

Neo-liberalism and the Local Response Teacher Education Reform: A Specific Reference to Turkish Teacher Education

Il neoliberalismo e la riforma della formazione degli insegnanti della risposta locale: un riferimento specifico alla formazione degli insegnanti turchi

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of neoliberalism on teacher education in Turkey in terms of the specific teacher education reforms made in 1997. First, the article analyzes how neoliberalism influenced teacher preparation and teacher education institutions. Second, it examines the changes made for content knowledge in teacher education. Third, the article elicits how the teaching professions changed under the patronage of neoliberalism in Turkey. To make the system more efficient and competitive, neoliberals introduced a market approach into teacher education and, as a result, teacher education became a means of preparing teacher candidates for the global market system. Neoliberalism restructured educational policies, teacher education curriculum, and the schooling and education practices, working conditions of teachers, the quality of educational facilities, and the teaching profession in general. Neoliberal education changed the nature of teacher education and teacher education has evolved from an academic discipline to a technical one.

Keywords: neoliberalism; teacher; globalization; education.

Riassunto

Questo articolo esamina l'impatto del neoliberalismo sulla formazione degli insegnanti in Turchia in termini di specifiche riforme della formazione degli insegnanti attuate nel 1997. In primo luogo, l'articolo analizza come il neoliberalismo abbia influenzato la preparazione degli insegnanti e gli istituti di formazione degli insegnanti. In secondo luogo, esamina le modifiche apportate alla conoscenza dei contenuti nella formazione degli insegnanti. Terzo, l'articolo spiega come le professioni di insegnamento siano cambiate sotto il patrocinio del neoliberalismo in Turchia. Per rendere il sistema più efficiente e competitivo, i neoliberalisti hanno introdotto un approccio di mercato nella formazione degli insegnanti e, di conseguenza, la formazione degli insegnanti è diventata un mezzo per preparare i candidati insegnanti per il sistema di mercato globale. Il neoliberalismo ha ristrutturato le politiche educative, il curriculum di formazione degli insegnanti e le pratiche scolastiche e educative, le condizioni di lavoro degli insegnanti, la qualità delle strutture educative e la professione di insegnante in generale. L'educazione neoliberalista ha cambiato la natura della formazione degli insegnanti e la formazione degli insegnanti si è evoluta da una disciplina accademica a una tecnica.

Parole chiave: neoliberalismo; insegnante; globalizzazione; educazione.

1. Introduction

Neoliberalism emerged in the USA and the United Kingdom as a political-economic theory that began as a movement in the late 1970s, reached its peak during the 1980s, and permeated to other countries in the world. Neoliberalism has affected not only politics but also the economy, religion, and especially the educational policies and implementations and teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Neoliberalism urged to embed accountability system of high stakes standardized tests and privatized school choice in educational policies by claiming the poor quality of teaching, negligence, inadequate education, and negligence of teachers' duties in public schools (Ambrosio, 2013). Neoliberalism, as a political-economic theory, highlights liberating entrepreneurial freedom along with emphasizing private enterprise, and it supports private enterprise and a free-market economy together with an emphasis on the reduction of the role of the state in the economic practices as much as possible in terms of creating and preserving an appropriate institutional framework (Harvey, 2005, p. 2). Neoliberals pay special attention to economic growth and endorse the implementation of a broad variety of policies. In this sense, they recommend to implement several specific measures, such as supporting investments and entrepreneurialism, restructuring income tax, curbing entitlement payments, reducing the deficit, lessening defense expenditures, discouraging consumer debts, and modernizing infrastructure. Employing its global actors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Neoliberalism has become more widespread in a variety of both rich and poor countries (Navarro, 2007; Bottery, 2006). To legitimate its discourse Neoliberals, use diverse channels and mechanisms, such as the improvement of school facilities, wide-sweeping reforms of school administration, and curriculum & instruction strategies along with the way of academic funding. This paper discusses the impact of neoliberalism as a political and global movement on the initial teacher education programs in Turkey along with a focus on the transition and future of teacher education in terms of neoliberal discourse in Turkey. By emphasizing the concepts of neoliberalism such as accountability, being market-oriented, and giving the importance to technical skills rather than theoretical knowledge, they transformed the teacher training programs within the logic of "Entrepreneur University". This paper attempt to response how did neoliberalism influence the initial teacher education in Turkey. In addition, this paper evaluates the reflection of neoliberal policies put into practice by the governments on the organization and change of teacher education programs in Turkey in the last three decades.

2. Neoliberalism and Education

Neoliberals point out that it is imperative to modernize education because it is an important component of a country's infrastructure development. Furthermore, they continuously make recommendations to invest in schools and more importantly to not only focus on successful students but also promote educational activities to improve the cognitive skills of non-college-bound students. This trend requires attaching particular importance to early childhood preschool learning, apprenticeship programs for adolescent youth as well as laying an emphasis on the continued focus on instruction in classical subject areas such as mathematics, science, and foreign language. These can all be examples of neoliberals' ongoing concern with the production of a highly skilled workforce as a means to stimulate economic growth. Redefinition of teacher identity has been a part of neoliberal education policies all over the world. As a result, while the state does not invest in the education sector, private schools, private universities, and private teaching institutions support the state to fill the gap. The policies brought to the agenda under the name of «Teacher Training (Education) Reform» were justified by the thesis that «... school failure occurs due to inefficient and uncompetitive teachers» (Furlong et al., 2009). Neoliberals regards education as part of market like other services and products. Neoliberal reforms in education aimed at reorganization of educational polices and system at every level by emphasizing competition and economic proficiency. This caused to loss of educational autonomy and specialization in fields and privatization of education (Welch, 2013). Education is now regarded as a commodity and functions within this framework.

Many countries adopted the neo-liberal economic policies and changed their educational system accordingly. These extensive changes were adopted in the United States, and in many other countries including the UK, Sweden, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and some Latin American countries; however,

this phenomenon occurred much less so throughout Asia and in many of the continental European countries. The focus was placed on the new assessment standards and the formulation of improved teaching standards. Many countries deregulated and transformed teacher education in the lines of neoliberal discourse. Teacher education policies were under the scrutiny of governments and politicians with neoliberal tendency. For instance, US government criticized university based teacher education programs as expensive and time consuming based on the hypothetical assumptions (Zeichner, 2018; Cochran-Smith, 2020). The main thesis of those who advocated a need for change in teacher education was that the existing understanding of education was outdated and could not keep up with contemporary developments. Therefore, phenomena such as teacher education programs and teacher competencies had to be organized according to new principles, namely neoliberal principles. The changes made in the education system first and then teacher education reforms based on the global neoliberal discourse (Popkewitz, 2000; Zeichner, 2003, 2014; Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Ellis & McNicholl, 2015; Cochran-Smith, Piazza & Power, 2013; Furlong, 2013; Slater & Griggs, 2015; Guven, 2008). As a part of this global wave of educational reforms, some countries changed their educational system totally, and the organization of teacher education (Law, 2004).

Turkey, which was affected by the neoliberal wave, preferred to follow the educational policies developed in other countries to resist the globalization rather than developing a unique understanding of education. It was the Turkish version of «neoliberal» ideology. Neoliberalism appeared after the 1980's coupe in Turkey and new-right inclined governments implemented its premises recklessly. They began to change settled public education policies and implementations in terms of cost-benefit analysis. Neoliberal-oriented governments also, after transforming public education, began to change teacher education within the framework of neoliberal discourse. Lacking sufficient capital, Turkey has endeavored to change the educational system through monetary loans and donations provided by the major international organizations such as the World Bank (2005), IMF, and OECD (1998, 2005). In a sense, this formed the basis for the country to legitimize neoliberalism in education (Heyneman, 2003). World Bank etc. organizations stated that they gave the funds to improve the education system. Teacher education reform has become an integral and indispensable part of the broader economic and social developmental objectives of Turkey. One aspect of these new reform objectives for Turkey is the ongoing interest in becoming a member of the European Union one day¹. The World Bank Country Assistance Strategy (World Bank, 1997) has supported the economic, educational, and social reforms sought by Turkey wholeheartedly. These reforms are critical, especially developments of educational standards because the EU has set-forth the benchmarks for its members to meet. The expectations set forth by the EU are for schools to offer a high standard of learning, to foster equal opportunities at every level of education, to provide flexible learning options to students, and to ensure that the education system meets the expectations of the needs of the business world. The EU's Lisbon Agenda benchmarks are one of the examples where the EU formalized specific educational targets for its member states and Turkey accepted these targets as she is a candidate country for full membership to EU.

3. Impact of Neoliberalism on Initial Teacher education

Neoliberalism regards economic growth as an important factor to maintain consistency of power and political order (Fowler, 2000). In the course of time, the discourse of neoliberalism has spread from developed countries to developing countries. Many countries throughout Europe, as well as nations such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United States implemented reforms for teacher education. The advocates of reforming teacher education implied that teacher education programs were inefficient, outdated and do not train skillful teachers for global market. Thus, they urged that university-based teacher education programs should have been reformed immediately and many governments throughout the world addressed reforming

1 In 1998, to restructure and modernize teacher education, the «Green Paper» policy document was created with the participation of European Union countries, and this document was put into practice under the name of «White Paper» in 2001. This policy document can be accepted as the legal document of policies and neoliberal understanding aimed at unifying teacher education in the member states of the European Union.

teacher education programs for the favor of neoliberal discourse (Souto-Manning, 2019). The reform attempts focused on professionalization-deregulation and improving quality of teacher training programs (Lewis & Young, 2013; Van Manen, 2016). These reforms usually addressed issues such as assessment schemes, content benchmarks, curriculum development, and overall generic teaching standards. In many European countries, the reforms were most often directed to common experiences and overall standards, as well as developing a course credit transfer system used to measure learning outcomes across different national systems. The EU and OECD, along with several NGOs, were the driving force behind these reform efforts and ultimately the creation of international conjunction toward homogeneity, conformity, and obedience (Delandshere & Petrosky, 2004).

Governments made an effort to promote schools through making interventions in national curricula, national testing, and standard-based quality measuring systems. It appears that these interventions caused a loss of teacher autonomy, professional and personal identities, as well as intensifying teachers' workload (Guven, 2008). Teacher education programs were also reformed, and initial teacher education programs had to implement prescribed curricula and instrumentally oriented competency scales. As a result, initial teacher education departments faced meeting new measurable requirements to get into new programs. The updated reforms were implemented through the direct intervention of participating governments under the same discourse that claimed to foster learning and to increase standards and economic competitiveness. They all criticized that teachers' competencies undermined the identities and job satisfaction of teachers (Day, 2000). The justifications of the criticisms during the discourse were based on personal experiences of teachers, the internal reporting system of school boards, limited empirical material, and not on truly scientific reports about teacher training systems. The changes were whole scale in some countries, and new institutions were created to alter all the existing teacher-training traditions at the university level (Bonnet, 1996; Terhart, 2004).

Depending on which country around the world is implementing teacher education reforms, there were some differences among the countries. A common focus point of agendas is professionalism and deregulation of teacher preparation. This effort aimed to erode the monopoly of universities on teacher education and to reshape the teacher education system. Often, these two completing agendas conflicted with which agenda ultimately determines the framework of reforms (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001). Usually, these reforms are supported by both political and professional efforts to achieve some form of harmonization and standardization in teacher education systems, as well as in professional agencies and publications regarding teacher education worldwide. As discussed previously, the ideas and aims of the EU are to reach improved and successful economic and political aims through the creation of a highly skilled workforce. One such step in this direction was the mobility and exchange program for teachers. This program was established to better integrate teachers and students into the educational system (European Commission, 1998; Ertl, & Phillips, 2006). By time, the trend toward teacher education reform intensified, and as a result, several countries took the reform of teacher education programs to the national level. The Turkish government has also made commitments to raise the quality of education at all levels based on the European Union standards and promised some long-term goals such as decreasing the drop rates and increasing the capacity and full enrollment in secondary education. These brought about empowering the infrastructure of the existing schools and updating the additional facilities and making extensive changes in the educational system and the content of the curriculum. The Turkish government claimed that younger generations could be better educated in terms of lifelong education and knowledge economy. Thus, Turkey could have integrated into the EU smoothly. The Turkish government began to reform the educational system to deliver all youth with adequate educational opportunities along with the lines of these short and long terms educational premises for the EU. Teacher education programs were reformed as well (MEB, 2004). Turkish teacher education system changed dramatically in a short period.

4. Neoliberalism and Transformation of Teacher Education in Turkey

Neoliberalism has employed different discourses while transforming teacher education in Turkey. Reform efforts primarily targeted teacher-training programs, and theoretical courses on educational sciences that supported the intellectual dimension of teaching were removed from the curriculum, claiming that it was

too theoretical. Stating that the quality of teacher education in its current state is low, they formed the basis of their discourse on the concepts of standardization, uniformity and quality improvement. These transformations that neoliberalism brought to teacher education will be analyzed separately here.

4.1 The Loss of the “academic teacher” and rise of the “technician teacher”

During the 1980's, the culturally responsive teacher education approach that contains philosophy, psychology, and sociology dominated teacher education curricula in Turkey. The reform movement, which is based on the neoliberal understanding, claimed that teacher training programs did not provide adequate practices for initial teachers that is this training approach was criticized due to being “theoretical” and having “low standard”. Thus, the Turkish government and HEC attempted many times to reform the teacher education system and to change its direction in the lines of «practice-oriented». After the introduction of 8 years of mandatory education, MONE and HEC cooperated to reorganize the teacher education departments at the university level in 1997 (Grossman et al., 2007). In Turkey, teacher-training programs were reformed in 1997 through a collaboration of the MONE and the HCE resulting in the implementation of the reforms beginning with the 1998 academic year. First, the number of practice-based courses were increased in the curriculum, and academic courses such as philosophy of education, sociology and curriculum development were excluded from the curriculum. At every level, these reforms have changed the path of teacher training and in general the teaching profession. The approach to teacher education has begun to follow a neoliberal approach which is taking it away from its academic tradition. Instead, the implementation of these new teacher education reforms has developed a system where teacher education is now more of technical competency and not an academic discipline. While the responsible government agencies were attempting to resolve problems in urban schools, such as student retention rates and low levels of academic achievement, the push for technocratic modernization and greater control in schools created its own new set of problems. For example, with technocratic modernization issues related to teacher demoralization and low levels of teacher candidate, recruitment occur more frequently. This happens more often in subject areas such as physics and technology.

The duration and level of teacher education have not changed. The most significant changes were curriculum, program organization, and the subject areas. The installation of subject specific teaching methods and the standardization of course accreditation led the teacher education programs in Turkey to a new direction. The reforms divided teacher education into two different systems for teacher training: one for elementary education and the other for secondary education. Elementary education departments consisted of early childhood pre-school education, elementary school education, and subject area teaching for junior high school. The secondary teacher education programs are responsible for training teachers who will be teaching general high school subjects (Güven, 2008). Cooperation between schools and universities has been strengthened to develop the skills of teacher candidates. Thus, it is planned to train teacher candidates who will meet the market needs.

Furthermore, to prepare teachers for work in different subject areas, a compulsory double major system has been added to the major field of study as a requirement for completion of the teacher education degree. As a part of the teacher-training program, the teacher candidates were provided with practice opportunities to observe classroom instruction, as well as participating in school visits along with a participation in the decisions in faculty meetings. Mentor teachers and supervisors observed and evaluated the progress of prospective teachers and provided more support for real classroom teaching and creating more realistic lesson plans periodically. New educational theories such as constructivism and multiple intelligences were infused into Turkish education, and they gave rise to the development of new curriculum and textbooks. These challenges also influenced the subject teaching methods, pushed MONE, and teaching training institutes to organize workshops and conferences targeting mentor teachers, too. It was a very subtle attempt to change the conformity among the teachers and to furnish them with new approaches. Teacher training institutions also participated in these training activities even they were against the idea of new teacher education system (World Bank, 1997).

The new teacher-education narration based on some persisting problems such as learning difficulties, classroom management and discipline issues claimed that the existing teacher training programs did not

respond to these issues. However, these alterations did not change the problems that prospective teachers faced during the field experience, and they remained resolved. The reformers urged that initial teacher education programs were insufficient for dealing with diverse social pathologies of schooling. Moreover, mentor teachers in the schools did not guide them to cope with these problems. Initial teacher education programs were accused of not furnishing prospective teachers with adequate skills to treat these problems properly. The defenders of new teacher education programs urged that a problem-based curriculum would be implemented to combine theory with practice in a wider context and prospective teachers could have skills to improve teaching practice. They accused universities of being as inherently conservative to novelty. However, these challenges opposed to modern teacher education and serving the interest of liberals or imperialists. Neoliberal discourse policy aimed at creating a new type of teachers called technically competent practitioners. The essence of this policy change was to make prospective teachers gain rich field experiences under the mentorship of more experienced teachers (Güven, 2008).

4.2 Quality and Accountability and Instrumentalism in Teacher Education

Turkey has implemented diverse teacher education models; however, the most radical and effective change took place in 1981 and teacher education was transferred from MONE to universities. Prospective teachers should have an undergraduate degree (B.A.) to be hired as teachers. Both the graduates of faculty of education and the faculty of science and letters were guaranteed that if they have teaching certificates, they would be eligible to apply to be a teacher. Teacher training institutions performed high degree autonomy and decided courses etc. until 1998 teacher education reform, however, all the educational faculties had to implement a standardized curriculum prescribed by HEC in Turkey after 1998. The MONE and HEC hired foreign experts, required by project funders such as World Bank under the National Education Development Project (NEDP), intervened in designing a new teacher education curriculum. HEC was very determined to implement a new curriculum and pushed universities to change admission conditions and programs to meet the new requirements of teachers. The new teacher education curriculum made after 1998 was divided into three main domains as following: deep knowledge of the subject area, pedagogical teaching skills, and culture. The new curriculum is composed of practice with 30 credits and culture courses with 13 credits of the whole with a maximum of 152 credit hours. The critical point of this new curriculum required more than three times teaching practices in a real school environment in different semesters (YÖK, 1998). MONE supported hugely these school practices and collaborated with the HEC closely. To reduce the teacher gap, HEC created a vast number of faculties without adequate infrastructure and skilled personal in every part of Turkey (Güven, 2008).

The neoliberal approach legitimated its premises by claiming that academic working in teacher training institutions produced theoretical studies and they did not bring innovations in the practice dimension of the teaching profession. This argument, which is acceptable at a certain level, also formed the basis for the change in the quality of the courses given in teacher training institutions (Atasoy & Cemaloglu, 2018). To improve the quality of education, the number of teaching practice courses was increased in teacher training institutions, but it was not possible to consolidate the new understanding with the old material at hand. Only Arts, Physical Education, and Music departments achieved this aim as they accepted a skill and talent-based admission. Neoliberal discourse has often emphasized that teachers should be trained just like technicians to be more qualified in education faculties. Hence, teacher-training programs included more applied teaching courses such as «subject teaching areas» and “school practice”. In addition, teacher education reformers changed the framework of school visiting courses and increased the number of courses. They claimed that a real school environment provides prospective teachers with more practical experience and would make them much more skillful. Advocates of this idea suggested that the more practical experience initial teachers have, just like technicians, the better and more qualified education they can provide for the next generations. However, it could not be achieved due to the inadequacy of the infrastructure in the schools, the crowded classrooms, the high number of students admitted to the faculty of education, and the lack of training of mentor teachers on this subject. In short, neoliberal discourse appeared good on papers theoretically, but insufficient in practice (YÖK, 1998).

The reform aimed at changing the main characteristics of the existing teacher education in terms of

the resolution process and created a centralized and a monopolized based on neoliberal premises. They undermined the autonomy of teacher education institutions, formulized new basic competencies and skills, and implemented a new curriculum with a minimum of 120 credit hours (equal to three years of full-time studies) and a maximum of 220 credits that are more teaching subject area oriented according to age groups. To legitimize their activities and to base them on a scientific basis, HEC established a Teacher Education Commission affiliated with the HEC and appointed scientists who have adopted neoliberal views. They tried to suppress the opposing views by urging that they made their decisions based on the opinion of this board. The HEC and Teacher Education Commission abolished the ideas of autonomy and professionalism of teacher training faculties. HEC ignored the views and knowledge of education faculties, created handbooks on how the courses would be taught, which course would be delivered in which semester, and determined the specific requirements for each course, and recommended that they be taught in faculties. It was the destruction of autonomy and the transformation of teacher training institutions into «high schools». This reform attempted to change teachers into subject specialists, not educators, and stuck the teachers between the curriculum and the lesson plans and changed teachers into “technicians”.

By ignoring the educational sciences departments and the accumulation of faculties, it transformed all faculties into «technical teacher education institutions». After 1997, private universities took advantage of this trend and established education faculties. These faculties admitted outnumber students. The rapidly increased number of students prevented the faculties from carrying out the practices and courses properly, quantitative success was achieved but the quality decreased further. The increase in the number of field experience courses at the country level has led to the problem of a financial burden and personnel deficit on the one hand, and on the other hand, it has made it difficult for students to find a school where they would practice (YOK, 1998). All these challenges emerged because of the neoliberal discourse that emphasizes the reduction of education to observable and measurable facts, its compliance with standards and accreditation practices.

Teacher education does not usually appeal to the most talented students. The quality of students enrolling in teacher education remains a problem in many education faculties. The quality of faculty staff in teacher education programs is not adequate for education faculties (Altan, 1998). The neoliberal discourse changed the characteristics of teacher education with a move away from «social reforming agency» and «public service» to technician teachers’ training. Relationships between teacher education institutions and society have been reshaped in favor of marketization. As Peters (2016) mentioned teacher education has been regarded as a «commodity and service like any other to be merchandised in marketplace». Neoliberal reforms in teacher education have created fundamental reorganization resulting in, for example, the loss of academic expertise and teacher training tradition. Teacher education has been regarded as a business and functions within this context.

These resulted in confirmation of neoliberal perspectives and teacher education reforms conceptualized in five important points.

- Extension; the duration of all teacher training institutions was 4 years. In addition, the duration of the departments of subject area teaching departments such as history, language arts math that train teachers for secondary education was extended to 5 years.
- Integration; the courses such as assessment and evaluation and teaching methods, which were previously taught separately, were integrated under the name of planning and evaluation of instruction
- Academisation; the reforms ignored the social, historical, and philosophical foundations of teacher education and focused on teaching methods and practice; thus, ensuring the implementation of «expert in the subject» and «skilled teacher» approach that is teacher education which became more subject-centered and discipline-oriented.
- Specialization; the new circumstances which occurred in teacher education programs required students to concentrate on certain subjects or teach specific levels such as K8 and secondary.
- Didacticization; subject teaching methods, real field experiences, and generally «didactic» teaching prevailed. This fact happened in teacher education in Turkey as well (Garm & Karlsen, 2004).

Despite different arguments or legitimatizing the tensions in teacher education, the paradigms never end. One should keep in mind that teacher education is culture and tradition rooted in unique cultural

and historical conditions. Some researchers pointed out that discipline-based teacher education tradition failed, as it did not furnish initial teachers with enough knowledge to grasp the real-life problems of students in the classroom and political reasons. Undermining the theoretical basis of teacher education resulted in mechanical teaching that never meets the real education solutions.

4.3 Standardization and Accountability of Teacher Education

As it is known, one of the most important discourses of neoliberalism is «standardization» and uniformity. Therefore, the management of educational institutions from a single center and the monopolization of teacher education has established the basis of «accountability» and accreditation. The standardization displayed uniformity of teacher education traditions and approaches in different universities. MONE and HEC decided to monopolize the curriculum, content, courses, and even the academic staff of teacher educations. They intervened in the admission process of initial teacher education at universities and even determined the central exam scores to be used for admission to teacher education departments at universities. Masters and doctorate programs of teacher education also have been redesigned according to the expectations of reformers (YÖK, 1998). To maintain uniformity among the teachers, in-service education programs were arranged by the World Bank loans provided to realize these reforms. MONE attempted to create professional development centers called «in-service teacher education academies» to mediate seminars, workshops, etc. (World Bank, 1997). The uniformity spread not only in the organization of the curriculum but also in the textbooks, training of future academics in teacher education. For instance, HEC determined the candidates for doctoral education in teacher education faculties and in what fields they would have Ph.D. degrees. HEC also intervened in the scope of dissertations of these doctorates and directed them to study the subject-specific teaching methods abroad. Standardization evoked a predominantly managerial, commercial, and industrial connotation; however, it is used widely in many areas such as health and especially in education. The concept bear to mind technical and positive connotations at first glance. Since neoliberals regard education as a “commercial activity” they set some standards for teacher education however, as the center of teaching “human” putting the standards into practice becomes quite problematic and this approach is seriously criticized. The critics focus on the changing nature of «human beings» and the superficiality of standards for teacher training. Two important issues emerge as problems in standardization in the understanding of teacher training: the first is for what purpose the standards will be used and the second is how they will be employed. The issue of standards becomes quite controversial since it cannot provide a satisfactory and definite answer to these questions.

The World Bank provided the loans for improving the quality of education; however, it made decisions using the directions of loans such as fostering initial teacher education, course materials, textbooks, and projects. The World Bank also supported graduate education by providing a \$177.2 million loan (YÖK, 1998). Ironically, an external authority regulates the use of authorization in loans. This also shows that international hegemonic powers contributed to the implementation of neoliberal policies in teacher education in Turkey. Later, the British Council joined this technical assistance (Guncer, 1998).

This reform also uniformed the school practices and created two courses called “Field experience Course I and II» and maintained the implementation of standards for initial teachers. These courses were expected to furnish initial teachers with early experiences about schools and motivate them. This reform was divided into three special areas (YOK, 1998). The first area, called general training, with 60 credit/ hours that consisted of learning, subject area teaching methods, socialization, core values, child development and interdisciplinary studies. The second area with up to 160 credit hours was about to subject area teaching. It is stated in the reform document that universities could organize new integrated courses more flexibly but provided that upon the approval of HEC. This is an example of the uniformity of the curriculum. The last area with 20 credit hours was about the cultural competency of initial teachers. HEC organized all these and directed them to faculties. One could have easily recognized this uniformity if one examines the old curriculum and course lists of many educational faculties in Turkey between years of 1998-2005. The standardization admission rules, departmental division, uniformity of subject areas, etc. changed all the teacher educational faculties and uniformed. This caused a loss of competition within the universities (Grossman et al., 2010). Everything seemed ideal on paper, but in practice, some well-established universities did not follow the framework presented by HEC, as they did not adept this top-down action.

As it is known, the neoliberal discourse has also used the «new right» ideology to legitimize itself in society. The facts such as «conservatism» and «religiousness», which form the basis of the new right ideology, have also shaped the organization of teacher training programs. This reform also paid special attention to the training of religion teachers and created “religion teacher training departments”. With the double major arrangement, they allowed for those studying in the department of religious teaching to study in Social Studies or Language Arts department. This reform also made it possible for social studies teacher candidates to have a minor subject in Language Arts provided that they took 22 credits in this department (YÖK, 1998). Education faculties in almost all universities implemented these practices, which devalued teaching fields, without objection. Some educational sciences fields such as curriculum and instruction, educational administration, etc. were abandoned without being asked to the faculties, because their graduates could not find a job, and despite the lack of infrastructure and teaching staff, the departments of field teaching were created in these faculties. Market orientation and cost-benefit analysis influenced this policy thus the reform put more emphasis on «skills» instead of pedagogy (Grossman & Sands, 2008). The implementations were consistent with the discourse of neoliberalism that claims to foster the equality of educational opportunity, but they reduced the institutional autonomy and individual choice; thus, it led to adding more centralization to teacher education programs.

4.4 Uniformity of Teacher Education

The other the magical key words of neoliberal reform were “higher quality” and better “governance” in education. The HEC approved and convinced the politicians and other partners with “high quality” and “better governance” and “achieving international standards” discourse. The new governance policy decreased the autonomy of faculties and teacher education departments were provided relative freedom for altering the courses and organization of teaching practices. The quest for quality was rhetoric and the “myth of quality” was used for achieving central aims and control of central authority (HEC) over assessment and teacher certification (Guncer, 1998). Usage of the discourse of “fostering quality” was imposed to all the teacher education faculties and “public management” was used as governance policy. The teacher education reforms were reduced to adaptation of international trends and standards through international mutual recognition of training, diplomas, and exchange programs among teacher education departments. The Lisbon Convention and Bologna declaration promoted these challenges. International interaction shaped organization of teacher education programs in Bachelor and Master’s degree programs and the aims of teacher competencies. The claims of insufficient knowledge of school subjects, over-academic teaching approaches, and inadequate didactic knowledge were used as legitimating the reforms. The worst part of this reform was that there place detailed prescriptive curriculum guidelines and undermined the conditions of teacher education institutions. These showed that there was a gap between the reforms and political trends and the realities of faculty (Güven, 2008). This new neoliberal education policy undermined the critics of existing teacher education institution and did not allow other to create alternative perspective. The defenders of this neoliberal teacher education were very keen that teaching was essentially a technical/rational domain. They implied that theoretical, humanistic and social dimensions of teaching was secondary for better teaching. The new created teacher education programs lacked social, philosophical cultural competencies (Güven, 2020). Standardization caused a uniformity for teacher education and undermined the collaborative decisions and alternative perceptions, and this caused alienation of academic staff to new system.

The reformers of teacher education claimed that teachers who were trained in the new standard driven programs pay more attention to learner achievement, student performance. Thus, the quality of schools could increase as they regarded schools as meritocratic however, they did not take into consideration the realities of Turkish society. Turkey was not fully industrialized and there was wide the socio-cultural and economic gap among different parts. In addition, there were other, the objectives and content were unclear and faculty members did not study on these new areas. The necessity of the courses was not studied adequately, and the textbooks and other materials were limited. This reform called technocratic modernization of teacher education entails teachers to gain skills not “instruction” by implying external tests and examinations. New teacher education reform expects future teachers to play multiple roles such as subject specialists, curriculum expert, assessment leader etc.

4.5 The Transformation of Educational Faculties into Teacher-High schools

The neoliberals created the common dichotomies for transforming the foundations of teacher education at all levels. The dichotomies are used to explain a broad and dynamic perspective of teacher education. The first dichotomy called the «proof based» study used for reforming teacher education was to find the facts, justifications, and grounds. The teacher education reform is based on very weak empirical data and there were few studies on the proposal of new assessment systems that provide the framework for the successful and real performance of the existing teacher education institutions. The significant dichotomy used by reformers was to use the results of standard tests based on the comparisons with other countries such as Finland and Singapore even though the indicators were not transparent. The international assessments such as PISA and TIMSS were taken as an indicator of the teacher education system; however, there was no exact date to explain the student's success and teachers' performance (Atasoy & Cemaloglu, 2018). The evaluation was made only by observation and counseling projects and, it was very hard to estimate the reliability. The key terms in this process were “quality” and “excellence” in education. The reformers used this dichotomy as policy justification for defending the new teacher education system in Turkey. This teacher education reform was linked to neoliberal transformation through “accountability” and the cost-benefit principle. This reform required creating measurable goals, systematic reporting, evaluation, and control. These principles required maintaining teacher's academic, didactic, and social competencies then the general and subject areas competencies of teachers have been determined; however, the criteria were ambiguous and tended to measure only the knowledge of subject matters in a narrow sense. All these market-orientated approaches aimed at breaking the autonomy of teacher education institutions by imposing standard-based reforms that threaten the constitution of new knowledge and understanding. The changes in teacher education increased the tension between individual freedom and institutional freedom by decreasing the autonomy of institutions (Garm & Carlsen, 2004).

Teacher education reforms not only changed the organizational way of teacher education but also changed the content of teacher education curriculum and understanding. The reforms paid special priority to practice rather than academic-scientific knowledge, and this transformed teacher education into technician-teacher training programs. The academic-oriented teacher education tradition in universities changed into a practice-oriented «seminary» college tradition by emphasizing student activities and learning. Moreover, the reforms aimed at eroding the research basis of teacher education and made teacher education a «skill development» activity. Raising the students' performance was the main rational reform of the teacher education curriculum as the standard examinations made by OECD aimed at evaluating the student performances in TIMSS and PISA that assess the students' performance in math, science, and reading (Croft et al., 2015). These examinations were accepted as a reference because they made a ranking of the participated countries, and these were the results of accountability and standardization principles of the neoliberal economy.

5. Discussion

Neoliberalism has affected teacher education in different ways in each country. Neoliberalism has resulted in a profound transition in teacher education since 1997 in Turkey. As teachers in Turkey are mostly civil servants, their professional identities were not affected much by this situation, but the employer, the Ministry of National Education, regulated the working conditions of teachers according to the principles of neoliberal economy. He started to apply principles such as performance indicator, effectiveness, and accountability in case of failure in standardized exams. Neoliberal understanding has been very effective especially in the regulation and change of teacher training programs. In Turkey, teacher-training institutions are affiliated to universities and universities are affiliated to the Higher Education Board, which is the central institution. The higher education institution, which is an extremely centralized institution, has shaped teacher education reforms from top to bottom in line with its own principles and ideology. Neoliberal ideologies embedded into the context of teacher education programs and delineated the framework of the courses of initial teacher education. Neoliberal policies changed the “provision of initial teacher education” into specialized technicians training programs. Turkey restructured the educational system and

teacher education in terms of neoliberal discourse. Neoliberal policies deregulated and dismantled teacher education. Initial teacher education has been subjected to marketization and accountability. The Governmental bodies such as HEC and MONE played an important role in the transformation of teacher education and attempted to control the substance of the teacher education curriculum by using «effectiveness and efficiency» as a mantra. Teacher education is regarded now as a «commodity», not public service. Teacher education programs are now under the pressure of «accreditation» «standardization» «performance» and «cost», «efficiency» in terms of the market economy. Thus, neoliberal tendency undermined the relation of theory and practice and eroded the social-cultural competencies. They favored psychology and practice in teacher education and erased the social and philosophical foundations of teaching. Teacher education programs were transformed into a technical subject by emphasizing practice more than theory and practical skills instead of social reformer. Bureaucratic control on teacher education has tightened. Faculty initiated and controlled education weakened. Policymakers transformed the essence of intellectual teacher education into technician teacher training by using standardized course syllabi. They pushed faculties of education to design “standardized programs” for restraining the faculty autonomy by demanding excessive accountability and accreditation. The redefinition of teacher identity, which is a part of neoliberal education policies, was brought to the agenda under the name of “teacher training/education reform”: these argument that inefficient and uncompetitive teachers cause school failure was presented as the justification for the reform. In this framework, performance management techniques, efficiency evaluation/direction, rewarding through performance-based compensation, etc. It has been introduced as a necessary tool in the reconstruction of the teacher identity by transforming the teaching profession. Traditionally, the image of the teacher, which is seen as a professional member who «understands the social meaning of education and has the equipment that forms the basis of this understanding, has a sense of ‘social responsibility’ regarding the learning/teaching process, makes decisions about his professional behavior, and does not accept external control» is being transformed. This reform attempt reshaped the identity of teachers the framework of the concept of «new professionalism», is tried to be transformed into a professional whose professional activities are measured by external accountability mechanisms such as professional standards, performance indicators, and productivity. These changes made in teacher education and transformed teacher identity. Teacher competencies have been started to be measured with tests applied to students, and student achievements shown in central exams have become the basic element of this system based on «standard testing fetishism».

To be a teacher in schools affiliated to the MONE requires prospective teachers to pass a series of high-staking tests that contain teaching subject matters standards. Educational faculties are required to provide performance reports every semester. Educational faculties were transformed into institutions that train professional staff in the educational market. The curriculum and content of teacher education changed in the assumptions that the teacher is only a “professional” who is an expert in his/her subject and how to teach them’, and that teaching is a technical skill, and these challenges affected the teacher identity. It means that future teachers no longer would need to have a cultural and social understanding of education. These reforms not only changed teacher training but also destroyed the educational sciences by extracting many courses related to educational sciences. Reform efforts on teacher education have also made some positive contributions such as more «practice» and the field-specific teaching methods courses more specific and increasing their number, thesis etc. on these subjects in the teaching departments. The increase in the number of researches who makes studies on subject specific teaching procedures is also an important development. However, the qualitative dimension of these efforts has often been overshadowed. Developments such as ignoring the intellectual dimension of the teaching profession, eliminating faculty autonomy, and identifying teaching with only teaching have made reform efforts questionable. These reforms, which constitute the building blocks of the structural adjustment programs implemented, have transformed not only teaching as a profession but also initial teacher education tradition in lines with neoliberal discourse in Turkey.

The new teacher education reforms eroded the cultural values of the existing teacher education institutions by changing the curriculum. The reform aimed to train teachers as a technician instead of highly educated teacher candidates. Teacher education reform that emphasized an instrumental approach eroded the culture-based position in Turkey. This reform performance of teachers, and standard-based performance assessment to the forefront. The focus point of the new curriculum in education faculties was not to train

teachers to be very qualified, flexible, and innovative. The neo-liberal understanding changed teacher education into commodities and teachers into clerks. Despite alterations to the teacher education curriculum in the years 2005 and 2017, the essence of neoliberal discourse persists.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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