

## The Restructuring Process of Teacher Training System in Turkey: A Model of Teacher Training Based on Post-Graduate Education (PGCE)

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**Abstract:** The article highlights the development and restructuring of teacher education policy in Turkey and reforms in late 1990s. It includes an overview of the history of modern teacher education in the country and outlines the current system. The purpose of this paper was to describe the nature of reforms and restructuring process based on post-graduate teacher education (PGCE) in the post-1997 period in Turkey that have had an impact on teacher education.

**Key words:** Turkey, teacher education, educational policy, higher education, restructuring

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### INTRODUCTION

Since 1950, all the governments have tried to improve and update the educational system of the country and attempt to solve some of the problems. Because of the low socio-economic status of teachers, highly qualified students do not usually prefer the teaching profession. Problems concerning teachers include lack of professional skills and knowledge to cope with the educational goals of today's society, low salary, low status, heavy demands on time, heavy workload, lack of opportunities to improve professional knowledge and effective performance and, finally, lack of job security. It is clear that these problems negatively affect the quality of education in Turkish elementary and secondary schools<sup>[1]</sup>. For this reason, Turkey has tried to implement many reforms and innovations in her education system. But, these reforms and innovations have not yielded the desired results and efficiency<sup>[2]</sup>. The problems of teacher education programmes which originate directly from their structure. The debate about the curriculum of teacher education programmes became more visible after the changes in the 1980s. Most of these debates have been based on the teacher education curricula of Western countries and many of them had textbooks that were translations of Western books<sup>[3]</sup>. Recently, the Turkish Higher Education Council (YOK) has made an effort to reform teacher education programmes in Turkey which enabled them to enter the process of producing knowledge at universal standards and of training creative teachers required for information societies. This progress led universities to rearrange the programs of various faculties considering some principles such as "efficiency and productivity"<sup>[4]</sup>.

In this context, Turkey started to implement new teacher training programs based on post-graduate education in order to train qualified and well-equipped

teachers. This study aims to introduce and describe the recent changes and developments in teacher training programs in Turkey.

**An overview of the history of modern teacher education:** The issues regarding teacher education in Turkey have been stated in many studies and on various occasions<sup>[1,3,5-14]</sup>.

Starting from the beginning of the last century, there have been many efforts to improve teacher education. It began in 1924 with the Law on Unification of Education when all schools in Turkey were brought under a Ministry of National Education. Pre-school teacher education began in 1915, even before the Republic of Turkey was established in 1923. The former teacher education system for primary level teachers had separate systems for urban and rural schools, and a village program that educated students to return to their home villages as teachers. In 1954, the systems of separate village institutes were closed. The nation-wide training period for primary teachers was six years after primary education or three years after junior high school until 1971 when it was extended to seven years after elementary school. In 1973, the National Education Basic Law mandated higher education for all teachers. Since 1973, all teacher education in Turkey has been at the higher education level. Since 1981 with the Turkey's higher education reform law and the establishment of the Higher Education Council (YOK) in 1982 it has occurred at the universities. With the 1981 higher education reform, all 4-year teacher training institutions and 3-year foreign language high schools were transformed into 4-year faculties of education. Integration in to the EU evokes new systemic changes in Turkish education. All this process of transferring teacher education to universities was parallel to the trends in the European countries<sup>[15]</sup>.

Today, there are 77 (53 public and 24 private) universities in Turkey<sup>[16]</sup>. Out of 77, 50 (five private and 45 public) universities have faculties of education, most of which offer dual (both regular and evening) programs. Starting in 1998, all faculties of education in Turkey follow a standardized curriculum prescribed by the Higher Education Council<sup>[17]</sup>. The faculties of education are not the only providers of teachers. Of those students enrolling in the faculties of science and letters, the ones who complete pedagogical course requirements (PGCE) in the faculties of education after having obtained a bachelor's degree in their fields of study are also eligible to apply for a secondary teaching position.

Training teachers for different schools were carried out by different educational institutions. It is possible to outline these institutions as follows:

**Teacher education for primary schools:** Teacher training colleges for primary schools trained teachers until 1974. The length of education in these colleges was five years after primary schools in 1924 and six years in 1932 and seven years in 1970. They were closed down in 1974. After 1974, two-year institutes of education were established to train high school graduates as primary school teachers. These institutes were affiliated to universities under the name of "High Institute of Education" in 1982. They kept training teachers until 1990 by giving two-year undergraduate education. But, in 1990 all teacher training programs nationwide were increased to four years with a new decision of YOK. This decision is important in the history of teacher education in Turkey since teachers start their teaching profession with bachelor's degree in primary education. Later, these institutes were turned into departments of primary school teacher education within the faculties of Education in 1992. In the restructuring process of Faculties of Education in 1997-1998 this department appeared as a sub-division of Elementary Teacher Training Department. A significant progress was obtained in primary school teacher education from 1924 to 1998.

**Teacher education for secondary schools:** Training teachers for secondary schools were carried out in different ways. Until 1982, three-year institutes of education took the responsibility of training teachers for secondary schools. Meanwhile, in 1976 the length of education was increased to four year and they were reorganized under the new name as Higher Teacher Training Colleges with new departments such as Physics, Chemistry, History, Geography, Turkish language and Literature, etc. In 1982 they were connected to Faculties of Education in the universities. In the new model which started to be carried out in 1997-1998 academic year Faculties of Education began to collaborate with Faculties of Arts and Sciences and Engineering Faculties to meet the needs of teachers in

some subject areas. This cooperation is still being maintained. So far, the Ministry of National Education (MEB) has appointed thousands of people with no pedagogical formation education as teachers in order to meet the needs for teachers.

**Why PGCE is based education needed in teacher training system?:** Changes in education and economy have created an increasing need for qualified human resources, which, in turn, demand that the quality of teacher education should be improved. Although teacher training has the great importance in Turkish education system, it is not adequate to reach the expected objectives. In this respect, it is necessary that a new teacher training model should be established to create an interactive teaching environment which is dynamic, creative and up-to-date by eliminating the present way of teaching which is loading candidate teachers only with knowledge<sup>[18]</sup>. To achieve these goals in education, the Turkish Higher Education Council (YOK) began to work on projects which would enable to train well-equipped and skillful teachers. Education and teacher training are the most significant elements in the development of a country and only teachers can transform the countries into information societies<sup>[19]</sup>. In addition, it is important that candidate teachers equipped with pedagogical education and skills should be effectively deployed nationwide by considering the needs of individual regions. Despite the fact that there is a limited number of vacant positions in some subject areas, teacher training schools keep graduating teachers in many subject areas without making any needs analysis<sup>[20]</sup>. This application should be abolished immediately and teachers in required areas should be educated.

Until 1982 teacher training schools and institutions were affiliated to MEB in Turkey and after that date they were connected to YOK. Thus, they gained an autonomous status, functional structure and common standards, and most important of all, they acquired a legal base<sup>[8]</sup>. As result duration and levels of teacher education increased, quality of the staff was brought up to the accepted standards. Despite these attempts, quality of the teachers who graduated from these institutions was questioned<sup>[3]</sup>. Such arguments led to continuous accreditation and quality studies in teacher education system, and the need for changes in undergraduate and graduate courses again started to be of high priority on the agenda of Turkish universities as in the institutions of other countries<sup>[21]</sup>. Along with these developments, the teacher education systems in the developed countries were examined by the committees responsible for teacher education in Turkey and academics and educators were sent to United States

and United Kingdom so that they could observe their teacher education systems in place.

Findings obtained from these observations were evaluated and put into the service of teacher education. Thus, various faculties in Turkish universities took the responsibility of training teachers: They are Faculties of Education, Faculties of Arts and Science, Faculties of Engineering, Faculties of Technical Education, etc. Although these faculties were influenced by the current developments in the world, they presented different approaches to teacher education in terms of programs, teaching and learning processes and infrastructure. Today, teacher training faculties have been restructured in accordance with the innovations and changes in the world and different applications and approaches between the institutions were eliminated. Meanwhile, primary education was increased from five to eight years. Considering the increasing demands for more teachers as a result of the practice of eight year-compulsory primary education, new arrangements were made in undergraduate programs of education faculties and pedagogical formation programs of other faculties in order to recruit teachers needed in the short and long term periods through the cooperation between MEB and YOK. According to these new arrangements, those who graduated from different programs rather than education faculties are required to attend non-thesis PGCE programs in order to become teachers in primary and secondary schools. Especially, training teachers for high schools are carried out in non-thesis pedagogical formation programs at PGCE in education faculties.

**How is teacher education program based on PGCE education applied?:** Within the restructuring process, new measures were needed for Education Faculties to reach their pre-set targets and to get the sustainable progress. Therefore, the National Committee of Teacher Training (NCTT) was set up to supervise, evaluate and develop the programs to be carried out in Faculties of Education. This committee analyzed teacher training programs of faculties and determined the needs and expectations. It has been serving as a consulting board, which consists of representatives of YOK, MEB and Faculties of Education<sup>[22]</sup>.

**New approaches to teacher education in Turkey:** It is aimed to increase quality in teacher education in Turkey. Thus, both universities and schools play a significant role in teacher training process. In collaboration with each other, Universities and primary and secondary schools share the responsibility of NCTT in Turkey. There are ten departments in Faculties of Education which trains teachers for primary, secondary and high schools. These departments train teachers for different subject areas and class levels. New arrangement in effect since 1997-1998 (Table 1).

**Application of non-thesis master (PGCE) programs in secondary subject area teacher education:** Only graduates who have finished four-year programs other

than Faculties of Education can apply for post-graduate teacher education programs. These programs are carried out with secondary school subject teacher M.A courses in 42 weeks after BA education.

In the first term students take five compulsory subjects; Introduction to Teaching Profession, Growth and Learning, Planning and Evaluation in Education, Special Teaching Methods I, and School Experience I. The subjects of this term consists of 12 hour theoretical and eight hour practical lessons, total of 20 hours a week over the 14-week period. 168 theoretical and 112 hour practice lessons are given, totaling 280 hours during this term. School Experience-I is given as 4 hours a week in teaching practice schools, amounting to 56 hours during the term.

Second term has also five subjects, one of which is selective. The subjects are Instructional Technologies and Materials Development, Classroom Management, Special Teaching Methods II, and Selective Subject I. This term covers 14 weeks and students have 10 hour theoretical and 10 hour practical lessons a week. They attend to 140 hour theoretical and 140 practice lessons, totaling 280 hours. School Experience II is carried out as 4 hours a week in teaching practice schools, totaling 56 hours until the end of the term.

In the third term there are four subjects, one of which is selective. These subjects are: Analysis of Study Area Course book, Guidance, Teaching Practices and Selective Subject II. The subjects in this terms are given as 10 hour theoretical and eight hour practice lessons a week. The length of education covers 140 hours theoretical and 112 hours practical lessons, totaling 252 hours during the term. Teaching Practices are totally 84 hours as six hours a week in teaching practice schools.

In teacher education system candidate teachers are provided with teaching knowledge and skills by participating in teaching experiences in the classroom with 196 hours for school practices in both undergraduate and graduate programs. After this intensive education, candidates are assigned to teach their own subjects if they pass the examination aiming to test their subject and pedagogical knowledge when needed by MEB.

## CONCLUSION

The importance and transfer of information in the modern world has influenced the structural, operational and administrative aspects and programs of educational institutions positively. Attaching importance to education by any country means to train individuals according to the needs of the age<sup>[23]</sup>. This process can be carried out by integrating present educational systems with innovations and information technologies. The requirements of standards and accreditation studies in education were adopted and teacher training programmes were revised in accordance with the developments in the world.

Table 1: Structure of Educational Institutes and teacher preparation in Turkey

Departments	Length of program (yr)	Entrants	Subject area	Prospective teachers *	Degree
Elementary Education	4	undergraduate	Science, Maths, and Social Sciences	1, 2	BA
Turkish Language Education	4	undergraduate	Turkish Language	2	BA
Foreign Languages Education	4	undergraduate	German, French and English Languages	2, 3	BA
Fine Arts and Music Education	4	undergraduate	Art and Music	2, 3	BA
Physical Education and Sports	4	undergraduate	Physical Education and Sports	2, 3	BA
Computer Education and Instructional Technology	4	undergraduate	Computer and instructional technology	2, 3	BA
Special Education	4	undergraduate	multiply-handicapped; visually and hearing handicapped students	1, 2, 3	BA
Educational Sciences	4	undergraduate	guidance and psychological counseling	1, 2, 3	BA
Secondary Science and Mathematics Education	1,5	Graduates	Biology, Physics, Chemistry and Maths	3	MSc (PGCE)
Secondary Social Sciences Education	1,5	Graduates	Turkish Language and Literature, History, Geography, Philosophy	3	MSc (PGCE)

\* 1, Pre-school education (0-6 age group); 2, Primary school (1-8 grades - 7-15 age group); 3, Secondary school (9-11 grades- 16-18 age groups).

Turkish universities started the process of reconstruction in the Faculties of Education which would educate teachers equipped with basic skills in teaching environment. In the past, the institutions which trained teachers in Turkey could not be said to make adequate use of the innovations in educational technologies for teacher training. As a result, teachers were trained with lack of required knowledge and skills<sup>[10]</sup>. In this respect, universities which have long served as the most important scientific centers assumed the role of educating teachers by means of Post-graduate education (PGCE) who would use their intellectual capacities and scientific backgrounds to produce solutions to the global issues.

In order to be among the developed countries, Turkish universities should be able to compete with their counterparts in every aspect of education. Quality should be made available in Turkish higher education rapidly and effectively to be able to take our place in the increasingly competitive world of science and technology<sup>[24]</sup>. Moreover, it should be aimed to develop a teacher training model which enables recruiting teachers who can produce knowledge and can apply what s/he knows effectively<sup>[25]</sup>.

Studies on restructuring process of teacher training systems have been carried out by the scholars, educators and scientists in the developed countries such as United States and England<sup>[26]</sup>. The outcomes of these studies have played a great role in training qualified teachers required by the system. In developed countries quality and efficiency regarding teacher training in accordance with pre-determined standards and criteria have been monitored and evaluated. Accordingly, teacher training system in Turkey has been revised with new innovations and approaches to teaching within the framework of faculty-school partnership provided by a protocol signed by MEB and YOK<sup>[27]</sup>.

It is a well-known fact that the teacher education programs of faculties were mostly based on academic and theoretical knowledge, and skills in practice required for teaching profession was mostly ignored. In addition, the content of teacher education programs still differs from one faculty or university to another. At the same time, there are also differences between the faculties in terms of educating qualified teachers. However, the idea of developing a teacher training model and adopting it to the needs of the system accelerated the restructuring process in our teacher training system. Theoretical knowledge in teacher education had come to the fore until the early 1990s. And then the line of research was shifted to teachers' practical knowledge<sup>[28]</sup>. This new understanding gave place to courses based on practice by decreasing the amount of theoretical courses in teacher education programs. Today, though it is late, the wrong practices were removed from teacher training programs of the faculties and accreditation studies gained a motion and they were incorporated into the programs of Education Faculties. According to Brittingham et al. (1999)<sup>[29]</sup>, there should be a partnership between all parties involved; YOK, MEB and faculties and teaching practice schools for the reconstruction efforts to be successful. At this point, the contribution of universities cannot be denied. In this context, Bilgen (1999)<sup>[14]</sup> stated three traditional goals of universities: producing knowledge, education and enlightenment. From past to present they have been trying to reach these goals. Teacher of the future should be a professional competent at his/her study subject area, methodology, teaching and teaching techniques<sup>[30]</sup>. Thus, it can be argued that teacher training programs based on post-graduate education will contribute greatly to the training of qualified teachers equipped with efficient pedagogic knowledge and skills. Although these post-

graduate programs have been effective so far, they should be supported by further studies and doctoral programs. Because, the level of development in information societies can be best measured by the level of scientific and technological advancement.

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