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## **THE ROLE OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION POLICY ON THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR ISSUE IN TURKEY**

### **Abstract:**

The issue of child labour can be encountered in almost every country. However, the issue currently has been growing particularly in developing countries. In relation to this subject, not only governments but also supranational organizations such as the ILO, UNICEF and EU take place in order to eliminate child labour. Even sometimes, projects are developed so as to be implemented by various countries and governments are orientated for the implementation of these projects, financial support and/or every so often qualified experts are provided, some countries are forced through a variety of sanctions in order to solve the problem by these organizations. At this point, the status of a candidate country to the European Union Turkey emerges as a striking example. Besides, Turkey is determined for this work because ILO's and IPEC program implemented in Turkey from 1990 to 2007. In addition, the example of Turkey is selected to examine the issue since the period of compulsory education was increased from 5 years to 8 years by changing the education policy of compulsory education in 1997. Furthermore, the period of compulsory education has been gradually increased to 12 years in 2013 in Turkey. However, this is outside of this paper since data is provided as quinquennially, thus, working data is not available to approach to the issue. This may be considered in another study. According to literature and ILO's reports, education policies should be intended for reducing child labour. Education policies such as starting primary education at a certain age and the continuum of this education performed by governments have been accepted as precautions aimed at reducing child labour. The aim of this paper is to elucidate whether this increased period of compulsory education can be one of the main element to eliminate child labour. In this context, the general conditions of child labour will be evaluated in this work by comparing the period 1994 that is before the increase compulsory education from 5 years to 8 years and observed data after this changed education policy. As methodology, secondary data obtained from previous statistical and published reports is used. Gaining a new source of literature in this field is attempted by using the example of Turkey. Consequently, the effect of the increased period of compulsory education will be investigated to reduce child labour by analysing results. In this context, also encountered problems and solutions to these problems will be presented.

### **Keywords:**

Education policy, Compulsory education, the Child Labour Issue, Turkey

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The child labour as an issue is very complex and controversial and also it still remains today's problem for contemporary society. It can be seen as an issue both in developed and developing countries. However, it is seen mainly in developing ones because of some reasons such as poverty, rapid economic improvement and its necessity of cheap and unskilled workforce. There are many studies conducted and published reports in the literature such as UNICEF and ILO reports, "Patterns of Child Labour in Rural Turkey" by Erturk (1994), "Child Labour" by Fyfe (1989) to determine the reasons in all contexts and to analyse the issue in order to give some solutions for the issue.

Many different supranational organisations such as ILO, UNICEF, and EU consider the child labour issue in the context of human rights. This can be seen such as in the UNICEF report "Child Labour Today" (2005) that "... all children have the right to be protected from economic exploitation.". Also one of the main concept in the campaign of World Day Against Child Labour 2012 was human rights and social justice that shows ILO accept that the issue is related to human rights.(ILO.org)

According to ILO reports, there are nearly 168 million of child workers in all around the world and half of them work under the hazardous conditions (ILO report, 2012). More detailed information and global trend can be seen in Table 1. Mainly the definition of child labour issue by ILO is accepted and referred in the literature. For instance, according to the definition of issue by the Ministry of Labour of the USA referred to ILO's definition: the issue of child labour refers to work that children should not be undertaking due to factors including their age, the safety of job or its unsuitability. Furthermore, not all work that children engage in should be classified as child labour because in some instances, children engaging in work which encourages personal development and education can be considered to be positive.(Dol.gov., 2015). Thus, whether work is deemed to be child labour depends not only on a child's age but also on the type of work and conditions under which it is performed, as detailed in the ILO Conventions.

**Table 1. Children in employment, child labour and hazardous work, 5-17 years age group, 2000-2012**

		Children in Employment		Child Labour		Hazardous Work	
		('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)	%
WORLD	2000	351,900	23	245,500	16	170,500	11,1
	2004	322,729	20,6	222,294	14,2	128,381	8,2
	2008	305,669	19,3	215,209	13,6	115,314	7,3
	2012	264,427	16,7	167,956	10,6	85,344	5,4

**Source: Marking Progress against Child Labour by ILO (2013)**

<sup>1</sup> This study has been derived from my dissertation "The Impact of the EU and ILO on the Elimination of the Child Labour Issue in Turkey" at London Metropolitan University, MPA Programme in 2015.

According to table, there is a tendency to reduce the number of child labour. However it is still in the agenda of NGO's, ILO and UNICEF and many governments, due to the high proportion of children must work instead of going to school. In this article, we will examine the reasons of the issue and critical policy areas to prevent the issue. According to ILO reports and other studies, there are three main policy areas to fight to the issue that are Social Protection, Decent works for adults and Education. In this study, we will mainly focus on the fact of compulsory basic education as a part of education policy. In this context, the trends of child labour issue in Turkey and the impact of increasing compulsory education length on the declining child labour issue. In order to analyze, we will compare the trends of the issue before and after the year of 1997 by using generated data by TURKSTAT. In this date compulsory education length has been increased from 5 years to 8 years. Actually, a dramatically changing was seen in Turkish education policy in 2013 that compulsory education length again has been enlarged by Government from 8 to 12 years. However, because of the lack of data to analyze the last changing on the policy of Turkish Government, we could not determine of the last situation of Turkey on the fighting to the issue and the effect of compulsory education on the issue. Nevertheless, in order to indicate the effect of education policy on the declining child labour issue, we will benefit from the United Kingdom's experience and other studies related to the subject in the literature.

## **2. The Reasons of the Child Labour Issue and Critical Policy Areas in Preventing It.**

As it has been stated that the child labour issue is very complex topic and there are many reasons to emerge the issue. One is poverty, injustice of income and its consequence low level of welfare. As argued by Fyfe (1989) children are taken into considering as cheap and unskilled labour force hence they are preferred as labour by employer and also sometimes, some works need different ability to be done such as children hands more suitable than adults in soccer ball making as it is seen in Pakistan. Additionally, children's family need their income to earn their livelihood in developing countries. This can be seen rarer in developed countries because social aid is more reachable and level of income is more adequately in developed countries. In accordance with the study of Cunningham and Viazzo (1996) child labour was one of the important problems of the UK till 1950's. The level of working children reduced simultaneously the increasing of level of income and welfare in the UK.

Culture and tradition has impact on child labour problems namely, working children was accepted as a normal behaviour in the UK in the cotton mills many decades ago. This can be seen still in many developing countries including some parts of Turkey which mainly seen in agricultural sector and particularly domestic works. Working in domestic work is accepted as a part of education for girls to be a good housewife in rural areas of Turkey.(Reference)

Inadequacy of law and frequently encountered problems on the enforcement of law is one of other reason of child labour problem. Even though there are national laws in countries around the world which states that no child under the age of 14 may work, the law is often ignored. More than 130 countries have signed an international convention saying that children may not work full-time before they are 14 or 15 years of age. However, in some of the countries concerned, laws on this are confusing or vague and not enforced. Employers can usually find a loophole to justify a young child working for them. Also in some countries they don't have a uniform birth registration system, so many people don't have birth certificates. Children's ages can't be established for certain and without documentation children may be denied access to state services like schools.

Another reason is education problems which related to sometimes cost of education, problems of reaching to education or sometimes lack of... these kinds of problems will be discussed separately in this work.

### **3. Education and Child Labour**

It has been stated by Viazzo and Cunningham that There is a clear relationship between child labour and education: children that lack access to education are more likely to enter the labour market where they are often subjected to hazardous and exploitative conditions (Cunningham and Viazzo, 1996). Therefore, promoting and expanding access to education is of vital importance. However, even though education is necessary, the retaining of students in school is more important and this requires a restructuring in order to provide quality education. Quality education requires a sufficient number of educated and trained teachers in addition to a relevant and diverse curriculum. Furthermore, classroom conditions, including equipment and resources, need to be adequate. Ultimately, children who obtain a quality education are more motivated to break away from poverty. Therefore, it can be seen that the education sector has the ability to contribute greatly to the eradication of child labour and so, education policies should aim to prevent and eliminate child labour (ILO, 2009).

Again, according to Cunningham and Viazzo (1996) until the 1950s, child labour was quite a common problem in the UK however, as a result of an increase in welfare, families no longer needed their children to work due to the income they received from the state and so, the rate of child labour greatly declined. Therefore, It should be suggested that in addition to the ILO's and other organisations' efforts to combat the problem of child labour, the issue of poverty needs to be addressed and changes need to be made to public policies which aim to end poverty and improve education which will ultimately help alleviate child labour.

Also the importance of education on the elimination of child labour issue can be seen on the campaigns of the UNICEF. One of them is in many countries around the world for children to be in school rather than in the workplace.

#### 4. Child Labour Issue and Turkey

Turkey's population is estimated about 79 million with an annual growth rate of approximately 13,1 per thousand in 2015. This population is relatively young with half of the total below the age of 28. Also 92,1 per cent of the population lives in the cities (TurkStat, 2016). According to the Human Development Index (HDI) for 2014-2015, Turkey is ranked 72th out of 177 nations in the context of human development. The economy of Turkey is the 17<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world with a GDP per capita that reached US \$10,515 in 2014 and its inflation rate is 6,57 % for 2014.

Over the nearly last two decades, significant achievements have been seen in education sphere thereby primary enrolment and retention rates have increased and the quality of education has improved. Net schooling ratio was 99,8 % for boys and 99,5 % for girls in 2013/2014 education term.

Turkey has made exceptional progress in regards to the elimination of child labour and this is a result of the combined efforts of Turkey's dedicated government, employers' and workers' unions, NGOs and other bodies, which have all joined the fight against child labour. In addition, the government's determination to address the issue saw the development of significant legislation, policies and programmes, which aimed to deal with the causes of child labour (International Labour Office, 2006).

Legislation and policies play an important role in combating the problem of child labour by providing a solid foundation on the basis of which other actions can be formulated and adapted to effectively address the problem (ILO, 2009). In this respect, Turkey has an effective arsenal. In addition to the rights laid out in the Turkish Constitution, there are integral basic laws relating to the employment of children. Labour Law No. 4857 adopted in 2003 brought national labour legislation into compliance with international instruments, including the ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182, and EU Directive 94/33. The Law on Primary Education No. 4306 also addresses the issue of child labour and forbids children of primary school age who do not attend school from being admitted into employment. Law No. 4702 on Apprenticeship and Vocational Training clearly states that in order to be admitted to work with the status of apprentice, an individual must be in the 14-19 age group, and possess a primary school diploma. Law No. 1593 on General Hygiene also contains provisions related to the working conditions of children (MoLSS, 2008). A new and very comprehensive Child Protection Law (5395), setting out the fundamental legislation on children, was developed and adopted by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 2005.

The reform of the education policy has been critical to the creation of an enabling environment. The Government took a major step forward in 1997 in the struggle against child labour when it passed an education law which mandates eight years as the minimum that children must attend school. The adoption of Law No. 4306 which extended compulsory education from five to eight years was crucial to ensure that every Turkish child between the ages of 6 and 14 was in school. Starting from 1997,

considerable national attention has been drawn to mechanisms for implementing the new eight-year compulsory primary education legislation. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has been implementing essential programmes to ensure school attendance, retention and academic success of all children in Turkey.

By the way, some additional information about the efforts of Ministry of National Education (the MoNE) should be given that the MoNE has made many efforts to address child labour and education including taking steps to raise the rate of school enrolment and retention, specifically outlining a plan to manage child labour as part of its national strategy for education and creating programs with the goal of removing children from child labour and providing them with educational opportunities (Meb.gov.tr, 2015).

Child labour in Turkey is now on its way out. Significant reduction in the numbers of working children has been observed in the country as a result of many interrelated efforts. With the assistance of ILO-IPEC's Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) successfully conducted three nation-wide Child Labour Surveys (CLS) in 1994, 1999 and 2006. The surveys not only provide information on children engaged in economic activities, but also on children engaged in household chores.

<b>Table 1. The Indicators of Working Children In Turkey</b>				
	1994	1999	2006	2012
Child Population age (0-5)	8,469	7,930	8,479	No Data
Child Population age (6-17)	14,968	15,821	16,264	15,247
Total employment aged 6 and over	20,984	22,124	22,963	No Data
Total child employment (6-17)	2,269	1,630	958	893
% of children aged 6-17 who work	15,2	10,3	5,9	5,9
Urban	611	478	457	400
Rural	1,659	1,151	502	493
Male	1,372	955	632	614
Female	898	675	326	279
Agriculture	1,510	990	392	399
Non agriculture	759	640	566	594
Wage earner	648	617	513	470
Own account or employer	52	28	26	10
Unpaid family worker	1,570	985	420	413
('000)				
<b>Source: TurkStat, 2007,2013</b>				

Figures released by the Turkish Statistical Institute indicate that 958,000 children aged between 6 and 17 were engaged in some form of economic activity in 2006 — some 5.9 percent of the total number of children in this age group as indicated in Table 1. Of the total number of working children in 2006, 392,000 children were engaged in agriculture, 271,000 in industry and 294,000 in trade and other services. Just under half

of the children concerned worked as unpaid labourers on family farms, in family shops or in other family businesses.

This survey presents explicit proof that work impedes education. The 2006 survey shows that 84.7% of all children between the ages of 6 and 17 were enrolled in school however; only 31.5% of these children were engaged in work. Furthermore, according to the same survey, 53% of female children and 33% of male children were engaged in domestic work.

Between 1994 and 2006, there was a great reduction in the occurrence of child labour in all age groups as shown in Table 2. The greatest reduction could be seen in the youngest age group. The December 2006 child labour survey demonstrated that the occurrence of child labour is reducing in Turkey. Furthermore the results of three surveys in 1994, 1999 and 2006 showed that the number of children between the ages of 6 and 17 working reduced from 15.2% to 5.9%. There was a very significant reduction in the involvement of female children in economic activity. Between 1994 and 2006, the number of female children working reduced from 897,000 to 326,000.

The rising number of female students, especially from rural areas, due to the Compulsory Basic Education Law (1997), significantly contributed to girls' gaining an education. For the purpose of reducing the gender gap in primary education, policies were developed and various projects and training programmes were implemented. Thus, there have been an increasing number of girls who have been able to complete their primary education. The national campaign 'Support to Schooling of Girls' managed to contribute to the reduction of girls' labour and made many efforts to empower girls in traditional communities through education which, in turn, was very conducive to changing the values and expectations of society by raising awareness about those issues. The Turkish Constitution, which specifies that "no one shall be employed in work that is unsuitable for their age, gender or capabilities", guarantees the protection of children. The Constitution, the Basic Law for National Education, and the Law for Primary Education and Training, also guarantee that primary education is obligatory and gratis in State schools for all residents, both male and female.

The Compulsory Basic Education Law of 1997 made an important contribution to girl's education by raising the number of female students especially from rural areas. Policies were developed and various projects and training programmes implemented to reduce the gender gap in primary education. As a result there were an increase numbers of girls who have completed the full eight years of their primary education. In the national campaign entitled, Support to Schooling of Girls, many efforts were made to empower girls in traditional communities through education; and through raising awareness led to a change in the values and expectations of society as a whole. This campaign was also successful in contributing to the reduction of girls' labour. Additionally, last year some changes has been made and started to apply these changes such as beginning from the age 5 for primary school education which was 7 years old, and compulsory

education length has been expanded from 8 to 12 years. Probably, these changes will have positive impact on the eliminating of child labour issue in Turkey. However, the investigating of positive or negative impacts cannot be shown now. In order to see the results of impacts accurately, we need additional time.

The reduction of the number of working children between 1994 and 2006 is most obvious between the ages of 6 and 14 which happen to be the years that children are required to attend school. As can be seen in Table 2, out of the total 12, 478, 00 children working, 318, 00 make up this age group. Throughout this period, the number of children engaged in the agriculture sector declined from 730,000 to 182,000, equalling a 75% decline. The number of children working in industry, declined by 53% from 106,000 to 50,000. Finally, the number of children working in the services sector declined by 70% from 71,000 to 21,000.

Even though these results demonstrate great success, one of the sectors, which did not maintain a reduction, was the trade sector, which demonstrated a decrease between 1994 and 1999 (50,000 to 31,000) but then was found to have increased again between 1999 and 2006 (21,000 to 65,000). In terms of the decline within specific sectors, the most significant reduction of child labour was found within the agriculture sector whereby the number of working children reduced by 74% between 1994 and 2006.

## 5. Conclusion

Although this is very complex issue and there are many factors specifically poverty, the two main factors contributing to the termination of the child labour problem, as was emphasized in the text, are family strategy and compulsory education. First of all, poverty is the main reason that can result in child labour. However, it should be accepted that eliminating poverty is a very difficult issue. Thus, other factors can be assessed and child labour issue can be decreased at the wanted level. As seen in Turkey, compulsory education has vital importance to the elimination of the problem. According to statistical data, in 1871, only 20% of children attended school, while in 1994, approximately 15% of children were workers, a rate which rose up nearly 45% after the implementation of compulsory education (1881, 1997). In 1871, the percentage of working children was reduced from 32% to 22%, with this rate declining from around 10% in 1999 to 5.9% in 2006. Compulsory education has option to follow child worker and prevent them to work. Although the techniques differ from country to country because of the difference in their living conditions and historical background, the policy transfer technique can be applied in order to combat this problem. For example, the ILO and UNICEF are working towards the elimination of the child labour problem. Thus, in order to succeed, they derive some experiences and results from the countries that underwent the problem in order to convey some policies and assist those countries which are affected by the problem. In conclusion, then, an indirect policy transfer technique is feasible for helping other countries under the aegis of global governance institutions.



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