

A NEW TYPE OF MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTING IN RESPONSE TO THE  
RECENT CHANGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A NEW TYPE OF MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTING IN RESPONSE TO THE RECENT CHANGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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This thesis analyzes the experiences of lower-middle and middle-class parents, who embraced secular values, with the recent changes in the education system in Turkey. It argues that changes made in neoliberal and neo-conservative lines within nearly twenty years affect the secular middle-class people in terms of their reproduction of class position and their lifestyles. The fear of not reproducing their class position and lifestyles leads these parents to make great financial and emotional sacrifices for the future of their children and results in the construction of new parenthood by an intensified parental involvement.

**Keywords:** middle-class, education, reproduction, neoliberal policies, neoconservative policies

## ÖZ

### EĞİTİM SİSTEMİNDEKİ SON YILLARDA YAŞANAN DEĞİŞİKLİKLERE KARŞILIK YENİ BİR ORTA SINIF EBEVEYNLİK MODELİ

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Bu tez Türkiye’deki seküler değerleri benimseyen alt orta ve orta sınıf velilerin eğitim sisteminde son yıllarda yaşanan değişikliklerle olan deneyimlerini analiz etmektedir. Eğitim sisteminde neredeyse yirmi yıla yakın süredir yapılan neoliberalizm ve neomuhafazakarlık temelli değişikliklerin seküler orta sınıfların kendi sınıflarını ve yaşam biçimlerini yeniden üretmeleri konusunda etkilediğini öne sürmektedir. Kendi sınıflarını ve yaşam tarzlarını çocuklarıyla birlikte yeniden üretememe korkusu, bu velilerin büyük finansal ve duygusal fedakarlıklar yapmasına neden olmaktadır, bu da ebeveynlerin çocuklarının eğitime katılımlarını yoğunlaştırarak yeni bir ebeveynlik tarzı üretmeleriyle sonuçlanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** orta sınıf, eğitim, yeniden üretim, neoliberal eğitim politikaları, muhafazakar eğitim politikaları

To My Father, Bayram Kızıl



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Since I decided to write this thesis in 2016, the education system has changed twice while the ruling party, Justice and Development Party (JDP), has been in power for 17 years in 2019. The changes in the education system were major ones since the whole curriculum and examination systems changed. Even though each Minister of Education tried to annul what had been done before him or her, when looking retrospectively, there were two main trends in education policies: neoliberalism and neoconservatism.

In Turkish education system, one can see that changes are made continuously. To further illustrate from my life, when I took high school entrance exam in 2005, the name of the exam was LGS (Entrance Exam for High Schools- *Liselere Giriş Sınavı*) but one year later, the examination system changed and became OKS (*Ortaöğretim Kurumlar Sınavı*- High Schools' Institutions Exam). These changes were not exception for my cohort because the system had already changed before I started high school, and it continued to change after that: it became SBS (Level Determination Exam), *TEOG* (Exam for Basic Education to High School Education)<sup>1</sup>, and finally *LGS* (Entrance to High Schools Exam) *again*. Not only the names of the exam were changing but also the time when students are going to take these exams, subjects that are put to the test and placement system to the schools were also changing. The exams gradually became much more selective because of

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/egitim/826828/AL\\_LGS\\_OKS\\_SBS\\_TEOG...\\_15\\_yil\\_icin\\_de\\_5\\_farkli\\_sistem.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/egitim/826828/AL_LGS_OKS_SBS_TEOG..._15_yil_icin_de_5_farkli_sistem.html)

the great demand for the quality public schools. The intense competition arose within families for their kids to be able to enroll in these schools. This is because of the continuation of decreasing quality in public education after 80s with neoliberal policies, and more precisely lack of investments made for secular public education after JDP came into power with the addition of neoconservatism to neoliberal policies. There is a famous saying in the Turkish education system that ‘one cannot graduate within the system that she/he has entered.’ Since it is interconnected with many things, exams were only one dimension of the changes in education system in Turkey. As Kandiyoti and Emanet (2017; 870) highlight ‘Since 2002 each successive term of JDP rule ushered in new waves of change in all aspects of education, from school governance and pedagogy to curriculum content.’ As a middle-class member and because I graduated from high school in 2009 when conservatism was not that prevalent, I was lucky and advantageous enough to survive from these changes; therefore I was able to get relatively quality and secular public education in an Anatolian High School<sup>2</sup>. However, a significant amount of population cannot necessarily get such education because getting a quality public education which is not religious has become scarcer for the people who have not enough financial means in Turkey. So, it is the subject of this thesis that the families who embrace secular values and belong to the lower middle and middle classes, with their moderately high cultural and limited economic capitals, cope with or trying to cope with the changes in education or the changes done in neoliberal and neoconservative lines.

## **1.1 Research Questions**

The research questions of this thesis are formulated according to the concerns mentioned above, and the research questions of this thesis are as follow:

**a)** ‘How did accelerated neoliberal policies in education affect secular middle and lower middle class parents, in other words, how transformations are experienced in

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<sup>2</sup> It is similar to Grammar Schools in Britain; it is designed as state funded schools for providing quality high school education for a selected few through central examinations. But from 2013, since all comprehensive schools have turned into Anatolian High Schools and since 2017, students can enter some of them without exams; it lost its original meaning.

the education system, i.e, reduced quality of state schools, increased competition for quality public high schools, closing of the *dershanes*/ private tutoring houses (similar to cram schools in Japan which prepares students to selective exams) by the secular middle class parents?’

**b)** How do the government’s neo-conservative policies in education such as increased neoconservative content in the curriculum, and the government’s efforts of mainstreaming of Imam Hatip Schools, and in relation to that decreasing options to send one’s child to non-religious schools affect these secular lower-middle and middle-class parents?

**c)** What strategies do parents employ, how do they allocate their moderate cultural capitals and their limited economic capitals to get the desired education for their children?

So this thesis aims to show the middle and lower-middle-class secular parents’ strategies and sacrifices, along with their experiences and dissatisfaction with the education system, a system which is mainly designed in neoconservative and neoliberal lines.

Apple argues that education is never neutral, it is related to what kind of society people want to live in and desired type citizen, it is always an ethical relationship, and schools are human institutions (1982). Kızılcelik (2015; 156-7) writes that ‘As is known, the first action of a new government in Turkey is to change the education policies of the old government’. Although they are discussed in the brief history of Turkish Education System in the literature review section, Turkish Education was instrumentalized depending on the ideology, and worldview, aims of the governments, and also influenced by the global trends as well. Imam Hatip Schools (Sermon and Preacher Schools) opened in 1924, opening and closing of the Village Institutes<sup>3</sup> (Köy Enstitüleri), Compulsory 8 Years Education introduced in 1997,

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<sup>3</sup> These are the schools that were founded in 1940, in single party era, by the Republicans People Party. Hasan Ali Yücel was the National Education Minister at that time; the aim was to increase the literacy rates of the village people and contribute to the development of villages. Yücel stated the aim of these schools as ‘to keep village kids at village and to prevent their migration to cities’ (Kaplan, 1999, p.183) , they aimed also to raise ‘fully republican and nationalist kids’. To this end, primary



abolishing of 8 years compulsory education with the 4+4+4 System in 2012 were all implemented mostly with the ideological, pragmatic motives of the governments rather than pedagogical reasons to promote better education for children. For today's context, according to Kaya (2015: 55) education currently is being 'a venue for struggle between Islamist and laicist powers', and he states that 'education is certainly the most delicate sphere that the AKP (JDP) and previous governments have utilized in order to indoctrinate the masses utilizing certain discourses, rhetoric, and ideologies'.

Similar to Apple (1982), many scholars such as Althusser (1970) and Bourdieu (1999), contrary to functionalist view of education, debate that education is not a very neutral, objective phenomena, aiming to eradicate the inequalities coming from one's family in terms of an *open society promise* or train the population according to people's talents and merits; instead, they argue that different groups have a stake in it and so they aim to shape the population according to their interests, ideology, and their desired vision of citizen, and education reproduces the inequalities in society, and deepens them with a cloak of objectivity. Education is not an isolated phenomenon and institution, independent on its own, but it is interconnected with many things like economy, politics, and culture.

To locate the education debates in a context, the ruling of JDP party came to power in 2002 referring itself 'conservative democrat', similar to American conservatism according to Insel (2003). From the beginning they were the proponents of privatization and neoliberal policies. This era shaped by intensified neoliberal economic policies and imposition of conservatism in social life and social policies (Pamuk, 2014). Especially after 2011, third consecutive election of the party, JDP started to be called 'authoritarian' by many accounts (Özbudun, 2014; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016; Somer, 2016; Akçay, 2019), because party consolidated its power

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school graduated children from villages are enrolled in these schools for 5 years and returned their villages to work compulsory 20 years as both teachers, and technicians in health and agriculture. The courses thought in these schools were ranging from agriculture, livestock, health, and carpentry to literature, music, arts and sciences. Their philosophy of education was learning by doing. They are closed after Democrat Party came into power, in 1954 by Adnan Menderes with the allegations for raising communists, in a Cold War Era. Source: Kaplan, İ. (1999). *Türkiye'de Milli Eğitim İdeolojisi*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.)

over many domains, it started not to give any attention other than its proponents. Neoliberal and neoconservative policies found their reflections in the education system in the same way, and these developments upset many parts of the population.

## **1.2 Operationalization of the Concepts**

Neoliberalism, in this thesis, is mainly operationalized in terms of the financial withdrawal of the state from the education domain, privatization, and increased parental involvement due to the decreased education quality in public schools. According to the report written by Education Reform Initiative (2019),<sup>4</sup> education spending of the families in Turkey (0.6%) doubles the average of OECD countries (0,3%) (p.32). Writers of the report argue that according to Turkey Statistic Institution's 2018 Life Satisfaction Survey, 44,2% of parents who send their children to state schools, and 60,4% parents who send their children to private schools see the private education spending as one of the most severe problems in education. Moreover, these ratios increased significantly in 2019 with respect to 2018 (p.34).

One thing more important than the private education spending of the families is how education spending is distributed among different income groups regarding the equal opportunity promise of modern societies. In terms of the education spending of different income groups, Educational Reform Initiative (2018)<sup>5</sup> has written a piece of news about this inequality. They compared three students from three different income groups to shed light to the educational inequality due to the different socio-economic status of families, and they argue that there is a considerable gap between educational spending of households in Turkey. And they state that 'In 2017, 19% of all educational spending was made by households. According to Turkish Statistic Institute's Household Consumption Expenditure in 2017, education spending made privately (cost of going to school, private school, private lesson, summer schools, university tuition fee, etc.) differs respectively i.e., there are significantly different allocated amounts of resources for different income groups. While the bottom 20%

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/egitim-izleme-raporu-2019-egitimin-yonetisimi-ve-finansmani/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/uzun-hikaye-ayse-ve-elif-arasindaki-ucurum/>

of income groups spend 2, 8% of the total private spending, the top 20% of the population spend 63, 6% of it. In other words, there is a 23 times difference between the poor and rich in terms of education spending’.

Again, continuing from parental involvement, the increase in the number of students who are enrolled in private schools also shows the results of neoliberal policies. The difference between the numbers of the children who were enrolled in private schools when JDP came into power in 2002 and 2016 also shows the scope of how education is privatized. According to Education Initiative Reform’s Education Monitoring Report of 2012<sup>6</sup>, based on the official statistics of National Ministry of Education, the ratio of children who were enrolled in private schools was 1,7% in the year of 2002 (p.178), and it climbed up to 8,3% in the years between 2017-2018<sup>7</sup>, with respect to total number of students. In other words, the number of children who are enrolled in private schools is quadrupled since JDP came into power. Here is a table in the next page, which shows the steady acceleration of the ratio of students enrolled in private schools since JDP came into power.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/yayin/egitim-izleme-raporu-2012/#more-4583>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/egitim-izleme-raporu-2017-18-2/>

Table 1: Ratio of students enrolled in private schools from 2002 to 2018<sup>8</sup>

	20 02- 20 03	20 03- 20 04	20 04- 20 05	20 05- 20 06	20 06- 20 07	20 07- 20 08	20 08- 20 09	20 09- 20 10	20 10- 20 11	20 11- 20 12	20 12- 20 13	20 13- 20 14	20 14- 20 15	20 15- 20 16	20 16- 20 17	20 17- 20 18
All Levels	1,7	1,8	1,9	2,1	2,4	2,6	2,7	2,8	2,9	3,2	3,3	4	5,2	7,5	7,6	8,3
Pre-school Education	3	3,9	4,1	5,2	5,7	6	5,1	5,2	5,4	9,5	11, 6	12, 8	14, 8	15, 9	15, 5	15, 7
Primary School											3	3,3	3,7	4,3	4,3	4,6
Middle School											3,2	3,3	4,2	5,7	5,4	6
Elementary School	1,5	1,6	1,7	1,8	2	2,1	2,3	2,4	2,6	2,8	3,1	3,3	4	5	4,8	5,3
General High School	3,6	4	4,2	4,2	4,8	5,6	5,8	5,8	6	6,7	7,1	7,4	9,3	20, 4	20	22, 7
Vocational and Technical High Schools	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,9	3,2	3,1	4,1	4,9	4,7

Neo-conservatism, on the other hand, in Turkey's context is an ideology which finds its source from religion, the interpretation of Sunni Islam, which puts the traditional family to the front, and it is against the gender equality discourse. Neoconservatism is operationalized, in terms of imposing a moral guide mainly by Sunni Islamic belief through education with the increased focus of religion at the curriculum, and a curriculum glorifying the past of Ottoman times<sup>9</sup>. It is argued by many accounts that there is an increase of neoconservatism in the education policies, especially after 2011 when JDP has consolidated its power (Lüküslü, 2016; Kandiyoti & Emanet, 2017; Tokdoğan, 2018; Gençkal Eroler, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Based on the Education Reform Initiative's Education Monitoring Reports of 2012 and 2018.

<sup>9</sup> According to Tokdoğan (2018), JDP government implemented a curriculum designed with the Neo-Ottoman ideology, to this end; they started to give great emphasis to Ottoman past in the curriculum instead of the Republican era, especially in the history courses. Also, the teaching of Ottoman language in schools was strongly urged by Erdoğan in 2014. The FATİH (Conqueror) project, the naming of the project's abridgment was made to evoke Mehmed the Conqueror purposefully.

Besides, government's intensively opening up of Imam Hatips (Preacher Secondary Level and High Schools) everywhere is also operationalized as the increase of neoconservatism. Here is a table below, which shows the dramatic increase in the numbers of Imam Hatip High Schools and their students.

Table 2: The Number of Imam Hatip High School Students and Their Students, based on the statistics of Education and Science Workers Union of 2018-2019 report.<sup>10</sup>

**The Number of Imam Hatip High Schools and Their Students**

Academic Year	Number of Students	Schools
<b>2002/'03</b>	<b>71.100</b>	<b>450</b>
2003/'04	90.606	452
2004/'05	96.851	452
2005/'06	108.064	453
2006/'07	120.668	455
2007/'08	129.274	456
2008/'09	143.637	458
2009/'10	198.581	465
2010/'11	235.639	493
<b>2011/'12</b>	<b>268.245</b>	<b>537</b>
2012/'13	380.771	708
2013/'14	474.096	854
2014/'15	546.443	1.017
2015/'16	555.870	1.149
2016/'17	506.516	1.452
<b>2017/'18</b>	<b>514.806</b>	<b>1.604</b>

In JDP era Imam Hatip schools became the dominant type<sup>11</sup> of schools, and below you can find how they became so. It is debated that 4+4+4 Law introduced in 2012 by JDP, though it is framed by the government officials as 'to catch up with the

<sup>10</sup> <http://m.bianet.org/bianet/egitim/200871-okullar-acildi-egitim-ne-durumda>

<sup>11</sup> <http://turkishpolicy.com/article/895/headed-east-turkeys-education-system>

compulsory education level of other OECD countries' (Kaya, 2015, p.57), is made to erase the implemented policy of 8 Years Compulsory education, which was introduced in 1997 (Lüküslü, 2016). In the "28<sup>th</sup> of February Process"<sup>12</sup>, the military 'recommended' in a National Security Council that the coalition government should increase five years compulsory to eight years paving the way to the closing of middle schools levels of Imam Hatips. Güven (2005) argues that 'a major underlying objective of this educational reform was to undermine the power of Imam Hatips, which had been designed to educate the clergy but which increasingly had become a power base for groups of defenders of Political Islam and political parties based on its ideas' (p.200). Özdalga (1999) too writes that education was 'used as a pawn in the game of macro power politics' (p.415). So, in order to erase this change, JDP decided to open up middle schools of Imam Hatips paving the way to children's getting a religious education at the age of 11. Although this created a public uproar and many respective universities such as Sabancı University, Bosphorus University, Middle East Technical University and Koç University published reports showing how this decision is pedagogically wrong and what will be the consequences of directing children in this age to vocational schools and Imam Hatips without providing an adequate basic education, middle school sections of Imam Hatips reopened in 2012<sup>13</sup>.

Though, then-contemporary Education Minister Nabi Avcı claimed that there is a considerable demand from society for the opening up of Imam Hatips in 2013<sup>14</sup> and there is indeed an increase in the number of students who are enrolled in Imam Hatips, the demand for these schools is way below the supply of these schools in the current situation. According to the recent news, student quotas of Anatolian Imam Hatip High Schools were unfilled by 69% in 2017<sup>15</sup>. Conversely to this development

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<sup>12</sup> This process is also called Post-modern Coup, where the military intervened and warned the coalition government than to make a coup.

<sup>13</sup> <https://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/turkeys-education-reform-bill-is-about-playing-politics-with-pedagogy/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/bakan-avci-halkta-ciddi-bir-imam-hatip-lisesi-talebi-var-1749333>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cnnturk.com/video/egitim/imam-hatiplerin-yuzde-69u-bos-kaldi>

of unfilled Imam Hatip Anatolian High Schools, there are news<sup>16 17</sup>, which shows that some Anatolian High Schools started to educate its students in two shifts, in the morning and noon (*'ikili eğitim'* in Turkish) because they cannot meet the demands of parents. So, it seems that government's insistence on Imam Hatips wastes a significant amount of public funds, and further reduces the quality of Anatolian High Schools by overcrowding them and decreasing school time through the abolishment of full-time education. In addition to that, the success of Imam Hatip high school graduates in the university entrance exams is quite low compared to the academic high schools. While 15% of Imam Hatip School graduates are able to enroll in a university, this ratio is 49% in Science High Schools<sup>18</sup>.

To understand the debates between secular sections of the society and the government in terms of education, one needs to have a brief idea about what Imam Hatip<sup>19</sup> schools were and what they are now. Imam Hatip Schools were first designed as vocational schools to raise Imams and Preachers in 1924, but they are now considered as Religious Education Intensive Regular High Schools, while their graduates do not have to be Imams or continue their education in Theology Faculties anymore due to the efforts of JDP government's changes in the laws. These schools teach a particular interpretation of Islam, Sunni Islam. The curriculum of Anatolian Imam Hatip high schools<sup>20</sup> is composed of courses like Arabic, Quran, Vocational Arabic, prophetic biography (*Siyer*), Islamic Law (*Fıkıh*), hermeneutics (*Tefsir*) together with courses like Turkish Language and Literature, mathematics, history, foreign language, biology, physics, and chemistry. So the government tries to make this kind of school the prominent way of schooling in Turkey.<sup>21</sup> In addition to this,

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<sup>16</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/bazi-anadolu-liselerinde-ikili-egitim-kapida,832596>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/anadolu-liselerinde-ikili-egitim-kapida-6007542>

<sup>18</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/imam-hatip-lisesi-cikisliharin-universiteye-yerlesme-orani-yuzde-15-te-kaldi,821386>

<sup>19</sup> Imam means Muslim religious leader in a Mosque, and Hatip means preacher in Arabic.

<sup>20</sup>

[http://dogm.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/2019\\_07/01154039\\_AIHL\\_Haftalik\\_Ders\\_Cizelgesi\\_2018-2019.pdf](http://dogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2019_07/01154039_AIHL_Haftalik_Ders_Cizelgesi_2018-2019.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/imam-hatipler-milletin-gozbebegi-olacak-20419310>

the replacement of the state's role in education with religiously oriented foundations, associations and organizations are discussed under the neoconservatism debate.

### **1.3 Recent Developments in Education with respect to Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism**

In terms of the roles of education in a society, Buğra writes that (2010):

In a society, it can be mentioned that there are two roles attributed to public education in terms of institutionalization of equality. First of these roles is the socialization experience where public education creates a collective memory through which individuals learn how to live equally and free. The second role, on the other hand, is to prevent the passing of inequalities to the next generation by providing equal public education. If education can prevent the passing of and determining of factors like socioeconomic factors, gender, ethnicity, and language, which are beyond the will of citizens, and secondly, if it can provide equal and free socialization, then education can be considered as successful in terms of the two major roles it has undertaken. (p.104)

Nevertheless, Turkey's education system is far from providing equal quality public education and preventing the passing of existing inequalities to the next generation with its neoliberal policies in education, which leads to 'parentocracy'.

According to a research entitled November 2017 Barometer, Political and Social Research Series, done by KONDA, <sup>22</sup>Turkish society does not only believe in the contribution of good education into one's life but also expects this from the state. 85% of Turkey's population agrees with the statement of 'state has to provide quality education to every child without leaving this responsibility to any other institution. They also find that the ones who send their children to private schools also think the same (p.14). Another important finding is that 71,3% of Turkey's population are afraid of their children's not getting the education they want.

In terms of the public budget allocated to education, in the next page there is a graph made by Eğitim-Sen<sup>23</sup>, based on the data of official statistics of the Ministry of National Education:

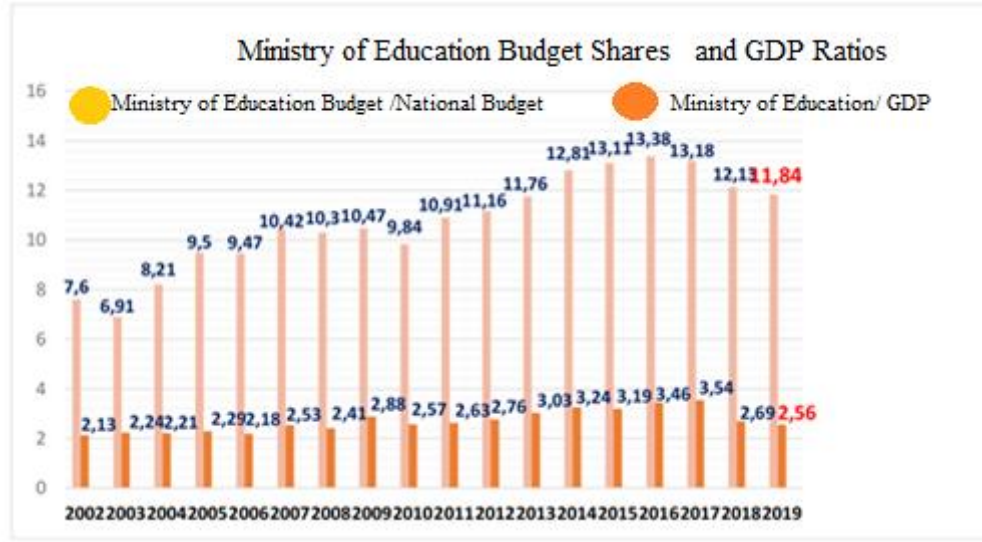
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<sup>22</sup> <https://konda.com.tr/tr/rapor/egitim-sistemini-yapisi-ve-beklentiler/>

<sup>23</sup> (Education and Science Workers Union) : 'A radical opposition which entirely opposed to the neoliberal and political Islamist policies of the JDP (Şen, 2018, p.111)' Source: Şen, A. F. (2018).



Figure 1: The Budget of Ministry of Education, Compared With National Budget and Gross Domestic Product



It is reported that ‘although the budget of the Ministry of Education has increased slightly in the last 16 years, the designated numbers remained way below than the actual needs. The privatization of education and given subsidies to private education through public funding have resulted parents taking this burden individually. Also the relatively big size of the budget is not because the government gives importance to education but caused by the increase in the number of personnel and the personnel wages related to that’.<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the graph before (Figure 1), one can argue that the public spending in education did not decrease significantly with respect to neoliberalism within JDP era, however, considering that Imam Hatip schools get the lion’s share of the education budget while their students constitute only the 10% of all students<sup>25</sup>, one can argue that even though the government did not ration the public education altogether to

Discussions on education policies in media: Media representations of education activists in Turkey. Research in Education.

<sup>24</sup> <http://egitimsen.org.tr/2019-milli-egitim-bakanligi-butcesi-analizi/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/turkey-erdogan-education/>

direct people to private schools (Connell; 2013), it definitely rationed secular public education by increasing the allocated share of Imam Hatips. According to an Education Reform Initiative's report in 2018, when the budget allocated for different high school types and the numbers of students who are enrolled in these schools are compared, an unbalanced distribution emerges. While the allocated budget per student in Imam Hatip High School is 12.707 TL, it is 7.504 TL for Vocational and Technical high school students, and finally, it is 6.153 TL for a general high school student.

With the decline of the public budget for non-Imam Hatip schools, middle-class parents, who do not want their children to get religious education, headed to the private schools with the help of given subsidies by the state. Since the subsidies cover only a small amount of private school fees, they are used most likely by middle class. Lüküslü (2016) writes in terms of the education policies of JDP that 'The marriage between conservatism and neoliberalism, once perceived as the success of the Turkish model, is particularly disruptive in the case of education, as it enables the Islamization of the state school sector, while increasingly channeling secular education into the realm of private schools, which are available only for parents with the required means (p.643-644)'.

However, parents' choice of private schools cannot be only explained with given subsidies or decreasing quality of secular public education. Simultaneously the government started to apply an aggressive course of action to direct students into the Imam Hatip schools with opening these schools everywhere and by converting non-religious schools into Imam Hatips, and turning non-religious schools into de facto religious schools by 'elective' religious courses with increasing the neoconservatism in schools. Most of the secular parents say that they choose private schools to 'buy some secularism.'<sup>26</sup> Education Reform Initiative's Education Monitoring Report of 2012-2013 shows that there is a huge difference between the chosen 'elective' courses in private and public schools, for example while less than 2% of students chose elective course of Quran in private schools, this ratio was about 78% in state

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dw.com/tr/t%C3%BCrkiyede-e%C4%9Fitim-%C3%B6zel-ile-devlet-aras%C4%B1nda-kalan-veliler/a-48745622>

schools, while the ratio was again less than 2% for Basic Religious Knowledge course in private schools, it was close to 55% in the public schools (p.98). This means that private schools offer much-unconstrained curriculum than the state schools. The manager of a known chain private school says that ‘I have the chance to build the curriculum in a more secular way. We can celebrate the holidays (he refers to national Republican holidays before JDP) in full blast. I can play the song of ‘Flowers bloom on İzmir Mountains’<sup>27</sup> for a week.’<sup>28</sup>

To conclude, by decreasing the quality of secular public education through allocating sources to Imam Hatips and Vocational High Schools, and by opening these schools in great numbers in Turkey, either by building them or converting non-religious schools to them, and finally making arrangements in the placement system, which forces students to choose these schools, JDP government rations secular public education, and directs most of the students to the Imam Hatips. This leads increased parental involvement for the middle-class parents to counterpoise these changes.

All the aforementioned discussions were about how government changes the education system, without asking much to one of the main interlocutors of education, parents. Government’s setting the rules from a top-down point does not echo so smoothly in the lives of parents, middle-class parents especially since they give great importance to education in their lives. The middle class is dependent on institutional cultural capital, the education their children are receiving, to acquire economic, social and symbolic capitals to reproduce their class.

#### **1.4 Arguments**

I assume that government’s leaving all the responsibility of providing education to the family, not providing quality secular public education will worsen the inequalities in education, the gap between who have the cultural and economic capital and who don’t have these capitals will widen.

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<sup>27</sup> It is a patriotic republican song. The song’s lyrics include ‘Long live Mustafa Kemal Pasha, long live! your name will be written on the gem stone.’

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.dw.com/tr/türkiyede-eğitim-özel-ile-devlet-arasında-kalan-veliler/a-48745622>

Even though the lower-middle and middle class, by making great sacrifices, try to compensate for low quality of education in the state schools through sending their children to private tutoring houses or enrolling them in extracurricular activities, they most likely not in a position to sustain this situation for a long time due to their limited economic capital.

Sending the children to private schools to get quality and secular education will turn into a privilege even more because of the decreasing economic capital of middle-class parents.

The competition to get into quality and secular public schools will be intensified with the current economic crisis and employed education policies, and easing the inequalities through education, a promise of equality of opportunity will be a much rarer situation in the near future.

### **1.5 Conceptual Framework**

Bourdieu (1986) with his essential concepts of economic, cultural, and social capitals and reproduction of class will be the skeleton of the analysis section of this thesis to understand how parents allocate and ready to allocate all their resources for their children to give them quality education. This thesis is also profoundly benefited from the scholars representing the ‘cultural turn,’ who are inspired by Bourdieu. Scholars like Diane Reay and Stephen J. Ball concentrate on how middle class helps to reproduce existing social inequalities through education. Phillip Brown’s (1990) concept of ‘parentocracy’, one’s getting of education depending on his/ her parents’ wealth and wishes rather than the meritocracy discourse embraced after WW2, also fits very well what is happening in education in a neoliberal context.

### **1.6 Literature Review**

In the context of Turkey, there aren’t many sociological studies in terms of showing how families try to apply strategies to reproduce their existing situations (lifestyles, class positions) in an ever-changing education system. There are only four studies which concentrate on this issue. These studies made in Bourdieusian lines (Rutz &

Balkan, 2009; Aratemür Çimen, 2015; Balkan & Balkan & Öncü, 2015; Özdemir, 2018) focused on the Turkish upper middle class with relatively high economic and cultural capital. Apart from Özdemir's (2018) study, which mentions the conservative trend in education, these studies only concentrated on the neoliberal feature of the changing education system.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

There is a vast literature (Brown; 1990, Apple; 2004) showing that implemented neoliberal policies in education feed the already existing inequalities in society and cancels the equal opportunity promise of education. This thesis also shares the same concerns that reduced quality of public education and leaving the families on their own with the market will possibly result in deepening of inequalities in society. With the overlooked neoconservatism debate in reproduction of middle class in Turkish education system, I tried to show that secular lower-middle and middle-class-secular-parents are not only in a risky position getting a quality education for reproduction or possibility of upward mobility but they are also deprived of getting an education which suits their life views.

### **1.8 Method**

To understand the experiences, feelings, strategies of lower-middle and middle-class secular parents with the education system, I conducted a qualitative research with semi-structured in-depth interviews. For the respondents, I selected a Parent Association, called Veli-Der, which demands 'secular, public, scientific, quality' education for all. Since these respondents were not fully representative of the secular lower-middle and middle-class with their organized character, I have also found five more parents who are not organized and leftist as Veli-Der's parents to get the voices of average secular parents. So I interviewed 14 parents in total, who live in Ankara and whose children are still in the formal education system. I interviewed eleven mothers and three fathers.

## **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

As a shortcoming of the thesis, since I was able to reach mothers more, and mothers volunteered more to participate in the research, mothers' voices are dominant in this research. Fathers' voices are limited and in some cases are received through the narratives of the mothers. Since parenting is a highly gendered phenomenon, it can be said that mothers' experiences are represented more in this research.

I tried to tell the experiences of the secular middle class only; this group does not prefer to send their children to Imam Hatip schools obviously because of their life views. However, there are accounts that the conservative middle class does not want their kids to enroll in these schools as well<sup>29 30</sup>; it would be valuable to see their experiences with the education system for future research.

## **1.10 Outline of the Thesis**

The current chapter of the study aims to present an illustration of a general picture of the education problem in Turkey concerning neoliberal and neoconservative policies of the JDP government. It also introduced the research questions, and arguments of the study, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework of the study, chosen method for the study together with its limitations. Lastly, this part of the chapter presents the outline of the study.

The second chapter is about the method chosen for this study. In this chapter, the research approach explained, and the design of the study is presented in more detail. This detailed presentation includes the sampling and data collection procedures, profile of the respondents, experiences I had before, during and after the field, reflexivity issue in Bourdieusian sense, the way that the data analysis was made

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<sup>29</sup>Balkan, N., Balkan, E., & Öncü, A. (Eds.). (2015). The neoliberal landscape and the rise of Islamist capital in Turkey (Vol. 14). Berghahn Books.

<sup>30</sup>Akçaoğlu, A. (2017). The Making Of Conservative Habitus: The Case Of an Upper-Middle Class Neighborhood in Ankara. Doctoral Dissertation. Middle East Technical University. Ankara.

The third chapter is the literature review of the thesis, firstly looks at the world and then concentrates on Turkish case. Firstly in the world, it briefly looks at the historicity of neoliberalism, what is meant by neoliberalism, then it continues with class discussions, mainly the middle class, then it gives the Bourdeusian conceptual framework to existing class discussions with the use of 'cultural turn.' At the intersection of neoliberalism and middle class, the education issue, 'parentocracy,' comes to the foreground, how the neoliberalism favors the middle class, and how the middle-class is reliant on the education for the reproduction of its class are discussed. Then for the Turkish case, the thesis gives a brief discussion on the neoliberal and neoconservative policies in general to contextualize the education policies of JDP government, then it looks very briefly to the education policies from Tanzimat era till the JDP. After that, the education policy of JDP with respect to neoliberalism and neoconservatism are discussed; next, there is a brief discussion on the Turkish middle class. Lastly, the literature review ends with the reproduction of class through education in the Turkish case.

The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study by dividing them into three themes. Themes that are presented in this chapter are firstly the reduced quality of state schools with respect to neoliberalism, secondly neoconservatism in education and parents' secular values. Thirdly and finally, secular middle-class parents' strategies to counterpoise these neoliberal and neoconservative trends through intensifying their parental involvement with the sacrifices made for their children to get a quality education, and leading, in the end, to a new parenthood style is discussed.

The last chapter of the study presents the contextualization of the Turkish case with respect to trends in the world. It expresses a general overview of the study and summarizes the findings. Also, it offers a very brief policy recommendation, showing how inequality in education is an urgent issue.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **METHOD**

In order to understand the experiences, feelings, and strategies of secularly-oriented lower-middle-class parents who are trying to provide quality education for their children in the context of neoliberal and neoconservative educational policies implemented by the JDP government, a qualitative type of research is designed.

Qualitative research, compared with quantitative one, is about understanding meanings, processes, and contexts. Marvasti (2004) says that ‘qualitative research provides detailed description and analysis of the quality or the substance of the human experience’ (p.7). Since the education of their children occupies a very important part of the lives of these parents letting them speak, without predetermined answers like in surveys, was important.

#### **2.1 Before the Field**

In the existing literature of sociology of education in Turkey, the effects of JDP government’s education policies over the lives of families were discussed under a middle or upper-middle-class focus, (Rutz and Balkan, 2009; Balkan & Balkan& Öncü, 2015; Aratemür Çimen, 2015; Özdemir, 2018), which own way higher in economic, cultural capitals than my respondents, and discussed under neoliberalism. These studies generally portrayed the people who can exercise choice and who are the benefiter of the reproduction of existing inequalities due to or maybe thanks to



neoliberalism. These kinds of middle classes are the ones who can exercise choice over differentiating their children from others due to their higher levels of capitals. But other than these fractions, although they are way more advantageous than working-class; lower-middle-class people try to maintain their class position without having so much available options compared their middle-class counterparts.

In the aforementioned studies, neoconservatism part was missing except Özdemir's (2018) mentioning of the recent policies in her thesis. Maybe the reason this issue was understudied is that the government's conservative policies were not that salient when these research took place. However, today it is not really possible to talk about neoliberal policies of JDP government without giving reference to its neoconservative character.

For this reason, to be able to understand the experiences of parents who suffer both from these two features of educational policies, I reached a parents' association, which is directly against these two characteristics of government's policies. Veli-der (Parent's Association in English) is an association which demands 'public, scientific, secular education for all.' Since Veli-der is not representative of the secular lower middle class with its leftist and highly politicized activist character, to get a bigger picture, I also interviewed with five more parents who are not organized, as well. Though they are not organized to find solutions to their problems, as Veli-der's parents did, they still have heavy concerns about the education of their children.

## **2.2 Finding the Respondents**

In order to find the respondents; purposive sampling, which is 'getting all possible cases that fit particular criteria' (Neuman; 2014; p.167) was used. I decisively chose this association to get the full picture of the implications of educational policies in people's lives. Parents, who are not organized, are chosen purposively on the criteria of not having a conservative lifestyle, being secular and having problems with the current education system. Parents are chosen also on the criteria of having children currently at formal education or just have graduated.

In terms of the method of the study, I conducted semi-structured interviews. According to Patton (2015), ‘the major way in which qualitative researchers seek to understand the perceptions, feelings, and experiences and knowledge of people is through in-depth intensive interviewing’ (p.26). So with these considerations in mind, I prepared a semi-structured interview with the help of initial literature review and the news related to Turkey’s education. A semi-structured interview was quite suitable because when one question was asked, respondents almost touched all the other issues in the interview, and this, in the end, provided flexibility. Tischler suggests that semi-structured interview provides the interviewer getting all the answers, and still have a chance to see different weights of emphasis given by each respondent to the issues (2007). In this way, I was able to see which point matters more for the respondent. I have also made observations during the events organized by Veli-der such as their meeting for Children’s Day at Uğur Mumcu Park. In this way, I observed some other parents, parents who randomly attended these events, who were alerted and upset about their children’s future as well.

After defining the respondents, and questions, an application was made to the Applied Ethics Research Center in Middle East Technical University towards the end of March 2019 in order to get the prerequisite approval of the research. My permission to conduct the study came on 9th of April, 2019.

### **2.3 Entering the Field and During the Field**

The field part of the research took about three and a half months. I entered the field in 13<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 and finished the collection of data on 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2019.<sup>31</sup>

As soon as I was granted permission to conduct my research I entered the field in the middle of April. Before doing this for the Veli-der’s parents, as a contact person I

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<sup>31</sup> This was the time where the local election of 31 March was made, and the re-election for Istanbul was decided and made afterwards and this was the period where economic recession was deeply felt for most of the people.

asked one of my colleagues at the university I work, she was giving voluntary psychological support for the association's solidarity network; thanks to her I was able to enter the field in a smooth way. She immediately called her contacts, and parents were quite helpful. I then went to a meeting at Küçükesat, at Seyran- Esat Culture and Solidarity Association on 13th of April, I met with two parents there who I conducted interviews with later. The day after that meeting there was another meeting at Batıkent, Batıkent Culture House, about the issue of internet addiction of children. Veli-der and Tersine Dünya Atölyesi /Okulu<sup>32</sup> (World Upside Down Workshops/School) organized this event, and it was quite crowded, and composed of quite alert parents. A psychologist was giving a lecture to parents and parents were raising their concerns about when to give a child a cell phone, schools, education. Thanks to this meeting I met Seray<sup>33</sup>, the *muhtar* of a neighborhood at Batıkent, and she immediately arranged me a contact, Tülay who accepted me in her house right after Seray called her. Seray including herself helped me to reach five contacts. As I mentioned, for the sampling of this study I used purposive sampling to select the association, and then I tried to do snowball sampling but generally I reached my contacts through Seray. I reached one of my contacts in a Kids Festival, which took place on 5th of May, at Yüzüncü Yıl Parkı. A middle-aged father, Hüseyin, in the organizing committee accepted my request and we made an interview right there.

The interviews took place wherever interviewees wanted such as one took place in one of the respondent's home, three in cafes, one in my workplace, one in respondent's school and so on. Most of them took place at Batıkent where the majority of respondents live, two of them were at Muhtarlık Building of one Batıkent neighborhood, I also went to Keçiören once, made an interview at a Muhtarlık Building as well. About the unorganized parents I have interviewed with, one of them was my friend. I reached the other four parents through the help of my friends. They were four mothers and one father. I conducted three of the interviews at their

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/tersine-dunya-cocuk-atolyeleri-oyunarak-deneyerek-sorgulayarak-hata-yaparak-224278.html>

<sup>33</sup> All the names of respondents are pseudonyms.

homes, and two in their workplaces. Two of them are living at Mamak, one at Yapraklı, one at Batıkent, and one at Ümitköy

## **2.4 Composition of Parents**

My interviewees are composed of eleven mothers and three fathers. Seven of them have two kids; seven of them have one child. Their occupations and former occupations are teachers, lawyer, banker, civil servant, nurse. Their education achievements range from high school degree to a master's degree. Majority of them have bachelor's degree, followed by *yüksel okul* (associate's degree). All of them are homeowners except two of them are tenants.

All of Veli-der parents were politically active; they had memberships to other associations such as Keçiören Woman Solidarity Home, unions like Education and Science Workers' Union, and political parties like Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi (Freedom and Solidarity Party). Majority of the parents defined themselves as seculars, 'aydın' (enlightened), modern, forward-looking, Atatürkçü (for unorganized parents), leftists (for Veli-der's case), and majority of the women defined themselves as feminists (in Veli-der's case). Veli-der's parents stated that religion does not have an important role or any role at all in their lives. Most of them said they are non-believers. Though they did not give any reference to any religion when I asked about their identities, three of the parents said that either they or their partners are Alevi during the interview. Parents except Veli-der's define themselves as 'neither nonbeliever nor conservative,' 'normal Turkish citizen,' and as seculars, 'modern', *Atatürkçü*, and so on, and said that they don't practice religion in their daily lives. Since I reached them through personal contacts and my friends' contacts, and asked my friends whether these respondents are secular or not, and said prior to the interview to the interviewee that I am making a study about people who embraced secular values, and finally because these respondents did not give any reference to the religious values in terms of their values, identities, I took them as seculars. They generally worried more about the neoliberalism part in the education because of their decreasing purchasing power, i.e. their decreasing economic capital caused by the economic recession in recent years. Though they don't generally problematize state's

giving compulsory religious education because of its teaching of ‘ethics,’ they are against the mushrooming of Imam Hatip Schools, and students being directed to these schools. You can find the profile of the parents below and on the next two pages:

Table 3: Interviews’ Profile Summary (Continues in the next page)

	Sex	Name	Age	Marital Status	Job	Educational Attainment
1	F	Tülay	47	Widow	Public Sector, technician	Associate Degree
2	F	Cemile	46	Married	Literature teacher	Master's Degree
3	F	Kadriye	55	Married	Retired, voluntary work	Associate Degree
4	F	Seray	57	Married	Elected neighborhood representative( <i>Muhtar</i> )	Distance Education
5	M	Mahir	62	Married	Retired, former chess teacher	High School
6	M	Hüseyin	53	Married	Retired, former bank employee	Bachelor's Degree
7	F	Halise	59	Married	Retired, former literature teacher	Bachelor's Degree
8	F	Eda	33	Married	Unemployed	Secondary School
9	F	Duygu	41	Married	Children's books illustrator currently, former lawyer	Bachelor's Degree
10	F	Şeyma	45	Divorced	Secretary	Bachelor's Degree
11	M	Şeref	36	Married	Civil Servant	Master's Degree
12	F	Güneş	46	Married	Civil Servant	Distance Education
13	F	Nermin	45	Married	Nurse, Public Sector	Bachelor's Degree
14	F	Behiye	44	Married	Drama Teacher (Free Lance, unemployed temporarily)	Associate Degree

Table 4: (Continued) Interviews' Profile Summary (Continues in the next page.)

Name	Job of His/her Spouse	Educational Attainment of His/her Spouse	Neighborhood
Tülay	Not applicable	Not Applicable	Batıkent
Cemile	Bank employee	Master's Degree	Yüzüncü Yıl
Kadriye	Lawyer and activist	Bachelor's Degree	Eryaman
Seray	Retired, former journalist	Bachelor's Degree	Batıkent
Mahir	Retired, former civil servant	Associate Degree	Batıkent
Hüseyin	Retired, former teacher	Associate Degree	Batıkent
Halise	Retired, former publisher	Bachelor's Degree	Yüzüncü Yıl
Eda	Driver (he was in prison during the interview)	High School Graduate	Keçiören
Duygu	Lawyer	Bachelor's Degree	Batıkent
Şeyma	Ex-spouse: instructor	Doctorate	Yapracık
Şeref	Civil Servant	Master's Degree	Ümitköy
Güneş	Police	Associate Degree	Mamak
Nermin	Chemistry Technician	Bachelor's Degree	Mamak
Behiye	System Director	Bachelor's Degree	Batıkent

Table 5: (Continued) Interviews' Profile Summary (End)

Name	Home Ownership	Number of Children	Monthly Income of Family	State or Private School
Tülay	Yes	1	5500-6000 Turkish Liras (TL)	Private
Cemile	Yes	2	Approximately 10.000 TL	Private
Kadriye	Yes	1	3000 TL	Private
Seray	Yes (they are paying the mortgage)	2	4500- 5000 TL	Private
Mahir	Yes	1	Approximately 7000 TL	Private
Hüseyin	Yes	2	Approximately 8000 TL	State
Halise	Yes	1	Above 7000 TL	Private
Eda	Yes	2	Normally 3000 TL, but there was no income during the interview	State
Duygu	Yes	1	4000 TL to 5000 TL depending on the Duygu's freelance income	Private
Şeyma	No	1	4250 TL including 1000 TL alimony	State
Şeref	No	1	13000 TL	State
Güneş	Yes	2	8500 TL	State, State+Private
Nermin	Yes	2	10.000 TL	State, State+Private
Behiye	Yes	2	5000 TL	State

So overall, I have interviewed fourteen parents in total. Three of them were fathers and eleven of them were mothers. In terms of the age composition of respondents, most of the respondents' age was higher than 40, the youngest respondent was 33 years old, and the eldest one was 62 years old.

Most of them have undergraduate degrees and employed in the public sector. Except two of them, all of them were homeowners. They were living mostly in Batıkent and Yüzüncü Yıl, and Mamak neighborhoods. Ten of them either have sent or sending their children to private schools.

In a spectrum about the importance of religion in their lives, they defined themselves as from atheist to 'neither atheist nor pious'. They all said that they don't practice religion in their daily lives.

## **2.5 After the Field**

The duration of the interviews ranged between 38 minutes to 90 minutes, while most of them took about an hour. Before starting the interviews informed consent of participants is taken. All of them were recorded by the permission of respondents and transcribed<sup>34</sup>. All the names used in interviews are pseudonyms. Since some interviews made in some loud public areas, I also took notes in order not to lose any data. After each interview, as Patton suggests, I have written post-interview notes, the things that I observe about the interview setting, how the respondent has reacted, and the things related to the rapport. (2015; p.453)

A generally good rapport between us was established since I reached them through snowball sampling, there is a strong solidarity culture between Veli-der's parents. Knowing that I study at METU also helped me to build a good rapport because it was a good university for them; they wished their children would enter it. Although I asked them questions that can be considered sensitive, in terms of having religious beliefs or not, or in terms of their identity, they did not have any hesitations to answer. Although Seray at one point said that 'I am telling you all these as a

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<sup>34</sup> <https://speechnotes.co/> is the program that I used for transcription; it eases this tiresome work in a substantial way.



socialist, but of course I don't know who you are, your thoughts are about all these?'. So sometimes I needed to gain their trust at some point. The interviews I conducted with unorganized parents also happened in a very friendly environment, I met three of them in their homes for the first time, and still, they were very sincere and hospitable.

My knowledge before going to the field might also have contributed to this good rapport between us because I was ready to listen to their problems and aware of most of them. Berg and Lune (2017) suggest 'one should know his/her audience in the interview setting. 'In the case of interview researcher's preparedness encompasses both local and culturally appropriate knowledge (2017: 89)'. As Mellor et al. (2014) write 'class researchers should engage in reflexive practices in order to explore myriad ways in which the researcher's own class history and current class position both advantage and disadvantage the research process often in unpredictable ways' (p.135). Our shared class position, my studying at a university that their children wanted to go, also my being knowledgeable about one of their the most critical concerns might have helped the formation of a good rapport, trust between us.

It is said that a good repertoire of the interviewer is formed through practice (Berg& Lune, 2017; 85). By listening to the interviews through audio records, I learned about my weaknesses and tried not to repeat those.

Some researchers argue that there is a power relation between researcher and interviewee, especially in quantitative research. Moreover, the researcher can be at a higher position in the hierarchy since she/he probably knows the subject better than his/her respondents in a systematic way. Qualitative research, in general, aims to undo this hierarchical relationship, and it 'encourages disclosure and authenticity between researchers and participants' (Karnieli- Miller et al., 2009). I never felt in a higher position than my respondents, thanks to the qualitative research and because most of my respondents were highly knowledgeable in all these education policies, and were looking at the issues in an organized way.

## 2.6 Reflexivity

According to Bourdieu, researcher has to be aware of the what baggage, habitus he/she brings to the research and he talks about reflexivity in a discipline as well, Bourdieu (1993) writes that, ‘one of the main errors in sociology lies in an unexamined relationship to the object- or, more precisely, in ignorance of all that the view of the object owes to the point of view, that is the viewers position in the social space and scientific field’ (1993: 10).

I as a second-generation middle-class person was curious about how education changes one’s life, how the department one studies in, how the private school one goes to changes one’s trajectory of life were interesting issues for me. But I was thinking about these issues mostly for my middle-class environment; I was not that aware of the existing inequalities in education. My reading of Rutz and Balkan’s (2009) study of ‘Reproduction of Middle Class in Istanbul’ during the fourth year of my undergraduate years affected me to study this kind of issue. Before delving into this research, I was seeing the neo-conservatism in the education policies more of a problem than the neoliberalism part because of my secular world view, and my relatively advantageous middle-class position, for example, I wasn’t aware of Anatolian High Schools is a reflection of inequality among public schools. But when I started to read about the literature, I saw that other than the problem of conservatism in education, equality of opportunity, upward mobility, which are offered by functionalist theory of education are not viable options for everyone, and there is a substantial inequality in the Turkish education system because of the prevalence of neoliberal education policies.

I also wasn’t really knowledgeable about the way parents made sacrifices for their children in this vivid manner. So the field has affected me in terms of looking at things, realizing the immense inequality.

According to Lune and Berg, though it is very valuable, interviewing can be a tiresome work in terms of collecting the data and decoding it (2017). Even if 14 interviews with parents can be seen as a small number, respondents have given very rich account of their experiences.

As Lune and Berg (2017) suggest, after writing the transcripts of the interviews, I detected some themes from the interviews then I grouped them under big headings. I also summarized each of the interviews for a page or so. In this way, I was able to detect the similarities and differences of experiences of each parent without missing the integrity of narrative (p.90).

To conclude, according to Creswell and Creswell (2013), qualitative inquiry has mainly five contributions to research. Firstly, 'It helps 'capturing the stories to understand people's perspectives and experiences.' In my thesis' case, the experiences of secular lower-middle and middle classes, as an essential proportion of the population, toward education system were missing in the literature, letting them speak was valuable in that sense. Secondly, 'qualitative inquiry elucidates how systems function and their consequences for people's lives.' In this thesis, for example, dilemmas of some leftist parents are shown; although they are against privatization of education system they still feel that they have to send their children to private schools. Thirdly, 'it helps to understand the context, why and how things are happening,' again returning to my case, the choices, preferences of these parents are not taking place in vacuum, they are 'choosing' these 'escape' strategies because of the existing education policies. The fourth contribution of qualitative research is its ability for 'identifying unanticipated consequences'. Before doing my fieldwork I wasn't aware of this kind of middle class, who faces a dilemma between their ideals and existing situation, sending their children to private schools with their leftist ideals. Fifth and final contribution according to Creswell, is 'making case comparisons to discover important patterns and themes across cases'. Although parents in my study share a common discontent with the education policies of JDP government, their focuses are somehow different from another, for example one is sending her son to private school because of her son's disability, another sending her daughter because of the problems her child's has encountered in public schools and so on, some others concentrated on the success in the exam and sending their children to Basic High Schools. Although all these parents are dissatisfied with the education system, their primary problems with education system at first hand are different from each other.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter first gives a summary of neoliberal transformations meant for the world, then it continues with discussing how these transformations affected the new middle class, how the middle class came to the foreground with the diminishing working-class politics, and how they became the main actor with neoliberalism's self-reliance rhetoric. After these, the conceptual framework of the thesis, Bourdieu's different types of capitals and his reproduction issues are discussed. Then, considering the fact that reproduction of middle class is dependent on the educational attainment of their children, middle class depends on the institutional cultural capital in Bourdieu's case, changes in educational system with neoliberalism, and how parents became the responsible ones from their children's education are analyzed in the international literature. Following, neoconservatism in education in the world, mostly in United States and Britain are mentioned. Thereafter, neoliberalism and neoconservatism in Turkey, middle class in Turkey; neoliberal and neoconservative education policies in Turkey after 2002 are discussed. In the final section of this paper, reproduction strategies of Turkish middle-class families are discussed.

#### **3.1 Neoliberalism and Operationalization of Neoliberalism**

In order to understand the neoliberal transformations in the education policies, and how neoliberalism in general affected the lives of the parents, in this thesis case's middle class parents, one needs to take brief look at what neoliberalism is, how it created further inequalities through the withdrawal of the state from the public services and opening these services to the market to fill in.

According to Harvey (2005), neoliberalism was a political class project which was put into practice by the corporate capitalist class and aimed to erase the gains of the working classes together with the Welfare State. He argues that neoliberalism is an ideology and hegemonic project put into practice with the theories of the Mont Pelerin Society, Chicago School. Capitalists in the developed world funded universities, founded think tanks, bought the elections to diminish the power of labor unions to promote neoliberalism as the only alternative to the crisis of the welfare state. He says that capitalists embraced anti-labor rhetoric and defended the prominence of the free market. Furthermore, this hegemony of neoliberalism didn't stop at the policies level as well. It also transformed the way people think about themselves, people are advised to take care of themselves rather than depending on the state by the politicians such as Margaret Thatcher at Britain and Ronald Reagan in the United States. Harvey suggests these changes made possible by the discourse of freedom, it is said to the people that by the free market they are free to choose whatever they want. People are expected to be the entrepreneur of their lives if they fall back, the reason is their not taking care of themselves; it is their fault, not the state's, nor the government's. So all the gains of Welfare State, such as quality education, health, pensions, social security i.e. safety net that the social state promotes promoted and abolished by the neoliberal state, by the tax cuts of corporations with the rhetoric of growth and competitive international trade. So the state embraced the role of regulator for the smooth functioning of the markets.

With neoliberalism, state's 'left hand' has receded as Bourdieu suggests (2003:2), with all the gains of welfare state has taken back, then, of course, the right hand of the state gained power. He suggests that all the rhetoric of free markets, 'financial equilibrium' of the right hand of the state does not know anything about budgetary restrictions imposed on people (p.5). He writes similar to Harvey's argument that 'One of the main reasons for all these people's despair is that the state has withdrawn... from a number of sectors in social life for which it was previously responsible: social housing, public service broadcasting, schools, hospitals, etc.' (p.2) Bourdieu finds all these ideology, the theory of neoliberalism, letting everything to the market, free trade discourse a 'fiction' and he says: 'This tutelary theory is a pure

mathematical fiction. From the start, it has been founded on a formidable abstraction. For, in the name of a narrow and strict conception of rationality as individual rationality, it brackets the economic and social conditions of rational orientations and the economic and social structures that are the condition of their application' (2003: 94). So Bourdieu (1994) argues that all the homoeconomicus individual, who is calculating costs and benefits and tries to maximize his/her interest, and free to choose, is a fictitious and ahistorical entity, so not everyone is free to choose, has the same chances to choose (p.18).

Although it is first used in the 1930s, neoliberalism is started to be widely used in social sciences for two decades<sup>35</sup> or so. Springer et al (2016) write that 'If neoliberalism is to serve as a way of understanding the transformation of society over the last few decades then the concept is need of unpacking' (p.2). Since it turned into a 'master concept' (Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2008), to diminish the fuzziness of it; one needs to be specific what he/she means by neoliberalism. Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008) try to delimit where does neoliberalism start and end. They say that 'there is a need to move beyond abstract and totalizing approaches that treat neoliberalism as a thing that acts in the world' (p.115).

Yazıcı (2013) from a very similar vein with Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008), argues that recently the concept of neoliberalism has turned into a reified and magical key in the social sciences. It is used as a central explanatory in a wide range of disciplines from economic policies, law, education, social policies, the transformation of urban land, consumption practices, social memory, privacy and body, art, cinema, to the media and many other subjects. Yazıcı criticizes social scientists using the term so willingly without questioning it. She urges social scientists to historicize, contextualize, and specify it by taking consideration to localities within a broader context rather than using it a very abstract level as the magical key for explaining everything so smoothly and directly. She argues that her aim is not to urge social scientists to discard neoliberalism but to theorize it better. Yazıcı says that one needs to understand how neoliberalism changes within time. For

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<sup>35</sup> England, K., & Ward, K. (2016). Theorizing Neoliberalization. in Springer, S., Birch, K., and MacLeavy, J., eds. *The Handbook of Neoliberalism*. London: Routledge, 50-60.

example in the 1980s, it aimed to abolish and erase what is left from the Keynesian State, with the slogan of withdrawal of state while after the 1990s it needed the direct intervention of the state to open up the markets for its expansion.

According to Kumar and Hill (2009), the ‘neo’ part in neoliberalism, its difference from classical/ laissez-faire liberalism of 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, is the rolling back of the state, but rolling back of the state from the welfare services. A strong state stands there to promote interests of the market, and ready for the market all the time for the smooth running functioning of them (p.3).

England and Ward (2016) in their paper, argue that neoliberalism is used differently in two different theoretical perspectives, both political economy and post-structuralism use neoliberalism in different ways. The political economy perspective is crystallized in Marxist David Harvey’s understanding of neoliberalism, his view of neoliberalism as a top-down project, orchestrated by corporate capitalists is very widely used by social scientists. As opposed to that understanding, there is the governmentality understanding of Foucault’s, Ward and England argue that this perspective is about: “the focus is on the junking of ‘grand narratives’, instead attention is on situated experiences, meanings and representations and explorations of neoliberalism as a cultural project”(p.53). Foucault’s understanding of governmentality rather than taking neoliberalism as a project directed from one source, shifts power from a central authority and distributes it among the population, and looks at how subjects turn into self-regulating neoliberal subjects who are always thinking about to increase their interests and chances in the future.

Springer (2012) on the other hand, criticizes the necessity in terms of choosing between Marxian political economy and Foucauldian poststructuralism in terms of studying the neoliberalism, so he questions the top-down and bottom-up approaches of these theoretical strains, he founds this as a false dichotomy. Springer instead writes that ‘a culturally informed critical political economy has a major role to play in developing politically enabling understanding of the entanglements of power in an increasingly interdependent neoliberal world’ (p.135).

In this thesis case, from a similar vein with Springer (2012) I will look at how the neoliberal policies orchestrated by the neoliberal JDP government which leads to parentocracy, is further continued by the families' habituses with their attempts for the reproduction. So although there are structural constraints and different policies, people are not adopting it in a one to one fashion, they rather inclined to reproduce their class with their habitus in contradiction with or thanks to neoliberalism. So in this thesis I will both look at neoliberal policies of the government as well as secular middle-class parents' strategies to reproduce their existing situations within the constraints and also with the allowances of these policies.

Considering the fact that neoliberalism's rhetoric on self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and responsibility of the individuals rather than depending on the safety net provided by the states, neoliberalism's ideology was in favor of middle classes. With neoliberal ideology, middle-class members are considered as the ideal type of citizen, because they were symbolizing that with hard work and individual responsibility people can reach their goals, and people are also free to exercise their choices, although these postulates are not necessarily true. Savage et al. (2014) write that 'middle class is held to be backbone of society... (In) 20<sup>th</sup> century, notably by conservative politicians seeking to define the middle classes as bastions of national virtue against the dangerous working-class' (p.1021). In the following part of this chapter, a brief debate on class studies and how the middle classes were studied are discussed.

### **3.2 Middle Classes**

It is generally argued that the middle class is a though and indefinite class to define. There were many attempts to explain what the middle class is by many theorists, questions about what will be the future of middle class in the long run, whether they will disappear and diminished into the working class or whether they will expand and became the bastions of democratic societies are long asked. In this section, a brief discussion in terms of the attempts being made to define the middle class is given to be able to convey the context that how Bourdieu formed his class analysis, and his concept's differences and similarities from the others.



As capitalism progressed in the Western world so did the middle classes, non-manual and waged or salaried workers were growing bigger. Some theorists took them as transitory and residual, and thought that they would disappear in the long run, some theoretical traditions accepted that they as a strata, group between capitalists and working-class, and different from them in terms of life chances, education, occupation, status. It is argued that there were also differences in middle class itself, some of them were highly educated doing managerial jobs, and earning high wages, some of them were not paid well and doing repetitive non-manual jobs. Since they were highly differentiated in terms of education, occupation, income, authority in decision making, they were not easy to categorize.

When one thinks of class in social sciences, he/she cannot continue without referring to Karl Marx of course. Marx thought that there are mainly two classes: which are bourgeoisie and proletariat, he argued that there is an antagonist relationship between them, and bourgeois exploits the proletariat. He argued that this was caused mainly the bourgeois owns the means of production. So very roughly, Marx saw the class difference in the production process, irrespective of the wage that the worker earns, because bourgeois owns the means of production and appropriates the surplus value that the workers produce, there is an inequality. Though Marx referred to middle and intermediate strata, in his book of Volume 3 of Capital, he thought that this middle stratum will be transitory and will dissolve into the proletariat with the further capitalist expansion. It was debated that Marx overlooked the middle class because of its political agenda.

Another theorist on class is Max Weber; according to Weber class cannot be limited to the production process, he instead looked at the 'market situation,' embraced a 'multidimensional view of stratification'. For Weber, 'The term 'class' refers to any group of people that is found in the same class situation (Gerth and Mills, 1958:181)', members of the same class do not necessarily share a sense of belonging and set of objectives, they are just the aggregates of people who are located in the same class situation. Weber added status and power as important aspects of the

distribution of power in society. He suggested that there were three sources of stratification, which are: economic class, social status, and political power /party.

Weber focused on how the 'class situation' of one's is affecting his/her life chances that is individuals' economic and social opportunities. Weber (1978) outlines a thorough classification of the propertied, commercial, and social classes. Propertied class based on whether one has a property or not, or the differences of people in terms of property including wealth, capital, shares and so on. The owners of property have a tangible advantage and may sometimes have a monopoly over labor. He divided the property owners into two, as entrepreneurs and rentiers. The commercial class was composed of merchants, bankers and financiers, professionals, and agricultural and industrial entrepreneurs with the criteria of marketability of their goods and services. He further divides this commercial class into two, where positively privileged members who control variety of services and properties, and also there is the negatively privileged group who lacks what positively privileged group has. For Weber, middle classes are located between the 'positively' and 'negatively' privileged propertied and commercial classes, including small property owners, craftsmen, professionals, public officials and high skilled workers (Weber 1978, cited in Darity Jr, 2008, p.144). Social class is all the people who are in similar positions with regard to their individual and intergenerational mobility. He identifies four different groups of social class, first one is the ones who are privileged through property and education, second one is propertyless intelligentsia, third one is petty bourgeoisie, farmers, shopkeepers, professionals, and the last one is the working class. Weber, unlike Marx, did not agree that class interests of people will eventually result with the uniformity of social action, in other words, he thought that classes do not have unifying interests. Status for Weber is about social honor, which includes things like respect and prestige. Parties are groups or individuals that seek social power like business councils or labor unions. In his view class, status and party were all aspects of distribution of power in a society, not necessarily dependent on each other, but they sometimes interact with each other reinforcing or undercutting each other. For example one can be a member of propertied class, having so many

properties but have a lower social status due to earning these properties in illegal ways, which society does not approve.

In terms of middle-class studies, Marxist social scientists such as Poulantzas studied on the traditional and new petit bourgeoisie's unproductive labor compared with the productive labor of working-class which creates surplus value (Poulantzas, 1973) while Wright worked on the contradictory class locations of the small employers, professionals and managers depending on the power, ownership, control over money capital and labor criteria (Wright, 1997). Middle classes for him are the propertyless employees, who do not own the means of production; still their levels of skill, knowledge and their position in the companies put them in a contradictory class location. Though they do not own the means of production, they still have a relatively advantageous position compared with the proletariat. Neo-Marxists are generally interested in the boundary problems of middle classes, with the questions of how big they are, if they can be included in the class struggle or not.

Ehrenreich (1989) defines the characteristics that make up the American professional middle class. She argues that occupation is the first characteristic of them, unlike the upper class, the middle class has to work for a living. Nonetheless, the minority of it is self-employed like physicians or therapists, most of them are work in corporations or bureaucratic institutions. Since the professional middle class does mental work; they have much autonomy than the other white collars. These classes have guild-like structures, only the ones who received adequate education, and have the appropriate credentials can attain this club. The members of this class earn more than the other sections of the middle class. In terms of lifestyle and tastes, professional middle class consumes to establish its status, and they marry within the class, which results with a cast like quality (p.13-14).

Neo-Weberians, on the other hand, look at the class and market situation of the people and their life chances in general. Especially Giddens takes middle class as white-collar employees and divides them into three groups which are old, upper and lower-middle classes. While the old one is defined by having small properties or not, upper-middle-class is composed of managers and officials; finally, lower middle

class are the employees who do routine jobs. He conceptualizes them with the shared market capacity on the basis of ownership, skills and manual labor-power.

Goldthorpe et al. (1987) also look at the shared market and employment situations; sources and amounts of income, whether one has job security or not, and one's location in the decision making, also his/her authority and control over one's workplace. He enumerates four sections of classes, which can be counted as middle class, which are service class, cadet service class, routine non-manual, and petty bourgeoisie.

Rossides (1990) divides the class system in the United States into five social classes: these are upper, upper-middle, lower-middle, working and lower classes. Upper middle classes are composed of substantial proprietors, upper-level managers, and professionals who have college or graduate training. Lower-middle-class on the other hand, for Rossides, is composed of people who are at the clerical and sales positions, people who are smaller property owners, and people who are employed in the middle management positions. Members of this class have high school and some college degrees. Rossides defined these characteristics of classes based on the criteria of 'shared levels of benefits across dimensions of economic standing, prestige, and power' (Kingston, 2000).

Gilbert and Kahl (2017), on the other hand, divide US society into six classes with the addition of underclass to the Rossides' analysis. These are capitalists/upper class, upper-middle-class, middle class, working class, working poor and finally underclass. Upper middle class depends mostly on the education for Gilbert and Kahl, it is very similar to Rossides' (1990) upper-middle class. With their own words: 'below the capitalist class is an upper-middle-class of well-paid, university-educated managers and professionals: people with responsible positions in business organizations, along with lawyers, doctors, accountants, and other specialists' (p.29). The lower middle class, on the other hand, is composed of semi-professionals and lower managers, such as insurance agents, teachers, nurses, electricians, and plumbers (p.29). They additionally add underclass as people who are living in the

inner cities, dependent on welfare and do not have any connections with the job market.

To conclude this part, Marx and Neo-Marxist scholars relied on the production process to define the class relations, and saw middle class in terms of a boundary problem, whether it will join the class struggle or not. Weber and Neo-Weberian scholars, on the other hand, saw class not in terms of the production process only, and as the only factor that leads to stratification, but they rather looked at the life chances of different classes, their education, occupation, consumption practices, and status. Scholars like Rossides (1990), Gilbert and Kahl (2017) in the American stratification studies' tradition, made gradational stratification analysis rather than a relational class analysis, according to Wright (2003), Weber and Marx, on the other hand, made relational class analysis, where 'the issue is not simply descriptively locating people within some kind of system of stratification -- either subjectively or objectively -- but identifying certain causal mechanisms that help determine salient features of that system' (p.2).

In this thesis case, concept of class, is used within Bourdieusian lines, Bourdieu's approach is different from the aforementioned class discussions, he was not after to define the class whether it will join the class struggle or not, or not to enumerate them like they are independent from each other. But he with the help of his different types of capitals, he defined the position of the people in different fields with relational terms. So people are actually living the class in their daily lives by differentiating themselves from the each other, people's having relatively low one type of capital would not necessarily mean that he/she will be disadvantageous in all of the fields, but different capitals are functioning differently in various fields. Bourdieu's contribution to the class discussion is given in the conceptual framework of the thesis in detail for the analysis section, however before this, below there is a discussion in terms of how scholars inspired from Bourdieu has approached to the issue of class.

### 3.3 Cultural Turn

In response to classical class and stratification studies, a new school of thought on class studies, which incorporates Bourdieu to their analysis, has emerged. Cultural turn scholars were suggesting studying class in people's lives, despite all the rhetoric of diminishing of class politics, the class was still in place for them.

According to Butler and Savage (1995), social scientists generally either studied elites, who are at the top, or the working class and poor, people who are at the bottom. Studying the middle classes was not a very popular topic until recently (end of 20<sup>th</sup> century). According to Savage and Devine (2005) until the 1970s, stratification studies dominated the field of class studies; the aim was to measure the classes, to detect the actors of future political struggles. In these studies, scholars worked on the issue of working-class, which was receiving attention due to the attributed role of revolution to them. Stratification studies relied on the employment status of people. Very roughly, it was expected with Structure-Consciousness-Action approach that, when working-class will be aware of its place in the relations of production, it will realize the inequality that the system produces, that it is being exploited by the bourgeoisie and became 'class for itself' instead of being 'class in itself', and will take action for revolution. After the Fall of Berlin Wall and the dissolution of Soviet Union, however, this revolutionary role given to working-class has played down. (Savage & Devine, 2005)

Lockwood also (1995) writes that Marxist theory of 'class in itself' and, then 'class for itself' cannot be adequate to explain the contemporary situation anymore. Large scale 'class movements' cannot be expected due to the fact that 'institutional nexus of bureaucratization, citizenship, market relationships brought their patterns of legitimation as well as the inequality'. Secondly, Lockwood argues that working class was fractured in itself; some members of them were participating in the middle classes (p.4). Diminishing traditional working-class politics and discussions on whether class is a relevant concept or not, also have contributed to not studying class in social sciences. Authors say that however things have changed, in 1995, there was

attention given to the middle class as whether they will be the actors of social change or they will be the defenders of the status-quo (Butler & Savage, 1995, p. vii, viii).

Savage and Devine (2005) highlight how stratification studies ignored the role of culture in people's lives. They argue, by referring to Bourdieu that people's realizing their position in society does not mean that, it necessarily and automatically will result in social change, rather people are inclined to reproduce the system because of the vested interests, capitals they have, though they are in a disadvantageous position. They argue that people are inclined to take the world as granted and reproduce the existing system. So there might be ambivalences in terms of one's class and his/her action. Bourdieu himself calls this given all the priority to the consciousness a 'scholastic bias,' he says that 'we all think that problems can be solved only through consciousness (1992)'.

So the cultural turn theorists thought that conventional class theories are inadequate to explain the current situation, and they suggested that class analysis should include cultural issues. Though there is no collective action based on class, people's lives are structured with their class identities. Reay (2006) writes: 'Cultural analysts of class focus on class processes and practices, the everyday workings of social class, developing conceptualizations that move beyond the economic and exchange' (p.289). They took Bourdieu's work to the core, to understand the issues of subjectivity, how the class is lived on a daily basis, how people differentiate themselves from others with respect their class position.

In Bourdieu's understanding, class is not only about one owns the means of production, or have property or not, or related to the one's occupation, or education only. Bourdieu (2013) rather connects all these in a relational way, not in the sense of enumerating, with his concepts of different capitals, he shows how people are scattered unequally in social positions depending on the composition and volume of capitals they have, and he also shows that how people are producing and reproducing existing inequalities through their cultural capitals, their tastes, judgments.

### 3.4 Bourdieu's Conceptual Framework:

In order to understand how middle-class families are inclined to allocate all their different capitals for their children's education, and try to reproduce their class position, and finally how this creates inequality; this section introduces Bourdieu's essential concepts such as different types of capitals and conversions between them, also the concepts of reproduction, habitus, and field.

Bourdieu's sociology is composed of many interrelated concepts; one cannot fully understand a concept without giving reference to another. Bourdieu, with his understanding of fictional dualities in social sciences, has contributed a lot to make sense of the social life. He challenged many dualities in sociology like theory versus methodology, agent versus structure, subjectivity versus objectivity, body versus mind. Rather than being a supporter of a particular theorist, he made use of different understandings of theoreticians and their methods, like selecting various tools from a toolbox to better explain the social depending on a context (Calhoun, 2002, p.13).

Calhoun writes that:

A former rugby player and a reader of the later Wittgenstein, Bourdieu was drawn to the metaphor of games to convey his sense of social life. But by "game" he didn't mean mere entertainments. Rather, he meant a serious athlete's understanding of a game. He meant the experience of being passionately involved in the play, engaged in a struggle with others and with our own limits, over stakes to which we are (at least for the moment) deeply committed. He meant intense competition. He meant for us to recall losing ourselves in the play of a game, caught in its flow in such a way that no matter how individualistically we struggle we are also constantly aware of being part of something larger—a team, certainly, but also the game itself. (2008, p.275)

Bourdieu uses a game metaphor to explain the social. He says that games are played in a field, and the players must have stakes to enter the game. People's taking the game as granted, taking the life as granted, not questioning it, means *doxa* for Bourdieu. Prospective stakes at the game, rewards of the game are *illusio* for Bourdieu. In every field there are different types and amounts of capital to be used. People are not entering the games, fields in equal terms but they enter in terms of the capitals they have. The total of types and amounts of capital means leverage,



advantage against other players. Every field requires different types of capitals, the ones who are experienced and established in the field try to delimit how the game should be played, and the ones who entered the game recently may try to change the rules of the game, different players' stakes in the game result with a struggle in a social field.<sup>36</sup>

Since he was challenging the Rational Choice Theory, which was prevalent in his time, he was saying that people are not always calculating cost and benefits consciously to reach certain ends, to get the rewards in a game, in the social life, but they think and act practically without much thinking, they have certain dispositions, judgments which they brought from their families and upbringings. With his famous concept of habitus he showed, how the society and individual, structure and agent are not separate at all. Habitus is 'an individualized social structure in one's body' (Bourdieu, 2014: 68-9), and it is 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them' (1990, p.53).

Calhoun (2002) for habitus writes that 'they are simultaneously structured and structuring because they are embedded in the repetition and occasionally innovation of action through time'. Again, habitus shows how redundant the hostility is between agent and structure. Still, Bourdieu was argued to be a determinist by some scholars such as Jenkins (1982) for not giving any agency to the individual with the concept of habitus.

In terms of the relationship between field and habitus, the field, in order to continue its existence, requires certain habituses and shapes them respectively, habitus also needs fields to sustain itself. In other words, in order the field to reproduce itself, it necessitates habitus or vice versa.

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<sup>36</sup> I used 'Pratik, Kültür, Sermaye, Habitus ve Alan Teorileriyle Bourdieu Sosyolojisi' text written by Cihad Özsöz, which I could not find any information of its publishment year.

The families are the major sources giving their acquired habitus of the past to their offspring, but habitus does not work in one way, individuals can also affect the habitus as well.

For Bourdieu (1996), though the family is an arbitrary social construct, it represents itself as the most natural and universal thing. He argues that family discourse has three important functions. First one is that family shapes the child, he takes family as the common spirit, independent from its members, transmitting the main personality of its members. Secondly, family is seen as divine sanctum, a haven, free from all the difficulties, ugliness of the outside world. Third is about the concept of house, used in French as '*demeure*'; people are keeping their families by constantly giving of debts and gifts, he states that "it is a world in which the ordinary laws of the economy are suspended, a place of trusting and giving – as opposed to the market and its exchanges of equivalent values" (p.20). For Bourdieu, families have a significant role in terms of the continuation of reproduction. He says that "the family aims to reproduce itself biologically and socially. It attempts to reproduce those of its attributes that enable to keep its position, its standing in the social world being considered" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 116).

Families from different social positions with varying endowments of capital have different class habituses. He mainly identifies four types of capital; these are economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and finally symbolic capital.

Bourdieu (1986) explains what capital means:

The social world is accumulated history, and if it is not to be reduced to a discontinuous series of instantaneous mechanical equilibria between agents who are treated as interchangeable particles, one must reintroduce into it the notion of capital and with it, accumulation and all its effects. Capital is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or group of agents, enabled them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. (p.46)

He challenges the idea that people's seeing of economic capital only in economic terms, other capitals are also not exempted from economic principle, they too are accumulated and with their conversions can be turned into economic capital as well. So Bourdieu suggests that social hierarchies are not produced only with economic

means. In other words, one's class does not only depend on the economic capital one has. Bourdieu (2006), unlike Marx, suggests that there are different types of capitals other than the economic one, and these are all important in different ways, in their own terms.

### **Economic Capital**

Economic capital is similar to Marx', though Marx was referring to means of production, Bourdieu's one is about property, income, and savings one has. These are the goods that can be 'immediately and directly convertible to money (Bourdieu, 1986, p.47)'.

### **Cultural Capital and Reproduction:**

One of the crucial contributions of Bourdieu is his concept of cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, there are three forms of cultural capital. These are: embodied, objectified, and finally institutionalized forms of cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital is about how one speaks a language, whether he/she speaks it flawlessly or not, with a particular accent or not, or one's bodily gestures, attitudes, manners in specific settings. This kind of capital can be learned eventually through the offspring mimicking their parents and cannot be transferred to one's offspring directly, so there must be prolonged exposure. Second form of cultural capital is the objectified one. These are the pieces of art such as books, paintings and sculptures. So they are in a material form, and these have chance to be converted into the money form. The main form of cultural capital which will be the topic of this thesis and the reproduction of middle-class debates will be the institutionalized cultural capital. This type of cultural capital is about the certificates and diplomas given from schools, universities; they are socially validated assessments that are given by legal institutions and seen as the most legitimate and viable path to acquire good occupation in the future for middle-class families. Weininger (2002) writes in terms of reproduction that:

One of the foremost characteristics of cultural capital, for Bourdieu, is heritability; as such, it can make a substantial contribution to the inter-generational reproduction of the distribution of individuals across class locations, since "the social conditions

of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986)". (p.126)

Despite the fact that, in modern times, society is representing itself democratic and open for all, and it does this through educational institutions with the discourse of achieved status rather than ascribed status, this representation is not necessarily accurate for Bourdieu (Nash, 1990). Bourdieu with his books of 'The Inheritors: French students and their relation to culture' written in 1964, and 'Reproduction in education, society and culture' written in 1970, was challenging the idea that the Fifth Republic of France brought everyone equality through education. Despite all the prevalence of the harbinger of 'mutation' discourse and 'the end of ideology' discourse in his time, he showed that the inequalities were continuing (Bourdieu, 1990: ix-x). He argued that although educational policies of the state might have seemed as providing equality of opportunity for all, actually existing inequalities were still in practice and class differences were continuing to be reproduced. The reason behind this was the cultural capital of the families since the schools are shaped by an elite habitus previously, despite the democratization and comprehensiveness of schools, they were expecting from working-class students to be the same as elite students, they were judging working-class students with the criteria of elite students. For example, adjectives such as 'bright,' 'gifted' and 'talented' were used for elite students by their teachers, adjectives such as 'serious', 'hardworking' were used for working-class students (Bourdieu, 2014, p.42). Since working-class students did not have such cultural capital as the elite students had, the school was disregarding their cultural capital. Since the school system was opened to everyone, the failure of the students was seen as their fault, hiding the inequality which started early in the family regarding the cultural capital.

For Bourdieu, middle-class families depend on the education most to reproduce their class because of their limited economic capital compared with elites, and their higher cultural capital in contrast to working class. Since they have higher cultural capital and want to sustain this, the middle class tries to retain their advantageous position through educational system; they give considerable attention to their children's education. However reproduction may not always be guaranteed for middle class due

to the decreasing jobs, inflation of degrees, and much fierce competition to get these jobs. This leads to intensified competition among middle class in terms of differentiating themselves through education. He writes in terms of reproduction of middle class that:

The educational mode of reproduction is a statistical mode of reproduction. What is reproduced is a relatively constant fraction of the class (in the logical sense of the term). But the factors determining who will sink and who will swim no longer depend on the family alone. But the family is interested in specific individuals. If you tell them: overall, 90 percent will swim, but none of them will come from your family, they're not all pleased. So there is a contradiction between the specific interests of the family as a body and 'collective class interests' (2014, p.86).

In the last years of his life, Bourdieu became an activist against the neoliberal policies, which was dominant in the world. Though he showed that comprehensive and democratic educational policies of the state, which were embraced after World War Two, haven't ended the inequalities between different classes, but reproduced it, he was thinking that social welfare features of the state still must be defended against all the self-responsibility, free choice discourse of the neoliberalism. Because for Bourdieu, these social welfare policies of the state were won collectively, and should not be surrendered against the 'tyranny of the market'.

### **Social Capital**

Social capital for Bourdieu is about contacts with influential and prominent people, how many people one knows and how one can mobilize them in a particular situation like to ask a favor, to find a job or to get an advice about which school to send children. One's social capital increases by the volume of the capital of their contacts. For example, knowing one highly prestigious person in terms of economic and cultural and social capital may worth more than knowing many other people.

For the education system, it is suggested that elite students at the universities do not only acquire cultural capital, but they form a network, accumulate a social capital that they will use later in their lives such as for finding a job.

## **Symbolic Capital**

Symbolic capital is about social legitimation, honor and respect, and any form of capital that is recognized as legitimate in a field. Bourdieu (1977) writes that ‘symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby disguised form of physical ‘economic’ capital, produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only as much, as it conceals the fact that it originates in ‘material’ forms’ (p.183). This type of capital is also legitimated through the vested interests of dominant groups. For example, having an eclectic cultural capital, knowing and connecting many things can be found as necessary in terms of symbolic capital, as the legitimate skill in elite universities while working-class students’ concentration and knowing only the subject that they study may be discredited by symbolic capital. (Bourdieu, 2014)

To conclude this part, Bourdieu with his concepts of capital, how these capitals might be allocated at different times, and showing how middle class takes reproduction seriously, structures the conceptual framework of this thesis. In a time of ‘parentocracy’ with neoliberal education policies, where families are seen as the only responsible ones of their child’s education, with a human capital understanding, Bourdieu’s theory comes to the front to shed light to the existing and reproduced inequalities. Though the system represents itself as open to everyone, it is far from being equal.

## **3.5 Neoliberalism in Education and Middle Class’ Relation to Education**

### **3.5.1 Theories on the Sociology of Education**

In this section, I very briefly mention about how education and schooling are seen by different theoretical traditions, to locate how education is taken in this thesis.

According to Ballantine and Hammack (2009), sociology of education is fairly a new field: much of the literature has been developed in the past half-century. (2009) There are very basically three views in the sociology of education, these are structural functionalism and symbolic interactionism and finally conflict theories.

The functionalist school argues that education is the key for the operation and stability, and for the smooth functioning of society. There are certain functions of the schooling which are socialization, where the kids together learn to be competitive, patriotic and to be just. Another function of schooling is cultural innovation, in the schools; innovations are made for the benefit of all. The third function of the education is social integration where it molds different groups of society accordingly to the shared norms and values. The final and most important postulate of it is 'Schools identify talent and match instruction to ability. Schooling increases meritocracy by rewarding talent and hard work regardless of one's social background and provides a path to upward social mobility'(p.520). This promise of schools' rewarding of hard work and talent irrespective of one's social background was challenged many times, especially with the neoliberal policies' effects on educational inequalities. (Apple, 1982; Ercan, 1998; Hill, 2013)

Another theory in sociology of education is symbolic interactionism, which shows that the stereotypes and prejudices of the teachers in schools affect the success of children. It argues that these biases are turning into self-fulfilling prophecies with the teachers' neglect of some children and favoring of some others. This theory is also criticized on the grounds that it does not show where these biases come from, which are deeply entrenched in society. (Macionis, 2012: 520)

The third theory is the conflict theory; it shows how schooling both creates and perpetuates the existing social inequalities. It argues that structural-functionalist idea of schooling develops everybody's talents and skills irrespective of one's social background is not attuned to reality, what schooling actually, does for conflict theory, is to nourish the existing school stratification, and it does this through different means.

Ballantine and Hammack (2009) write for conflict theories in education that:

Cultural reproduction and resistance theories argue, very generally, that those who dominate capitalistic system mold individuals to suit their own purposes. Beginning in the 1960s in Europe, these theorists considered how forms of culture passed on by families and schools. The amount of 'cultural capital' one has is an indicator of one's status and families. Schools differ in the amount of cultural capital they provide the children. (p.19)

Conflict theory argues that education and schooling serve the purpose of social control where people learn to accept the status quo. It is argued by Brown that, mass schooling in the time of Industrial Revolution times, was for gentling the masses of working classes rather than giving them a chance for social mobility. Standardized testing is also criticized on the grounds that it tries to inculcate the dominant knowledge as the only legitimate one, for the other groups in the society. Tracking, assigning of different achieving students to different classes, is also criticized. In the US context, it is found that students who are assigned to lower tracks came generally from lower-class students, and Black students, and their disadvantageous position is exacerbated through signing them to lower tracks. (Kozol, 1992; as cited in Macionis, 2012, p.552)

Conflict theory also criticizes the inequalities between private schools and public schools, and even inequalities within public schools. Private school is not a viable option for many sections of the society; in the US context well-to-do White middle-class parents in suburban areas send their children to good quality public schools, because these schools are locally funded. In other words, since they are funded at the neighborhood level, those who cannot afford to live there cannot send their children to those schools. So there is a segregation in public schools depending on residential districts.

Though human capital theory argues that education is a good investment for one's life, which increases the life chances of individual, and their earnings in the future, conflict theory shows that not everyone can earn human capital because of the expensiveness of colleges in US context. Conflict theory also argues that schools through tracking and serving the benefits of a particular group turns 'social privilege to personal merit' (Macionis, 2012: 527) It is what Bourdieu's saying with 'misrecognition,' though the system privileges some groups, it does this through presenting the system as open to everyone. Sennett too argues that 'given our cultural emphasis on individualism, we tend to see credentials as badges of ability rather than as symbols of family affluence' (Sennett, Cobb, 1972; as cited in Macionis, 2012). Macionis writes that 'when we congratulate the new graduate, we rarely recognize



the resources- in terms of money and cultural capital-that made this achievement possible' (2012: p.527).

To conclude, in this thesis, functionalist school's promise on the education, which is an upward mobility chance of students irrespective of one's social background, is problematized. So in this thesis, reproduction theory in education is used, it is mostly the social class which defines educational achievement, future chances of children, rather than personal merits and talents (Savage and Egerton, 1997). Making neoliberal policies, which lead to 'parentocracy' will result in strengthening the hand of inequalities more.

### **3.5.2 Neoliberalism and Education**

Neoliberal policies through the Structural Adjustment Policies started to be implemented with the instructions of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, UNESCO, and OECD both in developed and developing world in 1980s. The aim of this was the opening up the services, which previously provided by the state to the logic of market (Hill, 2004). It was thought that state-run sectors were inefficient and needed to be fixed with privatization. These policies, in the end, found its reflections in the education system as well; the public education which was given on comprehensive and inclusive ways, with Keynesian politics- after WW2 in developed countries like Britain, US, France-, started to be organized with a neoliberal logic.

Neoliberalism in education, according to Apple (2001) means that; free market, private enterprise, profit, consumer choice, no state provision, and finally no teacher's union in education institutions (Apple, 2001). So education, like any other services in the market was designed based on choice and demand. The consumers are 'free' to choose the schools in the education market, with the competition between schools it was expected that quality of schools will surge. In terms of relation between capitalism and education, Hill (2004) argues that with neoliberalism, firstly, there is the capitalist agenda for education, which is 'what capital wants education to provide' i.e. how capital wants to make indirect profits from education the efforts to impose standards, accountability. Secondly, there is the capitalist agenda in

education: how capital wants to make direct profits from education, by private schools, courses, etc. Hills' conceptualization of the relationship between capital and education leads us to Becker's human capital theory.

The neoliberal logic was relying on the human capital theory, which argues that individuals to raise their life chances and earnings in the future should invest in education. Human capital highlights the relation between employment and education, so education is seen as a means to get a higher-earning job, and it is seen as good investment when one thinks of its future benefits. 'The more you learn, the more you earn' was the logic of human capital theory. However, human capital theory is criticized because it empties the 'societal,' 'communal' features of education, which relied on solidarity and democracy principles. Instead, it aligns education with the logic of market and focuses only on the benefits of the individual, not the society (Brown, 2015).

Brown (2006) argues that together with neoliberalism, social problems are depoliticized with the self-reliance discourse. Brown writes that 'neoliberalism converts every political or social problem into the market terms, it converts them to individual problems with market solutions... private schools, charter schools, and voucher system as a response to the collapse of quality public education' (p.704). Kumar and Hill (2012) also discuss that biographical solutions became a substitute for systematic restructuring of education in neoliberal terms' (p.5). Apple (2004) likewise writes that together with neoliberalism 'we are witnessing a process, in which the state shifts the blame, for the very evident inequalities in access and outcome it has promised to reduce, from itself onto individual schools, parents and children' (p.24).

As Harvey (2005) has shown, the neoliberal structuring in education came with 'freedom to choose' more specifically 'parental choice' and 'school choice' (Hill, 2013). In this sense, parents now have the chance to choose the best schools for their kids, rather than relying only upon the public schools. Though the neoliberal discourse has packaged these changes with the rhetoric of choice; it is argued that not everyone can choose, choice of someone becomes the necessity of some other. Whitty (1997) writes that 'Atomized decision making in a highly stratified society

may appear to give everyone equal opportunities, but transforming 'responsibility' for decision making from the public to private sphere can actually reduce the collective action to improve quality education for all' (p.58; as cited in Apple, 2004). Reay (2012) also argues that what is left to the working class will be the schools that were not chosen by the middle class.

So what was seen as the right of citizens has turned into a commodity and privilege because only the ones who have the necessary capitals can buy the quality education from the market, because the public schools start not to provide it as it was used to be, due to the budget cuts. As Connell (2013) writes 'to create a market you have to restrict the service in some way. In this case you have to ration education. What you sell, then, is a privilege- something that other people cannot get' (p.105).

Apple (2002) argues that with choice discourse, schools began to attract only 'able parents', who are high on cultural and economic capital, and their 'able children' (who have already accumulated a cultural capital which is legitimate for the school environment), to be enrolled in themselves, due to the decreased quality in public schools, also they attract parents who want to differentiate their children from the others. Because schools are enumerated in the league tables, they are choosing these parents- middle-class parents, in a process of 'cream-skimming' according to Apple.

To conclude this section, with the implementation of neoliberal education policies in education, education which was a once citizen right becomes a consumer privilege. Since education started to be seen in human capital terms, only the ones who made enough investments to education can be eligible to benefit from it in the future. So, the upper and middle classes who are able to choose and pay can only get quality education due to the 'rationing' of education in the state schools.

### **3.5.3 Neo-Conservatism in Education**

Hill (2013) argues that neoliberalism does not generally come alone but comes with a 'twin', which is (neo)conservatism, though they don't have an easy relationship. He writes that "the paths of neoliberalisation and (neo)conservatism are similar in many countries. But each country has its history, has its particular context" (Hill, 2013,

p.3). The (neo) conservatism in education for Britain's context firstly refers to 'order and control' and secondly to the 'traditional morality'. He further says that conservatism in education in Britain's context mostly refers to the higher standards that the elite schools give, and has not any religious connotations. But Hill writes for the case of US and Turkey that:

In many countries, there is now in schools and in universities an emphasis on designing, applying and updating education and school teaching programs that seek to develop and stimulate students to develop very specific values/ value systems. In some states of the USA, these values are Christian fundamentalist, socially illiberal, economically individualistic. In Turkey, religion plays a similar role. While the values are Islamic and specifically Turkish and Islamic conservative, the same partnership thrives- the partnership between social illiberalism and conformity with economic individualism. (Hill, 2013, p.9)

For Apple (2004), neoconservatism in the American context is a “sense of a need to return to a romantic view of lost past of high standards, discipline, order and "real" knowledge” (p.30), and it is very similar to what Hill (2013) suggests. But additionally Apple (2002) adds ‘authoritarian populism’ to what is happening in the US education scene recently. This authoritarian populism was aimed to put Biblical and Evangelical Christian morality to the center of education policies, where traditional gender roles, free enterprise, nuclear family, homophobia are shaping the curriculum. These groups also try to discard the evolution from curriculum and add Creation instead of it. Apple argues that “there was an overt and worrying successful campaign for Christian Religious indoctrination, despite the existence of a diverse, multiculturalist society” (Harber, 2002: p.488).

To conclude this section, conservatism in education in US and Britain contexts mostly means higher standards of elite education; conservative politicians with the neoliberalism in the 80s, defended the idea that comprehensive education; with equal opportunity for all, has damaged high quality of the elite education, they instead was defending the idea that only a small proportion of the population, elites should receive a quality education. On the other hand, more recently, Apple (2002) with authoritarian populism shows the encroachment of Evangelical Christian values to the education curricula. This group of people was defending the idea that all of the population should base their values accordingly to the Evangelical Christianity, to

do that they aimed to change the curriculum. Wendy Brown (2006) takes neo-conservatism as ‘fixing and enforcing meanings, conserving certain ways of life’ (p.692), which means a ‘setting the moral-religious compass for society, and a setting indeed for the world’ (p.697), her account of neo-conservatism is similar to what Apple suggests with authoritarian populism.

In this thesis case conservatism in education is not taken as the attempts for imposing the higher standards of the ‘lost’ elite education once again in Britain’s case. But it is similar to what Apple (2002) suggests with ‘authoritarian populism’ and Wendy Brown (2006) with neoconservatism. The education system in Turkey, is rather tried to be designed with the idea that everyone should get an education in Sunni Islam lines. And Sunni Islam here, is also a very specific one, since it is based on the interpretation of the current government’s practical needs. So neoconservatism in education tries to fixate the reality to this end, without taking consideration the expectations and concerns of the different components of people in Turkey. There are seculars, Alevis, non- Muslims, religious people who do not want their children to get a religious education, however they are all forced to get the same kind of education in the state schools with the top- down understanding of the current government.

### **3.5.4 Middle Classes and Education**

In the ‘neoliberalism and education’ section, I explain how neoliberal policies in education are in favor of the middle class because the middle class is able to pay for this service, unlike the working class. In the next section of the thesis, I explain how middle class employs strategies to sustain their relatively advantageous position through education by trying to reproduce their class.

### **Parentocracy**

Philip Brown (1999) develops a concept which is ‘parentocracy’, in order to contextualize, when the educational achievement and related to that social mobility, became dependent on the one’s social class, and his/her parents’ resources most. He broadly periodizes the education waves in Britain in three periods. The first one is at

the Industrial Revolution times' periods, where the industry needed the workers, and these workers needed to be educated. He argues that this education, however, did not aim to erase the ascribed status and instead put the achieved status of that. The idea behind mass schooling, instead, was to tame, gentle and control the masses. In this period, only the middle-class were expected to go to the high schools where they could get better jobs, and this was even gendered, only their male members were expected to go to the high schools.

Then, he contextualizes the second period as meritocracy with comprehensive schooling; in this not so long-lasting period, a period which was taken place at the Keynesian times, students from all social backgrounds received relatively good quality education. He describes this period as "one organized on the basis of individual merit and achievement instead of feudal dogma of predestination". He, as a reason for this gives the state's competition with the other states in terms of the formation of human capital, but anyways all of the students irrespective of their social backgrounds were given a chance to get good quality education.

As the third and last wave in education, Brown gives the period of 'parentocracy'. In this period, children get an education depending on their parents' wealth and wish instead of their skills and talents. In the time of nascent neoliberalism, with high unemployment and recession, conservative politicians have argued that comprehensive education has ruined the elite schools and gave the working class unnecessary skills and high aspirations. He suggests that choice, freedom to choose, parental choice discourses, supported by right politicians, feed the existing inequalities. He concludes like this: 'despite reforms of the following 50 years, we seem set to end the century as we began, with the 'heredity curse'.

Dewiele and Edgerton (2016) look at the Canadian context to see whether parentocracy is still the case 17 years later the publishment of Brown's (1999) article. They argue that, still 'parents whose socioeconomic status is in the middle to upper range use their economic, cultural, and social resources/capitals to pursue specific educational experiences and trajectories for their children' (p. 205). They, in terms of the practices of middle-class parents give important insights. And they say

that due to the parental choice discourse, parents see themselves as consumers and make school administrations to do whatever they demand in a collective manner. Authors say that middle-class parents have a feeling of entitlement that working-class parents do not have. They also suggest as an important middle-class feature that these parents became 'portfolio' managers to increase the life chances of their children.

Katartzi (2017) in her article gives the recent portrayal of the Greek Education system, by borrowing Brown's concept of 'parentocracy'. She argues that Greek case with its austerity policies is a perfect example of parentocracy. Parents are the significant providers of quality education to their children if they can do so of course. They in different levels are allocating their resources, different types of capital in a Bourdieusian sense to provide a better future for their children, since they see education as the ultimate mean for upward mobility, and state does not provide quality education. She divides the middle class into two, the one who has high on cultural capital, and the other one who has limited cultural capital. While for the one with high cultural capital, sending their children to university is taken for granted, students with limited cultural capital see university education as a burden for their parents. And the ones who have cultural capital educate their children in terms of differentiating from the others. She says that the Greek education system is highly centralized and standardized. And there is a growing sector of shadow education. This shadow education consists of both courses for exam preparation for universities and extracurricular activities such as violin or ballet.

Croll (2004) also highlights the effect of social class in terms of educational success; he argues that there is a very considerable pattern of continuity between the socioeconomic situation of the parents and their adult children meaning that class continues to be reproduced irrespective of social changes. He expresses that even there were changes in the labor market, in terms of the passing of non-manual jobs from manual jobs, and this benefited all the social backgrounds; the more advantageous group still had the upper hand in terms of having the relatively better educational and employment opportunities.

To conclude the parentocracy discussion, because state has decided not to give everyone quality education irrespective of their social backgrounds, middle-class parents came to front because they were the ones who are able to exercise choice in the education market due to their relatively high economic and cultural capitals. With middle class' sense of entitlement for the quality education and their available means, there is a growing the inequality between middle class and working class in terms of the received education.

#### **3.5.4.1 Characteristics of Middle-Class Parenting**

The mark of Annette Lareau (2002) is critical to understand what differentiates middle-class parents from the working-class parents. Lareau makes a study with ethnographic data set to understand the differences between working-class and middle-class parents' influences on their children lives. She argues that parenting depends highly on the social class. In the study that took place in the 90s, she observed elementary schools students from upper middle class and working-class backgrounds. And she realized that parents had quite different approaches in terms of educating and disciplining their kids. Upper-middle-class is very involved in their kids' social and academic lives than the working class people; upper middle class parents check their kids' homework regularly, plan extracurricular activities to improve their children all the time. The working-class parents, on the other hand, care more about the obedience and discipline of their children and concentrate on the wellbeing of their children on here and now only.

She names the middle-class parents' way of rearing their children 'concentrated cultivation', and names the working class one as 'accomplishment of natural growth'. She writes that:

Middle-class parents engage in concerted cultivation by attempting to foster children's talents through organized leisure activities and extensive reasoning. Working-class and poor parents engage in the accomplishment of natural growth, providing conditions under which children can grow but leaving leisure activities to children themselves... Middle-class children gained individually insignificant but cumulatively important advantages. (2002: p.747)



Lareau's account is essential in showing how child rearing is a class-related phenomenon. Middle-class children due to their economic and cultural capital of their parents, gain a habitus which is suitable for the school before entering the education institutions. And schools which are considered as good and quality also demands this kind of an audience as their prospective students. Working-class children, on the other hand, do not get a chance for upward mobility because of the lack of this kind of habitus and schools demanding of middle-class children.

Reay and Ball (1998) compare the different processes in school decisions of working-class and middle-class families. They argue that while working-class families leave the choice to their children, middle-class families calculate all the available options for their children, and choose the best option accordingly, without considering the wishes of their children. They say that although middle-class families are seen as more democratic than their working-class counterparts, this is not the case for educational decisions such as school choice. They explain this by saying that since working-class parents do not have many options, leaving the choice to the children do not create any disturbance.

Bratlinger's study (2003) also shows middle-class practices in education in the United States context. She explains how the seemingly liberal discourse of the middle class in terms of everyone should have given a chance to receive quality education contradicts with the facts of how the middle class actually raising their children. Bratlinger, in her study, shows cognitive dissonance of the middle-class, though they embrace a seemingly liberal view, they do everything they can do to their children to receive a good quality education, irrespective of others. She suggests that how the neoliberal discourse of doing the best for your children contradicts the equality of opportunity.

Contrary to Bratlinger, however, Reay (2005) urges us that we shouldn't see the middle class in this kind of a monolithic way. She, in her article, differentiates two types of middle classes positions, which are exclusivist middle-class position, and egalitarian middle-class position. While the first is driven by the feelings of arrogance, satisfaction, contempt, and pride with respect to the position they occupy,

the other feels guilt, defensiveness, empathy, and conciliation. While the first one, exclusivist middle class is about how middle class generally portrayed in the reproduction of class studies, the second middle class is the one that we are not so familiar with. For this middle class, she addresses that “struggle to balance the need to meet dominant middle-class positions of being a good parent with their personal principles, and political values generate internal conflicts, ambivalence, and tensions” (p.920).

According to Reay and Ball (1998) and Ball (2003) middle class has a future-oriented self and this very much structures their way of parenting; rather thinking here and now, it sees its potential self in the future more important. Ball (2003) takes the middle-class individual as an unfinished self, the middle-class subject always sees itself in the process of becoming, as an unfinished entity full of potentials that are waiting to be discovered and nourished. Because of that middle class parents always feel anxious about whether they made the right choice about the school which they send their child, he writes that ‘there are constant worries about getting things wrong, about failing the child, about mistaking priorities, about not finding the perfect school or right university’ (p.171).

Because of this seeing itself in the future, middle-class parents are ready to sacrifice theirs here and now. This leads to some tensions between middle-class parents and their children. There are various studies which show how parental involvement in education such as sending children to extra-curricular activities and monitoring the homework of children intensively, create tension between children and parents (Solomon, Warin, Lewis, 2001; Kramer Sadlik&Fatigante, 2015).

#### **3.5.4.2 Increased Gendered Parental Involvement, Emotional Capital**

The efforts parents make in terms of reproduction of class are not equal among between fathers and mothers (Croll, 2004). It is argued that while fathers are represented more in the public sphere, in terms of going to PTA meetings, seeing the teachers when there is a problem in school life’s of his kids, it is generally the mothers doing the maintenance work of social class, they are doing every kind of housing chores for their kids and family besides they help them with their homework

and carry them to extracurricular activities, also with the social capital they have, they are gathering the background info in terms of which school to send the child.

Reay (2005) and Kramer- Sadlik& Fatigante (2015) draw our attention to the often neglected educative work done in the domestic sphere, mostly done by mothers. Reay (2005) points out that the changes in the 90s; parents became the main responsible actors for their children's education. With the beginning of 1990s parental involvement was put forward as a neoliberal policy to improve the educational attainments of children, it is said that school improvement and effectiveness are highly dependent on parental involvement. Another important work, education work, has been added to women's traditional gender roles at home. This of course, in the end, nourished the already existing inequalities since all the parents do not have similar amounts of time and energy, and capitals to devote for their children's education.

Reay (2005) to illustrate the current situation among middle-class parents and their children at their homes writes that: 'Currently we have a paradoxical situation in which the public sphere, including education is increasingly being privatized, while the private sphere of home is increasingly being publicly regulated and activities within held up for scrutiny and judgment' (p.105). She further says that 'family time increasingly transformed into work time' (p.105).

Reay (2005), in terms of gendered workload at home, says that mothers are seen as the main providers of their children's education, they are responsible for preparing their children to the next school day, such as mothers do the cooking, ironing, preparing food for children ('practical maintenance'), they do the homework ('educational and cultural support') with their children while fathers are only 'helping out' to mothers. She further says that while mothers are doing the prominent work for children's education, their responsibilities are confined more in the home, for example, fathers show up in parents' meetings more often than mothers.

## **Emotional Capital**

Reay in her paper (2000) inspired from Bourdieu's concept of capital invents another type of capital which is emotional capital, although it is tentatively presented, she says that generally mothers are the providers of emotional capital, other than emotional involvement this capital is about giving different kinds of emotions to the child for the future success or failure. For example, a middle-class mother can be anxious about her child's education life, and this may trigger the child to work more and succeed more. Another example can be given for a working-class mother since this mother can be insecure in her own education life, her being anxious about her child's life can result in her child's being anxious too. Although Reay doesn't give any strict differences of emotional capital in terms of class differences, she says that poverty, not being educated, struggles of daily life can be resulted with more feelings of insecurity, fear passed from the mother to the child, so a middle class mother might be the one who is profitable in terms of emotional capital since she is more experienced and more confident.

Katartzi (2017) also states the importance of emotional capital in the period of parentocracy in Greece. She borrowing from Nowotny (1981) and Allatt (1993) and Reay (2000) is more clear about the concept and takes the emotional capital as how mothers are affectionate and gives time, care for their children and has concerns for their children. She provides two examples of how emotional capital is mobilized within-household and extra-household activities. She argues that while mothers give attention, care to their children on a daily basis within-household, fathers are going to parents meeting only as an extra-household activity.

### **3.6 Neoliberalism and Neo-Conservatism in Turkey's case from 2002 to 2019**

In this section of the thesis, literature review of the Turkish case; changes in Turkey with the neoliberal structuring, and their reflections on the education system are discussed. Again, parallel to the world, middle class comes to the foreground in Turkey's case as well, and they are directed towards private schools for quality and secular education by the rationing of secular education in the recent years. According to Taşkın Alp (2018), developments in education are not independent of the conservatism in the social policies and liberalism in the economy. To this end, this

part of the chapter aimed to briefly contextualize how neoliberalism trend in the world has founded its reflections in Turkey, and it also discusses what is meant by neoconservatism in Turkey. To locate the policies of JDP government, some background information about its predecessor parties was also given.

Though Turkey has withdrawn its important substitution policy, protectionism and opened up itself to the world markets due to the Global Economic Crisis in the 70s with the neoliberal policies in 80s in Turgut Özal's <sup>37</sup>era, the period of JDP was characterized by unleashed and intensified neoliberalism because of the continuous single party ruling which gave chances to the government to make radical reforms (Pamuk, 2014). JDP era is also characterized by the alliance of neoliberalism and conservatism.

According to Tuğal (2010), Turkey's corporatist capital accumulation model implemented by the Republican People's Party and central right parties hit the wall because of the 70s global economic crisis. Turkey's ruling bloc could not act simultaneously to the crisis because of the established patronage driven election system and strong and extensively organized labor unions. 24<sup>th</sup> January Decisions were reorganized the economy in an austerity stricken and export-oriented way, 12th September Coup in 1980 was made to implement these decisions while silencing the left and restricting the activities of labor unions and diminishing the wages, Turkey still did not experience the neoliberal principles in a complete manner in 80s until the JDP era(2010). Pamuk (2010) thinks similar in terms of Tuğal that though Turkey opened itself to the world markets in Turgut Özal Era, because of the successive coalition governments and some legal arrangements, it did not privatize its public economic enterprises extensively until JDP era in 2000s.

JDP is a party whose predecessors were Islamic parties founded under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan in different party names. National Order Party (1970- 1971),

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<sup>37</sup> The politician who was a advisor in World Bank in the years between 1971 and 1973. He played an important role in the preparation process of 24th of January Decisions in 1980, which aimed to liberalize Turkish economy. He was a deputy prime minister who is responsible from the economy after the 1980's Coup. Then he founded the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi, ANAP), after that he became the prime minister of Turkey. In 1989 he was the president of Turkey until his death in 1993. ([https://www.tccb.gov.tr/cumhurbaskanlarimiz/turgut\\_ozal/](https://www.tccb.gov.tr/cumhurbaskanlarimiz/turgut_ozal/))

National Salvation Party (1972-1981), Welfare Party (1983-1998), Virtue Party (1997-2001) were the names of these parties, and they were banned because they allegedly violated the secularism principle in Turkey. These parties embraced an ideology which is called 'National Outlook'. Though it was not very clear what they meant by this, National Outlook was suggesting a 'just order' that would eradicate the inequalities, vast income inequalities which caused by the neoliberal policies, since the National part in their name suggests they were anti-globalist and also anti-Western. Since the left was damaged and discredited in the 1980s, the Welfare Party with its justice discourse got the attention of urban poor. White (2007) argues that the party together with Islamic discourse also caught conservative sections of the society who are living in countryside and cities. It is also said that they had the support of a nascent Islamic bourgeois called Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, MÜSİAD, which has flourished in Anatolian cities after 80s with the export-led industry (2007).

Welfare Party's success in 94's local elections, winning victories in cities such as Ankara as the capital of Turkey and Istanbul as the biggest city in Turkey, has led to discontent in some secular sections of society; they thought that there would be interventions to their lifestyle. Welfare Party's being the first party in 95's general elections also contributed to this fear. White (2007) suggests that this success of the Welfare Party has resulted in widespread backlash among Kemalists. Many people wore Atatürk badges and put pictures of Atatürk in front of their home's windows and shops. She writes that 'in the same year of 1995, state ordered the addition of life of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk into the curriculum, to the courses ranging from science to history to fight with Islamic threat and to increase the respect for Kemalism' (p.98).

In 28<sup>th</sup> February 1998, the army decided to interfere with the further flourishing of Islamic politics of Welfare Party, and 'recommended' the coalition government in a National Security Council series of educational policies that,<sup>38 39</sup> it should realign education policies with the Unification of Law of Education, increase the five years

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<sup>38</sup> <http://bianet.org/bianet/kategori/8236-28-subat-kararlari>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/28-subatin-ustunden-14-yil-geci-17143455>

compulsory education to eight years and should introduce lower coefficient in higher education examinations for Vocational High School Students which will result in not being able to select any other department in universities any other than Imam Hatip students have graduated, and finally ordered that Quran courses which were run by fundamentalists should be abolished and regulated in the schools which were connected to National Ministry of Education. Most of these recommendations were basically targeting the Imam Hatip Schools of that time because Imam Hatips prospered exponentially until the 1997; and it is argued that the electoral base of the National Outlook parties was composed of Imam Hatip students and alumni. Soon after the closing of middle school levels of Imam Hatips together with 8 years education law, students enrolled in these schools dropped significantly. Here is a table in the next page, made by TESEV's report in 2004<sup>40</sup>, which shows how the number of students increased until 1998 and decreased substantially until the JDP came into power in 2002.

Table 6: Number of Students Enrolled in Imam Hatips from 1991 to 2004

Number of Students Enrolled in Imam Hatips	
School Year	Total Number of Students
<b>1991-92</b>	346.174
<b>1992-93</b>	392.078
<b>1993-94</b>	436.528
<b>1994-95</b>	473.301
<b>1995-96</b>	495.580
<b>1996-97</b>	511.502
<b>1997-98</b>	396.677
<b>1998-99</b>	192.786
<b>1999-00</b>	134.224
<b>2000-01</b>	91.620
<b>2001-02</b>	71.853
<b>2002-03</b>	64.534
<b>2003-04</b>	84.898

This 28<sup>th</sup> of February process has also resulted in the strict regulation of ban on headscarves in public institutions; women students were not allowed to enter most of the universities back then. These changes in educational policy during 28<sup>th</sup> February

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.dogrulukpayi.com/iddia-kontrolu/recep-tayyip-erdogan/imam-hatiplerin-sayisi-60-bine-dusmustu-simdi-1-milyona-cikince>

would have shaped some of the JDP's educational policy when it came into power in 2002.

After the 28<sup>th</sup> February Process, Welfare party was banned and started to continue as Virtue Party, then the party divided ideologically between two fractions. Çakır<sup>41</sup> argues that there were discussions whether to compromise with the system or to fight with it, or whether the party should continue as Islamic, or should direct itself to the central right (2001). These two fractions were called traditionalists and reformists. Reformists were arguing that this Islamist and anti-globalist discourse of traditionalists did not reflect the reality of their times. These reformists later became the founders of JDP. So, in 2001, JDP was founded by the names as such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Abdüllatif Şener who left the Virtue Party. The party started to differentiate itself from Erbakan's legacy, his 'Just Order' rhetoric, presented and defined itself as conservative, more moderate and as democrats.

Since the party abstained from defining itself as Islamic, in terms of what is meant by conservatism for JDP government, both Kaya(2015) and Gümüşçü and Sert (2009) suggest that conservatism discourse of the JDP positioned itself against the social engineering of Kemalist state from above (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009) and instead, it is put forward as the preservation of culture, society, and religion in an evolutionary manner in contrast to revolutionary projects (Kaya, 2015).

They fully embraced the neoliberal policies against the anti-capitalist discourse of their predecessors. Pamuk argues that what differentiates JDP from the previous governments was not the favoring and nourishing of the capital which is close to them in terms of the redistribution of wealth through privatizations, but its ability to do this extensively with a continuous manner with its successive single-party rule. Pamuk writes that in the first five years of its rule JDP, embraced a policy that is in favor of private sector than any other governments (p.287). In terms of the successive years of JDP government, Pamuk argues that 'the party consolidated its control over

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<sup>41</sup> Çakır, R. (2001). Yenilikçilerin Neresi Yeni? Available at: <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/274-yenilikcilerin-neresi-yeni>



military, media, jurisdiction, and organization of education, universities, and many other domains' (p.292).

Since JDP embraced the neoliberal policies, they reduced the quality of many services given publicly, such as health and education. They also have made many changes in social policies with a conservative understanding. As stated by Coşar and Özdemir (2014) although the neoliberal capitalism is a global phenomenon, it puts on different facades depending on the region, and it progresses with variety of, and time to time ambivalent alliances. Thus neoliberalism exceeds general distinctions within 'developed' and 'developing' world, and succeeds to direct contextual dynamics with different paths in the developing world. The different path in Turkey's case for Coşar and Özdemir is Islamic politics. JDP's politics has contributed to the neoliberalism's development in Turkey according to the authors, and this, in the end, necessitates understanding the juxtaposition of principles of Islamism and capitalism (p.13).

Kaya (2015) also writes that 'Islamisation of society and politics in Turkey under the JDP's rule can be explained both as a reaction to the grouping stream of neoliberal governance and as an indispensable tool of neoliberalism' (p. 47). While welfare features of the state were rolled back, family and communities (Cemaats<sup>42</sup>) are put into the front to fill the gap of the social state, with the conservatism of JDP government. Kaya argues that the family has always been very prominent for JDP's ideology, and for JDP family must be traditional, patriarchal, extended, which everyone lives with others in harmony while taking care of each other. Moreover, it is expected that problems are solved within the family itself.

In terms of roles given to communities, civil society organizations for providing welfare, Kaya and many others such as Coşar& Özdemir (2014), Buğra (2014) suggest that social policies are not based on rights of the citizens anymore but given on the basis of charity, and the decision for who deserves to get this charity is a very political one, charities are given on a selective basis, mainly to the voters of JDP.

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<sup>42</sup> Referring to religious communities in Turkey's case.

To conclude this section, by the 1980's we were witnessing the inception of neoliberalism in Turkey together with the world, however, the proliferation of it comes with Justice and Development Party, which is coupled with conservatism. In this period, the welfare features of states were rolled back, power of labor unions were curtailed with intensive privatizations, and welfare provisions are started to be given based on charity on a selective basis. Family is also put into the front for providing the safety net that the state does not provide, conservatism was not limited with putting the traditional family to the front only, as Altunok suggests, it meant a setting a moral compass for society, which is based on the interpretation of Sunni Islam (2016). Conservatism founded its reflections in many other domains such as education as this thesis suggests. Because of the decreasing quality of public services with neoliberalism, and because of the elective provision of social welfare, upper and middle sections of the middle classes started to direct themselves to private sector to get quality service; such as to private schools. So the middle classes were directed to private schools to get rather quality and non-religious education.

### **3.7 A Brief History of Education before the JDP Era**

In this section, a brief discussion is presented on the neoliberal and conservative policies in education from the Tanzimat Era to JDP era. In this way, one can understand the base that the JDP has built its education policies on.

Gök (2007) argues that education as a public duty was acknowledged in the Imperial Edict of Gülhane, in 1839 with Tanzimat Era, it was suggested that primary education would be free and compulsory for everyone, though it couldn't ever be realized. A primary role was given to education for the modernization and Westernization of the nation-building process, 'it was hoped that education could be an agent for causing social and cultural reforms and values to take root.' ( p.248). Gök also writes that 'it is a stark fact that education is vital for an economically poor country with limited physical, human and financial resources (2007)'. With the foundation of Republic many changes have been made in terms of laicism, such as the removal of Arabic alphabet and accepting of the Latin alphabet, and changing the calendar from Hijri to Gregorian Calendar, it is debated that founders of Turkish

Republic made these changes to discard the Ottoman past through ‘turning their faces into the West’. In order to do this in education the Law of Unification of Education was introduced in 1924, which basically aimed to end the duality of education; which is the coexistence of religious education and modern/secular education. Medreses and Mekteps which gave religious education in Ottoman Era were closed down, all the educational institutions and educational activities were connected to the central authority of National Ministry of Education. Imam Hatips were founded in 1924, in the single period with Republican People’s Party, just after The Law On Unification Of Education (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu) in 1924. The Law of Unification was aimed to eradicate the religious schools of Ottoman times and nationalize the education and sought to regulate all educational activities from a center. So with this law, Medreses (Ottoman religious schools) were closed, instead Imam Hatips were founded to raise ‘enlightened’ Imams under the control of the state for the flourishing young Republic. Only 29 Imam Hatip schools were founded in 1924. This number of 29, decreased year by year, and they were closed in 1931 because of the allegedly low demand. They reopened as Imam Hatip courses in 1949 under RPP, which gave ten-months of training. When Democrat Party came into power, it reopened them in 1951 as schools. Together with the Islamic politics of Necmettin Erbakan, the number of students enrolled in these schools surged, from 70s to 1997 of 28<sup>th</sup> of February steadily.

There were no private schools until 1950s. This is not because the young republic was against it, but there were only elite foreign schools which generally the minorities went. After 50s the number of private schools started to increase, there were Maarif Kolejleri (Educational Colleges) which turned into Anatolian High schools later on, they are the schools which state gave a good quality education to a few selected students (Gök, 2007). According to Gök (2007), though the state was responsible for free and equal education, this was never realized in relation to the class, gender, ethnicity differences.

### **3.8 Changes after the 1980s**

According to Ercan (1998) state's role in providing education has changed; education has turned into a commodity with the principle of 'the one who receives the service pays.' The neoliberal policies founded its reflections in Turkey with the Structural Adjustment Policies imposed by International Monetary Fund in 80s as well. He criticizes this situation by saying that education which must be based on the social and solidarity principles are reduced into the numbers, turned into a commodity which individuals can pay and earn human capital.

Gök (1999) says that there was a prevalent decrease in the quality of education with the 80s neoliberal policies, 'exam industry,' private tutoring houses started to flourish. Ural (2012) too argues, when the investments made for education by the state decreased, then the private tutoring houses boomed. In this way the levels of inequality, inadequacy in education were deepened. Gök (2007) writes that with the decline of quality of state schools and increase in the private schools, 'The conscientious and well-to-do parents to seek alternatives in the creation of a private educational sector that has led to further deterioration of the public schools (p.251).

According to Gök (1999), 24<sup>th</sup> January Decisions in 1980 and coup made afterward affected the education from primary to all levels in terms of conservatism as well. The Turkish-Islam synthesis was embraced after the Coup to eradicate the effects of the Left. To this end, religion education was made compulsory, and the content of education was defined within nationalist, religious, conservative terms. Gök states that the number of Imam Hatip Schools, Quran courses and Theology Faculties have risen as well.

To conclude this section, it is argued that the decrease in the quality of public education began in the 80s through the adjustment policies of IMF. This, in the end, resulted with increased parental involvement, booming of private tutoring houses (though it is incomparable with the extension of them in JDP era), privatization in education through the opening of private schools and universities. Gök (2007) and Ercan (1998) argue that education started not to be seen as a public responsibility, but designed in terms of 'the buyer pays' principle. Getting a quality education was

seen as privilege, that only the ones who certain means can acquire. This is the end, of course, created inequality in terms of equal opportunity. Here again, one can witness how religious education and curriculum with Turkish-Islamic synthesis were instrumentalized for specific means, this time it is deployed against the threat of communism in the Cold War era, and to silence the labor unions.

In the next section, JDP's education policies is discussed under two main themes, which are neoliberalism and neoconservatism.

### 3.9 Education Policies in Turkey from 2002 to 2019



Picture 1: A massive advertisement of Doğa College next to Konya Road, Ankara, it is written that 'with the 'project' model in high school, climb to the top'



Picture 2: Another private school, Sınav College's, advertisement at Eskişehir Road in Ankara. It is written that 'enroll into the quality.'



Picture 3: Another announcement, Uş Academy College, it is written that 'Equal Opportunity in Education!' with the dates of scholarship exams.





Picture 4: Turkish- American Association's Generation to Generation College advertisement, again with the bursary exam's dates.

To give a brief idea about the privatization of education in Turkey, I took some pictures during the years 2018 and 2019. Before opening up the school year, in the semester break, before and after the high school exams, i.e. almost all year's long, Ankara's streets are filled with private schools' advertisements, which even writes 'equality of opportunity' in their advertisements. Other than the few established ones, together with the prominent rise of number of private schools, these schools are in an intense competition to attract parents. Because of the closing of the private tutoring houses and turning them into private schools, private school numbers boomed within four years. So, in this part of this chapter, educational policies of JDP, how they create inequalities with neoliberalism and how they create a discontent among secular sections of the society with the neoconservatism are discussed, since its 17 years period and neoconservatism and neoliberalism policies connected to each other, I occasionally wrote back and forth within these policies and give some background info in terms of politics.

According to Kaya (2015) when JDP published its election declaration in 2002, it had mainly two promises regarding education, the abolishment of the ban on

headscarf at universities and the removal of lower coefficient for Imam Hatip Highschool graduates to enable them to attend the departments other than Theology faculties. According to Gençkal Eroler (2019) the party also indicated in its election manifesto, it would be a proponent of the privatization in education.

However the JDP could not keep its promises, for its conservative electoral base, till 2007, where the ban of headscarf was lifted at universities with the change of the president of<sup>43</sup> Higher Education Council, and till 2009 when the lower coefficient practice was abolished for Imam Hatip students<sup>44</sup>, the reason behind this is argued to be ‘secular establishment’ as Kaya (2015) suggests, the party embraced a low profile till its second consecutive election in the 2007, though they tried to make a law that will abolish the lower coefficient in 2004, it was vetoed by then-contemporary president Ahmet Necdet Sezer, on the grounds that Imam Hatip’s violation of The Law of Unification of Education, mainly the violation of secular education. However, JDP’s conservative agenda for education did not stop there.

In this period of 2002 to 2007, the party has concentrated on its neoliberal agenda; party officials argued that they will concentrate only on the economy and EU process. JDP changed the curriculum in 2004, which was formerly changed in 1968 (Koşar- Altınyelken and Akkaymak, 2012) Then-contemporary National Minister of Education, Hüseyin Çelik argued that they made a curriculum which was in ‘the standards of EU’<sup>45</sup>, it was said that the curriculum change was necessary due to the ‘archaic, linear, straight-forward, out of date, and abstract structure’ of the previous behaviorist curriculum. So they changed the curriculum into a constructivist one, a pedagogical understanding where the children are at the center than the teacher, which every point of view is considered as valuable rather than a single truth. With the supports of EU and TÜSİAD<sup>46</sup>, JDP changed the curriculum. It said to be necessary for the ‘information society.’

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/dosya/turkiyede-basortusu-yasagi-nasil-basladi-nasil-cozuldu>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/yok-katsayi-uygulamasini-kaldirdi,ywcOPJKV7ESa6iJsaP4pcw>

<sup>45</sup> <https://m.bianet.org/biamag/egitim/42911-egitim-nereye-gidiyor>

<sup>46</sup> Turkish Industry And Business Association



However the government was criticized because of their neoliberal agenda, in terms of putting the consumer, entrepreneur as a role model and introducing concepts such as efficiency, human capital into the new textbooks rather than the citizen and society, government was taking individual to the center instead of society (Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak, 2013). Since the new curriculum was supposedly against the single truth and root learning by encouraging the learning process of students, the content in the text books was argued to be diminished in a great manner. There was not so much information in the new textbooks, but there were project home works. This argued to be exacerbated the inequalities in education because parents were deployed as resources to finish these projects and not everyone's parents have the necessary cultural capital to do assignments (Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak, 2013).

The schooling ratio in the JDP Era has increased. According to the statistics compiled by Education Reform Initiative's Education Monitoring Reports of 2012 and 2018 , Primary schooling ratio was 91 % when it came to power and it is 96 % in 2017-2018, and high schooling ratio was 50,6% in 2002, and it is 83,6% in 2017-2018, though these ratios are way below than the OECD average, and there are substantial differences in terms of gender and regional terms, JDP undoubtedly increased the schooling ratios campaigns like 'Girls' Education Campaign' and conditional cash transfers.

However increasing the access of disadvantaged groups to education does not solve all the problems in education, there are important problems like absenteeism, dropouts, grade retention in Turkey's education let alone the quality problems of public schools (Education Reform Initiative, Education Monitoring Report of 2017-2018).

Together with the dropouts, absenteeism, and grade retention in education, participation to distance/ open high schools is increasing. According to the data of Education Reform Initiative, the number of students who are enrolled in these

schools increased by 65% in 5 years.<sup>47</sup> In 2016-2017 school year, there were more than 1, 5 million students who were enrolled in distance education compared to 4, 3 million high school students in formal education. These students are argued to be coming from disadvantageous socioeconomic backgrounds, for example girls cannot continue their education because their families not wanting it or boys cannot continue because they have to work. However together with the conservatism in education and directing students to Imam Hatips these distant schools may start to be filled with Alevi students<sup>48</sup> who don't want to receive religious education and don't have the financial means to be enrolled in a private school.

In terms of increasing access to education, JDP started to distribute free textbooks from primary to high school level. However this seemingly egalitarian social policy was criticized as the misuse of public funds, where JDP subcontracted this publishing to private sector and on a bid-basis and disregarding the quality over quantity (Özmen, 2013). Misuse of public funds, and nourishing the private sector also went hand in hand within the FATİH<sup>49</sup> Project, the abridgment of the project name was designed to invoke conquest feeling with Neo-Ottomanism, referring to Mehmed the Conqueror according to Tokdoğan (2018). The project was labeled as 'the biggest and the most comprehensive education movement' by the government. The government decided to distribute 'free' computer tablets in 2011, and in 2018, it is said that 2 billion TL<sup>50</sup> was spent on this project.

Though JDP increased the participation of disadvantageous groups of education, with the discourse of 'equality of opportunity in development plans' (Yurttaş & Hatipoğlu, 2017), it simultaneously reinforced the privatization in education. And

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<sup>47</sup> <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/egitim/195550-acik-liseye-giden-ogrenci-sayisi-son-bes-yilda-yuzde-65-artti>

<sup>49</sup> According to the official website of FATİH Project ([http://fatihprojesi.meb.gov.tr/en/?page\\_id=10](http://fatihprojesi.meb.gov.tr/en/?page_id=10)): "Movement of Enhancing Opportunities and Improving Technology Designed to provide every student with the best education, the highest quality educational content and equal opportunities, FATİH Project is the greatest and the most comprehensive educational movement implemented for the use of educational technologies".

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.birgun.net/haber/fatih-projesi-de-husranla-sonuclandi-kamuya-yuku-2-milyar-208817>

this exacerbated the existing inequalities. According to the statistics of OECD's First Glance at Education Report of 2016, Turkey was ranked at 35<sup>th</sup> among 38 OECD countries in terms of girls' participation to higher education, average schooling year, parents' socioeconomic status effect on children's education<sup>51</sup>. According to a more recent report of OECD's Education at a Glance in 2018,

Turkey has one of the most significant shares of private expenditure on primary through tertiary educational institutions among OECD countries and partner economies. And Turkey has one of the smallest percentages of public spending on primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary educational institutions among OECD countries and partner economies.

According to Education Initiative Reform's Education Monitoring Report of 2012<sup>52</sup>, based on the official statistics of National Ministry of Education, the ratio of children who were enrolled in private schools was 1,7% in the year of 2002 (p.178), and it climbed up to 8,3% in the years between 2017-2018<sup>53</sup>, with respect to total numbers of students. In other words, the number of children who were enrolled in private schools was quadrupled since JDP came into power. This increase shows how education is not seen as a public duty and left to the domain of the parents; the ones who have enough means can provide quality education to their children.

Although private schools constitute a major share of the private education spending of the families, this does not mean that state schools are free either. According to Kurul (2013), JDP was not only in favor of extension of the private schools, but it also urged the marketization and commodification of the public schools, where these schools were expected to find their funds, resources, rather than demanding from the state. This situation has resulted in schools' renting their canteens, sports halls, parking lots to private sector to generate income. Civil society organizations, like religious foundations were called by the state to make donations in certain schools, mostly to Imam Hatip schools. Also, most importantly, families put to the front further to meet the needs in public schools by 'making contributions.' This, in the

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<sup>51</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2016/turkey\\_eag-2016-84-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2016/turkey_eag-2016-84-en#page1)

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/yayin/egitim-izleme-raporu-2012/#more-4583>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/egitim-izleme-raporu-2017-18-2/>

end, resulted with different quality of public schools depending on the socio-economic status of the neighborhoods. Though the MNE, E-School system automatically places the children to primary and secondary public schools based on their place of residence, there was news that address-based administration does not work because, though they are not allowed to do this, school administrators are accepting ‘donations’ from the families who are living at different catchment areas and enroll the children of these families to these schools<sup>54</sup>. As Kurul (2013) writes ‘parents have to settle for making obligatory donations and taking responsibility for transporting their child to school, which requires large amounts of time, because schools are in harsh competition, and the neighborhood school cannot always play a part in this situation’ (p.92).

National Ministry of Education, with a neoliberal mentality, decided to sign protocols with NGOs to ‘ease the burden it carries’ with ‘deregulation and privatization’ (Emanet & Kandiyoti, 2017), in terms of providing public services, in 2000 before JDP came into power, this process however went hand in hand with conservatism within JDP era.<sup>55</sup> Though National Minister of Education was the only and central authority to define what will be thought, who will teach, how they will be thought, it started to share its responsibilities with government approved civil society organizations by signing protocols with them. And these NGO’s are mostly composed of associations, brotherhoods, and Communities which have religious orientation in JDP era, NME in a way subcontracts to these associations to teach specific courses, for example values education and Ottoman Language were decided

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<sup>54</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/okullara-kayit-donemi-basladi-ebeveynler-yuksek-bagis-miktarindan-yakiniyor,830620>

<sup>55</sup> According to Mesut Mike who is the head of Education and Science Workers Union’s first branch of Istanbul, ‘NME has signed 85 protocols with various associations and foundations till 2000, however 50 of them were signed after the 15th of June Coup Attempt. While some of these associations and foundations are subsidiaries of various companies and investment groups, the other part is composed of extension of religious Communities. Signed protocols generally last for 2 to 3 years; however for religious associations like Tügva, Ensar, and Diyanet Foundation they were signed for 5 years. And again for religious foundations like Maarif Foundation, İHH, Fera Global Eğitim protocols were signed for 10 years’. Source: <https://www.birgun.net/haber/protokoller-iptal-edilsin-247945>

to be thought by Hayrat Foundation<sup>56</sup>. Other foundations like TÜRGEV<sup>57</sup>, Ensar and ÖNDER were said to be dominating the education field right now. In this way, without a need of appointed teacher by NME, Imams, who don't have a pedagogical formation can be employed by associations to teach specific courses like values education in public schools<sup>58</sup>.

In terms of periodizing the educational policies of JDP, Lüküslü (2017), Tokdoğan (2018) and Gençkal Eroler (2019) take the year 2011, the party's third consecutive election win, with its 'mastership era' as one of the turning points where JDP found the chance of changing education system with its ideology, geared education towards conservatism without any constraints because of the absence of an adequate opposition. From this point onwards, I only discuss the changes after 2011.

The government with its removal of 8 years compulsory education with the 4+4+4 Law in 2012 stirred a backlash among secular sections of the society. This law brought three main changes; it was dividing mandatory eight years of education into 4+4 years and adding additional four years of high school to mandatory education. In this way closed middle school sections of Imam Hatips in 1997, were able to be reopened. The law was also requiring the early schooling of pupils, beginning from 66 months. Thirdly, it was introducing many elective religious courses. The way that the proposal was accepted, without consulting anyone, and the postulates that it relied on were all criticized by many groups such as TÜSİAD, Kagider<sup>59</sup>, many respectable universities. The ones who are opposed to this law was suggesting that in this way enrollment to Imam Hatip middle schools would be encouraged, gender

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<sup>56</sup> <https://www.birgun.net/haber/egitim-politikasini-onlar-belirliyor-milli-egitim-degil-tarikat-yuvasi-223504>

<sup>57</sup> According to the official website of TÜRGEV, "TÜRGEV was founded under the leadership of His Excellency Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the president of Turkish Republic in 1996 when he was serving as the mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Offering its services only in Istanbul as Istanbul Youth and Education Service Foundation (ISEGEV) back then, TÜRGEV aimed at propagating its services across Turkey in August 2012 and changed its name to Turkey Youth and Education Service Foundation (TÜRGEV)"

<sup>58</sup> [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/839991/Anaokulunda\\_degerler\\_egitimi\\_degil\\_ima\\_m\\_hatipliler\\_egitimi\\_.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/839991/Anaokulunda_degerler_egitimi_degil_ima_m_hatipliler_egitimi_.html)

<sup>59</sup> The Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey (KAGIDER)

inequality in education would exacerbate through girls' leaving the school after the initial fourth year, kids will be directed towards to the vocational schools at the an early age without getting a basic education, paving the way a child's being an apprentice as early as at the age of 11, were also criticized (Kurul<sup>60</sup>; Yüksek, Gökşen, Alınışık, 2012).

With 4+4+4 Law, the installation of religion in schools was not only limited to the opening up middle level of Imam Hatip Schools. Some 'elective' (according to some news reports, they may most of the time become 'compulsory elective' because of not having any teachers for other elective courses) courses like 'The Life of Prophet Muhammad', 'Quran', Basic Religious Knowledge installed with 4+4+4 Law turned regular non-religious schools into de facto religious ones.<sup>61</sup>

The government's increased neoconservatism in the education system was not limited to directing families to private schools or increasing the religious content of education only. When JDP came into power a union called Eğitim-Bir-Sen<sup>62</sup>, Union of Unity of Educators started rise exponentially, while their number of members was 18,028 in 2002, in 2018 its number was 389.000<sup>63</sup>. According to Göktürk, Güvercin, Seçkin (2013) the presidents of this union were generally theology graduates, and this union is very much a nationalist and religious union. Eğitim-Bir-Sen by having the most significant number of members in its body is the first interlocutor to discuss the problems of teachers and education system in general with the government. However since this union is a pro- JDP union, and their members become candidates of deputy or deputies from JDP government, they do not question the existing policies of the government. So authors argue that unlike the classically studied labor unions which demand certain things and struggle for certain goals, this labor union is formed as uniform, homogeneous, and static. So, since this union has organic links with the government, they are acting in a harmonious way towards the policies of the

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<sup>60</sup>Kurul, N. AKP'nin faydacı, muhafazakâr ve esnek eğitim modeli: '4+ 4+ 4'. Eleştirel Pedagoji.

<sup>61</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/dini-icerikli-secmeli-dersler-bircok-okulda-zorunlu-hale-geldi,460146>

<sup>62</sup> It was founded in 1992.

<sup>63</sup> <sup>63</sup> <https://www.memurlar.net/haber/752056/meb-de-orgutlu-sendikalarin-uye-sayisi-belli-oldu.html>

government's, they also have a substantial power to affect the policies of MNE through their recommendations. According to the authors, framing of abolishment lower coefficient on the ban on the headscarves made by this union (p. 118).

There was news<sup>64</sup> that being a member of this union increases one's chance of being a school principal since it is a pro-government union. According to a report published in Birgün newspaper in 2017, almost all of the school principals appointed recently were the members of this union. Since much of the social activities organized in the schools, which elective course will be taught depend on the decisions of the school principals, so the pro-government principals are likely to increase the conservatism in the schools.

With the opening of the secondary level of Imam Hatip schools, existing elementary education institutions started to be converted to either primary or secondary schools. Secondary schools were further divided as Imam Hatip Secondary Schools and general secondary schools. The conversion of schools into Imam Hatips created discontent among some parents, and they protested against these.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, some of them started to be organized against government's educational policies with the initiatives like 'Don't Touch My School!' and associations like Veli-der (Parent's Association).

In March of 2014, the government has decided to group some very established schools under a category of 'project schools.' Kadıköy Anatolian Highschool, İstanbul Erkek High School, Kabataş Erkek, Cağaloğlu High School, Ankara Atatürk High School were included in this list; and they were highly prestigious and popular public high schools. With their category changed into 'project schools,' teachers and managers of these schools can be appointed directly from MNE, without a need for school's making its exams to the teachers and managers. There was news that the existing school managers and teachers started to be appointed to different parts of Turkey. Government officials claimed that they made these changes to improve the

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<sup>64</sup> <https://www.birgun.net/haber/okul-mudurlerinin-tamami-yandas-sendikadan-173749>

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.birgun.net/haber/direnen-veliler-kazandi-ismail-tarman-ortaokulu-imam-hatip-olmayacak-224409>

quality of these schools, though, a newly appointed vice-principal of Kabataş High School has said earlier in a public event that: ‘Time has come for all our schools to be Imam Hatips.’ This change in established schools also created discontent among students and their parents, many protests were made to undo these changes, and they too started an initiative called ‘We are not your Project!’. The parents of these schools claimed that government wants to erase the history and institutional culture of these schools<sup>66</sup>. These changes also made it harder for students and parents to find quality public education.

Neo-conservatism in education was not limited to primary to high school education only; in 2012, in the same times with 4+4+4 Law, Presidency of Religious Affairs abolished the law of required minimum age of 12 for attending the Quran courses, which was brought in 28<sup>th</sup> February Process. Deniz and Aksoy (2018) argue that neoliberal and neoconservative policies of JDP government threaten the equal opportunity right in the early childhood education as well. Since Early Childhood Education is not obligatory, the ones who have financial means can only send their children to the private institutions, or the options in state schools again require 'beneficiary pays' better say fees, which disadvantaged parents usually cannot afford. Since it is not free, government with its conservative ideology, by allowing collaborations of National Education Ministry with Directorate of Religious Affairs and some associations and foundations, offers some free Quran Courses for small children. And these Quran courses are said to take Sıbyan Mektepleri (Kids’ Schools in English) as their education model. Sıbyan Mektepleri were the schools in Ottoman times and placed near to the mosques which small children can go 'to learn their religion,' and they were abolished with The Law of Unification of Education in 1924. Writers also emphasize how some parents have to 'choose' private preschools to get secular education for their kids.

In terms of another important development in conservatism in education, Erdoğan’s famous claim of ‘we want to raise a pious generation’ was made after the offer for the introduction of 4+4+4 Law in 2012, and this also created a public uproar within

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<sup>66</sup> <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/179672-proje-okul-uygulamasinin-asil-amaci-ne>



the secular sections of the society. Erdoğan said further that, against the criticisms made to him,

There is the raising of a pious youth. [...] do you expect from us, from the AKP, which has a conservative identity, to raise an atheist generation? [...] We will be raising a conservative democratic generation, loyal to the historical values and principles of the nation, and the fatherland. That is what we are working on. (cited from Lüküslü, 2016, p.640)

According to Lüküslü (2016), Tokdoğan (2018), Gençkal Eroler (2019) this was an attempt for social engineering which aimed to put the conservatism as the only the legitimate way of life. Erdoğan further said that ‘Imam Hatips schools will be the apple of the eye of this country and this nation.’<sup>67</sup> Besides Imam Hatip’s schools’ being argued to be mostly an academic failure, it is debated by Batuhan Aydagül<sup>68</sup>, coordinator of Education Reform Initiative, that there is no evidence that Imam Hatips are successful in creating a pious generation as well. Aydagül says, ‘We have no evidence to assert that the government has been successful in creating a pious generation’<sup>69</sup>. However, the ‘pious generation’ discourse has caused more damage by further politicizing and polarizing education and by derailing and delaying policies to tackle education (problems)’.

Neo-conservatism has also continued with Erdoğan’s claim of ‘female students, and male students cannot stay at the same home’<sup>70</sup> in 2013, after the Gezi Protests. Many projects of MNE like ‘The Gate to the Anatolia Manzikert’, ‘the organization of a march for the commemoration of the fallen soldiers in the Battle of Sarıkamış (Lüküslü, 2016) had neoconservatism and neo-Ottomanist overtones as well.

According to Değirmencioğlu (2013), JDP has declared war to Republican tradition; the abolishment of the celebration of 19th May, which is a Youth and Sports Holiday decided by Atatürk, was this kind of ideological decision. Holy Birth Week, which

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/imam-hatipler-milletin-gozbebegi-olacak-20419310>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/83328a4e-4317-11e8-97ce-ea0c2bf34a0b>

<sup>70</sup> <https://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/151035-erdogan-kiz-erkek-ayni-evde-kalamaz>

celebrates the birth of Prophet Mohammad, determined to be included in the Important Days and Weeks Calendar of MNE and started to be celebrated in schools.

In 2013, after the strained relationship between the government and Gülen Community, the tutoring houses decided to be abolished at the end of the 2014 year by the decision of government. Tutoring houses started to mushroom after the neo-liberalization process in 1980s due to the decreased quality of public education, because there was an intensified competition among students and parents to win a place in limited good quality schools. However, as the next table shows, it doubled since JDP came into power within eight years or so in 2010-2011.

Table 7: Changes in the Number of Private Tutoring Houses from 1975 to 2011

Years	Number of Private Courses	Number of Students
1975-1976	157	45.582
1980-1981	174	101.703
1990-1991	762	188.407
1995-1996	1.292	334.27
2000-2001	1.864	523.244
2001-2002	2.002	588.637
2002-2003	2.122	606.522
2003-2004	2.568	668.673
2004-2005	2.984	784.565
2005-2006	3.570	925.299
2006-2007	3.986	1.071.827
2007-2008	4.031	1.122.861
2008-2009	4.262	1.178.943
2009-2010	4.193	1.174.860
2010-2011	4.099	1.234.738
Source: Demirer (2012): (Compiled from Higher Education and MNE statistics)		

Private tutoring houses were argued to be closed because it was a big industry generating about four billion TL revenue a year, and Gülen Community owned about 25% of them.<sup>71</sup>In 2013 and 2016, according to the Altınyelken, Çayır and Ağırdağ (2015) and Kandiyoti and Emanet (2017) other associations, and brotherhoods like TÜRGEV and Ensar came to the front to fill the gap opened in education,

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/gungor-uras/dershanelerin-yillik-cirosu-4-milyar-tl-1804549>

Süleymancılar and İsmailağa Community also began to fill the gap in education with their residence halls provided for lower-class children.

15<sup>th</sup> June Coup Attempt of 2016, allegedly plotted by Fethullah Gülen, has lead major changes in the curriculum. In 2017, it is decided that specific values of the government will be thought intensively. Bayhan and Aratemür Çimen (2019) in their report, which compares 2017-2018 and 2016-2017 curriculums, have found impressive results in terms of the changes in the values taught. Within a year, the content related to gender equality was removed almost completely, and the content related to secularism was removed substantially. Textbooks were written with a discriminatory discourse which reproduces the inequalities. In compulsory religious courses, Sunni Sect was started to be taught in a way that it permeates much more into every part of life. Authors argue that already not so bright textbooks in terms of equality, democracy went much worse within a year. Another change about the curriculum was related to discarding of the evolution from it. Scientific And Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), which publishes popular science books, was not allowed to publish books about evolution since 2013<sup>72</sup>. Eventually, evolution was also discarded from the ‘values curriculum’ of 2017<sup>73</sup>, on the grounds that ‘it is a contested issue and children are not ready to learn it, because it is too complicated.’<sup>74</sup>

After one year later of the Coup attempt, it was written in the official website of the NME that<sup>75</sup>: “With the first ring bell in 18<sup>th</sup> of September (2017), together with the distribution of free textbooks, NME will also distribute pamphlets which tell 15<sup>th</sup> of July National Will Epic to the students who are enrolled in primary, secondary and high schools, according to student’s levels.” Not only the pamphlets but also activities related with 15<sup>th</sup> of July, which will last all school year were put into the

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<sup>72</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/tubitaktan-evrim-yasagi,221581>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/23/world/europe/turkey-evolution-high-school-curriculum.html#commentsContainer>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/evrim-teorisi-mufredattan-cikariliyor/3913304.html>

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.meb.gov.tr/ilk-zilde-quot15-temmuz-milli-irade-destaniquot-kitapcigi-dagitilacak/haber/14493/tr>

curriculum. This excerpt from NME website, interestingly shows, how the ones who are enrolled in public schools and who only rely on the textbooks distributed by the state could not escape the indoctrination from both ‘freely’ distributed textbooks and additional pamphlets, which was designed for ‘every level.’

Another change was made in 15<sup>th</sup> of September, 2017, President of Turkey and Head of Justice and Development Party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said in a television program that he did not want TEOG (Exam for Basic Education to High School) anymore<sup>76</sup>. He said: “I found TEOG (Exam for Basic Education to High School Education) thing wrong. My prime president, let’s save our country from these things. We are not in a primitive condition like this anymore; these things are in the past, enough.”

Immediately after this statement of Erdoğan, then-contemporary Minister of Education İsmet Yılmaz started to work on a program which will put an end to the examination system. Erdoğan’s speech and the processes following this, show outstandingly that how the decisions, which affect more than one million students and their families, are made. In the end, Education Ministry came up with a ‘solution’ that will separate the high schools as ‘qualified schools’ and schools which do not require exams. In this way, it was expected that only 100.000 students would take the exam for qualified schools out of one million. The other 900.000 students were expected to go the nearest schools to their homes. It is said that in this way, only students who want to study in ‘qualified schools’ would take the exams.

In Turkey, there are huge quality differences and inequality between public schools depending on the school types and regions and there are even quality differences within a neighborhood<sup>77 78</sup>; so enrolling students nearest school to their home

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<sup>76</sup>[http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/824649/Cumhurbaskani\\_Erdogan\\_\\_Ben\\_TEOG\\_olayin\\_i\\_istemiyorum\\_\\_kaldirilmesi\\_lazim.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/824649/Cumhurbaskani_Erdogan__Ben_TEOG_olayin_i_istemiyorum__kaldirilmesi_lazim.html)

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/gentrification-education-cycle-in-istanbul-s-gated-communities/> Çetin Çelik’s and Defne Kadioğlu Polat’s (2016) study shows that how middle class parents enclose a public school with their economic capital and turns into a private like school in a gated community at a urban renewal area and don’t grant access to kids who live squatter area nearby.

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.egitimpedia.com/egitim-izleme-raporu-2015-16-egitimde-esitsizlik-suruyor-ozel-okullarin-payi-hizla-artiyor/>

without improving all schools does not sound as a decision which concerns quality and equality in education.

In this way, government officially divided schools into ‘qualified schools’ and ‘the schools which do not require exams’<sup>79</sup>. One can easily infer that naming some schools as ‘qualified’ makes the other schools ‘unqualified.’ The criteria, according to which these schools are considered as qualified or not are also criticized. However, that didn’t decrease the number of students who took the exams in the end.

And the government’s decision is criticized because the placement of students started to be made with the ‘circle system,’ and it is said that this system forces students to choose schools which they would not prefer<sup>80</sup>. Basically, in this system, a student can choose nine schools at most and five schools at least if he/she will be placed according to his/her exam result, and a student can choose three schools utmost from each school type. So if a student chooses three Anatolian high schools, she/he has to choose two more from the other school types either from an Imam Hatip or Vocational High Schools. This situation was also criticized as some neighborhoods only have Imam Hatips and Vocational Schools, and have no Anatolian High Schools at all<sup>81</sup>. The system is not transparent enough by having both the central placement, according to the exam result, and local placement based on the place of residence.

To summarize this, within the JDP era, it is clear that, families’ involvement in education has increased. Though the party made education available for disadvantageous parts of the society by increasing their access, this did not bring equality in education by providing everyone a good quality education. The party, with its neoliberal policies, encouraged the expansion of private schools, and marketization of public schools, and because of this, the ones who could not send their children to private schools, and the ones who are not living in well off

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<sup>79</sup> <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/egitim/nitelikli-okul-nedir-nitelikli-okullardan-bazilari-40879990>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/pervin-kaplan/1816473-liseye-geciste-cember-sistemi-nedir>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/istanbulda-4-liseden-biri-imam-hatip.html>

neighborhoods left with the lower quality public schools for primary and secondary schooling. In terms high schools, because of the extension of vocational high schools and Imam Hatip high schools, secular middle-class parents are left with the option of sending their children to private schools, if their child couldn't win a place in an Anatolian high school through a highly competitive exam. Since the government's efforts of making Imam Hatips 'the apple of eye' of this society, the ones who are coming from the disadvantageous background are confined in Imam Hatips and Vocational high schools because 'Turkey is one of the countries where educational achievement is dependent on social class most(Çelik 2016).

### **3.10 Middle Class in Turkey**

When one starts to do a literature review on the issue of educational strategies of the middle class in Turkey, he/she can see that there are not many studies on this issue. According to Karademir there are not systematic empirical studies on the issue of class in Turkey yet, let alone the middle class (2009). Karademir gives two different reasons for this lack of study. She says that difficulty of finding a tool to conceptualize both the urban and rural parts of Turkey is difficult. The second reason according to Karademir is the prevalence of informal sector in Turkey, at difficulty in classifying people, where to put people, under which category. Aratemür Çimen (2015), as an additional reason points out the penetration of postmodernism to social sciences; and researcher's preference on selecting the topics of gender, identity, race, and ethnicity instead of class.

There are only a few studies on the issue of class in Turkey which are Keyder's (1989) with a historical-comparative approach, Güllalp's (1993) and Boratav's (2004; 2005) with a Marxist perspective, and they can be considered as macro studies, they do not approach to the class experiences of everyday people.

The discussions on the middle class began to enter the literature through the 80s at Özal's time (Aydın& Taşkın, 2016). Kozanoğlu (1993) in his book entitled "Yuppies, Princes an Our Generation" looks at the reflection of Yuppies of America in the 80s through the middle class generated by Turgut Özal, 'Özal's princes.' He argues that 60s collectivist socialist youth has been replaced by individualist youth

who cares for money and power only. He periodizes the 60s as dominated by professional culture, 70s as socialist culture, and 80s as company culture. (p.41) And he parallels these with the role of middle classes. The 80s, with neoliberal structuring policies, was the time when the middle class is started to be discussed in social sciences and the media. For example Bali (2012) and Rutz and Balkans (2009), Kozanoğlu (1997) differentiate the new middle class of 80s from traditional and old middle classes of import substitution era. Where the new middle class was emerged in an open market, with the flourishment jobs at media, information, telecommunication, banking sectors, old middle classes relied on the state, they were employed in the public sector. 80s also brought discussions on nascent Islamic/Conservative middle class with export-led industry (White; 2002; Pamuk, 2008; Duben, 2011).

When there are studies on the middle class it was generally about the consumption practices, tastes of middle class. (Duman, 2004; Holt & Üstüner, 2010; Bayrak, 2011; Kravets, Sandıkçı, 2014; Güzel, 2017) Other studies on middle class concentrate on the residences, gated communities of middle classes (Öncü, 1997; Ayata; 2002; Ertuna; 2003; Geniş, 2005; Aydın, 2012), how middle classes create their own neighborhoods, with the existing capital they have with the aim of escaping from the ‘dirt’, ‘vulgar’, ‘chaos’ of the cities (Ayata, 2002).

In terms of this segregation issue, there are pioneering works of Öncü (1997) and Ayata(2002) on upper-middle and upper classes. Öncü (1997) looks at the first examples of gated community in Istanbul (Kemer Country while it was under construction) with respect to the globalization phenomenon and the ‘myth’ of ideal home of upper-middle-class families.

Ayata’s (2002) work is important in the sense for illustrating that how secular middle class distances itself from the religious class and lower class both in terms of geography and values by moving to gated communities at Koru Gated Community at Ankara, he says that this secular middle class defines itself with respect to secular world view, open-mindedness, rationality, environmental sensitivity, individual

autonomy, they see themselves as *aydın* (enlightened, intellectual), and as Westernized.

Ayata (2002) writes that:

In the Turkish context, a wide section of the middle class tends to distinguish itself through culturalised lifestyle choices: this involves a strong emphasis on secular values and a secular identity defined in opposition to the Islamist middle class that lead their segregated existence in the other parts of the city. (p.30)

Geniş's work (2005) looks at the İstanbul's context with the case of Kemer Country, which upper class isolates itself with the similar aims of Ayata's case but with the additional search of 'real Istanbulites'.

Bali (2012) also talks about the upper segments of the middle classes and their residence choices thanks to neoliberalism, in his book of '*Tarz-ı Hayattan Life Style'a*';

In Özal's period, free market economy was implemented brutally. This created a fast growth with this well-educated youngsters, who have started to work in firms with Turkish and foreign capital. In addition to that, in the 80's young women have also joined the job market with fast growth. Before the 80's there was no big contribution of the woman to the job market; after the '80s double income earner couples became a conventional model. Most of the time these couples were high ranked managers or self-employed people. So these couples wanted a lifestyle suitable to their social rankings and started to search for luxurious residences. (p. 112)

Bali was mentioning of a nascent new middle class after 80s neoliberal policies, in contrast to traditional middle class of import substitution era like the civil servants. However, after Gezi Protests in 2013, there was an increased interest for middle class both in academia and media (Tuğal, 2013; Yalçın, 2015). There were many discussions made whether the actor of the protests was middle class or not.

### **3.11 Reproduction of Class Inequalities through Education in Turkey**

There are not many sociological studies done on the issue of education, there are only four studies (Rutz& Balkans, 2009; Balkans&Öncü, 2015; Aratemür Çimen, 2015, Özçelik, 2018) which concentrate on the reproduction of middle class through education. The other resources related to parental involvement in education can only



be found in a piecemeal fashion. Scholars who study on Turkey think similarly, with the international literature of neoliberalism's creating and/or exacerbating the inequalities in education, and generally benefiting of the generally the middle classes. They likewise argue that increasing income inequality leads different classes' to acquire different quality education, only the ones who are willing and able to pay can get a quality education.

Pamuk (2014) argues that, from the early years of the Republic, increased public funding allocated to education was an essential factor to improve social mobility. Education provided in the public institutions made a reinforcing effect for the middle and low-income groups who live in urban areas especially. However, in this period of neoliberalism, demand for education exceeded the public funding allocated for education. Families started to make private spending and were directed towards private institutions including tutoring houses to get more quality education to support the education given in public education institutions. With the increased average income, different income groups began to differentiate in terms of educational spending (pp.334-35).

Akcan (2016) writes on the current context that 'today, not to ask 'did we studied for nothing?' question, not to be a part of white-collar reserve army of labor became one of the first main problems of both students and their parents''(p.89). He from a Marxist point of view, problematizes the myth of upward mobility, the myth of open society in his paper. Akcan mentions, an important value of the new middle class is to work, to strive, and at the end of it to acquire something. This myth according to him together with individualism of new middle-class results in the reproduction of system, because this middle class holds on the belief of upward mobility even if it is quite limited, isn't available for everyone.

Acar and Ayata (2002) argue similar to Bourdieusian analysis of education, that schools are not responsible for transmitting knowledge only, but they also reproduce existing inequalities in society with respect to the different school cultures. They compare the institutional habitus of three schools, one each from Imam Hatip high schools, private high schools, and public high schools in Ankara. They analyze these

schools mostly through a gender perspective, but they time to time refer different class dimensions in these schools as well.

They say that there is a clear distinction of female and male students in Imam Hatips because of the *fitrat* (nature) discourse of Islam, they argue that sexuality of male and female students are under the strict control of teachers, students get de facto single-sex education even if they are in the same high schools. In terms of Imam Hatip high schools' class composition they say there are not lower classes only, but also middle-class students are enrolled in these high schools since being a student in these schools, according to these students, signals that 'one's having a superior morality' concerning the seculars in the society.

Private high school, it is found out that, confer a strong we feeling, and taught its students that they can accomplish anything; writers argue that secularism and being enlightened are highly valued in these schools. These schools are composed of middle class and upper-class students.

In terms of public high schools, writers say that they are basically neighborhood schools and they suffer from not getting enough funds. Lower class students go to these schools because of their lack of financial means. Acar and Ayata in terms of decreasing quality of public schools wrote that:

The deterioration of the mainstream public school system owes much to the growing imbalance between increased demand for these institutions and the public funds made available for education. Education's share of the national budget has over the years declined, leading to increased class sizes, a deterioration in physical conditions and a lack of extra-curricular activities in public schools. (2002: p.93)

and they argue that there is an increasing closure of public education to lower economic groups.

Çelik (2018) too thinks that schools are getting segregated depending on the socioeconomic status of the families, but after 14 years later of Ayata's and Acar's article (2002), lower class is trapped either in vocational or Imam Hatip high schools than a general high school. Çelik (2018) writes that:

The high school types indeed structure and configure future educational and labor market careers, and thus life trajectories of students in Turkey. Within this context, the early standard tests at the end of secondary education determine the difference between an adequate existence and a life of poverty and the attendant consequences for health and well-being in the eyes of many parents for their children's future... the institutional habitus of these schools was shaping their pre-school identity and educational achievement over time. (p.131-2)

Çelik (2016) argues that Turkey is one of the countries where educational achievement is dependent on social class most, so the students who are underachieving come from impoverished families. He by referring to high school exams suggests that early division of children at the end of 8th grade causes further inequalities because disadvantaged children have given no chance to adopt school, to a different environment other than their own habitus. He finds TEOG system which was introduced in 2013 together with the regulation of turning every General High School into Anatolian School quite problematic since in this way all schools except vocational high schools require exam success. In this way, disadvantaged groups' children are trapped in Imam Hatips or Vocational High Schools where the chances of going into university and finding decent jobs are quite limited.

Before getting into a discussion with a middle-class focus, Çelik (2018) shows, how ethnicity can provide advantageous position for lower-class Turkish families compared with Kurdish and Romans lower classes. He analyzes the importance of social capital in school achievement by comparing different ethnicities of people living in the same disadvantaged neighborhoods of Istanbul. He says that in contrast to Roman and Kurdish minority, Turkish people are more advantaged in allocating their social capital for their children's education since they can have access to schools, neighborhood representatives, and other official institutions. So Turkish people even if they are socioeconomically disadvantaged still share the same ethnicity with the majority, and this creates an advantage for them in terms of social capital. He explains this difference in school achievement by inter-generational closure, where parents by knowing other children's parents create a network and try to ameliorate the disadvantages of neighborhood; these parents' children hang out with each other only. These parents because of their habitus, know how to reach the resources like neighborhood unit and schools, can communicate with the teacher of

their children in a confident way and in this way their children do not drop out school, unlike their Kurdish and Roman counterparts. He names this strategy of Turkish parents as resilience, even if there are many hardships for them as well, because they share the ethnicity with majority, Turkish parents could mitigate these difficulties for their children.

Çelik (2016) too thinks that schools are getting segregated depending on the socioeconomic status of the families, but after 14 years later of Ayata's and Acar's article (2002), lower-class is trapped either in vocational or Imam Hatip high schools rather than a general high school. He (2016) argues that Turkey is one of the countries where educational achievement is dependent on social class most, so the underachieving students come from impoverished families. He by referring to high school exams suggests that early division of children at the end of 8th grade causes further inequalities because disadvantaged children have given no chance to adopt school, to a different environment other than their habitus. He finds TEOG system which introduced in 2013 together with the regulation of turning every General High School into Anatolian School quite problematic since in this way all schools except vocational high schools require exam success. In this way, disadvantaged groups' children are trapped in Vocational High Schools where the chances of going into university and finding decent jobs are quite limited.

In terms of middle-class discussion, Sunar (2002) gives essential insights in terms of urban middle class' childrearing practices in Turkey. She argues that what defines the relationship between middle-class parents and their children is 'high degree of emotional and material interdependence.' What she means by is that families are always there to support their children in terms of emotional and economic terms. She says that middle class takes pride most in their children's success (p.11). According to Sunar, 'parents raise their children under the influence of their values, emotions, and self-construal (derive from their upbringing in the culture) in such a way to instill or evoke similar values, emotions, and self-control in the children (p.20). She suggests that parents are encouraging their children for autonomy and self-expression most. And she argues that, in terms of the relationship between child and his/her

parents that: ‘there is generally harmonious, non-punitive supportive of the child and sensitive to evaluation by the outside community’ (p.12).

Kozanoğlu (1993) writes in terms of decreasing upward mobility chances that:

Turkish society was a society which enables for upward mobility. Leaders like Demirel and Özal are the examples, who encourage lower class members to educate their children to be a member of the professional middle class. But the upper and middle classes do not want take their chances anymore. They make every sacrifice for their children, to retain this education process in an advantageous position until the university, where the occupations of their children will be defined. The education in the best schools and private lessons in addition to that lead the way to the foreign elite high schools. And if they can polish this high school education with the tutoring houses they can go to Ivy League-level universities of Turkey. And the ratio of who can survive from this sequence decreases. (p.48)

Yaran (2009) likewise mentions upper middle class, but their counterparts in Ankara. Yaran looks at the reproduction strategies of the upper middle class in Ankara, mostly at Çayyolu, similar to Ayata’s (2002) study, in terms of educational preferences of this upper-middle class she says that, being an alumnus of TED College (A College which provides K12 education, was founded in 1928 in Ankara, and spread through Turkey afterward) does not count as a privilege, distinctive anymore, this upper middle-class search for different schools such as French High School, Lycee Français Charles De Gaulle Ankara, to better differentiate their children from other classes, and isolate themselves from the conservative middle class as well.

Rutz and Balkan (2009), similar to Kozanoğlu (1993) talk about the parents who compete for the elite schools in Turkey, in their book entitled with ‘‘Reproducing Class: Education, Neoliberalism, and the Rise of the New Middle Class in Istanbul’’, as the title explicitly suggests, make a Bourdieusian analysis of the reproduction of new middle class in the city of Istanbul through education in a neoliberal context. They divided middle classes into two, core middle class, the ones who are public officials relied on the protectionism of state before 1980 and new middle class which formed after the neoliberal policies, who are employed in the sectors like finance, advertisement, and telecommunication. Authors made a field research the years between 1980 and 1997. Their main argument is that the neoliberal policies

implemented after 1980, together with the globalization, created a new middle class, and this new middle class heavily relies on the elite educational institutions in order to reproduce their class position to the next generation. Since there is a lack of supply in the elite high schools, families compete in a harsh setting with each other to 'win a place' in the best high schools. They look at the scene of Istanbul; their study is similar to the ones made in the British context, upper-middle-class competing for the elite schools. The authors argue that the state's withdrawal of its welfare state roles has affected the quality of education in public schools, the market interfered, and new private schools have emerged. And the new middle class are the benefited ones from this situation since they have enough cultural and economic capitals to attend their children to these schools unless their children can win a place in the most prestigious high schools, foreign high schools.

Rutz and Balkan argue that in the field of high school education, middle-class parents compete for the same reward, to win a place in the best elite schools. Those who have more capital in different types of capital have more chance to win the prize. The field composed of three main actors; one is the state which implements, designs the rules of the game with Ministry of Education with the discourse of open, transparent, objective ways of providing education to all citizens. New middle class as another actor, with their class consciousness, in terms of trying to reproduce their class position increase the competition in the market, and become the victims of their class consciousness time to time, as the third actor market, private schools, private tutors, and *dershane* benefit from the competition within the new middle class.

Parents even if they don't appreciate this system of high school exams, they get along with the system, because they are in a better situation compared to other classes except the bourgeois of course, with their different kinds of accumulated capital, generally they can reap the benefits of the system, if they win a place in one of the best elite schools. Also in terms of reproduction, even if the child is unhappy to compete in this system, for the reproduction of his/her family he/she must be sacrificed, because the reproduction is the most important thing for a family. The authors criticize this system as state's direct interference to new middle-class family

life, as turning children into test machines, sacrificing pedagogy into numbers, sacrificing knowledge to technique.

I think Rutz's and Balkan's attempt to make a Bourdieusian analysis of the new middle class in Istanbul was a necessary, preliminary and detailed account of what was happening in Istanbul, however they captured a minimal fraction of the middle class, upper-middle-class who are very high in cultural and economic capitals.

Duben (2011) criticizes Rutz's and Balkan's book in a book review. He says that social class is loosely defined. The critical contribution of Duben, is his acknowledgment of the book's lack of not taking 'Anatolian-based new Islamist middle class during the same period' into consideration. He says that there is a nascent Islamist middle class, which referred as Anatolian Tigers, which has started to flourish in the 80s, with export-oriented economy. He writes that: 'Education is a key to understand the hegemony of the new Islamist middle classes, and to neglect them is a serious omission'.

After this study Balkan together with Öncü (2015) made a quantitative study on Islamist middle class, by considering Duben's criticisms maybe, they compared Islamic and laic middle classes. They have reached 278 families with Islamic origin and 156 families with laic origin to participate in this study. Then they asked questions about their family's educational backgrounds, going two generations back, whether they want their children to go to public schools/private schools, also asked whether they want their children to go US for university education. They find that although these middle classes may seem different in terms of their lifestyles, their position between the working class and bourgeois makes them quite similar in terms of their middle-class character. Similar to Bourdieu, they say that the reproduction of middle class is not as direct as the working class and bourgeois, and they have to rely on education to transmit their present advantageous position because they don't have an economic capital which will last long like in the case of bourgeois. Both of them see education as a key and utmost important thing for their kid' future. (p.192) Education of their children is one of the most important reasons why do they invest. Interestingly they find that, similar to their secular counterparts Islamic

middle class does not want their kids to attend Imam Hatip schools, but they wanted their kids to go private Fethullah Gülen schools in the time of research. They also find out that both middle-class parents give importance to their daughters' education; they both hold a gender equity attitude in terms of their kids' education.

Beşpınar and Beşpınar (2018), from a similar vein with Öncü and Balkans' (2015) study the conservative and secular middle class. They compare the experiences of upper-middle-class' conservative and secular fathers. Since it's a qualitative study, it vividly shows how secular and religious middle classes' future projections about their children and experiences in terms of education can vary depending on a political and social context, though they are both middle classes. Given the recent political climate of Turkey, authors for the secular fathers write that:

The secular group openly express that there is a decrease in scientific thinking in education due to the politics shaping of education system. In addition to that, the values given in education system, which are based on religious references are also a problem. Families, who embraced secular values, send their children to schools, which embraced secular values, in that way, their children can encounter with the families who come from a similar background. In fact, this group stresses how an entire education spending of a child is turned into a 'weighty investment.' How they can sustain this educational spending is a source of worry for most of the secular fathers we have interviewed. (2018: p.33)

Besides the educational spending, firstly finding the right school is a problem for this group, Beşpınar (2016) writes that, for the secular middle class 'for most of the fathers, to find, 'appropriate school' guided by secular and universal values, is one of the primary challenging parenthood responsibilities.'

Aratemür Çimen too studies (2015), in her doctorate thesis, the school choices and educational practices of upper-middle-class families, who can exercise choice, in the context of neoliberalization, in Istanbul, like Rutz and Balkan (2009). She in like manner argues that middle-class families are reproducing the already existing inequalities through education, with the help of enrichment activities and shadow education. Additionally, she says that after JDP converted all the general high schools into Anatolian high schools in 2013, the trust of upper-middle-class families to established Anatolian High Schools in Istanbul has been lost as well, so the further



privatization of schools took place. She also stresses how the subsidies given by the government target a middle-class audience and government chooses to subsidize the private schools which middle, and upper-class sections of the society can only attend, instead of investing public schooling where everyone can attend.

Polat and Çelik (2016) look at one of the gentrified areas of Istanbul, Gaziosmanpaşa where the middle class in luxury gated communities and working-class in squatter houses live close by, and writers show how middle class embraces an exclusionary practice for the lower class children. They find that middle-class parents choose to finance a public school for their kids, and they don't grant access to the kids at squatter houses by demanding gated community cards, they enclose this de jure public school for their children only. Even if two public schools at the district located close by, and they are both public schools, the one financed by middle-class parents is way better in terms of number of teachers, number of classrooms, academic success and sports activities' success. Çelik (2016) argues that there is an inequality in terms of private and public schools but between public schools as well. In terms of middle class practices, he says that some middle class parents, who are not that high in terms of economic capital, choose to send their two children to public schools which are near to gated communities, and spend 39.000- 40000 TL each year for rent of their homes and contribution fee to school (300 TL each month) instead of sending their two children to private schools and give 120.000 TL each year for education only. (p.96) Özçelik (2018) in her study, also studies middle-class parents' enclaving of public schools and turning them into private- like schools to reproduce their class advantage.

The recent news <sup>82</sup>in Turkey also supports Polat and Çelik's (2016) study, but this time middle-class enclave resides next to lower class within the same school building. There are 'private classes' in public schools, where the ones who can pay 3000 to 10.000 TL or so for İstanbul, (537 to 1.792 US dollar) for a year, can enroll his/her child for him/her to get an intensive English education with private teachers, and also these classes have way better physical facilities according to the news.

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<sup>82</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/devlet-okullarinda-parke-dosemeli-ozel-sinif-ayrimi-ucretleri-10-bin-liraya-kadar-cikiyor,834609>

Though it is no secret that public schools are not free in Turkey, and parents have to pay for stationery, security and cleaning expenditures of schools because the state does not give any grants for these, dividing a public school with the private-like and standard classes are far from being based on inclusive educational policies.

So to conclude the literature review section of the thesis, with the implementation of the neoliberal policies we are witnessing that middle class came to the foreground as the ideal type of citizens, and as a reflection of it in the education middle class became the advantageous one due its relatively higher economic and cultural capital compared to the working classes, because they are the ones who are able to exercise choice and they are generally able to reproduce their class. So the neoliberal policies in education nourish the existing inequalities that came from one's family. Turkey's experience of neoliberalism in education is similar to that. Government' by rationing the quality public education direct middle class families to private sector to the buy this service to create a market in education. Turkey is similar to British and American contexts, in terms of parentocracy, which student's achievements depend on the wealth and wishes of their parents and decreased chances for social mobility. So we cannot talk about an equality of opportunity principle in the Turkish education system.

However what is unique to Turkey's case is the current government's rationing of secular public education, and their attempts to flourish the Imam Hatip schools, religious type of schooling as the only dominant type of schooling for the public schooling. Conservatism in education in British and American contexts mean the old high elite standards of schooling, neoconservatism in education however Turkey's case means government's 'setting of a moral compass' which dictates everyone a religious type of education based on the Sunni Islam.

In the analysis section of the thesis secular middle class parents' experiences in terms of the changes in these lines are discussed. Secular middle class rather than accepting what is imposed upon them are trying to come up with strategies where they can provide a secular and quality education for their children.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION: A NEW MIDDLE CLASS PARENTHOOD DUE TO THE RECENT CHANGES IN THE TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM**

This thesis aims to understand the ideas, experiences, and strategies of secular middle-class parents towards the educational policies of JDP government, to this end it asked several questions to the parents related to quality of public schools, comparisons of state schools with private schools, extracurricular activities, ideology of the education system, values of parents, opinions related to the future of their children, and many others. With the answers given to these questions by the parents, three main themes emerged. These are firstly the reduced quality of education in state schools due to the neoliberal structuring, secondly the increased neoconservatism in state schools and how these affect the parents who embraced secular values. The third and last theme is, concerning the first and second themes, constructing of a new parenthood. Secular middle-class parents in my research by increasing their parental involvement and making loads of sacrifices to prevent their children from getting a religiously-based education are applying a new parenthood style.

The first section of the analysis is about the views of parents in terms of decreased quality in state schools related to neoliberalism in education. This section has four subthemes. The first one is about low-quality infrastructure in state schools. The second one is about the schools' curriculum's 'not teaching of anything' to their children. The third theme is related to parents' experiences and ideas about the

teachers. The fourth and final subtheme of this section is about the lack of policies for the children with special needs in the state schools.

The second theme is about secular values and rising neoconservatism in state schools. In this section of the thesis, two subthemes emerged. The first one is related to parents' secular values, and how they put these values in contrast to religious values thought in the Imam Hatip schools. It also includes parents' concerns about schools' teaching of religious values to their children. The second subtheme is about the parents' concerns about the rising neo-conservatism in the public education system.

As the third and final theme, a new parenthood style is discussed. Parents in my research in order to counterpoise the increased neoconservatism and neoliberalism in the state schools began to employ a new parenthood style. Increasing parental involvement is the first subtheme of this new parenthood style. The second theme is the sacrifices made due to the escaping strategies of the parents, third and final subtheme is about the parents' differentiating themselves from the others with the discourse of 'we as the knowing and conscious parents.'

#### **4.1 Neoliberal Structuring and Parents' Ideas and Experiences of the Education System**

As it is discussed in the literature review section of the thesis, the neoliberal and neoconservative government in order to create a market for the education, has rationed the secular education in Turkish context. This in a way led to the decrease in the quality of the public school in terms of infrastructure, more importantly, resulted in a decrease in the quality of education in public schools in general. Those who wanted to get a relatively quality education are directed toward private schools, and a few Anatolian and Science High Schools. Four subthemes emerged out of the parents' experiences and ideas, in terms of the changes in education which are made with the neoliberal policy lines.

#### **4.1.1 Not Free State Schools and their ‘Dirty, Crowded and Insecure’ Environment**

Due to the state’s withdrawal of providing a quality secular education, parents as one of their main concerns related to the education system mentioned that state schools’ not being free and needed to be funded by the parents. Schools’ dirty and crowded, and finally insecure environment are also some of their primary concerns. So parents are left on their own to fund the state schools if they wanted to have a secure environment by hiring security guards or hiring cleaning staff for clean schools for their children.

*There is neither security, nor the toilets are cleaned. I know it, for instance, very well that my daughter peed her pants many times just before coming home. She used to say ‘The toilets are so dirty that I try to hold on, I do not go there.’ It is terrible in that sense. (Güneş, civil servant, 46)*

Güneş sent her daughters to the primary school in their neighborhood. Since she lives in Mamak, which is a neighborhood populated by the people who have a lower socio-economic status, the school apparently not funded very well by the parents. This, in the end, resulted in lower quality infrastructure.

Parallel to the middle-class’s perception of security and their desire to live in gated communities maybe, middle-class parents in my research had this perception about the insecure environment near to the schools where drugs are sold extensively, and gangs were present all the time. They in that sense are in need of hiring security guards from the private sector to protect their children from these threats.

(After referring to security guards of private schools)

*But you know this is not how it is like in state schools. Drugs are sold in front of the schools; some things happen, there are gangs. Children are grouped and ganged up at secondary school and high school.(Tülay, technician in the public sector, 47)*

*The schools are not safe. For example, the latest incident is, a cabinet fell on a child, it is so easy to install a cabinet, and a sink fell on another child, and the child passed away. A railed door fell on one of them. Things like that happen. School environments are not so safe, and there are some neighborhoods in which addictive substances are sold near schools, and*

*nobody intervenes to these. Everyone knows about it. There is a security problem in that sense.* (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)

Cemile as a teacher and a member of the Parents' Association was quite knowledgeable about the latest examples of what happened to the students in the schools because of the lack of precautions. So the state schools do not seem safe from the inside as well, for Cemile.

In terms of the fees demanded by the schools, parents claimed that:

*There are trips. There are costs. There is a certain payment we do. There is the copying cost. I mean it does not end. For example, we pay at least 50 liras each month. Trips, service fees, entrance fees, copying costs, cleaning costs...* (Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)

*Normally, education is known to be free, but it is definitely not. Because the teachers ask for some materials at least every week for their classes such as for visual arts, science practices, every week like model houses and such. The school has a weekly cost of around 100 liras and that does not include food.* (Eda, Unemployed, 33)

Though Eda is the mother of one of the least earning families and was living in one of the most disadvantageous neighborhoods in Keçiören, among my parents, she still was complaining that state school demands money from families in a continuous fashion for various domains.

*First of all, the quality of state schools is obvious. There is no allowance. This is the only thing they tell us when collecting money from us. 'The state does not give us money; we have to do this.' You question it. The principal comes and gives a speech. We say: 'We pay taxes but we also want the taxes to return.' But the principal says: 'It does not return.' S/he asks: 'Would not you rather prefer that we employ a security guard or the toilets being cleaned?' Then, you have to give.* (Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)

Behiye as a mother who defines herself as a person who embraced socialist values was expecting the state to provide these services, but anyhow she was agreed to pay the fees demanded by the schools for her daughter's to get an education in a school which is in a relatively good condition.

*Everyone pays the school as much as they want. They pay the parent-teacher association as much as they want. It is not like a registration fee, you pay whatever amount you want, every semester, whenever you want. They have*

*an IBAN; for instance, they installed a security building at the entrance of the school with that money. There is private security; they did something to control the alcohol and drugs, cigarette at the entrance of the school with the money collected at the parent-teacher association. This is how it works, they manage to maintain it for now, but I do not know if it is so for all other schools. The environment is unsafe, with our donations, it is the same for cleaners. This is how the cleaners' salaries are paid. The state does not afford it. The state does not afford anything at state schools. (Şeyma, secretary, 45)*

To conclude the first subtheme, though parents are complaining that the state's school not being free, and their need to fund these schools, they anyway complied with this situation. So because the state does not provide this, parents directed themselves to market to buy these services at the state schools, in the end, the state schools are commoditized as well. And parents who are relatively high on cultural and economic capital have the chance to keep their state schools relatively in good shape, however, this is not applicable for every student in Turkey due to the socioeconomic, regional inequalities and this, in the end, creates an inequality among state schools as well. This again contradicts with what is suggested by Gök, state's responsibility to provide free and quality education for all its citizens (2002). Gök writes: 'At present, by far the most critical issue facing public education and the right to education in Turkey is the lack of commitment by the state and the ruling classes. The allocation of funds from the national budget has been declining, despite the growing number of students and the need for new and better school premises, equipment and teaching tools' (2007, p.254).

#### **4.1.2 'Quite an Empty' Curriculum and Students' not Learning Anything from the Schools**

Again, as a result of the neoliberal structuring and neoconservatism, JDP government started to ration the quality education in the secular schools to lead the parents to private schools if they want to get a relatively good quality education. Only a selected few with the national exams got the chance to study in good quality state schools, in Anatolian High Schools. So other than these academic high schools, state is not providing any good quality education for all of its citizens.

Parents, as the result of the state's rationing of quality schooling, claimed as one of the first and most prevalent themes in the interviews, the emptiness of the education system. When I asked my participants 'what do you think about the gains of an average high school graduate when she/he has graduated from high school', almost all of them said 'nothing.' This expression clearly shows how the state provided compulsory level of education was seen by these parents. This part of the analysis is about the low quality of state education and parents' not so positive experiences and ideas with it.

*We would like to develop academic knowledge, general knowledge. Is there any? Children grow up empty. Because the curriculum and the books are empty as well. When overloaded, children just give up learning, the beauty of learning, and how to reach learning are not taught. They are given a load of knowledge and the student graduates without any gain. For example, when we think about education up to high school, it takes 12 years, and children are empty after 12 years. General knowledge of children is shallow. This stems from the system, not from the children. (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)*

Cemile defines herself as an enlightened person, and she is one of the most earning families in my thesis' respondents. Her and her husband's cultural capital, in terms of its institutionalized form exceeds the other respondents in my thesis. And she, as an insider of the education system, since she is a teacher, thinks that state schools are not good at to give any skills, knowledge to children. Because of that she sends one of her children to a private school, and prepares the other one for the bursary exams, she even does not see this adequate, so she additionally sends them to extracurricular activities as well.

*Children seriously grow up with empty brains. The child grows up, but there is not much s/he could learn. They can do some mathematical operations -if they can- but they do not know how to behave, how to communicate. (Eda, Unemployed, 33)*

*These test exams are a constant state of competition... Those children who have to study these have to learn in a very short time and they forget these later on. Therefore, they are unqualified. You might see the extent of ignorance in street interviews on Youtube; there is no knowledge at all. (Halise, retired literature teacher, 59)*



Halise again as an insider of the education system, equates the Turkish education system with the Turkish Exams System, where the knowledge is instrumentalized to get higher grades, in order to be placed in good high schools and universities.

*The children are empty; this is obvious from the university entrance exam, and how low the education level is too.*(Nermin, 45, Nurse)

*It is just the right to take the university entrance exam. That is it. It has no worth in the eyes of the employer. Those diplomas do not matter. They are only documents that are given when you finish something, turn a particular age, like a birthday certificate. With a few exceptions, they are neither personally growing, nor provide an advantage in terms of career competition* (Hüseyin, 53, Former bank employee)

Hüseyin, as an alumnus of one of the back then respectable universities, says that schools are not providing any quality education with very few exceptions. He highlights the relationship between the diplomas and labor market and points how there is a credential inflation in Turkey, and he questions whether every degree would lead to a good occupation.

So parents mostly said studying and learning only in an exam-oriented way, and this was indeed how the education system was designed in Turkey, was resulting in rote-learning. And when the exams are over, even those ‘successful’ students forgot what they have ‘learned’ so far. As the actor of these changes, for the decreasing quality of education system, most of the parents said that although education system was not too perfect in their student years as well, it got even much worse with the JDP government. For parents, this deterioration was also the case for the given equal chances to every child, i.e., equality of opportunity in education. They were connecting the equality of opportunity chance once they had, to their ‘idealist’ teachers back then. However, they think that, in today's education system teachers are not creating any positive difference for the upward mobility of the students. Parents’ ideas and experiences about the teachers, in that sense, is the next subtheme which parents’ also are very much discontented with.

#### 4.1.3 'Unconcerned, Incompetent and Outmoded' Teachers in the State Schools

Another thing parents compared with their student years and their children's was the teachers. They have quite ambivalent ideas and attitudes towards teachers, most of them have bad experiences with their children's teachers, especially the parents who send their children to public schools were seeing teachers as unconcerned, and seeing the elderly teachers especially as incompetent and out of date. Still some of the parents believed the existence of good teachers, or what a good teacher can change by himself/herself.

*Teachers are usually more impatient, less influential, and they give up on children more easily. (Hüseyin, former bank employee, 53)*

Two examples given in the below show the bad experiences of mothers with the state schools' teachers, where their children were humiliated by the teachers, they were saying that they were not able to find an interlocutor to discuss their children's problems at school. Because of that, and the changes came up with 4+4+4 policies, some parents directed themselves to private schools.

*My child does not go to school with fear. He does not think 'What scolding I will come across today. (Kadriye, retired, 55)*

*We changed the school once. The school where she finished primary school was far away, we transferred her to a nearer school at that time since the secondary school was nearer. She was insulted thereby the painting teacher, pushed her around, let us say, the teacher roughed her up for no reason. We do not know why. The teacher was also quite rude when we went to the meeting. (Seray, neighborhood representative, 57)*

*We live here in Mamak, and I registered my little girl to Maltepe Primary School. For me, this is the closest, a school that I considered in terms of the teachers, the administration, even the principal. Yet, for instance, a science teacher claiming to have 23 years of experience and to be a form teacher... I was so happy, extremely happy, thinking how nice it is, but the teacher has completely figured things out in her/his head, thinking the students would take what they would take and do not take what they would not, does not make an effort anymore. We used to depend on the experience of them, but now the children do not need experience, it is the internet era, they know everything, they are after building on what they already know. The teacher is about to retire, knows nothing, does not know how to use a computer, what can they give to the children when the children can use it. (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

Nermin was fascinated by the Internet and social media, her daughter had a Youtube channel, which was strictly controlled by her mother, and she thought that children could learn anything from the Internet. So for Nermin, there was not so much need for the teachers anymore. She during the interview reiterated the phrase 23-years-experienced-science-teacher phrase to show how the so-called experienced teachers can be old-fashioned, and she defended the idea that elderly teachers should retire immediately because of their incompetence and outmoded condition.

*Our parents were in the village; they were farmers. They did not even know how to guide us, but our teachers knew it very well how we could take one step up. Our teachers, not our parents supported us. But now it is not the case. Children now whether they pass the class or fail, whether they learn, the teachers do not care at all. I mean the current teachers are like that.* (Nermin, 45, Nurse)

Here Nermin compared the relatively better equal opportunity chances of her time with her daughter's time and said that teachers are not interested in the kids anymore, and do not want to improve the potential of the children anymore. She was linking her finding better employment chances back then only to the efforts of her teachers at that time, ignoring the fact that job market has already demanded a colossal labor force in her times.

Şeref, as the father of the highest-earning family among my respondents, was thinking that education policies should be left to the technocrats because the politicians are not good at this. Here he connects the problems of education to the earning of the teachers.

*Education of the teachers is not standardized. It is as if the teachers are doing this job due to obligation. Being a teacher is a bad occupation today, in terms of salary, in terms of opportunity. Also, education is something that is done offhand. Not for reaching a target, not for bringing society to a higher level. It is done at a 'whether we have it or not' level. It is the case for the students and also the teachers. I think it is also the case for the Ministry of Education.*(Şeref, civil servant, 36)

*For example, they say this a lot at the school: 'If you cannot give decent education at home, there is nothing we can do here.' But then why are you there? Of course, it is challenging, but not all families have to be perfect. You are an educator and you must give something to people, you must change something. This is also frequently said in parent-teacher association*

*meetings. They always criticize the parents. They always expect things from us. Alright, they might be right, education starts in the family, but if it did not (the child may be abused at home, s/he could go through many things), you need to do something for that child as well. Counselling teacher, for example, she has high heels on, she is aged too. All she thinks about is to look fancy. You feel it, the way she walks, the way she moves. She does not even keep eye contact with the parents or with the students. I mean she is up to no good. She does not care for the students. You go there and ask her something, she has no answer to give. (Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)*

Behiye was defining her identities as woman and laborer. And she was quite overwhelmed by the expectations of teachers and the school in general from her family. She was comparing her daughter's education with her son's education, her daughter is 10 years old and her son is 19 years old, and she in terms of the differences her children's education was saying that teachers started to expect everything from the family lately. Behiye here evoked the aged teacher's issue very similar to Nermin.

*I know that my son was smarter than the teacher, I mean because he had such an investigative approach. But the teacher had a plain logic, the teacher was late-retired and giving Turkish lessons in a study center. (Kadriye, retired, 55)*

Kadriye has a son with low vision, which is an eye disease. Kadriye thought that his son is quite a genius kid. She was trying to raise him without any exposure to religion whatsoever, and in order to this, she has many times interfered to his teachers through talking with them and warning them in the state schools before sending him to a private school. She, in this sense, with her quite confident attitude toward teachers and having one to one interaction with the teachers, and finally her insistence on her child should get a different treatment is the exemplary of the middle-class parenting. Gillies (2005) writes that 'the notion that middle-class children are bright, clever and possess potential is a common implicit assumption articulated by their parents' (p.844). Kadriye's parenting is very similar to Gillies' account. With Gillies' words she tries to 'protect' his son's 'right to be bright' (2005: p.843).

Parents' experiences were not all negative in terms of the teachers; they believed that a teacher, even if he/she is in a state school, can be a good one, though it is very infrequent.

*A child can be much more successful in a state school with a good form teacher than a private school. I mean, for example, there were a few such magnificent teachers in the school I used to work, and they raised many wonderful children. They always take them to places, do activities, so on and so forth... (Halise, retired literature teacher, 59)*

*For example, my little girl was very lucky at primary school. She had a great primary school teacher. She still talks about that teacher. Kemalist, hardworking... My daughter still never misses 10<sup>th</sup> of November, special days. She visits Anıtkabir, attends ceremonies. This is something that her teacher gave her at primary school. The teacher inoculated that love in such a way... (Güneş, 46, Civil servant)*

For Güneş who defines herself as Atatürkçü and modern, the primary school teacher's transmitting of her daughter to *Atatürkçü* values was a good thing.

To conclude this section, most of the parents argued that teachers are not interested in the students anymore, they thought that teachers are doing this job only to earn money rather than to actually teach children something, so as can be seen in the escape strategies of the middle class, their bad experiences with teachers will lead some of them to choose private schools, where they will be the 'customers' and can finally question the teachers and 'call teachers and managers to account' with entitlement they have (Gillies, 2005). As DeWiele and Edgerton (2016) write for the middle-class parents, 'these parents, more apt to view themselves as consumers of a service, feel entitled to acquire what they want' (p. 206).

#### **4.1.4 Lack of Policies for Children with Special Needs and Finding Individual Solutions**

Three of the interviewees I have interviewed with have children with special needs. Halise has a son with Attention Deficit Disorder, Tülay has a son with intellectual giftedness, and finally, Kadriye has a son who has low vision with a RAM (Guidance and Research Center, *Rehberlik ve Araştırma Merkezi*) report. These parents complained about the state's lack of policies for children with special needs;

they, in the end, had to find solutions by themselves through sending their children to private schools.

*But, what I have seen is, there is absolutely no education program for gifted children in Turkey. There isn't a program which is applied by the Ministry of Education, anyway. I have seen how wrong and twisted the perception of gifted children is in society. If only the government took care of these children, statistics say that 2-3 of every 100 children are gifted. But there is no such thing.* (Tülay, 47, technician in the public sector)

Tülay, as a single parent whose ex-husband has died, because of the state's lack of policies for the gifted children, was not quite sure what she needed to do with her son's education. She because of this directed herself to the market where she tried to find solutions on trial-error basis, by sending her son to a couple of different schools. She, in the end, found her '*business (ticarethane), the private school, which made her happy.*'

*Eren was at Evrensel College. I never thought about changing his school for TEOG exam. He continued to his school. Also, because Eren has limited eyesight, and he really has a different world than others, I never wanted to send him to a state school, to be honest. I didn't know what to expect; he wouldn't be lucky as he was at primary school at the state school, so the closure of the study centers didn't affect us that much.* (Kadriye, retired, 55)

*It is a process which starts from the secondary school and continues till the university, determining the life of a child within a couple of hours in the exams, I as a parent who did experience this can say that this is a horrible thing. If the system was different, our child could be somewhere very different than he is now.* (Halise, retired literature Teacher, 59)

Halise has a son with attention deficit disorder, as a '*conscious family*' they decided together to keep their expectations low for her son's education, her son did not prepare for the exams extensively since the exams are not designed suitable for his condition. So they as a family aimed him to be placed in a social work department, they would be happy if he would be placed at a state university, but anyhow they placed him to Başkent Foundation University thanks to economic capital they have.

To sum this section up, government's lack of or not adequate education policies for children with special needs and disabled children led these parents, who have enough

financial means, to private schools, however, this lack of policies threaten the access of disadvantaged and disabled children to education in general.

To conclude the first theme, in general, families firstly criticize the government, in terms of physical conditions of state schools such as lack of hygiene and security, crowded classes. To improve the material conditions of the state schools, parents have to give out money to the schools, and complain that the state schools are not free as well. Secondly, parents complain that the education given by the state was inadequate and ‘empty’, not connected with real life due to the rote-learning. Thirdly, maybe because parents were trying to find a culprit for all the wrongdoings of the education system, they have heavy criticisms for the state school teachers regarding that the teachers are unconcerned, incompetent, and finally outmoded. Nevertheless, for the teachers, parents still have some positive ideas as well; they believe in the existence of excellent teachers and how they can create a difference in children’s development positively. Fourthly and finally, because of the lack of social policies for children with special needs, three of my respondents were and are sending their children to private schools, due to neoliberalism's self-reliance discourse.

#### **4.2 Neo-conservatism in Education and Secular Values**

In this section of the analysis, it is argued that parents who embraced secular values feel a mismatch what they teach to their children and what their children are taught in the schools. In Bourdieu’s terms, they are in worry for being not able to reproduce the first habitus which they gave to their children in terms of the secular values they transmit in the home, with the school’s second habitus, religious values which are taught in the schools. Because of this discrepancy, some children had traumatic experiences with the compulsory religion courses, and parents are mostly directing themselves as much as they can, depending on the economic capital they have, to the private schools where students can get a secular education.

It would be simplified to argue that all secular parents are fiercely against neoconservatism policies in the schools; instead some of them, who define themselves as ‘neither religious nor nonbeliever,’ do not question compulsory religious courses that much. However, mostly Alevi and atheist parents are

thoroughly against these policies of the government. Overall, all of my respondents were against this much of expansion of Imam Hatip Schools and directing students to these schools.

#### **4.2.1. Secular Values and the School**

As Ayata (2002), Korkmaz (2007), Yaran (2009), Beşpınar (2016), Beşpınar and Beşpınar (2018) argue secular middle class defines themselves as modern, intellectual (aydın), Atatürkçü, and Westernized. And they are doing this positioning of their values in a direct opposition Islamic values, where they equate ‘religious conservatism’ with ‘backwardness,’ ‘traditionalism’ (Beşpınar, 2016) and with ‘bigotry.’ My respondents too defined themselves as with these kinds of adjectives and identities. Parents who embraced socialist values instead of Atatürkçü said that they are socialists, laborers, and some of the mothers also add they are feminists. In terms of what kind of values they wanted to raise their children with, none of them referred to any religious values, but they said that they want their children to be open-minded, rational, a person with environmental sensitivity and with individual autonomy (Ayata, 2002). Hoffman (2003) in terms of the middle class’ values writes that ‘middle-class parents place an emphasis on individualism, autonomy, self-reliance, and self-expression in their children’ (p.195). Respondents in my research also, very similar to Hoffman, said that they want their children to be creative, autonomous, questioning individuals who do not accept things immediately and also individuals who can express themselves. They also want their children to be world citizens with universal values, who are capable of standing on their own feet. This self-reliance discourse, not being dependent on anyone theme was emphasized and mostly used by the mothers’ of girls, for these mothers their daughters’ earning of their economic freedom are one of the most important things they wish.

#### **Secular Fathers**

Here are some examples which show what the secular fathers value most for their children’s upbringing.

*I always want to give and do my best in every aspect of my life, from reading habit to the books they will read, all the social activities they will do, I try to*



*give all realities of life, I mean I would like to. May he become an individual who is confident, a self-confident individual, because, in this country, you can not always live with your parents. Before all, I want him to be a child who can take care of himself when left alone. (Mahir, former chess teacher, 62)*

Mahir as a secular father who defines himself as socialist had found the chance of being father when he was 53 years old through adoption. He found the current government's educational policies completely wrong and says that he wants to raise his son as an independent and questioning individual, as *'the exact opposite of what the government's raising of an obedient generation'* as his own words. He and his wife allot a significant amount of their pensions for their child's to acquire quality and secular education.

Hüseyin who defines himself as a socialist, similar to Mahir, even if he does not send his sons to private school due to his political views and his financial situation, was struggling to provide his sons a secular education, in the state school as well. To do this he was getting the help of the parents' association, according to his accounts, until the interview's time, they were able to keep the religious foundations away from his sons' schools successfully.

*In a way that become a curious, investigative, responsible person... May her/him respect labor, I want her/him to be against gender discrimination, all kinds of discrimination, may her/him appreciate science and arts, favor science in solving problems. Other than that, even if they can not perform arts, I want them to watch it. Human rights, equality, being against discrimination, believing in science, things like that... (Hüseyin, former bank employee, 53)*

*Being confident, being okay with herself/himself, running after the things that will make her/him happy in life, the skill to surround herself/himself with the right people in her/his relations with other people, knowing how to say 'No', the willpower to want something and saying 'Yes' and doing it, the will to do something... (Şeref, civil servant, 36)*

Şeref also was ready to allocate a significant amount of his resources for his child to get an education free of 'political indoctrination.' To this end, he said that they, together with his wife are willing to pay half of their income each month, for a quality education which is 'free from politics.'

The accounts of these three fathers are very similar to Beşpınar & Beşpınar's (2018) study on the secular fathers, where fathers see providing a secular and good quality education as the primary responsibility of the fatherhood in the current political context.

Mothers who embrace secular values also were worried about the increased conservatism in the education system and they wanted to transmit their secular values to their children.

*May him be free and happy, do what he wants, does not find himself stuck and among things that are exposed, express himself, does not suppress his character against oppression. May he not suppress his identity, not suffer from economic problems. This is my expectation.”. (Duygu, Freelance Children's Book's Illustrator, 41)*

Some of the parents were saying that the school was not successful for transmitting the values they had such as universal values, environmental sensitivity, and respect for the others.

*In fact, I would like to transmit universal values. Righteousness, beauty, unity, solidarity, respect, tolerance... On the other hand, religious values are given, unfortunately they are emphasized right now. Religious values are like respect for religious figures, respect for prophets and such, learning about their lives, being respectful, performing salat, memorizing prayers, going to mosque... (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)*

*Love for nature, animals, humans... Respectful towards her environment, to all living things. I want her to be free, egalitarian, with a high sense of justice. (when asked whether she thinks these values are transmitted to her child at school) No. I can even say that the values you convey are messed up. This year they did recycling. Maybe that might be a little influential. There are some little things but nothing serious, noteworthy. Because she sees other children at school. She said ‘Everyone is swearing in this school, I do not want to go to this school’ when she was in primary school. Then I sat down and talked with her. I told her: ‘In this country, especially men swear. You must get used to this. You either ignore or intervene with it. When you can not handle it, you will walk away.’ For example, if these values were conveyed, these children would not swear in this school. Or they throw away their trash, I warn them, they make fun of me, they call me four-eyed. If these values are conveyed, there will be a bit of a difference. (Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)*

Behiye as the mother of a girl was also quite alert about the future of her daughter in the country. She, as with other mothers of daughters, was giving importance to their girls' standing on their own feet, being able to win their economic freedom.

Some parents were saying that the transmission of values cannot be expected from the schools only, but parents and families must have a significant role in transmitting them.

*May him never abandon honesty, do what he does in the best manner. May he be aware of his responsibilities, not run away from them, be hardworking in all aspects. May he be a trustworthy person. The school itself is not enough, these should also be given in family. These sorts of values are also conveyed at school, they are not untransmitted, but it is completed with my support. (Şeyma, secretary, 45)*

### **Secular Middle-Class Opinions about Imam Hatips**

For the secular middle-class Imam Hatip schools are outside chance to send their children, all of the respondents think negatively in terms of sending their children to these schools; they also think negatively about these schools in general. They put their values in opposition to what is thought at Imam Hatips.

Şeyma, contrary to other middle-class parents, was not contemplating so much about preparing her child that extensively to the national exams; she thought that her son's emotional wellbeing right now is more relevant than the exam. So she thought that her son could go to the nearest school to her home if he wasn't successful enough to be qualified for Anatolian High Schools in the exam, when I asked her what schools she has near to her home.

*But there is always that one school which is closer to the neighborhood, students go there normally, that's right, there is an Imam Hatip school nearby, I did not think of it. I do not know, I do not have any idea, let me think, let me look it up. Then I can send him to his father for studying as an alternative solution. I am serious, when he starts high school he is going to be a big boy. He is going to need a father anyway. I would send him there rather than Imam Hatip. They want to raise a conservative generation, which is based on religious education. Look! The closest high school is an Imam Hatip, there is no other. It is almost obligatory. (Şeyma, secretary, 45)*

After she apprehended that she hasn't many alternatives other than Imam Hatip schools, she decided to send her son to her son's father's place in Istanbul because of her lack of economic capital to afford a private school as a single mother who resides in her mother's home.

*There are too many Imam Hatip schools. This is a terrible thing. These schools keep opening while we need science, wisdom, science high school. For example, there was a construction site of a school but they put the sign quite late because people reacted. It has become so common... Certainly they want to create such a population that is unaware. Not be able to foresee anything. Ignorance. This is why Imam Hatips are spreading. They do not want educated literate youth. The government says we are men of cause. I do not know what cause this is. (Güneş, civil servant, 46)*

Güneş was feeling disgruntled about the spreading of Imam Hatips. Here in her account she equates Imam Hatips with 'unawareness' and 'ignorance' and puts to the values she holds 'science' and 'wisdom' to the opposite of the values taught in these schools.

*There are also the Imam Hatips, I do not think the religion is taught at Imam Hatips honestly. In my opinion, Imam Hatips are places where narrow-mindedness injected into children's brains. (Tülay, technician in the public sector, 47)*

These reports of secular parents, which they associate Imam Hatips with 'backwardness,' 'unawareness' and 'ignorance' affirm what is written by Ünder (2003: 39) 'by labeling (some) Islamic beliefs, modernists have used such words as 'ignorance', 'prejudice' and 'perversion' and those who hold such beliefs as 'bigots' 'old fashioned' and 'relics of the Dark Ages'.

Halise, in terms of the newly constructed Imam Hatip School building at 100. Yıl, which is a neighborhood, where the main opposition party, the Republican's People Party got 82.8% of the votes in 31st March 2019 local elections, and known as a district where seculars mostly live in, said that:

*I mean, there would not be anyone but 2-3 janitors that will send their children to Imam Hatip in our neighborhood. It seems to be changed for now, but it is a joke to build an Imam Hatip in our neighborhood. Like a challenge, like we can do this to you. It seems to be stopped, for now, the structure is*

*finished but the decision seems to be canceled.* (Halise, retired literature teacher, 59)

Halise here was well aware of the class composition of the students at Imam Hatips. She says that the middle class would not definitely send their children to these schools. And she sees the government's attempts to build these schools are not motivated with pedagogical ends but motivated by an insistence to impose people their conservative way of thinking.

#### **4.2.2 Concerns about Rising Neo-Conservatism in the Education System**

In this part, parents experiences with the increased neoconservatism in the schools, schools which are other than the Imam Hatips, are discussed, this part covers the parents' experiences with the textbooks, compulsory religion courses, the existence of religious associations in the schools, and also some of their experiences with the teachers' attitudes about the indoctrination of religion.

##### **Textbooks and Conservatism**

Textbooks are among the much-mentioned issues in the interviews. Most of the parents again referred to its 'empty' character; they said that there is no information given in the textbooks. Additionally, parents also referred to textbooks' conservative nature. They mostly argue that textbooks are attempting to teach their children conservative values. Mothers who named themselves as feminists highlighted that the conventional gender roles are taught in the textbooks considerably.

*Education is now full of superstitions. We see the condition of so-called textbooks. They are far from secularism, Atatürk was discarded from the textbooks, evolution was also. These are great mistakes; instead, many different things have been placed. Completely religious-based, commercialized, sheer backwardness, things that are distant from science were placed. They aimed to raise obedient individuals with these books, let us not say individuals because... (Tülay, technician in the public sector, 47)*

*In the last few years, the content of the textbooks got emptier. The curriculum is becoming more pious, and it puts the women in a secondary position, which represents the women inside the home. For example, when I looked at my daughter's and son's book, women are trapped inside homes, and women are represented as mothers, who do not work outside and doing the*

*household chores only. Fathers, on the other hand, are rendered as people who read the newspaper on the couch only. That is the overall image, and we are dissatisfied from this, of course. (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)*

Admittedly this was the discussion in Aratemür Çimen's and Bayhan's recent report (2019) on the content of the textbooks, which address that textbooks' content on secularism and gender equality got diminished. So, this situation is perceived as a problem for some of the parents in my research as well.

### **Parents and Compulsory Religion Courses**

For the parents who described themselves as 'neither conservative nor non-believer', mandatory religion courses were not a serious concern because of its ethics component of the course, yet some of them said that they are monitoring it as well to see whether they are giving this course more in terms of ethics, not with a religious emphasis.

*There is the normal classical religion class she takes the religion class in a certain framework. I personally think that she takes the knowledge we need to know about our religion with no exaggeration. The teachers are not like... In our school, this is how it is like, 'you will perform your salat', 'do not go around without covering your head', such a discourse, I have never heard such things. I ask her/him what they learn more or less. (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

Nermin was a mother who monitors her child extensively, her daughter's religion course was not an exception, though Nermin defines her as neither conservative nor non-believer, she was controlling what is thought in the mandatory religion courses as well, she was preferring her child to get religious education more with a 'ethics' basis.

*He has the education since 4<sup>th</sup> grade. But it should be like this: respect the environment, hygiene, self-care could be given as a lesson but in my opinion, the religion must be sort of optional. That should be left to the family to decide. As I stated before, respect to the environment, morals, etc can be given as a lesson at schools, but the religion can be taught in the family anyway. It is not necessary. Teachers make students memorize some prayers, and my child is trying to memorize, thankfully his teacher does not emphasis on that, I am not complaining about him, he says "I just need to see them try," he doesn't force students to memorize every single word. (Şeyma, secretary, 45)*

A non-believer mother's daughter, however, had a traumatic encounter with the first compulsory religion education course she took:

*I have never taught anything about religion to Deniz. We don't even have any religious words in our language. "İnşallah, maşallah" we don't use these words. The day when they had the first religion course (A new religion teacher was supposed to come to the class but it was delayed for around a month. Then their teacher continued to the lesson) I asked how was the lesson and your teacher, Deniz said "Mom! I don't understand what they are talking, they are speaking a different language" then suddenly she started to cry. She did not really understand anything. (Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)*

When I asked Behiye how did she accomplish such isolation from the rest of the society, she said that they are only hanging out with their family and friends, and do not watch any conventional TV programs. Her further comments on her secular values showed that she is feeling out of place because of the conservatism in Turkey. She even compared pious families' children with her daughter and said that religious family children are more confident and extravert than her child and her friends' children. This again is very similar to what is suggested by Beşpınar and Beşpınar's account on the secular parents, where seculars retreated to their family and close friend circle, only hanging out with them, and sense out of place due to the way of resources are being distributed in the society (2018).

*When compulsory religion course has started, our child has begun to interfere with our drinking of alcohol, and asked us, 'why don't you perform prayer?' Because he did not know the difference between the abstract and concrete concepts, he was perplexed. When he starts talking about djinnis, angels, hell, etc, it creates misunderstandings and confusion and affects the psychology of the child. Then even if it is not suitable for his age, he wants to fast. Then, he felt our differences from the rest of society in general and started to get angry with us. (Duygu, freelance children's book's illustrator, 41)*

Duygu's son's experience with his first compulsory religion course is also very challenging. The lifestyle of her and her husband has started to be questioned by their son. And Duygu as a mother who wanted to raise her son with the 'light of science' was having difficulty to do this because of all this indoctrination of Sunni Islam at schools. So, in Bourdieu's case, child's first habitus acquired in his home, the secular way of living was interrupted by the values which were taught at the schools.

One parent said about the indoctrination of religion with the compulsory education courses that:

*You know 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Religious culture and moral knowledge course is obligatory on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. For example, little kids are forced to memorize some prayers in a language they do not know. And we are having problems with this. Students get a bad mark if not memorize it, kids get affected by this badly, and they get sad. It is the same at the school that our child goes, we have to memorize it together. But the child does not understand anything, s/he just memorizes it. Then if s/he ever happens to have some religious bonds, this situation makes them disappear. This situation creates secession from the religion for most of people. When it is forced to someone, it happens (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)*

Though Cemile defined herself as secular and said that religion has not any role in their lives in any way, she is obliged to memorize prayers to make her child pass the mandatory culture of religion and knowledge of ethics course. And they are doing this as a family activity since they as a middle-class family want to prevent their child's to get low grades by monitoring him/her. Their experiences also show that this course is not about culture of religions course but a Sunni Islam course as suggested by Education Reform Initiative's Report.<sup>83</sup>

*I am an Alevi if I am honest. I can not get close to people who use religion to live their daily life. Because a human being must have conscience, everybody must be free to live their religion freely. I am trying to give some freedom to my kids about religion. I am trying because the things which their religion teachers teach them at schools do not appeal to me. They are even ridiculous in my opinion. Let me tell you about my children, for example, my daughter comes from school and says: 'Mom! We are born from Adam & Eve; we are all Adam & Eve's children'. A fifth-grader says that! The child faces a dilemma. It does not make any sense for them to teach this. They are born from Adam & Eve, but they are siblings. The child can recognize these. Then is it like two siblings got married and had a child? The child faces a dilemma, so I think it is wrong that they teach the religion at such an early age in such a ridiculous manner. So I say 'Do not listen to your teacher.' I prefer s/he grows up as a science-based, researching manner. I say 'search the internet; you can watch videos about the creation of the world and humans. (Eda, unemployed, 33)*

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<sup>83</sup> [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/egitim/665688/Din\\_dersi\\_icin\\_uyari\\_Secmeli\\_olmali.html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/egitim/665688/Din_dersi_icin_uyari_Secmeli_olmali.html)



An Alevi parent was also complaining about the mandatory religion course. She was advising her son and daughter to keep a low profile at the school, which was dominated by Sunni Muslim majority students. She was also worried about her children's getting bullied or questioned about their not fasting during the Ramadan times by the other children.

### **Partnerships Signed by Religious Associations**

Other than the compulsory religion courses, partnerships signed between MNE and religious associations in terms of giving seminars and values education courses, were also creating discontent among parents who embraced secular values in their lives.

Şeref's experience with values education, given by the Imams of Directorate of Religious of Affairs, began as early as his son was three and a half years old. Şeref's case is similar to that as suggested by Deniz and Aksoy (2018) in terms of the prevalence of neoconservatism in early childhood education. Here Şeref could have the chance to send his son to another kindergarten due to his relatively high economic capital:

*There is a course called values course. There are people who come from Religious Affairs and teach this course (I registered my child to a public preschool). The content of the course, when you look at it, is about equality and sharing. Okay sounds good, but it is not appropriate for a person from Religious Affairs to teach this. Anyway, I did not sign up for such a preschool. I signed my child up to a public preschool which I was sure it was not like that. Teachers are regular school teachers; they can teach this. There is no need to bring a man from Religious Affairs for this. For example, this is political. I also would not want the opposite of it. Whatever is the opposite of it, I would not want such a person to teach as well. The child can learn this from whoever a preschool teacher at the class who feeds him, dresses him, plays with him every day. (Şeref, civil servant, 36)*

*Other than that, religion interacts with education too much. The pious foundations case. I did not send my daughter this year twice to their events. They were sending them to one of those events about foundations. I did not send her on those days. (When asked about content of the event) I do not know. I also do not know the content; they were supposed to take them to a seminar given by an imam. Maybe the content of the event was good, but I did not trust. I did not send her to school that day. (When asked whether it was because of the principal) They signed protocols with Ministry of Education but not just the principal. I can say that our principle was horrible. He was*

*not an educator at all. These foundations signed protocols with Ministry of Education, they come, and give any training, course they want. It is not an option for the principal to deny it.*(Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)

Behiye's example above shows the prevalence of the existence of religious foundations in the education system. Even if she is living in a Batıkent neighborhood of Ankara, where the opposition party of Republican People's Party gets most of the votes, she cannot escape the indoctrination of conservatism in education one way or another.

### **Teachers' Directing of Students to Religious Activities**

Other than compulsory religion courses and partnerships signed with religious associations, parents also complained about teachers' directing of students into the religious activities in different ways.

*The teacher can come at the end of the year and say, crossing the line, 'Send your children to Quran courses this summer so that the children grow up to be respectful.' They do not say respectful towards nature, they say respectful towards people, adopting values, so send them to Quran course.* (Eda, unemployed, 33)

*Eren goes to study center after school in second grade. One day he came very angry, 'Mom, are teachers like that too!'. I guess they were discussing the creation of the world in a class, Eren told about the big bang, told about evolution, then the teacher asked 'Who created single-celled organisms?' Then Eren could not answer, he only said 'There is, of course, an explanation for that but I could not find it.' He argued with his teacher like that, then we went to the study center and said that a teacher should not approach a student like this. The child makes a scientific explanation, to counter that, the teacher makes an explanation completely based on God and religious belief, which she must not make. We said that this teacher is not going to give any lessons to Eren otherwise we will not send him here. The next day, the teacher was gone anyway.* (Kadriye, retired, 55)

Kadriye's protective type of parenting with its middle-class character led her to take action about the conservative explanations given by the teacher. Due to Kadriye's middle-class entitlement and economic capital she has, school has decided to send away the etude teacher, but not everyone is capable of imposing his/her will to the public schools because of the centrality of the education system and school

administrators being the member of Eğitim- Bir- Sen, which is nationalist and religious union very close to the JDP government.

To summarize the neoconservatism section up, neo-conservatism in education is felt deeply by the secular middle class, and they feel threatened as Beşpınar and Beşpınar (2018) argue in terms of the prevalence of neo-conservative values in education against their secular values. They, as their values which they want to raise their children, said that they want their kids to be capable of expressing themselves, autonomous, questioning individuals who can stand on their own feet. Though all the parents in my thesis are against the spreading out of Imam Hatips, parents who define themselves as 'neither conservative nor non-believers' do not question the existence of compulsory religion courses that much unlike their Alevi and non-believer counterparts because of this course's 'ethics' part. Increased religious content in the textbooks, teachers' directing of students to religious activities, and agreements of MNE with religious associations are also significant concerns of the secular middle-class people. These first two parts in the analysis were about rendering of secular middle class' situation in terms of neoliberalism and neoconservatism in the education system, in the next chapter however their strategies against these, their increased parental involvement by sending their children to private schools, private courses for extracurricular activities are discussed.

#### **4.3 Construction of a New Parenthood**

Parents, in order to offset the current education policies, are applying a new form of parenting style by increasing their parental involvement intensively and by preventing the exposure of their children to the effects of rising conservatism. In order to do these, they are, as already said, increasing their parental involvement by allocating much of their economic capital to the educational spending. Since they don't have much economic resources they are making sacrifices to the future of their children, and finally when they achieved the educational standards for their children they start they differentiate themselves from the others with the discourse of 'we as the conscious, knowing parents'.

### 4.3.1 Increased Parental Involvement

Though my respondents are constituted of eight families who send their kids to private schools, and six families whose kids are enrolled in state schools, all of the families are subjected to increased parental involvement educational policy due to the diminished quality in public schools and increased conservatism. In this part, parents' departing from the state schools by going into private school, and parents' endeavors to compensate for the lower quality public schools with extracurricular activities and shadow education are discussed.

#### The Education 'System'

Nearly all parents referred to a 'system' in their accounts, with the expression of 'education system is forcing us for the things that we originally do not want to do.' And they rendered this system with adjectives like 'scandalous,' 'disastrous,' 'broken,' 'unfair' and 'inadequate.' Though this was the reality for these parents, they kept struggling for their children to get a quality education no matter what happens. This, in a way, is very parallel with what Bourdieu proposes with his game metaphor. These middle-class parents enter the game of education relatively with high cultural and limited economic capital; they are legitimizing the education game for its attainable future stakes for them by investing so much in this game with different capitals they have.

For example a socialist mother Tülay, who 'attends the protests for equality of opportunity in education for all in the streets' states that she is sending her child to a private school for the preparation of a good Anatolian High School because:

*When he goes to a school where he may not get proper education, you think about the future and what kind of high school life s/he is going to have. You think of every dimension, academic dimension, social dimension, the behaviors, habits, bad habits, risk of having bad friendships. You think of so many things that it is not only academic. That social environment is also very important. You think those too and say that may he go to a nice school, catch that opportunity, and achieve it. (Tülay, technician in the public sector, 47)*

For her son's cultural and social capital in the future, she sees a good school as the ultimate mean. Tülay is also aware of different school types are offering different kinds of institutional habitus, which will undoubtedly affect the children's educational trajectory in the future as suggested by Acar and Ayata (2002). To this end, she was ready to contradict with her socialist ideals, she was giving about a thousand Turkish Liras each month from her 5000-6000 TL salary, and she was always monitoring his son to prepare him for the exam with the use of her emotional capital.

Another mother who defines herself as a socialist sends her child to a private school, says that:

*Private schools are actually not something that I approve of. But it is something that the parents are forced to, just to stay away from narrow-mindedness as much as possible. But in fact, the institutions we chose in line with our opportunities which can provide secular education are not supposed to exist in a social state structure. In a completely free market condition, the teacher has no assurance, and teachers change very often anyway, they do not have social security. Still, I find private schools better in terms of the education they give as compared to state schools. For example, they use different books; they use other books which are well-designed other than the ones offered in the curriculum. Foreign language is better. Other than that, there are more social activities. The relationship between the child and the teacher is better in terms of children's rights. (Duygu, freelance children's books' illustrator, 41)*

Here Duygu, very similar to Tülay, says that in order to protect his son from the latest developments in terms of the increased neoconservatism and the decreased quality in state schools, she has to send her son to a private school.

Nermin as the epitome of the classically studied middle-class, who always wants more, was saying that she is against the private schools because only the ones who have enough means can attend to those schools and get a relatively good quality education. Moreover, she was thinking that state schools are in this state because people are fleeing to private schools leaving state schools in this way. Anyhow, she made a 'donation' for a school which is different from her catchment area, and she says that:

*There is a school near my mother-in-law's house, but just to send Sude to Maltepe Primary School, due to the Syrian refugees and families with low education here in Mamak, and since there are children that distract Sude and interested in other things, what did we do, we sent her to Maltepe Primary School since it is a better school as much as we observed from our own environment. One step up... (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

Though these parents have an egalitarian discourse in terms of equality of education for all, their ideals are opposing with what is advised as good parenting, doing what is best for your child irrespective of other's expenses. As Reay (2005) argues “struggle to balance the need to meet dominant middle-class positions of being a good parent with one's personal principles, and political values generate internal conflicts, ambivalence, and tensions” (p.920). This account was necessarily accurate for the parents who defined themselves as socialists but still in need of sending their children to private schools. Reay, however, argues that rather than blaming the middle class for these exclusionary practices in terms of education for all, one must hold the state responsible for designing the education system accordingly to the wishes and wealth of parents (2005).

### **Extracurricular Activities**

Parents' heightened educational involvement, their private education spending were not restrained with the parents who send their children to private schools, as it was already explained state schools are not free as well. However, there is another realm in the Turkish education system that parents spend loads of money, and this is the private courses for various hobbies and private tutoring courses for the exams.

In terms of extracurricular activities, most of the parents are giving high importance for their children to acquire a hobby due to their cultural capital, as Lareau (2003) suggests with her 'concerted cultivation' concept for the middle-class parents, respondents were sending their children to the private courses or planning to send them when they got enough money. Some are doing it to compensate for the lack of opportunities in state schools; some are sending their children to courses as an extra to private schools.

Cemile, who defines herself as an enlightened person, is one of the mothers whom both sends her children to private school and extra-curricular activities because she doesn't think that the private schools are enough for social activities:

*We take extra stuff for arts and sports; we send them to swimming, we send them to a language course for language, we will send them in the future to drama course, we send them to a course for music. I mean we buy these services externally, which are supposed to be given at school. We have to pay for these, those who can afford to buy them, those who cannot raise like that, inadequate in terms of arts, sports, and culture. (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)*

Mahir as a middle-aged father was saying that 'he invests into the human' and he was giving solemn consideration for the education of his son, he was sending him to a private school since the start of his primary school years, but this was not satisfactory for him, he says that:

*I take him to different courses, sports activities. For instance, I take her/him to football at weekends. We always join those outdoor sports activities. We join social activities of children in Batkent and out of it. We are trying our best, we always go do sports together. We provide opportunities as much as we can. (Mahir, former chess teacher, 62)*

Duygu as a feminist, socialist and vegan mother, who appreciates the science most in her life, was criticizing the educational policies of the government and was discontented about 'finding individual solutions to the system's problems' as in her own words. So she was sending her son to the courses in addition to the private schooling. Her description of how she plans her son's activities can also be seen as an example of 'concerted cultivation' of the middle-class parents,' as suggested by Lareau (2003), it is the thorough planning of all the activities that the child will attend:

*We are trying to get out of the curriculum of the government. We are trying to exceed the education he is taking, supporting it with courses to meet arts and science. We are under pressure financially. He went to a drum course for three years, was into music. For science activities, I take him to some activities at weekends. I take him to concerts, classical music concerts, to art galleries and exhibitions. That is it. We watch documentaries like National Geographic and history channel etc. other than that we watch cinema channels suitable for children at home. (Duygu, freelance children books' illustrator, 41)*

Şeyma sends her son to the nearest state secondary school to her home and to compensate state's not teaching the test technique which will be needed in the central high school exams, she sends her son to etude centers, which are technically private tutoring houses but in a small scale. She additionally sends her kid to a basketball course as an extracurricular activity to acquire him a hobby.

Eda, as the mother of the least earning, and lowest ranked in terms of institutional cultural capital family among my respondents, was valuing the education of her son and daughter so much, she had dire efforts to increase the life chances of her children. She was attending the courses opened by neighborhood representative (muhtarlık) for herself and children, and she had a resilient attitude trying to undo the negativities and disadvantageous position she has in her life (Çelik, 2018). She was doing it by the help of her social capital; she was receiving advises from muhtarlık and women solidarity association about the issues related to her children's education. Her husband recently got in the prison before the interview, so she told that:

*The most we spend on is, of course, the kitchen, bills, and the courses of children. My son is preparing for high school next year, but they were having an education at mukhtar's office even before we got to those levels, my son went to instrument, bağlama course and my daughter went to guitar course, plus they were both going to swimming course. We had to cancel those right now. At the mukhtar's office, the expense is 100 liras per child monthly, together it costs 200 liras, of course with the transportation expense it costs around 400. Guitar and instrument (bağlama) courses were similar; they sum up to 300 liras. 700 liras per month spent on only swimming and music classes, of course extra school expenses of children were too much.(Eda, unemployed, 33)*

To conclude this part, middle-class parents in my thesis desired their children to acquire a hobby in their lives to improve themselves, and the ones who were sending their children to the public schools thought that it was not possible to receive these from the public schools. Some parents, although they send their children to private schools, colleges, still send them to extracurricular activities because they thought that private schools were not enough. In this manner, we can differentiate within the lower middle and middle classes in my respondents. While some of the lower-middle-class parents were also sending their children to private schools despite their



very limited economic capital, they had to stop at this point, while middle-class families who earn better, try to send their children to both.

Extracurricular activities in Turkey's education system are not prominently related to arts and sports courses to acquire a hobby, of course. There was a consequential exam industry with private tutoring courses till 2014. Following 2014, they were converted into Basic High Schools, where parents still used them as private tutoring courses. So parents were ideally sending their children to the Anatolian High Schools for the first two or three years in high school, then they were transferring them in the last one or two year/s of their education to the Basic High Schools. In this way, parents, who do not possess enough economic capital and the parents who still believe the quality education that the Anatolian High Schools offer, were applying a strategy using both public and private schools for the quality education with the lowest price possible. Because private tutoring courses have turned into Basic Schools, i.e., private schools, they too are discussed in the private schools' part.

### **Private Schools**

Reasons for sending their children to private schools, how parents were choosing, on what criteria they were choosing these schools vary. Whether they were sending them to colleges, which offer K12 education, or the Basic High Schools, only for the last two years of high school education, also differ. Their experiences with the private schools also range.

### **Reasons to 'Choose' Private Schools**

As for the parents who have children with special needs, they thought that state does not have a policy for their children, and thanks to the economic capital they have, they were able to send their kids to private schools. Tülay and Kadriye chose to send their children to private schools because of their children's particular condition, but changes after 4+4+4 Law have also accelerated that by turning their elementary schools into primary schools, so they had to leave to find a secondary school.

Some parents sent their children to private schools because of their bad experiences with the teachers. Some were sending their children to private schools because of the

low the quality of the state schools and to escape from the indoctrination of conservatism. And some of them concentrated more on the success at the exam due to their relatively low cultural capital, and are sending their children to Basic High Schools only, right after an Anatolian High School period.

Here's Nermin's account which shows that even sending her child to a relatively good public high school was not enough due to the recent changes related to Project Schools, also the race for a good university was so much intensified that without going to private tutoring schools, being placed to a university was seen impossible.

*My older daughter, for example, took the TEOG exam. She won a good high school, all of them were her teachers, the teachers that wrote the coursebooks of that school. The chemistry teacher was the one who wrote the chemistry coursebook. It was such a beautiful school. But two years later the school and the education system have changed. The teachers were sent to other schools, and the good teachers were gone. They were sent to different schools and replaced. Due to constant changes in the system, we couldn't get relief for our daughter; winning a place at a good Anatolian school was not even enough. (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

### **Criteria to Choose Private Schools**

Choosing the right private school was not an easy decision for the respondents in my research. There were various criteria, and the most important one was dependent on the economic constraints they have. The ones who sent their children to private school sent them to schools which the price was ranging between 20.000 to 25.000 TL. They were utilizing subsidies given by the state after the year of 2014; some of them were also receiving scholarships in changing ratios.

The ones who do not send their children to private schools were saying that the price of the schools are too high, and the schools do not provide all the opportunities that they are offering, and the ones seen as really quality schools were way too expensive for these parents. Only Hüseyin was suggesting that besides the economic constraints, he does not send his sons to private schools because of his political ideals. The other parents said if they had enough money, that they would undoubtedly send their children to private schools.

*Private schools are very costly. There is also that. I mean if it was half the price, I would definitely say private school. But considering the service quality, the money it requires is not good. (Şeref, civil servant, 36)*

Şeref as one of the most earning families in my research, and who has one of the highest institutional cultural capital among my respondents, prefers to send her son to public schools as much as he can. And he could do this because of his living at Ümitköy, a neighborhood which is populated by the affluent people of Ankara. He said that he has good neighborhood schools, and if he would not like these schools, he had the chance of sending his child to a private school since he has one child only. Şeref's experience is similar to what is suggested by Kadioğlu and Çelik (2016), he thanks to being a tenant at Ümitköy where good quality public schools can be found, can postpone sending his child to a private school.

The price of the schools was not the only criteria to choose these schools; parents who embraced socialist values were trying to find social democrat schools.

*We decided to send him to private school, but first let us look it up, because back then Cemaat schools were popular among private schools. It was hard to find, for example, when we went to Evrensel we took the opinions of friends from Eğitim-Sen. They advised Evrensel to us, but I had already sent Eren to the exams of it before knowing it, so that he overcome exam thing, that is how we went to Evrensel. (Kadriye, 55, retired)*

Behiye sent her daughter to Metod College for a while for the pre-school education and told similar to Kadriye that:

*We knew that the owners were rather democrats. We thought that they at least did not give a religious-based education. That is why we preferred that place. Because back then, we did not know who or which Cemaat owns which school. (Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)*

Thus, these parents were using the social capital they have to decide on which school to send the children, as Ball and Vincent argue, they were rather than relying on the 'cold knowledge' of schools', were using the 'grapevine' knowledge by asking their friends, to better choose the school (1998). In this way, they were protecting themselves from enrolling the schools which they were fiercely against their political views.

Güneş, similar to Kadriye and Behiye, says that:

*We decided on Üçler Basic High School because it was an Atatürkçü school.*  
(Güneş, civil servant, 46)

Güneş though sent her daughter to a Basic High School for the last two years of the high school education only; she chose this school because of its *Atatürkçü* character.

Seray's choice of Doğa College was creating a discontent for her due to the political ideals she was holding. She was sending her daughter to Doğa College because she believed that the school was giving an excellent education; however, she thought that the owners of the school had changed recently, and schools were bought by an investment group which was close to the government. She says:

*You feel sad unavoidably for having to send your child to such a school. But for example, there are three more schools in our neighborhood, which are more democrat, social democrat; we are having problems with their education..* (Seray, neighborhood representative, 57)

Duygu's way of choosing the school was very well informed. She instead of relying on the advertisements of schools or what she has heard from the others, took the initiative and intensively got involved in the decision process in order to get first-hand information.

*At first I visited many kindergartens in Batıkent. There I liked the school's social structure, width of the classrooms, hygiene of the toilets, the arrangement of the cafeteria. The point of view of the teachers and the principal to the child was also good. That is how we preferred it. There was also a movie theatre, swimming area and such. It was a nice school actually.*  
(Duygu, freelance children books' illustrator, 41)

To conclude this section, parents were choosing private schools with different types of criteria. The fee of the school, given subsidies, and given scholarships is the most critical factors that affect their choice of private schools due to their limited economic capital. Secular parents were also choosing the schools according to their life view, schools' being of democrat, *Atatürkçü* was significant for most of them. They were also using their social capital, to reach the 'grapevine knowledge' in order to find the 'right' school for themselves.

## **Advantages and Drawbacks of Private Schools**

Most of the parents were thinking that private schools are nothing other than a business ('ticarethane'), and simultaneously, they were considering themselves as customers/consumers. Because of this entitlement they have, they were able to question system in the private school, teachers they have complained at the state schools have to act in different ways in these schools because parents were paying for this service, they also had a different relationship with the principals, who should take parents' opinions into consideration. As Dewiele and Edgerton (2015: 198) write 'parentocracy is fully evident in not only the fact that these (middle class) parents make the demands in the first place but also in the fact that they fully expect the principal the comply (consumer sovereignty)'. They as the positive sides of the state schools stated some common points which are the full-time schooling- this was important for the mothers working outside-, not crowded classes, adequate hygiene conditions, and presence of security guards, and relatively good English education. For most of the parents, exemption from the neoconservatism imposed by the government was crucial.

Tülay for the school which she was sending her son, says that:

*Even if the principal is like that, that school is a business. It has to make money in order to pay the expenses, pay the teachers, pay the bills, after all it is business. But maybe it was a business that made us happy among other businesses. The price of this school was more reasonable. (Tülay, technician in the public sector, 47)*

Tülay because she has no time and energy to check her son always and because she is alerted by the insecure environment of the schools, and most importantly since she gave up on the state to provide these, sent her son to a private school 'which makes her happy.'

Seray who had problems with the teachers at a state school and sent her daughter to Doğa College, says that:

*The teacher does not treat the child like they do in the other school, because you are a customer, they cannot treat you badly, I mean, they make money*

*out of you, you are their money source. If the employer is the owner of the school's business' owner, you are also the employer to some extent, you are the parent. Therefore, the child is not that affected in that sense. (Seray, neighborhood representative, 57)*

Here as Gillies (2005) suggests with the middle-class parents' sense of entitlement, Seray as a middle-class parent expects full compliance by the school employees to her demands, because she thinks that she is a customer or the employer.

*The children are freer in private schools. They also provide hotel-like services. Toilets are clean, and classrooms are rather modern. Of course the relation of the teacher with the child is more intimate. The child can reach the teacher more easily. They have the children do more test regarding university preparation. (Güneş, civil servant, 46 )*

Güneş, unlike the parents who send their children to colleges, does not expect so much from the teachers of the Basic High School. She only concentrates on whether the school will teach her daughter the test techniques and carry her daughter to a good quality university or not, and this indeed how these schools were designed. She is more interested in the success in the exam. But she sees substantial differences with this high school and the neighborhood elementary school, which she sent her daughters previously in Mamak.

*It depends on the private school you choose. If you chose a Kemalist school, you are exempt from the religious knowledge overload, secondly, what we really buy in private schools is the social activities, art activities, English and physical conditions, which is cleanliness. (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)*

*There is this thing about private schools lately: a lot of parents go to these schools to buy some secularism, they escape their children from state schools. I am not sure whether they buy quality. (Halise, retired literature teacher, 59 )*

These accounts of parents support the view of Demirer (2012), where she argues that market's entering everywhere results with students' and parents' being 'the customer,' and teachers' being 'the seller' (p.169). Nonetheless, parents were not entirely content with private schools. After all, they were not sending their children to the established and good quality private schools because of their limited economic capital. So low-quality private schools were run with high turnover rates of teachers, bankruptcies at the middle of the term, not fully realizing what it had advertised in

terms of the social activities. Some parents' accounts on these showed that parents suffered from the bankruptcies and transfers of these schools in the middle of the academic year; additionally they said that because of the high teacher turnovers some classes of their children were not made.

Kadriye's example with Evrensel College supports what has argued by Apple (2002), private schools' attracting and demanding of able middle-class parents, who can pay and has the legitimate cultural capital, also their able children, with ready, pre-acquired cultural capital, and Apple names this as 'cream-skimming.' Kadriye has a son with a low vision, according to Kadriye's accounts, Evrensel College officials did not realize this condition of her son at first sight, after they made his son's registration, the school officials saw Eren has a RAM report. Because parents in the private schools do not want any obstacles on their way for the race of winning a good school, officials asked Kadriye to cancel the RAM report of Eren. However, Kadriye has rejected the withdrawing the report, because this report was giving some amenities to Eren during the official placement exams.

*There is also this competition. There is a competition among private schools, among parents, among students. Having a disabled child at school will be influential for them in this competition. Therefore, in none of the private schools, those who need special education already have special schools but other than that, in regular private schools there are no disabled children because they do not accept them. They do not accept them because of this competition, but we insisted on Eren a bit. (Kadriye, retired, 55)*

Both Seray and Mahir complained about the schools' not keeping their promises in terms of the social activities they should have provided. Seray complained about the not enough social activities in private schools due to the exam preparation process, and in Mahir's case, social activities were not done due to the not established system in the new private schools.

To conclude, in this part of increased parental involvement, I first discussed the parents' perception of the education 'system.' I discussed the parents' dilemmas and doubtfulness related to equality of education, and parents' compliance with the education system for their children's prosperity, no matter what happens. Secondly,

parents' sending of their children to extracurricular activities to counterpoise for the state schools was discussed. Thirdly, the reasons to choose private schools, how parents are choosing them, and the advantages and drawbacks of private schools were discussed. Parents' solution to increased neoliberalism and neo-conservatism education policies, resulted in an increased parental involvement for the secular middle class. In the next part, how secular- middle- class sustains or tries to sustain this situation, what sacrifices they are making were discussed.

#### **4.3.2. Sacrifices Made due to Escaping Strategies**

As scholars Reay, Ball, argue parenting practice is highly classed and gendered. In this section of the thesis, mothers' relation to their children's education, their being the primary agents of social reproduction with the emotional capital they have been discussed. Then sacrifices made by the family for the reproduction of class is discussed, considering my respondents' lack of economic capital, sending children to extracurricular activities and/or to private schools were not so easy, they had to make many sacrifices, nevertheless they found ways to do this by applying different strategies with the help of different types of capitals for the prospect good life of their children.

#### **Mothers and their Emotional Investments**

Though some of the mothers among my respondents, who are married, were saying that they with the fathers were taking care of the issues linked to children's education together, when I asked how do they share it, I found answers that fathers' generally were going to PTA meetings, and help with the homework and mothers' doing the rest of all other. This division of labor is similar to Katartzi where mothers give attention, care to their children on a daily basis within-household activities all the time; fathers are attending to the parents meeting occasionally only as an extra-household activity (2017). My respondents' division of labor between mothers and fathers supports the Ayata's (2002) description on the middle-class; though there is an egalitarian account of the division of labor between men and women, women are the ones who are responsible from the children and home sphere.



*We both take care of her whenever we have time. My husband and I are both very keen. Either I or her father talks to teachers at school. In fact, I want my husband to do this more, why? Because I have an overload of things to do. Get the children ready for school, clean their clothes, their hygiene. I say to my husband to call the school, just because he has more free time and I am mostly exhausted. Something happens and I say you make the call, please. He takes care of the external things and I do the household things. The important thing here is that she studies with her father. I arrive at home late, around 6.00, 6.30 pm and I go directly to the kitchen. I have to prepare dinner. My husband arrives at 7.00 pm, by that time I usually finish preparing the dinner, we have dinner, then I clean the kitchen. As I clean the kitchen they start studying, I mean it was like this during winter. He took care of her one on one, I mean he is fond of her. (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

As can be seen from the Nermin's account, she almost does everything related to children's education except the studying with her daughter; she even gathers the background information for her husband's to call the teachers. Yet, she highlights the importance of the father's studying with his daughter by saying 'the important thing here is that' and says that her husband takes care of his daughter on a one to one basis.

*The burden is on the mother. We, as mothers, undertake a huge part of the work such as taking to and bringing back from the school, preparing the needs, helping with homework, and so on. Fathers are rather relaxed on that. There is such an issue. I think that it is so for all mothers. (Duygu, freelance children's book's illustrator, 41)*

Mothers' involvement was not limited to doing household chores for their children only. Duygu as a feminist mother and since she is working on a freelance basis from home had quite some remonstrant attitude of the unequal division of labour for the child's education and household chores at home to her husband. She was saying that her working from home puts her in a vulnerable position because of the flexibility of working at home; she is expected to do everything on her own.

These accounts of Güneş's and Tülay's below is similar to what is suggested by Reay, where the middle-class mothers are also taking the emotional labor upon themselves, by trying to motivate their children all the time with the emotional capital they have (2000). Tülay's coupling of guilty conscience with not motivating her child has to do with the mother's middle class emotional capital.

*Sometimes, for example, my daughter was so sick of studying... I used to motivate her constantly by saying: 'My daughter, these days will pass, take a timeout every once in a while, go to cinema, to theater, meet your friends. (Güneş, civil servant, 46)*

*And I always have to motivate my child by saying 'You have to do tests, go to your school regularly, did you do your tests, come on why do not you do them,' which are things I do not want to do. But I have to do it. When he does not want to study, you say to your child 'Come on, study,' something close to pressuring if not pressuring, in order to get him to encourage and study. When you do not say it, when you let the child be, your conscience does not allow you be. (Tülay, technician in the public sector, 47)*

To sum this section up, as it can be seen from mothers' reports, parenting is highly gendered as it is classed as well. Mothers are seen and see themselves as the primary providers in children's education. Mothers are responsible for the maintenance work of the children, they had to cook for the children, iron the clothes of them, and prepare food for them all the time. And they are also monitoring their children to see whether they are doing the homework or not, or whether they are getting good grades or not. They also had to motivate their children when children feel low. Fathers are more represented outside the home, however, but this does not mean that they do not care for the children's education, but as it was already discussed in the secular values section part of the discussion, fathers see to provide a quality and secular education for their children as a fatherhood responsibility only and left the rest of it to the mothers.

### **Financial and Social Investments for Aspirations and Future Expectations**

Comparing the economic capital my respondents have and their parental involvement in their children's education, i.e., their private spending on education, it can be seen that, they are making some sacrifices and applying some strategies in their lives in order to provide their children with a quality education. This situation is very much related to how middle class constructs itself as a future-oriented way. For the middle-class, for the possible gains in the future, any sacrifice can be made. As Ball holds, the middle-class individual is an unfinished self, the middle-class subject always sees itself at the process of becoming, as an incomplete entity full of potentials that are waiting to be discovered and nourished (2003). Allocating the

resources for their children's education seen as the blueprint for happiness, comfort, and prosperity in the children's future grown-up life by the parents.

Still, the parents in my research mostly do not hold high aspirations like the studied upper-middle-class who determines the high school or the university that the child must go, or directing the child to a particular occupation. When I asked them, 'what kind of a future do you want for your children' almost all of them said they want their children to be peaceful, happy, and healthy in emotional and physical terms with an occupation that he/she likes. But after that, they were saying that this does not look very possible in the future, even reaching this kind of future is not easy for them given the political climate of Turkey. Parents claimed that they feel insecure and threatened due to the current economic crisis, nepotism, and unemployment. And they say that they feel unsafe because their way of life was under attack due to increased conservative policies.

*I would like him to choose an occupation in line with his abilities and live up to the healthy life standards with that occupation. (Şeyma, secretary, 45)*

*Of course before all I want my child to be healthy. First, I want him to live as a human with good physical and mental health. Second, I want him to live as a happy individual. Third, we talked about questioning earlier, I have no doubt about it, I am aware that I raised a child who questions things, I have no problem with that, which in case we reach the education we aim or get the chance to reach it, I am sure that he is going to question more and get to better places. (Tülay, technician in the public sector, 47)*

*First, may she has a healthy personality, mental health, and physical health. May she has an occupation that she likes and gain life. What this occupation will depend on her choices and skills. To be honest, I would like a safe future, a job that she can work at, that she can do what she wants. (Seray, neighborhood representative, 57)*

As the three accounts above illustrate, parents want their children to be healthy in physical and emotional terms, with whatever the occupation what she/he does. Some parents were saying that providing their kids even with these conditions are not possible, and they felt that their reproduction of class and lifestyle would not be that smooth.

*I would like the thing that s/he deals with arts and sports, the most importantly have a job that makes her/him happy and no concern for the future; but there is too much future concern. I mean even if they finish university, people are unemployed, we cannot imagine a lot of things about her/his future, because they are very little right now. (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)*

*May he be free and happy, do what he wants, does not find himself stuck and among things that are exposed, express himself, does not suppress his character against oppression. May he not suppress his identity, not suffer from economic problems. This is my expectation. (Duygu, freelance children's book's illustrator, 41)*

*Before all, I want a fair and free country. I want her/him to live in a free country in which nobody is judged based on her/his belief, thoughts. A place where there is no violence against women (especially for my daughter)... (Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)*

*I want a future in which employers are rewarded, those who deserve reach better places, not just a country in which those who can get others to pull some strings or carry particular identity characteristics are rewarded, a system which s/he can get what s/he deserves based on her/his skills, education, diligence. (Hüseyin, 53, Former bank employee)*

*We do not see a future here, maybe she will get a job somewhere, be a civil servant. It could be public or private sector, there may be a possibility of finding a job, but under which conditions can you do it? You either need to know some people or I do not know, those guys fill all the positions with their siblings, relatives, friends, qualified people are left out, which is concerning in terms of future, I mean you do not trust. (Seray, neighborhood representative, 57)*

Hüseyin and Seray as secular middle-class parents were pointing out their ideas about Turkey's lack of meritocratic culture, where knowing certain kinds of people became more important than the credentials, skills what one holds. And they feel insecure because of their not being close to the dominant groups in the society, which makes them less inclined to get a share from the distribution of resources.

*Freer, I would like her/him to live in the opposite of the country we live in currently. The country is so messed up that it is a mess in every aspect of it. As I said, children go to school and their beliefs are questioned in the school. 'Why do not you fast?' this is not supposed to happen. Of course I would love them to live in a world with more free people being respectful and loving towards each other. (Eda, Unemployed, 33)*

*May her/him at least has a job that s/he likes and can do, economic freedom, a job with international connections, not a job that will keep her/him in Turkey completely. (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

Though Nermin has managed to ‘save her elder daughter’ and placed her to in a Medicine Faculty at Kırıkkale University, this was not enough for Nermin. She was saying that she is ready to sell her house to get her an accreditation from Başkent Foundation University, in this way, her daughter can work as a doctor at another country as well.

Nermin’s attempts for widening the options of her daughter were not so much related to their lifestyle is being under attack and an urgent need her child to leave the country but to give her more established institutionalized cultural capital that will lead more economic capital in the future. Tülay, however, as a socialist and non-believer mother says that she wants her son to live the country:

*I do not want her/him to live in a country like this. I love my country, but I do not want her/him to live in this country. I do not want her/him to live in Turkey unless the conditions change. I want her/him to live abroad; I do not know whether s/he wants it or not. Of course it is her/his decision to make, but this is what lies in my heart. As long as these conditions remain, there is no job for our children in public institutions anyway. All our social space, lifestyles are being restricted. We are under pressure, neighborhood pressure, the laws, government pressure, pressure from governors, legal pressure... If s/he will in this country, under these circumstances, it is going to be a tough life, it is not going to be easy. (Tülay, technician in the public sector, 47)*

So some parents were not seeing a future for their kids in Turkey and wanted them to leave Turkey. Though Kadriye is not supporting it so much, Kadriye’s son Eren has already made his decision to leave the country:

*A free future, but it does not exist. I want him to live as he wants, but Eren is one of those who do not want to stay in Turkey. He wants to go abroad. I do not want it, not at all, because I say this country is ours, why can not we do what we want here and rather go abroad? Why does one produce what s/he produces abroad, but when you look at it the World is ours. He could also go abroad when you think like that but we do not really know what life will bring. (Kadriye, retired, 55)*

Some parents were, however, strictly against the idea of their children leaving the country; they were suggesting their children should stay and struggle for the betterment of the country. To conclude, parents have to make sacrifices in order to provide a future for their kids either in Turkey or abroad, and they saw the education as the key for this, which will unlock a good occupation, and a good occupation will bring comfort, happiness eventually in their children's life.

Parents generally were saying that the two areas which they consumed most were the food and education, they were saying that in these last two years, in 2018 and 2019, inflation damaged their purchasing power significantly, they said that they started to diminish their 'luxuries' to be able to supply for the food and education. They, as the sacrifices they were making said that:

*I used to pay my health insurance perfectly and regularly, later there were some disruptions and when he started to go to school, I totally stopped it. I used to be able to do savings more or less; now I cannot. I used to hire someone for cleaning etc. Regularly before s/he started school, now I cannot. (Duygu, freelance children's book's illustrator, 41)*

As seen from the Duygu's account, she had to increase the use of her domestic labor by not buying any cleaning service from the outside when Ardiç has started the school. And her health insurance she started not to pay, was vital for her since she works on a freelance basis, and her husband recently changed his job. Her being not capable of making individual savings puts her in a vulnerable position in terms of her relationship with her husband.

*For example, I sold my car; it had expenses so I sold it. I do not go to gym or go out to places. I go to classes, that is all my expenditure. For example, I used to go on trips, now I do not. I used to join daily trips, I could buy whatever I wanted like clothes or shoes or bags, now I cut back on them. Since I can not join trips, my relationship with my friends is weakened. Here is the most dramatic example for you. I can go on vacation, but I can go to my relative's house. I used to be able to go to hotels. (Şeyma, secretary, 45)*

Şeyma, as a single mother had to sell her car in order to provide the education spending of her son, who is enrolled in a state school. By not hanging out with her

friends because of the financial situation she is in, she had to sacrifice her social environment for her child's future.

*What becomes our priority, I do not buy clothes; I go to the cheapest hairdresser. What do I do, for example, we do not buy household goods for our house, for instance, if we had money I would change the sofas, but I say let it be, the sofas are not important. If I find money, I will send her/him to English course immediately. If I find 1000-2000 liras, I will start her/him to English course right away, my priority is always education. My sofa can wait, I will not change my car, I will not go to holiday if necessary, of course they want it but for me, it is always education. (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

As can be seen from Nermin's account, she is so willingly paying for the education of their children. She has never-ending support for the prospects of her children, and her parenting supports what is suggested by Sunar (2002) that, Turkish middle-class parents in the urban area give a continuous emotional and material support for their children.

*We lower our life quality. For instance, our trips, eating out once a week, though it does not happen anyway, taking trips once a month, summer vacations, these do not happen. We do not go on vacation; we channel that for those three months to other expenses like drama course, summer school, festivals, swimming, such activities. (Eda, Unemployed, 33)*

Eda as the mother of the already least earning family of my thesis' respondents, is willing to decrease their life quality more as parents for the educational spending of their children.

Güneş, whose daughter has just recently got into the university, says in terms of the private education spending that:

*We work, as the mother and father, you can make a living one way or another. What happens, we cannot do savings, we just keep it going by fulfilling our basic needs. We have a house, we do not pay rent; still we have difficulties, so many difficulties. At least we have hope. We had the children get an education, and they will find a job soon. (Güneş, civil servant, 46)*

Parents are not only constraining their 'luxuries' to provide a good education for their children, sometimes the whole family is being mobilized to explain a subject, and increase the success of the kid at the school. Nermin's account exemplifies this:

*“She got to 6th grade well, this year her courses will be a bit different. Right now we are fine since her father supports, there is also the older sister. They support. Her sister takes her when the father does not understand the sister tells her.” (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

As can be seen from the above accounts, parents' most important priority was to provide a good quality education for their kids. Twelve out of fourteen respondents were homeowners since they were not paying any rent; they said that they were able to allocate more resources to their children's education.

*We for our child want to provide a good education, for their not being dependent on someone in the future. We do not have any other chances because we only have a house that we can leave to them. I want my children to receive a good education and standing on their own feet. (Behiye, freelance drama teacher, 44)*

As Behiye's account shows, the middle class has to depend on the passing of cultural capital because they don't have an economic capital which will help their kids to sustain their lives in the long run.

To conclude this section, middle-class parents in my research also has a future-oriented self, for the potentially good future of their children they were ready to allocate all their resources to increase the institutional cultural capital of their children. However increased neoliberalism and conservatism both in social policies and education make the lives' of these secular middle class harder, some of them began not to see any future for their children in Turkey, in terms of finding a job because of the 'non-existence of meritocracy.'

Reay explains the gender dimension in the reproduction of the middle-class. Mothers are the major responsible ones from the child's education. Although big decisions, which school to send children, whether to send the child to a private school, are made by fathers or made together with the mothers, mothers are expected to take care of children and help the extracurricular activities of the children even if two members of the couple work outside. So they are the ones who 'do the dirty work of social classes (Reay, 2005) '. The mothers in my respondents are too doing the most of the everyday education-related work in the home; they are the responsible ones from



preparing the children to the next school day. While fathers are more represented in the parent meetings, it is the mothers mostly doing all the reproduction work of the class.

#### **4.3.3 'Knowing and Conscious Parents' Like Us**

Due to all the investments made for the children, all the never-ending parental involvement, when parents succeed in providing a good quality education for their kids, when their kids were placed in good high schools or universities, they began to differentiate themselves from the others on these grounds. Though mostly in very subtle ways, sometimes very obvious however, middle-class parents distinguished themselves from the others, mainly in the properties of 'we are the conscious and interested parents, and they are the rest.'

Some of the middle-class parents among my respondents mentioned there is peer pressure in their social environment in terms of an obligation like pressure to send the children either to private tutoring houses or to private schools during the examination process. Seray mentioned that although she was not thinking to send her to private tutoring houses, their friends said to her that she should unquestionably send her daughter to these courses.

Other accounts of Nermin and Güneş also tell a similar story, even their 'low earning accountant friend' sent her daughter to the Basic High school with borrowing money. These accounts of parents remind one, that is said by Ehrenreich that "barriers that middle class protect itself make it painfully difficult to reproduce itself" (1989, p.83). So the middle class in my research, though different than Ehrenreich's professional middle class of course, builds high standards among themselves, and then makes quite some sacrifices to reach them.

Considering they have limited economic capital and most of them were the first generation middle-class members in their family, they differentiated themselves from the others saying that they are 'the conscious, informed, interested families.' For example, Seray, though she is against the private schools since she is a socialist, differentiates Doğa College, the school that she sends her daughter from the other

'dershane bozması' private-tutoring-houses-like-schools. Though the school that she mentions was founded in 2011, she says that it is a rooted college and established college. Here is the account of Seray about private schools:

*It is questionable that into what degree the private schools are successful. Their looking better and bright do not mean that they are doing everything right. I ask questions like 'do they use sufficient laboratories,' 'do they give enough drama classes,' 'are there adequate social and cultural activities,' I do not know whether everyone raises these topics, but we are conscious families, and we have other sensitivities, because of this we grasp better. (Seray, neighborhood representative, 57)*

Nermin, in a way, presents the definition of 'parentocracy' and acknowledges her relatively advantageous position in that:

*We are engaged families; we are monitoring our children. We are more or less aware of what our daughter knows and does not know. But I say, in this system, children of uninterested parents come and go to school in an ignorant way. It depends on what we give to our children. Of course, she learns at school as well, still...(Nermin, nurse, 45)*

There were other instances where class in actual life came into the surface. When I asked Şeref, who has the highest institutional cultural capital and is the highest-earning parent, what does a good school means to him, he said that:

*If all of its students aim to be placed in a university or to live a good life, then this school is right. Nevertheless, if students say that 'I leave school and start to work at an 'industry' <sup>84</sup>(sanayi) then this school is not a good one. (Şeref, civil servant, 36)*

Şeref's way of matching the decision to start to work in the industry with the agency and choice of the students is quite worthwhile in terms of showing his exclusivist middle-class character. Exclusivist middle-class character as Reay (2005) suggests is characterized by 'feelings of arrogance, satisfaction, contempt, and pride with respect to the position one's occupying.' Şeref sees what he condescended as the choice of others. Şeref also does not want his kid to be enrolled in an expensive

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<sup>84</sup> Industry, sanayi, 'sending one's son to industry' means in the Turkish context, that disadvantaged families, generally the fathers decide on not to send their underachieving son to school instead starts him to work in industry to acquire a vocation.

private school as well. He prefers his son to stay with children from similar backgrounds; he says:

*Seeing a kid who has much broader access would create unhappiness for the ones who live normal lives — because of that, having a super-rich friend, who goes to abroad every year in a class would make my children unhappy. If everyone says they went to Italy last summer and my child says that he went to the summer house, it would be a disturbing thing. He does not need to experience this because this means that putting to children into a meaningless comparison. (Şeref, civil servant, 36)*

Cemile as a socialist mother says that she does not want her daughter to continue her education in a private high school even if with a bursary, she says that:

It would be better if she encounters with people like us. In private schools, there is something like an elite strata. And elite strata children are very much spoiled. Some of our values are in contradiction with each other. They give importance to material things very much, to money I mean. For example, for these students clothing is the upmost important thing, the girls aged 13 to 14 wear makeup and high heels. These are against our world view and family values, and we don't want our daughter to get exposed to these things and get influenced by them anymore. It would be better if our daughter hangs out with normal people. (Cemile, literature teacher, 46)

Doubts about the people who have more economic capital is also evident in Nermin. Nermin's account shows that she is discontented with the newly rich father of his daughter's friend. She tells that, the father of the friend of her older daughter, started a business, and earned some money then sent her daughter to Nesibe Aydın School where the school fee is about 50.000 TL for a year. She says:

*My daughter went to a Basic School while her friend went to college. My daughter's success and her friend's cannot even be compared. Though her friend went to a great college, she continued her education with Başkent University with the fee, at the Department of Nutrition, while my daughter studies Medicine right now. This suggests that somethings cannot be accomplished with money either. ... (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

In her account, Nermin was ignoring to see all her parental involvement and the sacrifices she made for her daughter. And she was explaining the different schools these girls have enrolled by linking her daughter's superior intellectual capacity, and

was relieving herself with the fact even those children whose parents have money might not be successful because of their lack of intellectual giftedness.

As Sunar (2002) suggests, middle-class parents are most proud of the success and accomplishments of their children. And to get this feeling of proud they are ready to make loads of sacrifices. Nermin in my respondents, from a very similar vein, was so happy people's recognizing her daughter's success, her daughter was placed in a School of Medicine- and by the way in Turkey being a doctor is a quite prestigious occupation. After this accomplishment of her daughter, she said that she started to give recommendations to people at dinner tables. Here is an excerpt which shows this:

*We are an exemplary family in terms of education for our social environment. I have a friend who I knew her for quite some time, her husband is a fireman, and she has a housewife right now, anyways, they invited us to dinner in a persistent manner. Next year their child will enter the high school exam and since they saw that our elder daughter did quite well in the exam, they expect us to guide them. That dinner was passed like our explaining the education process of Didem all night long. They treated us in a way that showed their recognition of us as a family in our daughter's success. (Nermin, nurse, 45)*

To conclude this subtheme, secular middle-class parents in my thesis' case are also differentiating themselves from the others and see themselves as 'conscious, knowing, and engaged parents,' due to the all the investment and sacrifices they have made and, they drew some boundaries from this line.

All in all, to summarize the discussion section, secular middle-class families began to develop a new parenting style due to all the negativities of neoliberalism and neoconservatism in education through intensifying their parental involvement.

In the first theme of the thesis, I connected parents' experiences with the withdrawal of the state's responsibility of providing quality secular education and directing parents to the private sector to find individual solutions. Four subthemes have emerged on this ground. Firstly, the parents' ideas and experiences about the physical infrastructure of the schools, secondly, their thoughts about the reduced quality of curriculum and education given in the state schools, thirdly, teachers' being 'incompetent, outmoded, and unconcerned', and fourthly and finally, finding

individual solutions to one's problems from the market for the case of children with special needs were discussed.

As the second theme of the thesis: secular values and increased neoconservatism in the education system were discussed. Parents were strictly against the spread of Imam Hatip schools, and they mostly felt insecure about schools' transmitting of these values, the values which they were purely against, to their children. Increased neoconservatism other than Imam Hatips was also one of their concerns; most of them were worried about the content of the textbooks, mandatory religion course, partnerships signed with religious foundations, and teachers' directing students to religious activities.

In order to offset these trends, parents started to apply a new parenthood style by intensifying their parental involvement more and more to get a quality education and escape from the neoconservative indoctrination. Since the lower middle class and middle class have relatively low economic capital, to increase their parental involvement by sending their children to extracurricular activities and /or to private schools, they needed to make substantial parental sacrifices by reducing their quality of life for the prospect of their children. And this was based on the idea of the future-self of middle class, and for the future of the middle-class children, any sacrifices can be made. And when these parents succeeded at some points, when they provided their children with relatively quality education, they were not falling behind for differentiating themselves from the others by the discourse of 'we as the knowing, conscious parents.' So changes in the education system were not echoing so smoothly in the lives of these parents, anyhow they kept struggling with the belief that good education is a must for their children by making considerable sacrifices in order to reproduce their class and lifestyle.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand how the recent changes (changes made from 2002 to 2019) in education policies, which are mainly made in neoliberal and neoconservative lines affected the secular lower-middle and middle-class families. According to the report of OECD's Education at a Glance report<sup>85</sup>, Turkey's households spare a considerable amount of money for the private spending on education compared to OECD's average. KONDA's 2017<sup>86</sup> report shows that a substantial number of Turkey's parents are afraid that their children will not get the desired education that they want for their children. So this research, with taking these statistics into consideration, and by the observations that the researcher has witnessed from her social environment, suggested that due to the neoliberal and neoconservative policies, secular middle-class parents are inventing a new type of parenthood by intensifying their parental involvement and finding strategies to escape from the rising neoconservatism in schools. Parents are engaging this type of new parenthood for their children to get a quality and secular education.

Before doing the research, the researcher had the assumption that secular middle-class parents are having difficulties in reproducing their class position and their lifestyles concerning education policies. Due to the neoliberalism, state's withdrawal of responsibility of providing quality public education, parents were having difficulty to reach quality education. Reduced quality in the state schools, however, was

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<sup>85</sup> <http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/EAGCountryNotes/TUR.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> <https://konda.com.tr/tr/rapor/egitim-sisteminin-yapisi-ve-beklentiler/>

limited with the non-religious schools. So the current education policies are rationing secular public education. In this way, families who do not want their children to get religious education are being directed toward private schools.

Because secular lower-middle and middle-class families have relatively limited economic capital compared to the upper classes and relatively high cultural capital with respect to the lower classes, they have to rely on their cultural capital most. In order their children to receive an institutional cultural capital which will supposedly lead their children to get a good occupation; this class gives high importance to education. In other words, since the middle classes do not have significant amounts of economic capital to pass their children, they give enormous importance to education, which is seen as a mean for a good occupation, which will be substantial for the future of their children. So for the reproduction of their class, the middle class depends on the cultural capital.

As it can be inferred from the terminology mentioned above, this study used the reproduction theory of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, to understand the experiences and strategies of the secular middle class in the education field. Bourdieu's concepts of capitals and reproduction were extensively used in the analysis section, to understand how the secular middle-class parents, who have limited means, used their capitals strategically to provide the best education to their children.

Since middle-class parents give high importance to the education of their children, and each of their experiences are unique as well as very similar to each other- regarding the reproduction issue- a qualitative type of research was designed, in order to obtain the richness of their experiences. Semi-structured interviews were made with three fathers and eleven mothers. Qualitative type of study helped to capture the individuals' experiences and also the similarities and differences between them.

So, the present study aimed to understand the reproduction strategies of secular lower-middle and middle-classes in the education system, which is designed mainly

with neoliberal and neoconservative lines. With these aims in mind, the research questions of the study are as follow:

- ‘How did accelerated neoliberal policies in education affect secular middle and lower middle class parents, in other words, how transformations experienced in the education system, i.e, reduced quality of state schools, increased competition for quality public high schools, closing of the dershanes/ private tutoring houses (similar to cram schools in Japan which prepares students to selective exams) and Temel Lisesi (meaning Basic High Schools in English, schools which replaced dershanes for a while in the transition period of dershanes turning into private schools)?’
- How do the government’s neo-conservative policies in education such as its efforts of mainstreaming of Imam Hatip Schools, and concerning that decreasing options to send one’s child to non-religious schools affect these secular lower-middle and middle-class parents?
- What strategies do parents employ, how do they allocate their moderate cultural capitals and their limited economic capitals to get the desired education for their children?

The analysis of the interview data with secular lower-middle and middle-class parents revealed three main themes regarding the current neoliberal and neoconservative changes made in education. These included firstly the parents' experiences and ideas related to neoliberalism, secondly, their concerns about increasing neoconservatism, and their secular values, thirdly and finally parents' applying a new parenthood style by intensifying their parental involvement to counterpoise these trends in education.

The first theme which was parents' ideas and experiences related to neoliberal structuring of education system, is composed of four subthemes. As the first subtheme of the first theme, most of the parents regarding the state schools infrastructure mentioned that state schools are deprived of security and hygiene; they also said that state schools are very crowded. In order to ameliorate these low



qualities of the schools because of state's not funding it, parents were left on their own to fund their schools. This, in the end, was resulting in state schools' not being free as well, so parents' private spending was also evident in the state schools. Because neighborhood primary and secondary schools are funded by the parents, this in the end, was creating an inequality due to neighborhoods' being populated by people from different socio-economic backgrounds. So there was an inequality, quality difference within the state schools as well.

As the second subtheme, parents mentioned that state schools are not providing a quality curriculum, a quality education in general. They mostly said that an average high school graduate, even a university graduate is graduating without learning anything from the schools. Some parents linked this situation to rote learning, and the curriculum's having no content related to real life. They said that knowledge was instrumentalized for the central selective exams only, and this was leading in the end to students' forgetting things that they have learned after the exams.

Quality of the teachers was the third subtheme; many parents recalled their memories with the state school teachers they had. They mentioned that teachers are incompetent, uninterested and outmoded. Parents' were mostly complained teachers' inattention towards their children and themselves, 'outmoded elderly teachers in this modern era' was another dissatisfaction of parents. The parents with available means, since they cannot change this situation in the state schools, chose to head for the private schools, where they can be a customer eventually.

Since three of my respondents have children with special needs, they complained that state's lack of policies for these children as the fourth subtheme. Because the state does not provide any solution to the problems of these families, private schools are addressed to these parents as the only option. So with the neoliberalism's self-reliance discourse, these parents found a solution to their problems from the market thanks to their resources.

The second theme that was emerged from the interviews is secular middle class' dissatisfaction with rising neoconservatism in education both in Imam Hatip Schools and non-religious schools. As the first subtheme secular values have emerged,

parents said that they want to raise their children as rational, questioning, free-thinking individuals, who are capable of expressing themselves. They want their children to be autonomous individuals. Parents were uncertain and worried about schools' transmitting of these values to their children. Secular fathers were especially concerned about providing quality and secular education for their kids. Imam Hatip Schools were many times evoked as the schools which transmit the values as opposed to the secular values of these parents.

For the surge of neoconservatism in the schools, parents firstly complained about the textbooks; feminist mothers said that women are represented only as housewives in the textbooks, and they worried that this would affect their daughters' self-confidence. Mandatory religion courses started in the fourth grade was a source of worry for the non-believer and Alevi parents. Some of their children had traumatic experiences with this course. The contradiction between non-believer parents' values and what is taught at the schools was being crystallized in this course. Parents who defined themselves as neither conservative nor atheist, however, had not these kinds of experiences with the course, they were not that much discontented with the course because of its teaching of the 'ethics.' Partnerships signed with religious associations and foundations were also mentioned by parents as a source of ailment. In order to abstain from these foundations, some parents chose not to send their kids to school when these associations organized events in the state schools. Values education course was also questioned by the parents since this course was also given by these associations or by the Directorate of Religious Affairs instead of the Ministry of National Education's teachers. Teachers' directing attitude of children to religious activities were also problematized by parents. Teachers' relying on religious explanations rather than a scientific one, and their suggestions to the parents that their children should enroll in Quran courses were mentioned by some of the parents as the examples of the surge of conservatism.

The third theme of the thesis is the new parenthood style of secular middle-class parents. Secular middle-class parents in order to counterweight these two trends in education, which are mentioned in the first and second themes, increase their parental involvement extensively, by increasing their private spending substantially.

This parental involvement, however, is not limited to financial resources. Mothers especially, in order to provide good quality education for their children make emotional investments. Because the middle class has a future-oriented self, it is very much ready to sacrifice its today for a possibly good future. And since middle-class parents invest so much in the education, when they succeed relatively for their children's getting of quality education, they start to differentiate themselves from the other people on these grounds as well.

So as the first subtheme, middle-class intensifies their parental involvement in counterpoising the neoliberalism and neoconservatism trends in education, either by sending their kids to extracurricular activities or to private schools, or sending them to both with respect to their economic capitals. The middle-class parents who send their children to state schools were also sending or wish to send their children to extracurricular activities either for the exams and/or for the arts and sports activities. Some of the middle- middle-class parents who are relatively higher in economic and cultural capitals, think that colleges that they send their children are not adequate for the extracurricular activities, so they were additionally sending their children to the extracurricular activities for arts and sports and/or exam preparation courses. The secular middle-middle class choose private schools in order to get a relatively good quality education in terms of infrastructure of the schools and the content; bad experiences they had in the state schools with the teachers is also another reason for heading to these schools. Parents of children with special needs are heading to private schools because of the state's lack of policy. Parents are also choosing these schools to abstain from neoconservative content in the state schools. Some parents who define themselves as 'neither conservative nor non-believer' and who is low in cultural capital are choosing Basic High Schools for the exam preparation process only. The criteria for choosing these private schools for secular middle class are their price and their non-religious owners who can be *Atatürkçü* or social democrat. Sometimes, however, private schools are not meeting the expectation of these parents. Since most of these parents have limited economic capital, they were sending their kids to non-established private schools, and this might result in the schools' bankruptcies in the middle of the term or high teacher turnover rates or with school's not keeping its promise to provide extracurricular activities.

Another important finding is that middle class parents apply a strategy according to the age and level of education their kids are enrolled. So parents send their kids to state schools as much as they can. Neighborhood kindergartens and primary schools are chosen if they had good quality teachers. They become much more selective when their children prepare for the high schools, because of the neoconservatism in the state schools and reduced options for Anatolian High Schools. For the lower middle class parents sending their children to good quality state high schools became vital and the only option because of their limited economic capitals, while for their middle- middle counterparts have the chance to send their children to private high schools.

Parental sacrifices to increase their parental involvement is the second subtheme of the new parenting. As suggested by Reay (2005), reproduction is a classed as well as a gendered phenomenon. So the mothers are the major responsible ones of the children's education in this thesis' case as well, though the fathers represented more in the public sphere, more in the PTA meetings, mothers are doing the reproduction work through maintenance work, and monitoring their children always on a day to day basis. This does not mean that fathers do not care for children's education, as it was already shown in secular fathers section, but mothers are doing most of the things related to children's education. Mothers, concerning the traditional gender roles, are also making sacrifices by increasing their domestic labor more in a time of economic crisis; they stop buying cleaning service from outside for example. Parents in general, are decreasing their quality of life for their children to get a quality education by not going to dinner, vacation for instance. And sometimes whole household was mobilized; a sibling, for example, is teaching a subject to the younger brother/sister for him/her to get good grades.

When middle-class succeeded in providing their children with relatively good education, they are not falling short of to differentiate themselves from the others on the grounds that they are the 'conscious, knowing and interested' parents. They, however, time to time are ignoring the investments they made for their children and are sometimes highlighting the cleverness of their children with respect to the parents

who are high in economic capital and low in cultural capital to relieve themselves about their relatively low economic capital.

So to conclude, while both secular middle- middle class lower middle class parents see the neoconservatism and neoliberalism in the education system as a problem, when they begin to apply strategies, it is seen that, lower middle class parents have limited options against the commodification of education because of their limited economic means. So the middle-middle class parents are capable of, at least seems to be capable of providing a good quality secular education for their kids against all the odds through making a lot of sacrifices with the help of their economic, cultural and social capitals. They look successful for reproducing their class and lifestyle by intensifying their parental involvement. But for the lower middle class parents reproduction, receiving a good quality education for their kids is much harder.

If we look from a more comprehensive perspective, however, with the neoliberal and neoconservative policies in education, the policies which nourish the ‘parentocracy,’ the majority of the population is far away from receiving a quality education. The children with limited means, i.e., whose families do not own any resources, are trapped and segregated either at the Imam Hatip Schools or the Vocational High Schools. Considering the current economic crisis in Turkey, the ones who are getting a quality education will be much rarer in the near future considering booming prices of the private schools and the intense competition for the few selected public high schools.

As a very brief policy recommendation, in order to fulfill the equal opportunity for all promise of modern societies, quality education must be provided for all sections of the society as a state policy to eradicate the existing inequalities. Educational policies must be made with the aim of easing these inequalities. Neoliberal education policies with ‘the buyer pays’ principle and neoconservative policies which constrain disadvantaged children to the Imam Hatip schools must immediately be altered for the realization of ‘equality of opportunity for all’ promise of an open society.

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## APPENDICES

### A. APPROVAL LETTER FROM METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



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03 Nisan 2019

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç.Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Özge KIZIL'ın "Seküler Değerleri Benimseyen Ebevyınlerin 2000'lerden-Günümüz Türkiye'sine Eğitim Politikalarına Bakış: Veli-der Örneği" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 174-ODTÜ-2019 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız

Prof. Dr. Tülin GENÇÖZ

Başkan

Prof. Dr. Ayhan SOL

Üye

Prof. Dr. Ayhan Gürbüz DEMİR (4.)

Üye

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI

Üye

Doç. Dr. Emre SELÇUK

Üye

Doç. Dr. Pınar KAYGAN

Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT

Üye

## **B. TURKISH SUMMARY/ TRKE ZET**

### **Eđitim Sistemindeki Son Yıllarda Yařanan Deđiřikliklere Karřılık Yeni Bir Orta Sınıf Ebeveynlik Modeli**

KONDA'nın 2017 yılında yaptıđı son alıřmalardan birindeki bir istatistiđe gre Trkiye toplumunun %72'si ocuklarının istediđi eđitimi alamayacađı korkusunu yařamaktadır. Eđitim Reformu Giriřimi'nin Milli Eđitim Bakanlıđı istatistiklerine dayandırdıđı verilere greyse 2002 yılından 2019 yılına kadar zel okullardaki đrencilerin oranı 1.7'den 8.3'e ykseldi, yani drt kat arttı. Bu tezin argmanı ise bu iki istatistiđin birbirinden ayrı dřnlemeyeceđi ve Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi iktidarı ile birlikte, 2002 yılından bu yana gnmze eđitim politikalarının iki ana ekseninde deđiřtiđidir. Bu iki ana eksen ise neoliberalizm ve neomuhafazakarlık temelli deđiřimlerden oluřmaktadır. Yani eđitimdeki kalite dřř ve artan muhafazakarlařma, velilerin ocuklarının iyi bir eđitim alamayacakları konusundaki endiřelerini arttırmakta, bu da yeterli kltrel ve ekonomik sermayeye sahip olanların zel okullara rađbet etmesine sebep olmaktadır. Neoliberalizm genel olarak din eđitimi vermeyen, akademik lisede denilen Anadolu ve Fen Liseleri'ne yani İmam Hatipler dıřındaki devlet okullarına kamudan ayrılan btenin dřmesi ve eđitim kalitesindeki azalıř, buna paralel olaraksa velilerin ocuklarının/đrencilerin eđitiminde artan nemi ve kendi yaptıkları zel harcamalar olarak iřlevselleřtirilmiřtir. Neomuhafazakarlık ise Milli Eđitim Bakanlıđı'nın İmam Hatip okullarını nceleyeci politikaları, artan 'semeli' din dersleri ve mfredatın muhafazakarlık temelinde deđiřtirilmesi olarak ele alınmıřtır. Bu tezin argmanı ocuklarının eđitimine byk nem veren, sekler ve kaliteli eđitim almak isteyen

seküler değerleri benimsemiş alt orta ve orta sınıfa ait velilerin bu eğitim politikalarından büyük oranda rahatsız olduğu ve sınıflarını ve hayat tarzlarını yeniden üretebilmek için büyük fedakarlıklar yaparak yeni bir ebeveynlik tarzı oluşturduklarıdır. Genel çerçeveye bakıldığında ise eğitim sistemindeki bu politikaların eğitimde fırsat eşitliğine büyük sekte vurduğu, sadece ekonomik sermayesi ve kültürel sermayesi yeterli olan sınıfların seküler ve kaliteli eğitim görülmektedir.

Kendini iktidara geldiği dönemde ‘muhafazakar demokrat’<sup>87</sup>olarak tanımlayan; Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi iktidarı döneminde (2002-2019) özel okullarda okuyan öğrenci sayısı daha önce de yazıldığı gibi yaklaşık dört kat artmıştır, özellikle 2012’den sonra yürürlüğe konulan 4+4+4 sistemiyle birlikte bu artış hız kazanmış, 2014’te velilere verilmeye başlanan teşvikler de bunu artırmıştır. Fakat bu tamamıyla neoliberalleşmeyle devletin sosyal devlet sorumluluklarından çekilmesi ve velileri özel okullara yönlendirmesi anlamına gelmemektedir. Çünkü aynı dönemde yine devlet okulları olan İmam Hatip okullarına yapılan yatırımlar artmaya devam etmiştir. Eğitim Reformu Girişimi’nin, 2012 yılındaki önemli bir istatistiğine göre İmam Hatip Lisesinde okuyan bir öğrenciye ayrılan kaynak 12.707 TL iken, bir Anadolu Lisesinde okuyan öğrenciye ayrılan kaynak ise 6.153 TL’dir. Bu da Connell’ in (2013) dediği kamu okullarında eğitimin ‘karneye bağlanması’ (*ration*) anlamına gelmemekte, Türkiye bağlamında İmam Hatip okulları dışındaki okullara ayrılan kaynakların ‘karneye bağlanması’ anlamına gelmektedir. Bu durum da çocuğunun din temelli bir eğitim almasını istemeyen, fazlaca da ekonomik kaynağa sahip olmayan; çocuklarını özel okula gönderebilme şansı olmayan aileleri fazlaca zora sokmaktadır.

Çalışmanın teorik çerçevesi eğitimin yeniden üretim rolünü çalışan teorisyenlerle şekillendirilmiştir. Pierre Bourdieu’den çalışmanın analiz kısmında farklı sermaye tipleri ile söz edilmiş, Diane Reay, Philip Brown ve Stephen J. Ball ise neoliberalizm kısmında ailenin eğitimdeki artan önemi kavramsallaştırmalarıyla bu tezin teorik çerçevesini oluşturmuşlardır. Bu teorisyenler eğitimin eşitleyici, toplumun bütün kesimlerine açık fırsatlar sunduğu tezine karşıt olarak, özellikle neoliberalizmle ile

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<sup>87</sup> Akdoğan, Y. (2004). *AK Parti ve muhafazakâr demokrasi* (Vol. 13). Alfa.

birlikte, eğitimde ailelerin öneminin arttığını, çocukların sadece ailelerinin kültürel ve ekonomik sermayesine göre eğitim alabildiklerini, bunun da toplumdaki eşitsizlikleri yeniden ürettiklerini iddia etmişlerdir.

Brown (1999) Birleşik Krallık bağlamında eğitim politikalarını üç dalga halinde ele almıştır ve bunlar eğitimdeki neoliberal politikaları bağlama oturtmak için önemlidir. Bunlardan birincisi sanayi devrimi zamanında bütün sınıflardan insanların eğitime dahil edilmesi ile vuku bulmuştur. Bu dönemde amaç herkes için yukarı doğru hareketlilik şansı yaratmaktan öte işçi sınıfını ehlileştirmek, onları fabrikalarda çalışmaya alıştırmaktır. İkinci dalga ise Brown'a göre İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan sonraki Keynesçi politikalarla gelmiş, tamamıyla gerçekleşemese de herkesin iyi eğitim alabilmesini sağlamıştır. Bunların tamamıyla gerçekleşememe nedeni; Bourdieu'nün özellikle bahsettiği ailelerden dolayı getirilen eşitsizliklerdir, fakat yine de sosyal devletin herkese kaliteli ve eşitleyici eğitim sağlama çabası önemlidir. Üçüncü dalga ise 1980'lerde başlayan neoliberal devlet anlayışı ile alakalıdır. Burada sosyal devlet sorumluluklarını bırakmış, bireylerden kendi başlarının çaresine bakmasını beklemektedir. Bu durumda da çocuklar sadece ailelerinin servetleri ve istekleri doğrultusunda iyi ve kaliteli eğitim alabilmekte, buna sahip olmayanlarsa yukarı mobilite şansı veren eğitimden faydalanamamaktadırlar.

Bu durumda sadece yeterli sermayeye sahip orta ve üst sınıf aileler çocukları için istedikleri eğitimi pazardan alabilmektedirler. Bu tezde neomuhafazakarlık, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Birleşik Krallık'taki muhafazakarlıktan farklı olarak alınmıştır. Onlardaki 'elit' standarttaki eğitimden farklı olarak neomuhafazakarlık; Türkiye'deki mevcut iktidarın kendi Sünni Müslümanlık tanımı temelinde şekillenen bir eğitim sistemi olarak ele alınmıştır.

Türkiye literatürüne baktığımızda orta sınıfın yeniden üretiminde eğitimin önemi kısıtlı da olsa çalışılmıştır. Rutz ve Balkan (2009), Balkan ve Öncü (2015), Aratemür- Çimen (2015), Özdemir (2018) genel olarak bu konuyu üst orta sınıf temelinde çalışmış ve Türk eğitim sistemindeki temel sorunu neoliberalizm olarak ele almışlardır. Rutz ve Balkan (2009) Liselere Giriş Sınavı'nın yeni orta sınıf için, kendi sınıflarını yeniden üretmek için ne kadar da önemli bir alan olduğunu İstanbul

özelinde Bourdieucü bir yaklaşımla çalışmışlardır. Balkan ve Öncü ise laik ve muhafazakar orta sınıfların kendilerini yeniden üretimi hakkında çalışmış, aralarındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları tespit etmişlerdir, görünüşe göre her iki orta sınıf da çocuklarının eğitime büyük önem atfetmekte ve İmam Hatip okullarını seçenek dışı olarak görmektedirler. Aratemür Çimen'in (2015) çalışması ise Rutz ve Balkan'ın çalışmasına oldukça benzerdir, Aratemür Çimen de İstanbul'da orta sınıfın kendisini eğitim yoluyla yeniden üretimini çalışmış ve orta sınıfın bu pratikleriyle eğitimdeki eşitsizlikleri yeniden üretici rolünü vurgulamıştır. Özçelik ise kentsel dönüşüm ve orta sınıfın kendini yeniden üretiminin kesişiminde orta sınıfın nasıl 'özel gibi' devlet okulları yarattığını ve de orta sınıfın dışlayıcı pratiklerini tartışmıştır. Gerek çalışmaların yapıldığı tarihten gerekse de araştırmacıların üst orta sınıfı çalışmalarından kaynaklı eğitim sisteminin önemli bir sorunu olan neomuhafazakarlaşmaya gereken önem verilmemiştir. Oysa sınıfın yeniden üretiminde önemli bir etken olan neoliberalizmin yanında eğitim sistemindeki neomuhafazakarlık da Türkiye'deki seküler alt orta ve orta sınıfın hayat tarzını yeniden üretmesinde önemli bir engeldir.

Bu uluslararası ve Türkiye'deki literatürden hareketle bu çalışmada üç temel araştırma sorusu sorulmuştur.

- Eğitimde artan neoliberal politikalar seküler değerler benimsemiş alt- orta ve orta sınıfı nasıl etkilemektedir, başka bir deyişle, devlet okullarında azalan eğitim kalitesi, sınavla öğrenci alan iyi kalite devlet liselerine girmek için artan rekabet, dershanelerin kapatılması bu velileri nasıl etkilemektedir?
- AKP hükümetinin İmam Hatip okullarını anaakımlaştırma çabaları ve buna paralel olarak velilerin çocuklarını başka tipte okula gönderme yönünde azalan seçenekleri bu alt-orta ve orta sınıfı nasıl etkilemektedir?
- Alt-orta ve orta sınıf veliler eğitim sisteminde yaşanan bu değişikliklere karşılık nasıl stratejiler geliştirmektedirler? Orta ve görece yüksek seviyede olan kültürel sermayelerini ve de sınırlı ya da orta derecede yüksek olan

ekonomik sermayelerini nasıl stratejik bir şekilde kullanarak çocuklarının istedikleri eğitimi alması için çabalamaktadırlar?

Bu sorulara yanıt aramak amacıyla nitel araştırma metodu kullanılmıştır, bu metottansa yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlar, seküler değerleri benimsemiş orta sınıf velilerin çocuklarının eğitimleri ile ilgili olan öznel deneyimlerini bütün detayları ile yakalayabilmek için kullanılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar zaten çocuklarının eğitim süreci hakkında oldukça bilgili olan velilerin deneyimlerini anlamada büyük esneklik sağlamıştır, bir başka deyişle veliler zaten bir sorunun içinde birden çok sorunun cevabını verdiklerinden yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar bu çalışma için oldukça uygundur. Veri toplama süreci yaklaşık olarak üç buçuk ay sürmüştür, araştırmanın saha kısmı Nisan 2019 ve Haziran 2019 tarihleri arasında Ankara’da gerçekleşmiştir. Eğitim sisteminin her iki yönünü de (neoliberal ve neomuhafazakar değişimler) problem olarak gören velilere ulaşabilmek için talepleri ‘kamusal, bilimsel, eşit’ eğitim olan bir veli derneği olan, Veli-der’in Ankara Şubesi’ne ulaşılmıştır, burada dokuz veli ile görüşülmüştür. Buradaki veliler Türkiye’deki ortalama siyasi katılıma oranla oldukça örgütlü olduklarından ortalama bir seküler ailenin deneyimlerini anlayabilmek için araştırmacının sosyal çevresindeki arkadaşlarından ve arkadaşlarının tanıdıklarından görüşmecilere ulaşılmış, mülakatlar yapılmış, yani kartopu örnekleme kullanılmıştır. Bu şekilde de beş veli ile görüşülmüştür. Toplamda üç baba ve on bir anne ile görüşülmüştür. Görüşmecilerin çoğu alt orta sınıfların yaşadığı bir mahalle olan Batıkent’te yaşamaktadırlar. Diğer görüşmecilerse 100. Yıl ve Mamak gibi yerleşim yerlerinde yaşamaktadırlar. Görüşmecilerin çoğu kendisini bir dine inanmayan insanlar olarak tanımlamış, dernek dışında ulaştığım velilerse kendilerini ‘ne inançsız ne de muhafazakar’ olarak tanımlamışlardır. Bütün görüşmeciler günlük hayatlarında ibadet etmediklerini söylemişlerdir. Bazı veliler kendilerini ilk olarak Alevi kimlikleriyle tanımlamasalar da konuşmanın belirli yerlerinde Alevi olduklarını söylemişlerdir ama genel olarak tüm görüşmeciler kendilerini tanımlamak için herhangi bir dini refereans noktası kullanmamışlardır. Görüşmeciler kendilerini ‘modern’, ‘aydın’ ‘sosyalist’, ‘feminist’, ‘Atatürkçü’, ‘rasyonel’ gibi çeşitli sıfatlarla tanımlamışlardır. Görüşmecilerden en genç veli 33 yaşında, en yaşlı olan ise 62 yaşındadır. Nerdeyse hepsi üniversite mezunudur ve ikisi dışında ev sahibidirler. En



az gelire sahip olan veli 3.000 TL, en yüksek olansa 13.000 TL kazanmaktadır. Genel olaraksa gelirleri 5000 -6000 TL bandında değişmektedir.

Araştırmanın önemli bir kısıtlılığı, araştırmacının sadece üç adet babayla görüşmesinden kaynaklı anne deneyimlerinin ağır basmasıdır. Ebeveynlik çokça toplum cinsiyet yüklü bir mesele olduğundan babaların deneyimlerine az sayıda ve de annelerin dolaylı anlatımı kaynaklı yer verilebilmiştir. Bunu annelerin bu çalışmaya katılmak için daha çok gönüllü olması ya da zaten annelerin çocuklarının eğitimiyle birincil derecede ilgili olduklarından çalışmaya katılmalarıyla açıklamak mümkündür. Araştırmanın önemli bir güçlü yanıysa seküler alt orta ve orta sınıf velilerin deneyimlerine yer vererek, çocuklarını ilk elde özel okullara gönderemeyecek üst orta sınıftan farklı olarak, eğitim sistemindeki bir diğer önemli sorunun neomuhafazakarlaşma olduğunu göstermesidir.

Görüşmeler en az 40 dakikadan en fazla 90 dakikaya kadar sürmüştür, görüşmecilerin rızaları doğrultusunda hepsi kaydedilmiş, daha sonra da tamamıyla deşifre edilmiştir. Mülakatları analiz etme kısmındaysa tüm mülakatlar tekrar tekrar okunmuş ve çıkan örüntüler ve farklılıklar not edilmiştir. Velilerin şikayetçi oldukları ana temalar, araştırma soruları ışığında belirlenmiş ve çeşitli alt temalara bölünmüştür. Mülakatlardan gelen veriler doğrultusunda ve araştırma soruları ile birlikte, bu tezde temel olarak üç sacayağı bulunmaktadır; bunlar birinci olarak eğitim sistemindeki neoliberal değişimler, ikinci olarak neomuhafazakarlık temelli değişimler, üçüncü ve son olarak ise bu politikalara karşılık zaman zaman ise bu neoliberal politikalarla birlikte oluşturulan yeni orta sınıf ebeveynlik modelidir, bu ebeveynlik modelini yeni yapan ise çok fazla yoğunlaşan ebeveynlerin çocuklarının eğitimine dahil olması durumudur. Ayrıca, normalde çocuklarının eğitimine çok fazla kaynak ayıramayacak durumda olan, yeterli ekonomik sermayeye sahip olmayan seküler görüşe sahip ( bu tezin durumunda ise bazı Alevi kimliğine sahip ailelerin) alt-orta sınıf velilerin çeşitli fedakarlıklar yaparak, hayat standartlarını düşürerek çocuklarının eğitimine kaynak ayırma çabalarıdır.

İlk tema olarak velilerin eğitim sistemindeki neoliberalizm temelli değişimler ilgili deneyimleri, düşünceleri ve şikayetleri tartışılmıştır. Bu ana temada dört farklı alt

tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Birincisi velilerin devlet okulları hakkındaki olumsuz düşünceleri ve deneyimleridir. Türkiye’de her ne kadar devlet okullarının ücretsiz olduğu yönünde bir söylem olsa da velilerin deneyiminde bu böyle değildir. Çocuklarını devlet okuluna göndermiş olan veliler okullardan gelen ‘bağış’, ‘aidat’, ‘katkı payı’ adı altında toplanan paralardan rahatsız olsalar da çocuklarını görece iyi bir devlet okulunda okutabilmek için bunlara rıza göstermektedirler. Bazense görece iyi olan ekonomik sermayelerine bağlı olarak bu durumdan faydalanıp, ikemetgah bölgelerinden dışındaki daha iyi altyapıya sahip okullara ‘bağış’ yaparak çocuklarını göndermektedirler. Devlet okullarındaki altyapı sorunları ile ilgili olarak ise veliler devlet okullarını ‘tehlikeli’, ‘güvensiz’, ‘kirli’ ve ‘kalabalık’ bulmaktadırlar. Bunu engellemek ya da en azından azaltmak içinse çoğu zaman veliler daha önce de bahsedilen ‘katkı payları’ ile birlikte bu hizmetleri özel sektörden satın alarak kendileri sağlamaktadırlar. Bu da genelde özel okullar ve devlet okulları arasındaki eşitsizliklerin dışında, devlet okullarının kendi arasında da bir eşitsizliğe yol açmaktadır, görece daha iyi semtlerde oturanların sosyo ekonomik durumlarına göre devlet okulları arasındaki kalite farklılıkları oluşmaktadır.

İkinci alt tema ise velilerin devlet okullarını, genel olaraksa eğitim sistemini kalitesiz ve ‘boş’ bulmalarıdır. Velilere göre okullarda çocuklarına günlük hayatlarında ve gelecekteki iş hayatlarında işlerine yaracak herhangi bir bilgi verilmemektedir, velilere göre eğitim sistemi çoğunlukla ezbere dayalı ve ulusal seçici sınavlara yönelik bilgiler vermektedir. Ders kitaplarının içeriğinin ‘boş’ olması veliler için önemli bir sorundur. Kültürel sermayesi yüksek olan veliler içinse çocuklarının okullarda herhangi bir sanatsal ve sporla ilgili bir uğraş/ hobi edinmemeleri önemli bir sorundur.

Üçüncü alt tema olarak ise veliler çoğunlukla devlet okullarındaki öğretmenlerden şikayet etmişlerdir. Velilere göre öğretmenler ‘geçmişte kalmış ve bugünün dünyasından bihaberdirler’. Çoğu, öğretmenleri ‘ilgisiz’, ‘sadece işini yapmak için yapan’ olarak tarif etmişlerdir. Buna karşılık çocuklarını özel okula gönderen veliler, özel okullarda ‘işveren’, ‘müşteri’ olma durumlarından ve öğretmenlerden daha iyi muamele gördüklerinden bahsetmişlerdir. Dördüncü ve neoliberalizmin son alt teması ise araştırmacının görüştüğü üç velinin özel gereksinime ihtiyacı olan

çocukları olduğundan dolayı, velilerin devlet okullarında özel gereksinime ihtiyacı olan öğrencilere yönelik bir politika olmamasından yakınmalarından oluşmaktadır. Buna bağlı olarak veliler, neoliberalizmin kendi kendine yetme söyleminden kaynaklı, ekonomik sermayelerine bağlı olarak pazardan çözüm aramaktadırlar.

İkinci ana tema ise velilerin okullarda artan muhafazakarlıkla ilgili düşüncelerinden ve endişelerinden oluşmaktadır. Neomuhafazakar politikalarla ilgili oluşan ilk alt tema ise velilerin kendi seküler değerleri ile okulda öğretilen muhafazakar değerlerin çatışmasından kaynaklıdır. Veliler ‘bağımsız’, ‘özgür düşünen’, ‘sorgulayan’, ‘kendini ifade edebilen’, ‘kendi ayakları üstünde durabilen’ çocuklar yetiştirmek isterken; okulda ‘itaat eden’, ‘dini değerleri benimseyen’ öğrenciler yetiştirilmek istendiğinden bahsetmişlerdir. Görüşülen babalar özellikle, çocuklarını muhafazakar değerlerin endoktrinasyonundan korumak için ellerinden geleceklerini yapacaklarını ifade etmişlerdir. İmam Hatip okullarında öğretilen değerler ise görüşmeciler tarafından seküler değerlerin tam karşısına konumlandırılmıştır.

İmam Hatip okulları dışındaki okullarda artan muhafazakarlık da aileler için önemli bir endişe kaynağı ve muhafazakarlık bölümünün ikinci alt temasıdır. Buna göre, özellikle kendisini feminist olarak tanımlayan anneler, okul kitaplarındaki geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri temsilinden rahatsızdırlar ve kız evlatları için kötü rol model olduğunu düşünmektedirler. Zorunlu DKAB (Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi) dersi de özellikle Alevi ve kendini inançsız olarak tanımlayan aileler için endişe kaynağıdır. Kendini ‘ne ateist ne de muhafazakar’ olarak tanımlayan aileler içinse bu ders ‘ahlak’ da öğrettiği için sorun kaynağı değildir, ama yine de onlar da dinin aile tarafından öğretilmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadırlar. Dini vakıflar ve derneklerle imzalanan protokoller de aileler için endişe kaynağıdır, bazı aileler bu derneklerin/ vakıfların okulda etkinlik düzenledikleri günlerde çocuklarını okullara göndermemeyi seçmektedirler. Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı ya da dini vakıflar ve dernekler tarafından verilen ‘değerler dersi’ de yine aynı minvalde veliler için endişe kaynağıdır. Bazı velilerse; özellikle Alevi veliler, devlet okullarındaki öğretmenlerin, proje dersleri için ya da yaz etkinliği için çocuklarını Kur’an kurslarına yönlendirmelerinden rahatsızlık belirtmişlerdir.

Üçüncü tema ise velilerin bu başta söz edilen iki temaya karşılık, yani düştüğünü düşündükleri eğitim kalitesine ve de artan muhafazakarlığa karşıt olarak, yeni bir ebeveynlik modeli oluşturduklarıdır. Burdaki yeni ebeveynlik modeliyle kastedilen çok daha fazla artan ve yoğunlaşan ebeveynlerin çocuklarının eğitimine dahil olma süreçleridir. Düşük ekonomik sermayeye sahip, alt orta sınıf inançsız veya Alevi aileler özelindeyse çocuklarını devlet okullarındaki endoktrinasyondan korumak amacıyla yapılan fedakarlıklardır. Bu grup kısıtlı sermayeye sahip olduğundan ve Sünni çoğunluktan farklı olan yaşam tarzlarını korumak onlar için önemli olduğundan, çocuklarının eğitimi onlar için fazlaca endişe kaynağıdır ve daha çok fedakarlık gerektirmektedir. Bu temadan ortaya çıkan üç alt tema mevcuttur.

İlk alt temada aileler eğitim sistemindeki bahsedilen iki trende karşıt olarak, çocuklarının eğitime dahil olma yoğunluklarını artırmaktadırlar. Bunu da ekonomik ve kültürel sermayelerine bağlı olarak çocuklarını ya müfredat dışı aktivitelere göndererek/ göndermeye çalışarak ya da/ ve de çocuklarını özel okullara göndererek yapmaktadırlar. Görüşmecilerden alt orta sınıfa ait olanlar çocuklarını sadece ders dışı aktivitelere gönderebilme imkanına sahipken, orta sınıfa ait olan, kültürel sermayesi görece daha yüksek olan ebeveynlerden bazıları çocuklarını hem özel okula hem de ders dışı aktivitelere göndermektedirler. Yani eğitimdeki neoliberal ve neomuhafazakar değişimler alt orta sınıf ve orta sınıf için ortak problemler olsa da alt-orta sınıfın düşük ekonomik sermayesinden kaynaklı aksiyon alabilme imkanı daha kısıtlıdır.

Orta-orta sınıfa ait olan ebeveynler birinci temada bahsedilen devlet okullarındaki yetersiz fiziksel koşullardan, ‘öğretmenlerin yetersizliğinden’, ve de devletin özel eğitime ihtiyacı olan çocuklar için politika eksikliğinden dolayı özel okulları ‘tercih’ etmektedirler. İnançsız veya Alevi aileler içinse özel okullar, özellikle eğitimdeki muhafazakarlaşmaktan kaçınmak için oldukça önemlidir. Kendini ‘ne inançsız ne de muhafazakar’ olarak tanımlayan görüşmeciler içinse özel okullar ya da Temel Liseler eğitimdeki muhafazakarlıktan kaçabilmekten ziyade çocuklarının sınav başarısını artırmada önemlidir. Bu anlamda kendini inançsız, Alevi, sosyalist olarak tanımlayan gruplar için okulların hangi sermaye gruplarına ait olduğu da önemlidir. Velilerin çoğu özel okullar hakkında eleştirel bakış açısına sahiptirler ve ‘müşteri’

durumunda olduklarını bildiklerinden okul yönetiminden ve öğretmenlerden oldukça talepkarlardır. Tezin bir diğer bulgusu ise orta-orta sınıf ailelerin çocuklarının yaşına göre, gidecekleri okul seviyelerine göre strateji geliştirdikleridir. Çoğu aile çocukları için ilkokulda devlet okullarındaki iyi bir öğretmenin yeterli olacağını düşünmektedir. Lise seviyesine gelindiğinde ise gerek üniversite sınavı için artacak rekabetten kaynaklı gerekse de Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin İmam Hatipleri anaakımlaşırma politikasından kaynaklı iyi bir dini eğitim vermeyen devlet lisesi seçimi hayati önem kazanmaktadır. Yani alt-orta sınıf ve orta sınıf ellerinden geldiğince kamu okullarında görece iyi bir eğitim almaya çalışmakta, bu olmadıyındaysa orta-orta sınıf ekonomik sermayeleri sayesinde özel okullara 'kaçabilmektedir'.

İkinci alt tema ise ailelerin çocuklarının eğitimi için yaptıkları fedakarlıklardır. Reay'ın de (2005) bahsettiği üzere yeniden üretim sınıfsal olduğu kadar toplumsal cinsiyete bağlı bir meseledir. Anneler de 'sınıfın kirli işlerini yapanlardır'. Bu tezde de bahsedildiği üzere babalar kamusal alanda, çocuklarının eğitimi konusunda yer yer daha sık temsil edilseler de anneler arka planda çocuklarının eğitimleri konusunda daha çok çalışmaktadırlar, çocukların yemekleri, okula hazırlık süreçleri, ödevlerinin denetimi çoğunlukla sadece anneler tarafından yapılmaktadır. Bu daha üstte de belirtildiği üzere babaların çocuklarının eğitimiyle ilgilenmemesi anlamına gelmemekte, seküler babalar, Beşpınar ve Beşpınar'ın (2018) da belirttiği üzere 'sağlayıcı' rollerinden kaynaklı çocuklarına kaliteli ve dini olmayan bir eğitim sağlayabilmeyi daha önemli ve yeterli görmektedirler. Tezin yazıldığı tarihte yaşanmakta olan ekonomik krize karşılık anneler ev içi emeklerini artırarak, 'lüks'lerinden kısararak çocuklarının eğitimi için daha fazla kaynak ayırmaya çalışmaktadırlar. Sadece anneler özelinde değil, bazen bütün ev halkı yaşam standartlarını gerektiğinde düşürerek ve de kaynaklarını çocuklarının eğitime mobilize ederek çocuklarına kaliteli ve seküler bir eğitim sağlamaya çalışmaktadırlar.

Üçüncü alt tema ise velilerin çocuklarına görece iyi bir eğitim düşündükleri anda kendilerini daha alt ve üst sınıflardan ayırıştırma eğilimleridir. Görüşmeciler

kendilerini ‘bilinçli’, ‘bilgili’ ve ‘ilgili’ aileler olarak görmekte, görece avantajlı konumlarının farkındadırlar.

Sonuç olarak, hem seküler alt orta sınıf hem de orta sınıf aileleler eğitimdeki neoliberal ve muhafazakar değişimden tedirgin ve hoşnutsuz olsalar da alt-orta sınıf kısıtlı ekonomik sermayesinden kaynaklı eğitimin metalaşması karşısında aynı tavrı alamamaktadır. Görüşmecilerden orta-orta sınıfa ait olanların çoğunluğu şimdilik çocuklarına iyi bir eğitim sağlamakta başarılı gözükseler de alt-orta sınıf daha kırılgan bir zeminde durmaktadır, özellikle alt orta sınıfa ait Alevi ve inançsız aileler için durum hem sınıfın hem de yaşam tarzının üretilmesi açısından sorunludur.

Daha geniş bir perspektiften baktığımızda ise bu eğitim politikaları Brown’ın (1999) bahsettiği ‘parentocracy’ kavramını fazlaca beslemekte, yani öğrenciler sadece ailelerinin serveti ve istekleri doğrultusunda eğitim alabilmektedirler. Bu da PISA (2016) istatistiklerine göre %41’i dezavantajlı, %25 i ise yoksul durumda olan Türkiye’deki çoğu öğrencinin kaliteli eğitim almaktan oldukça uzak olmasıyla sonuçlanmaktadır. Günümüzdeki hükümetin eğitim politikaları dezavantajlı gruptan gelen, alt sınıfa ait olan öğrencileri İmam Hatip okullarına ya da Meslek Liseleri’nde tabakalaştırarak, yukarı mobilité şanslarını düşürmektedir. Oldukça kısa bir politika önerisi olarak, toplumca da artık çokça talep olmadığı söylenen<sup>88</sup> İmam Hatip okullarını anaakımlaştırma politikası değiştirilmeli, modern toplumların vaati olan ‘eğitimde fırsat eşitliği’ sözü, toplumun tüm kesimlerine eşit ve kaliteli kamusal bir eğitim politikası ile birlikte sunulmalıdır.

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<sup>88</sup> [http://konda.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/TR1711 Barometre81 Egitim Sisteminin Yapisi ve Beklentiler.pdf](http://konda.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/TR1711_Barometre81_Egitim_Sisteminin_Yapisi_ve_Beklentiler.pdf)

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