

CIVICUS Uluslararası Sivil Toplum Endeksi Projesi (STEP) II Türkiye Yan Raporları

Türkiye’de Eğitim Alanındaki Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları

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Özet

Çalışmada Türkiye’de eğitim alanında faaliyet gösteren sivil toplum kuruluşlarının bu alandaki etkileri incelenmiştir. Eğitim alanında aktif olarak çalışan 5 sivil toplum kuruluşu ile derinlemesine yüz yüze görüşmeler yapılmış ve literatür taraması gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Vaka analizi İngilizce olarak kaleme alınmıştır. Aşağıda, temel bulgulara Türkçe olarak değinilmektedir.

Eğitim Türkiye Cumhuriyeti için her zaman önemli ve tartışmalı bir konu olmuştur; fakat sivil toplum sosyo-politik ve kültürel alanda çok yeni bir olgu olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Yine de, eğitim alanında hem kapsam hem de hacim bakımından artan sivil katılım değerlendirildiğinde bu iki alan birbirinden ayrılamaz duruma gelmiştir. Ayrıca eğitim ve sivil toplum alanlarının sosyal değişimde katalizör rolü üstlendikleri kabul edildiği için de bu iki alan birbiriyle bütünleşmiştir. Bu makale sivil toplum ve eğitim alanlarının bağlantı noktalarında yer alan çeşitli kurumları yansıtırken, sivil toplum kuruluşları faaliyetlerinin eğitimle ilgili uygulamalarına odaklanmaktadır. Bu vaka analizi, sivil toplum kuruluşlarının örgütsel yapıları, eğitim programlarının içeriği ve çeşitliliği ile kamusal karar alma organlarının yanı sıra çeşitli diğer ağlarla olan ilişkilerinin etkili bir mevcudiyeti olduğunu ve bunun kuruluşları eğitim ve eğitim politikalarında kritik aktörlere dönüştürdüğünü öne sürmektedir.

UNESCO sivil toplum kuruluşlarının önemli bir rol oynadıklarını kabul etmektedir ve sivil toplumun farklı pozisyonunu a) devlet desteğinin yetmediği yerlerde hizmet sağlayıcı b) yeni düşüncelerin kaynağı ve yenilikçi c) kalkınma konularında bilinçli eleştirmen ve savunucu olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bu kategoriler Türkiye’ye de uymaktadır ve bu makale STK’ların eğitim ve eğitim politikaları rolünü detaylandıracaktır.

Bu makale eğitimin genel görüntüsüne kısaca değindikten sonra, çeşitli STK’ları ve çabalarını yansıtacak ve onlar tarafından yaratılan alternatif sosyal alanları tartışacak. Keyman (2006) STK’ların en önemli probleminin niceliksel önemin niteliksel etkinliğine dönüştürülmesindeki yetersizliği olduğunu öne sürer.¹ Bu makale, söz edilen boşluğa köprü kurmaya çalışan çabaları vurgulayacaktır; ayrıca STK’ların ve onların eğitim modelleri ve programlarıyla ülkenin farklı konumlarına kaliteli hizmet sağlanmasındaki yeteneklerini ve bunun STK’ları karar alma organları için nasıl örnek kuruluşlar yaptıklarını tartışacaktır.

Türk eğitim sistemi üzerine yayımlanan birçok ulusal ve uluslararası rapordan da anlaşılacağı gibi, kalite, eşitlik ve eğitime erişme konularında büyük ilerlemeler olmuştur, fakat tüm bu alanlar daha fazla gelişmeye ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Son on yıl STK faaliyetleri ve eğitim alanında ortak bir çaba geliştirilmesini sağlamıştır; bu da STK’ların yakın gelecekte Türkiye’nin karşılaşacağı sosyal değişimle ilgili kritik meselelerde önemli bir rol oynayacağına işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca bu STK’lar örgütsel kapasitelerini arttırdıkça, eğitimle ilgili gündemi takip ettikçe, güçlü ve çeşitli bağlar geliştirdikçe, sadece amaçlarını gerçekleştirmekle kalmayıp diğer STK’lara ve kuruluşlara da örnek olacaklardır.

Introduction

When the two scorching concepts of Turkey- education and civil society- come together, there emerges a critical and dynamic discussion. The former has always been both important and controversial throughout the Republican history; however the latter turns out to be quite a more recent phenomenon for the socio-political and cultural outlook in the country.² Yet again, the two fields have become inseparable in a way, especially as we witness increasing civil participation in the field of education in terms of scope and size. The two fields are very much integrated; not only do they have mutual actors operating in both areas but the two are also recognized as important catalysts of social change. Therefore juxtaposition of two fields becomes crucial to analyze as Turkey faces many challenges and opportunities with regards to social change. Readers can refer to the paper as “notes from the field”, based on participant observation, interviews as well as extensive literature review. This paper, while reflecting the existence of a variety of institutions at the nexus of education and civil society, mainly aims at focusing on activities of civil society organizations (CSOs) with educational implementations in the field. This case study suggests that their organizational structures, content and variety of their education programs, and their relationship with the public decision-making bodies as well as various other networks are making prevailing statements all over the country and have an influential existence, which in turn transform them into critical actors of education and education policy.

According to UNESCO, in the context of education for all, civil society is comprised of non-governmental and non-profit associations involved in education, embracing a wide range of groups such as campaign networks, teacher unions, community associations, research networks, parents' associations, professional bodies, student organizations, social movements, etc. It recognizes the fact that civil society organizations (CSOs) play a major role and their distinct position can be identified as the following: **a) service providers** where state provision is absent or insufficient and they take on responsibility for non-formal education programs and are particularly successful in reaching the marginalized and excluded through approaches attuned to the needs and life conditions of the poor; **b) innovators** and sources of ‘new’ thinking and practices; **c) informed critics** and **advocates** on a whole range of development issues.³ The above-mentioned three categories are also applicable to the case in Turkey and this paper will further elaborate on the role of CSOs with regards to education and education policies. Recently, CSOs in Turkey not only amassed considerable resources and know-how but also established novel exemplary implementations in education. The following characteristics can be attributed to their activities: having operations and educational implementations in different provinces; having their own educational models and having become commendable institutions in their area of specialization; having influence on education policies with their best practices; amassing quality human resource and organizational capacity; promoting values of participation, volunteerism, corporate social responsibility; creating new networks and/or strengthening of

² As Keyman suggests (2006) number of CSOs- as a space of social transformation- is strengthening, increasing and their area of work is varying and scattering, which includes think-tanks, voluntary organizations, citizenry initiatives, unions, trade associations.

³ http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/partnership/civil_society.shtml

existing ones across territorial and/or disciplinary boundaries; carrying out campaigns and continuous public relations via various means (i.e. conferences, media relations, etc.).

Before getting into the discussion on CSOs' activities within the field of education, one briefly needs to take a look at the educational outlook within the country in order to better understand their structure and actions as well as to assess their impact. Then the paper will briefly reflect on variety of organizations and their efforts and discuss the alternative social space created by them. Keyman (2006) discusses that the main problem of CSOs in Turkey is the inability to transform their quantitative importance to qualitative effectiveness.⁴ This paper will highlight efforts that try to bridge this gap. It will also discuss CSOs and their ability to provide quality services to different locations of the country with their educational models and programs, and how this makes them exemplary institutions for the decision-making bodies as well.

Turkey's Education Report Card: A Quick Look at Critical Issues

Turkish education system is large in terms of its size; the system, from pre-school to tertiary level, incorporates nearly 18 million students. According to 2008-2009 MoNE statistics, there are nearly 11 million primary school children. One can also find recent quantitative and qualitative studies that take an indebt look into the status of Turkey's young population. One such study suggests Turkey will acquire the highest number of young population amongst 32 European countries by the year 2025.⁵ Nevertheless, we still observe an inadequate way of approaching youth related issues, education being one.⁶ Education has always been critical at the discourse level and it emerges as one of the top most important social concerns of the public opinion polls; however, a participatory and analytic discussion on what kind of education should be attained is more of a recent phenomenon of the last decade or so. This section will take a brief snapshot of the current situation in education, which reflects the necessity to focus not just on the need for education but also the importance of defining and critically discussing the nature of education (we all aim for as different actors of the society)reword.

One can point out two critical waves of educational reform in the past decade in Turkey. The first being extension of the compulsory education to 8 years in 1997, which in turn increased access to schooling for boys and girls. The other critical wave of reform/policy change focused on the content and curriculum in a gradual way as of 2004. It is possible to come across studies that provide a detailed account of to what extent Turkey really has achieved "reform" in the field of education.⁷ However, this paper only maps out the main arguments of these processes in relation to CSO activities rather than providing a detailed discussion of them. As of 2004, it is possible to observe change with respect to the main philosophy of educational programs, physical characteristics of schools, teaching-

⁴ Fuat Keyman. 2006. "Türkiye'de Sivil Toplumun Serüveni: İmkânsızlıklar İçinde Bir Vaha". Pg, 18.

⁵ Bilgi University Youth Studies Unit. "Youth in Turkey with Statistics".

⁶ For a detailed discussion of youth and youth policies in Turkey please see "*Türkiye'de Gençlik Çalışması ve Politikaları*" edited by Nurhan Yentürk, Yörük Kurtaran and Gülesin Nematlu.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of the recent reform efforts please see "*2007 Eğitim İzleme Raporu, 2008 Eğitim İzleme Raporu*" by Education Reform Initiative as well as "*Human Rights in Textbooks Project-2*" by History Foundation.

learning processes, discourses on teacher training as well as preparation of textbooks. Some key aspects of this process has been shifting to a more student centered approach; project-based learning; time allocated for social activities; extensive use of information technologies, etc. UNDP Human Development Report 2008 discusses that recent efforts to change the curricula for a more child-centered and constructivist approach holds potential for enhancing young people's capacity to participate effectively in an innovative economy and a democratic society.⁸ Consequently, other critical thematic issues towards the attainment of quality education have been gender equality, democracy and human rights. During these acts we have been observing increased participation of civil initiatives as well as increased importance of the international agenda; Education for All campaign has become an important drive and institutions such as UNICEF, World Bank, European Commission have all become stakeholders of the Ministry of National Education in carrying out educational projects.⁹

Equality is one of the main concerns of the Turkish education system. A recent study conducted on the nature of educational inequalities points out concerns within this field; there are serious inequalities in terms of access and quality between different parts of the country as well as gendered differences.¹⁰ As we look at the international comparisons and standards, *quality* also emerges as an important issue and the outlook is not very promising either. For instance, according to PISA, PIRLS and TIMMS results, Turkey performs poorly compared to other participant countries.¹¹ As UNDP Report 2008 suggests "Too many students are graduating from schools without mastering a set of minimum skills. The extent to which education can translate into personal, social and developmental benefits is vital but 'in many countries that are striving to guarantee all children the right to education, the focus on access [to education] often overshadows attention to quality.' Turkey is one of these countries".¹² There are also critical structural questions that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality component such as teacher training, successful implementation of the curricular change/ reform, etc. The components of education- status of students, teaching- learning processes, content of programs and educational environments- all contribute to the nature of quality education. In an ideal education environment, students should be able to find ways and means of realizing their potential, have the opportunity to improve themselves in different ways/ fields in addition to developing respect for human rights, cooperation and universal values. As can be inferred from a latest study on Turkey's education system, there are still critical financial inadequacies and substantive issues in spite of recent reform efforts.¹³ Therefore, services provided by CSOs become very critical towards discussing the "alternatives", sustain participation and demand, work for a better education environment and educational opportunities for all.

⁸ Turkey 2008/ UNDP Human Development Report. Pg, 38.

⁹ UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Pg, 8.

¹⁰ Education Reform Initiative. "Türkiye'de Eğitime Erişimin Belirleyicileri." Pg. 4-7.

¹¹ **According to OECD's PISA 2006** results, out of 57 participating countries, Turkey ranks 43rd in Mathematics (29th out of 30 OECD countries); 44th in Science (29th out of 30 OECD countries); 37th in Reading (28th out of 30 OECD countries) amongst 15 years olds. **According to PIRLS 2001** results, Turkey ranked 28th out of 35 countries amongst 4th graders. **According to TIMMS 2007**, amongst 8th graders, in Mathematics Turkey ranked 30th out of 48 countries; in Science Turkey ranked 31st out of 48 countries.

¹² Turkey 2008/ UNDP Human Development Report. Pg, 33.

¹³ Education Reform Initiative. Education Monitoring Report 2008.

Impact of CSOs on Educational Policy Areas

Civil Society Organizations in Education at a Glance

According to the Civil Society Index Report 2005, recent changes in the Turkish context have created new mandates for CSOs in the area of service delivery and advocacy.¹⁴ This is valid for the education field as well. Then the next step requires us to analyse how these organizations particularly relate to education and policies in the country? Firstly, their efforts are very much in line with the educational agenda and priorities of the country. Secondly, they have not only become an important source of information and resources but also facilitated creation of a significant socio-cultural and educational space for children, youth and various other participants (parents, teachers, professionals, volunteers, etc). Thirdly, they have brought about novel approaches in terms of their organizational capacity and content of their programs, all of which have made them experienced stakeholders in the education sector. They started to work in cooperation with the public bodies such as Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and local governments in various ways.

There are well-known CSOs that provide financial support and carry out campaigns for the economically less advantaged students. These initiatives have become important interventions for increasing the rates of schooling all over the country. For instance, the work of Association for the Support of Contemporary Life (ÇYDD) and campaigns like *“Dad Send Me to School”* and *“Girls, Let’s Go to School”* have become exemplary movements of the last decade. There are also other well known foundations and business people that invest in the improvement of physical capacity of institutions and/ or constructing new ones. Status of some associations and educational unions, on the other hand, may be referred to as advocacy related activities. For instance, Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association (TÜSİAD) has become one of the active participants in the debates on education. The Association identifies education as one of the most important topics of discussion for the country, therefore it has been active in publishing reports and carrying out seminars with respect to various components of education- early childhood education, vocational and technical education, higher education, etc.-since 1990.¹⁵ Another example worth mentioning in terms of advocacy related activities is the Education Reform Initiative (ERI) undertaken by the Sabancı University’s Istanbul Policy Center. ERI’s goal is to improve education policy and decision-making through research, advocacy and monitoring activities. ERI focuses on the critical issues of the education system under three main headings- quality (curriculum reform, teacher training, critical thinking, rights); equality/ access (gender equality, early childhood education) and governance- and tries to influence policy making through its activities that range from organizing conferences and workshops to carrying out research.

Some CSOs have also started establishing continuous cooperation with MoNE in carrying out their education programs in schools as well as their own activity locations. For instance, Turkish Marine Environment Protection Association (TURMEPA/ Deniz Temiz Derneği) and Regional Environmental Center (REC) are organizations that implement their education programs on environmental issues in schools. The following is also an example of CSO- Ministry partnership; Educational Volunteers Foundation has signed a special protocol with MoNE in 2005 in order to implement its education programs during the social activity

¹⁴ TÜSEV. “Civil Society in Turkey: An Era of Transition.” Executive Summary. Pg. 8.

¹⁵ <http://www.tusiad.org>.

hours of schooling. According to a respondent the link between public bodies- such as schools and Provincial Directorates of National Education- and CSOs are improving and both sides are learning from this mutual experience.

Recognizing the contributions of all these efforts and existence of a number of organizational structures, this paper deliberately prefers to underline the work of CSOs that create alternative implementations in various locations of the country in the post 1990 framework. The paper will map out the main issues and commonalities vis-à-vis these CSO activities with varying areas of interest. It by no means tries to be an exclusionary piece of work, on the other hand, the particular examples make it easier to conceptualize some of the concrete developments experienced in the field during the last decade. Amassing numerous stakeholders, funds and operations; creating and sustaining systematic activity in a required field; carrying out related research and other supplementary activities; evaluating the impact of these activities and updating them; are critical in the activities of CSOs, that is why their efforts become more than valuable for the education policies of the country.

One such example with extensive field operations throughout the country is Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey (TEGV). Since 1995, TEGV's mission has been to provide educational opportunities for children aging 7-16 in the form of "support", especially for elementary education, in three main focus areas: cognitive skills, personal development- social values, arts- language- communication. All its programs are supported with special materials, plays and/or educational organizations towards making the activities attractive for children. Foundation reaches around 150.000 children and 10.000 volunteers each year in its 85 activity sites in addition to collaborating with other CSOs especially in advocacy related activities. Public relations and various forms of fund raising activities are important in sending out the message of the foundation. All educational programs of TEGV relate to the educational agenda in the country and its activities provide support for the development of life skills of children such as communication, problem solving, analytical thinking, creativity etc. These programs are designed to fill the service gap in the socio-economically disadvantaged locations of the country. Each and every education program has an evaluation and measurement plan in order to assess its results towards continuous improvement. TEGV's slogan throughout the past year has been "One Child Changes, Turkey Changes".

Another example is the Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV). The organization has been developing and implementing intervention programs since 1993 in two main areas- early childhood and adult education- with the aim of improving standards and policy-making. AÇEV works to create low-cost alternatives to center-based programs or to support existing center- based models through programs and campaigns which aim to promote access, family involvement and quality in early childhood education. AÇEV also carries out functional literacy training and empowerment programs for illiterate women and mothers in Turkey.¹⁶ AÇEV is operational in various local places, for example through Community Centers of Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) and MoNE, demonstrating the wide reception of its programs. According to a publication the number of children reached during the first six months of 2007 was 19.000 whereas number of adults was almost 27.000.¹⁷ One of the most groundbreaking projects of AÇEV has been "7 is Too Late" campaign since 2005, conceptualized towards creating awareness about the importance of early childhood

¹⁶ www.acev.org

¹⁷ "Yıllar İçinde AÇEV: Çok Bakımlı Bir Anlatı." Pg. 176.

education and generating support for the issue from all levels of society so that the necessary policy changes can be realized. The final goals of the campaign are amassing quality early childhood care all over the country and make sure every child starts schooling before the age of 7. With these aims in mind the foundation strives for at least one year of compulsory education before the start elementary schooling. As one year of compulsory early childhood education will be realized in 32 pilot provinces during 2009- 2010 Academic Year, foundation announces it will continue to work its awareness raising activities (media, brochures, website, art related events) as well as policy making and lobby related activities with the policy makers and stakeholders.¹⁸

Another example is the Community Volunteers Foundation (TOG), which is aiming for the transformation of youth energy into community service all over the country. TOG was founded in 2002, with a mission of social peace, solidarity and progress by young people.¹⁹ Community Volunteers has been implementing local and national social responsibility, social awareness projects and social activities in addition to providing trainings on issues like health, democracy, human rights, etc. During 2008, its educational programs reached out to around 10.000 young people.²⁰ These projects are being carried out by mobilizing local resources and by active participation of youth and local actors. TOG is mostly active through local university clubs, but they also at times utilize other local groups and/ or youth centers. There are currently 88 active university groups carrying out social responsibility projects developed by young volunteers in accordance with the local needs and priorities. TOG not only supports projects on social service, but also youth empowerment projects (on the basis of peer to peer training) about human rights, social rights, health literacy, reproductive health, discrimination and homophobia. Participation, demand for their activities, flexibility, and sustainability seem to be important concepts for TOG's activities. Education is both an important tool for the realization of social responsibility projects and an important line of activity of peer-to-peer training. Currently, the organization is carrying out an impact analysis of its programs and services to target population, besides the on-going evaluations for individual projects aiming to measure change of attitude among participants and service recipients. According to a respondent from TOG, an important aspect of their activities and education programs is that participants find the ways and means of "implementing" and "producing", which in turn strengthens the learning process and contributes to the continuity of acquired knowledge and skills. "Not only criticize but to change, we volunteer" has been one of the mostly heard slogans of the foundation.

Impact of CSOs in the Field of Education and Educational Policy

Experienced change of the past decade characterizes more of *substantive* (changes in policy itself); *structural* (changes in political institutions involved in policy-making process); *sensitizing* (changes in public attitudes towards the issue) changes²¹ and CSOs have become

¹⁸ <http://www.acev.org/7cokgec.php?id=20&lang=tr>.

¹⁹ <http://www.tog.org.tr>.

²⁰ Community Volunteers Foundation. Annual Report. 2008.

²¹ CSOs are much more active and even public bodies started to refer to them as "stakeholders" of the policy-making process; yet again it is still difficult to talk about a *procedural* (changes in the policy-making process) change. As has also been suggested by the UNESCO country case study of 2007, there is deficit of assessment on the impact of public policies, projects and programs implemented in education. One reason to

significant actors of this time frame. On the other hand, it is difficult to measure to what extent the experience can be attributed to the role of CSOs. It may be complicated to talk about a direct causal link between the reform agenda of the past decade and increasing efforts of CSOs during this period; however, one can discuss about how the two processes have affected and strengthened each other. CSOs have not only transmitted societal demands regarding education, but have become an important stakeholder in policymaking and an active partner in implementation by proposing projects, doing research, and carrying out new initiatives. Moreover, these initiatives have become significant followers of the international agenda, which in turn became an important additional know-how. When one observes the qualitative and quantitative developments of the past decade, then it becomes possible to talk about an optimistic outlook concerning the role of CSOs and education. This is not to say one area directly results in the advancement of the other, but rather there is a dynamic relationship between the two.

For instance, according to AÇEV, after the start of “7 is Too Late” campaign, percentage of children aging between 4-6 acquiring early childhood education has increased to 33.4% in 2008 (from 16% in 2005). One of the main targets of this campaign is also to carry out advocacy related activities towards incorporating early childhood education of 5-6 years of age in elementary schooling.²² Another significant piece of information of the last decade may be the net schooling rates; in 1997-98 academic year net schooling figure was 84,7% whereas this number improved to 95,7% in 2006-07²³ and 96,5% in 2007-2008²⁴. A very recent example that shows the responsiveness of CSOs to the needs of the education sector is the emergence of CSO activities in the area of “teacher training”, an issue that that gained importance in the aftermath of the recent educational reforms.. The Academy for Teacher Foundation (ORAV), with a comprehensive approach to teacher training, is a very recent initiative aimed at providing guidance for professional, social and emotional development of teachers. Another initiative in this area is ERI’s efforts aiming to train teachers in the field of critical thinking.

Not only the need for change but the change process itself has become critical in Turkey and, as we can trace from the examples provided above, CSOs have become important actors of this process especially during the post 1990 framework. As part of the whole debate in “reforming” education, we need to take into account the coalition of CSOs that emphasizes and strives for equal and quality education all over the country with their alternative and complementary implementations. The examples mentioned in this paper work on different areas but they have some commonalities that need to be pointed out; they are active and producing unique models in their lines of work, they create/ sustain alternative spaces, have sound organizational structures, carry out strong public relations and/or advocacy related activities such as campaigns, reach out to a considerable number of people from diverse locations, and emphasize/ strengthen critical social values. Last but not the least these organizations have formed coalitions with the policy-making bodies in order to carry out their activities in schools and other public venues.

this is the lack of strategy- oriented policy approach. Policy life finishes short of an empirical, objective and rigorous evaluation phase, impeding further cycles.

²² Hürriyet Newspaper. 2 June 2009.

²³ Education Reform Initiative. “Equality in Education: Policy Analysis and Recommendations” Pg. 10.

²⁴ MoNE 2007-2008 Statistics.

CSOs offer a vibrant socio-cultural and educational space with various activities in different parts of the country and across related disciplines. They usually offer training and educational programs devised by professionals/ academia on issues that face inadequate implementations. These organizations have created space where volunteerism has become a norm rather than an exception. Keeping in mind the insufficient amount of volunteerism in the country²⁵, their activities become of great importance in amassing public awareness and knowledge in the field. CSO activities able diverse people to travel from one place to another towards the realization of common aims and discuss/ unite around significant issues. CSOs also contribute to academic work and started to get substantial support from the academia, which is critical in bridging the gap between academic work and real life implications. These organizations also carry out campaigns towards increasing their public image as well as supporting their advocacy related activities. “7 is Too Late” campaign by AÇEV is a fitting example of this effort.

There are critical values (i.e. participation, transparency, creativity) that CSOs promote and they have unique implementations in support of these. Firstly, they are not only mobilizing masses towards the realization of common aims but also try to sustain their participation. Secondly, these alternative implementations have a strong standing-organization, academic background, practical solutions- for Turkey’s long-lasting problems and they pool important know-how and financial resources towards reaching their aims. Thirdly, media has become more sensitive towards issues of social responsibility; one cannot ignore their visibility. Fourthly, being recognized at the policy level has become critical; now it is more likely to observe CSO activities within formal educational institutions.

The partnerships between CSO and institutions of higher education started to play a critical role in paving the way for increased youth participation, both professionally and voluntarily in civil initiatives. This cooperation enables them to form close, working ties both with the surrounding community and the CSOs operating within that community, which in turn leads to an increase in student awareness and involvement in surrounding social issues. With such perspective the universities have been offering mandatory or elective courses on social responsibility as part of their curriculum. Such implementations started to be promoted at the Higher Education Council level as well, which paved the way for Faculties of Education to offer such mandatory courses as of 2006 in line with their restructuring. These courses have both theoretical and practical implications for students and they have been an important way of allowing students to work/research in the field. CSOs and their activities are considered to be one of the primary venues for carrying out such level work.

²⁵ According to World Values Survey Turkey ranks 55th out of 55 countries, with 1.7% in carrying out voluntary work (amongst population of 18 year olds and older).

Concluding Remarks

As can be acknowledged in many published international and national reports on the education system of Turkey, there has been much progress with respect to quality, equality and access to education but these are all areas that require further improvement. The recent developments in education should also be viewed in relation to the coalition of CSOs and their increasing activities during this “striking education reform agenda”²⁶ since they have become influential actors and partners in the field with their education programs, organizational capacity, networks and various activities. The past decade has witnessed the mutual field of CSO activities and education, which translates into the critical role CSOs will continue to occupy in the near future as Turkey faces critical challenges in terms of social change.

(It is also likely to come across with cooperation amongst CSO activities and their work complements one another) reword. Consequently, these organizations from time to time cooperate in carrying out various activities or they may provide institutional support to each other’s activities. As education becomes an even more critical area of action in Turkey and educational actors gain ultra importance, the sustained and close cooperation of CSOs could create an extraordinary opportunity towards sustaining change and spreading out good practices throughout the country. Also, as these organizations increase their organizational capacity, follow the educational agenda, develop strong and diverse networks, they not only become efficient in the realization of their aims but also become good examples to the other CSOs and institutions. There is no debate concerning the critical role of education, rather there are harsh debates with regards to the nature of education we should attain. CSOs bring about a set of possibilities and alternatives to this controversial space; they not only affect the quality of education but also contribute to the development of novel approaches to education.

²⁶ The term used by the OECD Report- 2007 “Reviews of National Policies for Education: Basic Education in Turkey”.

Abbreviations

Civil Society Organizations	CSOs
Ministry of National Education	MoNE
Civil Society Development Center	STGM
Program for International Student Assessment	PISA
Progress in International Reading Literacy Study	PIRLS
Trends International Mathematics and Science Study	TIMMS
Education for All	EFA
Association for the Support of Contemporary Life	ÇYDD
Education Reform Initiative	ERI
Turkish Marine Environment Protection Association	TURMEPA
Regional Environment Center	REC
Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey	TEGV
Mother Child Education Foundation	AÇEV
Community Volunteers Foundation	TOG
Social Services and Child Protection Agency	SHÇEK
The Academy for Teacher Foundation	ORAV

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