformation in Turkey.

2.3.1 What is neoliberalism?

Neoliberalism has been evident in capitalist societies since at least the 1980s. Scholars have used different explanations to define it and indicate its different

characteristics. Harvey (2007) defines it as mainly a set of ideas about how to improve human well-being. It suggests that people do best when they are free to use their entrepreneurial skills in a system that supports strong ownership rights, open markets, and free trade. According to him, the government's job is to build and maintain the right environment for these activities. These include guaranteeing that the market works correctly and setting up military, police, and legal systems to protect ownership. If markets do not exist in certain areas like land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental issues, then the government should create them. However, Harvey (2007) also emphasizes that the government should limit its involvement in markets after they are established. This is because the government might not have enough information to challenge market prices, and interest groups could influence government actions for their gain, especially in democratic systems.

According to Steger & Roy (2010), neoliberalism is based on the old idea of a market that manages itself. There are different types of neoliberalism. The easiest way to understand it is by seeing it as three connected ideas: “(1) an ideology, (2) a mode of governance, and (3) a policy package” (p. 11).

Firstly, as an ideology, neoliberalism is an economic-focused belief system. It places great importance on the making and trading physical goods as a central part of what people do in life. They show global markets in a good way as a necessary means to create a better world. These views of the market as part of globalization are common in public thought and influence political decisions in many places around the world (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Secondly, according to them, neoliberalism as a mode of governance refers to a government that follows neoliberal ideas and focuses on entrepreneurial qualities

like being competitive, looking out for oneself, and spreading power widely. It praises the ability of individuals to take charge and prefers to pass down control from the central government to local groups. This way of ruling takes inspiration from the free market, suggesting that government should work like a business (Steger & Roy, 2010).

As stated by Steger & Roy (2010), neoliberals argue for using business-like methods in government: making strategic plans, managing risks to increase profits, and using cost-effective strategies. They aim to reduce the size of government, set specific goals, keep a strict check on results, and create work plans that depend on individual performance. They also promote "rational choice" ideas, making market-based actions look normal. Under such a system, government employees view themselves not as public servants aiming for public benefit but rather as business-minded individuals who help the government operate as a cost-effective "business" (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Lastly, "neoliberalism manifests itself as a concrete set of public policies expressed in D-L-P Formula: (1) deregulation (of the economy); (2) liberalization (of trade and industry); and (3) privatization (of state-owned enterprises)" (Steger & Roy, 2010, p. 14). Neoliberal policies involve significant tax cuts, mainly for companies and rich people, and cuts in public services and welfare. Instead of welfare, there is *workfare,* requiring work for benefits. Central banks use interest rates to control prices at the expense of people losing their jobs. Governments become smaller, and tax breaks are offered to businesses that can invest in certain areas. Cities develop new business areas to meet up to market needs. Moreover, there is an objection to unions so as to make workers more productive and flexible.

Restrictions on international money and trade are gone, making economies worldwide more connected (Steger & Roy, 2010).

Therefore, we can say that neoliberalism is primarily an economic approach resulting from excess capital and decreasing profit rates in advanced capitalist economies (Uçkaç, 2019). Consequently, such an economic model leads to changes in different aspects of society while trying to align with the objectives of neoliberalism.

2.3.2 The new right and neoliberal conservatism

Even though the economic impact of neoliberalism is widely discussed in the literature, it did not only have economic results. The neoliberal philosophy also had substantial sociopolitical impacts worldwide, as well as causing the emergence of the new capitalist order. As mentioned by Işık (2023), the crisis that capitalism faced in the 1970s has also resulted in the emergence of the new right, as well as neoliberalism. In this framework, whereas neoliberalism represents the economic approach of the movement, neoconservatism constitutes its political philosophy (Işık, 2023).

The new right, as discussed by Gamble (1988), King (1987), and Harris (1998) and cited in Topal (2002), merges nineteenth-century liberalism's individualistic focus with conservatism's stress on authority and tradition, is labeled as a *hegemonic project* by Jessop (1990). According to Jessop, this project not only aimed at using economic strategies to benefit capitalists but also aimed at reshaping societal aspects of civil society and the state (Topal, 2022).

As Işık (2023) stated, the new right values individualism over collective well-being. It tries to reshape the state's role, minimizing its intervention in other areas

and focusing more on market functionality. This shift includes a change from the welfare state to an economy-focused state, promoting individualism over collectivism and emphasizing control and regulation by the state instead of direct involvement (Safi, 2007, pp. 260-261, as cited in Işık, 2023).

In this context, Topal (2002) describes the new right as a strategic alliance between liberalism and conservatism to navigate economic and societal changes. It advocates for less government involvement in the economy, whereas any resulting gaps can be filled with conservative values such as family, religion, and national identity. As summarized by Topal (2002), despite emphasizing market priority and reduced state intervention, it highlights the state's role in preserving traditions, religion, family, and national identity.

Similarly, Yıldız (2008) characterizes the relationship between neoliberalism and conservatism as a balanced arrangement. While neoliberalism encourages individualism and adaptability, often causing traditional ties to weaken and fostering competitiveness, there is a need for a counterbalance. According to her, this equilibrium is reflected in the discourse of liberal conservatism, emphasizing concepts like nation, religion, family, and the role of women within the family. Consequently, strengthening conservative values emerged as a primary policy of the neoliberal era (Judd, 2007, as cited in Bağcı, 2015b).

On the other hand, Baltacı (2004) suggests that within the new right movement, neoliberalism has a relatively more significant role compared to neoconservatism because economic factors play a more prominent role in the emergence of the new right movement, especially after the crisis of the welfare state. Conservatism, on the other hand, has provided social tools such as “discipline” that are needed by the market economy. Therefore, according to him, it would be more

appropriate to characterize the new right as the internalization of conservatism by liberalism rather than the alliance of neoliberalism and neoconservatism (Işık, 2023).

Bağcı (2015b) notes that the neoliberal education agenda aims to conservatize and commercialize education, with lifelong learning as a critical component of this dual transformation in Turkey. He further explains it by stating that in the neoliberal era, this unique blend of market-driven liberalism and conservatism results in an educational focus on entrepreneurial individuals in the market but compliant in other social domains, seeing critical thinking as risky and activism as disruptive. In this context, lifelong learning is essential for providing more privatized activities focused on vocational training. He adds that emphasizing traditional institutions like religion and family prevents objections and maintains the existing social situation (Bağcı, 2015b).

As a result, redefining the curriculum, subjects, information, and values becomes more critical (Yıldız, 2008), and this process of reshaping education gets inspiration from the neoliberal conservative ideology. It aims to produce an entrepreneurial and competitive workforce and ensures that the ideological and pedagogical framework favors conservative principles and current conformity (Polat, 2013). Furthermore, conservatism's influence restricts critical thinking and enhances the state's control over education, putting pressure on teachers and students (Bağcı, 2015b). It is also evident in the competitive culture, standardized curricula, and exams that devaluate critical thinking and prioritize technical knowledge acquisition, all included in conservative agendas (Apple, 2004, as cited in Bağcı, 2015b).

2.3.3 The impact of neoliberalism on education policies

The adoption of neoliberal ideas and their use in making policies has increased since the late 1970s. According to Bowl (2017), neoliberalism became even more influential than humanitarian views and radical ideologies of the Post-War era, including the 1960s and 1970s. MacPhail (2008) stated that neoliberalism's assault on the welfare state, unions, and public resources reshaped individuals' roles in society and governance. After bringing social welfare programs down, neoliberal ideology gave responsibility to the individuals for their well-being. As a result, the so-called social contract between citizens and the state has significantly changed, especially following the economic insecurity in the 1970s and 1980s. They used the economic downturn of the period to support their claims, arguing that in the 1950s and 1960s, spending high on welfare did not resolve society's problems but indeed increased them (MacPhail, 2008).

Nevertheless, according to Fleming (2016), neoliberal advocates faced a dilemma. While pushing for less government intervention in people's lives, they recognized the need for substantial investment in human resources for the knowledge economy. Workers required education, especially if the private sector needed to invest in it. One solution was for the private sector to influence governments to tailor education to market demands. Instead of endorsing broad education, bodies like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) promoted the development of learners and more tailored systems focused on meeting economic needs (Fleming, 2016). Another solution was put by The McCracken Report, which proposed a remedy for excessive public spending: implementing a user pay system (MacPhail, 2008). The program's efficiency could be enhanced by increasing user charges. MacPhail (2008) adds that this reform not only aids in controlling public

expenditure practically but also strengthens the link between the demand for specific public services and the community's willingness to pay for them.

According to Bowl (2017), it has led to the government pulling back from providing education, which was once considered a public responsibility. Education policies have shifted from offering a broad range of personal, social, and vocational education to focusing more narrowly on education and training for practical purposes. Education policies in many countries mainly aim to prepare people for work and help them gain the qualifications necessary for the knowledge economy and global economic competition (Bowl, 2017).

Davies & Bansel (2017) state that as neoliberal states started to focus on the welfare of their citizens and managing the economy to empower global corporations, the structuring of systems and knowledge that turn people into self-reliant economic entrepreneurs was required. According to Davies & Bansel (2017), this transformation, where individuals and institutions are shaped to foster this entrepreneurial spirit, is vital to understanding how actions and decisions are influenced under neoliberal governance, and education is a critical area where this kind of structuring is evident.

Bowl (2017) adds that the shift toward consumerism and practicality in education has led to several common beliefs in adult education. Firstly, there is a trend where individuals are expected to fund their education, resulting in higher fees and fewer subsidies. Secondly, government support for adult education now focuses mainly on economic benefits, emphasizing job training and vocational skills over a broader educational approach that includes social and personal development. Lastly, Bowl (2017) emphasizes that the focus is on adults lacking practical or job-related

skills, viewing education and training as essential for employability and social inclusion.

As stated by Yıldız (2012), after an era of economic difficulty, education was reevaluated considering the OECD and the World Bank (WB) guidelines. As a result, it turned into a “commodity” that can be bought and sold. According to him, in today's world, where global economic competition is intense, education has become more of an economic strategy than a fundamental right for people. Yıldız (2012) also underlines that following 1980, the widespread adoption of neoliberal policies also brought about major changes in how adult education was conducted and approached in Turkey. The idea of employability has become incredibly prominent, shaping the definition of adult education and becoming closely associated with market-based concepts like efficiency, quality, flexibility, and competition, all rooted in neoliberal economics (Yıldız, 2012).

2.3.4 Neoliberal transformation of education in Turkey

Many sources in the literature indicate that the spark of neoliberal transformation in Turkey was ignited by the economic regulations known as the January 24 Decisions of 1980 (Aslan, 2014; Polat, 2013; Uçkaç, 2019; Şahin, 2020). Following this step, throughout the 1980s, education policies aligned with neoliberal ideals played a crucial role in merging education and the economy toward a market-oriented society in Turkey (Uçkaç, 2019).

This journey started when Süleyman Demirel, who later served as Turkey's ninth president from 1993 to 2000, appointed Turgut Özal full authority to supervise the economic transition (Şahin, 2020). The comprehensive stability package declared by Özal on January 24, 1980, aimed at keeping inflation down, reducing the foreign

financing gap, and providing a more market-driven economic framework for Turkey (Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey, 2002).

Nevertheless, implementing this program resulted in a transformation into a market-oriented system. It reduced the role of the public sector in the economy (Polat, 2013), which was indeed one of the primary goals of these decisions (Şahin, 2020). Eventually, social services such as education, healthcare, and social security were provided more by the private sector than by the government (Polat, 2013).

As indicated by Yıldız (2008), Özal used so-called "structural adjustment programs" to introduce policies such as privatization, commercialization, liberalization, and localization, and these policies aimed at integrating the Turkish economy into international markets. Polat (2013) also emphasizes the fact that these programs were supported by international organizations such as the WB, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Union (EU), eventually changing the nature of public service sectors all over the world. Moreover, some organizations used agreements promoting free trade and finance for countries taking on neoliberal principles for public governance (Polat, 2013). This view is also highlighted by Aslan (2014):

> There are national and international actors of the process in developing countries such as Turkey. Among the primary international actors are the institutions such as IMF, WB, EU, and OECD . . . These institutions/organizations transform the economic, social, and political life through the credits they give, adjustments, policies they impose, and commercial or investment treaties they make, not only in Turkey but also in the majority of the Third World countries (p. 257).

Aslan (2014) adds that the Economic Stabilization Package implemented on January 24, 1980, often regarded as the cornerstone of Turkey's neoliberal transformation, paved the way for subsequent reforms in education. According to her, an example is the redefinition of higher education, previously perceived as a

public service, to a "semi-public" service under the Higher Education Law of 1981 (Law No: 2547). This legislation introduced a system where higher education students were required to contribute financially to their education. In addition, despite Article 130 of the 1980 constitution granting the state the authority to establish universities, a 1984 amendment extended this right to foundations, allowing them to establish non-profit higher education institutions. This change was justified by the same “efficiency” discussions surrounding the privatization process in Turkey (Aslan, 2014).

As stated by Uzunyayla (2007), during this period, in addition to international organizations like the OECD, WB, and EU, some national organizations also stressed that education does not meet market needs adequately. They argued for regulations and educational policies based on producing skilled workers. For instance, the Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen Association (Türk Sanayicileri ve İş İnsanları Derneği [TUSIAD]) published a report on higher education in 1994 (Uzunyayla, 2007). This report claimed that higher education is semi-public and closer ties between universities and the market were required. It suggested that enhancing university quality should involve competition. According to Uzunyayla (2007), the report's key aspect was proposals for university funding, suggesting they rely on state funding and self-generated revenue. It also identified inflexible public sector rules as a significant financial issue, proposing new legislation to address these.

Aslan (2014) highlights that as a result, the state’s investment budget in education gradually decreased over the years. According to data sourced from the Ministry of National Education (*Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı* [MEB]) (MEB, 2013), the investment budget designated for MEB experienced a notable decline between 1997 and 2012. In 1997, the proportion of the MEB investment budget within the total

education budget stood at 15.01%, but by 2012, it had dwindled to 6.64%. She adds that the percentages of the MEB budget within the consolidated investment budget (28.35% in 2000; 8.09% in 2012) and with the GDP (0.40% in 2000; 0.18% in 2012) also exhibited significant decreases. These statistics show a gradual withdrawal of state support from education overall, especially in higher education, despite the increasing student population (Aslan, 2014).

A similar withdrawal can also be observed in adult education. As stated by Bağcı (2014), adult education does not receive a sufficient share of the budget of public resources. It is understood that the expenditures in this area mainly occur under current expenses, while investment expenditures remain at low levels. Bağcı (2014) emphasizes that although the demand for adult education has been continuously increasing over the years, the lack of proportional increase in spending has led to a dramatic decrease in spending per student:

> In 1995, the annual expenditure per student was 470 TL in constant 2011 prices, whereas it was 182 TL in 2009. It is observed that the financial gap created by this decline is attempted to be covered by international projects, revolving fund activities, sponsors, and school-family association revenues. (Bağcı, 2014, p. 199; see Appendix C, 2)

Aslan, Küçüker, and Adıgüzel (2012) mention that commercialization was another aim of the structural adjustment programs. Non-Formal Vocational Training Project, backed by the WB, can be given as an early example. Starting in 1987, this project aimed to create businesses within 200 schools. These businesses were meant to generate extra income for the schools by selling goods or services produced on campus. According to Aslan et al. (2012), this illustrates how schools diversify their funding sources by turning into businesses.

Sayılan (2006) states that for years, the practices aimed at opening and commercializing the field of education step by step have gained momentum with the

General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) process. GATS imposes and, at the same time, expands and facilitates the commercialization of education. Over the years, the service sectors, such as education, which gradually commercialized and opened up through neoliberal economic policies, have seen their regulations expanded and legally formalized for complete market access through the GATS (Sayılan, 2006). Polat (2013) also emphasizes that by affirming its commitment to the GATS Treaty in 1995, Turkey assured the WB that it would promote liberalization in sectors such as communication, health tourism, environment, education, and related sub-sectors. Consequently, education and similar sectors either underwent rapid privatization or were opened to the market, aligning with these promises (Polat, 2013).

According to Sayılan (2006), public spending cuts and the privatization of the public sector in education were initially initiated through "Build Your Own School" campaigns, which began covertly. Since 1990, these practices have been systematized by global actors. Sayılan (2006) gives the example of The National Education Development Project, implemented through a protocol signed by MEB and the WB, aimed to restructure primary and secondary education based on decentralization, reform teacher training, and restructure education management. Similarly, the Support to Basic Education Project, initiated under the structural adjustment programs framework in 1998 and later continued through a protocol signed with the Council of Europe in 2000, aims to restructure primary education and adult education. Thus, this process is being structured by global actors like the WB and GATS, while the EU accession process reinforces this transformation. (Sayılan, 2006).

According to Kurul (2012), the neoliberal transformation in Turkey accelerated in the 2000s due to the changes happening in the political scene. He highlights that the AKP's rise to power in 2002, just a year after its foundation, was surprising. Although religious factors influenced these accomplishments, the party's self-professed conservative democrat position and alignment with emerging local and international finance capital interests were crucial.

Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir (2012) highlight that upon assuming government, the AKP introduced reform plans in social policy areas like education, health, and social welfare, blending Islamic conservatism with AKP-style neoliberalism. As explained by Bıdık (2017):

> It's possible to assess the AKP's conservative democratic identity from two perspectives: political and economic. Firstly, it seeks to embrace its conservative stance by claiming its Islamic past and preserving its Islamic base. Secondly, it aims to establish a connection between the neo-conservative aspect of the new right ideology, a combination of new conservatism and neoliberalism, with conservatism. (pp. 180-181; see Appendix C, 3)

According to Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir (2012), the AKP's social policy regime shifts focus from community-based ideals to individualism, requiring individuals to take greater responsibility for healthcare, education, and elderly care. Personal consumption is emphasized as key to a fulfilling life, leading to low taxation on income. Similarly, the shift from public to private schools is evident in education, resulting in a surge of private colleges and preparatory courses (Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir, 2012).

Moreover, according to İnal (2002), the AKP overtly declared its intention to collaborate with the private sector to facilitate educational investment. He highlights that despite a fivefold increase in the budget allocated to education under AKP governments from 2002 to 2011, the proportion of education investment has

consistently declined. In line with the neoliberal principles sought, the AKP considered education an economic investment to enhance human capital and stressed the significance of quality, competition, standards, and governance in the education sector. İnal (2002) states that recognizing the importance of adequate human capital for enhancing the country's competitiveness in the global economy, the AKP has pursued various educational reforms. As summarized by Bağcı (2014),

> The structure in which education is relatively more egalitarian underwent a new form with the influence of new right-wing ideas, which started in the 1980s, followed a crisis-ridden course in the 1990s (Öngen, 2003), and became hegemonic with the AKP in the 2000s (Türe, 2005). . . The concept of the new right is the hegemonic project of neoliberalism, which was the accumulation strategy of the 1980s (Topal, 2002). It provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the transformation not only economically but also politically, socially, and culturally in all its aspects . . . it could not be expected that the relationship between education and equality would remain unaffected. (pp. 38-39; see Appendix C, 4)

Global and locally, the shift in perspective also led to a paradigm shift from lifelong education, which views education as a collective responsibility and a state's duty, to lifelong learning, which considers learning an individual pursuit and a personal responsibility (Barros, 2012). In contemporary discourse, lifelong learning is discussed as essential for a knowledge-driven society. However, it is more discussed within the framework of neoliberal policies to increase the workforce of skilled employees. According to Fleming (2016), lifelong learning emphasizes individual self-improvement and market-driven outcomes by supporting the neoliberal idea that individuals must constantly develop their skills and knowledge to sustain their economic viability.

This change can also be observed in Turkey's development plans. Korkmaz (2018) states that with the Fifth Development Plan covering the years 1985-1989, a new understanding began to emerge in both economic and educational goals; education, especially adult education, started to be associated with economic-

political discourses such as adaptation to globalization, EU accession, reaching advanced countries and competitiveness, becoming a knowledge society, and training individuals demanded by the workforce. Korkmaz (2018) highlights the fact that the goals of providing a comprehensive education approach for individuals who have not completed formal education or have never been involved in formal education, increasing literacy rates, aiming for societal development, and raising awareness of the rights and responsibilities of building a democratic society, were not included especially in plans prepared after 1980. Instead, the emphasis shifted to training individuals with skills demanded by the market, creating employable individuals, and aligning education with the market (Korkmaz, 2018).

In a way, the term lifelong learning has become a symbolic manifestation of neoliberal adult education, which aligns with neoliberal ideologies of individual responsibility, market-driven competition, and continuous adaptation to economic demands. For our purposes, in the next chapter, I examine how lifelong learning has become a symbol of preparing individuals for the demands of the capitalist economy.

2.4 Symbolic manifestation of neoliberal adult education: Lifelong learning

As pointed out by Bağcı (2015a), even though lifelong learning has been discussed in the literature for about a century, it has gained power in the last few decades and become a fundamental principle in many national education systems, including Turkey's. According to him, lifelong learning is an educational philosophy that assumes learning is integral to daily life, and it includes all learning processes that happen continuously and everywhere, regardless of age or the traditional limits of

educational institutions. While it includes formal schooling, it extends beyond it, making it closely associated with but not confined to adult education (Bağcı, 2015a).

In 1972, the report Learning to Be published by UNESCO was considered one of the first official reports advocating and starting discussions for lifelong education. According to this report, education should go on throughout one's life and be accessible to everyone (Faure et al., 1972). Humanist ideals aiming for the development of individuals by improving flexible education systems were emphasized within this report, as well as highlighting the importance of broader access to higher education and informal learning (Field, 2001).

However, different perspectives on education came into being as countries tried to adapt their economies and workforces in response to globalization. One approach involved aligning the skills and qualifications of adults with the evolving demands of the labor market and service-based economies, which resulted in a considerable discourse around the concept of learning societies, emphasizing the necessity of ongoing education (Blossfeld, Kilpi-Jakonen, Vilhena & Buchholz, 2014).

Transitioning from lifelong learning to a learning society initially portrayed education as a catalyst for societal dynamism. However, clarity on this shift remains elusive, with some viewing it as a “modern-day myth” (Ayhan, 2005). According to her, three main approaches to the learning society exist: one emphasizing active citizenship and equal opportunities, another treating it as a learning market to enhance economic competitiveness, and the third seeing it as a contemporary necessity, fostering diverse learning networks. The view aligning with market forces and individual success predominates, framing the learning society to suit various capitalist interests. Thus, the concept of a learning society has taken on the function

of providing logic and packaging that aligns with the interests of capital, is in line with current and future policies, and presents an appealing facade (Ayhan, 2005).

Okçabol (2007) affirms that, eventually, the concepts related to lifelong learning, which express learning from cradle to grave in philosophical and humanitarian terms, have been abstracted from their philosophical and humanitarian meanings and transformed into an economic content, indicating that this transformation has also taken educational and cultural processes under the auspices of capital, alongside production processes. He explains that in this context, what is important is the notion that lifelong learning in the workforce is necessary to increase workplace productivity and production. Therefore, more learning is necessary for more earnings and exploitation. In a sense, it is possible to say that in lifelong learning, the priority is given to production and earnings rather than the priority of the individual. (Okçabol, 2007)

Indeed, according to Bağcı (2010), the role of some international organizations in advocating for and promoting lifelong learning policies cannot be denied. International organizations such as the EU, WB, OECD, and UNESCO have impacted the theoretical framework of lifelong learning through their official reports and policy papers. These also influenced the educational policies of their member countries, including Turkey. For instance, Kaya (2014) identifies the OECD report titled A Strategy for Lifelong Learning, published in 1973, as one of the critical documents shaping the concept of lifelong learning. This report explained the need for lifelong learning to enhance professional mobility within a global economy and competitive environment. Similarly, the Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community released in 1991 emphasized universities' role in training high-quality workforce. Such statements show that lifelong learning was considered a tool

to attain professional qualifications, restricting it with the emerging liberal education approach (Kaya, 2014).

In sum, Bağcı (2015a) points out that the official texts of the OECD, EU, and WB advocate that lifelong learning is a solution for modern societal problems to address the challenges related to knowledge-based economies. He emphasizes that this perspective is highly market-centric, and it assumes that an educated workforce is essential for global economic competitiveness. In addition, it promises that achieving competitiveness will create new job opportunities and improve living standards. Enhancing workers' knowledge and skills through lifelong learning is essential to produce competitive goods and services for global markets. Consequently, there is a push to streamline basic education systems, focusing only on essential skills for competitive markets, while other knowledge and skills are to be acquired through lifelong learning as needed (Bağcı, 2015a). Moreover, as stated by Korkmaz (2008):

> Especially in the Seventh Development Plan (1996-2000) and the subsequent three plans, adult education has been approached more with the concept of lifelong learning rather than widespread education. The emphasis on adult education in these plans is geared towards training the workforce demanded by the market. During this period, education has become associated with economic terms such as 'employability', 'entrepreneurship', 'skill acquisition', 'certification of learning', 'competition', and 'support from civil society organizations and the private sector. (p.54; see Appendix C, 5)

As Turkey's pursuit of EU membership gained momentum, particularly during the 2000s, Turkey was compelled to meet the criteria established by the EU for candidate countries aspiring for full EU membership (Bağcı, 2010). As a result, Turkey has implemented numerous regulations in the education sector, among other policy domains, aiming to align with EU standards within the framework of these criteria. According to Yıldız (2012), The Lisbon European Council held in 2000 can be given as another factor influencing Turkey’s lifelong learning policies since, at

this meeting, the EU outlined its strategic elements to foster continuous economic growth and social cohesion, emphasizing lifelong learning as a key component.

Notably, adult education has been increasingly oriented towards workforce training and literacy programs, with civil society playing a more significant role since the AKP came to power in 2002 (Yıldız, 2012). Kaya (2015) states that at this point, vocational and perceived education have begun to be approached as narrow forms of adult learning, detached from the context of adult education.

Yıldız (2012) points out the establishment of the European Employment Strategy, which provided a framework for adult education practices in Turkey. In 2003, the Turkish Employment Agency (*Türkiye İş Kurumu* [İŞKUR]) took on the responsibility of aligning widespread training activities among government agencies with labor market policies. Within this framework, İŞKUR was tasked, under the management of the Turkish Employment Agency, with organizing enhanced content programs. Yıldız (2012) states that:

> …this trend, which can be defined as new vocationalism, devalues lifelong learning. The narratives of 'global competition, change, and the necessity for skilled labor to adapt to this change" have contributed to legitimizing this transformation process. In particular, the concept of "employability" has come to the forefront, delineating the boundaries of "lifelong learning" and leading to its association solely with market arguments such as 'efficiency,' 'quality,' 'flexibility,' and 'competition' commonly used in neoliberal economics (p. 6).

In recent years, alongside key legislative documents shaping education in Turkey, other reports and documents reveal a clear neoliberal perspective on education, evaluating it within the framework of economic and market demands (Yıldız, 2012). Another report that shows such a perspective on education is titled Education and Sustainable Growth, prepared in 2006 by TUSIAD. In this report, TUSIAD formulated its priorities based on human capital (Uzunyayla, 2007). It emphasized demands related to the education-qualified workforce-competition axis,

focusing on the education-employment relationship. The report drew attention to the relationship between education and growth, highlighting the direction education policies should take. It was followed by some legislative regulations concerning the education-employment relationship (Law No. 4702 and Law No. 5544 of 2006). According to Uzunyayla (2007), adaptation of educational curriculum and policies to the labor market was included among the premises of these laws (p.57).

Similarly, Law No. 3797, dated 1992, was amended in 2011 through a decree law issued by the AKP government, highlighting this perspective. This law stated that the ministry's main task is to design, implement, and update education and training programs with the knowledge and skills required by the globally competitive economic system and carry out educational services within this framework (Yıldız, 2012).

TUIK's 2007 Adult Education Survey findings reflect how education, particularly adult education, is viewed as a pathway to better employment and living conditions, with past educational experiences directly influencing participation (Bağcı, 2014). This survey indicated that in Turkey, 39% of university graduates, 28.8% of high school graduates, and 27.7% of vocational school graduates engaged in adult education, among which reasons for participation included improving job performance (60.8%), acquiring necessary life skills (28.9%), obtaining certification (28.3%), and enhancing job prospects (26.1%) (TUIK, 2010a, as cited in Bağcı, 2014, p. 58).

Yıldız (2012) points out that AKP-led municipalities have also been active in providing educational services, including courses on religious education. He adds that AKP-led IMM and Ankara Metropolitan Municipality were the most comprehensive providers of adult education services among local administrations in

Turkey. IMM has institutionalized its adult education activities and established large organizations. The most prominent of these organizations is ISMEK, which was launched in 1996. Since its inception, ISMEK has provided education to over a million participants. Yıldız (2012) underlines that these courses cover various topics, including vocational technical training, computer technologies, handicrafts, Turkish Islamic arts, music education, language education, social and cultural education, and sports education.

MEB mainly provides skills training such as crafts and vocational training, often targeting women, to decrease educational gaps for those without formal education (Bacakoğlu, 2022). On the other hand, the General Directorate for Lifelong Learning offers 3,682 different programs, including 1,104 general courses and 2,578 vocational and technical courses (Lifelong Learning Directorate, 2022). These courses have various subjects in 75 areas for people of all ages in 1,000 public education centers established in city and district centers. These centers offered a total of 628,189 courses, attracting 13,584,328 participants. Out of these participants, 7,369,986 of them completed their courses and received their certificates. The same report indicated the utilization rate of these courses to be 16.80%. Moreover, data on the 25-64 age group in Turkey regarding course participation by gender reveals that females outnumber males, with a participation rate of 19.91% compared to 9.44% for males. The participation rate in general courses is 63.67%, while it is slightly lower at 36.33% for vocational and technical courses (Lifelong Learning Directorate, 2022).

According to former Minister of National Education Ziya Selçuk, we are entering an era where certificate systems adaptable to people's changing needs will be preferred over diplomas (Bacakoğlu, 2022). This is because the knowledge and

skills people acquire in their professions or technology usage may not be sufficient in the future. Bacakoğlu (2022) points out that from this perspective, it is suggested that certificate systems be researched at both national and international levels in the context of adult education and lifelong learning.

Kaya (2015) states that this trend has also been reflected in the literature studies. While there were more studies on adult education compared to lifelong learning, especially in the 1990s, with the increasing interest in adult education due to globalization, research on lifelong learning gained more importance. She indicates that this shift is evident in official EU documents, emphasizing education's significance in meeting the demands of changing economies and societies in the information age. Kaya (2015) underlines a growing consensus that lifelong learning, focusing on equipping adults with knowledge and skills, is crucial for shaping the future workforce and employability. This trend reflects an aim to create a flexible workforce that integrates with the market, particularly in the knowledge economy, where human capital is key.

2.5 The current situation of adult education in Turkey based on state-provided numbers

As indicated in the literature, neoliberalism’s ideas on the economy impacted adult education policies in Turkey. With Turkey's EU candidacy and efforts made in this process, the concept of adult education has changed and become more oriented towards workforce training and employability. Due to these reasons, it could be argued that the concept of lifelong learning for all and at every age has become increasingly restricted and failed to fulfill its original egalitarian and humanistic mission as described.

The reflections of this process in Turkey can be observed in the unpublished EFA Report (Miser et al., 2010). This report tries to explain and analyze the situation of adult education in Turkey by the year 2008 by examining 1) institutions providing adult education, 2) adult education programs and participation rates in these programs, 3) program areas, and 4) demographic characteristics. Since these data only summarize the situation up to 2008, this section compares the data after 2008 with the data provided by TUIK.

TUIK's statistics show that ministries organized the most adult education courses (65.1%), followed by municipalities (21.9%) and foundations and associations (7.3%) in 2013 (TUIK, 2014). In 2015, the share of ministries and affiliated institutions decreased to 52.5%, and municipalities' share increased to 26.9%, along with foundations and associations providing 13.2% of all adult education courses (TUIK, 2016). TUIK's 2016 again shows a decline in the share of ministries and other affiliated institutions, with a percentage of 49% and 25.7% of municipalities. On the other hand, in 2016, foundations and associations increased their share by 17.6% (TUIK, 2018). Here, when considering the fluctuation in the percentage of courses organized by ministries and affiliated institutions, the influence of neoliberal policies shaping adult education policies might be present. Even though ministries dominated adult education activities in the earlier years, their decline in 2015 and 2016 shows a trend toward privatization within the sector.

On the other hand, the more recent data categorizes adult education providers as "employers," informal educational institutions, and formal educational institutions. Moreover, the newly emerging category of employers seems to have already a significant place among the providers of adult education attended by individuals aged 18 and over since they ranked first with 40.2%, according to the

TUIK 2022 Adult Education Survey indicators. At the same time, informal educational institutions had a percentage of 29.6%, and formal educational institutions had a percentage of 13.7%. Furthermore, for women, informal educational institutions ranked first with 35.7%, while among men, employers ranked first with 46.9% (TUIK, 2023c). The emergence of "employers" as providers of adult education and men attending more to the programs offered by "employers" might indicate the influence of market-driven solutions and private sector involvement in education, which are essential aspects of neoliberal ideology.

Given the restrictions of data sets provided by TUIK that do not specify courses based on the provider institution and their specific content, slightly more relevant data to compare Miser et al. (2010) claims comes from TUIK's 2012-2013 report, giving information about the number of courses, and the number of graduates by type of courses provided by Public Training Centers (*Halk Eğitim Merkezleri*) based on cities they are located. This report indicates that 483,141 participants graduated from 22,555 courses provided by Public Training Centers in Istanbul. Among these, 10,790 were vocational and technical courses, producing 236,261 graduates, while 9,469 were categorized as general courses, with 210,752 graduates. (TUIK, 2014).

When compared, TUIK's 2012-2013 data supports Miser et al. (2010) claim on the dominance of vocational training courses. However, the number of courses and graduates seems relatively close to that of general courses. However, in the given data sets, the types of these courses are not specified; therefore, it is not possible to draw conclusions considering the most popular courses with their exact fields.

When we consider the fields of education, even though TUIK does not specify the content of the courses provided, it is noted that the classification of fields

of education and training system is used. Therefore, according to the manual International Standard Classification of Education 2013 prepared by UNESCO (2015), we can say that the broad field of "services" involves personal services, hygiene and occupational health services, security services, and transport services. Moreover, any program related to domestic services, hair and beauty services, hotels, restaurants and catering, sports, travel, and tourism services, along with occupational health and safety, are included within this category (UNESCO, 2015).

We see that the highest number of courses was given in the field of "social sciences, career, and law," with 9,712 courses in 2010, 11561 courses in 2011, 12,703 courses in 2012, and 20,090 courses in 2013 (TUIK, 2014). In 2013, the number of "services" courses in Turkey was 7,863 in 2010, 5,336 in 2011, 11,720 in 2012, and 13,804. In 2016, "services" ranked first with 33.1%, followed by "health and well-being" with 13.5%, and "social sciences, business, and law" with 12.7% (TUIK, 2018). In 2022, "services" again ranked first with 30.3%, followed by "health and well-being" courses with a share of 15.6%, and "education" with 10.1% (TUIK, 2023c).

When we consider age groups and their preferences for the fields of adult education, in 2022, the "services" category was dominant for all the age groups except 65 and over. People who are 65 years and older prefer "arts and humanities" courses, with a percentage of 28.9%, and "health and welfare" programs, with a percentage of 28.6% (TUIK, 2023c). The same report shows the reasons for participating in adult education, indicating that people enrolled primarily "to improve their job" (60.7%), "to acquire information about a topic of interest" (53.8%), and "out of obligation" (47.1%) (TUIK, 2023c).

Consequently, younger individuals tend to focus on vocational training and/or skill development. They are most likely to compete in market conditions, whereas older age groups opt for personal fulfillment through arts, humanities, and health-related courses. The reason for having the highest share, job improvement, might indicate neoliberal principles such as skill enhancement of individuals and market adaptability. Since neoliberalism promotes individual responsibility for one's success and well-being, it shows that participants who attend adult education courses "out of obligation" might experience economic and/or societal pressures to enhance their skills.

Miser et al. (2010) also indicate that half of those benefiting from adult education are children and youth, while the other half are adults. Nearly half of adult education participants are young adults (23-44 years old), whereas middle-aged and elderly adults comprise the other half. Moreover, municipal adult education services show a similar age distribution, with around half of participants in Kocaeli Municipality's program and 40% of them in Istanbul Municipality's program are aged 25 and under, based on 2007-2008 data (Miser et al., 2010, pp. 101–102). TUIK's data supports a similar pattern in terms of the distribution of age groups. In 2016, the 18-24 age group participated in informal adult education programs most, with a percentage of 48.9%, followed by the 25-34 age group with 31.2% (TUIK, 2018). In 2022, the 18-24 age group again participated most, with a percentage of 51.7%, followed by 33.2% in the 25-34 age group (TUIK, 2023c). Looking at this data, it seems that lifelong learning fails to fulfill another promise: learning at all ages. According to data, adult education has mostly been limited to those under 25. As also pointed out by Miser et al. (2010), mainly middle-aged and elderly individuals are neglected.

According to the 2009 survey by TUIK on informal adult education activities, 193,289 men attended 11,726 courses organized by municipalities, and 527,126 women participated. However, the number of men who completed the courses was 93,012, while for women, it was 266,104 (TUIK, 2010). According to research, women participate more in programs offered by municipalities, whereas men participate more in other institutions. These findings show similarity with the situation described by Miser et al. (2010). On the other hand, according to the Adult Education Study published by TUIK in 2016, the participation rate of women in informal education was 13.8% in 2016, up from 13.4% in 2012.

Although specific data sets for institutions and municipalities were not provided in this study, it was observed that men's participation rate in informal education was higher than women's, with rates of 17.5% and 19.8%, respectively (TUIK, 2018). In 2022, women's participation declined to 13.5%, and men's participation declined to 17.9%, yet men still had a higher participation rate than women (TUIK, 2023c). Especially in countries like Turkey, where women's participation in education and the workforce is relatively low, lifelong education is needed to serve a "second chance" and address these shortcomings; however, the available data does not support such a scenario.

As stated in Miser et al. (2010), women benefit the most from adult education provided by municipalities. Women outnumber men in adult education institutions affiliated with the MEB and in adult education activities provided by municipal units. According to Miser et al. (2010), this difference happens because these organizations give more importance to traditional women's handicrafts. If we exclude this fact, it will be observed that approximately 46% of adult education participants are men, while 54% are women (Miser et al., 2010). The fact that women participate more in

courses related to traditional handicrafts can be seen as an indicator of conservatism and gender roles within educational systems.

The available data shows that courses under "services" had an increasing trend, while those in "education" and "health and well-being" decreased until 2013. Moreover, TUIK's 2012-2013 report shows changes in course numbers across fields. These changes might indicate shifting priorities in adult education, possibly influenced by societal needs or policy changes. Since “services” primarily rank among the top categories, it can be said that the reasons for attending adult education have shifted to employability and economic productivity concerns.

2.6 The role of municipalities in adult education

According to Uçak (2018), adult education conducted by municipalities encompasses goals that involve individuals in understanding the city's structure, adapting to the urban environment, and generating solutions to the problems encountered in the city. Nevertheless, as mentioned by Demirci (2021), conservative ideology and imagery also constitute factors shaping urban areas, especially in Turkey; since the period after 2002, there has been a noticeable increase in the prominence of these elements on urban identity. Therefore, the data showing that women participate more in traditional handicrafts courses may also highlight the conservatism approach within municipal education services under the influence of new-right and neoliberal ideologies.

The *new right* movement became more prominent in the late 1970s, causing essential changes in the conventional governance of local authorities post-1980s and market-driven policies (Yıldız, 2012). Yıldız (2012) further explains that the rapid urbanization and the development of infrastructure, employment opportunities,

education, healthcare, housing, and socio-cultural amenities in cities have contributed to the progressive enlargement of the roles and obligations of municipalities, particularly from the mid-1990s onward. Eventually, localization trends increased globally and became more evident in education (Tepe, 2007).

However, in Turkey, until 1994, the changes in the field of education were not as evident: until then, municipalities focused on providing other types of services, such as roads, asphalt, clean water, and waste management, with limited impact on the economic, social, and cultural development of cities (Kazancı, 2019). According to Yıldız (2012), the March 1994 local elections marked the start of the education programs conducted by metropolitan municipalities. He reports that following the triumph of the RP, which secured the majority of votes in Ankara and Istanbul, the educational initiatives provided by municipalities underwent transformations influenced by the ongoing Islamic municipality tradition (Doğan, 2007) or, as described by other scholars, the social municipality tradition (Erder & İncioğlu, 2008, as cited in Yıldız, 2012).

Yıldız (2012) explains that this distinct style of municipal management became more pronounced as the methods developed by the Islamist RP to attract more followers gradually evolved: “Thus, the seeds of this tradition were sown in the RP era, but it was only declared as official party policy by the AKP after the 2004 elections” (Erder and İncioğlu, 2008 as cited in Yıldız, 2012, p. 251). According to Soykan (2016), competition among municipalities has shifted the focus from mere social municipalities to a broader concept of municipalities being responsible for local communities' economic, social, cultural, and physical development. Many municipalities now offer educational programs, mainly through art and vocational

training courses, signaling a significant shift in their role toward holistic community development (Soykan, 2016).

In the case of Turkey, as reported by Kazancı (2019), with Law No. 5216 enacted in 2004 and Law No. 5393 enacted in 2005 on Municipalities, it is stated that municipalities are authorized to open businesses aimed at vocational training. Law No. 5216 on metropolitan municipalities includes initiating, managing, or offering vocational training programs among metropolitan municipalities' duties, powers, and responsibilities (Kazancı, 2019). According to Muammer (2007), The Metropolitan Municipality Law mandates the establishment of vocational and skill acquisition courses as a compulsory duty, providing opportunities for alternative service methods through "operating" and "collaborating" while also assigning responsibilities such as constructing buildings and facilities for education and culture services when necessary and supporting public institutions for the infrastructure and equipment of education services (as cited in Eser, 2010).

Tepe (2007) highlights that despite being less extensive than those granted to local administrations in advanced European nations, Turkish municipalities gained significant authority in education through Law No. 5393 of July 3, 2005, allowing them to establish preschools and manage state school infrastructure and resources. Many municipalities in our country provide adult education within the framework of these legal powers, and their activities are implemented according to the principles of the Regulation on General Education Institutions of the MEB (Miser et al., 2010).

Parallelly, the 8th Development Plan, considering the years 2001-2005, states that education activities that promote lifelong learning, especially efforts focusing on expanding skill-building and vocational training for youth unable to attend university, offering alternative pathways to acquire skills and professions, will be

encouraged, benefiting local administrations, voluntary organizations, and the private sector (Korkmaz, 2018). The concept of local administrations, which appears for the first time in development plans, is significant here. According to Kazancı (2019), the key point is that local administrations carry out their services with their own financial resources. In this context, local administrations with their financial resources providing educational services represent an example of fiscal decentralization (Kazancı, 2019), aligning with the economic principles of neoliberalism. Indeed, when analyzing the allocation of education spending in Turkey based on funding sources, it becomes evident that the portion attributed to local administrations rose from approximately 0.5% in 2001 to 1.5% by 2005. This significant increase, almost a 200% rise, is thought to be related to the increased resources directed by Metropolitan Municipalities for public educational activities (Tepe, 2007).

In Turkey, the educational services offered by metropolitan municipalities can be classified into three main categories: support for formal educational institutions, assistance in the form of goods or cash to students, and non-formal education activities (Tepe, 2007). As cited by Kazancı (2019), while laws allow municipalities to carry out physical infrastructure projects only to support formal education activities, there are no such restrictions for informal education since there is a law clause authorizing municipalities to establish and operate institutions for informal education. Today, the accumulation of competition between municipalities for providing social and cultural services has resulted in the education sector with information houses, vocational training centers, libraries, nurseries, special education and rehabilitation centers, and youth centers (Kazancı, 2019).

Among these, institutions such as ISMEK and BELTEK stand out, which can be examined under “vocational training centers.” Ankara Metropolitan Municipality

has Municipal Technical Training Courses (*Ankara Büyükşehir Belediyesi Teknik Eğitim Kursu* [BELTEK]) and Municipality Handicraft and Vocational Training Courses (*Ankara Büyükşehir Belediyesi Meslek Edindirme Kursları* [BELMEK]) initiatives. Tepe (2007) states that BELTEK, partnering with Gazi University, offers technical and vocational training. It aims to empower urban residents, foster urban integration, and boost the local economy. Conversely, BELMEK focuses on women, aiming to improve their skills and enable them to pursue professions while promoting cultural awareness and community solidarity (Tepe, 2007). However, Miser et al. (2010) note that although not all courses offered by municipalities are aimed at vocational training, many courses serve this purpose. Education is provided in various fields, such as handicrafts, Turkish Islamic arts, computer technologies, foreign languages, music, and sports.

Upon course completion at the vocational training centers of metropolitan and local municipalities, participants receive certificates that improve their social skills and aid in career advancement (Kazancı, 2019). Indeed, expanding modular, competency-based certificate programs in vocational adult education is among the promises of the 9th Development Plan, 2007-2013 (Tepe, 2007). As previously mentioned, the concept of lifelong learning, a natural outcome of neoliberalism, and its emphasis on certification systems have been institutionalized in Turkey based on the authority granted by the Vocational Qualifications Authority Law (*Mesleki Yeterlilikler Kurumu Kanunu*). The institutions authorized by the Vocational Qualifications Institution to provide training under vocational standards will ensure certification recognized nationally and internationally for their vocational training programs (Tepe, 2007). Soykan (2016) notes that graduates can use these certificates to enter the workforce or start their own businesses. Moreover, as suggested by Tepe

(2007), the certification system plays a vital role in EU accession and future mobility rights; thus, when institutions like ISMEK meet the required qualifications, they can issue internationally recognized certificates. According to him, this eventually encourages individuals to acquire new skills and improve existing ones, placing significant responsibilities on institutions like ISMEK and offering new opportunities.

However, as previously discussed in the literature, the impact of neoliberalism on education has not only been about marketization and workforce orientation; it has also led to a process of conservatization in education, and the effects of this process can be observed not only in decisions made by central administration but also in local governance. As stated by Demirci (2021), the AKP, known for its conservative stance, has maintained control over national governance since 2002. Until the 2019 local elections, it managed major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Bursa. Consequently, the conservative ideology's symbols are evidently portrayed in urban spaces, as urban plans are often formulated and executed by the ruling political authority or city officials. Demirci (2021) notes that the rise in institutions following a Turkish-Islamic synthesis framework has notably influenced the conservative character of cities. He gives the example of the rise in the number of vocational religious high schools and middle schools named *İmam Hatip* (preacher-prayer leader) schools and middle schools. He states that the number of Quran courses can also be evaluated in this context:

> …accordingly, the number of [Quran] courses, which was 3,000 in 2000, reached approximately 16,000 by 2018 (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2019). When the ratios of Quran course numbers to the population are examined, while the course numbers in 2000 corresponded to 0.004% of the population, this rate increased to 0.2% in 2018. (Demirci, 2021, p. 254; see Appendix C, 6).

Moreover, not only the number of courses but also the number of participants in Quran courses, both for adults and children, has seen a significant increase in recent years, and women comprise the majority of these participants (Yıldız, 2012). According to him, the reason why these women, who live in similar socio-economic conditions, show more interest in Quran courses can be understood through the recent Islamization policies in Turkey. Moreover, within a patriarchal cultural climate, literacy skills, which could empower women, are traditionally undervalued; religious knowledge is considered more valuable and "safer." He concludes that this climate hinders women's presence in public life, which is unfortunately supported by recent public policies.

Yıldız (2012) also refers to the conservative influence of courses provided by municipalities in Turkey. According to him, Turkish Islamic Arts such as Çini, Ebru, Calligraphy, Miniature, etc., and language education courses such as Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, which conservative segments of society have valued for years, stand out among the courses provided by municipalities. Therefore, it can be said that the conservative influence on adult education can be observed through the increase in the number of imam hatip schools and Quran courses (Demirci, 2021), the increase in the number of participants in these courses, as well as the changes happening in the content of the courses provided by the municipalities (Yıldız, 2012).

However, it should also be noted that this cannot be the case for all the municipalities and metropolitan municipalities in Turkey. Different political parties have varying views on how municipalities should handle education, depending on their core beliefs and ideologies; therefore, when analyzing the activities of municipalities, it is necessary also to examine the roles related to education that parties desire to have within municipalities (Tamer, 2015). For instance, Demirci

(2021) emphasizes that when the conservatism rate of the city increases, the number of Quran courses per capita also increases.

On the other hand, Tamer's study (2015) shows that the municipalities of Bakırköy and Şişli mainly offer personal development and hobby courses, while the districts of Arnavutköy and Sultanbeyli only provide vocational training courses in the given period. He explains this situation with the differences in terms of education statistics. Although it may not be possible to make direct implications without additional data about these municipalities, it is important to note that the CHP governed Bakırköy and Şişli municipalities, while the AKP governed Sultanbeyli and Arnavutköy during the given period.

According to Eser (2010), the educational activities of municipalities gained significant momentum after the structuring of metropolitan municipalities and due to the legal regulations made in recent years in Turkey. There has been a shift towards direct intervention in public education. As a result, the vocational and nonformal educational activities of municipalities, especially metropolitan municipalities, are increasing day by day (Eser, 2010).

Data provided by TUIK shows that the highest number of courses, totaling 11,726 out of 19.817 (59,17%) courses, were organized by municipalities in 2009 (TUIK, 2010). In addition, municipalities offered 20,92% of courses in 2010, 21,02% in 2011, 20,02% in 2012, 21,90% in 2013, 24,10% in 2014, 26,87 in 2015, and 25,73 in 2016 (TUIK, 2014; TUIK, 2016; TUIK, 2018). Until 2016, there were five categories of adult education providers stated in TUIK data: ministries and related institutions, universities, municipalities, confederations and unions, foundations, and associations. Nevertheless, due to changes in categorization and data presentation, it is impossible to see the municipalities' share in adult education programs in the

following years. The data provided by TUIK in the following years is based on the distinction between formal education institutions and informal education institutions, and such data might also involve private courses by private institutions or other types of adult education programs. On the other hand, the available data shows that the relatively stable percentage of courses conducted by municipalities suggests a consistent level of involvement in adult education programs at the local level when compared to other entities offering adult education.

In terms of the types of adult education programs, Miser et al. (2010) indicate that, by 2008, municipalities provide roughly 150 different adult education programs, with most focusing on vocational training. In sum, the courses offered by Metropolitan Municipalities can be broadly categorized into two main areas: social-cultural (35.7%) and vocational-technical (40.7%) (Miser et al., 2010). Soykan's (2016) study emphasizes that the structures of vocational and skill acquisition courses organized by 17 different metropolitan municipalities show similarities and are created by taking each other as examples. Moreover, Miser et al. (2010) emphasize that the most popular courses offered by municipalities are computer skills and English language classes.

When we consider the participation in adult education activities provided by municipalities, Miser et al. (2010) state that ISMEK, serving about 200,000 participants, manages over half of the adult education programs offered by municipalities, while other municipalities provide the rest Tepe (2007) also indicates that until the 2005-2006 academic year, the IMM provided education to a total of 225,149 individuals through ISMEK. As seen in the report by Miser et al. (2010) and other studies in the literature, municipalities are making significant efforts in adult education today, with ISMEK standing out as an established institution.

2.7 Institute Istanbul ISMEK

Institute Istanbul ISMEK was established in 1996, and until 2003, it operated as Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Vocational Training Courses; however, after 2003, it continued its services under the name Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses (Eser, 2010). In 2021, "Institute Istanbul" was added before ISMEK and started to be called Institute Istanbul ISMEK.[1] (Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2021). Currently operating under the IMM Directorate of Human Resources and Education, Lifelong Learning Branch Directorate, Institute Istanbul ISMEK is an institution that provides services based on lifelong learning principles (Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, n.d).

The purpose of ISMEK is determined to meet the general educational needs of Istanbul residents outside formal education institutions, to improve their vocational and artistic knowledge, to transform them from passive consumers into active producers, to contribute to their cultural and social development, and to equip them with the culture of the city and the skills for metropolitan living (Tepe, 2007).

While carrying out these tasks, ISMEK's legal basis is established by laws, regulations, directives, and protocols such as Basic Law of National Education No. 1739, Law on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of National Education No. 3797, Municipal Law No. 5393, Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216, Vocational Qualifications Authority Law No. 5544, protocols between Istanbul Governorship Provincial Directorate of National Education and IMM conducted at the beginning of each education term, and IMM regulation on vocational and skills education (Tepe, 2007).

[1] In 2021, the term "Institute Istanbul" was added before the abbreviation "ISMEK" (Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2021). However, since this study covers the period from 2019 to 2024 and existing literature refers to it as ISMEK, the abbreviation "ISMEK" is used throughout the text.

All ISMEK courses, public seminars, and exhibitions are free. Successful participants receive a course completion certificate approved by the Istanbul Governorship Provincial Directorate of National Education and IMM. Those with regular attendance but need more performance receive a participation certificate.s (Tepe, 2007).

In the ISMEK model, individuals can establish workshops, acquire professions, use ISMEK certificates as a means of employment, advance their careers in their current jobs, and upon completing the required certification hours, successful exam trainees can become course instructors (Eser, 2010). ISMEK endeavors to enhance the employability of its trainees through the training provided, offering guidance on employment opportunities in the labor market following their education (Eser, 2010).

Starting its activities in 1996 with 141 students in three branches at three-course centers, as of the 2008-2009 academic year, ISMEK reached 230,000 students in 123 branches at 218-course centers across Istanbul's 38 districts (Eser, 2010). In 2019, it had 242 educational institutions operating in Istanbul, offering 307 branches, 752 training programs, 1606 classrooms, 3002 instructors, and 2,984,924 graduates (Kazancı, 2019). Today, ISMEK continues to provide programs in 132 education centers, 16 specialty schools, and two libraries in different districts of Istanbul (ISMEK, n.d.). At this point, it should be noted that not every program is offered in every region, and the variety and number of programs may vary from region to region. For instance, in Şişli, ISMEK offers 302 programs at five different education centers, while in Eyüpsultan, 207 programs are offered at three different centers (ISMEK, n.d.).

Moreover, ISMEK supports the education of vulnerable groups through collaborations with various institutions such as prisons, nursing homes, mental health

hospitals, and community health centers. The educational opportunities provided by its ISMEK Distance Learning Center also offer flexibility in terms of time and location for many Istanbul residents (ISMEK, n.d.).

As indicated by Eser (2010), since ISMEK is an adult education organization carried out by the principles of public education, any Istanbul resident who has completed compulsory primary education age can become an ISMEK student. Therefore, being over the age of graduating compulsory education is considered sufficient to benefit from ISMEK training, which sets the lower age limit typically between 14-16 years old in our country, whereas there is no upper age limit for this age restriction (Eser, 2010). Indeed, ISMEK administrators list the target audience as those who have completed primary education age and have not received any vocational training, those who have acquired a profession but want to advance in their field, individuals who want to acquire a new art, skill, or hobby, those in need of rehabilitation for various reasons, and groups in need of support due to social responsibility (such as the elderly, disabled, prisoners) and groups experiencing adaptation issues in the city (Eser, 2010).

On the other hand, in his study, Tepe (2007) emphasizes that ISMEK primarily provides training aimed at personal development and empowering women's labor, even though there has been an increase in the number of male trainees over the years. The training given to women aims not only to develop them as potential workforce but also to contribute to both family and national economies. As Eser (2010) also points out, according to the 2008 ISMEK data, women constitute the majority of course participants, accounting for 79.1%, or approximately four out of every five participants. This indicates that women are the most crucial target group among the actual target audience.

Eser (2010) also notes that even though course participants are given a wide range of options in terms of educational branches, it is observed that foreign language (19%) and computer operation (18.3%) are among the most preferred branches, followed by music (7.7%). However, enrollment in ISMEK's vocational training courses and the reasons for choosing them vary among participants, and the districts within Istanbul show differences not only geographically but also economically, socially, and culturally. For example, areas like Tuzla, Silivri, and Pendik prioritize courses like computer and accounting for economic gains, while areas like Beşiktaş and Şişli prefer social and cultural branches such as body, fitness, and music (Eser, 2010).

According to data provided in their 2016 newsletter, ISMEK offered education to 141 participants during the 1996-1997 academic year, and the number of participants consistently increased parallel to the number of training centers and branches. Even though the number of participants decreased to 2,521 during 2000-2001 compared with the previous period, 1999-2000, enrolling 9,700 participants, it continued to increase steadily over the years (ISMEK, 2016). The number of participants reached its peak in the 2008-2009 academic year, and a total of 233,013 participants enrolled in ISMEK programs; however, in the following years, the number of participants again decreased, with an average of 211,000 participants for each following period until 2015-2016 (ISMEK, 2016). The news bulletin mentions that ISMEK provided courses to over two million students until 2016, while ISMEK's website indicates that the number of participants has reached three million so far.

ISMEK provides education in many fields, from vocational and technical training to art, foreign language, music, computer technologies, and personal

development. In addition to education centers throughout the city, it also offers opportunities for participation in advanced vocational training programs through specialty schools. Various specialty schools such as language schools, computer schools, bakery, and pastry schools provide Istanbul residents with theoretical and practical training in their preferred fields of education (ISMEK, n.d.).

According to the information given on ISMEK's website, there are currently a total of 1271 training programs available under four branches and 23 program areas, including 623 in *vocational and technical education*, 204 in *personal development*, 229 in *fine arts,* and 215 in *handicrafts and crafts.* While most of these programs are face-to-face, 304 distance learning and 12 hybrid course options are also available. Furthermore, there are 205 different workshops available in different education centers.

From these educational branches, vocational and technical education programs are offered in sub-fields such as information technologies, child development and education, gastronomy and culinary arts, visual communication and graphic design, beauty and hair care services, media and communication, fashion design and textiles, accounting and finance, robotics and innovation, technical design, management and services, and agriculture.

Personal development offers language courses in English, German, French, Italian, Russian, Japanese, Kurdish, Zaza language, Ottoman Turkish, and Turkish for foreigners, ranging from beginner level to advanced level, along with courses based on exam preparation. Furthermore, there are many options for personal development courses, such as elocution and speech, drama, body language, speed reading, parenting, and ecological or literature-based courses.

In fine arts, education is provided in music, performing arts, and art and design. In music courses, in addition to technical training and choirs, there are training programs for instruments such as guitar, piano, violin, cello, flute, clarinet, taborine, qanun, end-blown flute, oud, and kemancha. Performing arts options include applied theater, acting, voice, and dubbing training, as well as Turkish folk-dance courses, whereas art and design courses include traditional arts such as ceramics, marbling, miniature painting, mosaic, and calligraphy, along with photography, painting, and drawing courses.

The handicrafts and crafts branch encompasses a variety of programs, including wood design and technologies and the production of decorative handcrafts such as toy animal making, special occasion gift preparation, handicrafts technology, and jewelry technology. It also covers jewelry and jewelry design, knitting and embroidery crafts, ornamental arts, and textile design, which involves sewing decorative home products.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this section, I explain the research design used in the study to explain the patterns of participation in ISMEK educational programs. I conducted descriptive research to demonstrate the patterns and collected the data through a formal request to ISMEK and via the official IMM webpage.

3.1 Research design

This study uses a descriptive research design, which is chosen to illustrate the current situation of a phenomenon, answering what question to describe it. Descriptive studies are aimed at giving detailed information on existing conditions, and they play a crucial role in spotting patterns and trends within a group (Babbie, 2001). In this research, I aim to present the participation patterns in adult education activities at ISMEK by examining program areas, program districts, and participants' demographic data, including gender, employment status, age, and educational background.

The research process involves analyzing the frequency and relationships of variables from data provided by ISMEK and retrieved from the IMM official website. This approach offers a comprehensive view of participation patterns in ISMEK courses and helps us understand the current situation. Also, it helps to understand the manifestations of neoliberal policies in the educational program areas chosen and participant engagement.

3.2 Data collection

The analysis is based on two main data sets; one is acquired through a formal request to the IMM, and the second is retrieved from the IMM's official web page.

The first data set includes participant demographics such as gender, age, educational background, and the program districts. It also contains the number of participants from various districts and details of 1,658 educational programs, including their names and areas, cumulatively between 2019 and 2024.

The second data set provides information on participant numbers, ages, educational backgrounds, and districts of participants, along with participants' employment status. It also gives the mode of education (either face-to-face or distance). The second data set individually covers four academic years from 2019 to 2023.

Additional information regarding current educational programs, their areas, and the fields of education they cover, along with details about ISMEK's educational centers, was retrieved from Institute Istanbul ISMEK's official website. Further data was obtained from ISMEK officials through one-on-one interactions when necessary. TUIK statistics were used to get information about Istanbul's district population and workforce statistics.

3.3 Data analysis:

Descriptive analysis was employed to analyze the data. Program areas are categorized under four fields of education (*eğitim dalı*) based on the categories ISMEK uses on its official webpage. Demographic data such as gender, employment status, age, and educational background of ISMEK participants, along with information about the programs offered by ISMEK, were put into tables to make

informed interpretations. The variables in these tables were compared using percentages and frequencies since the study has a descriptive aim. Pearson Moments correlation was used to examine the relationships between certain variables.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I present my findings and discussion on participation patterns in ISMEK between 2019 and 2024. The findings and discussion are based on the descriptive analysis of the data in the sections formed to demonstrate the variables such as program areas offered by ISMEK, districts of these programs, and participants' demographics as gender, employment status, age, and educational background, which were included in the research questions. Lastly, I present an overall discussion based on my findings and the literature to see how the neoliberal transformation of adult education manifests in the program areas and participation patterns of ISMEK.

4.1 Program areas offered by ISMEK

In this section, I give information on fields of education and program areas under these fields of education, the number of participants in each field, and the number of programs in ISMEK in each academic year between 2019 and 2024.

Table 1 shows the list of program areas by four fields of education categories between 2019 and 2024 in ISMEK.

As seen in Table 1, program areas in ISMEK are listed under four categories: handicrafts and crafts, fine arts, personal development, and vocational and technical education. These categories are formed based on the four fields of education as given on ISMEK’s official web page. These fields are employed to interpret the data through this chapter to make interpretations easier to see and understand. Sports is under personal development in the table; however, in some of the data in ISMEK, it

is evaluated not in any fields of education above but as a category itself. This study categorizes sports under personal development, which is stated when it is not included.

Table 1. Program Areas in ISMEK by Fields of Education (2019-2024)

Field of education	Program Areas	Total
Handicrafts and Crafts	Wood Design and Technologies, Decorative Handcraft Production, Handicrafts Technology, Jewelry Technology, Jewelry and Jewelry Design, Knitting and Embroidery Crafts, Ornamental Arts, Textile Design	8
Fine Arts	Music, Music and Performing Arts,Performing Arts, Stage and Performing Arts, Art and Design, Ceramics and Glass	6
Personal Development	Language Training, Personal Development and Education, Foreign Languages, Sports	4
Vocational and Technical Education	Family and Consumer Sciences, Horticulture, Information Technologies, Office Management and Secretarial, Child Development and Education, Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Clothing Production Technologies, Food Technology, Visual Communication and Graphic Design, Graphic and Photography, Graphic and Technical Design, Beauty and Hair Care Services, Elderly and Patient Care Services, Media and Communication, Vocational Technical Training, Fashion Design and Textile Technology, Accounting and Finance, Robotics and Innovation, Technical Design, Textile Technology, Tourism and Hospitality, Food and Beverage Services, Management and Services, Agriculture	24

Source: [Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2024]

The first category shows eight program areas under handicrafts and crafts. This category includes specialized crafts such as wood design and technologies, jewelry technology, and textile design. Fine arts are the second category, comprising six program areas. This field includes music, performing arts, art, and design. The third field of education is personal development, which comprises four program areas that feature programs like language training and personal growth and education.

The last category is vocational and technical education. This category comprises twenty-four program areas, such as family and consumer sciences, information technologies, tourism and hospitality, fashion design and textile technology, accounting and finance, robotics and innovation, and technical design. As can be seen in Table 1, the largest category is vocational and technical education, followed by handicrafts and crafts. Fine arts come third; the smallest category is personal development, with four program areas under it.

In Table 1, each program area aims to develop specific skill sets relevant to its category. The most obvious fact about the table is that the vocational and technical education category is the most crowded field with 24 program areas. It is three times bigger than the following handicrafts area with eight programs. This variability demonstrates ISMEK's commitment to providing vocational skills directly applicable to the workforce. They supply for both current workforce needs and emerging industry trends. The number of these practical and technical areas reflects an institutional response to the demands of Istanbulites, which are required by the labor market via these programs.

Personal development focuses on improving practical personal skills for various aspects of life, such as communication and self-improvement programs under the personal development and education program area. Moreover, in this field, there are courses like leadership skills, time management strategies, and practical problem-solving skills, which are highly searched-for soft skills for employers to hire someone. In addition, language courses are included in this category. Language skills, especially English, are also a must for getting a job in today's world. These facts make this category, personal development, a category that supplies development opportunities for people. First, it seems like for personal development,

but rather, the skills through these courses serve as a means for participants to be equipped with market needs for a good job.

Indeed, when we look at the global trends, according to the report of the European Association for the Education of Adults (2015), the promotion of the various fields of adult education besides vocational educational training is still underdeveloped in many countries among Eastern members of the EU (EAEA, 2015). In all countries in South-Eastern Europe, vocational education and training are emphasized more than civil integration and social cohesion (Popovic, 2009), whereas the Nordic countries and Germany can be given examples of countries that focus on the role of adult education in strengthening social inclusion and cohesion (Keogh, 2009).

Table 2 shows the distribution of ISMEK Participants by fields of education in terms of numbers and percentages between 2019 and 2024.

Table 2. Distribution of ISMEK Participants by Fields of Education (2019-2024)

Handicrafts and Crafts		Fine Arts		Personal Development		Vocational and Technical Education		Total	
Participants	-%	Participants	-%	Participants	-%	Participants	-%	Participants	-%
115325	21%	62462	11%	161639	29%	212319	39%	551745	100%

Source: [Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2024]

It can be seen in Table 2 that vocational and technical education is the most popular category, with 212,319 participants, making up 39% of all participants. It is followed by personal development, which accounts for 29% of the participants. However, there is a noticeable difference of 10% between these two categories despite their consecutive positions. The third category is handicrafts and crafts, making up 21% of

all. Fine arts are the least participated category with 11%, which means it has 10% fewer participants than the preceding one.

Considering Table 2 and Table 1 together, the enrollment preferences of ISMEK participants explain why the vocational and technical education field has the highest number of program areas to provide the demand of 39% of participants interested in this field. This high demand reflects job-oriented skills and training that are directly applicable in the workplace and linked with global trends toward developing vocational skills to increase employability, as it is the purpose of life-long learning activities globally (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). Moreover, as described above in Table 1, these can be interpreted as visible outcomes of neoliberal educational policies and the rational choice theory. Breen & Goldthorpe (1997) explain that the trend in educational policy is influenced by the emphasis that individuals choose their educational options according to costs and benefits evaluation.

Meanwhile, handicrafts and crafts and fine arts account for 21% and 11% of the participants, respectively. The relatively lower percentage for fine arts could be due to the niche interest in artistic pursuits compared to more practical vocational training. However, the considerable interest in handicrafts and crafts highlights a continued appreciation and demand for traditional skills and artistic crafts.

The courses in this field can serve individuals who wish to fulfill their personal interests or gain potential skills for probable small business enterprises. Especially for women, what they have learned in the handicrafts programs can be turned into a source of income. There are many examples of women entrepreneurs in the crafts industry in Turkey as well as in the world (Ozar, 2007). For instance, Wut, Chan, and Lee's study (2021) demonstrates how women in Hong Kong constitute a

group of entrepreneurs, even though they are confined to small-scale production. As a result, it can be said that women can regard handicrafts and crafts education as a means to participate in economic life.

Table 3 gives the numbers of ISMEK programs over the academic years between 2019 and 2024 by mode of education.

Table 3. Distribution of Programs in ISMEK by Mode of Education (2019-2024)

Academic Year	Face-to-face education	Change%	Distance Education	Change%	Total	Change%
2019-2020	477	-	65	-	542	25% ↓
2020-2021	0	NA Covid	382	488%↑	382	30% ↓
2021-2022	840	NA	173	54% ↓	1013	165%↑
2022-2023	933	11% ↑	257	49% ↑	1190	17% ↑
2023-2024	951	2% ↑	288	12% ↑	1239	4% ↑

Source: [Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2024]
Note. Sports courses are not included, and program areas are not given in the data.

Table 3 demonstrates the annual distribution of ISMEK's educational programs divided into face-to-face and distance education from 2019 to 2024 by academic years. The table provides the total count of programs in each mode for each academic year and the percentage of changes compared to the previous year. Also, it shows the direction of change as a decrease or increase by using upward and downward arrows.

Distance education was introduced in 2019-2020; in this first academic year, there were 65 programs. 2020-2021 shows a complete transition to distance education with 382 programs, reflecting a significant 488% increase in this mode from the prior year. This apparent change is because of the COVID-19 pandemic. During COVID-19, all sorts of education shifted from face-to-face to distance education. Post-Covid, face-to-face programs restarted and increased gradually.

However, although distance education numbers continued to grow, they showed a slow pace. This transition allowed continuity in education during lockdowns. It also showed the potential for considerable expansion of distance learning, as seen by the 488% increase during the Covid year.

Following 2020, the gradual continuation of face-to-face education indicates a return to traditional learning environments. However, distance education's continued presence and growth suggest a new hybrid educational model. The fluctuations in program numbers and the shifts between education modes reflect ISMEK's responsiveness to external challenges and its ability to adapt to new ways of educational delivery.

This adaptive strategy made educational continuity possible during the pandemic. Also, it set the basis for more flexible, hybrid learning structures for later. The overall growth trend in total program numbers by 2023-2024 demonstrates a recovery and growth phase. It indicates that the demand for municipal lifelong learning activities is rising. According to Uzunyayla (2007), Yücesan-Özdemir & Özdemir (2012), Aslan (2014), and Bağcı (2014), this increase can be attributed to neoliberal policies that necessitate reductions in state budgets for education while the demands for adult education continue to rise.

According to Ünal (2007), as states deliberately do not channel their resources to education, education is becoming more “civilian,” and educational processes traditionally revered by capitalism acquire new forms and contents aligned with capital needs. The establishment of this global competitive order brings forth complementary e-learning networks. Thus, these new educational processes are structured within a new commerce network constantly adapted to flexible conditions (Ünal, 2007). As a result, other institutions, including municipalities, have

increasingly taken on the responsibility of providing adult education programs to fill the gap left by the reduced state funding, either face-to-face educational programs or e-learning activities.

4.2 Districts of educational centers and participation rates in districts

In this section, I present information on ISMEK's educational centers and their distribution by Istanbul's districts in the 2023- 2024 academic year. Also, I show the number of programs and participants in each district between 2019 and 2014. I will finish by analyzing relations between participation rates from a district and districts' score in the report Socio-Economic Development Ranking Studies Socio-Economic Development Index (*Sosyo-Ekonomik Gelişmişlik Endeksi* [SEGE]) (Ministry of Industry and Technology, 2022).

Appendix A presents the number of education centers, schools of expertise, and library workshops of ISMEK in the 2023-2024 academic year and Istanbul's population. As seen in Appendix A, there are 150 education centers all over Istanbul in the 2023-2024 academic year. These are grouped as educational centers, schools of expertise, and library workshops. There are 132 education centers, 16 schools of expertise, and two library workshops, totaling 150 centers throughout Istanbul. The highest number of courses by district is 10, and they are located in Pendik. Bağcılar follows Pendik with nine centers, and there are seven centers both in Üsküdar and Ataşehir. There are only two library workshops, Pendik and Sancaktepe. There are 16 schools of expertise in 10 different districts. Both Şişli and Bahçelievler have four schools of expertise, and the other eight districts have one in each. Beşiktaş has no ISMEK centers, and seven districts in Istanbul have only one.

The correlation between the number of educational centers in a district and its population, r = 0.9, indicates a powerful positive correlation, suggesting that as the population of a district increases, so does the number of educational centers. However, it is essential to note that correlation does not imply causation. While the data suggest that educational centers tend to be more numerous in more populous districts, this does not necessarily mean that educational centers are opened solely based on the population size of those districts.

Appendix B presents the lists of Istanbul districts and the distribution of population and ISMEK participants by districts, together with the ratio of participants to population and SEGE score of these districts between 2019 and 2024. Appendix B repeats Istanbul districts' population data from Appendix A in its first column. It adds the number of participants from each district with the participant ratio to population between 2019 and 2024. Also, it presents the SEGE score of these districts and examines the relationship of participant ratio to the SEGE scores of districts, if there is any. The table also shows correlation coefficient numbers of population and participation rates.

First of all, the SEGE score is a score published in the SEGE report prepared every five years by the Turkish Ministry of Industry and Technology. SEGE is an analytical tool developed to measure and compare the socio-economic developments of Turkey's regions, cities, provinces, and districts. To do that, different variables such as demographics, education level, employment situation, and social security were evaluated. The goal is to provide data-based insights for policymaking, strategy development, and other public implementations related to socioeconomic conditions. (Ministry of Industry and Technology, 2022.).

There is a positive and strong correlation (r = 0, 9) between the population and the number of participants in a district, which means that participation in ISMEK programs is highly related to the district population. Contrary to the correlation between district population and participation, the total participation rate for ISMEK across Istanbul is 4%, which might be because ISMEK is not their first choice for adult education programs since Istanbul also has other adult education provider institutions.

Among Istanbul districts, Şile (10%) and Silivri (7%) show higher rates, potentially reflecting different local educational needs or interests. Also, there are examples like Beşiktaş and Sultanbeyli, whose participation rate is negligible. That means participation is linked with population; however, they do not increase or decrease accordingly.

On the other hand, there is almost no relation (r = 0.04) between SEGE scores and the participation rates of districts, meaning there is no relationship between how socio-economically developed a district is and the participation rate in ISMEK programs. For example, Şişli has the highest SEGE score of 6.959, and Esenler, with a SEGE score of 1.354, both have a participation rate of 4%. However, some districts with higher SEGE scores, like Kadıköy (4.46) and Bakırköy (4.91), show relatively higher participation rates, 8%, and 6%, respectively, suggesting that socioeconomic factors evaluated in the SEGE report may play a role in educational engagement.

However, the overall correlation coefficient (0.04) means that factors other than socioeconomic development evaluated in the SEGE report influence participation in adult education activities. There might be practical reasons, such as the lack of enough ISMEK centers in a district. As shown in Appendix B, ISMEK has a different number of centers in every district of Istanbul. Also, other reasons,

such as cultural preferences and local populations' characteristics other than socio-economic metrics, might be effective for ISMEK's participation rates.

Abraham's study (2014), based on the labor market in Hungary, supports these findings. It shows that people living in towns participate in adult education more (50.2%) than people living in country seats and country boroughs (48.8%), and the municipalities with a higher number of inhabitants usually have higher participation rates in adult education. The study emphasizes that individuals living in disadvantaged regions or micro-regions have lower chances of accessing adult education. Moreover, the type of neighborhood within municipalities also influences individuals' participation in adult education.

According to the study's findings, 65.2% of those who lived in wealthy neighborhoods attended adult education programs, whereas only 23.3% of individuals living in poorer neighborhoods were involved in lifelong learning (Abraham, 2014). Even though it is seen that participants in adult education benefit from better conditions concerning labor market positions, Abraham (2014) underlines the dilemma of whether it is because of the efficacy of adult education or because those who participate in adult education are already highly motivated adults with better socioeconomic and educational backgrounds.

This situation is called the *selectional effect*, meaning that individuals who are socioeconomically more disadvantaged and lack basic skills and competencies necessitated by the labor market are also disadvantaged regarding their access to adult education services that can improve their labor market opportunities (Abraham, 2014).

4.3 Demographic characteristics of participants in ISMEK

In this section, I present the data on ISMEK participants' demographics as gender, employment status, age, and educational background in different fields of education as given in Table 1: handicrafts and crafts, fine arts, personal development, and vocational and technical education.

4.3.1 Gender

Table 4. shows the distribution of ISMEK participants in four main fields of education by gender between 2019 and 2024. Table 4 shows both the number of participants and their percentage.

Table 4. Distribution of ISMEK Participants by Gender (2019-2024)

	Male	Grand Total/ Male	Female	Grand Total/ Female	Total	Total/ Male %	Total/ Female %
Handicrafts and Crafts	2646	3%	112679	25%	115325	0,48%	20%
Fine Arts	16842	17%	45620	10%	62462	3%	8%
Personal Development	40048	39%	121591	27%	161639	7%	22%
Vocational and Technical Education	42074	41%	170245	38%	212319	8%	31%
Grand Total	101610	100%	450135	100%	551745	18%	82%

Source: [Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2024]

It can be seen in Table 4 that there is a considerable difference between the female and male participants in ISMEK programs in these five years, 2019 and 2024. While 82% (450,135) of all participants are female, only 18% (101,610) of the 551,745 participants are male.

The difference is even more significant in the handicrafts and crafts category, where female participation dominates, accounting for 20% of total participants compared to just 0.48% for males. In fine arts, differences between participants' genders are generally significant, with 3% male and 8% female participants. Male participation rates are relatively higher in personal development (7%) and vocational and technical training (8%) categories, yet female dominance in total participation rates is again visible, with 22% in personal development and 31% in vocational and technical education.

When we look at each gender's choice of fields, female participants' first choice is vocational and technical education, with 38%, followed by 27% in personal development and 25% in handicrafts and crafts. Fine arts is the last choice of female participants, with 10 percent. Most male participants, like female participants, attend vocational and technical education at a rate of 41%, and 39% of male participants attend personal development programs. Male participants' third choice is fine arts (17%), and very few male participants attend handicrafts programs (3%).

This significant difference between male and female participation rates in ISMEK suggests that ISMEK programs are highly popular among women. The reason might be that the content of programs is accessible and there are more suitable course hours for female participants. Even though women often have complex time-management needs, mainly those with caregiving responsibilities as mothers or homemakers. Also, it can be interpreted as there is still a traditional gender role assigned to women in a conventional household structure where men work full time, and women are housewives who do not go to work and thus have time to participate in the programs. Higher female participation rates are also compatible with previous research on participation in adult education (Bağcı, 2014; Şimşek, 2023)

The meaningful disparity between female and male participants in the handicrafts and crafts category emphasizes traditional gender roles where handicrafts are typically associated with female interests or skills. Due to societal norms and possibly greater encouragement for women to engage in creative and artistic pursuits, crafts, handicrafts, and fine arts are two fields of education that are participated in by more females. These areas are considered suitable for female roles as a mother and housewife.

The situation can be related to the conservatism embedded within neoliberal policies. The neoliberal policies do not challenge traditional gender roles but rather support them by encouraging participation in fields traditionally seen as appropriate for women. This may preserve conservative views on gender roles and limit social changes as it is aimed at the neoliberal era. (Yıldız, 2008; Bağcı, 2015b; Işık, 2023)

Nevertheless, it can also be related to the fact that women regard handicraft programs and production as a source of income, as discussed above in the findings of Table 1 and Table 2. There are many examples of women handicraft entrepreneurs around the world (Ozar, 2007; Wut et al., 2021) as it serves as a means for women who need a second chance to participate in economic life.

The vocational and technical education category shows the highest total participation, with females (31%) significantly outnumbering males (8%). This may indicate that vocational training, which often leads directly to employment, is particularly tempting for women to increase job opportunities and economic independence. Even though there is an apparent difference between female and male participants in this field, this is also the field most of the males participate in. With a participation rate of 41% among male participants, vocational and technical training is the most attended field, supporting the reflection of a neoliberal era. As a result,

lifelong learning puts market needs before individuals' requirements for personal and societal growth (Okçabol, 2007; Uzunyayla, 2007; Yıldız, 2008; Bağcı, 2015a).

The data reflects both the neoliberal aim to create market-ready individuals equipped with vocational skills and the conservative ideals of maintaining traditional gender roles in education. The participation rates suggest that while adult education programs in ISMEK help provide the education required for job market needs, they also mirror conventional societal norms and values regarding gender roles.

4.3.2 Employment status

Table 5 shows the distribution of ISMEK participants by employment status and fields of education.

Table 5. Distribution of ISMEK Participants by Employment Status (2019-2023)

Field of Education	Unemployed	%	Employed	%	Student	%	Retired	%
Vocational Technical	93081	70%	88062	78%	68295	80%	4045	52%
Handicrafts and Crafts	15657	12%	1828	2%	778	1%	1471	19%
Personal Development	18830	14%	18406	16%	13162	15%	1212	16%
Fine Arts	5076	4%	3979	4%	3029	4%	1003	13%
Total	132.644 40%	100	112275 33%	100%	85264 25%	100%	7731 2%	100%

Source: [IMM, 2023]
Note. N= 337914

Table 5 shows that unemployed individuals constitute the largest group, making up 40% (132,644 participants) of the total. This is followed by those employed, representing 33% (112,275 participants), and students who make 25 (85,264 participants). The retired population forms the tiniest fraction, at only 2% (7,731

participants). Unemployed participants also form the largest groups in all fields of education.

The highest participation rate in the vocational and technical education field belongs to the students, with 80%, followed by employed (78%), unemployed (70%), and retired people (52%). Although retired people constitute the smallest group in this category, their participation rate is still relatively high. Here, it is noteworthy that 52% of retired people are attending vocational educational courses. When we consider that courses under this category provide skills necessary for the job market, it would not be wrong to state that even if retired, they need to equip themselves with new skills to get a job since retirement salary is not enough for them to survive. (Nazlıer-Keser, 2019).

The high number of unemployed participants in vocational and technical courses likely indicates a strong demand for skill development among those seeking employment. The lower engagement in handicrafts and crafts among employed and students may suggest these courses are more hobby-oriented or appealing to those with more leisure time, such as unemployed and retired individuals.

The relatively balanced distribution of personal development courses across different employment statuses suggests these programs have general appeal, likely due to their potential to enhance life skills and personal growth. Considering that language programs, foreign languages, and Koran courses are listed under this category, together with sports courses, relatively balanced participation from each group makes more sense. The higher percentage of retired individuals in Fine Arts can be attributed to pursuing personal interests during post-retirement when individuals have more time to explore creative avenues.

There is no gender data together with employment status; however, when considering the data in this table linked with Table 4, where we can see that female participants outnumber male participants, it would not be wrong to conclude that the highest number of participants in ISMEK are unemployed women. They participate especially in Vocational Education programs.

Turkey has low rates of participation of women in the labor force, partially because women migrating from rural to urban areas often have low levels of education and lack the qualifications required by the formal sector, thus resulting in their staying primarily at home in cities without being able to enter the workforce (Karadeniz & Öztepe, 2013), high participation of women to vocational education programs can be seen as an effort to increase their skills and qualifications as required by the job market.

4.3.3 Age

Table 6 presents the ISMEK participants' distribution by age group and field of education.

As seen in Table 6, ISMEK participants' age ranges cover a broad spectrum, from under 20 to over 60 years old, demonstrating the program's appeal across various life stages. However, it is evident that people between 20-30 comprise the most prominent participants (29%) in ISMEK, and this group mainly participates in vocational and technical education. It is followed by 40-50-year-olds with 23%, 30-40 with 20%, and 50-60 with 16%. The participation rate of those under 20 and over 60 is the same, at 6%. While those under 20 participate in vocational education the most, over 60 groups participate in handicrafts.

Table 6. Distribution of ISMEK Participants by Age (2019-2024)

	Handicrafts and Crafts	Fine Arts	Personal Development	Vocational and Technical Education	Total	Total/Grand Total
Ages	Part. %	Part. %	Part. %	Part. %	Part. %	%
< 20	3225 10%	4698 15%	10972 34%	13078 41%	31973 100%	6%
20-30	13715 9%	16605 10%	58187 36%	72489 45%	160996 100%	29%
30-40	16073 14%	11977 19%	35616 22%	48349 23%	112015 100%	20%
40-50	36644 29%	12790 10%	31165 25%	44235 35%	124834 100%	23%
50-60	32887 37%	10747 12%	19348 22%	26583 30%	89565 100%	16%
> 60	12781 39%	5645 17%	6351 20%	7585 23%	32362 100%	6%
				Grand Total	551745	100%

Source: [Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2024]

The youngest group of people who are under 20 years old participates the least (5,79%) but in all fields. They also tend to participate in vocational and technical education. This trend may mean that even younger people at the age of formal education are also trying to find their way into the job market.

The largest group of participants are people between 20 and 30 years old (29%). Their first choice is also vocational and technical educational programs. This shows that they focus on developing their skills and/or careers in the early stages of their lives to get a job or find a better one. Those in their thirties, categorized in the 30-40 age group, show a balanced interest in personal development and vocational and technical education with rates of 22% and 23%, respectively. It may suggest that they are in a stage of career advancement as well as personal growth. Nevertheless, since foreign language and other soft skills for employability courses are under the

personal development category, they may be seeking ways to develop themselves for the job market.

For those between 40 and 50, there is a clear shift towards handicrafts and crafts; however, they also attend the vocational courses the most. This may reflect pursuing personal interests, hobbies, or new skills for potential career changes or upskilling and reskilling necessities. The 50-60 age group shows decreased participation but maintains significant involvement. These age groups are mainly in handicrafts and vocational and technical education programs, meaning continuing interest in lifelong learning. The handicraft area as their first choice indicates many people are retired by these ages and can pursue personal interests in those programs.

The oldest participants, who are over 60, show the lowest engagement rates but continue to participate in all fields. They also prefer to attend handicrafts courses the most, like the 50-60 age group. This also reflects interests that form or can be pursued after retirement.

According to Schömann & O'Connell (2002), it is essential to increase participation in training programs that are also market-oriented, and these programs should meet the developmental needs of all employees, regardless of age and qualifications, in order to prevent market failures resulting in insufficient training and career paths leading to labor market exclusion. They also add that low participation rates in continuing vocational training among aging workers are a common fact among most of the EU countries, which, combined with a seniority-based wage structure and employment insecurity, risks withdrawal from the labor market (Schömann & O'Connell, 2002).

Therefore, as explained by Ünal (2007), the precarious nature of working life in the neoliberal era facilitates the establishment of a commercialized lifelong

learning sector and endorses the adoption of imposed risk in the workplace. The continuous risk and competition among workers not only weaken their organizational opportunities but also open the way to the internalization of lifelong learning to remain competitive, which in turn results in an education network that will lock them in for life, as they are convinced that they are committed to it (Ünal, 2007).

Table seven shows the unemployment rate distribution in Istanbul by age group and gender between 20019 and 2023.

Table 7. Distribution of Unemployment Rate by Age in Istanbul (2019-2023)

Ages	20-24	25-34	35-54	55+
Male (%)	18	11	8	12
Female (%)	26	15	12	10
Total (%)	44	26	20	22

Source: [TUIK, 2023b]

In Table 7, there are four different age groups based on the groups formed by TUIK's data on labor force statistics regional results. The groups include people who are 20-24, 25-34, 35-54, and older than 55 years old. Each group gives the ratio of male and female unemployment in Istanbul between given years. When we look at Table 7, we can see that the highest unemployment rate, with a significant difference from the rest, among all other groups, belongs to the youngest group of 20-24. It is followed by 25-34 with 26%, above 55 with 22%, and 35-54 with 20%. We can see that the female unemployment rate is significantly higher than the male unemployment rate for all age groups except those above 55 years old. In the +55 age group, males have a 12% unemployment rate, whereas females have a 10%.

The age group 20-24 shows the highest unemployment rates among all groups, with a total of 44%. This suggests that young adults face significant challenges entering or remaining in the labor market. The female unemployment rate in this age group is notably higher at 25.72%, compared to 18.32% for males, indicating a gender disparity where young women are more affected by unemployment. The higher vocational and technical education participation among the younger ISMEK participants (under 30 years) could be directly linked to the higher unemployment rates observed in these age groups in Table 7. These educational programs may be considered essential for improving employability and addressing the challenges in the job market.

While Table 7 highlights higher unemployment rates among females across all ages, the educational pursuits in Table 6 are not distinguished by gender. However, it would be reasonable to infer that females in these age groups might be particularly active in seeking vocational and technical training to enhance their job prospects.

The age group 25-34 has the second highest rate at 26%, with a similar pattern where females (15%) are more unemployed than males (11%). This trend continues but decreases in the 35-54 age group, with a total unemployment rate of 20%. Here, however, the female unemployment rate (12%) surpasses the male rate (8%) by a narrower margin. Interestingly, the unemployment rate for the oldest group (55+) is higher than for the 35-54 group, totaling 22%. This may reflect difficulties in maintaining employment or finding new employment as individuals age. Notably, the male unemployment rate (12%) in this category is higher than the female rate (10%), contrasting with the trend observed in younger age groups.

The data reveals significant gender disparities in unemployment rates, particularly among the younger demographics, suggesting that young women in Istanbul might be disproportionately impacted by economic conditions or barriers in the job market. Also, there is a general trend of decreasing unemployment among younger and middle-aged groups, with an increase in the 55+ category again. This might indicate structural economic issues, such as age discrimination or inadequate support for transitioning careers in later life stages (Nazlıer-Keser, 2019).

4.3.4 Educational background

Table 8 presents data on the educational background of ISMEK participants distributed by field of education between 2019-2024.

Table 8 provides a detailed summary of the educational backgrounds of participants in ISMEK programs, again across four major fields: fine arts, handicrafts, personal development, and vocational and technical education. The data covers from non-literate individuals to those with doctoral degrees. It is clearly seen in the table that people with a Bachelor's degree are the biggest group of participants, with over 31% of all participants. The second largest group is comprised of high school graduates, who make up almost 30% of the total participants. Primary education graduates (19%), followed by associate-level graduates (14%), participate considerably in all programs. Non-literate people and people with a doctorate are two groups that participate the least yet show a presence in all fields of education.

Table 8. Distribution of ISMEK Participants by Educational Background (2019-2014)

	Fine Arts	Crafts	Personal Development	Vocational and Technical Education	Total %	Grand Totalt/ total
Educational Background	Part. %	Part. %	Part. %	Part. %	Part. %	%
Doctorate	668 25%	169 6%	1065 40%	756 28%	2658 100%	0,48%
Master's Degree	5530 20%	2566 9%	10183 37%	9235 34%	27514 100%	4,99%
Bachelor's Degree	27551 16%	16494 10%	63681 37%	63626 37%	171352 100%	31,06 %
Associate's Degree	8127 10%	9419 12%	26026 32%	37161 46%	80733 100%	14,63 %
High School	14478 9%	36406 22%	41326 25%	70324 43%	162534 100%	29,46 %
Elementary Education	6063 6%	49867 48%	17825 17%	31109 30%	104864 100%	19,01 %
Non-literate	45 2%	404 19%	1533 73%	108 5%	2090 100%	0,38%
				Grand Total	551745 100%	100%

Source: [Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2024]

It can be understood from the table that ISMEK offers wide-ranging programs for individuals from all educational backgrounds. The highest group of participants in the BA degree supports the neoliberal idea of lifelong learning to serve the market needs. Since the needs of the market change according to the latest technology and society's demand, a university education may not provide the necessary skills and training to answer those demands, and people need to develop themselves to be equipped with the required qualifications to get a job after graduating from a university using life-long learning.

If we group doctorate, master's, and bachelor's degree holders under higher education, we see that of all participants in ISMEK, university degree holders make up 51%, high school graduates 29%, and degrees in elementary school and below

make up 20%. In that case, we see considerable participation of higher education graduates in all fields, explicitly concentrating on personal development and vocational and technical education. It is evident from the study that even individuals with higher education degrees are seeking further skill enhancement to increase their employability in the job market or to pursue personal growth through these programs.

High school graduates are the second largest group of participants. This might be seen as a sign that these programs are essential for providing practical skills needed by people who cannot get them in universities to be employed with the necessary skills for a job.

Elementary education graduates actively participate in handicrafts, particularly where practical skills can be learned without academic requirements. Non-literate people form the smallest group of ISMEK's participants. They attend mostly personal development education programs. Considering that literacy education and sports are categorized under this field, non-literate people's participation in this field is higher than expected.

This level of inclusivity highlights ISMEK's role in providing educational opportunities to diverse societal segments and supporting lifelong learning for everyone by offering programs that meet different educational needs, from advanced academic study to basic literacy and skill development. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that university students and university graduates constitute a significant share in terms of participation, not only in personal development programs but also in vocational programs. Schömann & Connell (2002) explain that participation in training is highly selective by educational level across the EU, with university graduates constituting the largest share, followed by those who have completed the

upper secondary cycle, whereas those with only a compulsory minimum level of education are least likely to participate in further training, as similar situation can be observed in ISMEK participation patterns.

They emphasize that it is more important for young employees to have higher education levels and a track record of high participation in lifelong learning, as they are highly valued in the labor market compared to older employees (Schömann & Connell, 2002). Thus, the market pushes younger people to pursue a higher academic degree and continue lifelong learning programs. The situation is similar for older people; even though they are not the market's first choice, it is also a must for them to have a job.

Table 9 presents information about unemployment rates by educational background in Istanbul between 2019 and 2023 by gender.

Table 9. Distribution of Unemployment Rate by Educational Background in Istanbul (2019-2023)

Educational Background	Non-literate	Primary and Secondary	High School	Higher Education
Male (%)	15	11	11	9
Female (%)	12	14	20	14
Total (%)	27	25	31	22

Source: [TUIK, 2023b]

Table 9 shows the unemployment rate in Istanbul between 2019 and 2023 for four different educational backgrounds: non-literate individuals, primary and secondary school graduates, high school graduates, and university graduates under the higher education category. According to Table 9, high school graduates have the highest unemployment rate at 31%, followed by non-literate individuals at 27% and primary

and secondary school graduates at 25%. Although the difference is not substantial, the lowest unemployment rate is among higher education graduates, at 22%.

As seen in Table 9, the female unemployment rate is significantly higher than male unemployment rates in all educational backgrounds, except in the non-literate group, which has a higher male unemployment rate than females with 15%, whereas the female unemployment rate under non-literate is 12%. The fact that the non-literate female unemployment rate is lower than the non-literate male unemployment rate, contrary to another educational background, may be explained by the fact that non-literate women are not in search of jobs as much as non-literate men because of their traditionally attributed roles as housewives and mothers (Yıldız, 2008; Işık, 2023)

a tool for the market to fulfill its needs as life-long learning. (Bağcı, 2015b)

Considering the data from Tables 8 and 9, we observe that participants from higher educational backgrounds constitute the majority in ISMEK programs, representing 51%, with 39% of all participants enrolled in vocational and technical education programs. However, the unemployment rate for higher education graduates is the lowest among all educational backgrounds, as shown in Table 9.

On the contrary, individuals with secondary education or less show the highest unemployment rate at 32%. As shown in Table 8, this group also has the lowest participation rate in ISMEK programs at 20%, with only 29% of these participant groups engaging in vocational and technical training. These findings align with global and local trends where participation in adult education increases with educational level (Schömann & O'Connell, 2002; Miser et al., 2013; Bağcı, 2014). Additionally, these findings show that adult education often fails to serve as a second chance or a means of achieving equality for the disadvantaged. Instead, it primarily

acts as a tool for the market to meet its needs through lifelong learning (Bağcı, 2015a).

4.4 Discussion

In this section, I provide a comprehensive discussion of all my findings and link them to existing literature with a particular focus on analyzing the final research question:

How did the neoliberal transformation of adult education manifest in the program areas and participation patterns of ISMEK in specified years?

For this purpose, first, I discuss the neoliberal connections and effects on municipality-run adult education activities focusing on ISMEK. Later, I focus on the findings of participants' demographics, especially age, educational background, unemployment patterns, and meanings of these patterns under neoliberal effects.

Adult education, then transformed into lifelong learning, has become increasingly supported by the Turkish government since the declaration of the republic. (Miser et. al., 2013). In recent years, municipalities have taken on a significant role in providing nonformal education programs (Eser, 2010; Miser et al., 2010; Uçak, 2018; Tepe, 2007) due to various factors, primarily influenced by neoliberalism's impact on educational policies.

Since the 2000s, municipalities have led other institutions in offering adult education activities in Turkey. Neoliberalism's effects on the welfare state reduced social welfare programs, making individuals responsible for their well-being (Harvey, 2007; MacPhail, 2008). This shift decreased the state's education budget over the years (Aslan, 2014; Bağcı, 2014; İnal, 2012; Uzunyayla, 2007), so the gap

between the decreased state budget and increased adult education demand needed to be filled; thus, municipalities stepped up.

Localization trends and legal changes have empowered municipalities to offer more educational programs (Tepe, 2007; Yıldız, 2012; Kazancı, 2019; Şimşek, 2023). These programs, influenced by the social municipality tradition (Yıldız, 2012), have increased competition among municipalities and their interest in community development (Soykan, 2016). In a way, municipalities have begun to replace the state's role with social municipality practices (Şimşek, 2023).

It is also argued that municipalities can better analyze nonformal education needs and provide appropriate programs (Eser, 2010). As a result, municipalities' role in adult education activities is significant for understanding the latest trends in Turkey, including program numbers and participants (Miser et al., 2010) and how they reflect neoliberalism and neoconservatism in urban settings (Demirci, 2021; Uçak, 2018).

However, municipalities' expectations and goals for educational activities can differ based on their ideologies (Akpınar & Küçük, 2022; Tamer, 2015). In Turkey, where opposition parties won key metropolitan municipalities on March 31, 2024, marking a significant change after many years, adult education might be used to connect with the public and promote their ideologies. As Taşkıran (2022) stated, as key public institutions directly interact with the public, municipalities are critical in public relations. They are responsible for local governance within their operational boundaries and focus on providing public services to meet residents' needs.

Recently, shifts in economic, technological, political, cultural, and social areas have led to a shift in the understanding of municipal services and the expectations of residents from these services. For municipalities to achieve their

institutional goals and fulfill their missions effectively today, it is crucial to gain the support and approval of the target audience, address their needs, adopt a resident-focused approach, and build positive relationships with them (Taşkıran, 2022). As a result, it can be said that adult education activities in municipalities have gained importance for public relations of political parties as a means of direct interaction with the public.

ISMEK, initially established in 1996 as the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Vocational Training Courses, was designed to enhance employment opportunities for Istanbul's residents by providing vocational training aligned with market needs. It was renamed Istanbul Art and Vocational Training Courses in 2003 and later Institute Istanbul ISMEK in 2021, evolving into a comprehensive educational institution. The foundation of ISMEK reflects neoliberal policies, incorporating decentralization, the reduction of state involvement in essential services, and prioritizing market demands, elements strongly associated with neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007)."

IMM Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu remarked that this change in the name, together with a change in the functions, was a necessity, highlighting that the original vision of ISMEK, established in the 1990s to address the needs of that era, needed to evolve (Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2021). According to İmamoğlu, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift toward digitalization and significantly altered occupational standards and demands. This led to the emergence of new professions while transforming existing ones, necessitating a more dynamic and responsive approach to vocational training. Also, in Şimşek's study (Şimşek, 2023), managers in ISMEK state that they aim to increase the number of vocational and technical

training courses to answer the demand of people. This demand is shaped under the neoliberal era to be equipped with market demands to find a job or be promoted.

The mayor emphasized the urgency of adapting to these changes, stating that the IMM could not remain unresponsive to the shifting demands of the workforce, which were now markedly different from the pre-pandemic period. Thus, a restructuring of ISMEK was deemed essential to effectively meet the evolving educational and professional needs (Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2021). During the opening of the new term in September 2021, Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul, stated that Institute Istanbul ISMEK "will be the address of more vocational education, better-trained experts and more employment" (Institute Istanbul ISMEK, 2021). Moreover, in various speeches he made on different occasions and published on their news portal, he emphasized the importance of vocational training that can be beneficial for employment opportunities, for which school diplomas are not adequate now (Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2021).

Miser et al. (2010) emphasize that most of the adult education provided by municipalities is in the scope of vocational programs, and ISMEK shows a similar trend. As can be seen in Table 1, the vocational and technical education category is the most crowded field of ISMEK programs, with 24 program areas. ISMEK's focus on vocational training and employment is not surprising since, throughout the process of neoliberal transformation, improving education-employment relationship is emphasized in many national and international reports (Bağcı, 2010; Bağcı, 2015a; Kaya, 2015; Uzunyayla, 2007; Yıldız, 2012) as well as development plans (Korkmaz, 2008), and thus adult education has become more oriented towards workforce training.

Nevertheless, considering ISMEK as the leading organization of neoliberal lifelong learning would make a sweeping statement; indeed, ISMEK is an organization that tries to meet the demand of its participants, thus the labor market since the participant's demands are shaped under labor market requirements. We can explain this situation by reproducing neoliberalism through its actors, public institutions, and market dynamics (Juego, 2012).

Neoliberalism, which rose to power in the 1980s following the crisis in leading capitalist countries and led to market-based development strategies along with state budget cuttings (Juego, 2012; Yeldan, 2011-), resulted in the transformation of the concept of lifelong learning and made it become associated with new vocationalism (Soykan, 2016; Yıldız, 2012). According to Yıldız (2012), in Turkey, since AKP came to power in 2002, adult education has been increasingly oriented towards workforce training, with civil society playing a more significant role. Juego (2012) explains that this is because neoliberalism continues to reproduce itself in the face of crises, using them to reinforce the neoliberal mindset rather than retreating from it, and remains a dominant economic paradigm as in the example of IMF and WB's restructuring of global financial systems in favor of market-based principles.

Consequently, a well-trained and skilled workforce is needed in this new order, threatening individuals who cannot remain economically competitive by developing their skills according to market needs (Özcan, 2008, as cited in Soykan, 2016). This shift reflects the transformation from a welfare system, where the state facilitated education and employment opportunities for adults (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009), to neoliberalism, which places the responsibility on individuals (Davis & Bensel, 2017; MacPhail, 2008; Steger & Roy, 2010). Achoki (2023)

explains that with the fourth industrial revolution, there has been a skills revolution (Pedron, 2018) and that “the future of work is likely to focus on upskilling and reskilling people to thrive amidst constant disruptions” in the face of new developments (Achoki, 2023, p. 35). As a result, people are pushed to search for lifelong learning activities that are enough for the market.

Additionally, individuals, left responsible for their own well-being after the eradication of welfare systems, tend to make choices based on economic gains. TUIK’s 2007 adult education survey shows that the reasons for participation in adult education mainly were improving job performance (60.8%), obtaining certificates (28.3%), and enhancing job prospects (26.1%) (Bağcı, 2014). Şimşek’s study (2023), based on ISMEK data, also shows that 86.9% of participants cited self-improvement, professional advancement, and job acquisition as their main reasons for enrolling in ISMEK programs. TUIK’s 2022 data also indicates that people enrolled mainly “to improve their job" (60.7%), "to acquire information about a topic of interest" (53.8%), and "out of obligation" (47.1%) (TUIK, 2023c).

Şimşek (2023) explains that one of today's major problems is the lack of a profession, and the desire to have a profession is a priority among the reasons for attending ISMEK programs. On the other hand, participants who attend adult education courses “out of obligation” might be experiencing economic and/or societal pressures to enhance their skills. Tables 5 and 6 also show that unemployed participants make up the largest group in all fields of education, and vocational-technical education programs have the highest share of participants, with the 20-30 age group being the most represented. Additionally, more than half (52%) of retired participants of ISMEK programs prefer vocational education programs. This finding suggests that in a neoliberal economy, individuals need to maintain an

"entrepreneurial spirit" and continuously improve their skills and knowledge to remain competitive in the market (Davies & Bansel, 2017; Fleming, 2016; Kaya, 2015; Okçabol, 2007).

As discussed above, neoliberal influences are visible and shape the adult educational activities of municipalities. When we look at the participant's ages and how they are reflected in the participation patterns, we observe similarities with the participation patterns of adult education in Turkey. Miser et al. (2010) points out that nearly half of the adult education participants are young adults (23-44 years old), while middle-aged and elderly adults make up the other half, and municipal adult education services show a similar age distribution. According to TUIK's data, in 2022, the 18-24 age group again participated most, with a percentage of 51.7%, followed by 33.2% in the 25-34 age group, both of which showed an increase when compared with earlier years (TUIK, 2023c).

As discussed in the Findings section, Table 6, which discusses the distribution of ISMEK participants by age group and field of education, shows that the 20-30 age group participates most in ISMEK programs and primarily chooses vocational and technical education programs. As a result, when combined, TUIK's statistics and the findings of this study show that the youth in Turkey focus on developing their skills and/or careers in the early stages of their lives to get a job or find a better one.

However, Table 6 also suggests that vocational and technical education courses are among the first two options across all age groups. This implies that not only young individuals who are at the beginning of their career paths but also those who are already employed tend to participate in vocational training for career advancement and/or upskilling and reskilling purposes.

In addition, even though adult education courses in Turkey have significant variations, the “services” category remains predominant in 2016 and 2022 across all age groups except those 65 and older, who prefer arts and humanities and health and welfare. The findings of this study support this trend of high demand for vocational and technical education programs, as seen in Table 1 and Table 2. These data illustrate an apparent increase in economically motivated participation in adult education, especially among the youth, aligning with neoliberal principles of employability and competitiveness and the global trend of upskilling and reskilling. It hints at the neoliberal transformation of adult education to a gradually more market-oriented approach and the acceptance of lifelong learning institutions like ISMEK as a responsibility to provide job-related skills to meet the market demand.

Furthermore, Turkey's high demand for vocational training programs can be attributed to unemployment concerns. In the Findings section, Table 5 shows that 40% of ISMEK participants are unemployed, and 70% of them prefer vocational and technical education programs, suggesting that their purpose of participation is likely to be motivated by skill development to get a job. Moreover, as seen in Table 6, the working age group dominates vocational and technical education programs. Whereas 20-30 age group participants constitute the highest share (45%), it is followed by those under 20 (41%).

The relatively high participation of those under 20 in vocational training can be explained by TUIK’s data on the distribution of unemployment by age in Istanbul (Table 7). Table 7 shows that the 20-24 age group has the highest share (44%) of the unemployment rate in Istanbul, followed by the 25-34 age group (%26). When combined, these findings indicate that young labor market entrants experience

unemployment more than other age groups in Istanbul; thus, they prioritize work-related skill development and improve career prospects by attending ISMEK courses.

Similarly, Şimşek's study (2023) mentions that more than two-thirds of ISMEK trainees are individuals of the working age group, with 65.4% being in the 15-35 age group. Moreover, of these participants, 83.8% are university graduates, and 73.1% are unemployed. The report Youth Unemployment in Turkey(Yentürk & Başlevent, 2007) also indicates that 18.5% of the unemployed in the 20-24 age group are university graduates. These studies remark that a university degree does not necessarily confer an advantage in the job market for young adults in Turkey, and despite high education levels, youth unemployment in Turkey remains high (Şimşek, 2023; Yentürk & Başlevent, 2007).

In the first regard, the unemployment patterns by educational background shown in Table 9 in Istanbul show a contrary distribution when compared with the situation in which university graduates have the lowest percentage among the unemployed population in Istanbul. Nevertheless, they still constitute a significant share (22%). When we consider that Table 7 clearly shows that more than half of the unemployed in Istanbul are between the 20-34 age group, it can be said that unemployed university graduates remain a concern all the same.

In addition, even though university graduates have the least share of unemployment in Istanbul, they also constitute the most crowded group of ISMEK participants, and a significant proportion of them enroll in vocational and technical education programs, as shown in Table 9. TUIK's 2007 adult education survey and Şimşek's (2023) study also support these findings.

Moreover, according to Schömann and O'Connell (2002), although differences exist based on other variables, the situation is generally the same across

the whole EU, with those who have completed only compulsory education having the least share in terms of receiving adult education. Consequently, it can be said that even though low-qualified and low-educated individuals are less likely to be employed when compared with their highly educated counterparts in OECD countries, they are also less likely to be involved in lifelong learning opportunities (McIntosh, 2008). McIntosh (2008) explains this discrepancy by explaining that:

> In order to participate in lifelong learning, individuals must have the necessary skills on which to build and the 'ability to learn.' The possibility of lifelong learning therefore again comes down to well-educated young people being produced by a country's education system, with a good grounding of general skills and abilities, and the adaptability to react to changes in demand through future training and learning (p.82).

Under these conditions, it is not possible for lifelong learning to give individuals a second chance as claimed because, according to Ünal (2005), in this education system, which is structured in a monist structure with an economic understanding, "equality of opportunity" is seen as sufficient for people to have access to every opportunity offered in society and those who cannot access it are responsible for their own choices. Moreover, while the knowledge economy process advocates that the skills of human capital and workforce should be increased, it actually leads to a situation called *qualification inflation* in the market (Levidov, 2000, as cited in Ünal, 2007).

The findings of this study support the neoliberal idea of lifelong learning in terms of the necessity of individuals to equip themselves with the skills required by the market even after graduating from a university, as the highest group of participants in ISMEK programs is the group with a BA degree. In such a system, lifelong learning is seen as an instrument for career advancements, and it reflects a continuous (and individual) pursuit of acquiring certificates that can meet the changing demands of the labor market in this competitive environment.

As a result, universal convergence on competitiveness helps neoliberalism to reproduce itself through "deep institutional and behavioral reforms and policies on labor market flexibility, human capital, and social capital" (Cammack, 2009a, as cited in Juego, 2012, p. 26). However, Levidow (2002) explains this situation as an information society paradigm, which is another neoliberal project in which jobs increasingly demand transferable skills and cognitive capacities. In this system, reskilling for flexible employment in an insecure labor market becomes necessary. Many employers require higher qualifications than necessary due to qualification inflation, driven mainly by an excess supply of graduates. As a result, as university degrees are devalued, reskilling is introduced as a remedy since neoliberalism blames individual deficiencies for unemployment and job insecurity (Levidow, 2002).

In addition, Turkey lags behind other OECD countries regarding youth employment and the positive correlation between education level and employability (Şimşek, 2023). In developed countries, unemployment rates decrease as education levels increase; however, the report Youth Unemployment in Turkey (Yentürk & Başlevent, 2007) indicates the opposite situation in Turkey. Among those employed in Turkey, 61.4% have less than a high school education, while only 12.4% are university graduates. Data from 2004-2006 show that unemployment rates are higher for high school and higher education graduates in Turkey. Specifically, 18.5% of the unemployed in the 20-24 age group are university graduates, indicating that as the workforce with a university degree increases, so does the unemployment rate for this age group.

TUIK's data show that after 1993, the share of university graduates among young unemployed people has gradually increased (Altınöz, 2020). Data in 2019 shows a similar outcome since non-literate people have the lowest unemployment

rate (9.2%), followed by those with less than high school education (13.2%). Among other educational levels, only higher education graduates have a lower unemployment rate (Adıgüzel, 2021). Seçer (2006) also supports this claim and adds that the mismatch between the supply of labor and the demand for labor is growing as the demand for labor increases in Turkey (Altınöz, 2020).

In adult education participation in Turkey, gender differences are evident. The study's findings indicate that ISMEK programs are particularly popular among women, as previously noted in the literature (Şimşek, 2023; Bağcı, 2015b). Also, Institute Istanbul ISMEK Coordinator Dr. Canan Aratemür Çimen underlines that they give particular importance to women's employment and cooperate with different stakeholders to improve women's participation in the workforce through various projects and with the help of Regional Employment Offices (*Bölgesel İstihdam Ofisleri*) (Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2021).

This can be because women's participation in the workforce is still relatively low compared to men in Turkey, and the content of programs and course hours might be more suitable for women. On the other hand, the difference is even more significant in the handicrafts and crafts category, where female participation dominates, and the situation can be related to the conservatism embedded within neoliberal policies (Yıldız, 2008; Bağcı, 2015b; Işık, 2023). The data suggests that while ISMEK helps provide the education required for job market needs, it also reflects conventional societal norms and values based on gender roles.

Another problem with adult education activities in Turkey is inequality in terms of access to education. As stated in the 2050 Vision of the Istanbul Planning Agency and emphasized by Ekrem İmamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul, poor households have to spend more than half of their monthly income on food and

shelter, and only households with better conditions can afford to spend on education and culture (Enstitü İnstanbul ISMEK, 2021).

İmamoğlu stresses that the fact that poor households have difficulty allocating a budget for education also produces and feeds deep inequality, and ISMEK also aims at providing vocational training for economically disadvantaged individuals as well (Enstitü İnstanbul ISMEK, 2021). Under such conditions, given the fact that ISMEK programs are free of charge, the high preference for vocational programs education might also reflect individuals' priority in finding jobs rather than enrolling in programs related to arts, sports, or leisure activities.

To conclude, the participation patterns in ISMEK reflect the demands of the neoliberal era. Merriam (2008) illustrates this in her discussion at the second ISMEK Adult Education Symposium, emphasizing that adult education is profoundly influenced by societal contexts. In today's globalized world, where the cross-border movement of people, goods, and ideas is facilitated by market-driven economies and information technology, numerous challenges and opportunities arise.

However, globalization also widens the disparities between socio-economic groups, contributing to ethnic tensions and global instability. Merriam (2008) advocates for empowering adult learners through active engagement, critical evaluation of their educational goals and societal values, and promoting social policies that enhance collective learning and action to address these global challenges.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I begin with a summary of the study, followed by a conclusion in which I state the main findings. I then provide a brief discussion. In the limitations section, I address potential areas for improvement in the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

5.1 Summary

This study analyses the data on ISMEK's participation in varied program areas, districts of these programs, and the participants' demographic information, such as gender, employment status, age, and educational background. ISMEK was chosen for this study since it is Turkey's most established and comprehensive municipal adult educational organization. The aim is to understand how participation patterns and program areas in ISMEK adult education programs manifest during the neoliberal period. To do that, the data was analyzed using descriptive analysis. The data was gathered from several sources. The first data set was retrieved from the official IMM webpage, and another data set was officially asked via petition. Official statistics from the TUIK website and data from ISMEK's website were utilized. Also, one-to-one contact with ISMEK officials was conducted when necessary. Simple tables were formed based on the data, and frequencies and percentages of variables were used to describe the patterns of participation in ISMEK since the study is descriptive. As discussed in the literature, the manifestations of neoliberal transformation in adult education in the world and Turkey are also visible through ISMEK's program areas, participants, and the participants' demographic information.

The higher number of participants in vocational and technical education programs followed by personal development programs, which include language skills and soft skills required by the job market, shows consistency with the neoliberal agenda stating that learning should be from the cradle to the grave and not for the sake of personal or public gains but the market. In addition to this, the conservative role of neoliberalism in education was observed through women's significant participation in program areas that are traditionally linked with female roles. Young, educated unemployment was also observed through the participation data. In terms of older age groups, it is seen that they show more interest in handicrafts and crafts programs, as well as a significant involvement in vocational and technical education programs.

5.2 Conclusion

This study provides significant insights into the nature of ISMEK's adult education programs and participation patterns within the context of the neoliberal agenda in contemporary Turkey. It is evident from the findings that there is a notable preference among participants for vocational and technical educational programs, followed by personal development courses that include employment-related skills. This sheds light on the influence of neoliberal policies on adult education and the evolving needs of the workforce in Turkey. This preference highlights a major trend that adult education activities are increasingly aligned with market needs, prioritizing skills that enhance employability over social and personal development.

Demographic analysis highlights that unemployed women predominantly attend ISMEK programs. The high participation rate of women in vocational programs, followed closely by handicraft courses, suggests that many female participants either seek to acquire skills necessary for employment or engage in

traditionally deemed suitable for women. This pattern reflects an attempt to integrate into the workforce and reinforce traditional gender roles.

Participants aged 20-30 constitute the largest age group in these programs. Their engagement in professional courses points to a desire to acquire market-required skills, fulfilling the neoliberal expectation from adult education to produce a workforce equipped with contemporary skills. This trend is further visible in the significant number of Bachelor's degree holders who choose to enroll in vocational courses. Despite holding higher academic qualifications, these individuals find it necessary to reskill and upskill to meet market demands. It is a sign that academic degrees are not enough for employment as they used to be in a welfare state.

The role of municipalities in adult education is increasingly important, with ISMEK standing out as a leading example. ISMEK's ability to provide up-to-date programs for upskilling and reskilling among its participants demonstrates its responsiveness to the demands of Istanbulites. However, despite offering a wide range of courses to diverse age groups and educational backgrounds, ISMEK's programs tend to reinforce existing societal norms and traditional gender roles rather than challenging them or encouraging critical skills and broader personal development. This is an unintended outcome of the reproduction of neoliberalism due to the demand and supply balance between the participants and ISMEK.

Moreover, the study does not show any correlation between participation rates in ISMEK programs and the socio-economic development ranking scores of districts since data about other variables that can affect socio-economic status are absent. Nevertheless, it is seen that participation rates are positively correlated with the population of the district, yet not necessarily related to higher socio-economic status.

5.3 Limitations of the study

As with any study, this research has several limitations and areas for potential improvement. The most prominent limitation is related to the period covered by the study. The data in this study belongs to the years 2019-2024. A more in-depth analysis could have been conducted using data from earlier years. Additionally, before c 2019, ISMEK was managed by IMM under a different political party. If data from the previous period had been included, it would have been possible to compare and contrast whether different political administrations had varying impacts on ISMEK participant patterns and program areas and, if so, what those differences were.

Furthermore, although one of the datasets used is divided according to academic years, the second and more detailed dataset encompasses the five years from 2019 to 2024 cumulatively. There are also differences between the two datasets regarding the variables they contain. This has hindered in-depth analysis. For example, the IMM database, which contains employment status information, lacks gender information, while the dataset that includes gender information does not contain employment status. Due to technical issues processing large datasets, data misalignments have been found, preventing analysis of certain variables like certification status in the IMM dataset.

In addition, this study is a descriptive analysis that examines participant patterns and program areas and addresses the question of ‘what?’. A case study conducted with the multifaceted data of an important institution like ISMEK would greatly enrich the research and enhance understanding by explaining the reasons behind the participation patterns described in this study. Therefore, additional data was requested from IMM. However, due to the length of the official data request

procedure, the requested data did not arrive within the time allocated for the thesis, and thus, a case study could not be conducted. Considering that the official data request procedures may take longer than anticipated, it is essential to begin the study with a clear and detailed specification of the desired data. A timing plan should be made, considering the possibility of incomplete data.

5.4 Suggestions for further studies

Given the increasing importance of municipal services in terms of public relations (Taşkıran, 2022) in contemporary Turkey, there is a need for more detailed studies on municipalities' adult education activities. In this context and considering the limitations of this study mentioned above, we can propose several suggestions for future research:

First, a comparative analysis of the art and vocational training courses offered by different municipalities can be conducted instead of focusing on a single institution to understand better the adult education activities of municipalities in the neoliberal era.

Moreover, working with data spanning a more extended period rather than a limited time frame will provide the opportunity for deeper analysis and an understanding of changes and transformations over time.

Last but not least, instead of a descriptive study, a case study or an ethnographic study with more in-depth and rich data can be conducted to offer a comprehensive perspective.

APPENDIX A

DISTRIBUTION OF ISMEK EDUCATIONAL CENTERS (2023-2024)

11,5	District	Number of Education Center	School of expertise	Library Workshop	Total number of centers	Population
1	Adalar	1			1	16 325
2	Arnavutköy	3			3	336 062
3	Ataşehir	5	1		6	416 529
4	Avcilar	1			1	437 221
5	Bağcilar	9			9	719 071
6	Bahçelievler	2	4		6	567 848
7	Bakirköy	3	1		4	220 476
8	Başakşehir	6			6	509 915
9	Bayrampaşa	2			2	268 850
10	Beşiktaş	0			0	169 022
11	Beykoz	1			1	245 647
12	Beylikdüzü	4			4	409 347
13	Beyoğlu	1			1	218 589
14	Büyükçekmece	2			2	276 572
15	Çatalca	1			1	80 007
16	Çekmeköy	3			3	299 806
17	Esenler	5	1		6	427 901
18	Esenyurt	3			3	978 007
19	Eyüpsultan	4			4	420 194
20	Fatih	5	1		6	356 025
21	Gaziosmanpaşa	3			3	483 830
22	Güngören	3	1		4	269 944
23	Kadiköy	3	1		4	467 919
24	Kağithane	5			5	445 672
25	Kartal	4			4	475 042
26	Küçükçekmece	7			7	792 030
27	Maltepe	1	1		2	523 137
28	Pendik	9		1	10	743 774
29	Sancaktepe	3		1	4	492 804
30	Sariyer	2			2	344 250
31	Silivri	1			1	48 537
32	Sultanbeyli	6			6	221 723
33	Sultangazi	5			5	264 736
34	Şile	1			1	360 702
35	Şişli	1	4		5	532 802
36	Tuzla	5			5	293 604
37	Ümraniye	3			3	723 760

38	Üsküdar	6	1		7	517 348
39	Zeytinburnu	3			3	280 896
	Total	132	16	2	150	15655924
					R = 0.9	

Source: [Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2024; TUIK, 2023a]

APPENDIX B

POPULATION OF ISTANBUL DISTRICTS AND ISMEK PARTICIPANTS

(2019-2024)

District	Population	Participants	Participants/ Population	SEGE Score
Istanbul	15 655 924	551745	4%	4,051
Adalar	16 325	958	6%	1,822
Arnavutköy	336 062	4070	1%	0,771
Ataşehir	416 529	20540	5%	3,545
Avcılar	437 221	8018	2%	1,64
Bağcılar	719 071	19756	3%	2,346
Bahçelievler	567 848	31511	6%	2,423
Bakırköy	220 476	18473	8%	4,465
Başakşehir	509 915	17328	3%	3,468
Bayrampaşa	268 850	3119	1%	2,266
Beşiktaş	169 022	17	0%	5,94
Beykoz	245 647	1220	0%	1,732
Beylikdüzü	409 347	20220	5%	2,503
Beyoğlu	218 589	5174	2%	3,394
Büyükçekmece	276 572	9397	3%	1,891
Çatalca	80 007	1102	1%	0,761
Çekmeköy	299 806	9176	3%	1,45
Esenler	427 901	16799	4%	1,354
Esenyurt	978 007	10656	1%	2,479
Eyüpsultan	420 194	12654	3%	1,839
Fatih	356 025	23646	7%	4,226
Gaziosmanpaşa	483 830	13720	3%	1,46
Güngören	269 944	8417	3%	1,92
Kadıköy	467 919	25891	6%	4,91
Kağıthane	445 672	22865	5%	2,174
Kartal	475 042	24165	5%	2,321
Küçükçekmece	792 030	27541	3%	2,161
Maltepe	523 137	11206	2%	2,685
Pendik	743 774	31309	4%	2,485
Sancaktepe	492 804	9394	2%	1,275
Sarıyer	344 250	2549	1%	3,249

Şile	48 537	4940	10%	0,698
Silivri	221 723	16373	7%	1,312
Şişli	264 736	10000	4%	6,959
Sultanbeyli	360 702	1005	0%	0,684
Sultangazi	532 802	34338	6%	0,816
Tuzla	293 604	11698	4%	2,73
Ümraniye	723 760	22152	3%	3,364
Üsküdar	517 348	29059	6%	3,045
Zeytinburnu	280 896	11289	4%	2,382
		r = 0,9	r = 0.04	

Source: [Enstitü Istanbul ISMEK, 2024 & TUIK, 2023a & Ministry of Industry and Technology/SEGE, 2022]

APPENDIX C

TRANSLATED QUOTES

1. … yaşamlarının herhangi bir döneminde ortaya çıkan sorunları çözmek ve kişisel ilgilerini karşılamak için, kendi yaşamlarını yönetme sorumluluğunu almış kişilerin, öğrenmelerini etkileyen faktörlere dikkat ederek öğrenmelerini sağlamaya çalışan örgün ve yaygın eğitim uygulamaları ile yaygın öğrenme düzenlemeleridir. (Miser, 2020, s.18).

2. 1995 yılında kursiyer başına düşen yıllık harcama 2011 yılı sabit fiyatlarıyla 470 TL iken 2009 yılında 182 TL'dir. Bu düşüşün ortaya çıkardığı mali açığın uluslararası projeler, döner sermaye faaliyetleri, sponsorlar ve okula aile birliği gelirleri ile kapatılmaya çalışıldığı görülmektedir. (Bağcı, 2014, s. 199)

3. AKP'nin muhafazakar demokrat kimliğini siyasal ve ekonomik açıdan iki başlık altında değerlendirmek mümkündür. Birincisiyle; muhafazakârlıkla İslami geçmişini sahiplenmekte ve İslami tabanını korumaya çalışmaktadır. Muhafazakarlığın ikinci boyutuyla ise; yeni muhafazakarlık ve neo-liberalizmin bir birleşimi olan yeni sağ ideolojisinin neomuhafazakar ayağı ile bir bağlantı kurmak istemektedir. (Bıdık, 2017, s.180-181)

4. Eğitimin görece daha eşitlikçi olduğu yapı, 1980'lerle başlayan, 1990'larda krizli bir seyir izleyen (Öngen, 2003) ve 2000'lerde AKP ile hegemonik olan (Türe, 2005) …Yeni sağ kavramı, 1980'lerin birikim stratejisi olan yeni liberalizmin hegemonya projesidir (Topal, 2002) ve yaşanan dönüşümün sadece iktisadi değil aynı zamanda siyasal, sosyal, kültürel tüm yönleriyle kavranabilmesi için bütünlüklü bir çerçeve sunar. …eğitim ve eşitlik arasındaki ilişkinin bunun dışında kalması beklenemezdi. (Bağcı, 2014, s. 38-39)

5. Özellikle Yedinci Kalkınma Planı ve sonraki üç planda yetişkin eğitimi yaygın eğitim kavramından daha çok hayat boyu öğrenme kavramı ile ele alınmaya başlanmıştır. Bu planlarda yetişkin eğitimine yönelik vurgu, piyasanın talep ettiği işgücünü yetiştirmeye yöneliktir. Bu dönemde eğitim, 'istihdam edilebilirlik', 'girişimcilik', 'beceri edinme', 'öğrenmelerin sertifikalandırılması', 'rekabet', 'sivil toplum kuruluşları' ve 'özel sektörün desteği' gibi ekonomi terimleriyle birlikte anılır olmuş olmuştur. (Korkmaz, 2008, p. 54)

6. Buna göre 2000 yılında 3 bin olan kurs sayısı 2018 yılına ulaştığında yaklaşık 16 bine ulaşmıştır (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 2019). Kur'an kursu sayılarının nüfusa oranları incelendiğinde ise 2000 yılındaki kurs sayıları nüfusun %0,004'e denk gelmekteyken; 2018 yılında oran %0,2'ye yükselmiştir. Bu istatistiklerden de görüldüğü üzere 18 yılda Kur'an kursu sayıları %2 oranında artmıştır. (Demirci, 2021, s. 254)

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