

Turkey's Education System - Out of the frying pan, into the fire

News:

"I don't want this TEOG thing anymore and I find it wrong." – Thus spoke Erdogan... The next day the Transition from Primary to Secondary Education (TEOG) examination was abolished.

Comment:

"There is no obstacle for its immediate removal. It is a very simple issue," Erdoğan told journalists... And all of a sudden, the penny drops for the prime minister, the education minister and the radical pro-government intellectuals: TEOG must be removed, it is overdue... This is how education is designed in Turkey: The master orders, the servants jump. In the last 20 years, 11 ministers have changed - 6 of them during the AKP period alone. In particular, since 2004, curriculum and education programs have been revamped five times! Each of them and in particular the TEOG became rhapsodized at introduction, *"we worked much on it, we asked everyone, this will change the system from the roots..."*

Over the last 4 years, nearly 1.3 million children sit for the test every year, competing for the best education in the best high schools throughout Turkey. This exam caused much sweat, tears, psychological pressure and additional financial burden for preparatory books and courses upon the children and their families. Children spent their 3 months of summer holidays in private courses instead of enjoying their free time with relatives, friends or discovering hobbies and developing new skills. All of a sudden the valuable investments of these families are gone with the wind, and instead replaced with new uncertainty. What kind of exams will follow now? How will access to quality schools be shaped? The Education Ministry has already proposed own examinations for every school, or admission based on the address of residency might also be a possibility – thus forcing children and parents into schools which they never wanted. Meanwhile some elite-schools welcomed the removal of the TEOG, because eventually and once again it would enable them to choose their own students in order to establish and highlight the school's own "culture, and goals and style" (Bahçeşehir Uğur Educational Institutions) - meaning to choose only children of families who fit into the modern secular non-Islamic ideology propagated by the school.

In the current prevailing unequal and low quality of education, lacking number of classrooms, deficit number and quality of teachers and learning material, ineffective teachers, the rote-learning system, faulty and secular curricula which does not meet the Islamic expectations of families, this decision **contributes to further commercialization of education**.

Consequently high-quality education will be reserved for high-income families, while high-elite schools like Istanbul's 536-year-old Galatasaray Lycee, or more new ones like the Bahçeşehir College will be only accessible for families who comply with the "culture" of these schools. The mass of students will be forced to serve their sentence of 12 years compulsory education, generating the new mass generation of hopeless, substitutable cheap workforce.

However, education requires firstly a change in its ideology! As long as the primary aim of education in Turkey remains to induce youth with secularism, politicians and instructors will not be able to focus on improving the quality of the education system. And that the primary aim of education in Turkey is the secularization of its youth can be seen in the newly introduced curriculum. It has removed evolution theory from the teaching curricula, while it enforced lessons of democracy on every level; secularism and interreligious dialogue in the religion lessons; matters of gender-equality in sociology; and even stories of other gods, like the "God of Music" in the music lesson and many more... So this is how this education system fulfils its promise in raising a "devout youth"... A system of education that measures devotion with terms of secularism and religionlessness, while at the same time denies its youth access to even quality worldly education, will always jump out of the frying pan into the fire.

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