The Hegemonic Restructuring of Educational Policies under the Justice and Development Party in Turkey (2002-2020)

Sinan Cem Deveci

A thesis presented to the

Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
at Boğaziçi University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

May 2025

Approvals

"The Hegemonic Restructuring of Educational Policies under the Justice and Development Party in Turkey (2002-2020)," a thesis prepared by Sinan Cem Deveci in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, has been approved on 28 May 2025 by:

THESIS ADVISOR

Professor M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu _____
Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
Boğaziçi University

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Faruk Yaşlıçimen _____
Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
Boğaziçi University

Associate Professor Ahmet Bekmen _____
Faculty of Political Sciences
Istanbul University

Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

Copyright © 2025 Sinan Cem Deveci.
Some rights reserved.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

Abstract

The Hegemonic Restructuring of Educational Policies under the Justice and Development Party in Turkey (2002-2020)

Sinan Cem Deveci, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2025

Professor M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Thesis Advisor

This thesis examines how the Justice and Development Party has utilized the field of education as a strategic domain for ideological transformation in Turkey between 2002 and 2020. Rather than being a collection of fragmented policy reforms, the Justice and Development Party's educational interventions are analyzed as part of a coherent hegemonic project that aims to reconstruct the social and cultural order in line with a religious-conservative worldview. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and "common sense," and Louis Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses, the thesis investigates how education has served not only as a technical tool but as a mechanism of ideological reproduction, consent production, and identity formation. The study employs a critical-historical and discourse-analytical approach, analyzing a wide array of sources, including legal documents, policy texts, curricula, textbooks, and official statements. It focuses particularly on the 2004 curriculum reform and the 2012 4+4+4 education law as key turning points in the education's hegemonic restructuring. The research demonstrates how these reforms have institutionalized a new form of common sense, in which de-secularization and Islamization have been presented as the natural and legitimate values of Turkish society. In doing so, the thesis sheds light on the broader relationship between education, ideology, and power in contemporary Turkey.

45000 words

Özet

Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi Döneminde Türkiye'de Eğitim Politikalarının Hegemonik Yeniden Yapılandırılması (2002–2020)

Sinan Cem Deveci, Yüksek Lisans Adayı, 2025 Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Profesör M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin 2002-2020 yılları arasında Türkiye'de eğitimi nasıl ideolojik bir dönüşüm alanı olarak kurguladığını incelemektedir. Parti'nin eğitim politikaları, birbirinden bağımsız reform girişimleri olmaktan ziyade, dini-muhafazakâr bir dünya görüşünü toplumsal ve kültürel düzlemde yeniden inşa etmeyi hedefleyen bütünlüklü bir hegemonik projenin parçaları olarak ele alınmaktadır. Çalışma, Antonio Gramsci'nin hegemonya teorisi ve "common sense" kavramı ile Louis Althusser'in ideolojik devlet aygıtları kavramından hareketle, eğitimin ideolojik yeniden üretim, rıza oluşturma ve kimlik inşası süreçlerinde işlevsel bir mekanizma olarak nasıl rol oynadığını tartışmaktadır. Araştırma; yasa metinleri, politika belgeleri, müfredatlar, ders kitapları ve resmi açıklamalar gibi kaynakları esas alan eleştirel-tarihsel bir söylem analizine dayanmaktadır. Özellikle 2004 müfredat reformu ve 2012 tarihli 4+4+4 eğitim yasası, eğitimin hegemonik yeniden yapılandırmasında kritik dönüm noktaları olarak incelenmektedir. Tez, bu reformlar aracılığıyla sekülarizmin geriletilmesine paralel olarak, dini değerlerin Türkiye toplumunun doğal ve meşru normları olarak sunulduğu yeni bir "common sense" biçiminin eğitim aracılığıyla nasıl kurumsallaştırıldığını irdelemektedir. Bu çerçevede çalışma, günümüz Türkiye'sinde eğitim, ideoloji ve iktidar arasındaki ilişkileri anlamaya katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

45000 kelime



To my family,

Table of Contents

List of Tables *xiii*
List of Figures *xiii*
Abbreviations and Acronyms *xiv*
Acknowledgements *xv*

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 THEORETICAL BASIS 5

2.1 The Synthesis of Coercion and Consent: Hegemony 6
2.2 Common Sense in Gramsci's Framework 10
2.3 Hegemony, Education, and Education as an Ideological State Apparatus 14
2.4 Habitus and Forms of Capital in Bourdieu's Perspective 19

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 25

3.1 Education and Ideology under One-Party Rule (1923-1946) 26
3.2 The First 15 Years of Education in Turkey After Transition to Multi-Party System (1946-1960) 36
3.3 Education between Two Military Coups (1960-1980) 44
3.4 The Rise of the Turkish-Islam Synthesis (1980-2002) 50

4 THE FIRST DECADE OF THE AKP IN THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD: 'CONSERVATIVE DEMOCRAT' EDUCATIONAL POLICIES (2002-2012) 59

4.1 The Educational Targets of the Early AKP 62
4.2 Ideological Stance of the 2004 Curriculum Reform 65
4.3 Reforms on Secondary Schools and Vocational-Technical Education: The Impact of the Post Washington Consensus 72

5 THE 4+4+4 EDUCATION SYSTEM AS A HEGEMONIC PROJECT: IN SEARCH OF A NEW COMMON SENSE AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY 79

5.1 The Enactment Process of the 4+4+4 Educational Law 82
5.2 Religious Elective Courses in the 4+4+4 Education System 87
5.3 Imam Hatip Schools in the 4+4+4 Education System 94

5.4 Religionization in Education through Values Education and Religious Foundations 109
5.5 Neoliberalism, Privatization, and Class Dynamics in Education 116

6 CONCLUSION 127

BIBLIOGRAPHY 135

List of Tables

Table 5.1 Average Number of Students per School Type (2019-2020 Academic Year) 100
Table 5.2 Average PISA 2018 Scores by School Type in Turkey (2018) 103

List of Figures

Figure 5.1 Share of DKAB Teacher Recruitment in Total Appointments (2003-2020) 90
Figure 5.2 Number of Imam Hatip Schools in Turkey (1995-2020 Academic Years) 96
Figure 5.3 Number of Students Enrolled in Imam Hatip Middle and High Schools (Academic Years 2002–2020) 97
Figure 5.4 Per Student Public Expenditure by School Type (2017-2018) 98
Figure 5.5 Number of Students per Classroom by School Type (2015-2018) 99
Figure 5.6 Tertiary Education Admission Rate by School Type among Senior Students (2012-2020) 104
Figure 5.7 Number of Private Schools by Academic Year 118
Figure 5.8 Number of Students in Private Schools by Academic Year 119

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AKP – Justice and Development Party
ANAP – Motherland Party
AP – Justice Party
CHP – Republican People's Party
DKAB – Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge
DİB – Directorate of Religious Education
DP – Democrat Party
EAP – Emergency Action Plan
EU – European Union
IMF – International Monetary Fund
ISA – Ideological State Apparatus
MIC – Middle-Income Countries
MGK – National Security Council
MoNE – Ministry of National Education
MSP – National Salvation Party
NES – National Employment Strategy
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA - Program for International Student Assessment
PWC – Post Washington Consensus
RP – Welfare Party
TBMM - Grand National Assembly of Turkey
TIMMS - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
WC – Washington Consensus
WB – World Bank
YÖK - Council of Higher Education

Acknowledgements

I thank my advisor M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu who helped, supported, and guided me in the writing of this thesis. I am also grateful to my family and friends, who lifted my spirits and supported me through every step of writing this thesis.

NOTE: The in-house editor of the Atatürk Institute has made detailed recommendations with regard to the format, grammar, spelling, usage, syntax, and style of this thesis.

1

Introduction

Education is never neutral. It has always been a field of struggle where different visions of society, classes, history and identity are instilled. When a student steps into a classroom, he or she not only acquires knowledge, but also enters an environment where he or she internalizes a worldview and a sense of collective belonging. Through institutional forms, symbolic representations, moral narratives, and seemingly neutral knowledge structures, education establishes what appears as "common sense"—the naturalized horizon of how things are, and how they should be. In this sense, education is an apparatus that redefines not only what students learn, but also how they perceive their country, their culture, their place in the world and their worldview. But whose culture, and whose worldview? And to what end?

These questions are particularly crucial in Turkey, where the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has undertaken a radical shift in the field of education over the past two decades, conceptualizing education as a key area for ideological and political struggle. From reforms in the national curriculum to institutional collaborations with religious foundations, from the redesign of textbooks to the expansion of religious form of schools, the AKP has approached education as a cultural battlefield through which a new dominant set of moral values -or common sense- can be constructed. Within this framework, the school becomes

not merely an instrument of instruction, but a medium for instilling a particular worldview, set of values, and definition of collective identity.

This thesis aims to critically examine how the AKP has utilized education as a strategic instrument of ideological transformation, with particular attention to the Islamization of public education. The core argument of this study is that, far from being a series of discrete policy initiatives, the AKP's education reforms constitute a coherent hegemonic project aimed at naturalizing a conservative-religious worldview within the structure and content of formal schooling. This project is not merely about integrating religion into education; rather, it is about producing a new "common sense" in Gramscian terms—one that renders a specific moral order and vision of society legitimate, natural, and uncontestable.

To conceptualize and analyze this process, the thesis draws on two interrelated theoretical approaches. First, Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and his notion of "common sense" provide a critical framework for understanding how education functions as a terrain where ideological dominance is exercised, not through overt coercion, but through the organization of consent. Hegemony, in this context, refers to the capacity of a ruling party to embed its worldview within the everyday practices, values, and assumptions of society, thus securing dominance in both the political and cultural realms. Education is central to this endeavor, as it provides the institutional mechanisms through which this worldview is normalized and reproduced.

Second, Louis Althusser's concept of ideological state apparatuses is employed to examine how state-controlled educational institutions serve to reproduce the dominant ideology. Althusser's framework highlights how institutions such as schools, rather than functioning merely to train labor or transmit technical knowledge, operate to inculcate specific values, attitudes, and subjectivities aligned with the interests of the dominant class or ruling party. In this thesis, Althusser's insights help explain the structural role of education in producing not only compliant citizens, but morally and ideologically aligned subjects. These frameworks help reveal the ways in which education operates not merely as a technical apparatus, but as a powerful field of ideological struggle.

In this sense, I aim to find answers to questions such as: How has the Justice and Development Party (AKP) utilized education as a strategic domain for ideological transformation, with a particular focus on the process of Islamization? How has the AKP restructured the Turkish education system as part of its broader hegemonic project through the institutionalization of a religious-conservative worldview? In what ways have curricular reforms and legal changes served to naturalize this ideological project? And how do these transformations correspond to Gramsci's notion of "common sense" in terms of the AKP's ideological stance?

Methodologically, this study mainly employs a critical-historical and discourse-analytical approach. In particular, the discourse-analytical dimension focuses on how policy documents, curricula, and official statements actively produce, normalize, and disseminate particular narratives and meanings that define legitimate knowledge, values, and identities within the educational field. It also examines a wide array of primary sources, including education laws, government policy documents, curricula, textbooks, and official statements issued by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and other governmental institutions. The analysis focuses particularly on the 2004 curriculum reform and the 2012 "4+4+4" education law.

In terms of scope, the thesis concentrates on formal public education at the primary and secondary levels, and covers the period from 2002 to 2020. Although higher education and private schooling are occasionally referenced, the main focus remains on how state-driven policies have reshaped mainstream schooling in ideological terms. Particular attention is given to the role of curriculum changes, Imam Hatip schools, religious courses and organizations as instruments of ideological reproduction.

In this sense, this thesis argues that since 2002, education has functioned as a central ideological state apparatus used to consolidate a religious-conservative worldview. Through investigations of key reforms, such as the 2004 curriculum change, the 4+4+4 education law, and the increasing presence of religious actors in public schools, this study aims to explore the mechanisms through which the AKP has sought to normalize and institutionalize a new hegemonic order within the education

system. Within the framework of Gramsci, I attempt to reveal that these reforms are not just policy shifts, but part of a broader effort to establish the AKP's worldview as a natural order of things and unquestionable reality in order to secure its long-term ideological dominance. I aim to assess the policy shifts in the AKP era, the 4+4+4 education system in particular, as a mechanism that restructures both institutional and social spaces in order to make conservative-religious narratives dominant in the public sphere.

To develop this analysis, the thesis proceeds in four steps. First, it outlines a theoretical framework drawing on Gramsci, Althusser, and Bourdieu. Second, it situates the AKP's education reforms within the historical evolution of Turkish education policy. Third, it focuses on the 2004 curriculum reform and the 4+4+4 education system as key sites of ideological transformation. Finally, it examines how these reforms function as mechanisms of ideological consolidation in the evolving interplay between education, ideology, and power.

2

Theoretical Basis

This chapter lays the theoretical foundation for analyzing how educational institutions function as sites of ideological production and reproduction. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and "common sense," Louis Althusser's notion of ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital, the chapter explores how dominant ideologies are embedded within educational structures. These theoretical tools provide a multi-layered framework to examine how political actors utilize education not only as a technical mechanism for knowledge transmission, but also as a strategic field for shaping subjectivities, constructing legitimacy, and organizing consent. By engaging with these perspectives, the chapter aims to contextualize the education policies in Turkey between 2002-2020 within broader dynamics of power, ideology, and cultural reproduction. The section is organized around three key conceptual axes: (1) the synthesis of coercion and consent in Gramsci's theory of hegemony and common sense, (2) the role of education as an ideological state apparatus in Althusser's framework, and (3) the ways in which Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital help explain the reproduction of social hierarchies through education.

§ 2.1 The Synthesis of Coercion and Consent: Hegemony

According to Marx, the material conditions that occur in the societal field create the foundational basis of human consciousness alongside the social structure (Carnoy, 1984, p. 46). The state, within the orthodox Marxist interpretation, is a result of the relations of production, which can also be named as 'base'. In this regard, Marx did not consider the state neither as an outcome of the common will nor as a product of the common development of human intelligence (Carnoy, 1984, p. 46). To Marx, the state is not a simple representation of 'common good' as well. On the contrary, it is the expression of the political dominance which is embedded in the class structure within the relations of production (Carnoy, 1984, p. 47). Therefore, the state is the consequence of the contradictions and conflicts based on interests between the classes that arise out of relations of production. "Thus, because the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class) has a particular control over labor in the capitalist production process, this dominant class extends its power to the State and to other institutions." (Carnoy, 1984, p. 47). In this consideration, the modern capitalist state is totally under the control of the bourgeoisie.

In Marx's and Engel's works it can be seen that the capitalist state is nothing more but a response to the need of the dominant class, which is the bourgeoisie in the current economic system, to restore and re-produce the economic dominance of that class (Carnoy, 1984, p. 49). The state, in this case, functions as the 'repressive arm of the bourgeoisie' (Carnoy, 1984, p. 50); it serves the dominant economic class to become "(...) also the politically ruling class, and so acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class" (Engels, 1968, pp. 155-157).

According to Marx and Engels, history itself is an expression of class struggles within the framework of historical materialism. The determinist Marxist approach, which had strict positivist tendencies, interpreted historical materialism as only a process that takes place between the base and the superstructure (Bekmen, 2010, p. 217). In other words, the relations of production were the only determinant factor of social life and life itself. Such a point of view caused a linear understanding of history, social

life, and politics. Historical subjects, i.e. human-beings as history-makers could not play crucial roles in such an interpretation, since it is as inevitable, peremptory and encompassing as natural laws (Bekmen, 2010, p. 217). This could be seen as reductionism of any ideological, political, and cultural dynamic into a reflection of economic relationships (Bekmen, 2010, p. 217).

The capitalist state, in this manner, arose from the need of the bourgeoisie to secure 'class antagonisms in check' (Carnoy, 1984, p. 49). Therefore, this consideration led to a reductionist and determinist interpretation, especially within the Marxist-Leninist literature, that sees the state as a 'repressive apparatus of a dominant class', and state should have been evaluated as "(...) an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another" (Lenin, 1965, p. 8).

In this regard, what makes Antonio Gramsci and his theory of Hegemony distinctive within the Marxist theory is his way of exploring the structure of power relationships. According to Gramsci, the current accordance between the base and superstructure did not have to be the result of *a priori* conditions. On the contrary, the accordance must have been reproduced and re-established by the 'actors' of the dominant class or groups over and over in every historical moment and in every conjuncture within a political and ideological framework (Bekmen, 2010, p. 218). Thus, politics, ideology, and culture could not be viewed as shallow reflections of relations of production (Bekmen, 2010, p. 218). According to Gramsci, the reason behind the sustainability of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is not in essence a repressive process alone. The repression institutions such as religion or the lack of consciousness of the subaltern groups or classes could not easily explain the re-production of the relations of production (Carnoy, 1984, p. 66). To Gramsci, the state is the main actor in this process. Gramsci did not interpret the state as merely a 'repressive apparatus' of the bourgeoisie. The 'real power' of the system could not be found in the oppression of the ruling class' state apparatus, but it can be found in the acceptance of the 'world-view' of the dominant class by the oppressed (Fiori, 1970, p. 238).

In other words, the hegemony of the dominant class was included within the state in the superstructure (Carnoy, 1984, p. 66).

In this respect, Gramsci explains the state as “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 244). As can be seen, Gramsci conceptualizes the state not only as a repressive apparatus of the dominant class or groups, but also as the re-producer of the ‘active consent’ of the masses. This means, according to Gramsci, the dominant class or group must establish its own hegemony over all other groups and classes not only with coercion and force, but it also must create persuasion and consent mechanisms. Therefore, hegemony is a “synthesis of consent and coercion” (Carnoy, 1984, p. 73) that disseminates itself into every aspect of political and civil spheres.

Hegemony can be understood in two major senses. Firstly, it can be said that it is a process that takes place in civil society whereby a fraction of the dominant group or class seeks control over other fractions of the same class or group (Carnoy, 1984, pp. 69-70). In order to materialize this process, the fraction uses its moral and intellectual leadership (Carnoy, 1984, p. 70). Secondly, it is a relationship between dominant groups and subalterns as well. Dominant fraction seeks the creation of political, intellectual, and moral leadership over subordinate groups in order to make its world-view 'all-inclusive' and 'universal' which will help shaping the needs and interests of the masses accordingly. (Carnoy, 1984, p. 70). In other words, the dominant fraction must put forth its own political, cultural, and moral world-views and values as the only ‘societal norms’ with no alternative in order to become hegemon (Hay, 1999, p. 163).

Hence, hegemony is neither abstract nor static. It is something in creation and re-creation perpetually through political, cultural and economic practices in daily life. Therefore, hegemony is “a whole body of practices and expectations” (Williams, 1977, p. 110) rather than something can be explained simply as ‘manipulation’ or ‘indoctrination’ (Williams, 1977, p. 110). As Williams (1977, p. 110) states, hegemony is actually “a lived

system of meanings and values" which is "constitutive and constituting". In this regard, Fontana (2002, p. 28) defines hegemony "as a complex and densely articulated set of ideas constituted by multiple and interlocking layers":

> "On one level, hegemony may be viewed as the movement away from the economic-corporative to the political -from the particular to the universal (...)- At the same time, hegemony also constitutes the generation of alliances by an increasingly preeminent social group. Thus, a group or class becomes hegemonic as it exercises intellectual and moral leadership over other groups in society in such a manner that the latter become 'allies' and 'associates' of the former. On the other hand, opposed to leadership is domination, which is the exercise of coercion or 'armed force' over other groups." (Fontana, 2002, pp. 28-29)

Then, Marx's distinction between state and civil society morphs into 'binary categories of base and superstructure' (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 110) since the dominant class resorts to both consensual and coercive methods in order to provide dissemination for its own moral, cultural and political world-view. Civil society is the realm of -to say- contracts in where persuasion is engendered; it is where cultural, political, ideological, and religious encounters and struggles are generated through associations and institutions (Fontana, 2002, p. 29). The orthodox Marxist approach had a tendency to ignore -or at least to underestimate- the importance of the public sphere and civil society (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 110); however, Gramsci claimed that modern capitalist states, even including fascist dictatorships, primarily incline to establish a hegemony that wins consent of the ruled rather than coercion (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 110). In Gramscian perspective on state and civil society, as can be seen, the separation between them becomes obscure. In other words, Gramsci's view on civil society and state as well as civil and political society does not illustrate a strict distinction between them, to the contrary, they appear as largely intertwined. They exist "within the all-encompassing 'integral state'" (Mayo, 2015, p. 151). This 'integral state' operates through both consent

and coercion, and it is embodied by the 'symbiotic unity of the two spheres' (Fontana, 2002, pp. 28-29).

For the classes or groups that take over the power in modern society, the main goal appears as conquering the 'civil society' through its own 'hegemonic project' in order to make its rule solid and possible (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 110). A hegemonic project can be implemented by only spreading the dominant class' or group's world-view into institutions such as voluntary organizations, media, schools and so on (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 110). As Gwyn A. Williams states, hegemony is:

> An order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations [(Williams, in Miliband, 1973, p. 162) in (Carnoy, 1984, p. 66)].

§ 2.2 Common Sense in Gramsci's Framework

As can be seen, hegemonic projects seek a 'social formation' in favour of the leading group that will justify and re-produce its own moral, cultural and political values. In order to maintain this social formation and hegemony, "consent must be actively constructed and reconstructed over time" (Bruff, 2008, p. 58). In this sense, the dominant fraction of the dominant class or group may make concessions, or establish compromises or build alliances with other fractions or subordinate groups (Bruff, 2008, p. 58). However, it must be noted that the destination of the concessions cannot reach on to any fundamental need of the dominant group, "for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity [(Gramsci, 1971, p. 161, in (Bruff, 2008, p. 58)].

Thus, the dominant class or group may need to be in search of a "'national-popular' dimension" for its own hegemonic project (Bruff, 2008, p. 58), and societal hegemony could be established through an accomplished alliance. The exercise of determining ideas that 'should' be the 'material forces' in society is operated by 'organic intellectuals' in Gramsci's view, who represent certain social forces. Gramsci (1971, p. 12-13) states that their mission is to "organize social hegemony and state domination" as deputies of certain social groups (Bruff, 2008, p. 48). Bruff (2008, p. 48) clarifies this process as "the organic intellectuals strive to convert multiple, heterogeneous positions into a common vision – or hegemonic project", that helps the group or class "to gain the consent of those in alliance with it to lead the formation in the attempt to attain societal hegemony". After the societal hegemony is achieved the social formation is "able to form a historical bloc whose unity is organized on the institutional terrain provided by the state" [(Bruff, 2005, p. 275) in ((Bruff, 2008, p. 59)].

The Historical bloc is a reference to the complex relationship between base and superstructure. As mentioned earlier, Gramsci did not see the relationship between the base and superstructure as static. Thus, in Gramsci's view, superstructures are not considered as "mechanically derived from a base, but as constituting a dialectical unity or 'historical bloc' with the dominant relations of production", (Thomas, 2010, p. 100). Crehan (2016, p. 184) states that the historical bloc in Gramsci should not be thought of as a "two-tiered entity in which an economic base gives rise to epiphenomenal superstructure"; but it is dynamic, in which ideologies are being constructed.

Therefore, it is not a simple and plain alliance taking place in the political field between various social groups. Historical bloc, as Gramsci states, is "(...) not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity" (1971, p. 181-82). It is a dynamic unity that does not exclude any aspects of 'real life' such as economics, politics and culture (Bruff, 2008, p. 59). As Gramsci puts it:

> If the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge (not mechanically but in a way that is alive), then and only then is the relationship one of representation. Only then can there take place an exchange of individual elements between the rulers and ruled, leaders [dirigenti] and led, and can the shared life be realized which alone is a social force—with the creation of the "historical bloc". (Gramsci, 1971, p. 418)

This indicates the transformation of societal hegemony into political hegemony (Bruff, 2008, p. 59). Thus, once a historical bloc is formed, the superstructure plays a determinant role over the base as well. The bloc comes into existence during fundamental turning points, such as economic transformation from feudalism to capitalism, in that a rising leading group or class is able to re-form the societal field in favor of the 'social forces which compromise it' (Bruff, 2008, p. 60) through "the codification of both prohibitions and positive injunctions" [(Poulantzas, 1978, p. 83) in (Bruff, 2008, p. 60)).

At this juncture, it is significant to state that the historical bloc allows the dominant group to get the opportunity to perpetuate its societal hegemony through reshaping or re-making institutions, the legal framework, the regime, and so forth. This constitutes another new or altered hegemonic order over subaltern groups within the societal field. The bloc, since it secures its societal authority in the legal sphere, seizes the chance to "frame and thus circumscribe action and thought in accordance with the version of *common sense* that it supports" (Italic added) (Bruff, 2008, p. 60).

Gramsci's common sense (*senso comune*) refers to embraced (or assumed as embraced) beliefs, opinions and "facts" by the mass of the population. It does not have a completely positive or negative denotation in Gramsci's view, but it is rather a neutral term (Creah, 2016, p. 44) in order to define how we understand the world, or "how humans make sense of the situation they find themselves in" (Bruff, 2008, p. 47). We do indeed engage with a variety of societal forms, by choice or not, to which we are

exposed through education in schools, on the internet and social media, in workplaces, and so forth. In this, we see Gramsci's point of view, that all humans are seen as philosophers (Gramsci, 1971, p. 323). Nonetheless, that does not necessarily imply that all men exist in society with a certain capacity to codify a philosophical way of thinking in order to understand the world. Gramsci means that humans have their own opinions about life, and these should be considered as their philosophy regardless if they are articulated or not (Bruff, 2008, p. 50). Thus, common sense is a complex combination of ideas, beliefs and assumptions derived from a myriad of sources and countless forms of socialization, which is mostly unsystematic, 'even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 419).

In this sense, every human being is in a world of common sense, even though that is not necessarily the exact same one. In this manner, Gramsci (1971, p. 420) states that "every social class has its own common sense". Then, common sense can be found as various versions at the same time within the society, and they can co-exist. However, "(...) every philosophy has a tendency to become the common sense of a fairly limited environment". This means that any group willing to dominate the civil society desires to create its own version of common sense to become the explanatory basis on human behaviors and mentality (Bruff, 2008, p. 47). "Political struggle centers on the attempts of each group to render their version of common sense" (Bruff, 2008, p. 47). Therefore, the dominant version of the common sense is never wholly completed or secured; it can always be challenged. But hegemonic projects require a consensus on the so-called "facts" that the world we live in is the only one possible. Thus, the dominant version of the common sense, also, must be in a perpetual transition, re-production and augmentation (Bruff, 2008, p. 47). Through a complex process of simplification, it aims to become 'the common philosophy of the masses' which contains human beings' actions, traditions, ideas and morals (Fiori, 1970, p. 238). As Crehan (2016, p. 51-52) puts it:

> (...) an ability to impose commonsense truths, which assume that existing power relations are the ones possible, is a crucial dimension of any power regime. Hegemony, it should be noted, does not

> require that (...) the subalterns, see their subjugation as justified, only that they see it as a fixed and unchangeable reality it would be futile to oppose. Only to the extent that we accept, whatever our actual social and economic location, the hegemonic narratives portraying the world as seen from the vantage point of those who hold power might we say that we inhabit a common, shared world.

§ 2.3 Hegemony, Education, and Education as an Ideological State Apparatus

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Gramsci's theory of hegemony is based on the idea that the dominant group or class does not have to resort to the use of force or coercive methods or its economic power in order to maintain the *status quo*; rather, it resorts to a synthesis of re-production of consent mechanism alongside force. In other words, the ruling group is able to construct and re-construct the class structure of the system; and the acceptance of social, cultural, moral values of the dominant group through its hegemony within the state and the civil society.

As far as one can understand, hegemony definitely contains the idea of dissemination of the world-view of a dominant fraction of the ruling class through a societal formulation that cannot simply be challenged. Alongside media and organic intellectuals, the dissemination of the world-view of the dominant group is achieved through schools, universities and other formal educational institutions. In this regard, "education, in Gramsci's concept, amounts to nothing less than the fundamental operations of hegemony" (Borg, Buttigieg, Mayo, 2002, p. 8).

Education within a formal and wider framework, according to Gramsci, is fundamental and central to the workings of any hegemonic project in the broadest sense. It is one of those means that the ruling group or class, through the state, "states in terms of moral regulation and fostering legitimated behavior" (Mayo, 2015, p. 151). In the dissemination of intellectual and moral values, or moreover in any re-forming process related

to these values, education plays a key role for Gramsci (Borg, Buttigieg, Mayo, 2002, p. 10).

Gramsci attaches remarkable importance to education among other institutions, which are too able to carry out hegemonic projects through variable ways, due to the fact that schools, even under a fascist regime, are essential grounds for producing and/or re-producing consent for social rule (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 113). To Gramsci, any type of hegemonic relationship is "necessarily an educational relationship" (1971, pp. 349-350), and then, an educational relationship must refer to a political relationship as well, that is "the generation of permanent persuasion by means of speech and language" (Fontana, 2002, p. 32).

The mutual relation between speech/language (logos) and politics (polis) can be found even in ancient Greek philosophy, namely in Plato, Aristotle and finally Isocrates. Their intention, in fact, was focused on the target of tracing the nature of the relationship between knowledge and politics. *Logos Hegemon Panton*, which was argued by Isocrates, meant "speech and language are the leader and guide of all things" (Fontana, 2002, p. 31). And logos was considered as the outcome of the 'political association' by Aristotle (Fontana, 2002, p. 31). To put it differently, the relationship between speech/language and politics is built upon each other's existence. In this context, there is a power dynamic construed by the relation between logos and hegemony that is "based on the generation and dissemination of forms of knowledge and systems of value" (Fontana, 2002, p. 31).

In the consideration of the Gramscian approach on education, this conceptualizing, of course, includes developing a common language, grammar, or discourse on one hand. But, on the other hand, it is also genuinely related to intensifying a group's or class' own version of 'common sense'. As Gramsci (1971) puts it:

> The dualistic and 'objectivity of the external world' conception, as it has taken root in the people through the traditional religions and philosophies that have become 'common sense', can only be uprooted and substituted by a new conception intimately fused

with a political programme and a conception of history that people recognize as the expression of its absolute necessities.

Schools, above all, instill the dominant culture (which Gramsci more or less equates with common sense, see Mayo, 2015, p. 93), the knowledge and values which are assumed as decorum for any citizen within a framework of a given social formation (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 113). This means the ruling group or class imposes its own "specific and determinate personality" to the society through the exertion of forging intellectual, moral and cultural knowledge and values of its own, by decontextualizing them from their economic and social basis (Fontana, 2002, p. 30).

Gramsci (1971, p. 340) says that "the struggle for hegemony is that of the education of one's own forces". It is a struggle that focuses on common sense which is "the folklore of philosophy" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 325). Capitalism is inherently 'all-pervasive' (Mayo, 2015, p. 149). Thus, any educational strategy -whether it counters against it or occurs as a product of it- must be 'all-pervasive' as well. It must diffuse in all spheres of life.

In this respect, Louis Althusser shares Gramsci's view. Capitalism is all-pervasive, and its re-production process of the relations of production must be all-pervasive as well. Althusser states that "to exist to be re-produced" (Althusser, 2014, p. 219), and he conceives of the re-production process of the dominant ideology not only as re-producing material, political and ideological conditions of existence of the dominant class, or a simple recurrence of the dominant ideology that is 'automatic' or 'mechanical' re-production focused on given institutions; but he views it as "combat for the unification and renewal of *prior ideological elements*" (Althusser, 2014, p. 219).

Althusser's approach to the state is also based on the theory of Gramsci's Hegemony. The dominant class, for Gramsci and as it is for Louis Althusser, has to culturally determine all civil societal institutions such as education, law, family, religion, unions, etc. In this manner, the dominant class' world-view should be felt in every field of life, and it has to disseminate the cultural understanding of its very own. It should seize all the societal formations. In this regard, re-production of the labour-force or relations of production does not only mean the re-production of the

worker as only labour-force, but also the re-production of all social forms that he/she belongs (or feels that he/she belongs), such as family, citizenship, understanding of religion, etc. Althusser asserts that *ideology*, rather than an abstract notion, is specific; in other words, it has a material existence. Ideology always exists within an apparatus and its practices (Carnoy, 1984, p. 91). He claims that ideology provides a so-called comfort zone for individuals, through acknowledging them as subjects and subjecting them 'to the subject of the ideology itself (for example, God, capital, the State)" (Carnoy, 1984, p. 92), assures them that "everything will be just fine" as long as the subjects recognize the idea of behaving within the boundaries of the ideology.

In this context, according to Althusser, the state cannot be thought of as a simple repressive apparatus of the dominant class; or, in other words, it cannot be simply codified as the 'repressive arm of the bourgeoisie'. The ruling class must create consent for its rule alongside the use of force. In this sense, Althusser asserts his theory of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs).

Althusser accepts that the state has its own repressive apparatuses that are based on coercion: "The government, the administration, the army, the courts, the prisons, etc..." (Althusser, 2014, p. 243). Indeed, the state, in the ultimate sense, preserves its possibility of resorting to force. However, to Althusser, the consensual apparatuses of the state cannot be ignored. In Althusser's view, "what distinguishes the ISAs from the (Repressive) State Apparatus is the following basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses *function* '*by ideology*'" (Althusser, 2014, p. 243).

Althusser states that any Ideological State Apparatus, regardless of what form it appears, is devoted to obtaining the same outcome, which is the re-production of the relations of production:

"Each of them contributes towards this single result in the way proper to it. The political apparatus by subjecting individuals to the political State ideology, the 'indirect' (parliamentary) or 'direct' (plebiscitary or fascist) 'democratic' ideology. The communications apparatus by cramming every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism,

liberalism, moralism, etc, by means of the press, the radio and television. The same goes for the cultural apparatus (the role of sport in chauvinism is of the first importance), etc. The religious apparatus by recalling in sermons and the other great ceremonies of Birth, Marriage and Death (…)" (Althusser, 2014, p. 250)

At this juncture, to Althusser, another essential difference between the (Repressive) State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatuses is the domain that they interfere. (Repressive) State Apparatus is completely concerned with the public sphere, for Althusser, whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses focus on the private sphere: "Churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc., etc., are private." (Althusser, 2014, p. 243). Althusser claims that while the (Repressive) State Apparatus is apparent, the *plurality* or the accordance between Ideological State Apparatuses is not easily visible, even though the unity of them does exist (Althusser, 2014, p. 243). Herein, Althusser presents a systematic list of the Ideological State Apparatuses: The religious ISA, the educational ISA (both private and state schools), the Family ISA, the Legal ISA, the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA, and the Cultural ISA (Althusser, 2014, p. 243).

Nonetheless, Althusser (2014, p. 251) states, "one Ideological State Apparatus certainly has the dominant role, although hardly anyone lends an ear to its music: it is so silent! This is the school". "What do children learn at school?" Althusser (2014, p. 235) asks. He answers that they do learn writing, reading, various techniques, and 'scientific' or 'literary culture' that may be useful for a variety of jobs in production. Hence, basically, they get education for 'know-how' (Althusser, 2014, p. 235).

However, alongside this knowledge and techniques, Althusser (2014, p. 236) adds: "children at school also learn the ' rules' of good behavior". By 'rules of good behavior' Althusser refers to "rules of morality, civic and professional conscience" that are, in fact, rules of paying respect to the "socio-technical division of labour" (Althusser, 2014, p. 236), which is a product of the class domination. In other words, the school is the institution *par excellence* as an ideological apparatus of the state, which takes children in order to –to say- 'design' them for their appropriate political,

social, cultural and economic niches within the predominant system. As Althusser (2014, p. 236) puts it: "the school (...) teaches ' know-how', but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice'". School, in this sense, admits students from all the classes of society at 'infant-school' age for years, the years in that children are stuck between the family state apparatus and the educational state apparatus and quite 'vulnerable'; and it instills methods, 'know-how', knowledge and so forth, which are encased within the ruling ideology (Althusser, 2014, p. 251). Thus, "[School] acts as sorting machine, forming and reproducing the classes of society according to what Bourdieu terms degrees of attainment, of cultural capital." (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 113).

§ 2.4 Habitus and Forms of Capital in Bourdieu's Perspective

Pierre Bourdieu introduces the concept of habitus as "a property of actors (whether individuals, groups or institutions) that comprises a 'structured and structuring structure'" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Habitus refers to a system of durable, transposable dispositions which individuals acquire through socialization, especially within the family and educational institutions. As Bourdieu explains, "the word disposition seems particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of habitus… It expresses first the result of an organizing action…; it also designates a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and, in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination" (Bourdieu, 1977).

The concept of *habitus* originates from the Latin word denoting one's physical condition, appearance, or overall disposition (Jenkins, 2003, p. 74). In Bourdieu's sociology, however, *habitus* goes far beyond its etymological roots. It refers to the system of internalized dispositions that individuals acquire over time through both social and personal experiences. As Bing (2004, p. 39) explains, habitus encompasses the historical imprints embedded in an individual's conduct, attitudes, and perceptions, particularly those shaped by one's environment, upbringing, and daily social interactions.

Bing (2004, p. 39) defines habitus as "embodied history internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product." In this sense, habitus represents a deeply ingrained orientation to the world, a set of learned dispositions that shape how individuals move, speak, relate to others, and interpret their surroundings through everyday social practice. It is, as Bourdieu (1986) also emphasizes, a product of history that continues to guide present behavior while often remaining below the level of conscious reflection.

Importantly, habitus is dynamic rather than static. As Bing (2004, p. 39–40) notes, the experiences that shape habitus are not fixed but continuously reconfigured by new circumstances and encounters. Past and present experiences are integrated in ways that transform individuals' perceptions, actions, and thoughts. Therefore, any human production—be it behavior, language, or ideas—is inevitably influenced by a person's historical background and embedded social conditions.

Habitus functions as a socially constituted logic that informs one's thinking and behavior (Reay, David & Ball, 2005). It is shaped by ongoing social mechanisms and evolves through prolonged exposure to different contexts. Although it tends to be durable, habitus is not immutable; under certain historical conditions or disruptions, it can shift or be restructured (Navarro, 2006).

Crucially, habitus is not determined solely by social structure or individual agency. Rather, it emerges from the interaction between both forces across time. As Albright and Luke (2008) argue, dispositions develop largely without deliberate calculation or conscious intent. They are formed instinctively, internalized through repeated exposure, and thus become a "second nature" that informs everyday conduct.

In addition to habitus, Bourdieu's theory heavily relies on the concept of field, which refers to relatively autonomous social arenas wherein individuals and institutions interact, compete, and struggle for the accumulation and control of various forms of capital. Fields constitute the structured social spaces in which habitus operates and acquires meaning. They are not neutral backgrounds but dynamic arenas of power, in which

the distribution of capital shapes the possibilities for action and recognition.

As Swartz (1997, p. 117) explains, a field can be understood as "a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined in their existence and in the determination; they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions by their present and potential situation." This definition highlights the relational nature of fields, as well as the way structural positions constrain and enable agency.

Fields vary according to the dominant forms of capital they value and reward. For example, while the economic field privileges financial assets, the academic field prioritizes educational credentials and scholarly authority. In this sense, fields are also spaces of competition, where actors mobilize their resources and strategies to secure more advantageous positions.

As Navarro (2006, p. 18) puts it, a field is a structure composed of multiple and intersecting relationships—cultural, symbolic, and material—which organize the circulation, production, and appropriation of goods, services, and knowledge. Each field operates with its own internal logic and hierarchies, and the struggles within them shape not only individual trajectories but also the broader reproduction of social structures.

Bourdieu's theory also incorporates a broader understanding of capital that extends beyond its economic form. He outlines three primary forms of capital: economic, social, and cultural. "Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money…; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital…; and as social capital, made up of obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242).

As Navarro (2006) suggests, cultural capital facilitates the transformation of one form of power into another, thereby allowing the emergence of non-economic forms of hierarchy in society. Social classes often differentiate themselves not merely through material wealth but also through systems of taste and distinction, which serve as markers of

status and cultural superiority. Thus, capital is a form of resource that enables individuals or groups to either resist or exercise domination within social relationships. It is this capacity that allows agents to assert or sustain a position in the social structure. In this framework, capital becomes the mechanism through which people navigate their relationships with others, organize their social space, and maintain or challenge the existing order.

While economic capital remains the most visible and dominant form of power in capitalist societies, it is not uncontested. For instance, individuals or groups with limited financial resources, such as academics, artists, or intellectuals, may challenge the primacy of economic power by asserting the value of their own forms of cultural capital. This dynamic reflects broader tensions between competing capitals—akin to the rivalry observed between finance, industry, and landowners.

Pierre Bourdieu acknowledges all forms of behavior and accumulation of information acquired through education as 'cultural capital'. His theory of cultural reproduction investigates the connection between "original class membership and ultimate class membership, and how this link is mediated by the education system" (Sullivan, 2002, p. 144). Individuals obtain certain forms of behaviors and informational backgrounds within the intra-familial sphere and educational institutions. However, since the distribution of cultural capital is not equal, and cannot be expected to be equal, social and class-based inequalities are preserved and re-produced through the educational system.

Importantly, the transmission of cultural capital is strongly influenced by social origin. Bourdieu asserts that social and class inequalities are legitimated through educational institutions, thus, the educational system plays a key role in maintaining the *status quo* (Sullivan, 2002, p. 145). Students internalize the economic capital, social capital -that is one's social relationships and 'network'-, and cultural capital of their own class through schools. Therefore, any institutionalized educational system contributes to producing and reproducing of its own existential conditions, since its 'existence' and 'persistence' "are necessary both to the exercise of its essential function of inculcation and to the fulfillment of its

function of reproducing a cultural arbitrary which it does not produce (cultural reproduction), the reproduction of which contributes to the reproduction of the relations between the groups or classes (social reproduction)" (Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, 1990, p. 54). Education, in this sense, should be considered as the "most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern" (Bourdieu, 1974, p. 32) since it provides justification for already existing social inequalities.

The preceding chapter has laid out the conceptual tools necessary for analyzing the relationship between education, ideology, and state power. Rather than functioning as a self-contained theoretical exposition, these concepts will serve as the interpretive foundation for this thesis. In what follows, I trace the historical trajectory of education in Turkey with the purpose of uncovering how various groups have mobilized education as a site for ideological reproduction and social transformation. Far from a merely descriptive historical account, this chapter applies the theoretical lens previously established to identify patterns of continuity and rupture, particularly in how education has been instrumentalized in the construction of collective identity and culture.

3

Historical Background

> *It is the human intelligence that came up with the concept of Godhead, it is the revealer of its secrets and continues to put effort into revealing.*
>
> – History I Textbook, 1933

This chapter provides the historical grounding necessary to understand how education in Turkey has long functioned as a site of ideological contestation and state-led social engineering. By tracing the evolution of education policy from the early Republican era to the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the chapter aims to situate the AKP's interventions within a broader historical trajectory.

The analysis proceeds chronologically, beginning with the Republican People's Party's (CHP) early efforts to establish a secular, nationalist education system in the 1920s and 1930s. It then explores the shifting role of religion in education during the multi-party period, the rise of political Islam and the expansion of Imam Hatip schools in the post-1980 context, and the dynamics of education policy in the 1990s, including the 28 February military intervention. Special attention is paid to how different

political fractions have interpreted and restructured education in line with their respective visions of society, modernity, and morality.

By mapping these historical developments, the chapter establishes the ideological precedents and institutional pathways that made the AKP's post-2002 transformation of the education system possible. It also provides a foundation for understanding how the AKP's use of education as a hegemonic instrument fits into longer-standing patterns of state-society relations in Turkey, where education has been less a neutral policy domain and more a central arena in the ongoing struggle over who gets to define the moral and cultural fabric of the nation.

§ 3.1 Education and Ideology under One-Party Rule (1923-1946)

After the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, the new regime was willing to maintain and surpass the legacy of the modernization process of the Ottomans that started with Mahmud II in the 19th century. In this regard, the early republican period can be explained as a re-making, reforming and creating process of all the institutions with modern characteristics. The educational field, of course, was not an exception. The Second Constitutional Era (1908-1920) had brought a new period of legal reforms, and a much more westernized paradigm into the education system. It is rather hard to claim that all legal reforms could be observed in practice continuously; nonetheless, during the era, teachers had the right to obtain legal protection and establish professional organizations; women, for the first time in the Ottoman history, obtained the right to participate in all phases of education; concepts such as school, textbook, and method became some current issues; and on top of all, the idea of the unification of the education system has been rolled out and debated loudly for the first time (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 149).

In order to fulfill the "unification" debates, Tevhid-i Tedrisat (*the law on the unification of education*) was launched in 1924. Tevhid-i Tedrisat, as a law which ensures the unification and centralizing of all the educational affairs and institutions, was a victory of the principles and ideas that have been declared since the era of the Committee of Union and

Progress[1] (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 126). The Sultanate was abolished in 1922 already, and the caliphate was annulled on the very same day with the enacting of Tevhid-i Tedrisat, on March 3, 1924. The founders of the new regime considered that embracing a "national education" was a must. In this sense, briefly reviewing Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's thoughts on education, before launching the Tevhid-i Tedrisat, can present a more comprehensive framework to comprehend the intentions of the new regime on education. Mustafa Kemal declared his thoughts on education systematically for the first time during the opening speech of the Congress of Education (*Maarif Kongresi*) in 1921, in Ankara. According to Mustafa Kemal, the education system should be based upon "constant and great struggle" occurring between nations (Binbaşoğlu, 2009, p. 416). Mustafa Kemal stated:

> When I speak of a national education program, I mean culture, harmonious with our national and historical characteristics, that is free from superstitions of ancient times, foreign ideas, and influences of both east and west which are not related to our creational composition (Binbaşoğlu, 2009, p. 416).

In this speech, it can be observed that Mustafa Kemal disaffirms religious education by defining it as "*superstitions of ancient times*", and he embraces a *national* education that is free from any impact coming from any other culture but Turkish.

Considering this aspect, Tevhid-i Tedrisat seems to cover most of the expectations of the young Republic. To corroborate this claim, it can be constructive to analyze Tevhid-i Tedrisat's crucial outcomes. After Tevhid-i Tedrisat was launched, all educational institutions in the country gathered under the administration of the Ministry of National Education; and Pious Foundations (*Evkaf*) for educational purposes were absorbed by the Ministry of National Education as well. Madrasahs

[1] *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* in Turkish. The political movement was founded in 1889 and was the initiator of the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy in the Ottoman Empire. The Committee has ruled the Ottoman Empire between 1908 and 1918 with limited interruption.

(*Medreseler*) -which had been the essential educational institutions based on religious education in the Ottoman Empire for centuries- were immediately closed in 1924. Within the same year, in lieu of Madrasahs, 29 Imam Hatip schools[2] and a Faculty of Theology (*İlahiyat Fakültesi*) at Istanbul University (*Darülfunun*) was established (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 172). However, the Imam Hatip schools had not been a part of the education system for a long while, and they had already become history in 1930, allegedly due to lack of student numbers (Kaplan, 1999, p. 143).

In 1927, religion courses were removed from the curriculum of both primary and secondary schools, except for rural schools until 1940 (Kaplan, 1999, p. 159). Arabic and Persian language lessons were also removed from the secondary schools' programs in 1929 (Kaplan, 1999, p. 160). Due to the fact that the law of Tevhid-i Tedrisat regulated the minority schools as well, they also had to make the addition of the lessons Turkish Language, Turkish History, Turkish Geography and Civics into their curriculum (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 172). On the other hand, religious courses were removed from the curriculum of the minority schools as well (Kaplan, 1999, p. 160).

Tevhid-i Tedrisat was a strict answer to the question of "How to modernize the education system?". Moreover, it met the new government's needs in terms of procuring the legitimacy of the new Republic and its economic independence as one of the foundational bases of the ideological stance of the new regime, which was going to be named as Kemalism. In this case, it is essential to briefly analyze 'why Tevhid-i Tedrisat was embraced as a pioneer of the modern education system' and 'what sort of an institutional reform it brought into the education system' to apperceive the paradigm of Kemalism during the era of the One-Party rule.

As mentioned, Tevhid-i Tedrisat was interpreted as a requirement for the modernizing process by the new regime, mostly based on three main

[2] Imam Hatip schools were founded to replace madrasahs alongside a Faculty of Theology at the Darülfünun (*Istanbul University*), after Tevhid-i Tedrisat was passed in 1924. They were designed as special schools with special curriculums that would train ministers (*Imams*) and preachers (*Hatips*).

concerns. Firstly, the law allegedly was expected to lead to democratization in the educational field through supervision and unification of the various and vertical educational institutions which prevent social mobility (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 132). Secondly and more importantly, in parallel with the unification, implementing a secular mode of education was going to be possible (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 132). This approach does not deny the existence of religion in social relationships and life; however, it acknowledges religion as long as it is coherent with the essential parameters of modernism; to put in labels, reason, and science (Gökaçtı, 2005, pp. 122-123). Religion, according to the new formulation of the new regime, was -or should have been- an absolute matter of conscience (Gökaçtı, 2005, pp. 122-123) rather than a concrete and inherent mechanism within the state. Thirdly and most importantly, Tevhid-i Tedrisat's main purpose was to impose an idea of "national culture" -or in Gramscian sense, a national-popular dominant version of the common sense- to new generations; and it would have been practicable by only unification of the education (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 169).

Compositionally, Tevhid-i Tedrisat was based on three main institutions within the education system. First of all, the new regime's legitimacy was considered as the main problem that should be provided through national education. In this regard, the educational ideology of Kemalism was based on a unified national education that interprets the most crucial function of the education system as imposing a “national consciousness” to upcoming generations (Kaplan, 1999, p. 161). Thus, the primary schools had been designed as institutions that would give the opportunity to teach students the essential principles of Turkish nationalism and obedience to the new regime (Kaplan, 1999, p. 161). Secondly, Turkey, as a country has suffered from wars for decades and due to 'belated' modern reforms, needed professional experts in many fields immediately. The era being discussed in this part should be considered with the stark fact that Mustafa Kemal and his cohorts, as the founders of a brand new republic, had to take over a poor society with limited physical and financial resources; moreover, it was limited in terms of human resources as well due to World War I (Gök, 2007, p. 248). In order to create

the needed labor force, a unified and national education system was considered as a vital vein that would help to train professionals in all aspects of the work life. Concordantly, Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues regarded technical schools as the most significant educational institutions that would admit the majority of the students (Kaplan, 1999, p. 165). And thirdly, standard secondary schools and high schools (*orta okul* and *lise*) were thought of as pre-eminently well-disciplined institutions that would educate only the most talented students for university education (Kaplan, 1999, p. 165). These students were thought of as the intellectual fraction of the new regime, who was going to ideologically advocate Kemalism. Through this three-tiered educational structure, the regime sought to manufacture differentiated forms of cultural capital aligned with the needs of the new state. This also functioned as a mechanism to infuse specific class-based values—secularism, nationalism, positivism—into the 'common sense' of each educational stratum, thus aligning the habitus of citizens with the ideological vision of the ruling bloc. Through education, the new regime sought to establish a hegemonic order wherein secular nationalism would be perceived not as the worldview of the Kemalist elites, but as the common sense of the nation. This was not merely an administrative reform, but a hegemonic project aimed at producing active consent to a new moral and political order.

From this point forth, it is not unsound to state that the law was not only about the centralizing and unification of education. It also illustrates the fact that the state was going to take an active position in the nation-building process through education. In this context, it would not be inaccurate to say that the new Republic considered education as the most important apparatus (Özelli, 1974, p. 78) to establish a new nation-state in parallel with a nation-building process (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 136). In other words, Tevhid-i Tedrisat can be examined as the educational perspective of the new regime that was mostly based on an instrumentalist approach that helps the creation of social, economic and cultural 'independence'; and a modern nation (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 136).

Nonetheless, to achieve these goals, the new regime took cognizance of the importance of informal educational institutions and socialization

attempts alongside the classical primary and secondary schools. In this regard, Nation's Schools (*Millet Mektepleri*) were established in 1929, with the purpose of teaching literacy (in the newly adapted Latin alphabet) to all the uneducated citizens in the Republic between the ages 15-45, regardless of whether they were women or men (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 192). Moreover, Public Houses (*Halkevleri*) in the cities and Public Rooms (*Halkodaları*) in the countryside were founded in 1932, as major public educational institutions for adults in an attempt to provide social and political legitimacy for the young secular nation-state (Gök, 2007, p. 248). Institutions such as Halkevleri and Millet Mektepleri can be considered as Ideological State Apparatuses in Althusser's sense, operating in the realm of civil society to reproduce the values of the ruling bloc. These organizations did not rely on overt repression but rather functioned through consent-building practices, helping to disseminate the regime's moral and political values. Thus, they have acted as strategic nodes in the hegemonic consolidation of the Republic.

It should be comprehended that the vast majority of the population used to live in rural areas in the first decades of the Republic. Thus, the new regime had to obtain the ideological support of the citizens living in rural areas as well as it had to increase the economic productivity of villagers. In this particular, the Ministry of Education introduced Mobile Village Women's Classes (*Gezici Köy Kadınları Kursları*) and Village Men's Training Classes (*Köy Erkek Sanat Kursları*) in 1938 and 1939 as well. Above all, the most important attempt on the subject was undoubtedly Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*).

Village Institutes were first established in 1940. The institutes were thought of as centers of village development, offering a five-year curriculum leading to graduation. (Özelli, 1974, p. 88), and formed based on a work ethic that combines education and production (Kaplan, 1999, p. 182). In this sense, the admitted students were expected to become both technicians and teachers at institutes after graduation.

It is possible to track the ideological and political intentions of the Village Institutes in the Regulations of Village Institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri Yönetmeliği*) which also can be an indicator in order to understand the

One-Party State's motivations behind all established formal or informal educational institutions. According to the Regulations:

> Students will be educated fully in terms of republican and national feelings; the village teachers will serve in order to realize national ideals and aims; the village teachers will see the Turkish nation - which consists of various professions and parties[3] as a whole, and will work (...) for its development and progress. (Ayas, 1948, pp. 338-339)

In other words, the Village Institutes aimed to produce not only technically skilled individuals but also organic intellectuals capable of articulating and disseminating the worldview of the new regime among rural populations. As educational ISA, these institutes were tasked with embedding the hegemonic norms of Kemalism into everyday life, particularly in the Anatolian countryside, an area previously resistant to such ideological penetration. Alongside the ideological stance of the Institutes, debatably, excluding their ideological and political intentions, the Village Institutes can be interpreted as establishments that were expected to help supply the manpower requirements of the bureaucracy in terms of teachers and technicians in villages; implementing a scientific approach on the agricultural field; and providing a literacy-boom[4] in the whole country (Kaplan, 1999, p. 183).

As was discussed above, all the educational institutions were designed to educate students who will follow the founder ideals of the Turkish Republic, especially republicanism, nationalism and secularism (Kaplan, 1999, p. 173). These ideals had been interpreted as the most

[3] The word "zümreler" is translated as "parties" in this sentence. However, it should be noted that it was probably used as a substitutional word for "class". According to the 10th Year March of the Republic, Turkish society was an "unprivileged, *classless*, and harmonious mass".

[4] During a debate on a resolution about village schools and institutions in the parliament, Hasan Ali Yücel, the then Minister of National Education, stated that 'the rate of literacy in Turkey was still extremely low' with 15.6% according to the 1935 Population Census Data; and 'this rate was pathetic in comparison with Bulgaria with 93%' (Yücel, 1993, p. 143)

crucial ideological basis of the new regime and Kemalism in order to obtain the respect and loyalty of the citizens for the newly-established nation-state (Kaplan, 1999, p. 173).

As it was mentioned, the approach of Mustafa Kemal and his cohorts on education can be interpreted as mostly instrumentalist in terms of its pragmatic framework. In consideration of John Dewey's understanding, whose ideas on education had an important impact on the creation of the modern Turkish education system, this instrumentalist approach does not seem astonishing. According to Dewey, 'intelligent criticism' is required in order to protect the integrity of 'value' and 'conduct' in response to the 'challenges of dynamic and constantly changing individual and social experiences' (Anton, 2007, p. 87). In Dewey's understanding, 'ethical theory' is instrumental (Anton, 2007, p. 87). In this regard, ethics should be *useful* for *the reforming* process of economic, political and religious institutions (Anton, 2007, p. 87).

To use the concept "'mostly' instrumentalist" appears to be debatable at this point since Dewey's understanding of education and ethics, and the Republican reforms on education illustrate accordance. According to Kaplan (1999, p. 173), the main reasons behind the reforms in the educational field were also totally concentrated on providing legitimacy for the newly established nation-state. Kaplan (1999, p. 173) states that the reforms did not have the purpose of introducing universal accumulation of knowledge and culture to students as well as they did not aim to educate people with a critical and universal mindset on this basis. The ideology of the national education, according to Kaplan (1999, p. 161), was simply based on nationalist education with an instrumentalist approach.

Nonetheless, this viewpoint can be seen as a reductive interpretation of the reforms in some aspects. In order to present a more comprehensive framework on this issue, it may be useful to understand the logic behind the Ottoman reforms in the 19th century as well. Ottoman elites knew that the industrial revolution caused incredibly rapid progress in the field of both military and economy in the Western European states (Pamuk, 2012). Under these circumstances, according to Ottoman reformists, reformation efforts had become inevitable. However, the mainstays of the

reforms can be interpreted as *double-headed*. On one hand, the reforms had taken place in an attempt to gain European support and for this, they were diplomatic moves. However, on the other hand, they were also the reflections of *sincere concerns* of the Ottoman reformists (Zürcher, 2004).

The reforms launched on education in the early republic era can be interpreted within a similar context as well. On one hand, as all the reforms taking place during the era, the reforms in the educational field also had the aim to urgently impose a strong nation-state and 'nation' idea to the citizens in order to become a member of the modernized capitalist West[5]. Therefore, in this case, they were mainly instrumentalist. On the other hand, the reforms were believed to be beneficial to the country and its future as well. Hence, they were reflections of the *sincere* concerns of the Republican reformists too. In this respect, alongside the instrumentalist nature of the reforms, it can be said that they were also sincere efforts of the reformists with the intent to build a nationwide *enlightenment period*.

At this juncture, it should be noted that it was not only Dewey who had an impact on building the Turkish education system. Mustafa Kemal was influenced by Herbert George Wells[6] as well, whose ideas eventually led the way to the Darwinist paradigm in Turkish historiography (Toprak, 2012, pp. 360-361). In his *A Short History of the World* (1922), H. G. Wells construes the origin of human beings with a scientific basis including solely the evolutionary theory. This approach influenced mostly the development process of anthropology in Turkey; but it also influenced the idea of national education (Toprak, 2012, p. 360). In furtherance of this claim, several contents within the education system can be examined. For instance, the biology textbooks, in the 1930s, covered the history of nature and the evolution of living things in a quite detailed manner. Furthermore, in the biology and geology textbooks, the evolutionary theory was

[5] Hasan Ali Yücel, the then Minister of National Education, clarified this idea in 1942: "One of the most important targets of the Republic is to make Turkish community a part of the Western civilization which has achieved great successes in the fields of science, technique, industry, and economy, especially in the 19th century." (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 235)

[6] An English novelist and historian.

described widely (Karaömerlioğlu & Yolun, 2020; Toprak, 2012). The textbook started by explaining the diversity of life and evolution of living things before examining the biological characteristics of living beings and the environment. It can be said that many modern biology textbooks follow the same path with similar content even today. Another example can be found in the book History (*Tarih*) I. The book contained the evolutionary theory as well (Toprak, 2012, pp. 362-363) and it had quite courageous chapters such as 'How Fabrication Stories, Superstitions, and Religion were Born' (*Uydurma Hikayeler, Hurafeler ve Din Nasıl Doğdu*) with examining the evolution of religions in light of anthropologic data (Toprak, 2012, p. 369). This perspective on scientific subjects cannot be explained within a solid instrumentalist approach.

It is true that Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues treated the evolutionary theory as an instrument too to create the 'Sun Language Theory'[7] (*Güneş Dil Teorisi*) and the 'Turkish History Thesis' (*Türk Tarih Tezi*)[8] in order to help the nation-building process. These scientific knowledge forms were instrumental in displacing religious explanatory frameworks and establishing a new 'common sense' aligned with the moral and intellectual values of the early Republican elite. While the early Republican curriculum was grounded in secular-rationalist knowledge, the emergence of the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory may be interpreted as extensions of the hegemonic project. These pseudo-scientific theories attempted to reframe national identity in a way that harmonized secular modernism with a glorified pre-Islamic past. In Gramscian terms, they functioned as part of a broader effort to produce a new

[7] The Turkish History Thesis was an official historical narrative developed in the early 1930s, asserting that Turks were among the founders of the world's earliest civilizations and had significantly contributed to the development of humanity. It aimed to foster national pride and assert a pre-Islamic, Central Asian origin for the Turkish identity.

[8] The Sun Language Theory, developed in the mid-1930s, claimed that all human languages originated from an ancient proto-Turkic language. Although lacking scientific basis, it served nationalist and ideological goals by reinforcing the idea of Turkish cultural primacy.

'national-popular' common sense that could unify intellectual authority and mass legitimacy under the ideological vision of the ruling bloc.

Nevertheless, it is also true that they were in search of building a nation in light of 'reason' and 'science' within an idealist and positivist approach. In other words, Dewey's pragmatism and instrumentalism, and H. G. Wells' scientific and 'enlightening' perspective coexisted in the education system during the one-party rule, even though they conflicted in some aspects. As Hasan Ali Yücel stated:

> Education in Turkey has a strict nationalist spirit. The basis of our social discipline, which is convenient to love other people as well, is based on the commitment and self-devotion to the affiliated nation. (…)
>
> Alongside the desire to comprehend the Turkish nation, which lives in all Turks' conscience, we also have a humanist viewpoint. Humanism, as we understand it, (...) is a concept that encompasses all the humanity that uses its creative and constructive power against nature. (Sakaoğlu, 2003, pp. 234-235)

§ 3.2 The First 15 Years of Education in Turkey After Transition to Multi-Party System (1946-1960)

World War II has affected the global power balance by bringing huge destruction throughout the world, especially in Europe. The United Kingdom had lost the privilege of being the central imperialist power. The great destruction in Europe led to a new international political conjuncture with two great powers rising: the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The alliance between the USSR and the USA that had taken place during WW II rapidly morphed into a strict rivalry between Communist and Capitalist economic systems (Oran, 2001, pp. 480-481). In other words, after World War (WW) II, the Cold War was hard at hand.

Throughout WW II (1939-1945), Turkey followed a balanced policy in international politics which was in some aspects eminently realist (Oran,

2001, pp. 480-481). As a consequence of this policy of balance, the ruling CHP had the fear of economic and political alienation in the bipolar superpower system. Because both the USA and the USSR had expansionist tendencies, this fear had a reasonable basis. Thus, the one-party regime had to transform itself in order to harmonize with the new realities of world politics (Kaplan, 1999, p. 199).

After Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death in 1938, İsmet İnönü became the 'National Chief' and the 'unchangeable party leader' of the CHP. This type of leadership was rather hard to maintain for Turkey as a result of two main historical turning points. Firstly, the anti-fascist alliance had become victorious against German Nazism, Italian Fascism, and Japanese Militarism. Titles such as 'National Chief' and 'Unchangeable Leader' could resemble the era before WW II. Secondly and more importantly, democratic regimes triumphed over authoritarianism and totalitarianism in the West. For Turkey, as a country willing to become a part of Western civilization, a one-party system was not sustainable any longer. Pursuant to that, the first step in the transition to a multi-party system was taken and new political parties were allowed to be established in July 1945 (Kaplan, 1999, p. 199). Moreover, CHP held an extraordinary meeting in 1946 as well and the institutions of 'chiefdom' and 'unchangeable party leadership' were annulled (Kaplan, 1999, p. 199). Following these developments, the Democrat Party was founded under the leadership of Celal Bayar in 1946.

3.2.1 *The First Years of the Multi-Party System: Concerns and Concessions on Education (1946-1950)*

With the transition to the multi-party system after the 1946 General Elections, some soft changes in the CHP's 1947 Program also can be observed in the context of education. For instance, the aim of "educating Republican, Nationalist, Populist, Statist, Secular and Revolutionary citizens" had turned into the aim of "educating citizens who are loyal to the founding principles of the Republic of Turkey" (Tunaya, 1952, p. 593). While this shift did not constitute a fundamental rupture at the ideological level, it

arguably allowed for relatively broader and more flexible interpretations in practice.

The strong opposition of the Democrat Party had forced CHP to make concessions in the field of education in this period (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 256). Moreover, the demand for religious education in state schools and educating qualified ministers had become current topics (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 168). Demands on religious education were not only coming from the Democrats, but they were coming also from the CHP deputies as well. Some deputies expressed concern that 'non-national' ideologies, such as communism, might emerge. (Gökaçtı, 2005, pp. 168-169). Advocates of such ideologies, according to some deputies, may have used desolation in the field of spirituality in society (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 169). For instance, Muhittin Baha Pars, Bursa Deputy of the CHP, stated that "New leftist religions have appeared. If they find empty consciences, they may take part" in a session in the parliament concerning religious education (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 169). Another CHP Deputy Ahmet Silivrili was on the same page as well: "Unfortunately, we still abstain from opening on religion. Secularism does not mean irreligiousness." (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 169) In other words, the CHP government had the concern based on the fear that 'destructive' ideologies may have risen and become a threat to the foundational basis of the Republic due to the democratization process (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 169), even though the process had its ideological limits (Kaplan, 1999, pp. 199-200). The political democratization may have led religion to become a hot topic in politics after 25 years of revolutionary process and secularization. This could become a serious problem in terms of losing the cultural and political hegemonic achievements of the Republic.

In such a period of confusion for the ruling CHP, the very first attempts took place in 1948 in search of softening religious demands that seemed to be coming from the society. In order to prevent or minimize 'reactionary' challenges, the ruling CHP established a commission that will investigate the topics of 'giving religion lessons to primary school students' and 'educating ministers such as *Imam* and *Hatip'* (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 169). As a consequence of the intra-party debates, the elective religious courses, which can be taken on-demand by parents, were added

to the curriculum of the 4th and 5th grades after 25 years (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 256). A Faculty of Theology was established at Ankara University (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 256) in 1949. Furthermore the Ministry of National Education initiated the establishment of Imam Hatip Courses with a 10-month curriculum. (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 256). It should be noted that the religion lessons drew interest from the society indeed. The ratio of students who had not attended the religion lessons was only about 1%, taking account of non-Muslim students as well (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 173).

There were two main stances in the ruling CHP over religious education. While a group defended that religion lessons may preserve national consciousness against rising foreign ideologies, namely communism; another fraction was in defense of the idea that any concession on the issue may lead to reactionary consequences eventually. In this regard, the Ministry of National Education held a striking position that can be enlightening in understanding the official approach to religious education:

> Compulsory courses related to any religion or sect in educational institutions of the Republic of Turkey, which is a secular state, cannot be subject to discussion. In this respect, it is essential that religion courses should remain optional. Any student or teacher cannot be forced to take or teach these lessons. Religion lessons will not have an effect on passing the class." (Mumcu, 2013, p. 195)

To put it differently, the CHP government was in search of a way that may be satisfactory for conservative demands while preserving Kemalist foundational principles within the education system.

In spite of the intense interest for the elective religion lessons, it is rather hard to state that the 10-month long Imam Hatip courses were satisfactory to neither conservatives nor seculars (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 178). The courses were criticized as inadequate in terms of educating qualified ministers.

While the CHP government had confusions over what to reform about the education system in consideration of the upcoming elections, the Democrats held a critical position on the issue. The CHP had been accused of communism (Kaplan, 1999, p. 211) and blasphemy during the era

(Mumcu, 2013, pp. 194-195); and the field of education played a crucial role for opposition in this manner. Due to numbered left-leaning personnel in the Ministry of National Education, who had been employed during Hasan Ali Yücel's ministry term, Hasan Ali Yücel and even İsmet İnönü were accused of communism (Kaplan, 1999, pp. 210-211). In this kind of political climate, the 1950 elections were finally at hand.

3.2.2 *Education under Democrat Party Rule (1950-1960)*

Democrat Party's Foundational Program (1946) had 9 articles on the education system. The Democrats, on one hand, were in defense of a unified education system as well (Tunaya, 1952, p. 666). On the other hand, according to the Party Program, the Democrat Party "… refuses the misinterpretation of secularism as it is anti-religious, and entitles freedom of religion as one of the sacred rights of humanity." (Tunaya, 1952, p. 663) Concordantly, the Democrats were in favor of educating capable ministers and forming a qualified religious education (Kaplan, 1999, p. 202). This sort of approach to the education system was taking a stand against the most crucial reform that had been launched in the 1920s and 1930s by the CHP. In other words, the Democrats intended to make religion a part of the education system once again.

CHP government, as mentioned, has allowed optional elective lessons and established several Imam Hatip Courses after the 1946 elections. Nonetheless, these policies were carried into effect with strict secular concerns; therefore, they were not efficient in terms of satisfying conservative segments that is in search of a more comprehensive framework in the field of freedom of religion (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 178). In this regard, the reforms that took place in the field of education in the era (1946-1950) can be assessed as efforts that were launched in order to preserve the political legitimacy of the CHP within the multi-party system, rather than sincere policies in aspiration of meeting the demands coming from conservatives (Gökaçtı, 2005, pp. 178-179). No matter why the CHP has already reluctantly triggered the process of forming a religion-involved education system during the 1946-1950 term of government, and it was

going to be the Democrat Party installing religion into the education system in the strict sense.

During the 10-year era of the Democrat Party (DP) governments (1950-1960), Turkey was going to witness religion gaining much more space in the public sphere alongside economic liberalization. The Democrats, in their Party Program, accused the One-Party System of 'reducing the productivity of work life', 'preventing economic progress with interventionism', and being bureaucratic and a 'monopolist state model' (Kaplan, 1999, p. 215). The Democrats' government program, on the other hand, was a reflection of the conjuncture taking place in the world, in terms of the Cold War-related policies. The program had clearly an anti-communist stand, by declaring the importance of legal measures to annihilate 'extreme-left movements' (Kaplan, 1999, p. 216). According to the Democrats, extreme-left political opinions could not be treated within the freedom of speech and conscience (Kaplan, 1999, p. 216). The field of education was seen as another field to put up a fight against communism for the Democrats as well. The abolishment of the Village Institutes in 1954 can also be interpreted in this regard. The Village Institutes had been criticized due to so-called resemblances of the Soviet Union and encouraging communist ideology through practices such as students working in fields of construction, agricultural and technical activities, cleaning, and maintenance work under allegedly left-leaning or Marxist school administrations (Aysal, 2005, p. 277). During this era until the DP victory in the 1950 General Elections, the Democrats had criticized CHP in the context of the Village Institutes repeatedly, and some of the right-wing CHP deputies were in favor of these critiques as well (Aysal, 2005, pp. 277-278). After the transition to the multi-party system in 1946, the accusations against the Village Institutes had become more widespread among all the opposition. In this respect, the mixed-sex education in the Village Institutes was criticized due to its 'non-compliant' structure to the 'Turkish sentiment of family and morals' too (Aysal, 2005, p. 277). Eventually, the Democrats annulled the so-called 'pro-communist' and 'immoral' Village Institutes in 1954 by turning them into teachers' training schools (Okçabol, 2013, p. 18). Alongside the Village Institutes, the People Houses

(*Halkevleri*) were abolished already in 1951 as well. (Okçabol, 2013, p. 17). The closure of these institutions signaled the dismantling of two key ISAs of the early Republican hegemonic project. Their elimination reflected not only a shift in political power but also a broader transformation in the symbolic infrastructure through which the state had previously reproduced its Kemalist values.

The Democrats had taken important steps in this 10-year period such as lifting the ban over the language of the Azan (*the call to prayer*) that had been legally in Turkish for 18 years, lifting the ban over hajj, re-opening shrines (*türbeler*), and setting free religious publishing (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 188). As religion had gained strength in politics and the public sphere, it also had gained strength in the educational field as well.

After the Democrats won the 1950 General Elections, the system of education became a hot topic for the new government. The 1946 Program of the Party illustrated that the Democrats aimed to form a more religious-based education system. Democrat Party's first government program was in parallel with the Party Program of 1946. In the government program, spiritual (*manevi*) education was interpreted as important as technic and material education (Ünsür, 2003, pp. 16-17). According to the new government, national morals and spirit (*maneviyat*) were seen as crucial in the current world:

> No matter how far materially (technically) advanced, any community not based upon unshakable national morals and not giving a place to traditional values in its soul will be clearly dragged into a bad sequel in today's complicated world. (Kaplan, 1999, p. 218).

Therefore, unsurprisingly, the program was seeking for an education system that is harmonious with 'national characteristics and traditions' (Kaplan, 1999, p. 218).

The democrats kept elective religion lessons in the curriculum of the 4th and 5th grades and put effort into making them more efficient within the education system. Religion lessons were added into the curriculum of the 1st and 2nd grades of secondary schools' (*orta okul*) in 1956 as well (Kaplan, 1999, p. 224). Furthermore, although these courses were labeled

as electives, students were required to pass them in order to move on to the next grade. Also, parents had to write petitions not to take the course -rather than to enroll in it- which contradicted the very idea of an elective course. (Çizmeli, 2013, p. 160). Recently established Imam Hatip Courses had turned into Imam Hatip Schools again after 19 years, in 1951 (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 256). The schools were designed as 4-year technical schools based on primary education. And a 3-year of high school education (*lise*) was added to the Imam Hatip schools' system in 1955 (Sakaoğlu, 2003, p. 256). Within the period of the Democrat Party governments between the years 1950 and 1960, the number of Imam Hatip schools had reached 19 in primary education and 16 in secondary (Kaplan, 1999, p. 224). The Faculty of Theology at *Darilfünun* (Istanbul University), which was established in 1924 and annulled in 1936, was re-established as Higher Institute of Islamic Studies (*Yüksek İslam Enstitüsü*) in 1959 (Kaplan, 1999, pp. 224-225).

In brief, after the transition to a multi-party system, the Village Institutes and Public Houses were abolished, religion lessons became a part of the curriculum again after 22 years in urban schools and after 9 years in rural schools, Imam Hatip schools were re-established after 21 years, and religious education has started to take place in higher education after 13 years. Through such symbolic changes, the Democrat Party contributed to a contested redefinition of the national common sense. A common sense that increasingly made room for Islamic cultural references within the public sphere. Yet, this discursive expansion was not uncontested: it triggered significant resistance from secular segments of the bureaucratic and intellectual elite. Rather than indicating a seamless transformation, this period reveals how hegemonic norms surrounding religion, morality, and national identity were actively negotiated, reinterpreted, and challenged in both institutional and cultural fields. The period between 1946 and 1960 represents a phase of hegemonic reconfiguration marked less by rupture than by contestation and negotiation. While the Kemalist superstructure retained institutional dominance, the growing presence of religious discourse and symbolism in public life signaled an evolving struggle over the moral and cultural boundaries of the Republic.

Rather than a smooth recalibration, the decade was characterized by competing efforts to redefine what would count as legitimate values within the national common sense. This struggle, visible across educational policies, political rhetoric, and symbolic acts, laid the groundwork for a more open and enduring contest over the ideological foundations of collective identity.

§ 3.3 Education between Two Military Coups (1960-1980)

A military coup d'etat put an end to 10-year of DP rule on May 27, 1960. Turkish people became aware of the coup after the announcement on Turkish radio that declares the Turkish Armed Forces had seized control in order to 'prevent fratricide' and 'recover democracy from its great depression' (Zürcher, 2004, p. 241). The 1960 military coup has affected Turkey's stance on the economy, politics, social life, and the education system as well.

The Constitution of 1961, introduced following the 1960 military coup d'etat, consisted of the 'spirit' of the 1960s and 1970s in Turkey. The new constitution, compared to the Constitution of 1924, was much more liberal in terms of providing a legal basis for political actions in a wide spectrum (Zürcher, 2004, p. 246). "A full bill of civil liberties was included in the constitution" (Zürcher, 2004, p. 245). According to Kaplan (1999, p. 262), on the other hand, the 1961 Constitution regulated the relationship between the state and citizens in accordance with social state policies within an approach of solidarity and corporatism. However, one way or the other, the 1961 Constitution had opened the way for extensive social mobilization. Thus, Turkey witnessed rising democratic demands in politics and cultural fields during the term of 1960-1980 (Kaplan, 1999, p. 227). Social mobility throughout the country has increased rapidly. Political organizations of the industrial working class had gained power; youth and student movements had become a hot factor in politics; the Kurdish national movement had appeared; public employees, including teachers and educators, had widely organized (Kaplan, 1999, p. 227). This

highly politicized society consisted of the basis of the concrete steps taken in the field of education within the period.

3.3.1 *Re-preservation of the Foundational Ideology within the Education System (1960-1971)*

After the coup d'etat, a military government had taken the authority in order to lead the process of transition to democracy. "The enlightened and gallant Turkish Armed Forces that succeeded the *revolution* of 27 May 1960", according to the military government, "has set to work just after taking command from the (Democrat Party) government, which had become illegitimate by violating the constitution, human rights and freedoms of Turkish people" (Dağlı, 1988, p. 3). According to General Cemal Gürsel's military government, national education was one of the most crucial matters in Turkey (Kaplan, 1999, p. 229). Thus, the military government had chosen to supervise religious education within official institutions rather than dragging it out of the school system. In this respect, during the short military government term between the years 1960 and 1961, the Directorate of Religious Education was founded with the objective of administering the Imam Hatip schools and the High Institute of Islam (Kaplan, 1999, p. 230).

Until 1965, Turkey had witnessed a series of coalitions led by CHP due to the TSK's demands (Zürcher, 2004, pp. 248-250). The coalition of CHP and Justice Party (AP), which was formed as a result of the first democratic elections after the 1961 coup d'etat, had dissolved in a short time. The governments that took place between the years 1962-1965 had programs that highlighted the importance of education in terms of social and economic development alongside the aim of creating an order and national culture based upon principles of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and Western civilization (Kaplan, 1999, pp. 231-233). However, the era of coalitions ended with the 1965 General Elections. Justice Party, as the successor of the Democrat Party, won the elections and came to power alone.

The main target of the education policies, according to AP government, should be helping citizens to develop their understanding of material and spiritual life with a national conscience (Dağlı, 1988, p. 94). In this

regard, the program of the first AP government openly declared that religious education may become much more widespread:

> It is not possible to consider the secularism principle in our constitution within a framework that restrains the religious needs of citizens or restricts freedom of religion and religious education. As in all civilized countries, we will give importance to religious education in a way that meets the needs of spiritual faith in our country, which rapidly moves in economic and cultural fields. We will strive to raise well-educated clergy (Dağlı, 1988, p. 96).

The program, also, was in defense of Imam Hatip students in terms of providing graduates the right to enter universities:

> We will provide the possibility of higher education for graduates of Imam Hatip and technical schools in order to let them develop their skills (Dağlı, 1988, p. 95).

In this context, in 1967, optional religion lessons were added into the curriculum of the high schools as well (Okçabol, 2013, p. 17), and Imam Hatip schools have started to accept female students (Okçabol, 2013, p. 17).

Even though the Justice Party governments' aim was apparent in terms of extending the field of religious education, the 1961 Constitution's article 19/4 was also quite clear on its limits: "Religious education depends solely on the will of citizens and legal representatives of minor." In this respect, during the era between the years 1960 and 1980, any sort of compulsory religious education had never taken place. Nonetheless, there were still some main problems in the field. After 1961, the concept of setting up one's cadre in public offices has started to take place in all ministries, including the Ministry of National Education (Mumcu, 2013, p. 195). As a consequence, on one hand, the right-wing governments have started to provide a framework in religious education that was totally in support of the thoughts of the Sunni sect of Islam (Mumcu, 2013, p. 195). On the other hand, it was still reassuring for non-Muslim and Alevi citizens in terms of religious education's optional characteristics.

Imam Hatip schools, which started to gain momentum during the era of the Democrat Party government, continued to gain more space within the education system after the Justice Party came to power in 1965. The number of Imam Hatip schools has boomed during the Justice Party governments between the years 1965-1969. While the number of Imam Hatip schools was 26 in 1966, it has risen to 71 in 1969 (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 211). Imam Hatip graduates, mostly coming from rural areas with conservative backgrounds, have started to take place in Turkish political and social life through a newly rising Islamist paradigm after the second half of the 1960s (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 206). Even though seculars had deep apprehensions towards this new conservative flow, the 1968 movement, led by students and the working class, as was the case across the world, created a more tolerant political climate among secular political groups.

(Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 210). However, the liberal framework of the 1961 Constitution that allowed diversity within the political sphere was not going to take place for a long time.

3.3.2 *Education between the years 1971-1980*

As mentioned above, the working-class organizations had gained momentum during the era alongside rising youth and student movements both in the right and left-wing due to the liberal framework of the 1961 Constitution. In early 1971, on one hand, the AP government seemed to be paralyzed in reforming processes on any serious social, economic or financial matters (Zürcher, 2004, p. 258). On the other hand, the government had become inadequate in terms of preventing violence from taking place in the streets and universities. Turkish Armed Forces, in such a political climate, handed the prime minister a memorandum in 1971.

After the 1971 Military Memorandum a 'reform government' took over the power. Of course, national education was an important topic in the new government's program. According to the government program, a 'national education reform' -based upon the principle of secularism- was needed; and it was going to be carried out in the light of the principles of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Tevhid-i Tedrisat's perspective on the unified education system (Kaplan, 1999, pp. 237-238). Nonetheless, as

Kaplan (1999, p. 238) states, it is rather hard to interpret this perspective as a sincere approach to education. On the contrary, the perspective presented by the 'reform government' can be apprehended as 'official excuses' that legitimized the military intervention, especially considering the effects of the launched policies in the educational field afterward. Following the Military Memorandum, the Imam Hatip schools and religious education have gained a more secure status within the education system. The Imam Hatip schools, which used to have technical school status, have gained the same status as any standard high school after the military intervention (Kaplan, 1999, p. 238). As a consequence of this legislative regulation, the graduates of Imam Hatip schools finally got the right to enter universities without let or hindrance (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 220).

National Salvation Party (MSP), under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan, gained 48 members in the Parliament in the 1973 elections. This was the first time that conservatives and Islamists got representation in the parliament as a political party, rather than being a small group within other center-right parties. The MSP's entering the political scene led to remarkable fluctuations in policy-making processes alongside the education system, religion, and religious education. According to Erbakan and his cohorts, the Imam Hatip schools were not only technical schools founded in order to raise educated clergy; to the contrary, the schools were interpreted as the milestones of the future Turkey that has been formed (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 219). While religious education had always been embedded in ideological struggles since the foundation of the Republic, the MSP era marked a shift in how this struggle was articulated. Imam Hatip schools, already shaped by political dynamics, began to be overtly positioned as tools of a broader ideological project. Rather than initiating their politicization, this period amplified their role as symbolic institutions within Islamist discourse and national politics. This, of course, was going to cause a turning point in the Turkish education system. The coalition that was formed by CHP and MSP in 1974 has played a crucial role in this manner. The ideological stances of the parties taking place in the coalition were almost diametrically opposed. In this regard, CHP had to make concessions due to the coalition's vulnerable characteristics. One

of the most important concessions that were made by CHP had come to pass in the educational field. *Compulsory* moral lessons were added into the curriculum of both primary and secondary schools "in order to teach students moral precepts which are in accordance with Turkish national characteristics", as it was clearly stated in the government's program (Kaplan, 1999, p. 245). This development may be seen as laying a foundation for the introduction of compulsory religion lessons, which would become institutionalized in the education system after the 1980 coup d'état. As in the 1940s, CHP had taken crucial steps backward again in the field of religious education in the 1970s as well. Moreover, in this instance, the courses have become compulsory and much more influential in terms of taking part in both primary and secondary schools.

According to the Nationalist Front Governments, the main problem in then Turkey was a rising threat of communism (Kaplan, 1999, p. 247). Religion was considered as a preventing apparatus against left-wing ideologies. Therefore, the right-wing Nationalist Front Governments did not hesitate to empower religion in schools. In this regard, it can be said that both CHP and Nationalist Front Governments officiated in the 1970s had provided a more comfortable zone for religious education. The number of Imam Hatip schools had become more than 300 in the 1970s and the number of students receiving education in these institutions had become more than 100 thousand in 1978 (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 223).

Overall, the period between 1960 and 1980 can be described as a phase in which the Kemalist educational order maintained its institutional presence, yet began to coexist with increasingly visible religious references and institutions. These years reflected a contested and uneven process of hegemonic adjustment where secular norms were still dominant, but no longer uncontested. The ideological field of education began to reflect this duality, as religious discourse started to re-enter the public sphere through formal and informal channels, illustrating that the boundaries of the dominant version of common sense were slowly being renegotiated.

§ 3.4 The Rise of the Turkish-Islam Synthesis (1980-2002)

After having its sharpest military coup d'etat in 1980, Turkey launched many neoliberal reforms under the military regime. After 1980, Turkey, like many other developing countries such as Brazil, Mexico, India, and Chile, made quite a lot of transition in the field of economy in order to implement market-oriented policies for economic growth. While 'liberalization' took place in the economic field, social and political liberties had suffered under the brutality of the military regime.

The military regime, under the leadership of General Kenan Evren, had annihilated almost every social and political institution including political parties, unions, foundations, and non-governmental organizations which society needs in order to affect, shape or involve the political sphere (Kaplan, 1999, p. 305). Thousands of arrests and trials have been conducted against legal and illegal political movements. The military regime has reorganized the society in order to create a nation that shows obedience to the state in terms of economic, social and cultural policies that are put into effect after the 1980 military coup (Kaplan, 1999, p. 305).

3.4.1 *A Historical Turning Point: Ideological Shift of the Republic after the 1980 Military Coup*

The 1980 military coup was a breaking point for the official ideology of the Republic. Ataturkism (Kemalism) and Turkish nationalism, which had consisted sort of a 'semi-official' ideological paradigm in the 1961 Constitution, found a much larger place for itself in the 1982 Constitution –which was introduced after the coup- with a chauvinistic understanding of the concepts (Kaplan, 1999, p. 306). Nonetheless, after the 1982 Constitution, the military regime has illustrated an aberration from the classic interpretation of Kemalist secularism. Kemalist secularism, officially, had been transformed into a 'reconciled' form that tolerates and even encourages Islam in all political, social, cultural and educational spheres (Kaplan, 1999, p. 306). As Şerif Mardin (2002) states, it was a well-known fact that the military regime was certainly decisive in protecting the secular basis of the Republic. Nevertheless, the generals were also

pragmatists in terms of gaining legitimacy and "they were aware of the fact that they could not neglect the changes that had taken place in Turkey in the last 30 years" (Mardin, 2002, p. 125). As Mardin says, "If Atatürk himself had returned to life, he would have been astonished" seeing that many issues have become a part of ordinary life in Turkey, that had been "removed due to their anti-secular characteristics" (Mardin, 2002, p. 125).

Within the educational field, it is rather easy to track what Mardin meant. According to the 24th article of the 1982 Constitution:

> Education of religion and morals is done under the supervision and control of the state. *Religious culture and moral education are among the compulsory courses* taught in primary and secondary schools. (Emphasis mine)

The religion lessons, which had been removed in the 1920s and started to be taught as elective courses after the 1940s, have eventually become a part of the education system as compulsory lessons. Ironically, it has been done not by Islamists but by the generals who were in a claim of the reassuring Kemalist basis of the Republic. Moreover, the Imam Hatip schools, which were expected to be closed or reduced in numbers by many due to the secular character of the 1980 Military Coup, have kept their existential status without any decrease in numbers (Gökaçtı, 2005, pp. 227-228); and graduates of the Imam Hatip schools gained the right to enter all the fields of the universities in 1983, which had used to be only Faculty of Arts or related programs after 1973 (Ünsür, 2003, p. 126). Thus, the integration of religious and moral elements into the curriculum aimed to produce a new common sense that could align social consent with the conservative-nationalist vision promoted by the military and allied intellectual circles.

It should be noted that the Iranian Revolution had recently become a reality in those days, and Turkey's potential shift into an Islamic regime was a hot topic in debates. In this respect, these can be interpreted as political maneuvers made by the generals, who had seen communism and Islamism as two of the main reasons for the coup, in order to take the edge of the complaints coming from the conservative wing (Gökaçtı, 2005,

p. 228). Nevertheless, regardless of the reasons behind pro-Islamic policies, the 1980 Military Coup was a historical breaking point that materialized Turkish-Islam Synthesis as the State's, if not official, semi-official ideology. In this regard, Server Tanilli goes even further and states that "The 1980 military coup has institutionalized fascism by making the process of reactionism successful" (Tanilli, 1988, p. 98). According to Tanilli and many other left-leaning modernists, the military coup d'etat "brought a total rejection against the enlightenment movement of creating independent, democratic, and the secular society in Turkey" (Tanilli, 1988, pp. 98-99).

The 1982 Constitution destroyed the understanding of freedom of education recognized in the 1961 Constitution. The educational ideology of the military regime was based upon demolishing any challenge coming from any political group that was not in accordance with the state's new semi-ideological stance of Turkish-Islam synthesis. In this regard, as clarified in the 58th article of the 1982 Constitution, "The state takes measures in order to educate the youth (…) against the opinions which aim to abolish the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation". This approach illustrates the fact that according to the military regime the state had to protect its youth from any 'detrimental' ideology or flow regardless it is socialism or cultural liberalism (Kaplan, 1999, pp. 306-307). While the 58th article was in defense of absolute 'national unity' no matter if it was provided at the cost of democratic progression, the 42nd article of the 1982 Constitution banned education in the mother tongue to suppress the rising Kurdish movement. According to the applicable law, "Any other language except for Turkish cannot be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens in any educational institution".

The legal, economic and ideological framework of the 1980 military coup d'etat had been preserved by the successor of the military regime, namely the Motherland Party (ANAP) under the leadership of Turgut Özal. Özal was the architect of the 24 January Decisions[9] which paved the

[9] The beginning of the neoliberal structural transformation or/and the adjustment process of Turkey into the world economic system. The 24 January 1980 program had a

way for the military regime to implement neoliberal policies after taking over the power. The goals of the 24 January Decisions could be explained briefly as improving the balance of payment, reducing the rate of inflation in the short term, and creating an export-oriented and market-based economy and economic growth in the longer term (Pamuk, 2012). This transformation indicates a strong dissent from the earlier eras of Turkey, since it aimed an economy on an outwardly oriented course instead of an interventionist and inwardly oriented one; briefly a sharp turn from import substitution industrialization. The philosophy of the constantly changing liberalization program was not so different from traditional liberalization programs. The ideological framework of the package was based on reducing state interventions, establishing a private sector-based market economy, assuming the foreign investment's involvement in the economy by being more open to international trade and capital flows would have been a substitutional factor for domestic capital and price control (Kazgan, 2006; Kazgan, 2012; Pamuk, 2012; Ulagay, 1984). Of course, the non-market public investments fall off the map in this picture (Özkazanç, 2011; Kazgan, 2012).

Özal also served as the vice prime minister of the military government after the 1980 coup d'etat. During the ANAP governments from the early 1980s until the early 1990s, Turkish-Islam synthesis has gained more momentum within the education system. For instance, while the weekly course hours of philosophy and sociology lessons were reduced, the creationist narrative had become a vital part of the education system against the evolutionary theory (Okçabol, 2013, p. 22). Within the same era, private educational 'enterprises' have become an important part of the Turkish education system as well, based on the State Planning Organization's advice in the 5th and following development plans (Okçabol, 2013, p. 24). Even considering the enormous increase in the number of private teaching institutions (*dershaneler*) alone, which had become almost an

significant impact on the neoclassical monetarist approach within the same framework of neoliberal thinkers led a 'Washington Consensus'. The military coup that took place in the same year 12 September showed determination to maintain and indurate the program in order to integrate Turkey into the neoliberal world economy.

essential part of the preparation process for university entrance exams, can show how far neo-liberalization[10] in education has reached. The number of private teaching institutions in Turkey, which used to be only 78 in the late 1970s, had already reached more or less 2000 in the late 1990s (Okçabol, 2013, p. 24).

The neoliberal economic policies launched following the 24 January Decisions with the help of the 1980 military coup d'etat have caused wider gaps in income and a lower degree of social services (Gök, 2007, p. 251). Rising inequality in income distribution, of course, has become vigorously embedded within the educational field as well. Private schools have been gradually gaining power within the system, especially after the 1950s and 1960s; however, the 1980 coup d'etat was a turning point in terms of the creation of a de-facto dual system in which equal right to education has suffered due to high-quality education provided by the private schools, while public schools having problems both on resources and educational quality (Gök, 2007, p. 251). After the 1980s military coup d'etat, the process of this dual system followed an accelerated path that ended up with strong class-based contrast in terms of getting an education.

Briefly, after the 1980 military coup d'etat, Turkey has witnessed a process of neo-liberalization in the economy, while its social and political environment has started to be based upon much more religion-related concepts. The education system of the country, as mentioned before, was not an exception and it has started to follow the path of the 1980 military coup's ideals as well. A slightly pro-Islamic understanding has become the ascendant in the education system. Nonetheless, it is also important to mention that there have been some implementations in order to prevent political Islam's rise as well. After the military coup d'etat, the

[10] The prescription of neoliberalism on overcoming the crises in the 1970s can be put in labels as preventing nation-state interventionist policies, validating free market understanding, restricting the rise of money supply; liberalizing trade, money and capital flows worldwide; diminishing the tax burden on capital, removing public investments, commodifying public services, such as education (Pamuk, 2012; Pamuk, 2016; Kazgan, 2012; Yentürk, 2003).

headscarf bans, which were going to become a chronic problem of Turkish politics, appeared discontinuously for the first time in educational institutions, especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Gökaçtı, 2005, p. 229). The 1994 local elections victory of the Islamist 'Welfare Party' (Refah Partisi) was the first signal anyway, but the Welfare Party's (RP) 1995 victory in general elections was going to cause another need for 'restoration' in the Turkish Armed Forces' point of view.

In sum, the post-1980 period marked a significant phase in the ideological reorientation of the Turkish education system. While the state preserved its formal commitment to secularism, educational institutions increasingly became instruments for embedding conservative-religious values into public life. This transformation did not occur through abrupt ruptures, but through a gradual and strategic realignment of official discourse, curricular content, and institutional structures. From a Gramscian perspective, this era represents an attempt to reconstruct hegemonic consent by integrating the Turkish-Islamic synthesis into the common sense of the collective identity. Yet this hegemonic effort was neither seamless nor uncontested; it remained subject to political pushback, bureaucratic negotiation, and periodic recalibration, as the 28 February process would later demonstrate.

3.4.2 *28 February 1997: A Short-Breathed Kemalist Restoration*

The brutal 1980 Military Coup d'etat has been very successful in terms of re-organizing society and politics. Its nationalist approach and defense of Turkish-Islam synthesis had been widely accepted by the right-wing mass political parties after the general elections in 1983. Rising left-wing movements have been successfully codified as the enemies of national unity and the fatherland. However, the military regime and succeeding ANAP had fought the left at the expense of the concessions on the secular basis of the Republic. It is rather hard to claim that it was the only reason behind the Islamist movements rising, but undoubtedly this shift in the official ideology has contributed to the rise of Islamist political movements as well. The Islamist Welfare Party, as the successor of the MSP under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan, achieved great and

unexpected success in the 1994 Local Elections and the 1995 General Elections. The Islamist Welfare Party became a coalition partner, and Erbakan himself became the prime minister of the 54th Government of the Republic of Turkey, namely Refah-Yol. This was a shock for the secular masses in the country, and of course for the Turkish Armed Forces.

The Refah-Yol Government could not resist in the long run. Before turning its second year, the Turkish Armed Forces interpreted that an intervention was needed in order to obviate rising Islamism. In this regard, the Turkish Army had foreseen a restoration process on 28 February 1997. The aim of the army was basically to restrain the influence of Islamists in state apparatus; especially in the fields of economy and education. During the National Security Council (MGK) meeting, the Turkish Army introduced a detailed 'demands list' to the government, although officially they were named 'advice'. Erbakan had seen no choice but to accept the demands. However, it is rather hard to claim that it was adequate for the military forces. After the 28 February military intervention, there have been crucial outcomes such as the closing of the Welfare Party and increasing prosecutions of the organization involved in 'reactionary' activities anyway (Tekeli, 2010, p. 312). Undoubtedly, one of the most significant results of the 28 February Memorandum was the 8-year uninterrupted compulsory primary education. The reason behind this demand was simply based on the idea of closing the secondary parts of the Imam Hatip schools.

Following the 12 September 1980 military coup d'etat, Imam Hatip graduates did not have to get an education in related programs and had gained the right to enter any faculty of any university, as mentioned. The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) put this process to an end on 30 July 1998, following the 28 February Decisions. According to the new law, technical school students' weighted high school grade point average was going to be multiplied by 0.88 if they opted for related programs (Tekeli, 2010, p. 314). However, this ratio had been determined as 0.3 for unrelated programs and faculties (Tekeli, 2010, p. 314). This had made practically almost impossible it for Imam Hatip graduates to get an education in any faculty or program but theology. Previous research on Imam Hatip

graduates' preferences has shown the fact that their tendency toward higher education was mostly toward Political Sciences and Law Faculties (Tekeli, 2010, p. 314). In other words, the graduates may have become decision-makers of the Republic. Probably, the main concern of the Turkish Armed Forces was based upon this fact alongside religious education's rising role in the Turkish education system. In the short term, these measures came up with a result. While the number of Imam Hatip graduates was around 80 thousand in 1999, this number had become around 10 thousand in 2003 with a sharp decrease.

Alongside the 8-year uninterrupted compulsory education, the headscarf bans also became a hot topic after the 28 February Decisions. Turkish Armed Forces were decisive in terms of putting dress code into practice in universities. After the MGK's decisions on 28 February, the General Assembly of the Council of Higher Education decided that the rectors should be warned about the decisive implementation of the dress code in universities (Tekeli, 2010, p. 315). This caused the revival of headscarf debates in universities. However, the ban was maintained and became widespread in 2001 as well (Tekeli, 2010, p. 315). The headscarf bans also had been implemented in Imam Hatip schools excluding only the Quran courses (Tekeli, 2010, p. 315).

The February 28 process reflected a moment of intensified struggle over the ideological boundaries of the Republic. While secular actors sought to reassert their dominance through legal, institutional, and symbolic interventions, particularly in the field of education. The contestation over hegemonic control did not disappear. Rather than restoring a stable and lasting consensus, the process revealed the depth of the ideological fragmentation within Turkish society. This period marks not the reestablishment of hegemonic unity, but a coercive attempt to reverse the ideological gains of the preceding decades. In other words, an attempt that ultimately proved unsustainable in the face of growing social and political shifts that would culminate in the AKP era.

4

The First Decade of the AKP in the Educational Field: 'Conservative Democrat' Educational Policies (2002-2012)

The first decade of the AKP in power was a period of cautious change in education. During these years, the party avoided open confrontation with the secular state and focused on building legitimacy. Its "conservative democrat" identity helped the AKP to speak both the language of local values and of global norms like democracy and human rights. In education, this meant balancing between neoliberal goals and a slow cultural shift. The party aimed to distance itself from the Kemalist understanding of modernity and began creating space for religion in schools—though in a more subtle way than it would after 2011. In this chapter, the AKP's education policies between 2002 and 2012 as the early phase of its larger political project will be examined.

Turkish-Islam Synthesis, as mentioned before, has provided Islamist movements with a much wider opportunity for political activity. Islamist Welfare Party (RP) became a coalition partner in 1995; and it was banned following the 28 February military intervention on grounds that it violated the principle of laicism in the constitution. The RP's successors separated into two fractions after the banishment (İnal and Akkaymak, 2012, p. xiv). On 14 August 2001, a younger and more "progressivist"

generation, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Turkey since 2014, founded the Justice and Development Party, officially known as AK Parti (AKP). AKP, during the era, mostly distanced itself from the more "Islamist" ideology of the RP (Gür, 2019, p. 343). The AKP won the 2002 general election by a landslide and came to power alone. Between the years 2002 and 2011, the party followed a set of policies that focused on creating a new form of hegemony against Kemalism. During the making process of its counter-hegemony, the AKP government has followed pragmatist policies, especially in two dimensions. Firstly, the AKP government sought to construct a hegemonic project that brings together the discourses of the center-right with populist strategies and the society's traditional values –namely, religion– in an attempt to respond to the widespread discontent and political instability caused by the crisis-ridden economic conditions of the 1990s and early 2000s (Akça, 2011). The neoliberal hegemonic project in Turkey has followed a unique path in that the 'heavy statist coercion mechanism' and 'strong authoritarian statist tradition' are intertwined after the 1980 military coup (Aksoy & Eren Deniz, 2018, p. 110). Nevertheless, the neoliberal strategy initiated by the Motherland Party (ANAP) in the post-coup era was subsequently continued by the AKP (Akça, 2011; Özkazanç, 2011).

Secondly, the AKP government has tried to form a 'modern' conservative ideology rather than solid Islamism, namely conservative democracy. This ideological stance refers to notions that originated from the West such as state of law, human rights, democracy, and freedom of religion. According to Yalçın Akdoğan (2003, p. 6), conservative democracy is a third way that excludes both 'Islamist revolutionary transformations' and modernist social engineering projects. This ideological stance, according to Akdoğan and as the AKP presents it, provides a more passive bottom-up transformation (Akdoğan, 2003). Akdoğan (2003, p. 128) states that this political stance is the third way in order to re-produce local values system within universal standards in reconciliation with conservativism. Thus, the conservative democrat identity of the AKP illustrates the fact that the party aims to justify Islamic-rooted values through universal values. The alleged denial of the party's Islamist roots and the creation of a

new form of conservatism, to Ahmet Yıldız (2004, p. 55), have three 'messages' to different addresses in essence. Firstly, the party's aim was to reach a larger electorate by resorting to 'local' values that extend beyond the classic Islamist grass-root. Secondly, Yıldız (2004) states that the ideology of conservatism helps the party to overcome possible international legitimacy deficiencies. And thirdly, the party intended to eliminate the risk of being liquidated by the Kemalist military establishment by distancing itself from political Islamism. In other words, the stance of the AKP was quite eclectic in terms of defending conservatism in the political and cultural aspects while advocating a free market economy and neoliberalism in the economic sense and putting emphasis on many pro-Western notions, democracy; and religion in the societal field.

The discourse of conservative democracy, in this regard, should be considered as an early-period ideological stance of the AKP that has been constituted as a response to the discursive needs of the party while the state apparatus was not controlled. In this sense, the conservative democrat stance of the AKP should be reviewed as a hegemonic strategy highlighting democracy and democratization in order to win active and passive consents of different political forces -such as liberal and center-right segments of the society- to remove the obstacles on the way of seizing the state apparatus (Yıldırım, 2016, p. 554). In parallel with this ideological stance, which tends to act in a more reconciled position as a counter-hegemonic project, there are differences in the educational policies of the AKP between the years 2002-2011 and post-2011. Between the years 2002 and 2011, the educational policies of the AKP government have mainly focused on two priorities. Firstly, the ruling AKP has put effort into undermining the modernist approach to education, which has been equated with Kemalism by the Islamists that highlights positivism, scientism, and behaviorism, as it will be revisited in the following parts. Secondly, the AKP government, like many neoliberals of the time, has followed strict policies in order to integrate into global capitalism. Thus, the party has

insisted on an economic-based understanding of education that is parallel with the ideals of the post-Washington Consensus. [1]

In this chapter, firstly the AKP's point of view on education will be presented through party program, action plans, and election manifesto. Secondly, the ideological stance of the 2004 curriculum reform will be discussed as an attempt to understand the AKP's tendencies on education before seizing the state apparatus. Thirdly, the reforms in secondary schools will be examined to comprehend the relationship between the education and neoliberal integration process of Turkey.

§ 4.1 The Educational Targets of the Early AKP

The 58th Government of the Republic of Turkey, which was formed after the 3 November 2002 general election under the leadership of the then prime minister Abdullah Gül because of Erdoğan's political ban[12], declared a 150-page Emergency Action Plan (EAP) on 3 January 2003. There were 205 actions within the scope of the EAP. These actions were combined under the titles of Public Administration Reform, Economic Transition Program, Law Reform, and Social Policies. The aimed educational policies of the AKP were listed under the title of Social Policies, in the section of 'Qualified Education' (*Nitelikli Eğitim*).

The EAP's prominent educational aims can be labeled as: Preparing a new curriculum; restructuring the Ministry of National Education (MoNE); providing an education that is formed in accordance with students' interests and abilities after the 6th grade; giving weight to vocational and technical schools; providing cooperation between vocational high schools, universities and industrial organizations; employing

[1] The Post-Washington Consensus, a term coined by economist John Williamson in 1989, refers to a set of neoliberal policy prescriptions promoted by institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It emphasizes trade liberalization, privatization, and a minimal role for the state. The concept emerged as a reaction against state-led industrialization and protectionism.

[12] Erdoğan's ban was lifted with the help of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and Erdoğan became the prime minister of the 59th government in 2003.

teachers and lecturers under contractual status; and supporting private sector investments in education (T.C. Başbakanlık, 2003, pp. 93–98).

The Party Program of the AKP (AKP, 2001), which has not changed since the founding of the party, was in accordance with the EAP. It also presented an economics-based conceptualization of education:

> According to our party, education is the most important element of development in every field. Societies that do not use their human capital effectively are doomed to lose their chance of competition. Therefore, our party believes that the first priority in the allocation of public resources should be given to investments in education.

The AKP, in its 2002 Election Manifesto (AKP, 2002), promised to "increase the share of education [in public expenses] by making cost-benefit analysis" and "giving weight to vocational and technical education" in parallel with the EAP as well. The Party Program, as the EAP, also put emphasis on the aim of increasing the private sector's share in education:

> Private educational institutions will be increased in number through promotive regulations in order to encourage the private sector make investments in education; and implementations will be launched to ensure that the existing private schools operate with 100% capacity.

Alongside the Party Program, the 2002 Election Manifesto of the AKP had the aim of supporting private enterprise 'in all areas of education' and increasing 'the share of private enterprise in education'.

Another significant point of the 58th Government Program of the AKP was the emphasis on the culture. The first sentence in the education section of the program states that conserving and developing cultural values and richness, and handing it down to the next generations is 'the fundamental policy of the government' alongside "preventing cultural degeneration". In this context, an emphasis on religious education appeared in the program as well. In the 58th government program, the AKP declares

that it will provide efficiency and operability to religious education within the framework of secularism:

> Through providing efficiency and operability to the principle of secularism that is defined in our Constitution, (...) a religious education will be made effective and productive within the framework of our Constitution. In this way, the expectation of our citizens in the field of religious education will be met and it will be possible to put an end to the abuses experienced in this field.

According to the AKP Party Program, the party also was against the continuous 8-year compulsory primary education. Continuous 8-year primary education must have been separated into two different parts. In the Party Program, it was stated that "Compulsory education will be restructured in a gradual way that provides an opportunity for preference and guidance (…)". In other words, the education system should focus on students' interests, preferences, and vocational orientations.

As can be seen, on one hand, the AKP had the aims of increasing private education's share in the education system and making religious education effective, allegedly in accordance with the secularism principle in the Constitution, in its party program, election manifesto and the government program in its very first years. The party interpreted education as an instrument of development within the economic term of cost-benefit analysis. On the other hand, the AKP was in search of an education system that primarily focuses on vocational and technical education, which will function in cooperation with universities and especially industrial organizations.

However, in fact, the AKP's first attempts in the educational field were not based on structural transitions. The party, firstly, followed a strict policy of setting up its own cadre in public offices, and in the educational field, it was of course the MoNE. In the very first months of the AKP government, 276 senior executives were replaced, and 160 new appointments were made in the central organization of the MoNE (Okçabol, 2013, p. 61). In these first months of the AKP, most of the 1040 District and Provincial Directors of National Education were dismissed as well. And those

who were not dismissed generally had religious backgrounds, i.e. they were Imam Hatip or Theology (*İlahiyat*) graduates (Okçabol, 2013, p. 59-60).

Another cadre setting up has taken place in the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DİB). The employment numbers hardly reached 20 thousand staff in the MoNE, whereas it was around 35 thousand for the DİB in the first years of the AKP government (Okçabol, 2013, p. 62). During the era of Hüseyin Çelik as the Minister of National Education (2003-2009), the number of District or Provincial Directors of National Education who have a religious education background rose to 266 from 86. Between the years 2002 and 2007, 7758 Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (DKAB) teachers were appointed by the MoNE. It must be noted that the number of appointed teachers of physics, biology, and chemistry was 1454 in total during the same era (Okçabol, 2013, p. 62).

In addition to the significant personnel changes in the Ministry of National Education, one of the first policies implemented by the AKP in the field of education was the reform of the national curriculum.

§ 4.2 Ideological Stance of the 2004 Curriculum Reform

The 2004 reform was one of the first large-scale education policies introduced by the AKP government. While it was presented as a technical update aimed at aligning with European Union standards and global trends, it also carried important ideological messages. This section explores how the reform changed the foundations of the curriculum in terms of how knowledge, truth, and values were defined. These shifts offer important clues about the AKP's long-term approach to education and its vision for society.

The AKP reformed the curriculum of the primary schools and then the secondary school curriculum as well in 2004 and 2005. The reform was based on two dimensions: Firstly, it was an outcome of the ongoing negotiations with the European Union (EU). The possibility of the full-membership and the process of the full-membership negotiations affected the formulation of the new curriculum (İnal, 2012, p. 23). Secondly,

integrating national education into globalization had an impact on the idea of creating a new curriculum (İnal, 2012, p. 23).

According to the revised curriculum, lecturing was going to be student-centered rather than teachers, and the courses will be discussed by questioning the principle of 'mutual causality' (Çalışkan, 2004). Hüseyin Çelik, then Minister of National Education, declared that the "Quantum paradigm will replace the Newtonian paradigm" in the new curriculum (Şahin, 2005). Anti-democratic and non-pluralist 'behaviorist' educational philosophy which dictates 'linear thought' was going to be replaced with a 'constructivist' perspective (İnal, 2017). According to the MEB, the previous curriculum with the educational philosophy of behaviorism was a significant reason behind the problems of the country due to its 'linear', 'monist', and 'vulgar reductionist' understanding (İnal, 2012, p. 23). On the other hand, the educational philosophy of constructivism was intented to provide students with an educational environment that is based on 'probabilistic understanding' and 'multidirectional causality' (İnal, 2012, p. 23). To the MoNe, the truth was grounded in 'objective reality' in the previous curriculum, whereas the revised curriculum has an understanding that is based on 'subjective reality' (MEB, 2005, p. 38-41).

Therefore, it can be said that the very first attempt of the AKP to reform education within a comprehensive framework focused on conflictual notions. 'Anti-democratic vs. Democratic', 'linear vs. non-linear', 'objective reality vs. subjective reality', and eventually 'Behaviorism vs. Constructivism'… Thus, one must understand why the discussions around education are based on epistemological constructivism and its conceptualizing of education during the first years of the AKP rule rather than the content of the national education. What was the cause of the tendency toward constructivism for the decision-makers?

Of course, pedagogical concerns played a role in the tendency towards constructivism for some of the decision-makers taking place in the process of reforming the curriculum. The ineffectualness and failure of the Turkish students in any kind of international measurement could be observed easily. Turkish students have consistently scored nearly the worst results within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) countries in international assessments such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) or the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Thus, at least we can think that some of the bureaucrats have taken an active position during the reform process due to the sincere beliefs in pedagogical constructivism which put emphasis on student-centered learning methods or student participation alongside pupils' experiences and understanding of subjects (Ünder, 2012, p. 37). Moreover, it was in accordance with the '*zeitgeist'* in which Turkey's candidacy of the EU opens a road to challenging the classic approach to education of the state. However, the main reason behind the curriculum reform and confronting notions that became the main topic of the educational discussions in the Turkish case, in fact, can be interpreted as an outcome of the ideological position of the AKP.

Some hints can be found in former Undersecretary of the Ministry of National Education Necat Birinci's protocol speech during the Symposium of Pursuit of New Paradigms in the Turkish Education System (*Türk Eğitim Sisteminde Yeni Paradigma Arayışları Sempozyumu*) which was held in Ankara, in 2006. Birinci, then, stated that "The principles of positivism are based on progress, universalism, collectivism, experiment, practice, inductive methods; and it is obstructive. Thus, it is kind of a prejudgment" (Birinci, 2006, p. 11). According to Birinci, the deterministic Newtonian Positivism which does not allow skepticism had been adopted as the only way in the Turkish education system; and Turkey would have not had the opportunity to adapt itself to the current era or the transformation that the world has already comprehended (Birinci, 2006, p. 11). Therefore, to Birinci, the education system of Turkey was grounded in rote learning; and the convicts were positivism and modernism.

It also can be traced that modernist left-leaning Kemalists have severely criticized the new reforms on education based on the claims that it will lead rising Islamic motives in the education system (Okçabol, 2013, pp. 103-113; Gazalcı, 2008, pp. 57-58). However, it still does not answer the questions 'Why was constructivism beneficial for the Islamist-rooted AKP?' and 'How is it ideological rather than pedagogical or technical?'.

The 'scientific' approach of constructivism, postmodernism, and post-positivism share an epistemological view that is based on relativism, anti-objectivism, and anti-positivism (Ünder, 2012, p. 34). Thus, constructivism in education plays a different role than it does in international relations. This epistemological understanding refers to the "active role that the knowing subjects play in the production of knowledge or beliefs rather than the known objects" (Ünder, 2012, p. 35). It completely differs from the foundational approach of the Republic on education which was focused on modernism, scientism, positivism and the enlightenment values. The constructivist approach and postmodernism have gained momentum since the 1980s; and in 2002, when the AKP came to power in Turkey, they provided an opportunity to fight modernism and positivism within the discourse of the West which has been promoted as the only civilization to follow by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Kemalists. Following the rising postmodern and constructivist paradigm in the West, Kemalism was in contradiction with itself in some aspects, especially in terms of its incompatibility with the 'new' 'Western-rooted' values such as ironically multiculturalism, anti-Eurocentrism, and non-linear historical conception that does not promote the Western civilization as a static formation which other cultures should aim to reach or join. Therefore, firstly; constructivism, postmodernism and post-positivism were functional and beneficial for the Islamist-rooted AKP in terms of fighting a 'common enemy': Modernism and positivism. İbrahim Kalın (2007), the former Chief Counselor to the President of the Turkish Republic and current Director of the National Intelligence Organization of Turkey since 2023, in fact, explained it quite well on muslim-science.com:

> There is no denying the fact that Kuhn's radical anti-realism or Popper's concept of verisimilitude cannot be interpreted as lending support to the epistemic hegemony of modern science. On the contrary, they are meant to destroy it once and for all. (…) Today we can hardly come across a book or article written in English, Arabic, Turkish or Bahasa Malaysia that does not have recourse to Foucault, Kuhn, Feyerabend or Lyotard to denounce the philosophical underpinnings of modern science.

Thomas Kuhn, Michel Foucault, and Paul Feyerabend share common opinions on challenging 'scientific knowledge' and 'universal objective truth'. They deny the hierarchal designation of knowledge and truth, which contributed to the 'hegemonic' claims of modernism and positivism more than any other thought. Thus, according to this stance, "(…) scientific knowledge is not superior to other forms of knowledge (including religion)" (Ünder, 2012, p. 40) and there is no deserved exclusive status of it among other ways of comprehension of truth, knowledge, and 'objectivity'.

As Ünder (2012, p. 39) states, Islamist intellectuals have a tendency to have more sympathy for ideas that erode and confront modern science. Hence, the sympathy for quantum physics and chaos theory can be understood in this way. Newtonian physics, to Islamist political movements, sets up a barricade against uncertainty, miracles, and indeterminist incidents that take in nature; thus, it excludes the possibility of 'divine intervention' in this sense. From this point of view, the preference of former Minister of National Education Hüseyin Çelik and former Undersecretary Necat Birinci for quantum physics over Newtonian physics becomes more meaningful.

Secondly, constructivism and postmodernism provide much more freedom for religion and it becomes an instrument for Islamists. The objection to notions such as universal truth, objectivity, and scientific knowledge legitimizes and leaves room for other forms of thinking, such as religion (Ünder, 2012, p. 41). It leads to a formation in that relation between science and the state is no different from the relationship between religions and the state; thus, the state, in its public schools, must keep itself at an equal distance to all types of thoughts and practices, regardless they have a scientific theoretical basis or they are only simple beliefs. In such an approach, the difference between, to say, evolutionary theory and creationism are equally respected by excluding their 'factual' roots. Indeed, one of the most ideologically contested aspects of the education system has been observed in the treatment of evolutionary theory in the following years. While evolution continued to be covered during the

initial years of the AKP's rule, it was gradually marginalized and officially removed from the high school biology curriculum in the 2017–2018 academic year (Evrensel, 2017). The Ministry of National Education justified this decision by arguing that the complexity of the subject exceeded students' cognitive capacity at that stage, framing the removal as a pedagogical rather than ideological adjustment (Evrim Ağacı, 2017).

However, the decision triggered widespread opposition from various sectors of society. Teachers' unions, particularly Eğitim-Sen, denounced the move as a violation of secular and scientific education principles, interpreting it as part of a broader Islamization agenda in education (VoA News, 2017). Legal actions were initiated by professional and civil organizations challenging the constitutionality of the decision. Numerous academics and scientists criticized the exclusion of evolutionary theory as a direct assault on scientific literacy, warning that it would distance Turkey's education system from international scientific standards and deprive students of essential knowledge in biology. The controversy extended into public discourse, where many viewed the decision as an example of the state's increasing use of education as an ideological apparatus to restructure both scientific and cultural norms (VoA News, 2017; Shaheen & Hatunoğlu, 2017).

Interestingly, while the state attempted to suppress evolution in formal education, this suppression inadvertently stimulated alternative channels of scientific engagement. One notable example is the rapid rise of the YouTube channel *Evrim Ağacı* (Evolution Tree), which emerged as one of Turkey's most popular science communication platforms. Following the removal of evolution from the curriculum, the YouTube channel of the platform experienced significant subscriber growth, reaching nearly 4,5 million subscribers by 2025. In the comment section of the videos published by the channel, both high school students and biology teachers frequently express frustration at the absence of evolution in the school curriculum, emphasizing that they must resort to such alternative platforms to access content systematically excluded from their formal education. This phenomenon highlights how efforts to impose ideological filters in education not only encounter resistance but also generate

counter-hegemonic spaces where marginalized scientific discourses continue to thrive outside the formal structures of state-controlled curricula.

Thirdly and lastly, possible long-term targets of any hegemonic or counter-hegemonic project, which is Islamism in this context, need functioning strategies within the realities of the *status quo* or the conjuncture. In this regard, constructivist epistemology[13] has this function in link with desirable targets of the Islamists in the long run (Ünder, 2012, p. 42). Openly expressing the Islamist agenda of its own, as can be seen in the RP example, had the potential danger of incurring the wrath of the then-existing Kemalist secularism of the Turkish state. The 2004 curriculum reform took place in a conjuncture in which the AKP had no total control over repressive state apparatus based on coercion. Especially the military and the Constitutional Court had played a crucial role against the AKP. These institutions had been seen as guardians of the regime by the secular opposition. The risk of being overthrown by the repressive arm of the Kemalist regime might be still at hand. Therefore, the AKP needed policies that were seemingly in accordance with other hegemonic institutions, such as the EU and the OECD, in order to "establish its view of the world as all-inclusive and universal" (Carnoy, 1984, p. 70), even though it was in contradiction with the postmodern and constructivist understanding in many aspects. In other words, constructivism and postmodernism, for Islamists, could be useful *before* seizing the state apparatus as a leading hegemonic fraction in order to legitimize "their claims to power and de-secularize the public realm" which requires eradicating positivism and modernism as an ideology or philosophy (Ünder, 2012, p. 39).

Alongside its constructivist approach to education, the revised curriculum illustrated a strong link with the neoliberal philosophy. The Turkish business world has been demanding a radical reform in Turkish education as the EU since the 1990s (Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak, 2012, p. 62). The revised curriculum adopted a content that was grounded in

[13] The view that knowledge, values, and social reality are not fixed or objective, but socially constructed through interpretation, discourse, and interaction.

"competence" and it was presented as a radical shift from the previous curriculum's traditional 'knowledge-based' or subject-based approach; thus, this approach "emphasized the development of select competencies and skills" (Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak, 2012, p. 59). Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak put emphasis that "analysis of the contextual use of the key words illustrated that the post-2005 textbooks have more emphasis on individualism, welcome participation of the private sector in public services, and represent citizens as consumer, salespersons, and entrepreneurs" (2012, p. 63). The 2004 curriculum reform was based on a shift in that individualism is viewed in a definition within the framework of individual-based understanding rather than a social-based description (Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak, 2012, p. 63). Neoliberal hegemonic world-view, thus, has started to find much more space for itself in the educational field after the 2004 curriculum reform. However, since the neoliberalization in education will find space for itself in the further sections of this thesis, it will not be examined in this section.

§ 4.3 Reforms on Secondary Schools and Vocational-Technical Education: The Impact of the Post Washington Consensus

As mentioned in this chapter earlier, the AKP has attached importance to vocational and technical schools in its party program, 2002 Election Manifesto, and the program of the 58th government. After Erdoğan's political ban was lifted, the 59th government, under Erdoğan's prime ministry, also put emphasis on the importance of vocational and technical education in its program and promised to revise the unfair status of vocational and technical schools:

> The existing university selection and placement system, which causes unfair implementations and reduces the demand for vocational and technical education, will be modified to encourage competition and ensure justice.

According to the 9th Development Plan of the Republic of Turkey (2007-2013), targets such as transition to a modular and flexible system in vocational and technical education (T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı [DPT], 2006, p. 92), and focusing on practical education as a significant facility in the training of qualified labor force education (DPT, 2006, p. 93) have been determined. The 60th Government Program and the 60th Government Action Plan (2008-2012), which was declared on 10 January 2008, had similar objectives. As it was declared in the Action Plan of the 60th Government, vocational and technical schools' share in secondary education was planned as 50%. The same goal has been shared in the MoNE's Strategic Plan (2010-2014) as well (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı [MEB-SGB], 2009). In line with these goals, the MoNE carried out various projects: Project of Strengthening the Vocational Education (MEGEP), Secondary Education Project (OÖP) -with the financial support of the World Bank-, Project of Developing Human Resources through Vocational Education (İKMEP), Project of Developing the Quality of Vocational and Technical Education in Turkey (METEK) can be labeled in this sense.

The OÖP (2006-2011) had the aim of restructuring the system of secondary schools. The most crucial change that the project put into practice was renewing the general and vocational programs of the schools in a flexible way. The policies on developing vocational and technical education have been put into effect based on the claims that the trend of the OECD and the EU was in the same direction. In this sense, the educational policies of the government have become one of the main elements of the medium-term employment strategy of Turkey.

In the wider sense, the official economic intentions in the field of education can be found in the 2010 National Employment Strategy (NES). According to the NES, there have been four main policies, including education, in order to increase employment. The focus on education was expressed with the objective of the "strengthening of the relation between education and employment" within these four policies (T.C. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı [ÇSGB], 2010, p. 7). The intention in this expression refers to reshaping education in line with the needs of the market in

order to provide a labour-force that corresponds to the aim of labour market flexibility (ÇSGB, 2010, p.7). The targets in terms of strengthening the relationship between education and employment have been explained as providing an accessible education system; increasing the quality and efficiency of vocational and technical education; creating and encouraging new dimensions for lifelong education; harmonizing education and labour-force; disseminating active labour market policies and increasing their efficiency; and encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship through the education system and active labour market policies (ÇSGB, 2010, p. 28-29).

What can be claimed here is that the main arguments in the NES concerning educational policies are seemingly in accordance with the philosophy of the Post Washington Consensus (PWC). The term Washington Consensus (WC) was coined in 1989 by John Williamson, an English economist, in order to explain the economic policies of the Washington-based international institutions, namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). According to John Williamson, "the Washington Consensus was a (...) response to a leading role for the state in initiating industrialization and import substitution. The Washington Consensus said that this era is over" (Narcis Serra, Shari Spiegel, Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2008, p. 3). The philosophy of especially the 1980s neoliberal strategy, i.e. the Washington Consensus, was based upon the idea that "imperfect markets are always superior to imperfect states", as Deepak Lal states (Öniş & Şenses, 2003; Peet & Hartwick, 2009). Thus, minimal state discussions have become widespread once again after the first globalization wave in the 19th century. According to neoliberal thinkers, excessive protectionism would always outweigh 'market failures' (Öniş & Şenses; 2003).

However, many middle-income countries (MICs), or 'emerging markets' in terms of neoliberal ideological perspective, have encountered the WC policies by opening up capital accounts before accomplishing a stable financial system. The financial globalization process of the semi-periphery has become a burden due to premature institutionalizing, according to neoliberal thinkers. The MICs, including Turkey, found themselves on

a highly fragile growth path based on short-term improvements and they had to deal with speculative inflows of capital (Öniş & Şenses, 2003). Especially after the Latin American and Southeastern Asian crises, the term WC evolved due to criticisms, major events, and intellectual challenges. The main critiques have been focused on the state's role in the market. The logic lying behind the PWC goes further than the structuralist measures and national developmentalism, and it is in line with the neoliberal critique by focusing on 'improving the performance of the state'. (Öniş & Şenses, 2003) Stieglitz points out, in this manner, that states must use 'marketlike mechanisms' in order to improve their effectiveness (Öniş & Şenses, 2003). In other words, the state must have acted in accordance with the needs of the market, rather than taking a total non-interfering position.

In this sense, the projected policies of the NES appear as aims that are in parallel with the PWC's neoliberal philosophy. According to the NES, the state needs to take an active role through education in order to meet the demands of the market and increase its effectiveness. The education system, thus, has been viewed as an apparatus through which the reproduction of the relations of production takes place. In order to create a labour force that is productive in the market, the masses must also be created or re-created in ways that acknowledge the new regulations of market flexibility and strive to adapt to its constantly changing needs (Koşar, 2014, p. 114). In this context, the NES's approach to education was based on restructuring vocational education and standard education in terms of quality and effectiveness. Within this perspective, the structural dimension of unemployment has been avoided. Employment has been completely evaluated as a matter concerning individuals' qualifications and educational level rather than social or systemic.

On the other hand, according to the NES, the state's long-term policy is to abdicate from the field of vocational and technical education by supporting the private sector in the field (ÇSGB, 2010, p. 30). Vocational education is reviewed as a field in which individuals will derive a profit out of it in the long-run; thus, education is treated as a commodity (Koşar, 2014, p. 127). This approach interprets any sort of 'development' within

the field of education, regardless of whether they are social, technical, or intellectual, as a tool to gain individual benefit in the future. This policy is in accordance with the target of the AKP to increase the private sector's share in education. In this context, the AKP government has evaluated education, whether it is vocational or not, as an apparatus that functions considering the 'sensitivities' of the market. While the alignment of vocational and technical education with labor market needs may appear functionally beneficial, this orientation also carries certain implications that merit critical reflection. When education is narrowly framed as a tool for economic utility, particularly through increasing private sector involvement, it risks marginalizing its broader public and emancipatory roles.

From a Gramscian perspective, such a shift may contribute to the normalization of market-oriented values as part of the prevailing common sense, potentially reinforcing hegemonic structures. In this context, the increasing association of vocational education with profitability and individual gain may limit the space for alternative educational aims, such as fostering critical thinking, promoting social mobility, or cultivating active citizenship.

Therefore, while the functional convergence between education and employment is not inherently problematic, its implementation under a market-driven logic may lead to long-term consequences—such as reduced educational equity or the erosion of education's role as a public good—that deserve careful attention. The policies which are in accordance with the PWC's hegemonic neoliberal philosophy have gained momentum after the 4+4+4 education system as it will be revised in further sections.

Another significant topic about the vocational and technical schools was the change in the weighted high school grade point average. As mentioned earlier (See *Chapter 3.4.2*) the weighted high school grade point average for vocational and technical schools, including the Imam Hatip schools, was regulated in a way that almost makes it impossible for the graduates of these schools to study in unrelated programs in higher education. The difference of the weighted high school grade point average between general and vocational high school graduates was narrowed

significantly in 2009 (Hürriyet, 2010), and totally annulled in 2011 (Milliyet, 2011) as promised in the 60th Government's program.

Reforming the secondary schools acquired a new dimension through a circular that MoNE issued in 2010. According to the MoNE Circular, the aim of converting all general high schools into Anatolian or vocational/technical high schools was decided by the end of the 2012-2013 academic year (MEB, 2010). These transformations have been put into effect until 2014. In current situation, general high schools are completely out of the education system.

In parallel with these transformations, the Decree Law No. 652 regulated the educational institutions and directorates in 2011. Although many educational directorates were unified under others, the General Directorate of Religious Education was not touched (Okçabol, 2013, pp. 209-213). After the conversion of the general high schools, the number of Imam Hatip High Schools rose by more than 70% in the 2013-2014 academic year (Gençkal Eroler, 2019, p. 94). In this sense, it can be claimed that these policies mostly appeared in favor of Imam Hatip schools. According to former President of the Association of Alumni and Members of Imam Hatip High Schools (ÖNDER) Hüseyin Korkut, the demand for Imam Hatip schools markedly increased even after the decline of the weighted high school grade point average between general and vocational high schools (Yeni Şafak, 2011). The transformations in secondary education, alongside their neoliberal approach, have seemingly served the Islamist agenda of the AKP considering the increasing number of the Imam Hatip schools and their strengthening position in the education system, especially following the 4+4+4 education system, as it will be examined in a wider context in the next chapter.

5

The 4+4+4 Education System as a Hegemonic Project: In Search of a New Common Sense and Collective Identity

The model of 8-year compulsory primary education, which went into operation with the amendment of the Law. No. 222 through the National Security Council Memorandum dated 28 February 1997, has ended with the Law No. 6287 dated 11 April 2012. The compulsory education period was extended to 12 years and the compulsory education process was designed as three stages, formulated as "4+4+4", with the amendments took place on the Law No. 222 and Law No. 1739; and it came into effect in the 2012-2013 academic year. The intended fundamental change in the education system has been indicated in the AKP party program even in 2001. The program promised a gradual system in education and another type of formulation rather than 8-year continuous primary education. However, the transformation of the education system had not come into effect until 2012.

To comprehend the long-term delay in the reform of the education system, the differences between the 2002-2011 period and the post-2011 period of the AKP should be reviewed. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the AKP government adopted a cautious and balancing approach between 2002 and 2011 to avoid being politically constrained or sidelined by

the Kemalist state. The comprehensive control of the military and the higher juridical bodies was not achieved in the early years of the AKP government. Thus, the party had resorted to a variety of counter-hegemonic strategies that had appeared to be quite eclectic. While the party has maintained the neoliberal integration process, it also predicted that cooperation with other hegemonic institutions against the Kemalist then status-quo might have been beneficial. In this sense, the party had embraced a set of policies that highlight conservatism rather than its Islamist roots; and post-modern anti-modernist discourses rather than Islamic references. Through such conceptualizing leaning on the discourse of democratization, the AKP gained the support of other hegemonic institutions, such as the EU, against the existing Kemalist cultural hegemony.

In the educational field, the 2004 curriculum reform has demonstrated that the party had chosen a political path that challenges modernism, positivism and scientism by putting forward other Western-rooted concepts grounded in post-modernism and constructivism. As part of its aim to form a new cultural hegemony, especially after 2011, the AKP government codified Kemalism as the "other" of the nation. Kemalism, as the *ancient-regime*, has been explained with the notions of Jacobinism, authoritarianism, and militarism; while the 'new Turkey' discourse of the AKP has been based upon 'civil', 'democratic', and 'liberal' paradigms (Yaşlı, 2014, p. 122). This discursive transformation was not merely ideological but also strategic, as the AKP relied heavily on populist methods (Özpek & Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 2019) to legitimize its stance against the Kemalist visions of cultural and political values. As Özpek & Tanrıverdi Yaşar (2019) argue, the AKP constructed a dichotomy between 'privileged elites'—associated with secularism, the military, and bureaucratic tutelage—and the 'deprived majority', framed as the genuine owners of the nation. According to (Özpek & Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 2019), this line allowed the AKP to present itself as the true representative of the people, while simultaneously masking its illiberal practices under a discourse of democratization.

In this sense, the ruling AKP's political stance, namely 'conservative democracy', has been rapidly transformed. In the Gramscian sense, the

party has secured its hegemony in the legal sphere, and has seized the chance to forge a new form of dominant common sense, ideology, and collective identity. The signals on the issue can be traced back to the 60th Government Program following the 2007 general election. According to the program, education has been described as a "phase of gaining a social and cultural sense of belonging alongside an identity-making process". In the 61st Government Program the AKP, has started to put emphasis on the "new Turkey" discourse. This discourse of the new Turkey has been based upon concepts such as "native values", which are primarily based upon Islamic cultural values, and unification of the 'nation' and 'state', which have been disjointed for decades according to the AKP (Yaşlı, 2014). The party's claim of representing native and national values, in this sense, not only delegitimized secular institutions as alien or imposed, but also enabled a reinterpretation of Islamism within a broader culturalist framework (Özpek & Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 2019). While Islamism, as an ideological project, seeks to shape public life through religious norms, the AKP's strategy emphasized cultural belonging and identity over doctrinal commitments (Özpek & Tanrıverdi Yaşar, 2019). Alongside this new form of imagined collective identity, the AKP government has been designing its own version of common sense as well. The claim of 'resistance' against the oppressive Kemalist tradition of the state is an important strategic factor in the AKP's hegemonic common sense conceptualizing. Through this political position, the AKP government gained the chance to lean on a legitimate ground against Kemalism by describing itself as the defender of the 'social and cultural values', which are mostly interpreted with Islamic references. In other words, the AKP government has presented itself as the "conveyer" of the local and traditional values into to state mechanism.

The AKP has achieved the chance to build a new form of hegemony, especially after two breaking points. Firstly, the AKP government, with the support of the Gülen movement, gradually purged Kemalist elements from the Turkish Armed Forces through the Balyoz and Ergenekon trials initiated after 2007.

. Secondly, the party was able to make the changes to rectify Kemalists from the higher juridical bodies, especially from the Constitutional Court and the (Supreme) Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) after the 2010 constitutional referendum (Okçabol, 2013, pp. 281-282; Yaşlı, 2014). Especially after these two turning points, the AKP government increasingly got control of the repressive state apparatus and widened its sphere of influence in all aspects of life including legal and societal fields. In other words, these two turning points have demonstrated the triumph of the AKP's counter-hegemonic project against the Kemalists.

The 4+4+4 education system has been the outcome of these processes, which is based on a new collective identity, and a new form of "common sense" in that de-secularization and Islamization of the society could have been interpreted as the common social and cultural values of the nation. In this regard, the system should be reviewed as a hegemonic project that aims to re-identify society and impose the new dominant version of common sense to the upcoming generations.

In this section, in order to present this point of view in a wider sense, firstly, the enactment process of the 4+4+4 educational system will be examined. Secondly, the impact of the religious elective courses will be analyzed. Thirdly, the role of the Imam Hatip schools in the system will be investigated. Fourthly, the values education and the increasing influence of the religious groups in education will be reviewed. Fifthly and lastly, neoliberalism, privatization and class dynamics of the system will be discussed.

§ 5.1 The Enactment Process of the 4+4+4 Educational Law

The 4+4+4 law proposal was submitted to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) and passed during the period that is referred to as the '28 February Process' of 1997. Alongside the 4+4+4 law discussions, the judicial investigation on perpetrators of the 28 February Memorandum launched more or less simultaneously (Gençkal Eroler, 2019, p. 130). Hence, the impression that the 4+4+4 educational law was a counter-

ideological and revanchist policy was widely embraced by the opponents of the law.

The recommendations made in the 18th National Education Council, which was held in 2010, were also precursors of the new education system. According to the 2nd article of the section titled "Strengthening Access to Primary and Secondary Education, Providing Access to Secondary Education" (*İlköğretim ve Ortaöğretime Erişimin Güçlendirilmesi, Ortaöğretime Erişimin Sağlanması*), 4-year primary education, 4-year orientation, and preparatory education for the secondary education, and 4-year secondary education should have come into effect in order to allow students to get education in different environments (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı [TTKB], 2017, p. 7).

The decisions of the 18th National Education Council, which have foreseen fundamental changes in the education system, have become well-known by the general public after one and a half years through the law proposal on changing primary education and educational law, i.e. the 4+4+4 educational law as it is known by the public. According to the law proposal, the 12-year compulsory education was planned as a long-reaching target which will be put into effect by the initiative of the Council of Ministers in the future. Thus, in the first phase, the law proposal's main target was a non-continuous 8-year compulsory education, which is focused on the establishment of different types of schools with different programs after the 5th grade (Okçabol, 2013, p. 222).

According to the legislative intention, the main reason behind the law is allegedly about the school environment. It is assumed that sharing the same space for 6-year-old 'children', who are unaware of basic concepts of life, with 14-year-old 'adolescents', who are in the phase of shaping their physical and mental identity, inevitably causes serious psycho-social disorders, especially for children (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi [TBMM], 2012, p. 8). Another significant issue that was mentioned in the legislative intention was based on the unproductivity of vocational education. 8-year continuous compulsory education, as reviewed in the legislative intention, is a restriction on the economic development of the country since it leads to a serious delay in gaining necessary

qualifications for individuals. Thus, vocational education institutions fall short of contributing effectively to economic development. (TBMM, 2012, p. 9). In this sense, it was expected that the new educational law would diversify the school system in the second 4-year of primary education by establishing vocational elementary schools. However, any sort of vocational elementary school was not mentioned in the regulations or circulars. Imam Hatip elementary schools were the only outcome of the alleged vocational education of the new system in the second stage of primary education (T.C. Resmî Gazete, 2012, Article 9).

During the legislation process of the 4+4+4 educational law, other crucial issues have been discussed widely by the public. After adopting the bill, the schooling-age and 'opportunity' of distance high school education discussions had importance. Enrolling in primary education was determined as 69-80 months children before the 4+4+4 educational system. After a circular published on 9 May 2012, 66-month-old children determined to start primary education. Through the circular, the schooling age is reduced to 5,5 after the 4+4+4 educational law. Although the AKP government initially maintained its decision despite pedagogical critiques, subsequent challenges, and public concerns led to a regulatory adjustment in August 2013 (T.C. Resmî Gazete, 2013). Thus, in August 2013, the regulation was revised, and the starting age for primary education was reset to 69 months.

The MoNE, on the other hand, stated that the critiques from the media and NGOs were ideological and came from unqualified people in the field of education:

> We can ground opposition [about the 4+4+4] on two main reasons. The first reason is the ideological point of view. The opponents of the law cannot abandon the habit of raising monotype people by ruling out individual and cultural differences. They do not have the aim of competing with the world. The second reason is rooted in the lack of information and objective assessment. The critiques of those who do not have scientific competence on education-related issues and categorically take sides without information on the regulation do not reflect the truth. (MEB, 2012, p. 13)

However, it is unclear who is considered to lack 'scientific competence' in MoNE's declaration. Although the MoNe claimed that NGOs and media organizations followed an ideological agenda and were unqualified in the field of education, education faculties of the prestigious universities of Turkey shared common critiques on the system change during the legislation process of the 4+4+4 educational system as well. According to Education Faculties of Middle East Technical University (Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Education [METU], 2012), Boğaziçi University (Boğaziçi University, Faculty of Education [BOUN], 2012), Ankara University (Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, 2012) and Hacettepe University (Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education, 2012), the 4+4+4 educational law was against the principle of equal opportunity of access in education; the decision of reducing schooling-age to 5,5, which was repealed in 2013, was not based on pedagogical concerns; and scheduling vocational education to an earlier time is disincentive for students' holistic development. In addition, METU's Faculty of Education (METU, 2012) underlined that directing children as young as 10 years old towards specific vocational paths is inconsistent with contemporary educational and developmental psychology principles since children at this age are not yet cognitively or emotionally equipped to make career-related decisions. Boğaziçi University's Education Faculty (BOUN, 2012) expressed concerns that the inclusion of options such as open and home-based education after the second stage of primary school may disproportionately push children from lower socio-economic backgrounds—especially girls—out of the formal schooling process. This could potentially exacerbate existing gender and class disparities in secondary education enrollment rates. The education faculties of the mentioned universities also put emphasis on the fact that it is not necessary to divide primary education into two stages in order to prevent alleged psycho-social disorders of children. Students from different age groups could get education in different educational institutions without interrupting the continuous 8-year compulsory primary education. Thus, one of the main reasons for the law draft was basically resolvable in different

and easier methods. Furthermore, according to the 2nd article of the law draft, it has been foreseen that the schools of the first two stages of primary education could be established within the same educational institution (TBMM, 2012, p. 14). Within this scope, considering expert views and contradictive legislative intentions, most of the claims taking place in the law draft as motives of the need for a new education system appear as insufficient justifications for such a fundamental transition within the education system.

The 4+4+4 educational law, above all, led to the re-establishment of the Imam Hatip middle schools, which were abolished after the 28 February Military Memorandum. Even though President Erdoğan stated that the "Educational reform is not ideological, but pedagogical" (Posta, 2012), the re-establishment of the Imam Hatip middle schools fueled the unrest of the secular opposition based on the concerns of the AKP's Islamist ideological agenda on education. The suspicions on the issue gained momentum with the former AKP deputy Ali Boğa's statement laying stress that the government "seized the chance of making all schools into Imam Hatip schools" (NTV, 2012). The concerns focused on the Islamization of the education system have also risen with the elective courses dimension of the 4+4+4 educational law alongside the re-opening of Imam Hatip elementary schools. According to the 4+4+4 educational law, "Quran" and "The Life of Our Prophet" (*Hz. Peygamberimizin Hayatı*) courses were added into the curriculum of elementary schools and high schools as elective lessons (T.C. Resmî Gazete, 2012, Article 9). The law, although a range of electives were later introduced in practice, had no specific emphasis on any other type of elective course.

§ 5.2 Religious Elective Courses in the 4+4+4 Education System

One of the most significant structural outcomes of the 4+4+4 education reform was the institutional expansion of religious education, not only through the reopening of Imam Hatip middle schools but also through the introduction of elective religious courses. This dual-track expansion

enabled the government to infuse religious content across both compulsory and ostensibly voluntary components of the curriculum. The following section focuses on the elective dimension of this process.

The elective religious courses were introduced under the field of 'Religion, Morals, and Values', which are 'Quran', 'The Life of Our Prophet' (*Peygamberimizin Hayatı*), and 'Basic Religious Knowledge'. These courses were the only ones that are mentioned in the law, and it was concerned by many as it is an indicator that these courses will be much more effectively taught in schools compared to other types of elective courses.

Indeed, the AKP government has put a significant effort into making elective religious courses widespread. The pro-government Islamist educational union Eğitim-Bir-Sen, as an 'ideological state apparatus' (ISA), addressed the parents about creating demand for religious elective courses by stating that people should be in an effort to build religious generations who know about the Quran, recognizes the prophet Mohammed and follows his path (Hürriyet, 2016). The Directorate of Religious Affairs, as the religious ISA, openly expressed inducing children into elective religious courses is a religious duty of parents in its Friday Sermon (Khutbah) on 5 February 2016 (Directorate of Religious Affairs [DİB], 2016a). In İLKE (Science, Culture, Education Association) report, whose member of the Board of Trustees theologian Alpaslan Durmuş (İLKE, n.d.) is the former head of the Board of Education and Discipline under the MoNE (TTKB, n.d.), elective religious courses were interpreted as an 'opportunity' to build a 'peaceful' society in that religion is considered as the main source of life, and, furthermore, the meaning of life (İLKE et al., 2013, p. 17).

In addition to these discursive strategies, it was claimed that some administrative practices also played a substantial role in manufacturing demand for religious education. For instance, according to the Eğitim-Sen's claim, in some public schools, parents of fifth-grade students were surveyed with questions that selectively emphasized religious options. These questionnaires did not present a broad range of elective courses, but instead focused exclusively on the religious ones—namely, *Quran* and *The Life of the Prophet*. Furthermore, parents were asked whether they

would approve the establishment of Imam Hatip classes within regular public schools (Cumhuriyet, 2014). The framing of the questions—especially the focus on religious courses and the request for personal identification—is suspicious about whether these surveys genuinely aimed to reflect parental preferences or whether they subtly guided responses in a particular direction. Rather than serving solely as neutral instruments of consultation, such practices may have contributed to shaping perceptions and reinforcing a limited set of educational choices.

Alongside the propagandist publishing and statements through religious and union ISAs, the AKP government labored over disseminating the religious elective courses through 'formal' excuses and so-called lack of feasibility. It has become one of the 'problems' in some public schools that students are not allowed to select the elective courses they wish to take and are forced to select the courses under the 'Religion, Morals, and Values' group due to the implementation of 'package elective course schedules' decisions made by school principals, and alleged lack of teachers in other fields (Cumhuriyet, 2018a; Cumhuriyet, 2018b). While officially optional, religious elective courses have occasionally been reported as de facto obligatory in some schools, especially where school administrators schedule religious electives as default packages or where teacher shortages prevent the offering of alternative electives. There have been numerous documented cases indicating that students from different religious or denominational backgrounds are effectively coerced into enrolling in religious elective courses. One such case occurred in Diyarbakır, where a Christian student who was legally exempt from compulsory DKAB was still forced to choose from a limited pool of Islamic religious electives, due to the absence of other options in the school (Radikal, 2016). Similarly, reports have shown that in many public schools, Alevi students take up to four Sunni-Islam-based elective courses in addition to the obligatory DKAB class (Mutluer, 2013). However, this phenomenon does not seem to be uniform nationwide and appears less commonly.

That said, one of the most striking examples of this de facto coercion occurred at Vefa High School, one of Istanbul's historic and most prestigious public schools located in the city center. In 2017, all 9th-grade

students, approximately 170 in total, were automatically enrolled in the elective course "Basic Religious Knowledge" under the justification that no teachers were available for alternative elective courses (Politikyol, 2017). Although students had previously submitted their elective preferences at the end of the preceding academic year, they were presented with this compulsory assignment at the start of the new term. School administrators rejected parental objections and declared that no changes could be made to the assigned courses.

On the other hand, the claim of "lack of teachers" in other fields rather than religious education is the consequence of a premeditated educational policy. The AKP government, since it came to power in 2002, has assigned Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teachers systematically. The former Minister of National Education Nabi Avcı stated that there had been around 418 thousand teacher assignments between the years 2003 and 2014; and the most needed field among all the fields was the Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (DKAB) with around 19 thousand assignments (Anadolu Ajansı, 2014). According to the assignment announcements of the MoNE, the DKAB still is a dominating field among others. The DKAB teacher assignments were in the third place after class teachers and English teachers in the announcement of March 2019 with around 2000 recruits (MEB, 2019). This trend becomes more apparent when analyzing the proportion of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (DKAB) teacher appointments relative to the total number of teacher assignments across different periods (see Figure 5.1 below).

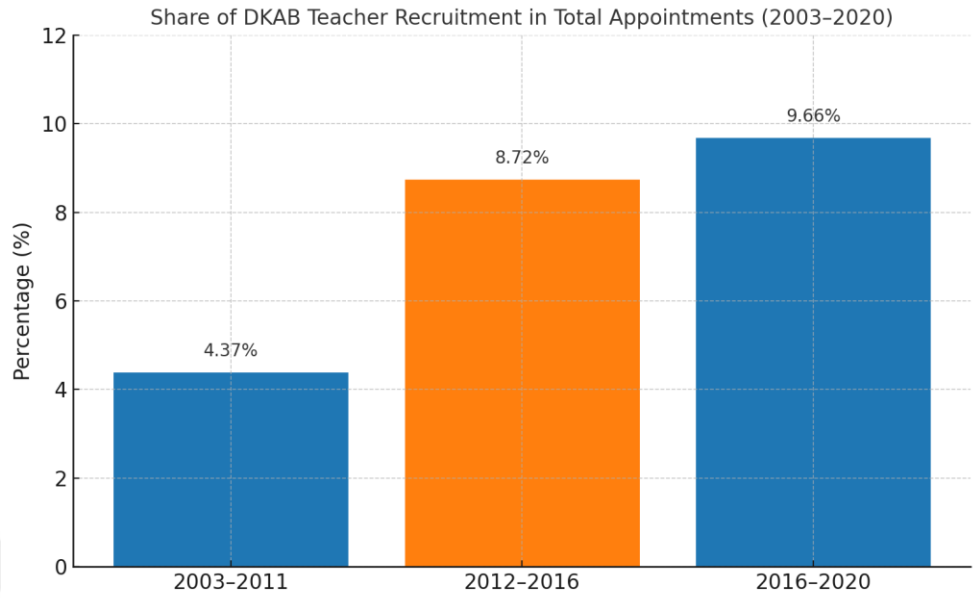


Figure 5.1. Calculated by the author using MoNE Personnel General Directorate's annual teacher recruitment announcements.

Following the introduction of the 4+4+4 education reform, the proportion of appointments in this field has markedly increased. While this development alone may not directly prove the existence of a deliberate ideological agenda, it clearly signals a systematic prioritization of religious education staffing by the state. In the broader context of expanding Imam Hatip schools and elective course frameworks, this pattern reinforces the interpretation that religious instruction has become increasingly institutionalized through both curricular and administrative mechanisms in the post-reform education system.

The name of the religious elective courses' group is, in fact, a demonstration of how the AKP government interprets the notions of 'moral' and 'values' which are intertwined with the culture. As they are presented in the law under the same section with 'religion' without any other emphasis on non-religious types of 'moral' and 'values', it illustrates the fact that the ruling AKP equates these notions with religion in essence. In this sense, these courses can be interpreted as apparatuses that are designed to disseminate the dominant common sense of the AKP government. They help to create a much more Islamic understanding of culture,

common values, and morals. 'The folklore of philosophy', in this regard, can only be an outcome of Islamic values and morals. These religious courses are delivered from a homogenous Sunni-Islamic perspective, with little to no representation of other denominations or belief systems.

It can be seen that the AKP has been an attempt to describe the 'we' within the mentality of their world-view by naming the course about Mohammed's life as the Life of *Our* Prophet. In other words, non-Muslims are not considered in 'we', since Mohammed is 'our' prophet in the state's point of view. In addition, although the discourse of tolerance is frequently emphasized—particularly when referring to other Abrahamic religions—the content and tone of the textbooks reveal a strong alignment with a singular Sunni Islamic perspective. References to Judaism, for example, are occasionally framed within a historical narrative of betrayal and conflict. One instance appears in the 8th grade *The Life of the Prophet* textbook:

"*The Jews did not learn any lesson from these events. They fought on the side of the mushriks during the Battle of the Trench. Again, they ended up on the losing side*." (MEB, 2023a, p. 33) (Translation mine)

Moreover, there is a total absence of references to alternative interpretations within Islam itself. Neither Alevi nor Shiite perspectives are mentioned in any of the textbooks, including *Basic Religious Knowledge*, across both middle and high school education levels. While the overall tone remains relatively moderate, the complete omission of intra-Islamic diversity conveys a broader ideological message. It reduces Islam to a monolithic Sunni tradition, implicitly reinforcing the AKP's broader aim of standardizing religious consciousness under its preferred doctrinal framework. As an example, the *Basic Religious Knowledge I* textbook for high school students narrows down Islamic scholars within the borders of Sunni-Islam:

"In the field of fiqh and its methodology, many Islamic scholars have emerged. Among the most prominent is Imām Abū Ḥanīfa. His views on fiqh were compiled by his students Imām Muḥammad and Imām Abū Yūsuf. Imām al-Shāfiʿī also made significant contributions with his work al-Risāla." (MEB, 2024, p. 75) (Translation mine)

The consistent exclusion of any theological traditions beyond Sunni Islam thus serves not only to disseminate religious content, but also to subtly shape the boundaries of legitimate belief and identity within the educational field.

In a 2012–2013 survey conducted by the Education Reform Initiative (ERG, 2013, p. 98), it was observed that religious elective courses—such as *The Life of the Prophet* and *The Quran*—were among the most frequently offered and selected courses in public schools, especially in grades 5 and 9. In contrast, private schools reported almost no demand for such courses, instead prioritizing foreign languages, arts, and technology. According to data released by the Ministry of National Education in 2015 (MEB, 2015), religious elective courses such as *The Life of the Prophet* and *Basic Religious Knowledge* ranked among the top preferences of students in grades 9 and 10 in high schools. Similarly, in grade 5 of middle schools, *The Quran* was the third most selected elective course after Mathematics Applications and Foreign Language. In contrast, grades 11 and 12 students leaned toward mathematics and geometry, likely reflecting university entrance exam-oriented considerations. This divergence illustrates that while religious electives are heavily favored in lower grades, older students tend to prioritize academically advantageous subjects when given broader options. The disparity between public and private schools in elective course preferences may suggest that religious electives are institutionally privileged within the public school system. Rather than pure ideological indoctrination, this may function as a soft steering mechanism that subtly fosters religious curriculum normalization.

However, these patterns also reveal that, despite the structural privileging of religious electives within the public school system, a significant number of students and families still choose not to enroll in these courses when alternative options are genuinely available. This suggests that even under conditions of institutional encouragement and soft steering, segments of the population exercise a form of contestation by opting for non-religious subjects, reflecting underlying ideological diversity and the limits of full hegemonic internalization.

It should also be noted that the AKP government, in turn, has indeed institutionalized more explicit forms of structural compulsion within the elective course system. In August 2023, the Board of Education and Discipline (*Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı*) of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) issued a new regulation published in the Official Gazette of Notices (*Tebliğler Dergisi)*. According to this directive, students in grades 9 and 10 are required to select at least one elective course from each of the three designated groups: *Human, Society and Science; Religion, Morality and Values;* and *Culture, Art and Sports*. For grades 11 and 12, students must choose at least one course from at least two of these groups (MEB, 2023b). Through this formal structuring, the inclusion of at least one religion-based elective becomes virtually unavoidable for all students, thereby introducing a coercive mechanism that extends beyond mere soft steering and further entrenches the ideological reproduction embedded in the AKP's hegemonic educational project.

In sum, the elective religious courses, introduced under the guise of educational diversity, mostly function as an ideologically charged instrument within the broader hegemonic project of the AKP government. Through administrative mechanisms, selective staffing policies, curriculum content, and subtle coercion, these courses institutionalize a particular religious worldview while ignoring other belief systems and secular moral frameworks. Rather than responding to pluralistic societal demand, the structure and practice of these electives appear to generate a controlled environment of consent, wherein Sunni-Islamic norms are positioned as the cultural default. In this regard, elective religious education should not be assessed solely in terms of availability, but also in terms of its role in the reproduction of hegemonic common sense. These courses function not merely as curriculum elements, but as instruments for the reproduction of 'common sense'—a religiously inflected moral order constructed and normalized through state apparatuses. By aligning the concepts of morality and culture with Sunni-Islamic values, the ruling AKP exercises cultural leadership and manufactures, thereby sustaining its ideological dominance beyond coercion.

§ 5.3 Imam Hatip Schools in the 4+4+4 Education System

Imam Hatip schools were founded in accordance with the Tevhid-i Tedrisat, the Law No. 420 dated March 3, 1924. The main goal of establishing the schools was to educate civil servants who perform religious services. Firstly, they were abolished in 1930 allegedly due to a lack of students. After the Democrat Party came to power in 1950, the Imam Hatip schools were re-opened, and increased in number, especially after the 1970s. The perception of the Imam Hatip schools has changed for the public after the rural-urban migration in the 1960s and the 1970s. Following the 1973 elections, the National Salvation Party (MSP) entered the coalition government. During this period, a significant legal adjustment was made: the status of Imam-Hatip institutions was upgraded from *schools* (*okul*) to *high schools* (*lise*), thereby allowing their graduates to access university education without institutional barriers (Çağlar, 2013). As a result, the number of Imam-Hatip schools expanded rapidly in the latter half of the 1970s, coinciding with Erbakan's participation in the National Front coalition governments between 1975 and 1978 (Çağlar, 2013). The graduates, mostly coming from rural areas with religious backgrounds, have started to be active in politics, predominantly within the Islamist MSP (Coşkun & Şentürk, 2012).

Imam Hatip schools have long been subject to public scrutiny regarding their legitimacy, purpose, and place within the national education system. These debates are predominantly shaped by political and ideological considerations (Altıntaş, 2024, p.245).

The main conflict on the Imam Hatip schools occurred after the extinction of the elementary parts of the schools through 8-year continuous compulsory education following the 28 February 1997 military intervention. Imam-Hatip schools have been regarded both as a reflection of and a contributing factor to Turkey's departure from Atatürk's secular legacy [(Makovsky, 2006, p. 6) in (Gür, 2019, p. 342)]. The 4+4+4 educational law put an end to the 8-year continuous compulsory primary education and led to the re-opening of the Imam Hatip elementary schools. Moreover, the classic definition of the schools, which put emphasis on the vocational

basis, has been changed through the new education system. Imam Hatip schools have been transformed into unique institutions combining a dual curriculum aimed at both vocational training and higher education preparation, thus distinguishing them from other types of secondary schools (Gençkal Eroler, 2019, p. 150).

There are two main official differences between the Imam Hatip schools and the other types of schools. The first difference is that the Imam Hatip schools function under the General Directorate of Religious Education of the MoNE. The second and more important difference is taking place in field of curriculum.

The curriculum of the Imam Hatip schools appears as quite intensive. The course of the Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge is obligatory for the students of Imam Hatip schools as well as all the students in any formal elementary and secondary school. On the elementary level, all the lessons under the field of 'Religion, Morals, and Values' are compulsory for Imam Hatip students. In other words, the courses 'Quran', 'The Life of Our Prophet' (*Peygamberimizin Hayati*), and 'Basic Religious Knowledge' lessons are mandatory to attend for the students of Imam Hatip elementary schools, whereas they are officially elective courses for other students in other types of elementary schools. In addition to that, Imam Hatip students at the elementary level take Arabic lessons as well (MEB, 2018b). The remaining courses of the schools are within the common curriculum.

The curriculum of the Imam Hatip schools gets much more intensive at the high school (secondary) level. Alongside the common curriculum, Arabic lessons, and the lessons under the 'Religion, Morals, and Values' field, students of Imam Hatip high schools take vocational lessons as well. These are 'Vocational Arabic', 'Prophetic Biography' (*Siyer*), 'Fiqh', '*Tafsir',* 'History of Religions', 'Hadith', '*Akaid'*, '*Kelam',* 'Oratory and Professional Practice', and 'Culture and Civilization of Islam' (MEB, 2017).

As can be seen, the vocational curriculum of the Imam Hatip high schools is intensively Islamic. It may have not been interpreted completely problematic in terms of the schools' previous vocational description. However, preposterous increase in number of the schools has put a

profound impact on the high school system. The description and program of the schools have been regulated within the scope of both vocational and higher education.

This systemic transformation was accompanied by a remarkable quantitative expansion of Imam Hatip schools. As illustrated in Figure 5.2 below, the number of Imam Hatip middle and high schools remained relatively stable until the early 2010s. Particularly following the enactment of the 4+4+4 educational law in 2012, which symbolized a decisive shift in the AKP's capacity to reshape the education system as part of its broader hegemonic project, the number of these schools increased exponentially.

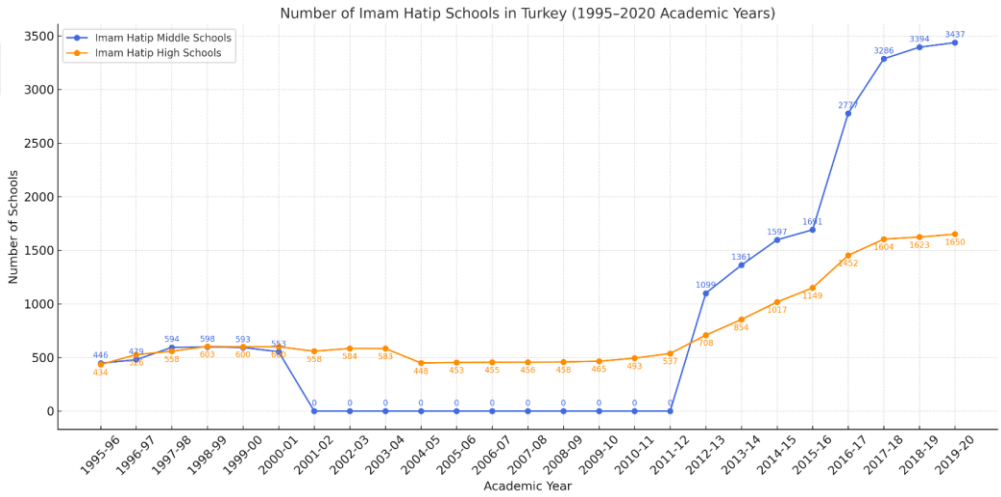


Figure 5.2. Number of Imam Hatip Secondary and High Schools in Turkey (Academic Years 1995–2020). Source: Ministry of National Education Statistics and Aşlamacı (2024) (compiled by the author).

The trajectory shown in Figure 5.2 reveals how this policy was implemented in two waves: first, the re-establishment of Imam Hatip middle schools after the 4+4+4 educational reform in 2012, and second, the rapid proliferation of both middle and high school branches in subsequent years. Such growth patterns reinforce the notion that the expansion was centrally orchestrated and not merely a response to spontaneous social demand.

In parallel with the exponential rise in the number of Imam Hatip schools, the number of students enrolled in these institutions has also

grown dramatically. As shown in Figure 3 below, the total student enrollment in Imam Hatip middle and high schools witnessed a sharp increase particularly after the 4+4+4 educational reform, indicating that the quantitative expansion was not confined to the institutional level but extended to the societal base as well.

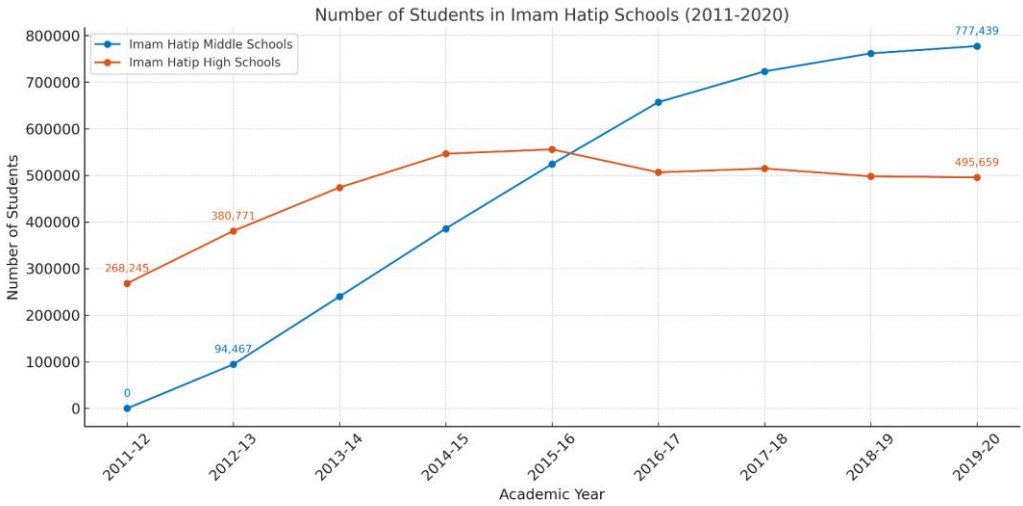


Figure 5.3. Number of Students Enrolled in Imam Hatip Middle and High Schools (Academic Years 2002–2020) Source: Ministry of National Education Statistics (various years); Aşlamacı (2024) (compiled by the author)

The number of Imam Hatip schools was around 600 until the 1997 decision of continuous 8-year compulsory primary education. The number jumped to 1141 just in the first 6 months of the 4+4+4 education system (Okçabol, 2013, p. 253). In the 2002-2003 academic year, the educational season that the AKP came to power, the number of students at the Imam Hatip schools was around 70 thousand. This number boomed as the AKP government stepped up strenuous efforts to disseminate the Imam Hatip schools, and reached 504 thousand in formal education, and 1 million 350 thousand in total including the open high school students in the 2018-2019 academic year (Eğitim-Sen, 2019, p. 4). To put it differently, the number of students of the Imam Hatip schools has increased around 1800 percent from 2002 to 2019. To more comprehensively evaluate the material advantages allocated to Imam Hatip schools within the post-4+4+4 educational structure, analyzing the distribution of public resources across school types is essential. Although official data from the Ministry of

National Education (MoNE) does not provide disaggregated expenditure figures by school type, several independent research reports offer estimations that reflect the unequal distribution of public funds.

According to data compiled by Eğitim-Sen (2018, p. 5), the promoting policy of Imam Hatip schools can be observed by reviewing the expenditures of the public resources per student by school type (see Figure 4). Whilst the per capita expenditure of Imam Hatip schools in the 2017-2018 academic year is almost 13 thousand TL, it is respectively around 7 thousand TL for vocational and technical schools, 6 thousand TL in general education, 4 thousand TL for students enrolled to primary education, and only around 1500 TL for pre-school education. In other words, the resource allocated for each student of the Imam Hatip schools multiplies between 2 and 6 times any other schools' per capita expenditure in the public education system (see Figure 5.4 below).

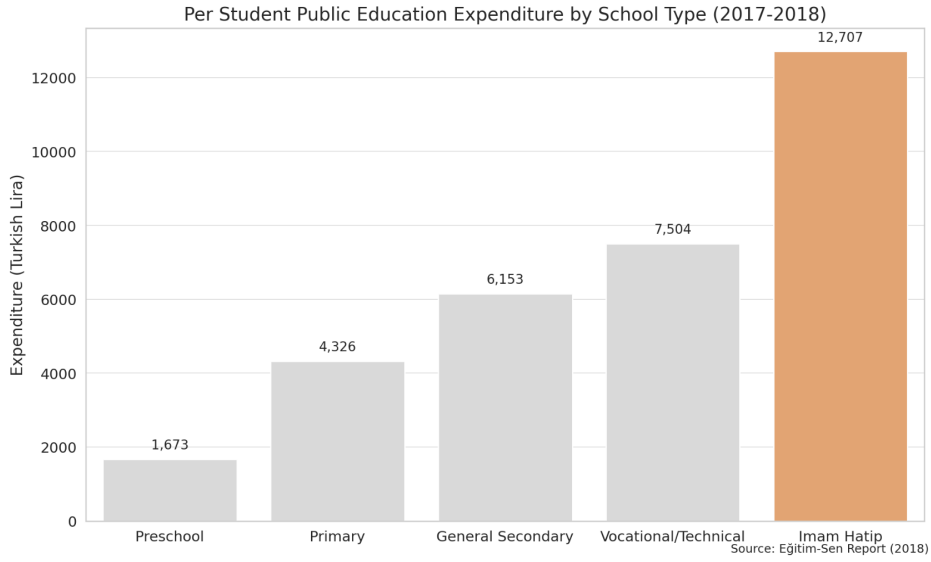


Figure 5.4. Public Expenditure Per Student by School Type, 2017–2018 – Source: Eğitim-Sen, 2018

Between the academic years of 2015 and 2018, the number of students per classroom in Imam Hatip high schools dropped from 23 to 16, indicating a significant improvement in classroom density. In contrast, vocational and technical high schools maintained higher rates (27 to 24), while general high schools remained relatively stable (20 to 21). This

comparative development implies that Imam Hatip high schools have received relatively favorable infrastructural investments in recent period (see Figure 5.5).

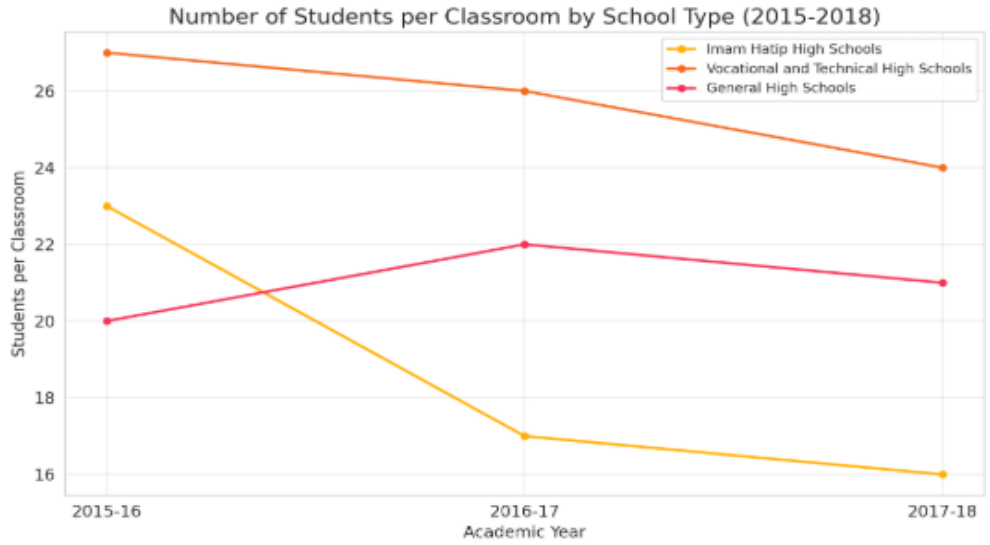


Figure 5.5. Average Number of Students per Classroom by School Type (2015-2018). (Source: Education Reform Initiative, 2018 Education Monitoring Report)

This infrastructural development alone may not be conclusive, yet it opens a relevant line of inquiry: Why have Imam Hatip schools witnessed a faster improvement in classroom conditions compared to other school types? This downward trend in classroom density, while not inherently problematic, raises critical questions when analyzed alongside broader data: Is the investment proportional to student demand? And why are Imam Hatip schools experiencing sharper improvements in classroom conditions than their counterparts? Rather than reflecting a bottom-up increase in demand, such figures may suggest a top-down prioritization in investment. To put it differently, despite the significant rise in the number of Imam Hatip schools, the student growth rates have not kept pace. This discrepancy resulted in significant improvements in infrastructural ratios such as students per classroom may indicate a structural capacity expansion beyond immediate demand. In this context, average school population of Imam Hatip schools can be an indicator to demonstrate the degree of demand for the schools, the inequality among the students in

different types of schools, and how favored the Imam Hatip students are (See Table 5.1).

Average Number of Students per School Type (2019–2020 Academic Year)

School Type	Average Number of Students per School
Public Middle Schools (excluding Imam Hatip)	339
Imam Hatip Middle Schools	226
Public High Schools (excluding Imam Hatip)	609
Imam Hatip High Schools	300

Table 5.1. Source: Author's compilation and calculation using data from Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Statistics of Formal Education 2019–2020.

While proponents of Imam Hatip schools often emphasize increasing demand to justify their rapid proliferation after the 4+4+4 reform, official data on average school population sizes offers a critical counterpoint. In the 2019–2020 academic year, the average number of students per school in public middle schools excluding Imam Hatip institutions stood at 339, while Imam Hatip middle schools hosted an average of only 226 students per school. A similar and more striking pattern emerges at the high school level: non-Imam Hatip public high schools average 609 students per school, compared to just 300 in Imam Hatip high schools. This discrepancy implies a significant imbalance between the number of schools and the actual student population they serve in the Imam Hatip track. That said, it should be noted that according to the Ministry of National Education's 2022 Performance Program (MEB, 2022, p. 62), nearly half (47.9%) of general secondary education classes in 2020 consisted of more than 30 students per classroom, revealing the ongoing issue of overcrowding in public high schools. Thus, rather than a reflection of overwhelming demand, the data indicates that a disproportionately high number of Imam Hatip schools exist relative to their student body size.

Considering enrollment and admission patterns in the LGS (high school entrance exam) and YKS (university entrance exam) systems, as will be discussed in this section, this divergence reinforces the argument

that the expansion of Imam Hatip schools is a state-driven initiative, which prioritizes ideological position over educational efficiency or popular demand.

Government officials have repeatedly expressed the great significance they attach to Imam Hatip schools especially following the 4+4+4 education system. It has grown to such a pitch that Mehmet Özhaseki, the former Minister of Environment and Urbanization, proudly confessed that he played an active role in establishing more than 10 illegal Imam Hatip schools during his mayoralty (Sputnik Türkiye, 2017). According to President Erdoğan, who is also an alumnus of an Imam Hatip school, "the history of these schools is like the essence and summary of what our nation has experienced in the last century" (T24, 2017). In Erdoğan's view, the owner of the Imam Hatip schools is the nation's very itself (T24, 2017). Erdoğan has constantly put emphasis on his identity as an Imam Hatip alumnus (DW, 2019), and expressed that he expects success and competition from Imam Hatip students in every field of life (T24, 2017). In this regard, it is striking that the son of President Erdoğan, Bilal Erdoğan, goes even further and codifies Imam Hatip students as "the Erdoğan generation" (BirGün, 2018). It illustrates how much importance the AKP government and Erdoğan himself give to Imam Hatip schools as the main institution in the education system in the creation of the next generations.

At this juncture, it should be noted that the Imam Hatip schools have a 'story' or 'narrative' in the social memory. The 28 February 1997 military intervention against the RP had one of its most critical impacts in the field of education. The elementary parts of the Imam Hatip schools had been abolished after the 28 February military intervention, and the graduates' chance of getting higher education had dramatically decreased in unrelated fields after the YÖK decision following the memorandum. Therefore, the Imam Hatip schools gained symbolic importance within the religious segments in Turkey. The story behind the schools has been interpreted in relationality between the Kemalist state and the conservative population, and the students of the schools have been interpreted as victims of the system. The academic achievements of İmam-Hatip graduates, particularly in secular subjects, heightened concerns among

secularists. In 1994, Mustafa Kıyıklık, a student from Kartal Anatolian İmam-Hatip High School, achieved the top score in Turkey's highly competitive national university entrance examination (ÖYS). The following year, another student from the same school, Selçuk Şimşek, ranked second nationwide (Bozan, 2007). Before the 28 February military intervention, a notable report by the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD) advocated for the reimplementation of the Law on the Unification of Education (Baloğlu, 1990). The report categorized Imam Hatip schools as vocational institutions. It highlighted the increasing admission and the academic success of İmam Hatip graduates who had gained admission to prestigious university programs in law, medicine, and political science. Nevertheless, the report insisted that İmam-Hatip schools should remain limited in number, focused only on educating imams and preachers, and that their graduates should only be eligible to pursue theology in higher education. Although the report was strongly criticized by then-President Turgut Özal and by both religious and liberal circles in Turkish society, it has been interpreted by the early 1990s that secular actors were determined to halt the growing influence and success of İmam Hatip schools (Gür, 2019). Though, as Gür (2019) describes it, the 1990s had been the "golden age" of the Imam Hatips indeed. Thus, it can be seen that Imam Hatip students are expected to create a new success myth through contributing to the already-existing story in order to provide and re-product the consensual mechanism of reshaping the collective identity in an Islamic understanding. The myth of success has especially started after the YÖK's narrowing of weighted high school grade point average decision in 2009. According to former President of the Association of Alumni and Members of Imam Hatip High Schools (ÖNDER) Hüseyin Korkut, for instance, the Imam Hatip students showed significant success in university entrance exams in that year. He stated that some students even registered the Law Faculty at Boğaziçi University, which had not existed (Yeni Şafak, 2011). That said, it is still rather hard to create a success myth for Imam Hatip students. This can be seen as an illustration of the propagandist discourse for creating a success myth for

Imam Hatip schools without even checking the existing programs of universities.

In the 2018 round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), students from Anatolian Imam Hatip High Schools ranked far below their counterparts across all three tested competencies. While students from Science High Schools, Social Sciences High Schools and Anatolian High Schools scored of 528,8 in reading, 504,9 in mathematics, 532.0 in science on average, Imam Hatip students received only 444.8, 425.8, and 446.0, respectively (See Table 5.2).

Average PISA 2018 Scores by School Type in Turkey

School Type	Reading	Mathematics	Science
Science High School	583.4	593.9	584.9
Social Sciences High School	516.8	490.1	512.7
Anatolian High School	495.0	484.9	498.6
Anatolian Imam Hatip High School	444.8	425.8	446.0
Vocational and Technical High School	421.6	409.2	423.8

Table 5.2. Source: Ministry of National Education (2018).

In national university placement exams (YKS), the results reveal a similar pattern. Between 2012 and 2020, the university admission rates of Imam Hatip High Schools consistently lagged behind those of general high schools.

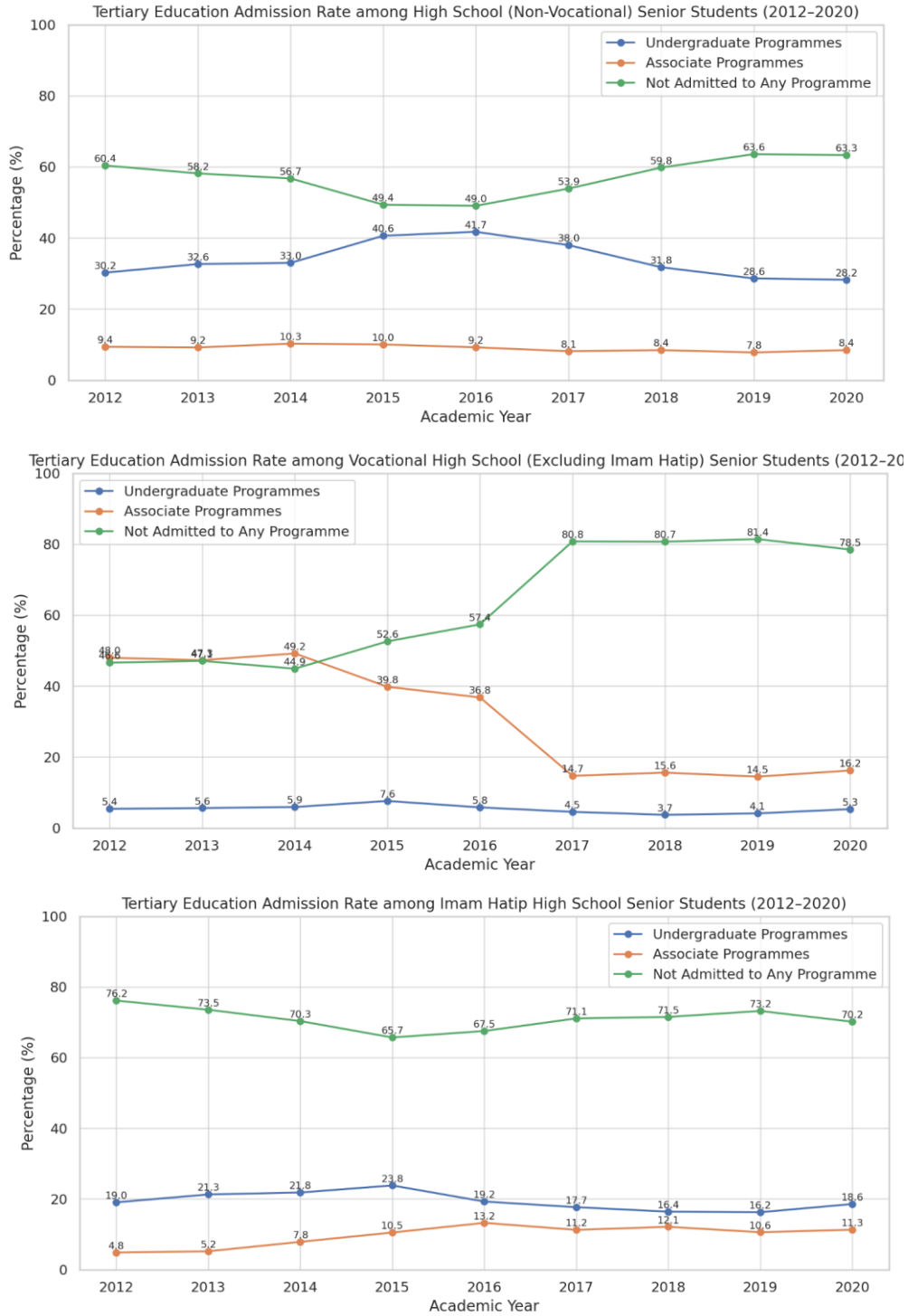


Figure 5.6. Source: Author's compilation and calculation using data from Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Statistics of Formal Education (various years).

These figures make it difficult to sustain a narrative of Imam Hatip's success as an empirically grounded reality. Instead, they point to a symbolic effort to construct a myth of academic legitimacy that lacks support from national or international assessment data. The persistence of this myth, despite evident shortcomings in performance, suggests a deeper ideological agenda behind the promotion of Imam Hatip schools. However, the relative positioning of Imam Hatip schools becomes more significant when compared with the dramatic collapse in vocational and technical high schools' performance, particularly after following the track of the 4+4+4 education system's first alumnus in 2016, after the implementation of the 12-year compulsory education system in 2012. Traditionally perceived as non-academic career paths and serving predominantly lower-income students, vocational high schools witnessed a steep decline in their already limited higher education outcomes. In 2015, nearly 48% of vocational high school graduates were placed in associate degree programs; by 2020, this figure had dropped below 16%, with undergraduate admissions falling below 5%. Research based on localized contexts highlights students' conflicting perceptions of vocational education. For instance, Yazgan's (2017) study in Eskişehir finds that students perceive vocational high schools simultaneously as a "shelter", in terms of offering relatively quick access to employment; and as a "trap," in terms of limiting prospects for prestigious jobs and higher education. Similarly, the field research conducted by the Mevlana Development Agency (Ahlatcı, 2015) in Konya reported that 88% of surveyed students believe their schools are seen by society as either "ordinary" or "worthless". While these are local findings, they point toward a broader pattern of how vocational education is associated with constrained mobility and limited recognition. In this sense, Imam Hatip schools may offer a sense of recognition and belonging for students from lower-income families, especially in cases where access to more traditional forms of *social capital* is limited. For many families, the promise of moral legitimacy and upward mobility, even though it is also limited, may make these schools appear as meaningful alternatives to vocational schools in terms of *cultural capital* as well.

Since 2018, Turkey's high school admission policy has required students to make their selections through a local placement system, limiting them to five schools and no more than three from the same school type (e.g., Anatolian, vocational, or Imam Hatip) (MEB, 2018, p.6). Students who skip this step are not allowed to access centrally placed school options. While formally neutral, this structure narrows students' ability to apply exclusively to academically oriented. In this context, the placement system may play a role in shaping the appearance of demand, especially for Imam Hatip high schools, regardless of students' underlying motivations.

In this context, Imam Hatip High Schools, despite their poor academic performance, may have come to be seen as a relatively preferable option for families seeking upward mobility, especially within lower-income segments. Their dual-path curriculum, ideological legitimacy, and state-backed expansion make them an engineered alternative to vocational schools. Rather than reflecting genuine societal demand, this configuration appears to be the outcome of a demand-generation strategy facilitated through policy instruments and ideological preferences. This phenomenon can be easily observed through viewing the ratio of elementary school students' preferences in the high school entrance exam (LGS) in 2018. Imam Hatip high schools admitted more than one-fifth (22,88 percent) of the students among all students who got the right to placement. This ratio remained quite low for vocational and technical high schools, which is around one-tenth (11.48 percent) (Eğitim-Sen, 2019, p. 5).

Hence, the education policy of the government regarding Imam Hatip schools cannot be merely interpreted in an aspect that asserts it is related to meeting the demands coming from the society; to the contrary, even though there is demand for the schools, the policies serve to generate a much wider demand, which are interpreted as instruments for Islamization of the society in order to contribute the aim of extending the grassroot of the ruling AKP. The expansion of Imam Hatip schools should therefore be interpreted as a strategic move within the broader hegemonic project, serving to construct a new common sense aligned with Islamic conservative values. Imam Hatip schools, as one of the vital parts

of the education system, play a significant role in establishing a new collective identity. As the AKP began to increase its control over the state apparatus, especially after the 2010 constitutional referendum, the party in its 61st government program, and Erdoğan himself, have started to use the discourse of the 'New Turkey', which was based upon forging a new dominant version of common sense through disseminating the worldview of the government as 'native' values and moral values of the majority; or the common culture; or in other words, the "folklore of philosophy" in the Gramscian sense. On the ideological basis, the party has shifted from the 'reconciliatory' and 'moderate' position of provisional 'conservative democracy' towards its Islamist roots within a neoliberal paradigm. In this regard, wide-spread Imam Hatip schools have the feature of being a *par excellence* apparatus among other types of schools similar to what Althusser suggested within the educational Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) due to their intensive Islamic curriculum.

Furthermore, as the government delineated them to society, the Imam Hatip schools were educational institutions for students who wished to learn about their religion, rather than solely vocational institutions (Hürriyet, 2004). In this sense, the strengthening of the Imam Hatip schools, which have a long history in the Turkish education system, was a more legitimate mode of Islamization within the education system due to the sense of trust of the religious-conservative segments of the society in these educational institutions. Thus, the transformation of the Imam Hatip schools with a curriculum in that a dual approach relying on both traditional and modern modes was a more secure path rather than establishing a brand-new type of educational institution.

From this point of view, the Imam Hatip schools should be evaluated as the main institution within the hegemonic project of the 4+4+4 education system. In March 2018, the Konya Provincial Directorate of National Education organized a workshop that gathered 50 teachers of Religious Culture and Imam Hatip vocational courses to address emerging theological challenges among students (Sözcü, 2018). The workshop participants reported increasing tendencies toward deism among students—a belief in God while rejecting divine intervention in worldly

affairs—indicating that some students were distancing themselves from the full doctrinal orthodoxy promoted by religious education. This observation, coming directly from the practitioners of religious pedagogy, triggered significant national debate, including public remarks by President Erdoğan (BirGün, 2018b) and responses from senior religious authorities such as the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Bianet, 2018). President Erdoğan publicly expressed concern by questioning the education minister about the rise of deistic tendencies, while senior religious authorities, including the Directorate of Religious Affairs, downplayed the issue, arguing that such tendencies were marginal and not widespread.

The controversy over the growing visibility of deism among students, specifically within institutions designed to cultivate religious-conservative subjectivities, highlights the inherent limitations of ideological reproduction even within the very structures established to secure hegemony. In Gramscian terms, such developments illustrate how hegemonic projects remain subject to ongoing contestation, resistance, and potential fragmentation, even within their core institutions.

Furthermore, some empirical researches reveal significant generational differences in public perceptions of Imam Hatip schools, highlighting additional contestation regarding their societal role. In this sense, for instance, in the study of Ankaralı et al. (2019), while approximately 56% of respondents described Imam Hatip students as possessing national and moral values, 12.2% stated the opposite. Similarly, 68% perceived these students as well-integrated into society, whereas 16% believed they fail to adapt socially. Regarding adherence to traditions, 69% considered Imam Hatip students attached to customs and traditions. However, only 36% evaluated Imam Hatip students positively overall, while 48% offered a mixed assessment with both positive and negative aspects.

These contestations are particularly pronounced among the 18-29 age group, which is the very cohort most directly exposed to the AKP's post-4+4+4 educational structure. Only a minority of 18-29-year-olds assessed Imam Hatip graduates as having a general cultural level above the national average; 31.6% explicitly stated that Imam Hatip graduates'

cultural level was below average, compared to only around 8% in older cohorts.

The most striking signs of contestation emerge in terms of preference and support. Among the 18-29 age group, approximately 25% supported closing Imam Hatip schools entirely (versus 2-4% in other age groups), and 45% stated they would not wish their children or close relatives to attend such institutions (compared to roughly 10% in older cohorts). In the same age group, fewer than 50% agreed that Imam Hatip schools produce socially beneficial individuals, while this proportion reached 80% among older respondents. Some hints of this trend can be observed even among Imam Hatip graduates themselves. According to the study conducted by Türköz (2020, p. 13), while only around 14% of the older generations (X and Y cohorts) identified as nationalist, this figure triples to 43.2% among Generation Z. Conversely, the share of those identifying as conservative drops dramatically from nearly 46–47% in older cohorts to just 20.3% among Generation Z. This shift suggests a generational realignment away from religious-conservative self-identification toward nationalist orientations. Collectively, these findings indicate that, despite state-driven expansion and ideological promotion, the younger generation which constitutes the primary target of the AKP's hegemonic educational project, exhibits substantial skepticism toward Imam Hatip schools, thereby exposing cracks in the government's attempt to secure consent and internalize its ideological vision.

Although the Directorate of Religious Affairs confirms that the graduation numbers of the Imam Hatip schools are inordinate and their professional competence is inadequate in its 2017-2021 Strategic Plan (DİB, 2016b, p. 29); there is no sign from the government that it is in intention to restrain. Considering the imagined role of the future generations in terms of creation of a new ideology, common sense and collective identity, it is unsound to expect any retreat from the ruling AKP about the policies concerning the Imam Hatip schools.

§ 5.4 Religionization in Education through Values Education and Religious Foundations

Especially after the 1980s, the religious communities generally have transformed to respond to the changing conditions in that the state provides more space for religion in social, political, and economic life with the rise of Turkish-Islam Synthesis as a state ideology. The pre-eminent religious community after the 1980s had been the Fethullah Gülen community or Gülen Criminal Cult (GCC). The GCC has put excessive importance on education. The movement has gained power in the state apparatus by raising a so-called 'golden generation' via private schools both at home and abroad and private teaching institutions in order to seize many important bureaucratic institutions, military, and higher judicial bodies. After the 2010 constitutional referendum, the movement especially gained the opportunity to set up its cadres in higher judicial bodies such as the Constitutional Court and the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK). The movement's efficiency in the military had been increased through controversial investigations such as Ergenekon and Balyoz. The AKP government and the GCC had acted in unison to prevent the possibility of being liquidated by the Kemalist military and higher judicial bodies until securing the state apparatus. As the Islamist AKP, the GCC also has the idea of making Islam a determinant factor in social life. However, unlike the political Islamists, the movement interprets Islam as a supraparties hegemonic factor in the political field. What significant here is the AKP government and the movement both have hegemonic projects in that one party should become the leading fraction of the nascent formed hegemony after the 2010 referendum. The fact that one of the turning points of the crackled GCC and the AKP alliance was the AKP's decision to abolish private teaching institutions (*dershanes*) in 2012 illustrates how two fractions attached importance to education in their understanding of power. Eventually, the GCC lost its power in all the fields of the state alongside the educational field, especially after the huge purge following the July 15, 2016, foiled coup attempt of the movement. As the movement has appeared as a 'failed' hegemonic project, many other religious

communities, foundations, and associations have gained more power in the educational field.

Nonetheless, it is rather hard to claim that these communities and institutions have a wider understanding of politics rather than only gaining space. None of them has ever been close to the power that the GCC had gained in decades. Furthermore, it is unlikely for them to envision such a project as the Gülen movement had considering their human resources, background, and relations with the state. Moreover, after the clash between the AKP and the Gülen movement, the AKP has been more careful while choosing partners. The AKP government has exerted pressure on communities that do not demonstrate loyalty to Erdoğan. An example can be found in the case of the Furkan Foundation, a relatively new form of religious community, whose 'Imam' Alparslan Kuytul has been arrested for almost 2 years in total, after openly criticizing the government (Sabah, 2019). In addition, many foundations and associations taking part in the educational field are directly related to the AKP government. For instance, the Turkey Youth and Educational Service Foundation (TÜRGEV), which owns many dormitories and takes an active part in the field of values education, presents itself as "TÜRGEV was founded (...) under the leadership of current president Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 1996" (TÜRGEV, n.d.). Another example is the Birlik (Union) Foundation, a foundation taking part in especially 'values education', which lists Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the first place in the founders' committee of the organization on its website (Birlik Vakfı, n.d.).

As Althusser (2014) reminds us, private or non-governmental institutions can function as ideological state apparatuses as well. Post-GCC era in the educational field, thus, illustrates a new term in that religious communities, foundations, and associations function as ideological state apparatuses. It cannot be denied that many communities, foundations, and associations have restricted autonomy in some aspects. However, it seems that they are allowed to perform in the educational field as long as they are beneficial for the hegemonic project of the AKP in which Islamization of society has been interpreted as creating and re-producing a grass-root for the party. Hence, these institutions play a role in the

educational field in order to maintain and contribute the dominant version of the common sense of the AKP.

While doing so, these non-governmental institutions carry out many projects in coordination with the MoNE. In return, these institutions gain protection and support in the legal field. An example can be found related to the Ensar Foundation that occupied the agenda of the public after the child sexual abuse scandal in Karaman in 2016 (Sözcü, 2016).

However, it has not led to a detailed investigation of the institution despite intensive public demands. While the number of -mostly illegal- pre-school-like institutions belonging to religious foundations and communities has increased markedly; many foundations like TÜRGEV -which has become well known for its relationship with the Erdoğan family and topics of costless lands, huge donations, and allotted buildings- and Ensar Foundation, Hizmet (Service) Foundation, Hayrat Foundation, İlim Yayma Cemiyeti, Birlik (Union) Foundation, etc. attained the right to give seminars and courses, to deliver issues with religious contents, and collect donations in the schools under the name of 'values education' (Eğitim-Sen, 2016).

On the other hand, institutions such as foundations and associations affiliated with religious groups carry on many other projects to de-secularize society and especially to shape the upcoming generations in the field of education. According to the Directorate of Religious Affairs, there are around 17 thousand Quran courses all around Turkey. Around 4 thousand of these courses are performed under foundations and associations (DİB, 2025). Alongside the Quran courses, these institutions carry out projects through protocols with the MoNE. A striking example is the project “Let’s Go to Mosques, Children” (Haydi Çocuklar Camiye) which is being conducted by the Server Gençlik Foundation with the permission of the MoNE. The foundation describes the aim of the project as "helping children to understand the meaning of life and to discover their spiritual potential" in a world in which all human beings exist only once (Server Gençlik Foundation, 2016). The number of children attending the project, according to the official numbers on the official website, was around 35 thousand. The project focuses on school-age children (6-13 years old).

The Server Gençlik Foundation encourages students with rewards that can be gained through collecting points by going to mosques (Server Gençlik Foundation, 2016). In order to understand the contribution of these religious communities and institutions to the hegemonic Islamization project, investigating the 'values education seminars can be useful.

Values education refers to "the attempt, within schools, to craft pedagogies and supportive structures to foster the development of positive, ethical, pro-social inclinations and competencies in youth, including around strengthening their academic focus and achievement" (Berkowitz, 2011, p. 153). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), values are "are generally long-term standards or principles" that are put in use to understand "the worth of an idea or action" through providing criteria for the pupils to interpret if something is good or bad (UNESCO, n.d.). In this sense, by definition, the values education is to the extent of 'common sense' from the Gramscian point of view regardless of their content or understanding. Thus, the values education seminars are an important subject in order to understand what kind of generations with what sort of values aim to be raised through education in Turkey.

The Values Education Center started to take part in educational activities in 2003 within the body of the Ensar Foundation. The center has already published books named "Children and Religion", "Pre-school Religion and Moral Education" and many others in the field (Değerler Eğitimi Merkezi [DEM], n.d.). The values education in Turkey, however, has started to take place in the official educational institutions after 2010 with the circular of the MoNE, during the office of Nimet Baş. In line with these developments, the Ministry of National Education has also actively contributed to shaping the notion of values through officially published pedagogical materials. One notable example is the book *Values Education* published by the Directorate General for Secondary Education under the MoNE, which is publicly accessible via the official Education Informatics Network (EBA) platform (MEB, 2025). The book includes thematic chapters on values such as *justice*, *honesty*, *self-discipline*, *patience*, *respect*, *love*, *responsibility*, *patriotism*, and *benevolence*. However, rather than

being grounded in pluralist or secular ethical frameworks, each of these values is exclusively contextualized within religious -specifically Sunni Islamic- narratives. For instance, the chapter on *justice* opens with direct verses from the Quran and continues by emphasizing the justice of Muslim rulers throughout Turkish-Islamic history, defining universal justice through the Prophet Muhammad's Farewell Sermon. Likewise, the value of *friendship* is introduced by the religious phrase "If you seek a friend, Allah suffices," and further explained via narrations from classical Sunni hadith sources such as *Bukhari* or other references from *Kutub al-Sittah*. This approach is systematically repeated across all chapters. While the book's structure ostensibly focuses on promoting universally accepted virtues, the interpretive framework is frequently religious, suggesting that moral values cannot be taught or understood outside of an Islamic reference system. Therefore, official curricular tools reinforce the AKP's broader project of hegemonizing a specific religious worldview within the educational domain, blurring the line between civic morality and religious doctrine.

In the values education field, many religious foundations and associations have started to take part in the following years through signed protocols with the MoNE. TÜRGEV, Ensar Foundation, Hizmet Foundation- which is affiliated to the Ismailağa religious community that openly supported the AKP in the July 2019 Istanbul local election (Takvim, 2019), Hayrat Foundation, İlim Yayma Cemiyeti, Birlik Foundation can be named as the main institutions taking active role in the values education seminars (Eğitim-Sen, 2019, p. 5). The seminars' point of view in the field can be easily distinguished from the universal understanding of the term "values education". The Association of International Educators (ULUED), which is affiliated with the Hayrat Foundation, presents its educational materials on values education taking place in public schools. Considering the materials of the institution, more than 30 out of 40 presentations have direct religious concerns or titles such as 'Existence and Union of Allah', 'Signs on Science and Technology in the Miracles of the Prophets', 'The Importance of Following the Sunnah', 'the Balance between the World and Afterlife', 'The Purpose of Creation of Human' and so on (ULUED,

2019). Another example of how values education is reviewed by the MoNE can be seen in the presentations which can be found on the official website of the MoNE. According to the MoNE's official presentation, the values are the reason behind human attitudes and they are grounded in the 'creation' (*fitrat*) of human beings; these values are natal, and "natal values are religious and moral values" (MEB, 2018c). According to the issued booklet on values education by the MoNE following the protocol with the Hizmet Foundation, the meaning of life has been interpreted within the framework of "the guidance of Allah's divine inspiration"; and the meaning of life cannot be understood without comprehending the value of "devotion and commitment to Allah" (MEB, 2014, p. 22). Moreover, the booklet has no other significant emphasis on 'values' rather than hadiths and passages from the Quran. Thus, as can be seen, the values education in Turkey has been reviewed in a framework in which only an Islamic interpretation of the 'common values' of the society has been brought to the fore.

In this regard, the values education field in Turkey has occurred as the activity area of the religious communities, foundations, and associations via the protocols signed with the MoNE. Thus, religious communities conduct cultural activities that reinforce the ruling party's worldview and facilitate its dominance in the field of education. In this context, since these institutions contribute to the government's hegemonic Islamization project in the educational field, function as ideological state apparatuses. These institutions serve the hegemonic project to impose and build a dominant version of common sense through especially values education seminars. In these seminars, the interpretation of 'values' has been presented in a way as if any non-Islamic 'value' or form of knowledge can be found in the society. Hence, the efforts taking place in the field should be considered from a point of view in which the dominant version of common sense has been forged through the exclusion of other forms of values and ways of obtaining knowledge. In this regard, the values education interpretation of the AKP is in accordance with the hegemonic Islamization project of the 4+4+4 education system.

Alongside the values education, religious institutions take part in education through dormitories and other projects and activities within the context of the signed protocols with the MoNE. In 2016, there were 738 dormitories in 81 provinces under the Credit and Dormitories Agency (TBMM, 2017, p. 142). However, there were also 3964 private dormitories in Turkey. The majority of these private dormitories, around 2300, operate for the children at the level of elementary school. More than 2200 of these dormitories belong to foundations and associations (TBMM, 2017, p. 159). In other words, the weight of foundations and associations in the area of dormitories overcomes the state involvement. The dormitories owned by foundations and associations are operated by some religious groups and communities (Saymaz, 2018, pp. 15-16). According to Turam (2007), the dormitories operated by religious communities can be interpreted as socialization spaces in which students are gradually exposed to particular normative and religious frameworks through structured extracurricular activities. While definitive claims on identity transformation would require longitudinal sociological data, these dormitories of religious groups may contribute as apparatuses in which students' worldview is trying to be shaped, especially through extracurricular activities (Turam, 2007). These activities focus on allegedly saving students from 'degeneration'. The students, in addition to the school education, spend most of their time in these dormitories where a "good deal of socialization and acculturation occur" (Turam, 2007). Considering the fact that the post-GCC era of the religious communities and other institutions in the field of education has been shaped within a framework of certain obedience to the state, it should be noted that these dormitories could be considered institutions that fill the gap of the state involvement in other socialization forms rather than school-related ones. Of course, these institutions cannot be considered as places that are completely under the control of the government. However, shaping students' world-views and identities within the scope of the Sunni sect of Islam is beneficial for the AKP's hegemonic project of de-secularization the society in order to create a new collective identity, and a new dominant common sense that embraces mostly Islamic values as the natural realities of life.

§ 5.5 Neoliberalism, Privatization, and Class Dynamics in Education

Since the 1980s, global economic restructuring influenced significantly by neoliberalism has reshaped societies, demanding that nation-states adjust their policies to the rhythms of this new global economic order (Morrow & Torres, 2000; Burbules & Torres, 2000). Education, previously guided by social welfare logic, became one of the prominent terrains for this neoliberal transformation. Neoliberalism redefined education's purpose, emphasizing market logic, competition, individual choice, and efficiency over social solidarity and equity (Clarke, 2004; Lauder et al., 2006). Neoliberal education reforms globally promote market-oriented strategies emphasizing efficiency, accountability, competition, and choice (Clarke, 2004). These reforms rationalize privatization by labeling public education as inherently inefficient, rigid, and wasteful (Clarke, 2004).

Turkey, aligning with global trends, experienced intensified neoliberal restructuring, particularly from the early 2000s under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government (İnal & Akkaymak, 2012; Okçabol, 2013). In the Party Program, the AKP sides with "an operating market economy with its all institutions and organizations". In the 59th Government Program, it was also declared that "forming a market society" is an essential goal for the AKP. In the 61st Government Program (T.C. Başbakanlık, 2011), which was formed after the 2011 general election, the language for the goal becomes the 'flexibilization of labour markets'. The 4+4+4 education system, in the economic sense, was an outcome of the long-term neoliberal policies of the AKP government and its predecessors after September 12, 1980, military coup d'etat. The system has provided the AKP to take further steps to reinforce the neoliberal hegemonic project, i.e. the policies based upon Post Washington Consensus (PWC) as mentioned earlier, in the educational field. This era saw increased commodification of education, the polarization of schools, the expansion of the private sector, and the declining quality of public education (Gök, 2014; Kurul, 2012). Policies such as the "4+4+4" educational reform, changes in curricula, privatization of services, the introduction of

voucher systems, and significant state incentives for private schooling marked a dramatic shift toward privatization and marketization in education (İnal & Akkaymak, 2012; Kurul, 2012; Okçabol, 2013).

The AKP's educational policies incorporated explicit ideological dimensions, prominently visible in curriculum reforms and religious education expansions, such as the controversial "4+4+4" system (Okçabol, 2013). These reforms dovetailed reflecting efforts to solidify neoliberal ideology through educational content and structure. Specifically, curricular changes emphasized individualism, entrepreneurship, and consumerism—fundamental neoliberal values—shaping students into neoliberal subjects who perceive themselves primarily as economic agents (Koşar-Altınyelken & Akkaymak, 2012; Aratemür Çimen, 2015). The 2004 curriculum reform in Turkey explicitly embedded entrepreneurial values such as leadership, risk-taking, and competitiveness into primary school education. Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak (2012) observed that post-2005 textbooks increasingly portray citizens as consumers, entrepreneurs, and competitors, thereby normalizing market rationality within students' formative educational experiences.

According to Kurul (2012), the commodification of education, income generation through parent-teacher associations, intensified competition, manipulation of teacher employment, incentives for private schooling, and widespread charitable contributions characterize Turkey's educational landscape post-2002. Such neoliberal measures have been justified through rhetoric emphasizing the supposed inefficiency of public education and promoting market mechanisms as necessary solutions (Aratemür Çimen, 2015).

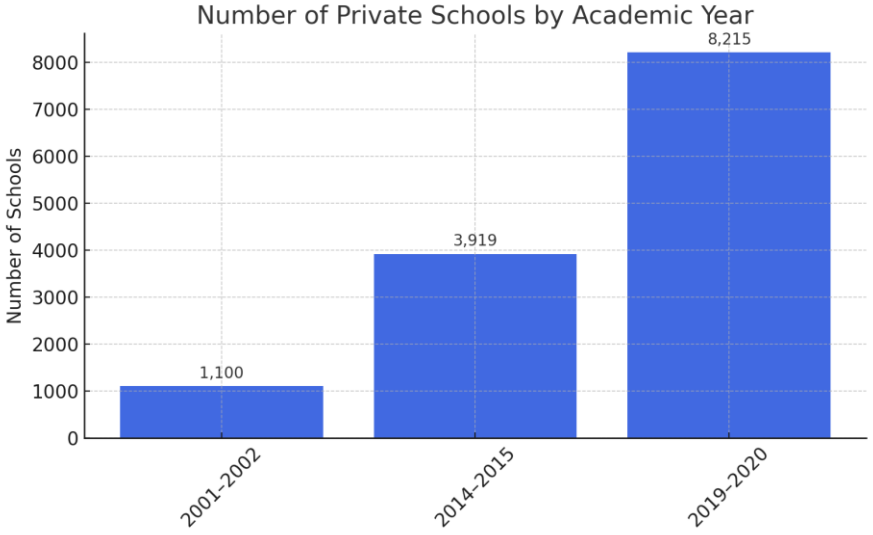


Figure 5.7. Source: Ministry of National Education (MoNE), National Education Statistics: Formal Education 2019-20.

A striking indicator of this shift is observed in private school enrollments. While there were only 1,100 private schools and 245,838 students in 2001-2002, these numbers surged dramatically to 3,919 schools and 651,867 students by 2014-2015. Private education institutions (dershanes), despite being officially closed in 2015, transformed into private schools, thereby maintaining and even expanding the private educational market (Garipağaoğlu, 2016). In the 2019-2020 academic year, private school and student numbers rose to 8,215 and 1,178,985 respectively (MoNE, 2020).

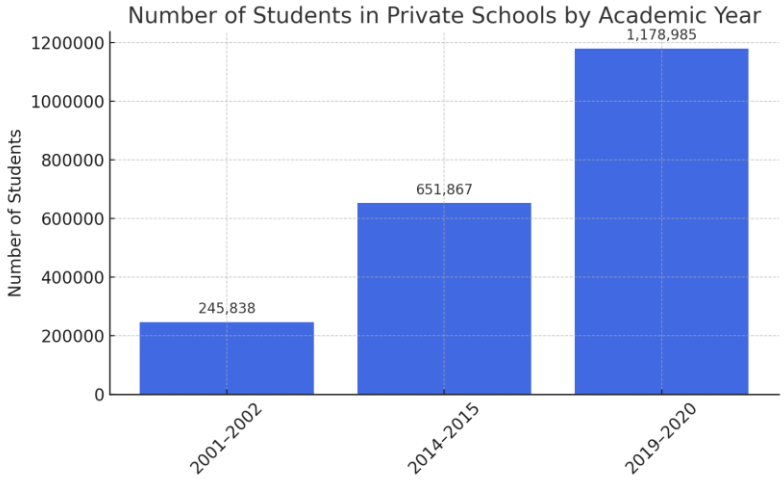


Figure 5.8. Source: Ministry of National Education (MoNE), National Education Statistics: Formal Education 2019-20.

In contrast, public education suffered from underinvestment, with declining quality and deteriorating infrastructure highlighting a paradox wherein the state-supported private competitors while neglecting its own educational institutions (Canerik, 2017; Hız, 2010). According to the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan published by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2015), only 8.4% of public schools had gymnasiums, 39.2% had libraries, and 36% had auditoriums. Reports also emphasized inadequate heating, cleanliness, security, and counseling services in public schools (Sarıışık & Düşkün, 2016; ERG, 2016).

The ratio of private schools in the education system reached an all-time high of 25 percent in the 2018-2019 education season, while it was only around 2 percent in 2003 (Eğitim-Sen, 2019, p. 3). In their quantitative research, Balkan and Öncü (2013) examined the educational preferences of 434 families, 278 with Islamic backgrounds (will be referred to as conservative families) and 156 with secular backgrounds (will be referred to as secular families), all categorized as middle class. The findings revealed that a higher proportion of secular parents had graduated from prestigious high schools, such as private or Anatolian high schools, compared to their conservative counterparts. Conversely, a greater number of conservative middle-class parents had attended Imam-Hatip high schools, whereas no parents in the secular group held such a background. Notably, in both family groups, the primary motivation for saving money was their children's educational expenses. Additionally, the data indicated that while none of the secular families preferred Imam-Hatip high schools for their children's secondary education, among conservative families, this preference was also minimal, with only 9%. Both groups demonstrated comparable willingness to send their children to universities that offer instruction in a foreign language. Likewise, there were no significant differences between conservative and secular families regarding their views on university education abroad. A particularly noteworthy result of the study was that conservative families expressed greater enthusiasm than secular families for enrolling their children in private primary schools. On the other hand, it was observed that secular families showed a higher tendency to private high schools compared to

conservative families. This may be an indicator of a common idea among secular society in Turkey which is based on the thought that private schools may have the possibility of reducing the impact of religious education in schools. And it should be noted that more recent studies may suggest higher gaps. According to the report of the Education Reform Initiative (ERG), private schools provide a less religious form of education, especially considering the field of elective courses. As mentioned earlier, according to the report, while the most 'preferred' courses in public schools are 'Our Prophet's Life', Basic Religious Knowledge, and Quran respectively; in private schools, they are 'Project Presentation', 'Democracy and Human Rights', and 'Social Activity' (Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (ERG), 2013, p. 98).

According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), educational expenditures as a share of total household consumption reveal stark disparities across income groups and indicate a growing class-based divergence over time. In 2002, the lowest income quintile allocated merely 0.4% of their total consumption to educational services, while the highest quintile devoted 2.2%. By 2012, this gap had widened: the lowest 20% spent 0.6% of their consumption on education, whereas the highest 20% increased their share to 4.1%. The data from 2019 further underscores this trend, with the lowest income group spending only 0.9% and the highest quintile reaching 4.4%. These figures clearly demonstrate that while all income groups slightly increased their spending on education over the years, the capacity of higher-income households to invest in education has grown at a substantially faster rate. This expanding disparity reinforces educational inequality and aligns with the broader neoliberal transformation of Turkey's education system, where access to quality education has increasingly become contingent on families' economic capital.

Privatization reinforced socio-economic segregation within the education system. This stratification became evident in the high school selection process, where students' educational outcomes strongly correlated with their families' social class backgrounds. Higher-performing students typically enrolled in Anatolian high schools or private schools,

whereas lower-performing students, often from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, were relegated to vocational and technical high schools including Imam Hatips or open high schools, with the latter constituting nearly 26% of high school students by 2015 (ERG, 2016).

The interplay between class structures and educational choices became a focal point for research, examining how neoliberal restructuring has reinforced class segmentation in education. The competitive, market-driven environment privileged families with considerable resources, aligning closely with Bourdieu's (2006) concept of cultural capital. Middle-class families increasingly viewed education as a strategic investment, often employing multiple strategies, including enrolling their children in boutique institutions, private schools, or private-like public schools to maintain class position (Aratemür Çimen, 2015). Artemür Çimen's (2015) study, conducted within the Turkish context, reinforces Bourdieu's (2006) theoretical perspective that educational attainment and life opportunities among middle-class children are deeply rooted in their families' capacity to mobilize economic, cultural, and social capital. In this regard, the findings align with existing literature indicating that middle-class families often actively sustain social inequalities by deploying strategies that provide their children with distinct educational advantages (Ball, 2003; Rutz & Balkan, 2009). In this sense, Vincent and Ball (2007) further emphasize that middle-class parenting practices are shaped by the notion of the "child-as-project"—a pliable being who can be refined and improved through a multitude of curated learning experiences. Within this framework, the role of the "good parent" is to provide abundant and diverse opportunities that allow the child to accumulate valuable competencies and symbolic capital (p. 1065). Artemür Çimen (2015) explains how this logic operates within the Turkish middle class, where families, regardless of their secular or Islamic orientation, channel significant effort and resources into shaping their children's educational and personal development—ultimately contributing to the ongoing reproduction of class boundaries through education.

As can be seen, the post-2002 educational system by the AKP further deepened the neoliberalization and marketization trends in education.

The education system not only segmented schooling but also intensified competition and reinforced class-based inequalities by channeling students through a hierarchically structured educational landscape (Aratemür Çimen, 2015). This restructuring has been tried to be tolerated by middle-class and upper-class families, that are capable of mobilizing economic, cultural, and social capitals as conceptualized by Bourdieu, to secure educational positions for their children. From a Bourdieusian perspective, such structural inequalities reflect a broader social reproduction process. Families possessing greater economic, cultural, and social capital strategically navigate this neoliberal education market, leveraging private schooling and extracurricular investments to secure educational advantages for their children (Brantlinger, 2003).

Conversely, lower-class families, constrained by economic and cultural capital, confront deteriorating public education or relegation to vocational or Imam Hatip schools may likely reinforce their disadvantaged positions. As Bourdieu (2006) suggests via the term "habitus", vocational schooling often channels students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds into practical training programs, providing limited cultural capital that aligns with labor-market entry rather than higher education aspirations. This process, evident in the Turkish context as discussed in earlier sections, consolidates a class-based division of educational trajectories and solidifies existing socioeconomic hierarchies rather than challenging them.

On the other hand, the formulation of the 4+4+4 education system in elementary and secondary schools should be understood as an attempt to align education with global competition. The AKP government launched crucial reforms in the field of education in order to promote neoliberal philosophy, to produce and re-produce relations of production within a flexible framework, and to commodify the right to education. The need for change in the education system has been discussed under the section "Making Education Sensitive to Labour Force Demand" in the 9th Development Plan of the Republic of Turkey (2007-2013). According to the plan, "There is a need for new mechanisms to respond to the demands of the economy and the labour-force market" which are especially

expected to increase the employability of the young population (DPT, 2006, p. 47). The 4+4+4 system suggests an educational understanding that promotes vocational education at quite early ages through the elementary parts of the schools, or in other words, the second 4-year of compulsory education in the new education system. The 4+4+4 education system defines primary education as the first 4 years of education, which enrolls children who are between 6 and 11 years old. The secondary education (high schools), that enrolls 13–14-year-old children, and the students on vocational education are considered as an 'exception' of the legal measures in terms of the limitation on working age, which is 15 in Turkey. The Occupational Health and Safety Law No. 6331, which came into effect 2 months after the 4+4+4 educational law in June 2012, does not regulate the definition of 'child worker' (Müftüoğlu, 2014, p. 139). Put differently, the system theoretically 'provides' children with an educational process in workshops and factories even 5 days a week, not necessarily in school, without any limitation on child labor.

Whilst the AKP government's economic ideals on education focus on a strict neoliberalization process that interprets the harmony of the labour-force and educational processes as a must within the framework of the post-Washington Consensus, it would be rational to suggest that it brings further limitations on upward mobility. The 4+4+4 education system presents private schools as an alternative option for especially underachieved students from wealthier families who wish to find a way out of the duality of the system that enforces children to make a choice mostly between vocational-technical schools and Imam Hatip schools. Especially the extraordinary rise of private high schools in the last two decades shows the fact that families see no other way but interpreting education as a commodity in the system considering the possibility of their children getting a higher education. Thus, neoliberal restructuring in education facilitated class-based distinctions, aligning with Bourdieu's concept of education as a mechanism of class reproduction, where social inequalities are systematically maintained through institutional practices.

6

Conclusion

This thesis has examined how the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has transformed the Turkish education system into a field of ideological intervention and hegemonic restructuring. The central argument advanced throughout the thesis is that the AKP has not merely adjusted educational policies in a technical sense, but rather sought to reconfigure education as a strategic domain for producing a new "common sense" in line with its religious-conservative worldview. This transformation has been pursued through a combination of discursive, institutional, and curricular mechanisms. In this context, the educational reforms enacted since 2002, namely the 2004 curriculum revision and the "4+4+4" education law, must be understood as key instruments in a broader ideological project rather than as isolated policy moves.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that the AKP's educational agenda constitutes a paradigmatic case of what Antonio Gramsci describes as a hegemonic strategy—a strategy aimed at transforming both state institutions and the everyday consciousness of citizens by redefining what appears as natural, legitimate, and generally accepted. In this regard, education has functioned as an ideological state apparatus in the Althusserian sense, wherein the reproduction of power and the consolidation of ideological consent are realized not through coercion alone but

through the normalization of certain values, knowledges, and moral orders.

At the core of this research was the question of how the AK Party's education policies function as a hegemonic project. The analysis illustrated that the 2004 curriculum reform and the 4+4+4 education system were not merely technical or policy-oriented changes, but were also deeply ideological in nature. One of the key observations of this thesis is the continuity and rupture between the AKP's early educational initiatives (2002–2011) and the post-2011 period. While the period between 2002 and 2011 laid the discursive and institutional groundwork for a reconfiguration of education, the post-2011 period marked a qualitative shift in the nature and pace of transformation. In the first phase, educational policy was largely characterized by neoliberal-populist measures and changing the fundamental structure of the education system. The 2004 reform was often framed within the rhetoric of democratization, equality of opportunity, and alignment with EU standards. However, even during this period, foundations were being laid for a more ideologically driven transformation. These seemingly technical and development-oriented reforms were already embedded within an ideological framework that began to challenge the secular-Kemalist model of education. By promoting a curriculum that valued subjective interpretation, multidirectional causality, and probabilistic reasoning, the AKP government symbolically distanced itself from the positivist, scientistic legacy associated with Kemalism. While this move was couched in the language of postmodern pedagogy, it also served to legitimize alternative, culturally grounded worldviews that would eventually converge with the party's Islamist-conservative ideology.

Having gradually neutralized the Kemalist superstructure, particularly through the 2010 constitutional referendum and subsequent restructurings, the AKP acquired the institutional capacity to advance its ideological agenda without significant institutional resistance. In this sense, the party's earlier cautious and eclectic strategies, which emphasized democracy, EU integration, and neoliberal rationality, gave way to a more assertive and centralized hegemonic project. The transformation of

the education system after 2011 can therefore be seen not only as a pedagogical or ideological development, but also as a reflection of the AKP's success in reconfiguring the political field itself. In Gramscian terms, the post-2011 era marks the passage from a counter-hegemonic position to a dominant hegemonic bloc, capable of reorganizing the dominant common sense of society through both state institutions and civil society mechanisms.

Within this newly consolidated framework, the AKP's educational reforms began to more overtly integrate religious discourse and conservative values into education. This was achieved through both structural mechanisms such as the 4+4+4 reform that redefined the architecture of compulsory education and symbolic tools that reframed the moral and civic objectives of education. The new system enabled earlier exposure to elective religious courses and facilitated the expansion of Imam Hatip schools. While officially justified as a matter of pedagogical flexibility and parental choice, these reforms in practice functioned as instruments of ideological alignment, steering students toward a vision of the ideal citizen rooted in piety, obedience, and cultural authenticity. Erdoğan's invocation of the "pious generation" (Yeni Akit, 2019) ideal was not merely rhetorical; it was materially encoded into the system and policy implementation. Thus, the post-2012 education policies did not only reproduce hegemonic values; but they actively constructed a normative horizon in which religious conservatism appeared as both natural and necessary. These reforms served to integrate religious discourse more explicitly into education, to restructure schooling pathways in ways that supported conservative values, and to increase the role of Imam Hatip schools, religious mechanisms and institutions in the education. Through this restructuring, the AKP sought to normalize a vision of Turkish society that blended Islamic conservatism.

Following the 4+4+4 education system, in the educational field, a visible departure from the reformist-populist stance has been observed. The education system was increasingly mobilized as an instrument for shaping moral behavior, and reproducing a religious-conservative vision of society. While the AKP maintained certain neoliberal features in

education, it embedded these within a broader strategy of moral-ideological realignment. The coexistence of neoliberal educational governance with religious-cultural engineering constitutes one of the most distinct features of the AKP era and reflects a peculiar synthesis of economic rationality and moral traditionalism.

At the level of ideological narrative, the AKP's political discourse has increasingly framed seculars and Kemalists as morally hollow and culturally alien, while presenting religious-conservative values as indigenous, authentic, and morally superior. In this discursive field, education becomes not only a means of instruction but a vehicle for moral salvation and national renewal. This rhetorical shift has been accompanied by a delegitimization of secular pedagogical traditions and a revaluation of religious identity as the cornerstone of citizenship and social belonging.

The institutional consolidation of power in the post-2011 era was paralleled by the increasing involvement of religious civil society actors in the domain of education. Foundations and associations with close ideological affinity to the AKP began to play an active role as ISAs in the hegemonic project not only via extracurricular activities, but also through "values education" in schools.

Importantly, this thesis does not argue that these transformations have been monolithic or uncontested. While the analysis has centered on state discourse and formal policy, it is acknowledged that the actual implementation and social reception of these reforms involve diverse responses, negotiations, and forms of resistance. Nonetheless, the thesis has shown that at the level of state-led ideological production, the AKP's educational project constitutes a coherent and deliberate attempt at reshaping Turkey's ideological landscape.

As with all hegemonic formations, the AKP's educational project has not unfolded without tensions, contradictions, and sites of resistance. Despite extensive structural reforms and discursive realignments, the party has faced difficulties in sustaining mass consent, particularly among urban, secular, and middle-class segments. The relatively stable enrollment rates in Imam Hatip schools despite the rapid rise in the number of schools, parental concerns over the elective religious content, and the

growing reliance on private secular schooling all suggest that the hegemonic project is far from absolute. Moreover, the persistence of inequalities in educational quality and access, coupled with declining performance in international assessments, have challenged the moral and technical legitimacy of the AKP's education model. These dynamics point to the possibility that the party's project of educational hegemony may be internally fractured and externally contested.

In this sense, the findings of this study contribute to broader discussions about the relationship between education, ideology, and power in three interrelated ways. First, by drawing on Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and his emphasis on the formation of "common sense," the thesis offers a framework for understanding how education policies may function beyond their formal or technical content. In the Turkish case, the gradual redefinition of pedagogical goals, curricular narratives, and institutional structures suggests that education has been instrumental in constructing a particular moral and cultural outlook that aligns with the AKP's broader ideological orientation. While this transformation has not occurred through overt coercion, it has involved the normalization of certain values, behaviors, and knowledge forms over time.

Second, the thesis highlights how specific policy moments—most notably the 2004 curriculum reform and the 4+4+4 education law—can be interpreted as critical junctures in the ideological reconfiguration of public education. Rather than treating these reforms as isolated events, the analysis situates them within a longer trajectory in which education increasingly becomes a site of symbolic contestation. The 2004 reform, for instance, is examined not only as a shift toward constructivist pedagogy, but also as a moment in which the epistemological premises of public schooling were realigned to accommodate alternative, culturally rooted perspectives. Similarly, the 4+4+4 law is discussed as more than a structural reorganization, highlighting its role in enabling earlier access to religious education and expanding the influence of religious schooling in the public sphere. Taken together, these reforms reveal how political actors may gradually recalibrate the ideological foundations of the education system through discursive and institutional adjustments.

Third, the thesis engages with the intersection of ideological and economic dimensions by drawing attention to how religious-conservative and neoliberal imperatives have coexisted within the education system. While this interaction is complex and context-dependent, the study suggests that the AKP's approach to education cannot be fully understood without considering how class-based distinctions, market-oriented policies, and moral values have become increasingly entangled. Although the thesis does not offer a comprehensive analysis of class reproduction, it points to several mechanisms through which ideological and social hierarchies may be maintained through educational policy.

Despite these contributions, this study has certain limitations. Given the complexity of Turkey's political and social landscape, future research could further investigate the micro-level acceptance of these policies; how students, teachers, and families interpret and navigate the ideological dimensions of education in their daily lives. In addition, a comparative analysis with other cases, especially countries that have experienced similar ideological struggles in education, could provide further insight into how education functions as a battleground for hegemony.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of Turkey's education system remains uncertain, particularly as political dynamics continue to evolve and as new societal actors begin to question the direction of educational policy. While the AKP has, over the past two decades, succeeded in embedding a religious-conservative orientation into the structure and discourse of public education, it is far from guaranteed that this orientation will remain hegemonic in the long term. The AKP has extensively restructured the education system to embed a religious-conservative worldview, empirical data indicate cracks in the consolidation of this hegemonic order. Longitudinal surveys conducted by KONDA (2025) between 2008 and 2025 illustrate a gradual but significant secularization trend within Turkish society. The proportion of individuals self-identifying as "religious" has declined from 55% in 2008 to 46% in 2025, while those identifying as "atheist" or "non-believer" have increased from approximately 2% to 8% over the same period. These transformations suggest that, despite the state's intensive use of education as an ideological state apparatus to

naturalize its religious-conservative vision, broader socio-cultural shifts—particularly among younger generations—have produced counter-hegemonic tendencies that continue to challenge the full internalization of the AKP's ideological project.

Additional empirical evidence further underscores generational limits in the internalization of the AKP's religious-conservative hegemonic project. According to the study conducted by Zübeyir Nişancı (2023), among the 18-24 age cohort — who constitute the primary target population exposed to the post-4+4+4 educational reforms — approximately 11% identify with atheism, deism, or non-Islamic belief systems, compared to only 4-5% in older cohorts. Furthermore, fewer than 50% of individuals within this age group define themselves as "religious," while this figure ranges between 58% and 80% among older generations. These patterns suggest that the younger generation exhibits a significantly lower degree of ideological internalization and religious orthodoxy, despite sustained state-driven efforts to instill such values through educational and institutional channels.

Beyond the realm of religious adherence, additional evidence highlights growing youth disillusionment with Turkey's broader socio-economic and political landscape. A 2020 youth survey revealed that approximately 76% of young respondents expressed a desire to live abroad if given the opportunity, while only 18% reported being satisfied with their lives (Gazete Duvar, 2020). These figures suggest not only a rejection of the material conditions shaped by the current regime but also a broader disaffection with the ideological vision promoted by the AKP's hegemonic project. Rather than fully embracing the regime's projected moral, religious, and national narrative, a significant segment of the younger generation appears increasingly inclined toward exit strategies, reflecting the limits of affective consent and highlighting one of the most acute forms of contestation.

As economic instability deepens and political legitimacy is increasingly contested, the durability of this ideological project may be called into question—not only by formal opposition movements, but also by

students, educators, and parents who experience its effects in their everyday lives.

Perhaps most significantly, it remains to be seen whether new counter-hegemonic narratives will emerge from within the education system itself. Schools have historically been central to the reproduction of dominant ideologies, but they have also served as sites of resistance, negotiation, and transformation. As students and teachers continue to engage with—and sometimes push back against—the normative frameworks imposed upon them, there is potential for alternative visions of education to gain traction. Whether these alternatives will take the form of secular-pluralist models, civic-oriented pedagogies, or novel syntheses of tradition and modernity is uncertain. Nevertheless, the possibility that education could once again become a space for reimagining the social and moral order suggests that the struggle over schooling in Turkey is far from over. How will these changes affect the long-term sustainability of the AKP's hegemonic project? Will new counter-hegemonic movements emerge within education that offer alternative narratives and worldviews? These are critical questions that future research may address.

Bibliography

Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi. (AKP) (2001). *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi programı*. Retrieved from https://www.akparti.org.tr/akparti-programi/

Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi. (AKP) (2002). *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi 2002 seçim beyannamesi*. Retrieved from https://www.akparti.org.tr/

Ahlatcı, M. B. (2015). *Meslek lisesi son sınıf öğrencileri gözünden mesleki eğitim ve toplumsal yansımasına yönelik saha çalışması*. Konya: Mevlana Kalkınma Ajansı

Akça, İ. (2011). 1980'lerden bugüne Türkiye'de siyaset ve hegemonya: Bir çerçeve denemesi. *İktisat Dergisi (January-June 515-516)*, 25-35.

Akdoğan, Y. (2003). *Ak Parti ve Muhafazakar Demokrasi.* Istanbul: Alfa Yayınları.

Aksoy, N., & Eren Deniz, E. (2018). Early childhood education in neoliberal, religiously conservative times in Turkey. *Policy Features in Education, Vol. 16 (2)*, 108-123.

Albright, J. & Luke, A. (2008). Pierre Bourdieu and Literacy Education. New York: Routledge.

Althusser, L. (2014). *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.* London and New York: Verso.

Altıntaş, M. E. (2024). İmam hatip okulları ve din öğretimi. In Y. Alpaydın & K. Kültür (Eds.), *Türk eğitim sisteminde dönüşüm: 2002–2024* (pp. 245–268). Ankara: SETA Kitapları.

Anadolu Ajansı. (2014, June 27). *En çok öğretmen ihtiyacı din kültürü ve ahlak bilgisinde*. Retrieved from https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/en-cok-ogretmen-ihtiyaci-din-kulturu-ve-ahlak-bilgisinde/147515

Ankaralı, H., Türkmen, A. R., Denizler, F., Alkan, F. H., Tüysüz, Y., Öztürk, Ş., Biseli, K., et al. (2019). Türkiye'de İmam Hatip Okulları Hakkındaki Halkın Bilgi Düzeyi, Algı Seviyesi ve İlişkili Faktörler. *Kalemname, 4*(8), 210–300. Retrieved from https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/kalemname/issue/51166/666561

Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences. (2012). *222 sayılı İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu ile bazı kanunlarda değişiklik yapılmasına dair Kanun Teklifi'ne ilişkin görüş*. Retrieved from http://www.ankder.org.tr/444-sistemi-hakkinda-egitim-bilimleri-fakultesinin-gorusu/

Anton, J. P. (2007). The Republic, Educational Reform and Dewey. In F. P. John Peter Anton., *Dewey's 1924 Visit to Turkey and the Present Quests* (pp. 85-92). İstanbul: Forum İstanbul Enstitüsü Yayınları.

Aşlamacı, İ. (2024). *İstatistiklerle Türkiye'de örgün ve yaygın din eğitiminin 100 yılı (1923–2023)*. İstanbul: Değerler Eğitimi Merkezi.

Aratemür Çimen, C. (2015). Differentiating children through education: School choices and educational practices of middle-class families in neoliberal times (Doctoral dissertation, Boğaziçi University). Council of Higher Education Thesis Center. Retrieved from https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/TezGoster?key=WY5CM7tPNE2z_YM6pBu0t9CcJZpC7yPf_kcZOXj9n1-3D4N2wsUHzlrS0I27vvRL

Aronowitz, S. (2002). Gramsci's Theory of Education: Schooling and Beyond. In J. B. Carmel Borg, *Gramsci and Education* (pp. 109-120). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC.

Ayas, N. (1948). *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Milli Eğitimi: Kuruluşlar ve Tarihçeler.* Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi.

Aysal, N. (2005). Anadolu'da Aydınlanma Hareketinin Doğuşu: Köy Enstitüleri. *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi Vol. 35-36*, 267 282.

Balkan, E., & Öncü, A. (2013). İslami orta sınıfın yeniden üretimi. In N. Balkan, E. Balkan & A. Öncü (Eds.), *Neoliberalizm, İslamcı sermayenin yükselişi ve AKP* (pp. 251–290). İstanbul, Turkey: Yordam Kitap.

Ball, S. J. (2003). *Class strategies and the education market: The middle classes and social advantage*. London, UK: RoutledgeFalmer.

Baloğlu, Z. (1990). Türkiye'de eğitim: Sorunlar ve değişime yapısal uyum önerileri. İstanbul: TÜSİAD.

Bekmen, A. (2010). Marksizm: 'Praksis'in Teorisi. In H. B. Örs, *19. Yüzıldan 20. Yüzyıla Modern Siyasal İdeolojiler* (pp. 163-252). Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Berkowitz, M. W. (2011). What works in values education. *International Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 50, Issue 3*, 153-158.

Bianet. (2018, April 13). *Diyanet İşleri Başkanı'ndan deizm açıklaması*. Retrieved from https://bianet.org/haber/diyanet-isleri-baskani-ndan-deizm-aciklamasi-196085

Binbaşoğlu, C. (2009). *Başlangıçtan Günümüze Türk Eğitim Tarihi.* Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.

Bing, F. (2004). Ethnicity, Children & Habitus. Germany: Peter Lang.

Birinci, N. (2006). Protokol Konuşmaları. In M. A. Halil Etyemez, *Türk Eğitim Sisteminde Yeni Paradigma Arayışları Sempozyumu: Bildiriler Kitabı* (pp. 9-13). Ankara: Eğitim-Bir-Sen.

BirGün. (2018a, January 18). Bilal Erdoğan imam hatip öğrencilerine seslendi: Sizler Erdoğan neslisiniz. *BirGün.* Retrieved from https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/bilal-erdogan-imam-hatip-ogrencilerine-seslendi-sizler-erdogan-neslisiniz-200609.html

BirGün. (2018b, April 10). *Erdoğan'dan bakana 'deizm' sorusu*. Retrieved from https://www.birgun.net/haber/erdogan-dan-bakana-deizm-sorusu-211538

Birlik Vakfı. (n.d.). *Kurucular Kurulu*. Retrieved from http://www.birlikvakfi.org.tr/Kurucular-Kurulu-y1517.html

Boğaziçi University, Faculty of Education. (2012). *"5.1.1961 tarih ve 222 sayılı İlköğretim Kanunu ile bazı konularda değişiklik yapılmasına dair Kanun Teklifi" hakkında Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesinin güncellenen görüşü*. Retrieved from https://fed.boun.edu.tr/sites/fed.boun.edu.tr/files/fedfiles/son.pdf

Borg, Buttigieg, Mayo. (2002). Introduction. Gramsci and Education: A Holistic Approach. In J. A. Carmel Borg, *Gramsci and Education* (pp. 1-23). Lanham, Boulder, New York, Oxford: Rowman & Litlefield Publishers, INC.

Bourdieu, P. a.-M. (1974). *Scholastic Excellence and the Values of the Educational.* Methuen, London.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). Outline of a Theory of Practice (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education (pp. 241–258). New York, NY: Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. & Passeron. (1990). *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture.* London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Bourdieu, P. (2022). *In Other Words: Essay Towards a Reflective Sociology.* Basel, Berlin, Boston: Standford University Press.

Bozan, İ. (2007). *Devlet ile toplum arasında: Bir okul: İmam Hatip Liseleri. Bir kurum: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*. İstanbul: TESEV Yayınları.

Brantlinger, E. A. (2003). *Dividing classes: How the middle class negotiates and rationalizes school advantage*. New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

Bruff, I. (2008). *Culture and Consensus in European Varities of Capitalism: A "Common Sense" Analysis.* Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Burbules, N. C., & Torres, C. A. (2000). Globalization and education: An introduction. In N. C. Burbules & C. A. Torres (Eds.), *Globalization and education: Critical perspectives* (pp. 1–26). New York, NY: Routledge.

Canerik, H. (2017). *MEB'de özelleştirme uygulamaları ve çözüm önerileri*. Retrieved from http://huseyincanerik.com/index.php/172-milli-egitim-bakanliginda-ozellestirmeler-ve-cozum-onerileri

Carnoy, M. (1984). *The State and Political Theory.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Clarke, J. (2004). *Changing welfare, changing states: New directions in social policy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creah, K. (2016). *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Cumhuriyet. (2014, May 6). *Velilere "Çocuklarınızı imam hatibe gönderecek misiniz?" sorusu*. Retrieved from https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/velilere-cocuklarinizi-imam-hatipe-gonderecek-misiniz-sorusu-68911

Cumhuriyet. (2018a, February 8). *Öğrenciler, dini içerikli dersleri seçmeye zorlanıyor: Artık tüm okullar imam hatip oldu*. Retrieved from http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/egitim/922673/Ogrenciler_dini_icerikli_dersleri_secmeye_zorlaniyor__Artik_tum_okullar_imam_hatip_oldu.html

Cumhuriyet. (2018b, February 8). *Öğrenciler, dini içerikli dersleri seçmeye zorlanıyor: Artık tüm okullar imam hatip oldu*. Retrieved from http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/egitim/922673/Ogrenciler_dini_icerikli_dersleri_secmeye_zorlaniyor__Artik_tum_okullar_imam_hatip_oldu.html

Coşkun, I., & Şentürk, M. (2012). Islamic education in Turkey: A model for the integration of Islam and modernity. In K. İnal & G. Akkaymak (Eds.), *Neoliberal transformation of education in Turkey: Political and ideological analysis* (pp. 165–177). Palgrave Macmillan.

Çağlar, İ. (2013). *From symbolic exile to physical exile: Turkey's Imam Hatip schools, the emergence of a conservative counter-elite, and its knowledge migration to Europe*. Amsterdam University Press.

Çalışan, E. (2004, August 12). MEB'den iddialı müfredat değişikliği. *Bianet*. Retrieved from https://bianet.org/bianet/egitim/40626-mebden-iddiali-mufredat-degisikligi

Çizmeli, Ş. (2013). Din Eğitimi ve Birleşmiş Milletler Çocuk Hakları Sözleşmesi. In V. Ataman, *Neden Geri Kaldık? Bitmeyen Kavga: Çağdaşlaşma* (pp. 149-188). İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları.

Dağlı, N. (1988). In B. Aktürk, *Hükümetler ve Programları, II. Cilt, 1960-1980.* Ankara: TBMM Basımevi.

Değerler Eğitimi Merkezi [DEM]. (n.d.). Yayınlar: Kitaplar. Retrieved from https://dem.org.tr/yayin/kitaplar

DW. (2019). Erdoğan: İmam hatipli olmak dava adamı olmaktır. *Deutsche Welle Türkçe.* Retrieved from https://www.dw.com/tr/erdo%C4%9Fan-imam-hatipli-olmak-dava-adam%C4%B1-olmakt%C4%B1r/a-48314564

Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (ERG). (2013). *2012 Eğitim İzleme Raporu.* Istanbul: Sabancı Üniversitesi.

Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (ERG). (2016). *Eğitim İzleme Raporu 2015–16*. Retrieved from https://egitimreformugirisimi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ERG_EİR_2015-16.pdf

Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (ERG). (2018). *Eğitim İzleme Raporu 2017–18*. İstanbul: Sabancı Üniversitesi.

Eğitim-Sen. (2016). *2015-2016 Eğitim Öğretim Yılı Sonunda Eğitimin Durumu.* Ankara: Eğitim-Sen.

Eğitim-Sen. (2018). *2017-2018 Eğitim Öğretim Yılı Sonunda Eğitimin Durumu.* Ankara: Eğitim-Sen.

Eğitim-Sen. (2019). *2018-2019 Eğitim-Öğretim Yılı 1. Yarıyıl Değerlendirmesi.* İstanbul: Eğitim-Sen.

Engels, F. (1968). *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State.* New York: International Publishers.

Evrensel. (2017, January 14). *Yeni müfredatta evrim çıkarıldı, 15 Temmuz eklendi*. Retrieved from https://www.evrensel.net/haber/304023/yeni-mufredatta-evrim-cikarildi-15-temmuz-eklend

Evrim Ağacı. (2017, July 19). *Evrimin müfredattan çıkarılmasıyla ilgili resmî açıklama*. Retrieved from https://evrimagaci.org/evrimin-mufredattan-cikarilmasiyla-ilgili-resm-aciklama-5177

Fiori, G. (1970). *Antonio Gramsci, Life of a Revolutionary.* London: New Left Books.

Fontana, B. (2002). Hegemony and Rhetoric: Political Education in Gramsci. In J. B. Carmel Borg, *Gramsci and Education* (pp. 25-40). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC.

Garipağaoğlu, B. Ç. (2016). Özel dershanelerden özel okullara dönüşüm projesi. *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 16*(1), 140–162. https://doi.org/10.17240/aibuefd.2016.16.1-5000182915

Gazalcı, M. (2008). *Eğitimde dinci çember*. İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi.

Gazete Duvar. (2020, September 6). *Gençlik araştırması: Yüzde 76'sı yurt dışında yaşamak istiyor, her iki gençten biri mutlu değil*. Retrieved from https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2020/09/06/genclik-arastirmasi-yuzde-76si-yurt-disinda-yasamak-istiyor-her-iki-gencten-biri-mutlu-degil

Gençkal Eroler, E. (2019). *"Dindar Nesil Yetiştirmek": Türkiye'nin Eğitim Politikalarında Ulus ve Vatandaş İnşası (2002-2016).* İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Gök, F. (2007). The History and Development of Turkish Education. In M. C. Fatma Gök, *Education in 'Multicultural' Societies – Turkish and Swedish Perspectives* (pp. 247-255). Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul.

Gök, F. (2014). Eşitlik, sosyal adalet ve eğitimin neoliberal dönüşümü. In M. Uysal & A. Yıldız (Eds.), *Eleştirel eğitim yazıları* (pp. 41–50). Ankara, Turkey: Siyasal Kitabevi.

Gökaçtı, M. A. (2005). *Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi ve İmam Hatipler.* İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from Prison Notebooks.* New York: International Publishers.

Gür, B. S. (2019). Religious education. In A. Özerdem & M. Whiting (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of Turkish politics* (pp. 339–348). New York: Routledge.

Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education. (2012). *05.01.1961 tarih ve 222 sayılı İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu ile bazı kanunlarda değişiklik yapılmasına dair Kanun Teklifi'ne ilişkin görüş*. Retrieved from http://www.halkevleri.org.tr/guncel/4-4-4-hakkinda-hacettepe-universitesi-egitim-fakultesi-gorusu

Hay, C. (1999). *Marxism and the State.* London: Macmillan.

Hız, G. (2010). *1980 sonrası Türkiye'de yükseköğretimde piyasalaştırma ve özelleştirmedeki gelişmeler*. *Muğla Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, (25), pp. 55–80. Retrieved from https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/musbed/issue/23515/250547

Hürriyet. (2004, March 26). Erdoğan: Ali Bey yanlış yaptı. *Hürriyet*. Retrieved from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-ali-bey-yanlis-yapti-38584921

Hürriyet. (2010, April 22). Katsayılar 0.12 ve 0.15'te sabitlendi. Retrieved from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/katsayilar-0-12-ve-0-15-te-sabitlendi-14497074

Hürriyet. (2016, February 6). *Eğitim-Bir-Sen'den seçmeli ders açıklaması*. Retrieved from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/egitim-bir-sen-den-secmeli-ders-aciklamasi-37238965

İLKE et al. (2013). *Yeni Eğitim Sisteminde Seçmeli Din Dersleri: İmkanlar, Fırsatlar, Aktörler, Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri* . İstanbul: İLKE, YEKDER.

İLKE. (n.d.). *Başkanlarımız*. Retrieved from https://ilke.org.tr/baskanlarimiz

İnal, K., & Akkaymak, G. (2012). Preface. In K. İnal & G. Akkaymak (Eds.), *Neoliberal transformation of education in Turkey* (pp. ix–xiv). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

İnal, K. (2012). The educational politics of the AKP: The collapse of public education in Turkey. In K. İnal & G. Akkaymak (Eds.), *Neoliberal transformation of education in Turkey* (pp. 17–32). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

İnal, K. (2017, February 6). Müfredatsiz eğitim. *Cumhuriyet*. Retrieved from https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/olaylar-ve-gorusler/mufredatsiz-egitim-671253

Jenkins, R. (2003). Pierre Bourdieu. New York: Routledge.

Kalın, İ. (2007). *Three views of science in the Islamic world*. Muslim-Science.com. Retrieved from http://www.muslim-science.com/three-views-of-science-in-the-islamic-world-kalin/

Kaplan, İ. (1999). *Türkiye'de Milli Eğitim İdeolojisi ve Siyasal Toplumsallaşma Üzerindeki Etkisi.* İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Karaömerlioğlu, M. A., & Yolun, M. (2020). Turkish nationalism and the evolutionary idea (1923–1938). Nations and Nationalism, 26(3), 743–758. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12600

Kazgan, G. (2012). *Türkiye ekonomisinde krizler (1929–2009): "Ekonomi politik" açısından bir irdeleme*. İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Kazgan, G. (2016). *Liberalizmden Neoliberalizme*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.

Konda. (2025). *Hayat Tarzları Araştırması* [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://x.com/kondaarastirma/status/1928376690646167557

Koşar-Altınyelken, H., & Akkaymak, G. (2012). Curriculum change in Turkey: Some critical reflections. In K. İnal & G. Akkaymak (Eds.), *Neoliberal transformation of education in Turkey* (pp. 59–82). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Koşar, A. (2014). Ulusal İstihdam Stratejisi Bağlamında İstihdamın Eğitimle Dansı. In A. K. Özgür Müftoğlu, *Türkiye'de Esnek Çalışma* (pp. 119-133). İstanbul: Doğan Basım Yayın.

Kurul, N. (2012). Turkey under AKP rule: Neoliberal interventions into the public budget and educational finance. In K. İnal & G. Akkaymak (Eds.), *Neoliberal transformation of education in Turkey* (pp. 83–106). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lauder, H., Brown, P., Dillabough, J., & Halsey, A. H. (2006). Introduction: The prospects for education: Individualization, globalization, and social change. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J. Dillabough, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Education, globalization & social change* (pp. 1–70). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lenin, V. I. (1965). *The State and Revolution* . Peking: Foreign Language Press.

Mardin, Ş. (2002). *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset, Makaleler 3, Ed. Mümtaz'er Türköne, Tuncay Önder.* Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Mayo, P. (2015). *Hegemony and Education under Neoliberalism: Insights from Gramsci.* New York: Routledge.

Middle East Technical University, Faculty of Education. (2012). *"5.1.1961 tarih ve 222 sayılı İlköğretim Kanunu ile bazı konularda değişiklik yapılmasına dair Kanun Teklifi" hakkında ODTÜ Eğitim Fakültesinin görüşü.* Retrieved from https://fedu.metu.edu.tr/tr/system/files/ReportsAndDocuments/fakultegorusu/the_faculty_position_on_4_4_4_in_turkish.pdf

Milliyet. (2011, December 2). *Artık katsayı yok.* Retrieved from http://www.milliyet.com.tr/artik-katsayi-yok-gundem-1469920/

Morrow, R. A., & Torres, C. A. (2000). The state, globalization, and educational policy. In N. C. Burbules & C. A. Torres (Eds.), *Globalization and education: Critical perspectives* (pp. 27–56). New York, NY: Routledge.

Mumcu, A. (2013). Din Öğretiminin Hukuksal Boyutu. In V. Ataman, *Neden Geri Kaldık? Bitmeyen Kavga: Çağdaşlaşma* (pp. 189-207). İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları.

Mutluer, N. (2013, January 15). *Türkiye'de Alevilik seçmeli din dersi'nde dışlanacağım kaygısı. Milliyet.* Retrieved from https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/turkiyede-alevilik-secmeli-din-dersi-nde-dislanacagim-kaygisi-1655403

Müftüoğlu, Ö. (2014). Türkiye'de Esnek Çalışma. In Ö. Müftoğlu, & A. Koşar, *Türkiye'de Esnek Çalışma* (pp. 134-142). İstanbul: Doğan Basım Yayın.

Narcis Serra, Shari Spiegel, Joseph E. Stiglitz. (2008). Introduction: From the Washington Consensus Towards a New Global Governance. In J. E. Narcis Serra, *The Washington Consensus Reconsidered: Towards a New Global Governance* (pp. 3-13). New York: Oxford University Press.

Navarro, Z. (2006). In Search of Cultural Interpretation of Power, 37(6),11-22.

Nişancı, Z. (2023). *Sayılarla Türkiye'de inanç ve dindarlık*. İstanbul, Türkiye: International Institute of Islamic Thought & Mahya Yayıncılık.

NTV. (2012, August 24). *Okulları imam hatip yapma şansı yakaladık*. Retrieved from https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/okullari-imam-hatip-yapma-sansi-yakaladik,H_REJeK_vU6GkPESIwcK8g

Odabaşı, B. (2014). Türk Eğitim Sisteminde Yeni Kanun (4+4+4) Üzerine Düşünceler. *Çukurova Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 103-124.

Okçabol, R. (2013). *AKP İktidarında Eğitim Eğitimin Piyasalaşması ve Gericileşmesi.* Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi.

Oran, B. (2001). 1945-1960: Batı Bloku Ekseninde Türkiye - 1: Dönemin Bilançosu. In B. Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugünüe Olgular, Belgeler Yorumlar Cilt I: 1919-1980* (pp. 477-498). İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Öniş, Z., & Şenses, F. (2003, November). *Rethinking the emerging Post-Washington Consensus: A critical appraisal* (ERC Working Paper in Economic No. 03/09). Middle East Technical University, Economic Research Center.

Özelli, M. T. (1974, January). The Evolution of the Formal Educational System and Its Relation to Economic GrowthPolicies in the First Turkish Republic. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, pp. 77-92.

Özkazanç, A. (2011). *Neo-liberal Tezahürler, vatandaşlık-suç-eğitim.* Ankara: Dipnot.

Özpek, B. B., & Tanrıverdi Yaşar, N. (2018). Populism and foreign policy in Turkey under the AKP rule. *Turkish Studies, 19*(2), 198–216.

Pamuk, Ş. (2012). *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi.* İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları.

Pamuk, Ş. (2016). *Uneven Centuries: Economic History of Turkey since 1820*. Princeton University Press .

Peet, R., & Hartwick, E. (2009). *Theories of development: Contentions, arguments, alternatives* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Politikyol. (2017, October 9). *Seçmeli din dersleri "zorunlu" hale geldi*. Retrieved from https://www.politikyol.com/secmeli-din-dersleri-zorunlu-hale-geldi

Posta. (2012, March 15). *Erdoğan: Eğitim reformu ideolojik değil, pedagojik*. Retrieved from https://www.posta.com.tr/erdogan-egitim-reformu-ideolojik-degil-pedagojik-113268

Radikal. (2016). *Papazın kızına zorunlu seçmeli din dersi*. Retrieved from http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/papazin-kizina-zorunlu-secmeli-din-dersi-1117075

Reay, D., David, M. & Ball, S. (2005). Degree of Choice: Social Class, Race, Gender and Higher Education. UK: Alden Group.

Rutz, H. J., & Balkan, E. M. (2009). *Reproducing class: Education, neoliberalism, and the rise of the new middle class in Istanbul*. New York, NY: Berghahn Books.

Sabah. (2019, January 25). *Alparslan Kuytul tekrar tutuklandı*. Retrieved from https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2019/01/25/alparslan-kuytul-tekrar-tutuklandi

Sakaoğlu, N. (2003). *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Eğitim Tarihi.* İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Sarıışık, Y., & Düşkün, Y. (2016). *Çocukların gözünden okulda yaşam*. Eğitim Reformu Girişimi & Türkiye Eğitim Gönüllüleri Vakfı. Retrieved from https://egitimreformugirisimi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ERG.TEGV_.%C3%87GOY.Ara%C5%9Ft%C4%B1rmaRaporu.09.08.16.pdf

Saymaz, İ. (2018). *Kimsesizler Cumhuriyeti.* Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Server Gençlik Foundation. (2016). Haydi çocuklar camiye (e-brochure). Retrieved from https://haydicocuklarcamiye.com/e-brosur/

Shaheen, K., & Hatunoğlu, G. (2017, June 23). *Turkish schools to stop teaching evolution, official says*. The Guardian. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/23/turkish-schools-to-stop-teaching-evolution-official-says

Sullivan, A. (2002). Bourdieu and education: How useful is Bourdieu's theory for researchers? *The Netherlands' Journal of Social Sciences, 38*, pp. 144–166.

Sputnik Türkiye. (2017, July 31). Bakan Özhaseki: Kaçak imam hatipler var. *Sputnik Türkiye.* Retrieved from https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201707311029491896-bakan-ozhaseki-kacak-imam-hatip/

Sözcü. (2016, March 24). Karaman'daki taciz olayında iğrenç detaylar. *Sözcü*. Retrieved from https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2016/gundem/karamandaki-taciz-olayinda-igrenc-detaylar-1151143/

Sözcü. (2018, April 10). *Deizm tartışmasının odağındaki müdür: Şaşkınım*. Retrieved from https://www.sozcu.com.tr/deizm-tartismasinin-odagindaki-mudur-saskinim-wp2342231

Swartz, D. (1997). Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu. London: University of Chicago.

Şahin, H. (2005). Newton, kuantum ve çocuklarımızın geleceği. *Radikal*. Retrieved from http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/haluk-sahin/newton-kuantum-ve-cocuklarimizin-gelecegi-719393/

T24. (2017, May 26). Erdoğan: Talimatı verdim, Arena ismini stadyumlardan kaldırıyoruz. *T24*. Retrieved from https://t24.com.tr/haber/erdogan-talimati-verdim-arena-ismini-stadyumlardan-kaldiriyoruz,406017

Takvim. (2019, June 21). *İsmailağa Cemaati'nden 23 Haziran seçimlerinde Binali Yıldırım'a destek*. Retrieved from https://www.takvim.com.tr/guncel/2019/06/21/ismailaga-cemaatinden-23-haziran-secimlerinde-binali-yildirima-destek

Tanilli, S. (1988). *Nasıl bir eğitim istiyoruz?* İstanbul: Amaç Yayıncılık.

T.C. Başbakanlık. (2002). 58. Hükümet Programı. Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık.

T.C. Başbakanlık. (2003). *58. Hükümet Acil Eylem Planı*. Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık.

T.C. Başbakanlık. (2003). *59. Hükümet Programı*. Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık.

T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı. (2006). Dokuzuncu Kalkınma Planı, 2007–2013. Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık.

T.C. Başbakanlık. (2007). *60. Hükümet Programı*. Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık.

T.C. Başbakanlık. (2007). *60. Hükümet Eylem Planı*. Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık.

T.C. Başbakanlık. (2011). 61. Hükümet programı. Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık.

T.C. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı. (2010). *Ulusal İstihdam Strateji Belgesi*. Retrieved from https://www.csgb.gov.tr/cgm/dokumanlar/ulusal-istihdam-stratejisi/

T.C. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. (2016a, February 5). *Şimdi yaraları sarma zamanı* [Hutbe]. Retrieved from https://www2.diyanet.gov.tr/DinHizmetleriGenelMudurlugu/HutbelerListesi/Şimdi%20Yaraları%20Sarma%20Zamanı.pdf

T.C. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. (2016b). *Stratejik plan 2017–2021*. Ankara: T.C. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. Retrieved from https://stratejigelistirme.diyanet.gov.tr/Documents/strateji%20-%2006(baski).pdf

T.C. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. (2025). *İstatistikler*. Retrieved from https://stratejigelistirme.diyanet.gov.tr/sayfa/57/istatistikler

T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2005). *İlköğretim 1–5. sınıf programları tanıtım el kitabı*. Ankara: Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü Basımevi.

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı. (2009). *Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı stratejik planı, 2010–2014*. Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı.

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2009-2020). National Education Statistics: Formal Education (Annual Reports). Ankara, Turkey: MoNE. Retrieved from https://sgb.meb.gov.tr/www/resmi-istatistikler/icerik/64

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Ortaöğretim Genel Müdürlüğü. (2010, May 6). *Genel liselerin Anadolu lisesine dönüştürülmesi* genelgesi (Sayı: 2010/30, B.08.0.OGM.0.06.05.00.160.01.01/3699). Retrieved from https://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/dosyalar/934.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı. (2010). *18. Millî Eğitim Şûrası kararları*. Retrieved from https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2017_09/29170222_18_sura.pdf

T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2012). *12 yıl zorunlu eğitim: Sorular–cevaplar*. Retrieved from https://www.meb.gov.tr/duyurular/duyurular2012/12yil_soru_cevaplar.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (2014). *T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı ile Hizmet Vakfı arasında Değerler Eğitimi Verilmesine İlişkin İşbirliği Protokolü.* Ankara: T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Hayat Boyu Eğitim Genel Müdürlüğü.

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2015, March 31). *Öğrencilerin gözde dersleri belli oldu*. Retrieved from https://www.meb.gov.tr/ogrencilerin-gozde-dersleri-belli-oldu/haber/8377/tr

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Din Öğretimi Genel Müdürlüğü. (2017). *Anadolu imam hatip lisesi haftalık ders çizelgesi.* Retrieved from https://dogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2017_06/15113722_AIHL_Fen_Sosyal_Bilimler_ProgramY_Cizelgesi1.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Ölçme, Değerlendirme ve Sınav Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü. (2018a). *2018 yılı ortaöğretime geçiş tercih ve yerleştirme kılavuzu*. Retrieved from https://odsgm.meb.gov.tr/www/2018-yili-ortaogretime-gecis-tercih-ve-yerlestirme-kilavuzu/icerik/322

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Din Öğretimi Genel Müdürlüğü. (2018b). *İmam hatip ortaokulları haftalık ders çizelgesi (2018–2019 eğitim öğretim yılı)*. Retrieved from https://dogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2018_04/10184831_20180015_06_YHO_Haftalik_Cizelge_2018-2019.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2018c). *Değerler eğitimi sunumu* [PowerPoint presentation]. Retrieved from http://bagcilar.meb.gov.tr/haberler/hikmetnazifsunumu.ppt

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2019). *Sözleşmeli öğretmenliğe başvuru ve atama duyurusu (Mart 2019)*. Retrieved from http://personel.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2019_03/21174502_2019_Mart_SYzleYmeli_YYretmen_Atama_Duyurusu.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı. (2022). *2022 yılı performans programı*. Retrieved from https://butceveperformans.meb.gov.tr/file/41.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2023a). *Hz. Muhammed'in Hayatı 8. sınıf ders kitabı*. Retrieved from https://cdnimage.eba.gov.tr/beta/403/5ea/24a/d96/e46/c94/306/920/2c2/584/88d/024/eb9/06e/012/4035ea24ad96e46c943069202c258488d024eb906e012.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Din Öğretimi Genel Müdürlüğü. (2023b, August). *Tebliğler Dergisi, Ek-2: Ağustos 2023/2789*. Retrieved from https://dhgm.meb.gov.tr/tebligler-dergisi/2023/2789_Agustos_2023_ek-2.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2024). *Temel Dini Bilgiler* I ortaöğretim ders kitabı. Retrieved from https://cdnimage.eba.gov.tr/beta/329/8ea/24a/d96/e46/c94/306/920/2c2/584/88d/024/eb9/06e/025/3298ea24ad96e46c943069202c258488d024eb906e025.pdf

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı. (2025). Değerler eğitimi. Ortaöğretim Genel Müdürlüğü. Retrieved from https://ogmmateryal.eba.gov.tr/kitap/degerler-egitimi/index.html

T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı. (n.d.). *Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanları*. Retrieved from https://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/www/talim-ve-terbiye-kurulu-baskanlari/icerik/330

T.C. Resmî Gazete. (2012). *6287 sayılı İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu ile bazı kanunlarda değişiklik yapılmasına dair Kanun*. Retrieved from https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/04/20120411-8.htm

T.C. Resmî Gazete. (2013). *Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı İlköğretim Kurumları Yönetmeliğinde değişiklik yapılmasına dair Yönetmelik*. Retrieved from https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/07/20130705-4.htm

T.C. Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi. (2012). *5/1/1961 tarihli ve 222 sayılı İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu ile bazı kanunlarda değişiklik yapılmasına dair kanun teklifi*. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20141212071234/http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d24/2/2-0358.pdf

T.C. Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi. (2017). *Aladağ Yurt Yangını Meclis Araştırması Komisyonu Raporu*. Retrieved from https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/sirasayi_sd.sorgu_baslangic

Tekeli, İ. (2010). *Tarihsel Bağlamı İçinde Türkiye'de Yükseköğretimin ve YÖK'ün Tarihi.* İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.

Toprak, Z. (2012). *Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji.* İstanbul: Doğan Kitap.

Tunaya, T. Z. (1952). *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler 1859-1952.* İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi.

Turam, B. (2007). *Between Islam and the state: The politics of engagement*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

TÜRGEV. (n.d.). Hakkımızda. Türkiye Gençlik ve Eğitime Hizmet Vakfı. Retrieved from https://www.turgev.org/tr/sayfa/hakkimizda/

Türköz, Ş. (2020). Siyasal toplumsallaşma sürecinde imam hatip liselerinin rolü. *Talim: Journal of Education in Muslim Societies and Communities, 5*(1), 1–20. Retrieved from https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/talim

Ulagay, O. (1984). 24 Ocak Deneyimi Üzerine. İstanbul: Hil Yayın.

ULUED (Uluslararası Eğitimciler Derneği). (2019). *ULUED Değerler Eğitimi Sunuları*. Retrieved from http://www.ulued.org/ulued-degerler-egitimi-sunulari-i90/

UNESCO. (n.d.). *Teaching and learning for a sustainable future: Module 22 – Reorienting education for a sustainable future*. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_d/mod22.html

Ünder, H. (2012). Constructivism and the curriculum reform of the AKP. In K. İnal & G. Akkaymak (Eds.), *Neoliberal transformation of education in Turkey* (pp. 33–58). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ünsür, A. (2003). *Kuruluşundan Günümüze İmam Hatip Liseleri.* İstanbul: Önder Yayınları.

Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2007). 'Making up' the middle-class child: Families, activities and class dispositions. *Sociology, 41*(6), 1061–1077. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038507082315

VOA News. (2017, July 4). *Turkey bans the teaching of evolution in public schools*. Retrieved from https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/turkey-bans-teaching-of-evolution-in-public-schools/3926756.html

Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and Literature.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Yaşlı, F. (2014). *AKP, Cemaat, Sunni-Ulus.* Istanbul: Yordam Kitap.

Yazgan, Ç. Ü. (2017). Mesleki ve teknik Anadolu lisesi öğrencilerinin sosyal hareketliliğine ilişkin profilleri: Eskişehir ili örneği (Doctoral dissertation, Anadolu University). Council of Higher Education Thesis Center. Retrieved from https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/TezGoster?key=q3-d9QtLoVA2OMExHSkJpc6oluhbr1tsoFUOGTpnqD6x6FF1qvj75aNcYfnP39Ka

Yeni Şafak. (2011, August 8). *Katsayı farkı azaldı, İHL'ye talep arttı*. Retrieved from https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/katsayi-farki-azaldi-ihlye-talep-artti-334350

Yeni Akit. (2019). *Erdoğan o sözlerini tekrar etti: Dindar bir nesil yetiştireceğiz*. Retrieved from https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/kart/haber/erdogan-o-sozlerini-tekrar-etti-dindar-bir-nesil-yetistirecegiz-951220.html

Yentürk, N. (2003). *Körlerin Yürüyüşü: Türkiye Ekonomisi ve 1990 Sonrası Krizleri*; in "Türkiye Ekonomisi ve Kriz Geleneği", "Yangın Söndü, Arsayı Kurtardık: 2001 Güçlü Ekonomiye Geçiş Programı" and "Finsansal Sermaye Girişi Gölgesinde İstikrar Uygulaması: 2000 İstikrar Paketinin İncelenmesi" (p. 3-72). İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

Yıldırım, D. (2016). Muhafazakar Demokrasi ve AKP. In E. Haspolat, & D. Yıldırım, *Türkiye'de Yeni Siyasal Akımlar (1980 Sonrası).* Siyasal Kitabevi.

Yıldız, A. (2004). *AK Parti'nin "Yeni Muhafazakâr Demokratlığı"*. *Liberal Düşünce, 9*(34), 41–48.

Zürcher, E. J. (2004). *Turkey: A Modern History.* London, New York: I. B. Tauris.