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### The Privatization of Education in Turkey from the 2000s: Between Educational Policies and Strategies of Local Actors

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## The Privatization of Education in Turkey from the 2000s: Between Educational Policies and Strategies of Local Actors

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### ABSTRACT

The privatization of education has become a global trend where many countries started to adopt this practice. That situation is also the case for Turkey, where over the past 20 years' private schools increased sharply at all levels of education. This article aims to understand the main reasons for the development of private schools in Turkey from the 2000s. This study, conducted when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, has been devoted to the Covid-19 impact on private schools. This section aims to give a general overview of this impact and to perceive if this trend toward the privatization of education is going to be strongly broken. This study has a basis on an analysis of various scientific articles published in various academic journals, a review of critical studies on educational policies and educational sciences, international journal of educational development, dealing with the themes of privatization, privatization in education, and other subjects that have a direct and indirect relationship with our central theme. In addition, due to a lack of research in this area, to establish the general situation regarding the impact of Covid-19 on private schools, a small quantitative survey of an association of private schools was carried out. According to the result of the study, the first private schools in Turkey have a historical foundation. However, the increase in the number of private schools over the past 20 years explains three main factors: (1) State policy and the incentives from international organizations; (2) Increase in the middle class and change in parental choice; (3) Difficulty in providing quality public education. Regarding the impact of the pandemic, the private schools most affected are said to be boutique schools because of the online education that imposed during this period. Regarding the impact of the pandemic, the most affected private schools would be the so-called "boutique schools" types because of the distance education that imposed during this period.

**Keywords:** Privatization, education system, Turkey, policies, organization international, quality, private schools, family



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## Introduction

Privatization has become a global trend, practiced in many countries, and this is in all sectors of activity. Privatization, which refers to “the transfer of activities, assets, and responsibilities from government/public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies” (Belfield & Levin, 2002, p. 19), is seen by many governments as a strategic solution, particularly to financing problems.

This practice does not spare the education sector. Indeed, as Belfield and Levin (2003) point out that “in many developing countries, the privatization of education has indeed brought about an increase in the share of private financing, sometimes at the basic education level” (p.11).

We see two distinct concepts; one is "privatization in education," and the other is "privatization of education." The first means privatization of an "endogenous" nature, which “involves the importing of ideas, techniques, and practices from the private sector in order to make the public sector more like business and more business-like» (Ball & Youdell, 2007, p.8). On the other hand, the second explains a privatization of an "exogenous" nature which “involves the opening up of public education services to private sector participation on a for-profit basis and using the private sector to design, manage or deliver aspects of public education” (Ball & Youdell, 2007, p.9).

However, the issue of privatization of/in education should be seen in a broader sense. Indeed, it engages a whole debate around several notions, such as the role and function of states and private and social actors in the education system. Moreover, it also raises questions about the public or private good, for example, whether education should be a public good or a private good. The practice of privatization in education brings changes in roles and responsibilities, which lead to a reshaping of education governance.

In addition, the privatization of education procreates value changes in the system. For many authors, the privatization of education leans towards more economic values, seen as a commercialization of education. Indeed, as also indicated by Altinok and Lakhali (2005), there is “a disembodiment of the educational sphere, passing from the social sphere to the strictly economic sphere” (p. 189). This situation is seen by many as an obstacle to the right to education and equality.

In this context, Locatelli (2018) stated "the need to recreate a space for democratic participation." Thus, Daviet (2016) proposes a new notion which is the "common good" as a "response to the challenges posed by the evolution of the global context and the transformations of the educational and intellectual landscape," in order to adopt "a humanist and holistic education." (p.2) Because the "principle of education as a public good [...] does not take into account the social, cultural and ethical dimensions of education" (p.8). This study aims to understand the main reasons for the development of private schools in Turkey during the last 20 years. Various socio-economic, political, and global factors can be discerned as an outcome of this phenomenon. This research will also help to understand the complex role of the state in the education system and the involvement of various actors in education, especially private actors. Moreover, it can shed light on the broad debate in the field of the privatization of education.

In this study, we will first outline the study's methodology and then explain the results by grouping under six themes in which we will enumerate the main factors that the research has defined as the reasons for the expansion of private schools. Moreover, with the current situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has hit everyone, we have tried to understand in general the impact that has caused in private schools.

## Methodology

The objective of this study is to identify the different factors that are the main causes of the increase of private schools during the last 20 years in Turkey. In addition, since this study was carried out at the time of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, a small quantitative survey was carried out in order to give a general overview of the impact of Covid-19 and to perceive whether this trend towards privatization of education is going to be severely broken.

**Table 1.** Number of selected publications by years

Publications	Number	Year
Turkish	53	1989-2020
French	23	1999-2019
English	9	2001-2016

The study includes an analysis of various scientific articles and books published in various academic journals, journals of critical studies on educational policies, and educational sciences, international journal of educational development, dealing with the themes of privatization, liberalization, privatization in education, and other topics that are directly and indirectly related to our central theme. Many of these articles take the context of Turkey and, others have a more general approach.

Approximately we used 85 articles for this literature review. The main findings from the analysis of these articles have been organized coherently under six significant themes.

Approximately 85 articles from different studies; qualitative, longitudinal, prospective, were studied for this literature review. The main findings from the analysis of these articles have been organized coherently under six meaningful themes.

**Table 2.** Researching articles process

Languages for the article	Key Word	Search Engines
Turkish	Eğitim sistemi, özelleştirme, eğitimde özelleştirme, eğitim politikaları, özel okullar, eğitimde kalite, uluslararası kuruluşlar	Google, Google Scholar, ResearchGate
French	la privatisation de l'éducation, la mondialisation de l'éducation, les politiques éducatives, la qualité de l'éducation, les écoles privées, des organisations internationales	Google, Google Scholar, ResearchGate, Institute of Education Sciences (Eric),
English	Privatization in education, liberalization, organization international, education policy, types of privatizations, private schools	

**Table 3. Inclusion and Exclusion criteria**

Inclusion criteria	Peer reviewed articles from 1989-2020
	English, French and Turkish language
	Focus on the privatization in education globally
	Focus on the privatization in education in Turkey
	Review literature methods
	Data on the private schools in Turkey
	Quantitative methodology
Exclusion criteria	Not original Data
	Privatization in higher education
	Focus of study does not answer research question

### ***Collect general information regarding the impact of the Covid-19***

For lack of research and data in this area, to provide a general overview of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on private schools, we have carried out a small quantitative online questionnaire developed on Google Form and consisted of 4 questions. The link of the questionnaire was sent to an association of private schools, and we received 66 responses in return. 78.8% of respondents were teachers, and 24.2% were administrators in the private school. The purpose of this survey is to collect general information to perceive the impact of Covid-19 in private educational institutions. Thorough research on this topic is not intended as part of this study.

## **Results**

### ***Studies on the history of private and public education***

The history of private schools in Turkey dates back to the 1850s, before creating the Turkish Republic. At that time, private schools governed by the law of 1856 known as "Islahat Fermanı" in the period of Tanzimat (Küçükçayır & Cemaloğlu, 2017) that refers to the era of reforms in the Ottoman Empire between 1839 and 1876, were intended for minorities and foreigners living in the country. Cultural and religious reasons have been an essential factor in the establishment of these private schools. According to Uygun (2003), the latter has made an important contribution to innovation and improvement of the quality of Turkish education. Moreover, it is thanks to these schools that Turkish private education initially developed. In addition, wealthy families at the time provided their children with private lessons. Therefore, little by little, the need for private schools emerged in Turkey.

The Ministry of Education was established in 1857 during the last years of the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, its objective was to maintain control over public and private education services so that they did not inculcate values contrary to the national interest and, on the other hand, to ensure that the education was carefully and thoughtfully. In 1876, freedom of education was introduced under the called "Kanun-i Esasi" law. Under this law, private schools were free to operate their activities, but the state ensures its supervision (Uygun, 2003).

It is interesting to note that the first Turkish private school named "Galatasaray Sultanisi" (Galatasaray High School) opens with state support in 1868 (Küçükçayır & Cemaloğlu, 2017); this was due to the new demand for quality education, as public schools could not meet this demand (Şimşek, 2014). As a result, wealthy families preferred foreign private schools for the education of their children.

Also, it is interesting to observe that the emergence of private schools in Turkey corresponds to a period of political instability and the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, there was a strong political

will to modernize Turkey through education with Western-style institutions. Thus, opening up to European-style education was supposed to improve the quality of education and modernize Turkey.

After creating the Republic, the first and most crucial period concerning private schools was in the 1980s. Indeed, from this date, the Turkish government established laws on private education such as Laws 1739 and 222, articles 27 and 42. These rules came due to the Constitution of 1982, and the opening and establishment of private schools were authorized. However, following point 42 of the 1982 Constitution, primary education in Turkey has been defined as a public right from which every child should benefit free of charge (Bakioğlu & Sarıkaya, 2015).

The second significant period goes back to the late 1990s and early 2000s marked by economic liberalization. In 1999, the coalition government of three political parties amended the 47th article of the constitution to adopt a privatization approach in the 1982 constitution (Angın & Bedirhanoglu, 2013). Subsequently, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) continued this pro-privatization trend, and in 2001 the privatization program in Turkey accelerated (Zaifer, 2015). Indeed, it is only from 2001 onwards that we gradually noticed the opening of private schools throughout Turkey. The rapid economic growth that the country experienced in 2004 affected the rise of the middle class, which consequently increased the demand for private schools.

### ***Development and growth of private schools***

Private schools have grown in size and mainly from 2010, with the number of private schools multiplying in all levels of education. Indeed, the number of private schools in Turkey has increased 27 times in 31 years. The table below illustrates this increase from 2010 to 2017. At the primary level, the number of private schools was 26 in 1980; this number increased by about 34 times to reach 898 in 2010. At the same time, the number of students enrolled in private schools has also increased. Between 2010 and 2017, the number of students enrolled in private elementary schools increased from 267,294 to 501,111 (Baryam, 2018).

**Table 4.** Number of private schools in Turkey

School years	Primary and secondary school		Technical and vocational school
2010/2011	898		24
2011/2012	931		45
2012/2013	992	904	126
2013/2014	1071	972	426
2014/2015	1205	1111	429
2015/2016	1389	1555	419
2016/2017	1274	1414	368
2018/2019	1808	2060	413

Source: MEB statistics (2017/2018 and 2018/2019)

The number of private schools and the number of students enrolled in them continue to overgrow at all levels of education. Moreover, the latest statistics from the Turkish Ministry of Education for 2018-2019 confirm this situation (National Education Statistics, Formal Education 2018/19). Indeed, in the school year 2018-2019 the total number of private schools is 12,809 and the number of students studying in private schools is 1,440,577 for all school levels (p.41).



The table below shows the latest figures for private schools for the 2019-2020 school period. The total number of private schools is 13 870, and the number of students studying in private schools is 1 468 198. As a percentage of the total private schools is 20.2%, and the number of students enrolled is 8.8 %.

**Table 5.** Figures of private schools for the 2019-2020 school period

Level of Education	School/ Institution	Number of students
Total of Private Education Institutions (Formal Education)	13 870	1 468 198
Pre-Primary Education	5 655	289 213
Primary School	1982	274 018
Lower Secondary School	2351	347 495
Upper Secondary School	3882	557 472
General Secondary Education	3 481	448 554
Vocational and Technical Secondary Education	401	108 918

*National Education Statistics, Formal Education 2019/20*

### ***Types of school in Turkey***

In the country, the different types of private school can be categorized into four groups as follows: Turkish private schools, minority private schools (schools founded by the Greek, Armenian and Jewish minorities under the Lausanne Convention), foreign private schools (schools founded by American, German, French and Italian citizens) and international schools only for international students (Dağ, 2015). These educational institutions are directed and managed by private groups or individuals from Turkey or abroad. and they can be either non-profit foundations or profit-oriented companies.

Among Turkish private schools, we notice different characteristics: those that offer the possibility of learning foreign languages, those with a religious tendency, those that give more opportunities for social, cultural, and sports activities, and finally, those that offer modern infrastructures with technological equipment amongst others (Açıklan, 1989).

The public sector also offers different schools at the secondary and high schools levels, such as Anatolian high schools, science high schools, and social science schools (Ugyun, 2003). There are also religious secondary schools called "Imam Hatip", which are essential to the educational system. These high schools are based on Islamic education, and some parents prefer these schools to give their children an Islamic education. On the other hand, the public sector does not offer any divergence within its schools at the primary level.

In the Ministry of Education, there is currently a department called the Directorate of Private Educational Institutions (Özel Öğretim Kurumları Genel Müdürlüğü) which is responsible for monitoring and controlling private institutions (Tunç, 2006). The latter are obliged to follow the curriculum dictated by the Ministry of Education. Within this framework, there are exceptions for minority and international private schools. However, according to article 6 of the Private Education Law number 5580, schools can adopt different curricula provided they obtain the approval of the Ministry (Ilgar, 2014). Thus, Turkish private schools do not have much freedom concerning to the official curriculum.

### ***Forms of privatization in education***

Bellei states that "educational privatization is not a single policy but a family of policies" (as cited in Chevaillier & Pons, 2019, p. 32). We note that in Turkey, there are several forms of privatization implemented in education. Indeed, various forms of privatization are stated by different authors such as Pedro et al. (2015), Akman (2017), Adamson and Galloway (2019), Ball and Youdell (2007), Verger and Moschetti (2016), and Belfield and Levin (2003). Here, we will just mention the most practiced forms in the Turkish educational system.

Pedro et al. (2015) discuss three modes of privatization: the outsourcing of certain public services, the introduction of market-based or other self-regulatory instruments of governance, and the provision of schooling by private organizations.

The outsourcing and provision of schooling by private organizations are among the most common forms of privatization in the country. For example, in the former case cleaning services, canteens, and transportation of students are contracted out. The private sector provides transportation from school to home for students living far from school, and parents pay the cost of such transportation.

In addition, the goal of increasing the share of private education is included in the 2015-2019 strategic plan of the Ministry of National Education and the 65th government program (governed by the Justice and Development Party AKP). It states that "the share of the private sector in all levels of education will be increased" (Akman, 2017). As a result, several incentives have been given directly or indirectly to private institutions in various forms such as allocating public land to private companies, tax exemption, interest subsidies and vouchers.

As in most national contexts, in Turkey also, the dynamics of education privatization are pretty complex. Several actors such as families, various associations in education, trade unions, private school associations, teachers, universities, and others play an essential role in this educational context. Moreover, with the development of education privatization, private actors are beginning to have significant involvement in several aspects of education, for example in elaborating policies. Indeed, as Bolay pointed out, private educational institutions will be required to put in place policies in the areas of curriculum development, educational management, supervision, and evaluation (as cited in Kulaksızoğlu et al., 1999). Therefore, privatization leads to a decrease in government responsibility (Bayram, 2018). Thus the private sector assumes the role of responding to parents' demands by offering various educational institutions, such as foreign language, social activities, providing modern and technological equipment with new teaching practices.

### ***The stakes of privatization***

After the closure of complementary education centers in 2015, the school market in Turkey has gained new space. Indeed, "the Turkish government has abolished the complementary education centers by transforming them into private schools" (Gariþaþaođlu, 2016). These centers were private establishments that prepared students for the national university entrance examination at the end of the secondary year. On the one hand, this fact has affected parents' choices and, on the other hand, the increase in private schools (Altun Aslan, 2019).

Moreover, on the one hand, the Turkish system encourages the private sector and, on the other hand, the need to increase the quality of public schools is also evident. Thus, there is a contradiction in the attitude of the state. Indeed, the state supports its competitors while at the same time needing to improve its public schools; this appears to be a paradox (Canerik, 2017). Hiz (2010) points out that the state allocates specific financial and material resources for private schools, while for public schools it provides an insufficient budget (Bakirođlu & Sarıkaya, 2015).

Therefore, the main reasons given by some authors as arguments in favor of privatizing education in Turkey are financial resources for the state, to provide freedom of choice for parents, and to increase the quality of education. On the other hand, however, the privatization of education is also seen, on the one hand, as an impact on the increase of social inequalities (Levin, 2001; Özdemir, 2011; Sayılan, 2006; Kalaycı, 2002) and, on the other hand, it creates the danger of the commodification and commercialization of education. Indeed, Rizvi (2016) indicates that "something has changed in the vocabulary of privatization: it now seems to be linked to a neoliberal doctrine in which educational reform conceives increasingly in market terms" (p.7).



Moreover, education is a fundamental human right, and international declarations such as those of Incheon in 2015 testify to this. With privatization, the conception of education is drifting towards economic values. According to Şahin (2002), by transferring education to the private sector, education becomes a privilege for a minority who has money, creating a two-tier system, contrary to the principles of populism of the republic and human rights.

### ***Main factors explaining the expansion of private schools***

We observe three main factors that explain the growth of private schools in Turkey. We can classify these factors at two levels: the macro- level and the micro- level (Murpy, 1996, as cited in Akman, 2017). The first level is more related to economic and global causes, including the local and international economic context, the incentives of international organizations, and state policy. The second level, the micro- level, is more related to causes comprising parental choice and the quality of education.

### ***State policy and the incentives from international organizations***

In Turkey, education policies are mainly guided by the Five-Year Development Plans prepared by the State Planning Organization (Asri, 2015). Various international and national actors also play an essential role in changing these policies (Asri, 2015).

The economic and social context is still evolving with globalization and market liberalization. "Indeed, as Polat (2013), Yarnardağ, and Süslü (2002) point out, the influence of the dominance of economic markets by neoliberalism also has an impact on the Turkish education system.

In addition, international organizations have played and continue to play a considerable role in spreading privatization by influencing countries' educational policies. Indeed, international organizations, in particular the World Bank, the WTO, and the IMF, have played and continue to play a considerable role in spreading privatization by influencing countries' education policies.

According to Özdemir and Beltekin (2012), this is also the case for Turkey. They point out that particularly in the last 30 years, the IMF and the World Bank have played directly or indirectly an important role in the changes in education in Turkey through conditional credits paid to education projects. Indeed, "over the last three decades, the policies of the IMF and the World Bank have had a significant impact on the transformation of education" (p.52).

Turkey has started to receive conditional credits from the World Bank for the education sector since 1971 through various projects such as the "Education Project" in 1971, the "National Education Development Project" in 1990, the "Basic Education Project" in 1998, and the "Basic Education Project II" in 2002. These projects had two main objectives, one is visible in the agreements, was to improve the quality of education by improving subjects such as school buildings, teaching materials and teacher training. The second objective less visible in the agreements, hidden between the lines, was to "decentralize education, especially the financial autonomy and independence of schools, and, in the words of the Bank, to disseminate "educational management". (Özdemir & Beltekin, 2012) This concept, which appeared in 1970, brought with it a set of methods, ideals and concepts from the private sector" (Ball & Youdell, 2007, p. 21). Thus, Ball and Youdell (2007) tell us about a trend towards privatization of the education sector hidden by a language camouflaged with the term "educational reform" or "modernization."

In addition, Akkari and Payet (2010), Mazières (2012), and Santiago (2012) emphasize the globalization or homogenization of education through the actions of international organizations.

Furthermore, the economic situation of the country may lead to a tendency towards privatization. As mentioned by Bakiroğlu and Sarıkaya (2015) regarding the problem of financing education to reduce public spending on education, the government is moving towards privatization of education.

In Turkey, the system is somewhat centralized and the government mainly carries out expenditure on education. Relating data from the Turkish Ministry of Education in 2016, the government finances 74.2% of spending in the education sector. Indeed, rising education costs, inefficient teaching staff, inefficient use of resources, rising external debt, and increasing public spending make it challenging to finance education (Güngör & Göksu, 2013). Some authors, such as Ölçüm (1992), believe that privatization is a solution to Turkey's educational problems, stating that "privatization should give importance and the state's obligation to finance education should be reduced" (p.8).

In addition, education was used to inculcate the ideology of the political parties that were in government to shape society (Akyeşilmen, 2015). On the one hand, the Turkish system encourages the private sector, and on the other hand, the need to increase the quality of public schools is evident. Thus, there is a contradiction in the attitude of the state. Indeed, the state supports its competitors while at the same time needing to improve its public schools, and this appears to be a paradox (Canerik, 2017). Hiz (2010) points out that the state allocates specific financial and material resources for private schools, while for public schools it grants an insufficient budget (Bakiroğlu & Sarıkaya, 2015).

#### *Increase in middle class and change in parental choice*

In Turkey, from the 1980s onwards, with the liberal reforms, "many households experienced a significant improvement in their income and a consequent change in their lifestyle" (Danis et al., 2019, p.3).

As a result, the families' demands for their children's education have changed considerably over the last few decades. "Private supply may be the only recourse in the face of rising demand for education" (Belfield & Levin, 2003, p.34). Indeed, this is also the case in Turkey. According to Uygun (2003), families send their children to private schools because evaluation is better than public schools.

Thus, the privatization of education also allows families to choose the education they want for their children (Yirci & Kocabaş, 2013). With privatization, schools can adapt more quickly and easily to the wishes and expectations of students and teachers more flexibly and more efficiently.

Teaching a foreign language is one of the main reasons parents choose a private school for their children (Açıkalin, 1989). Furthermore, research shows that parents who opt for a private school do so mainly to the possibilities offered by these schools in terms of sports and social facilities, and the success rate of their students in passing the university exam (Erdoğan, 2002).

In addition, the private school market offers a wide range of school choices in terms of both price and quality that meet the demands of various family profiles. Indeed, there are well-priced private schools that are affordable for many middle-income families and upscale schools for more affluent families. One of the most important criteria when choosing a school is the school environment. Indeed, the most important reasons for parents' preference are the adequacy of the social and physical facilities of the school, the safety of the school, full-time education, the proximity of the school to the home, the quality of the shuttle service, and the environment where the child feels happy (Nartgün & Kaya, 2016).

#### *Difficulty in providing quality public education and transfer of students to the private sector*

Governments in Turkey have always faced several problems in the field of education. In addition, the rapid increase in the number of students in Turkey (Çelik, 2015) further affects the quality of education. According to Eyüboğlu (2002), private schools offer better education. Privatization may therefore be a possible way for the state to increase the quality of education (Yirci & Kocabaş, 2013; Ak Küçükçayır & Cemaloğlu, 2017).

Bolay identifies three main reasons for the development of private schools; the inability of public schools to cope with population growth, the decline in the quality of public schools, and parental demand for better education. (as cited in Kulaksızoğlu et al., 1999).

As a result, the government faces a particular difficulty in providing quality education, faces many problems, such as overcrowded classrooms in many public schools. As a result, "private schools also help governments by reducing excessive class sizes in public schools" (Dağ, 2015, p.195). According to Çokgezen and Terzi (2008), the performance of teachers and students in public schools is lower than in private schools.

Moreover, school performance also appears to be an essential element in the quality of education (Lauwerier et al., 2013; Sayed, 1997; Bergmann, 1996; UNESCO, 2007; Adams, 1993). Indeed, the Turkish education system is based on test exams that students have to pass several times to be able to study in a good school as and have the right to enter university. Thus, academic performance measures the capacity to pass these exams. Çelik (2015) notes that in 2013, %25 of students did not answer a question correctly on the exam. Thus, this shows that students leave high school with gaps.

In addition, external factors outside the school in determining the quality of education 66% (Yıldırım, 2012). Family characteristics play a greater role in school performance than school characteristics (Bakioğlu & Sarıkaya, 2015).

### ***Overview Impact of Covid-19 on Private Schools***

With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 in Turkey, the education sector has also been affected. To deal with this pandemic, the government has decided to close schools by continuing distance education at all levels of education. All schools, including private schools, had to apply this regulation.

According to the survey, most people responded that private schools had been negatively affected due to the switch to distance education. Many parents have deregistered their children to place them in public schools. In addition, for the 2020-2021 school year, some private schools did not receive new registrations. Thus, 27% of respondents estimated that more than 2000 students have been transferred to public schools. 20% of respondents estimated that between 500 and 1000 high went into the public. The 29.2% estimated that less than 100 students passed in the audience. We do not have exact numbers on this but we see how many transfers have been.

In addition, 43.8% of respondents indicated that they had known 10 to 50 private schools that closed during the pandemic. On the other hand, 35.9% of respondents have known less than ten private schools which terminate their functions.

Respondents indicated that the private schools most affected were the small schools known as "boutique schools" because they encountered funding difficulties to pay the rents and salaries of their staff. On the other hand, we also have the people who participated in the survey who indicated that private schools were not affected in this period.

Finally, we can infer that the move to distance education affected private schools during the pandemic. Indeed, students in private schools were unable to use their school's infrastructure. In addition, parents had much more responsibility for teaching their children during this time at home. In addition, the Turkish National Ministry of Education established reasonably practical distance education system through different platforms such as TV, Digital Education Platform (EBA), which were accessible to all students without exception.

It seems that once the pandemic is over and students return to their classroom and school again, the growth trend of private schools will continue.

## Discussion

The privatization of education allows families to choose the education they want for their children. Nevertheless, this choice can be made only among private schools where wealthy families can access it. Thus, wealthy families have more of this choice opportunity than low-income families. Indeed, we cannot speak of freedom of choice for the latter because the public sector does not give this opportunity. In the public sector, parents must enroll their child in a school located in their neighborhood.

Furthermore, according to Sarier (2010), family income causes a problem regarding equal opportunities in education. In addition, inequality of access to quality education also arises. Ak Küçükçayır and Cemaloğlu (2017) advise investing in the quality of education to prevent income inequality from causing unequal access to quality education. According to Akman (2017) "in a sense, public education can seem like a variable producing poverty" (p.347).

But, on the other hand, children from less well-off families can access a private school through a scholarship. Indeed, private schools offer scholarships to students who score very high on the scholarship exam conducted by private schools. That can give students from low-income families the opportunity to study in a private school. However, these scholarship exams are open to all students regardless of their social level.

In addition, the Turkish government encourages privatization in education by implementing incentive systems. Indeed, the study voucher, which strongly encourages the private sector put into practice in 2014. The study voucher named in Turkish "eğitim teşviki" is a practice that consists of supporting some parents who have enrolled their child in a private school by granting them a small sum as a contribution to school fees. Parents who want to receive this financial support must first enroll their child in a private school of their choice and sign a payment agreement with the chosen school. Parents then apply for the study voucher through the school. The conditions for obtaining this voucher are not very clear. Low-income parents are said to have the opportunity to receive it. However, in practice, we observe that this is not the case. In addition, even if they obtained this voucher, many low-income families, will not be able to afford the rest of the private school fees because the sum of the voucher only covers a small part of the total cost registration sum.

On the other hand, many public schools do not receive enough budget to pay their daily expenses. Indeed, the leaders of public schools have a minimal budget to cover the costs of their school. Thus, they take the initiative to find financial resources such as collecting donations in different forms. Parents, therefore, feel obligated to contribute so that their child can have a learning environment with a minimum of educational tools in the classroom. Hoşgörür and Arslan (2014) underline this aspect well in their research carried out with public schools, indicating that "lacking sufficient resources they (school leaders) had to create additional resources to keep the school alive" (p 11). On the other hand, Akman (2017) points out that the registration fees and donations that public schools request also show one of the business aspects of education.

Moreover, when we speak of private schools, the work situation of teachers practicing in these schools must also be addressed. Cerev and Coşkun (2020), who have researched the field, point out that the most critical. Teachers face working in private schools are their salary rights, such as working for low wages and insufficient job security. The basis of this problem relies upon the fact that private schools mainly provide education services with a commercial approach to make a profit, which has an impact on teachers' working conditions. Thus, many teachers prefer to work in the public sector (Cerev & Coşkun, 2020).

Turkey said in its Education Vision 2023 that support would provide to finance educational institutions through collaborations with the private sector and civil society. The aim is to diversify the modes of financing in the field of education. Thus, we see a willingness to increase collaboration with the private sector to obtain funded support. It will be interesting to analyze the form of this collaboration. Nevertheless, we can deduce that the private sector's role in education will increase in the years to

come. Thus, it is very likely that a change of role and responsibility will occur at the state level in the future. Thus, it remains to be observed and analyzed.

### **Conclusion**

Through this study, we found three main factors that explain the lack of extension of private schools in Turkey: (1) International organizations and the global socio-economic context have their role in the growth of private schools. Furthermore, (2) private schools are seen as an effective means of increasing the quality of education that the public sector has difficulty providing. In addition, (3) the increase in the middle class has prompted changes in the parents' choices, increasingly demanding a better quality education appropriate for their child. Thus, the privatization of education also allows parents the opportunity to choose the education they want for their children (Erdoğan 2002; Ölçüm 1992).

Turkey's population is more than 73 million, of which about 29% are under 15 years old. Education is the cornerstone of a society and plays a colossal role in the country's development and for the well-being of individuals. Turkey is a country with a young and growing population, so providing quality education to this young generation is paramount. Private schools can be seen as a solution to meet the demand for quality education that Turkish families increasingly demand their children. However, an empirical study is needed to see whether private schools meet the demands of families and whether they do not create new challenges. According to Altun Aslan (2019), "the propagation of private schools has made issues of quality and efficiency in education controversial" (p.274).

In addition, like other emerging countries such as Brazil and Indonesia, Turkey has experienced substantial growth in the private education sector. The literature review analyzed here shows that the country's experience with privatization goes back a long way with the birth of modern Turkey. However, the forms of privatization of the last two decades are specific. On the one hand, there is a massification of privatization and private schools outside the elite circle. On the other hand, many actors intervene to impel this private offensive in education, such as the state, international organizations, and entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, Turkey's Education Vision 2023, which aims to develop collaboration with the private sector, will give more responsibilities and roles to private actors in the education area.

Thus, it is likely that privatization has spurred the diversification of the educational offer in the country. However, literature remains divided privatization contributes to increasing the quality of education for all in the country. Territorial and social inequalities remain massive.



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