EIGHT-YEAR CONTINUOUS COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN TURKEY AND AN ANALYSIS OF INVOLVEMENT OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATION BETWEEN 1958 AND 1975 IN THE U.S.

A Thesis in
Educational Theory and Policy
by
Mehmet Fatih Yigit

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The thesis of Mehmet Fatih Yigit was reviewed and approved* by the following:

David A. Gamson  
Professor in Charge of Graduate Programs  
Associate Professor of Education  
Thesis Adviser

David P. Baker  
Professor of Education; Professor of Sociology

Mindy Kornhaber  
Associate Professor of Education

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
ABSTRACT

It is still a question whether governments should take active roles in education in all around the world. In some cases, it may be beneficial for a nation’s education system if it is controlled completely by the government. However in countries where many different groups expect different outcomes from education, it may be difficult for governments to take control of the education and please the entire nation.

The first part of this thesis talks about the eight-year continuous compulsory education reform in Turkey and shows an analysis of the reform by reviewing its aims one by one. The reform is a good example of government involvement in education in Turkey. In the second part of the thesis, I analyze the U.S. as another country and talk about the history of federal government involvement in education in the country.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. v
List of Figures ................................................................................................................... vi

Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1. **An Evaluation of the Eight-Year Continuous Compulsory Education in Turkey**

1. Overall structure of Turkish National Education System ........................................... 1
2. History of compulsory education in Turkey ............................................................... 2
3. A promising era: 8-year continuous compulsory education ...................................... 3
4. Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 14


1. National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 ..................................................... 17
2. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 ...................................... 17
3. The Impact of Federal Programs on Education ......................................................... 18
4. Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 20

Bibliography ..................................................................................................................... 23
**List of Tables**

*Table 1: Statistics on Pre-Primary and Primary Education*

<table>
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<td>24.62</td>
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*Source: Organization of the Education system in Turkey: 2008-2009, European Commission*
List of Figures

Figure 1: Average class size in primary education (2000, 2007)

Source: OECD. 2007 data: Table D2.1. 2000 data: Table D2.5, available on line.

Figure 2: Share of students in schools with high proportion of computers per student (more than 16 computers per 100 students %)

Source: PISA 2006 CRELL Calculations
Introduction

Education is an important factor in human life that lasts a lifetime in informal ways and takes a considerable amount of time in more formal ways. When we think about education as something that is life long, we can say that education never ends. On the other hand, if we approach to the concept of “education” as something that is given in buildings named “schools” for a certain amount of time, then there is an end for education.

The length of years of education and the role of governments in education needs in-depth research in order to understand how and why education systems and educational institutions change during time. The following two chapters will cover those two questions; why and how the length of education in Turkey changed from five years to eight years; and how education and the role government in education changed in the U.S. from 1958 to 1975.

Chapter 1

An Evaluation of the Eight-Year Continuous Compulsory Education in Turkey

Overall structure of Turkish National Education System

The National Education System determined by National Education Basic Act No 1739, consists of two main parts, namely “formal education” and “non-formal education”. Formal education is the regular education conducted within a school for individuals in a certain age group and at the same level. It includes pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education and higher education institutions. Non-formal education is provided with different programs to teach students reading-writing skills for them to have the opportunity to complete their education, to enable to acquire habits for evaluating their spare time, and to prepare them to have the suitable jobs according to the employment needs of the Turkish and
Global economy. The non-formal education institutions are public training centers, apprenticeship training centers, practical schools of art for girls, maturation institutes, vocational education centers, technical training centers for adults, education and application schools, industrial practical schools of art, science and art centers, open primary education, open high schools, vocational and technical open schools. These schools are usually free to the public.

Beginning from 1997-1998 education year, the duration of the obligatory primary education was accepted as eight years in Turkey in order to increase the standards of quality of education. The duration of compulsory education was five years before 1997. There have been several issues during the implementation of the reform. We can separate them into three major areas: Financial, curriculum, and infrastructural problems. I call these problems “technical issues” and I analyze another important problem that was the consequence of the idea of “continuous compulsory education” besides those technical issues, which is “social unrest and objections to the reform”.

The main goal of this paper is to analyze the 8-year continuous compulsory education reform in Turkey in terms of success or failure by analyzing the goals of the policy reform and their consequences.

**History of compulsory education in Turkey**

By virtue of the first article of the “Provisional Code for Primary Schooling” enacted in 1913, it was laid down to render primary education compulsory and further to serve it free at state schools. After the declaration of the Turkish Republic, the concept of free and
compulsory primary education was put on the agenda again and the provision setting forth that primary education is “free and compulsory” for children aged between 7-14 was included in Article 87 of the Constitution of 1924 (Akyüz 2001). Thereafter, this provision was also included in the 1961 and 1982 Constitutions. It was specified under the “right and duty of education and training” section (Article 42) in the Constitution of 1982 stipulating that “primary education is compulsory for all female and male citizens and served free in state schools” (Kavak 1997). Today, compulsory education which is 12 years in many of the developed countries in the world was extended from five to eight years in Turkey in 1997 and “Primary Education” was redefined as an “eight-year continuous education”. Primary education in Turkey involves the education and training of children between the age groups of 6 to 14, and it is compulsory for all male and female citizens, and is free at State schools. The objective of primary education is to ensure that every Turkish child acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, behavior and habits to become a good citizen and is raised in accordance with the concept of national morals and that he/she is prepared for life and for the next level of education in accord with his/her interests, talents and capabilities. Primary education institutions consist of eight-year schools where continuous education is provided and graduates are awarded primary education diplomas.

A promising era: 8-year continuous compulsory education

Education plays an important role for the future of nations. Especially in our time, it is widely believed that education influences economic and social mobility not only in developed countries but also in developing nations (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001). Today, compulsory
education policies extend over a long period of time when compared to past years and they are believed to have a seminal effect on the development level of countries. Beginning from 1920s, there have been many important reforms in Turkey in order to increase the standards of education given in formal and informal institutions. In the 1920s, the initial years of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, educational reforms were carried out in four areas: “Unification of Education”; “Organization of Education”; “Modifications in the Quality of Education” and “Expansion of Education”. The aim of the process of social change launched after the establishment of the Republic was to steer the traditional social structure in a more modern direction, to raise awareness of contemporary understandings of citizenship, and to build the social fabric through education (Ministry of National Education, 2005). The first major reform around this time was the adoption of the Law on the Unification of Education, No. 430 in 1924. This Law has two characteristics. The first is democratization of the education system, and the second is the practice of secularism in action in the field of education. Law Number 789 issued on 22 March 1926 formalized the secular education system, based upon the principles of the Republic.

Even though the 8-year continuous compulsory education started to be implemented in 1997, we see from the declaration of the annual meeting of Ministry of National Education in 1981 that one of the decisions was to implement 8-year compulsory education system in Turkey. However, there were many critics who claimed that the reform was the product of a one-time meeting between government officials and military generals. One of the members of the Republican Party, Mustafa Gazalci, strongly criticized those people who claimed that the probable outcomes of that reform had not been discussed before implementing it. He said in
one of his speeches that the 8-year continuous compulsory education is the only reform that was discussed for a long time before implementation.

The new policy reform resulted in many problems. The biggest problem was the social unrest as a result of the consequences of the reform. One of the previous Ministry of Education, Mehmet Saglam, says that he talked to the Chief of General Staff many times about the fact that the society will not support the reform because it prevents children between the ages 12-16 from going to the religious schools. Mr. Saglam says that he proposed increasing the compulsory education years but not in “continuous” way so that the families could choose to where to send their children.

As I mentioned before, Law number 789 issued on March 1926 had formalized secular education system. However there are always arguments about the definition of secularism in Turkey. While some groups define it as restricting religious rituals in official governmental institutions including schools, others tend to interpret it as having freedom of expression, speech, and religion. The most important consequence of the reform was to close the middle section of Imam Hatip schools where students were given religious information besides normal curriculum followed in State schools. While some groups, who identified themselves as secularists, insisted on separation of religion from education, other groups were claiming that giving religious information would not harm the secular state.

Many people in Turkey still think that the reform was the product of military decision instead of a decision made by the congress that should be in a democratic country. A well-known journalist and political analyst, Sahin Alpay, wrote in a newspaper just after the day that the parliament passed the law:
“It is a good news that Turkey has increased the duration of compulsory education from 5 years to 8 years. It would not be logical to keep the old way of schooling in a developing world in which education is thought as the most important investment in human life. However, the problem is that we do not know why the congress did not use its own willpower to pass the law but directed by military commands. Is it because the congress is incapable of proposing and passing such a law with its own decision without feeling pressure of any other institutions? This reform not only allowed closing the middle section of Imam Hatip Schools but also the same divisions of foreign schools that were important for foreign language education. The most important reform initiative of the history of the Turkish Republic has many unanswered questions in our minds.” (Milliyet, 1997)

A faculty member in Afyon Kocatepe University says that the reason that the most important reform initiative in the history of Turkish Republic is a failure is that the aim of the people who passed this law in 1997 was to increase their number of representatives in the parliament by giving an impression to the society that they are trying to increase the quality of education instead of doing it sincerely just for the sake of quality. However, she says, they saw that closing the middle section of Imam Hatip Schools did not result in more representatives in the parliament but did result in decline of the power of those political parties after the next elections. She concludes that the right people who are sincere in establishing educational goals for the whole nation should perform the reform (Atikan, 2000).

The resistance to the 8-year continuous compulsory education reform was so intense that different groups were accusing each other of being traitor. The press report of the Welfare
Party clearly tells us the level of anger towards the supporters of the reform: “People who were religious and tied strongly with religious rules founded this country. An education system that intends to create hindrances for religious people cannot be implemented in this country.” They all proposed to have 8 year compulsory education but the difference was that while one group was defending the education to be continuous so that there would not be school change during the primary education years, others claimed that a 5+3 model would be the best one for the country. A survey conducted in 1997 by ARGEDA indicated that 78.8% of the people who participated in the survey supported the idea that compulsory education should be 5+3 instead of uninterrupted 8-years period.

We should not deny the fact that there are positive effects of the reform on Turkish education system. In order to analyze the consequences of the reform, we should know what the goals were. We can summarize the goals of the 8-year continuous compulsory education under eight main categories. Those are:

- Increase the rate of attendance to schools in eight-year primary education from 86% to 100%,
- Increase the rate of attendance in pre-school education from 7% to 16%,
- Create additional capacity at schools (additional capacity for 3.5 million pupils)
- Reduce the numbers present in classrooms to 30,
- Abolish dual education in time,
- Teach at least one foreign language to each pupil,
- Generalize usage of computer technologies in education (Establishing computer labs in every primary education schools)
• Improving the conditions of all schools in rural areas (35,000 schools).

• *Increase the rate of attendance to schools in eight-year primary education from 86% to 100%.*

Schooling rate in primary education in Turkey has steadily increased after the 8-year continuous compulsory education reform. Statistics on primary education (Table 1) shows that even though there was a decline in schooling rate between the years 2001-2006, it started to increase again to 90% in 2006-2007, 97.37% in 2007-2008, and a slight decline in 2008-2009, 96.49%. We see from the table that although there is an increase in the overall schooling rate, male schooling rate has declined 2.41% compared to the 2000-2001 education year. However, it is a good indicator that female schooling rate has increased 5%. One of the reasons of this increase can be thought a project executed with the cooperation of Ministry of National Education and UICEF called “Girls to School Now Campaign.” The goal of this project is to assure 100% attendance of girls at ages of primary education period (ages of 6-14) and to bring in the pupils excluded from the education system, abandoning the school or in discontinuity to the primary education (Eurydice, 2009.)

• *Increase the rate of attendance in pre-school education from 7% to 16%.*

We see that primary education is not the only concern of the 8-year compulsory education reform. Beginning from 2008-2009, the government started to include pre-primary education in compulsory education program in thirty pilot provinces. It is among the goals of
the government to make pre-primary education compulsory in the next two to three years. The current Ministry of Education, Nimet Cubukcu, says:

“Our government, especially the prime minister, wants to make it compulsory to attend pre-primary schools. During our government, the enrollment rate in pre-primary education has increased from 11% to 30%. By implementing the pilot project in 30 provinces, we intend to increase the compulsory education period from 8 year to 9 year.”

Looking at the Table 1, we see that the goal of increasing attendance rate in pre-primary education in Turkey has been reached after six years of implementing 8-year continuous compulsory education policy reform.

Table 1: Statistics on Pre-Primary and Primary Education

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Source: Organization of the Education system in Turkey: 2008-2009, European Commission
• Create additional capacity at schools, Abolish dual education in time and Reduce the numbers present in classrooms to 30

Decreasing the number of students per classroom was among the goals that were intended to be achieved by 2000. However, when we look at Chart 1, we see that in 2000, the class size in Turkey was still above 30. If we should define success according to the results in 2000, we can say that the goal of creating additional capacity at schools to reduce class size was not achieved. But if we look at 2007, we see that the average class size is 27. Smaller classes are often perceived as allowing teachers to focus more on the needs of individual students and reducing the amount of class time they spend dealing with disruptions. Smaller class sizes may also influence parents when they choose schools for their children. In this respect, class size may be viewed as an indicator of the quality of the school system (OECD, 2009.) In many parts of the country, due to lack of school buildings and teachers, some students go to schools from morning to noon and some from noon to evening. If we compare the ratio of students to teaching staff in Turkey to the other OECD countries, we will see the big difference. The OECD average of ratio of students to teaching staff in primary education is 16 students per teacher, whereas it is 23 in Turkey (OECD, 2009).

• Teach at least one foreign language to each pupil, Generalize usage of computer technologies in education (Establishing computer labs in every primary education schools) and Improving the conditions of all schools in rural areas (35,000 schools).

It is unlikely that each student in primary education institutions learns at least one foreign language. We do not have enough data on teaching of foreign language in Turkey but
it is clear that the governments are paying more attention on language teaching now. The number of English Language teachers who have been recruited in 2008 is an indicator that shows the importance of foreign language teaching. In 2008, 28,000 teachers have been recruited in total and among them, the number of English Language teachers is the highest one, 1,500.

Figure 1: Average class size in primary education (2000, 2007)

Public institutions only.

Source: OECD. 2007 data: Table D2.1. 2000 data: Table D2.5, available on line.

Usage of computer technologies in education is more common than it was 10 years ago. However, there is still not enough number of computers for each student in primary education institutions. Chart 2 shows that there is an enormous difference among the European Union and candidate countries. Turkey has less than 10% of students in schools with high proportion of computers, while the UK or Norway have more than 90%. Each
school in Turkey may have Internet access by 2005, as told by the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. However, having Internet access does not necessarily mean that each child has equal opportunity in using computers with Internet access. As the Prime Minster told, all the schools in Turkey now have access to Internet. This is an important improvement in Turkish education system but comparing it to other European Countries, it is clear that Turkey needs to have do more in order to reach desired level of generalizing the use of computers in schools.

Regional Boarding Primary Schools (YIBO) are part of primary education system in Turkey in order to meet the needs of students who do not have enough opportunities in their own villages to attend schools. Primary education facilities are provided to the children living in rural areas by means of YIBO practices. In accordance with 16th and 22nd article of Regulation for Primary Education Institutions (İlköğretim Kurumları yönetmeliği), students who placed in YIBO (Regional Boarding Primary Schools) are determined. The students living in the place where transportation to schools is not economical and transportation conditions are not practicable primarily are placed to these schools and then if these are not possible, they are taken into the scope of transportation.

In the selection of the school and areas where students will be taken into transportation scope, it is important that there is no school in settlement place, school building is damaged by natural disaster or any other reason, there are less then 10 students from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades, and there is not enough classrooms for 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades (Eurydice, 2009). In the frame of this practice, in 80 provinces, 68,6317 students from 34,590 settlements
to 5,859 central schools, have been transported daily in 2008-2009 education year (MEB 2009 Budget Report).

Figure 2: Share of students in schools with high proportion of computers per student (more than 16 computers per 100 students %)

The Regional Boarding Primary Schools have been improved in the last 10 years. In 2007, a teacher from one of those schools in the city of Van says:

“I came here 7 years ago. Right now, there are 1100 students in this school coming from the rural areas around the city. It would not be fair to say that these schools are not doing well. If I compare the condition of my own school to the year 2000, I see great improvements. When I first came here, there was not any single English Language teacher and school guidance. Now, we have school guidance and language teachers in this school and the students can compete with the other students in normal primary schools.” (Gulmez, 2006)
However, there are several important drawbacks of Regional Boarding Primary Schools. Another teacher talked to Aksiyon, a monthly magazine, about the conditions of those schools.

“The most important problem of these schools is infrastructural. Right now, we have just 6 restrooms for 300 students in our school. Teachers have housing problems. Some families leave their children here at the age of 7 and never come back to see them. The students of 7-15 age are all in the same building. That is an important problem because they are fighting usually that makes it difficult for teachers to have discipline.” (Gulmez, 2006)

Conclusion

The 8-year continuous compulsory education policy reform undoubtedly was the most important reform in the history of Turkish education of the last 80 years. One cannot deny the fact that there are important improvements in education in Turkey after implementing the reform. However, it is the nature of this kind of policies to have limitations and/or negative unintended consequences. This short analysis of the policy reform shows that while several goals of the reform have been achieved, findings for some other goals still show that there is no improvement towards achieving them. Mobile education is implemented in far rural places because of lack of teachers and classrooms and because of inadequate infrastructure and school buildings. However, even though the conditions of Regional Boarding Primary Schools have been improved compared to 1997, there are still problems of those institutions (teacher
housing, school building conditions, etc.) that need to be addressed. One of the most important problems in Turkish education is that the size of classes is so big that it is difficult especially for teachers to deal with each student’s problems. Compared to 2000, class size in Turkey has decreased but it is still over 25 that puts it in 5th place among OECD countries in class size. Data on foreign language teaching is not enough to make a judgment about the quality of language teaching but looking at the policies that the government follows, we see that there is an effort to increase foreign language capacity of primary schools. It is an indicator of improvement that foreign language courses are among the compulsory classes that each student should take beginning from 4th grade.

In order to have successful implementation of this policy reform, I strongly believe that local people, especially teachers and parents, should be involved in the process in order to feel themselves as a part of the school system. Educational change is not simply a technical-rational process that teachers adopt as a result of orders coming from the top. According to Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), “educational change is technically simple and socially complex” (p.65). They claim that educational change is a process that requires commitment of individuals by actively constructing their own meaning for the change. ‘Real’ change occurs when the meaning of change is shared by the individuals included in the process and as a result cultural transformation takes place (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). We cannot say that Turkish people actively participated in the 8-year continuous compulsory education reform that I think made the process difficult to get positive results earlier.

Infrastructural problems are still waiting for permanent solutions. A research study conducted in the capital city, Ankara, found that the physical infrastructure of schools is not
appropria 8 year compulsory education. Another finding of the same research showed that the sports ground is not appropriate at the age group of 6-14 (Suzen, 2004). The report by the Ministry of Education also shows that the capacity of the school buildings cannot meet the demand of 8 year compulsory education (MEB, 1998). After the first year of the reform, there has been 30% growth in the 6th grade enrollment rate that resulted in more crowded classrooms. The number of schools is not adequate when compared to the number of children of school age but there have been significant improvements in this area. Between 2000 and 2007, average class size in primary education did not vary significantly however, class size decreased in Turkey in 2007 compared to 2000. The OECD report shows that class size decreased from 32 to 27 in 2007 (OECD, 2009). All these findings tell us that there are significant improvements in Turkish education system but the reform is not implemented effectively or it does not meet the needs of the country.

CHAPTER 2

Federal Government and Education in the US: 1958-1975

Education system in the United States experienced important changes beginning from the second half of nineteenth century. One cannot understand clearly the involvement of federal government in education without looking at the education system in America before 1950s. At the end of nineteenth century, as Ravitch (2000) says, there was no American educational “system”. There were thousands of district schools, hundreds of colleges and universities, and scores of normal schools that trained teachers but the federal bureau of education had no power or control over the local schools. The only goal of the federal bureau of education was to collect data about the condition of and progress of education. Education
was directed by local businessmen, civic leaders, and parents that show us the degree of local control in education. Not only federal government had no control on education, but also state education agencies were weak, small, and insignificant. They had little or no power over local school districts.

The Sputnik crisis is usually considered as the reason of involvement of federal government in education but it actually began long before 1940 (Kaestle C. F. & Smith, 1982). In one sense, it is a continuation of the debate between advocates and opponents of state involvement in local education during 1850s and 1860s. The idea behind having central control over educational institutions was that government could provide upgraded quality and equalized funding and opportunity.

Kaestle and Smith (1982) talk about an important point and say that the coincidence of wars and federal intervention in education is striking. The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 is a product of the Cold War during that time. On the other hand, another important reform, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 is the result of the war on poverty.

**National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958**

National defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 is known as the first major federal effort to fund the traditionally local operations of elementary and secondary education (Gamson, 2007). Even though Sputnik is usually thought as the main reason of NDEA, there were several other reasons that should be considered essential during that time. James Conant’s reform proposals and *Life* magazine’s series that criticized the education system
were among those reasons. The space war between Soviet Union and the United States resulted in more emphasis on science in the United States. The major impact of NDEA was in the subject areas of science, mathematics, and foreign languages (Kaestle & Smith, 1982). Besides that, guidance and counseling were the other two primary policy targets of the law in Title V of NDEA (Gamson, 2007).

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965**

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was part of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s war on poverty. President Johnson is known as a former teacher who witnessed poverty’s impact on his students. He believed that equal access to education was important to a child’s ability to lead a productive life. ESEA of 1965 contained only five titles but later revisions added new titles and programs including Bilingual Education Act of 1968, and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. It eventually enlarged its scope to thirteen titles and over 100 programs (Keastle & Smith, 1982).

Other important federal acts were Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964, Affirmative action plan, and Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Title VI of Civil Rights Act of 1964 empowered federal officials to withdraw funds from any program violating antidiscrimination laws and regulations. The federal government became a significant factor in setting rules for the nation’s schools, colleges, and universities by using cutoff of federal funds as a weapon (Ravitch, 1983). Affirmative action was another effort of federal government to take role in education. Especially universities were the institutions that this policy affected. The universities that had contract with government were required to prepare a “written affirmative
action compliance program”. Unwilling to risk federal grants, universities usually complied, but individual professors criticized the affirmative action and its goals (Ravitch, 1983). This policy was mainly for equal opportunity of employment in universities regardless of race and gender. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 required every recipient of federal funds to provide full access to the handicapped, without discrimination.

**The Impact of Federal Programs on Education**

The role of federal government has changed particularly since the mid-1950s from episodic and exhortatory involvement in education to continual activities (Keastle & Smith, 1982). The two important federal programs, NDEA of 1958 and ESEA of 1965, aimed at identifying gifted and talented students and concentrating on scientific knowledge and raising basic skill levels of poor children. Certain accomplishments can be seen as a result of implementing those programs but there were also strict critics of them. One of the criticisms was on the potential impact of NDEA on curriculum. Many educators expressed their concern that the legislation offered little or no aid to basic reading training or to programs in social studies, literature, or arts (Kaestle & Smith, 1982).

The basic method of both NDEA and ESEA to reach their goals was to spend more money on education. However, studies showed that many educational problems cannot be solved by just increasing the amount of money spent in schools. After the large social science surveys (such as the one by James Coleman) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it is difficult to believe that, important as adequate finances are, by itself a massive infusion of cash will solve the schools’ problems (Oakes, 1985).
The issue of equal education opportunity was among the priorities of “administrative progressives”. They defended NDEA because they usually claimed that students should be taught and given courses according to their abilities. For administrative progressives and their supporters, equal opportunity required programs equal to the ability of the pupils (Gamson, 2007). NDEA says;

A program for testing students in the public secondary schools…to identify students with outstanding aptitudes and ability… to advise students of courses of study best suited to their ability, aptitudes, and skills (National Defense Education Act of 1958).

The language of this act reminds us the administrative progressives because grouping students according to their abilities are among the goals of administrative progressives. One of the clear indicators of federal government’s being involved in education is the Title V of NDEA that required states to submit their secondary schools testing plans to the US office of education in return for federal funding. By doing that, federal government started to take an active role in education.

We can say that NDEA reinforced the idea of ‘tracking’ in public schools. There were several assumptions behind it.

The first is the notion that students learn better when they are grouped with other students who are considered to be like them academically… Another assumption is that slower students develop more positive attitudes about themselves and school when they are not placed in groups with others who are far more capable… A third assumption is that the placement processes used to separate students into groups both
accurately and fairly reflect past achievements and native abilities…. A fourth assumption is that it is easier for teachers to accommodate individual differences in homogeneous groups or that, in general, groups of similar students are easier to teach and manage (Oakes, 1985).

A considerable amount of work shows that no group of students has been found to benefit consistently from being in a homogeneous group. All those results show that we can be confident that bright students are not held back when they are in mixed classroom (Oakes, 1985).

Conclusion

When we think NDEA and ESEA together, it seems as if there is an irony in ways that government pursued for educational excellence in the whole country. While the target population of NDEA was gifted and talented students, the students that ESEA aimed to benefit were students coming from low-income families, the ones whose daily language was not English, and the handicapped students. Looking from this perspective, what NDEA did was forestalling any significant development of reforms aimed at improving education for all students (Gamson, 2007).

One of the titles added to ESEA of 1965 was the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. Bilingual education act did not require any district to offer bilingual programs. It provided money for what were supposed to be demonstration programs initiated by local districts (Ravitch, 1983). In 1970, the Office of Civil Rights decided that discrimination against
children who were deficient in English language skills violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act which says:

“No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origins, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance”

However, we see from a report prepared by American Institute for Research in 1975 that bilingual education was neither a success nor a failure (Ravitch, 1983). The research showed that there is no difference between students receiving bilingual education and the students in English curriculum classes. Another important point is that there was no evidence to support the first and main goal of Bilingual Education Act.

“Bilingual Education Act was originally advocated as a way to reverse low educational achievement and high dropout rates and to increase self-esteem among Hispanic and other non-English speaking minorities. Real as the problems were, there was no evidence to demonstrate that they were caused by the absence of bilingual education.” (Ravitch, 1983)

It is unquestionable that many federal initiatives increased the level of equality in the U.S. education system by giving certain rights to disadvantages students. However, it requires a quantitative analysis of the outcomes of the federal laws to say that quality of education also increased.

As it is seen from the two chapters above analyzing the change process in the two different countries, politics and academic concerns often generate changes in the education
system and within educational institutions. In the situation of Turkey, the change was considered mostly political and the process was not easy to adopt due to tension between society and the reformers. However, in today’s Turkey, a new educational reform is on its way. The new plan that the Ministry of Education is working on is 13-years of continuous education. However, it seems that the process for this new initiative will be different from the previous 8-year plan because the concern now is on educational quality instead of ideological approaches. However, as we see through the comparative case of the U.S., there is a certain influence exerted by the federal government and the states on educational reforms in both countries. Regardless of the degree of decentralized education system, federal governments will have some sort of influence on education and educational institutions. It shows that whether an education system is highly decentralized, as in the case of the U.S., or highly centralized, as in Turkey, the influence of governments seems to be always there for some reasons that need to be researched in more depth.
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