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Place and Importance of Private Tutoring in Turkish Education System; Recent Discussions and Alternative Solution Proposals

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ABSTRACT

Within Turkish educational system growing each passing year up to now, the private tutoring system that has been benefited by almost every sector of society from the past to the present, has always been discussed in all assets. Faced with the danger of closing before, these institutions are now on the agenda with the closure again.

Private courses are the institutions providing education in a wide range from elementary students to college students, even college graduates, foreign languages, computer training courses, etc. in our country can be opened with the permission of Ministry of National Education (MEB). We need to investigate the revealing reasons of these institutions serving a broad range of education and why they are so preferred rather than discussing their closure or conversion. In this study, the reasons for the demand for private courses, historical development, some examples in the world, positive and negative criticisms directed at these institutions are evaluated in the theoretical framework, suggestions on our education system and the closure process are made, as an alternative charter school model is presented in general outline.

Key Words: Private tutoring, discussions about tutoring, charter schools, Ministry of National Education, education.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays that unemployment is a big issue, professional knowledge and skills are prior requirements even for the the simplest things. In this case, individuals need to develop themselves in terms of quality and in the form of becoming better equipped. A growing number of students who want to get higher education, whereas the capacity of higher education institutions can not meet this demand, individuals go into a quick race to get ahead of each other. While we have experienced this situation only in the transition to higher education previously, nowadays we face this problem not only before the higher education but also after the higher education in the process of getting a job.

While the institutions choose students as a result of supply-demand imbalance, in order to enter more qualified secondary schools, individuals evaluate different alternatives where they can get better education outside of their schools. This competition increases furthermore in the transition to the higher education and continue in the process of reaching their profession. In this competitive environment, in order to reach their targets by taking additional training courses outside of schools, individuals tend to go to the institutions that can promote themselves. The institutions that prepare the students for this competitive exams are the private courses and the mentioned private courses are affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. However, starting from the date they started to spread, their assets constantly have been the subject of debates and several studies have been conducted for their removal. These discussions on the private tutoring courses have led to the isolation from the other educational institutions. Yet, many students are enrolled in private tutoring courses for the national exams held in our country. The phenomenon of the private courses has involved more in the lives of students and parents every passing year despite of all criticism. This issue has been constantly in the center of the debates related to education and transitions between the stages, considered as a bleeding wound of the education

system, always discussed on their functions and their constant increasing participant number and characterized as a problem to be solved. (Kahraman,2013).

The historical development of private tutoring courses that have an undeniable place in our education system, in the spreading time and recent discussion reasons and the examples in the world constitute the research problem of this research. In the study, we intend to suggest alternative solutions on the education system and the closure of the private tutoring courses such as presenting charter school model in general outline, examining the mentioned issue above in the theoretical framework.

Literature

Ciftci and others (1998), in their work entitled "Private Courses Place in the Turkish Education System and Its Future", have taken opinions from people in total of 2996 consisting of students, parents, teachers working at different schools and from different private courses, school administrators and private course administrators, directors for National Education, the employees of Research, Planning and Coordination Committee in the Ministry of National Education, employees of Private Educational Institutions General Directorate, representatives from trade unions, associations, foundations in order to investigate the emergence of private courses and their historical development, the place in the education system and have reached the following results:

- Private courses have been emerged as a need intended for university entrance exams.
- Preparing for exams were taken as the focus in the activities of private courses.
- The private courses have become a requirement due to the difference between the measurement systems at schools and in the central examinations.

Kahraman (2013), in his study, in order to examine teachers' opinions about the necessity and the functions of private courses, have taken the opinions of 224 teachers working at different schools and different private courses in Ankara and reached the following findings:

"Increasing academic competition, dwindling quality of teaching in the state sectors, examinations, the demands of students, the ability of private courses to get efficient outcomes by motivating, the portfolio of the parents who want better education, private courses to be a good motivation source for the students are shown by the teachers as reasons mandating private courses. The beneficial aspects of private courses are specified by the teachers as adapting technological advances quicker than other educational institutions, the higher academic and increasing success shown by the students attending any private courses than the others, being complementary to the school education. A huge number of employment at private courses, unemployment expectations in case of closure of private courses, too much added value to the economy and etc. are the contributions to employment specified by the teachers. Lack of trust to the private courses due to improper applications by some private courses, not having done required legal regulations by the state, too large private course investments of some social organizations, less wage rates for teachers at these institutions, being an expensive service for the majority of society, negative thoughts of politics about this issue are counted by the teachers as reasons for the negative attitude to the private courses. Private courses are primarily educational institutions and should remain so, any money spent on education is not wasted. People will find other ways of getting the same education with the money spent to private courses in case of closure of these educational institutions, The thoughts of finding other ways of getting the same education with the money spent to private courses in case of closure of these educational institutions and impossibility of conversion to a school for all the private courses are recommendations and expectations for the future specified by the teachers.

The teachers think that having a better teaching staff and selected mass of the students, loyalty in missions by the staff, the thought to be easy and lucrative can be counted as reasons mandating these institutions. The reasons such as having enough physical conditions for the education, being a serious moral teaching center for the students, preventing students to bad habits and criminal tendencies, ensuring equal opportunities are not expressed as beneficial aspects of private courses by the teachers. And also, teachers do not accept that the sources obtained from these institutions spent for the teachers working there and benefiting from the possibilities for free of the students in need as economic contribution of the private courses. However, lack of acceptance by the community due to political and social considerations, tax evasion of some private courses, negative attitude of trade unions and politics are not among the reasons to have negative attitude to these institutions by the teachers interviewed. Hesitant approaches have been seen in the opinions of the teachers interviewed such as new private course establishment by new entrepreneurs, conversion of all private courses to schools, abolishment of some exams like YGS (Examination of Transition to Higher Education) and SBS (Level Specification Examination) and these ideas have not been listed in the future recommendations for the private courses by the teachers."

In his study, Dagli (2006) interviewed parents sending their students to the private courses and as a result of these interviews he witnessed that parents accept these institutions as an integral part of education that deficits state educational institutions and even more an alternative to the state schools.

Bastürk and Dogan (2010), in a study to reveal high school teachers views on private courses, applied written questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions to 28 teachers working in various high schools in the Anatolian side of Istanbul and reached the following conclusions:

The high school teachers are quite uncomfortable with the idea of using education as a tool for economic profits due to commercial concerns of these institutions while accepting some superiorities of the private courses for the university entrance exams. On the other hand, one other issue that bothers high school teachers is that the achievements of students entering to any university is attributed only to the private courses.

Historical Development of Private Courses in Turkey

Though with a different structure of the functions, the emergence of private tutoring in Turkey, dates back to the pre-Republic times. The first emergence of private educational institutions began with the permission to open their schools for minorities with the Tanzimat. Then, "General Regulations of Education" published in 1869, included provisions dealing with the private schools. The most important development related to private courses to take a place in the education system has been through the Special Education Law, No. 625 and dated 06.08.1965. Although, these institutions were initially for the weak students and the ones who would complete their education outside of the school, then gradually, they spread and turned to an industry that its purpose emerged with the economic concerns and profits. Despite having the risk of closure in the early 1980s, the place of the private courses strengthened further with the enactment of the law numbered 3035 and dated 11.07.1984. In 1985, some private courses came together and set up "Private Courses Union Association" (OZDEBIR). Subsequently, with the establishing of GUVENDER in 1991 and TODER in 2002, they entered into serious institutionalization process and the number is increasing every year. Finally, the law numbered 625 was repealed, Private Education Intitution Law numbered 5580, dated 08/02/2007 came into force and then the regulations based on this law have been enacted.

Table 1. Private Courses, the number of students at private courses and teachers employed at private courses by year.

Years	The number of Private Courses	The number of students	The number of teachers
1975-1976	157	45.582	1.384
1980-1981	174	101.703	3.826
1990-1991	762	188.407	8.723
1995-1996	1.496	379.463	12.430
1996-1997	1.664	432.714	13.722
1997-1998	1.710	433.847	14.395
1998-1999	1.727	484.229	15.030
1999-2000	1.808	500.464	17.073
2000-2001	1.864	523.244	18.175
2001-2002	2.002	588.637	20.112
2002-2003	2.122	606.522	19.881
2003-2004	2.568	668.673	23.730
2004-2005	2.984	784.565	30.537
2005-2006	3.570	925.299	41.031
2006-2007	3.986	1.071.827	47.621
2007-2008	4.031	1.122.861	48.855
2008-2009	4.262	1.178.943	51.916
2009-2010	4.193	1.174.860	50.432
2010-2011	4.099	1.234.738	50.209
2011-2012	3.961	1.219.472	50.163
2012-2013	3.690		

Source: 1975 - 1991 - Unknown Exams, Unexperienced Lives, Derya Keskin

1995 - 2013 - 17th Ordinary General Assembly of OZ-DE-BIR Activity Report

As can be seen from Table 1, the number of the private courses that was 157 in the years 1975-1976 has risen up till the years 2008 and 2009 and reached to 4262. After 2009, albeit small reduction in the number occurred. The increasing number of universities and the increase in the quota by Higher

Education Board beginning from 2008 can be accepted among the reasons for this decline. (Ozoglu, 2011).

By the year 2014 the "Draft Law amending National Education Basic Law and some Certain Law and Decree Laws" has been prepared, discussed, adopted by the Parliament National Education Commission and March 1, 2014, was approved by the President. The Law was published in the Official Gazette dated 14 March 2014. Accordingly, the private courses and student study centers will continue their educational activities until September 1, 2015, up to 2018- 2019 academic year, they have to complete their conversion to private schools.

According to the 2013 Annual Report of the Ministry of National Education, 391 private courses have been closed in 2013. Relevant to the current situation, the mentioned law is still pending in the Constitutional Court with the reference of the main opposition party.

The place of private courses in Turkish Education System and the reasons of the demands for these institutions

The examination system can be primarily shown among the reasons of the demands for the private courses in Turkey. Having the transitions between the educational stages with competitive central exams for young students and inequalities in pre-university education between regions are the reasons for the expansion of private courses. (Esme, 2013).

Nevertheless, in Private Courses Regulations of National Education issued on 21/10/2009, a private course has been identified as follows: A Private Course is an institution that operates in education by preparing students for the entrance exams for the transition to a higher stage of education, training in any field of the students' interests, raising the level of knowledge of the students. As mentioned in the definition of the private course, having the transition between the educational stages with a competitive central exam, exams such as entrance exams to secondary schools SBS (Level Specification Examination), with the final version of TEOG (Examination of Transition to Secondary Education from Basic Education) and LYS (Entrance Examination for Bachelor Degree) have become major causes for individuals preferring better educational institutions.

Competitive environment arising from the supply-demand imbalance in higher education has increased each passing year. Among the causes of the demand for higher education, higher education brings high economic profits in Turkey. (Tansel and Bircan, 2005). Individuals tend to prefer especially popular universities or departments in the society in order to obtain professions with high status and earnings.

The contents of the examinations are also among the reasons that boost the demands for the private courses. Therefore, over time the Ministry of National Education made arrangements regarding the contents of examinations, but could not bring a solution to the problem. For example, student's achievement score was calculated by the overall success of the student's school, but, this calculation has reduced the value of individual achievement, and that has increased the demands for quality secondary education institutions accepting students with entrance exams, and as a result, private courses have become an indispensable choice for elementary school students in transitions to secondary education. In other words, the competitive phenomenon of the transition to higher education were reduced to the primary level. (Gur ve Celik, 2009).

Certain shortcomings in our education system are among the reasons for the demand on the private courses. Inequalities among schools and regions; same lack of quality teachers in every schools, lack of teachers in certain branches in some schools, differences in class sizes, changes in the physical structure of the schools can be counted as the examples of this glitch. Students and their families have tended to the private courses in order to compensate for deficiencies in the education system. (Ozoglu, 2011).

Another reason of the demand is the perception of students and parents towards the private courses in the country. The private courses are seen as the key to the success by the parents and the students. Families are accepting these institutions as investment vehicle to offer a better future to their children. (Tansel and Bircan, 2006). On the other hand, the impact of the families whose children go the courses to other families put forward the private courses. (Ozoglu, 2011).

The social impact of the private courses is one of the preference reasons. The students participating these institutions experience the sense of belonging to a group outside of the schools.

Recent Discussions Related to The Private Courses, Positive and Negative Criticism to The Private Courses

The courses have been discussed since the start of widespreading and in the current state, they are on the agenda with their closure. The closure or the conversion to private schools is not new, it has been mentioned in the eighth and ninth development plan of the government. In the ninth developmental plan, some aspects about this issue have been stated such as, the educational system is exam-oriented that

families and the government spend huge amounts on exam preparations and incentives for the conversion to schools should be provided for the private courses. Yet, in the strategic plan of MEB (Ministry of National Education) for 2010-2014, it was planned to provide the conversions of 70% of the private courses to private schools by the end of 2014 with accommodating methods. As mentioned previously, the decision of conversion by the end of 2015 has been ensured.

So, what are the reasons to discuss these institutions too much? In which aspects are they discussed? What are the positive and negative criticism on the private courses?

One of the private courses-related criticisms is that a large portion of students time are occupied by these institutions. It has been suggested that students involve in an intense pace of work at a very young age by getting education both at schools and private courses and this situation affect both students and their parents social life adversely (Baloglu, 1995). Due to the time allocated to the private courses, students spend a large portion of their time on solving tests, they do not have time for any activity intended to develop themselves. Therefore, students' physical, mental and social development can not be adequately provided. Students attending private courses have to spend their evenings at private courses every day after school or their weekends, thus, they do not spend their time with their families sufficiently and the structure of the families is disrupted (Bacanli ve Dombayci, 2013).

Opposing views on the subject is that the students' youth years is the time that they take more responsibility and work regularly in accordance with a specific target. During this period, students have a very high energy potential. Without private courses, students will use this energy potential elsewhere in a right or wrong way. Namely, the private courses is a kind of recovery for the students from the adverse effects of the streets. From another perspective, students attending private courses experience the sense of belonging to another groups outside of the schools that last for years, can make new friends and also have the opportunity to get socialized. Especially, the students from rural areas are adapting to urban life before going to universities and getting better prepared for the college life. (Ozer, 2006).

Another criticism regarding to the private courses is that they cause inequality of opportunity. While private courses bring economic burden to the families, the accessibility to the courses became easier for wealthy families and as a result, inequality of opportunity emerges. (Baloglu, 1995). It can be seen that the rate of attending students to the private courses has increased with the rise of the income level of families in the research of Tansel and Bircan (2005). In addition, the children of the families with low and middle income have disturbed feelings that their families are sending them to the private courses in difficult conditions and this creates more pressure on the students of this kind of families (TED, 2010). Furthermore, having private courses in the urban centers only makes difficult to reach these courses for the students living in rural areas.

The contrary proponents of this view specify that there are already inequalities with both geographical regions and income status of the families in education and the private courses have arisen as a result of this kind inequalities (Koprulu, 2014). As is mentioned previously, disruptions in Turkish educational system have created lots of inequalities and the families tend to send their children to the private courses in order to make up for this deficiency. Additionally, in recent years, it is known that there are private courses for almost every kinds of budgets (Bacanli and Dombayci, 2013). It is very difficult to reach not only to the private courses but also to the private schools for the students living in the rural areas, because the private schools are also located in the urban. The responsibility sense of the students attending private schools or courses from rural areas develops when they realize the endure of their families in paying to a private educational institution. (Ozer, 2006).

A still further criticism on this issue, the quality of the educational at schools is effected by the private courses adversely. The productivity of the students who want to succeed in the entrance exams with the methods shown at private courses is constrained (Bacanli and Dombayci, 2013). The subjects covered at schools are processed once again at private courses. In some cases, students study a subject with their tutor before it is covered by their teachers at school. In such cases, there can be conflicts between the students attending private courses and the others and also sometimes with the teachers at school, and as a result, classroom management is getting harder for the school teachers. Besides, in Turkey, when the exams approach, students somehow receive health report in order not to go to school, they devote their school time to private courses instead. Having different institutional objectives, we witness different educational activities at schools and private courses. In such cases, students do not care about the school by focusing on their university targets. The quality and the effectiveness of the education at schools decrease depending on the reasons mentioned, distrust occurs towards schools among students and parents.

In addition, the private courses do not provide students with new knowledge due to the differences in the institutional objectives, the students are encouraged to solve plenty of questions, to memorize and to do

more repetitions and by this encouragement, analysis and synthesis capabilities of the students are blunted (TED, 2005).

Opposing this view, private courses owners point out that the private courses have been more preferable with different points from management, assessment, guidance, various effective teaching methods and etc. They express that by identifying the the topics that students failed with assessments continuously, needed precautions are taken and having the parents included in the process, effective solutions are provided, with strict guidance and monitoring system, the success of the students is increased (Temel, 2002).

Obviously, students' high motivation also has a large share in the success of the private courses. Students attending these private institution likely have unique purposes and this unique purpose motivate them to achieve in the exams. Also having paid to these institutions causes parents deal with the students' success more closely. Another reason for the succes of these establishments is that the teaching staff has more efficient working conditions and the risk of losing students (customers), because their existence depends on the students' presence.

As another criticism is related to the economic dimension of the private courses. The money allocated to the private courses has already exceeded even the budget allocations of the higher education. In case of diverting this huge amount of money to the national education, it is claimed that the quality problems in the national education and supply and demand problems in the higher education will be solved (TED, 2006). In addition, excessive overload of the lectures to the teachers working at the private courses and illegal inhumane working hours can be counted as criticism regarding teaching staff (Balci and Dombayci, 2013).

Private Courses in the World

Many examples of private courses not only Turkish educational system, but also in many countries can be seen in the world. Particularly, it is common in countries where the transitions between the school stages are conducted with the central exams and the functions are similar to Turkey. Foremost, in South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan as in far east countries and in Greece and Israel, these institutions are widely used and named as "shadow education".

Transition to the higher education is carried out with a scientific orientation in some countries such as Germany, Austria, France, Russia, Australia, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. There are either less or no alike institutions in these countries.

As is mentioned previously, the central exam for university entrance is the top reason of the private courses being widespread. But there are other reasons as well. One of the most prominent features of the mentioned countries, they have a hierarchical structure in their educational systems. At each stages, schools differ from each other in terms of quality, students always are in a race to reach the top quality ones. Another reason is that there is a very tight relation between the education level of people and their income level. Having a higher level of education provides higher earnings (Ozoglu, 2011).

Some similarities with Turkey can be seen when taking a look at Japanese Educational system. The compulsory education is for nine years, free of charge and maintained as composite, the age to start school is six (OZDEBIR, 2005). The entrance to all high schools is performed through exams. Entrances to universities is performed in the same way. "The institutions that the students attend outside of their schools is named as Private Education Schools in general and divided into two types" (OZDEBIR, 2005). In Japan, as of 2011 about 39% of primary school students, %75 of secondary school students and 60% of high school students has attended private courses and while the number of private courses is 49000, the number of schools is 39000 in Japan. Also, 30% of the teachers working at schools work at private courses at the same time (Bacanli ve Dombayci, 2013).

Taking a look at the situation in Greece, four types of private courses are seen. The private courses serving secondary education is around 3000 and their class size is about 10-12 students in general. Foreign language courses are around eight thousand in Greece. Ateliers are in the form of vocational courses. Higher education courses is 23 in total and their number is quite a few (OZDEBIR, 2005).

There are unofficial courses for entrance exams in Austria and the Netherlands. In Spain, private courses serve as orientation courses for university preparation. For the university entrance, it is a requirement for a student to attend these courses for a year and succeed in the exams held at the courses. In the United States; public courses have been offered in various fields by using the facilities of the government. These courses operating as practical knowledge and dexterity courses have been founded with the aim to help the students graduated from high schools with a low grade find job opportunities. In Brazil, the establishments called "cursinho" are available for the entrance exam preparations. These institutions

meaning small educational courses prepare students for the university entrance exam named “vestibular” (GUVEN-DER, 2000).

South Korea is one of the countries with common usage of private courses and the success rate of the students is very high. South Korea took the second place with students’ reading skills in the study of PISA in 2009 (OECD, 2010). The participation rate to private courses in South Korea, in elementary school was 88%, in secondary schools was 74% and in high schools was 55%, according to the 2007 data (Bacanli ve Dombayci, 2013).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The place and the importance of the private courses in Turkish education system has emerged as a result of the demand for these institutions. It will be much better and more accurate to eliminate the causes of the demand for the private courses rather than taking them out of our education system.

Therefore, firstly, it is necessary to make needed arrangements regarding the examination system. The exam content should overlap with education given at schools.

- Changing the types of questions also can be effective. The other types of question should also be utilized instead of multiple choice questions.
- School achievement and extracurricular achievements can influence the test scores. Social factors such as students' extracurricular sporting and artistic activities and gained rewards can be added to the entrance exam scores. Such an assessment system encourages students to social activities and contributes to their personal and social development.
- Precautions in terms of infrastructure, equipment and human resources to eliminate among schools can be taken.
- Some arrangements can be performed in the criterias of passing to a upper class. Encountering no difficulty in passing to a upper class affects the quality of education adversely.
- The educational programs of the higher institutions should be regulated in terms of employment. Individuals clutter to enter some specific universities or departments, because having entered to these universities or departments, they think that they will obtain a respectable profession that can make thier living in the future.

In the process of transition of the private courses, taking some measures will be appropriate.

- Advisory units may be established within the Ministry of National Education and these units can orient the private courses on the path to follow in the transition process. (Bacanli ve Dombayci, 2013).
- Most of the private courses in Turkey do not have a garden for the students. They need to have some certain requirements to become better private schools. Therefore, vacant lands can be given by the state for swap. Even, school campuses can be formed by combining the ones in smallest scales. The mentioned advisory units can direct the courses on this issue.
- Some private courses can be converted into courses like driving courses or vocational schools.
- The examples of the models around the world can be adapted to our country. In this study, contracted (charter) school model has been given as an example for the the transition process.

CONTRACTED (CHARTER) SCHOOL MODEL

Charter School Model is a kind of school model that has emerged in 1992 in USA. New pursuits began in education as a result of distrust in public schools due to problems occurred in the 1990s and the charter schools were born. The main purpose of the model, is to overcome the defects existing in the education system. This model aimed to provide teachers with more freedom, to respond to the needs of students and to get families more interested in the education process for the improvements in education (Al, 2014). It is difficult to reveal the features of this model due to different implementation in all states (Inayet, 1999).

Charter schools can provide the democratization of education and give teachers, families and students the possibility to use entrepreneurship opportunities. Proper implementation of this model can offer diversification and personalization of education, opportunities to develop new learning methods for educators. In addition, the methods and techniques developed in these schools may be example to other schools and increase competitiveness (Al, 2014).

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