

THE FUNCTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM ON
SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

ELİF ERBERK

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES, EDUCATIONAL
ADMINISTRATION AND PLANNING

AUGUST 2023

Approval of the thesis:

**THE FUNCTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM ON
SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

THE FUNCTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM ON SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

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**Ph.D., The Department of Educational Sciences, Educational Administration and
Planning**

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI

August 2023, 249 pages

The purpose of the study was to find out the implications of the 4+4+4 education reform on socioeconomically disadvantaged students. The study was conducted with a mixed-methods research design. Accordingly, schools were selected by the cluster sampling method and 44.290 students were sample of the study. Next, 48 participants were selected through the criterion sampling method. Raw data registered in the e-school system and a semi-structured interview form were utilized in collecting the data. Descriptive analysis and content analysis were employed to analyze the data.

Quantitative research findings revealed that the 4+4+4 reform has adversely affected academic achievement in all levels of schools. Although the number of the students increased after the reform, the distribution over years showed that the number of students, particularly female students, decreased. In addition, the results indicated that both first and second semester absenteeism, particularly those higher than 40 days, increased in all school levels after the reform. Qualitative research results

highlighted the perceptions of the internal and external stakeholders about the reform in education system. Almost all participants asserted that the reform was sudden, ideological and top-down. According to the teachers and school principals, the 4+4+4 reform negatively affected both students and the practitioners of the reform. Besides, the reform particularly affected 1st, 5th, and 9th grade students. Furthermore, the participants emphasized that socioeconomically disadvantaged students were affected by the reforms much more due to inequality of opportunity in education. Moreover, education is no longer a stepping stone to class mobility for socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

Keywords: The 4+4+4 education reform, Conflict Theory, Equality of Opportunity in Education, Social Justice Implementations, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.

ÖZ

EĞİTİM REFORMUNUN SOSYOEKONOMİK AÇIDAN DEZAVANTAJLI ÖĞRENCİLER ÜZERİNDEKİ İŞLEVLERİ VE SONUÇLARI

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Ağustos 2023, 249 sayfa

Çalışmanın amacı, 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun sosyo-ekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçlarını ortaya koymaktır. Çalışma karma yöntem araştırma deseni ile yürütülmüştür. Buna göre, okullar küme örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilmiş ve ardından 44.290 öğrenci çalışmanın örneklemini oluşturmuştur. Daha sonra, 48 katılımcı ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilmiş ve çalışmaya dâhil edilmiştir. Verilerin toplanmasında e-okul sisteminde kayıtlı ham veriler ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde ise betimsel analiz ve içerik analizi kullanılmıştır.

Nicel araştırma bulguları, 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise olmak üzere tüm eğitim kademelerinde akademik başarıyı olumsuz etkilediğini ortaya koymuştur. Reform sonrasında öğrenci sayısı artmış olsa da, yıllara göre dağılım incelendiğinde, öğrenci sayısının, özellikle kız öğrenci sayısının, azaldığını görülmüştür. Ayrıca sonuçlar, reform sonrasında ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise kademelerinde hem birinci hem de ikinci dönem öğrenci devamsızlığının arttığını

göstermiştir. Özellikle 40 günü aşan devamsızlıkların reform öncesine göre iki veya üç katına kadar çıktığı görülmüştür. Nitel araştırma sonuçları ise eğitim sistemindeki iç ve dış paydaşların reforma ilişkin algılarını ortaya koymuştur. Katılımcıların neredeyse tamamı reformun ani, ideolojik ve tepeden inme bir reform olduğunu belirtmiştir. Öğretmenlere ve okul müdürlerine göre 4+4+4 eğitim reformu hem öğrencileri hem de reformu okullarda hayata geçirecek olan öğretmen ve müdürleri olumsuz etkilemiştir. Ayrıca, reform özellikle 1. sınıf, 5. sınıf ve 9. sınıf öğrencilerini etkilemiştir. Bu sınıflarda reformun olumsuz etkileri yoğun bir şekilde hissedilmiştir. Üstelik katılımcılar, eğitimde fırsat eşitsizliği nedeniyle sosyo-ekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı öğrencilerin reformlardan çok daha fazla etkilendiğini vurgulamışlardır. Ayrıca çalışmanın sonuçları eğitimin artık sosyo-ekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı öğrencilerin sınıf atlamalarına destek olan bir basamak görevi görmediğini ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 4+4+4 Eğitim Reformu, Çatışmacı Kuram, Eğitimde Fırsat Eşitliği, Sosyal Adalet Uygulamaları, Sosyo-Ekonomik Açıdan Dezavantajlı Öğrenciler.

*To the children who, against all odds,
have the courage to hope for their future...*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Despite being long and challenging, this process was a unique and worthwhile journey for me. In this valuable process, first and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Yaşar Kondakçı, for his profound wisdom and academic support.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Prof. Dr. Cennet Engin, Prof. Dr. Cevat Yıldırım, Assoc. Dr. Oya Taneri, and Assoc. Dr. Deniz Örucü, for their invaluable and instructive feedback.

I want to express my deepest thank you to everyone who accompanied me on this challenging journey and shared the process with me with all sincerity. I deeply hope that our paths will cross again with these precious people in the light of knowledge or love.

Some people deserve a much more heartfelt thanks, and they know themselves well :) I am glad that you have been with me throughout this process and I hope you can be with me for the rest of my life.

Finally, I think I should thank myself too. I have achieved something beautiful and meaningful that has opened the doors of a new life for me. Now I can change the world :)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- MoNE : Ministry of National Education
HEC : Higher Education Commission
TES : Turkish Education System
SES : Socioeconomic Status
EOE : Equality of Opportunity in Education (EOE)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the background of this study is presented, the purpose of the study, the study questions and the significance of the study are explained, and the definitions of the terms related to the study are also given.

1.1. Background of the Study

Change is indispensable in educational institutions as it is in many organizations. Educational institutions need to improve their organizational change management capabilities. They should also develop their capacity to innovate, change and adapt (Giles & Hargreaves, 2006). Changes in education should involve a planned process (Hargreaves, 2005). However, many reforms in the Turkish education system are not embraced and are considered a puzzle by education stakeholders because they are implemented only by Ministry of National Education (MoNE) without a detailed evaluation and without taking into consideration the stakeholders of education, and then a new change is inevitable (İnal, 2012). As a matter of fact, the 4+4+4 education reform, which was defined as a major change in the education system, was criticized for being a top-down reform (Epçaçan, 2014), and policy makers were blamed for lack of preparation due to this reform being believed to be sudden and unprepared (Akpınar et al., 2012).

With the 4+4+4 education reform, with the approval of the MoNE, the duration of education was extended from 8 to 12 years and the transition from continuous to discontinuous education was made. With this reform, fundamental changes were made in the education system by MoNE in the 2012-2013 academic year and the education system was reorganized from 5+3 to the 4+4+4 (MoNE, 2012). MoNE

(2012) cited the following reasons for this change: to follow the developments in the world by extending the duration of compulsory education, to increase the schooling rate, and to offer programs suitable for the interests and abilities of students at an early age. Despite these reasons given by MoNE, some academics have stated that this reform does not have positive features and is an ideological reform (Bedir, 2022; Eroler, 2019). On the other hand, the reform was evaluated as a positive reform in terms of creating diversity in the curriculum, providing equality of opportunity in education for students, and helping students with vocational guidance for their skills at an early age (Akpınar et al., 2012; Doğan et al., 2014; Örs et al., 2013). Some researchers, on the other hand, stated that the 4+4+4 education reform encountered many problems in the implementation process since there was no pilot implementation in advance (Dinç et al., 2014; Epçaçan, 2014; Ünal, 2013).

It is highlighted that the 4+4+4 education reform was a reform that required change at all levels of education even in the first years of the reform (ERG, 2012). For instance, the school starting age was changed to an earlier age and children who started school at 60-66 months had difficulty adapting to school. In addition, 5th graders transferred to secondary schools. The 5th grade issue is still an unsolved problem despite years after the reform (Uluer, 2023). Being part of secondary school was difficult for children who had not yet entered the concrete operational process to comprehend secondary school lessons (Göktaş, 2018). In addition, many teachers working in primary schools became redundant due to the 5th grade becoming a secondary school. In high schools, the negative consequences of the unplanned reform revealed infrastructure deficiencies and highlighted that schools were not physically ready for 12-year compulsory education (Kayıp, 2019).

In addition to criticizing the unplanned implementation of the 4+4+4 education reform, many education stakeholders believe that it is revenge for February 28 memorandum (Noyan, 2019). [As a result of the February 28 memorandum, the government was dissolved. The changes in Türkiye during the period when the decisions that went down in Turkish political history were implemented were not only in the political sphere but also in the administrative, legal and social spheres. These changes were called the postmodern coup (Tunahan, 2015)]. The reopening of

the middle school level of imam-hatip high schools, which were closed down at the end of 1990s, and the inclusion of religion courses in the school curriculum as elective courses led to the evaluation of this reform as an ideological reform (Güven, 2012). There have been various large-scale and small-scale changes in the Turkish Education System (TES). However, it is controversial whether these change initiatives were brought about by a rational paradigm or ideological tendencies (Zayim & Kondakçı, 2015). In this context, the 4+4+4 education reform, which completely changed the education system and affected all stakeholders, is considered a 'large-scale change' as defined by Fullan, and large-scale changes are defined as conscious political and strategic initiatives (Fullan, 2000).

Although the 4+4+4 education reform, which reflects a political ideology, has led to changes at different levels, it has not had a positive impact on the lives of disadvantaged students (i.e. poor, girls) (Özer, 2020). Especially in disadvantaged regions (i.e. eastern and southeastern parts of Türkiye), classes that were already crowded before the reform became even more crowded after the reform. In many schools, the number of classrooms was insufficient, so inactive parts of the school were converted into classrooms (Yılmaz, 2014). The school enrollment rate of students was impeded by the inclusion of open secondary schools and open high schools in the education system, and the expected goal of the reform was not achieved. Dropouts increased in secondary and high schools, and children who left formal education enrolled in open education programs. The reform failed to ensure the schooling of girls and so gender-based inequalities increased. As can be seen, the reform failed to ensure equality of opportunity in education; on the contrary, the problems the created made the situation of disadvantaged students worse (Özbaş, 2018). Therefore, the 4+4+4 education reform was not well planned, was not piloted, and remained a reform having with many shortcomings (İnal, 2012).

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The situation of disadvantaged groups at schools is a challenge in the system of education. Being disadvantaged is mostly due to poverty, and therefore as the poor population rises, the disadvantaged student population also increases accordingly.

When the needs of the students coming from lower-classes are not met, it will create greater educational problems characterized by lower quality and more conflict (Levin, 1988). As a consequence, it is possible that educational inequalities would lead to bigger problem and affect the system of education adversely in the future. In order to deal with these problems, the state has made various reforms in different periods. The 4+4+4 education reform that came into force in the 2012-13 academic year is one of them.

The state is aware that it could not succeed at creating social justice in the system of education if it does not provide equality of opportunity in education (Ayata, 2018). On the other hand, the 4+4+4 education reform, which brings various regulations in terms of equal opportunities, also includes educational inequalities such as the dwindling of formal education to 4 years. In other words, educational inequalities have a new dimension after this reform (Güven, 2012). In this regard, this dissertation focuses on getting evidence on the argument that educational reforms fail to alleviate social injustices and the situation of disadvantaged groups. In this dissertation I argue that the so called 4+4+4 education reform in Türkiye has perpetuated inequalities in education. This is an unaddressed issue in TES. Given the impact of the 4+4+4 education reform on education, the current study aims to examine the 4+4+4 education reform in terms of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and to determine the functions and implications of this reform on disadvantaged students. In line with this purpose, the following research questions were attempted to be answered:

1. What are the functions and implications of education reform on disadvantaged students in terms of academic achievement?
2. What are the functions and implications of education reform on disadvantaged students in terms of gender?
3. What are the functions and implications of education reform on disadvantaged students in terms of absenteeism?
4. How do teachers, school principals, and academics perceive the 4+4+4 education reform?

5. What are the experiences / observations of teachers, school principals, and academics regarding the 4+4+4 education reform?
6. What are the implications of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students from the teachers, school principals, and academicians' point of view?

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study has a different perspective from previous studies on the 4+4+4 education reform. The study stresses the importance of education and educational reforms for disadvantaged students. The reform was theoretically analyzed within the framework of sociological theories in education, especially functionalist and conflict theories, and the results of the study were evaluated from the perspective of conflict theory, which emphasizes socioeconomic inequalities. As this study examines the consequences of the reform on disadvantaged students, the use of theories of inequality in education has enriched the study. In addition, since this study is a longitudinal study that analyzes change over time and allows reliable inferences to be made (Cohen et al., 2007), it has revealed the situation before and after the reform and in this sense, it has made an important contribution to the literature.

When we look at the objectives of the 4+4+4 education reform, it is seen that although not all objectives of the reform directly include disadvantaged students, they indirectly include outcomes related to disadvantaged students. Although there are studies explaining this issue in the literature, it is observed that the issue is generally examined in a single dimension and with a single method. In this sense, this study, in which explanatory mixed method design was used, is important in terms of methodology. In line with the nature of the explanatory sequential design, this study first used a quantitative method with a significant data set to reveal the results of the 4+4+4 education reform. The data used at this stage were examined in terms of variables such as academic achievement, gender and absenteeism at all levels of K12 students in socioeconomically disadvantaged schools, and the same variables were analyzed by comparing the data before and after the reform. This was

followed by a qualitative study that examined the situation of disadvantaged students in depth. Therefore, as Fullan (2004) emphasized in the process of change in education, the possible reasons for the quantitative findings were supported by interviews to see the big picture in the education system. As far as is known, there are either extremely few or no studies that are as detailed and longitudinal in the literature. In this regard, it might be argued that this work closes a knowledge gap and clarifies a controversial subject.

Furthermore, the qualitative findings of this study revealed that the views of reform implementers are as important as those of policymakers in the centralized Turkish education system (Çelik, 2004). Since reform initiatives have a positive impact on policy when reforms are need-oriented, it is important to involve informed stakeholders before reforms are introduced. This also makes it easier to implement reforms. Therefore, as underlined by Lingard et al., (2017), Tefera (1999), and Zimmerman (2006), this study revealed the damages that top-down reforms can cause to the education system and provided important information on how to avoid many drawbacks that can be encountered when the views of educational stakeholders are taken into consideration.

Moreover, in the qualitative part of this study, the participants were selected according to predetermined criteria and those who had been in office for at least 4 years before the reform were selected in order to better evaluate before and after the reform. In addition, teachers working at all levels were included in the study both with the support of the literature (Gür & Aykurtlu, 2021; Kırmızı & Yurdakal, 2016; Yardibi, 2017) and as a result of the decision taken in consultation with internal stakeholders consisting of teachers and school principals. In order to better reveal the results of the reform, teachers working in the 1st, 5th, and 9th grades, that were considered to be most affected by the reform in the first years of the reform, were preferred. This selectivity and inclusiveness increase the importance of the study. Therefore, the study was shaped by the views of those who practiced the reform.

Last but not least, the views of academics, which are quite limited in the literature, were also included in the study, and the study revealed how a reform implemented in

K12 was perceived from the perspective of higher education. When evaluated in this framework, it can be said that the study makes an important contribution to the literature.

1.4. Definition of the Terms

Change: Change is defined as all developments and changes within the process. Change involves alterations to all or part of the current situation.

Reform: Reform also involves processes of change and innovation. In addition, reform entails the elimination of the negative results previously achieved after the corrections were made and the improvement of the phenomenon to better conditions.

Socioeconomically disadvantaged students: Education, employment, and income levels are all impacted by socioeconomic circumstances. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students are, by definition, students with lower income and educational levels.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Change and Reform

The 21st century is an era of rapid change. Information and technology in particular have been important social forces shaping society in different aspects. Organizations are not exempt from the influence of external forces of change. Because of the rapid pace of change, it is very difficult for organizations to hope that the same structures and functions will help them survive in long term (Hage & Powers, 1992). As Kotter and Schlesinger (1989) point out, organizations have to change in order to survive, because they cannot survive without change. For this reason, the internal and external environments try to help organizations to embrace change as the key dynamics of the change process (Fagenson-Eland et al., 2004).

The most certain reality of the 21st century is uncertainty, and this uncertainty increasingly necessitates change in various disciplines, including infrastructure, research, technology, environment, health, medicine, education and business (Huffington et al., 1997). In addition, Heraclitus' quote "The only constant in life is change" emphasizes how inevitable change is. Therefore, it is very important to keep up with change because competitive organizations are strategically moving forward and organizations that resist change or cannot keep up with the pace of change in a rapidly changing world face the danger of extinction over time (Mathews, 2006). In other words, in the modern world, organizations can survive and grow by constantly adapting to changing conditions.

Organizational change, like change, needs a process. Burke (2002) defines organizational change as making significant adjustments to existing methods,

substantially changing all methods used, reorganizing the structure of the organization for decision-making and accountability processes, and creating a new vision for organizational members. Herold and Fedor (2008) also describe organizational change as changes to existing business practices and approaches that affect the entire organization.

Approaches to change in an organization may differ depending on the type of change. Organizations generally encounter two types of changes that affect their approach throughout the process. These are first order changes (evolutionary changes) and second order changes (revolutionary changes) (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003). The first type of change is small, not easily noticed and easier to implement. In contrast, the second type of change is transformational and strategic. These revolutionary changes have the potential to have far-reaching effects on much wider audiences and the consequences can be much greater. This type of change is referred to as reform (Del Val & Fuentes, 2003). Tushman and Romaneli (1985) define changes in a different way. According to them, they are incremental and radical changes and there are some differences between these two types of change. Unlike radical change, which is substantially different and aims to fundamentally change the organization's processes, systems, strategies and structures, incremental change focuses on improving the organization's harmony with its environment (as cited in Newman & Nollen, 1998). For this reason, incremental changes are more easily accepted in organizations, while radical changes may cause reactions from individuals working in the organization and resistance to change. Thus, no radical change is painless (Plowman et al., 2007)

Figure 1 below illustrated factors including both the forces for change and the resistance to change. It reflects the pressures and obstacles found in an organizational environment. To comprehend resistance to change better, Kurt Lewin created the idea of Force-field analysis. According to Lewin, a level of behavior within an organization is a dynamic balance of forces moving in opposite directions rather than a static tradition. Furthermore, he argued that it was crucial for forces to remain in a state of equilibrium, and that each change should be evaluated in respect to driving forces or resisting forces.

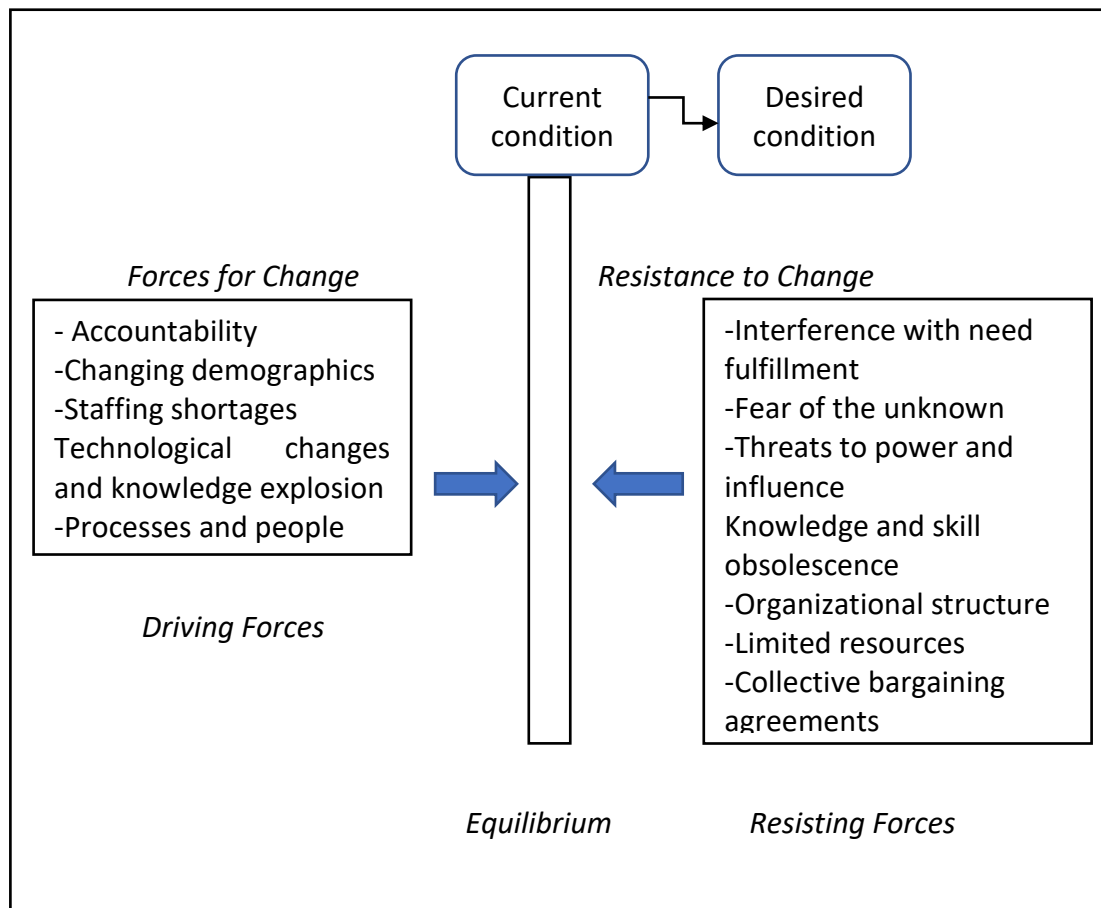


Figure 1. Forces for Change and Resistance to Change
 (Adapted from Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

First, when driving forces are noticed, it can be mentioned that they cover “accountability, changing demographics, staffing shortages, technological changes and knowledge explosion, as well as processes and people”. These are forces for change. The second category is resisting forces. They include “interference with need fulfillment, fear of the unknown, threats to power and influence, knowledge and skill obsolescence, organizational structure, limited resources, collective bargaining agreements” and these are resistance to change (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

Lewin (1947) asserts that if the forces are increased in both sets simultaneously, the chaos might occur in the organization. In other words, while “technological changes and knowledge explosion” increases, “knowledge and skill obsolescence” also escalates at the same time, it may lead to turmoil affecting the whole organization. It

is expected that while technological developments increase, lack of skill decrease. Hence, there could be a balance between the forces. To put it another way, lessening one set of forces might also minimize the level of tension, and thus resistance to change may be decline.

According to Cadwell and Gould (1992), it is crucial to develop vision, improve leadership strategies, cultivate trust, enhance communication, create an effective team for change, and develop a model for change in order to remove the barriers and resistance to change in organizations and subsequently provide a more effective organizational change (as cited in Coban et al., 2019). And Lewin's three-step management model is helpful for the organizations in overcoming resistance and obstacles. Lewin discussed the significance of planned change in this paradigm and emphasized that there are three steps to change: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing (as cited in Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2012).

Unfreezing is the first step of Lewin's change model. At this stage, the organization should remove its current status quo and be ready to change. Additionally, resistance to change should be prevented at this stage (Burnes, 2004). Hatch (1997) also underlined that discontent with the current situation can facilitate the unfreezing step. The second step, moving, is the stage where the change is put into practice. At this stage, through the management the organization's objectives, internal structure, and if necessary, personnel are changed (Schermerhorn, 1989). Additionally, new values are substituted for existing ones (Cameron & Green, 2015). In the refreezing step, that is the final stage, the organization accepts change and the change is internalized by the individuals in the organization (Styhre, 2002). In other words, at this stage, change practices in the organization are institutionalized anymore (Lawler & Silioe, 2010).

Burnes (2004) asserts that each stage of the change process has its own significance when examining Lewins' change model. According to him, it is crucial to instill in people a sense of confidence in change during the unfreezing step, to keep them motivated during the moving step, and to encourage them to adopt values that will

make it easier for them to adjust to the new system during the refreezing step. Parallel to this view, Robins (2003) underlined the significance of fusing new values into the organization's core values during the refreezing step.

Lewin also highlights individuals are more likely to accept planned changes that they are aware of. In addition to that, Daft (1991) underlines that when people are a part of the plan, they accept change and do not perceive it as a threat. For instance, similar reactions to change can be observed in schools when educational institutions are considered organizations. Typically, teachers and school administrators, who are the ones who implement changes in schools, are unsettled and reluctant to change due to the sudden introduction of changes and their top-down implementation in TES. This can be attributed to either the failure of past reform initiatives (Savaş-Yalçın, 2022) or a lack of hope for reform in the future (Segiovanni, 1994). As Brooks (2006) states, reforms have a dark side as well as a hopeful aspect. In the multi-purpose change process that takes place in the dark side of education, it is seen that there are factors that create resistance to change as a result of forced changes in educational organizations, just like in other organizations.

2.1.1. Educational Change and Reform in TES

Organizations may find themselves under the influence of change due to external pressures, whether they feel ready for change or not. In other words, the constant occurrence of new developments in the economy, political and social order, cultural life and technology brings about change in many areas (Garvin, 1993). Such a pace of change also forces the education system to change and thus causes educational organizations to change. Because education is one of the most sensitive systems to social changes (Ryder, 1985).

In other words, it can be argued that the changes in social life with globalization have forced education to change as a result of the developments in the 21st century. As a result of this situation, countries have designed various policies to change their education systems (Özdemir, 2011). As Ball (2012) and Muricho and Chang'ach (2013) point out, education policy always deals with change and reform and is

concerned with doing things differently. This shows how closely related policy and education are (Capano, 2011).

When the development process of education is examined, it is seen that although the industrial age education model was used for a period, it was replaced over time by the information society education model. Thus, as a result of the impact of postmodernism on TES, the lesson in the classroom has turned into personal research, passive listening into apprenticeship, individual work into teamwork, an omniscient teacher into a mentor teacher, unchanging curriculum into a rapidly changing curriculum, homogeneity into diversity. In other words, there have been changes in knowledge, learning-teaching methods and, most importantly, in the definition of the educated individual (Dündar & Hesapçioğlu, 2011).

When the educational reforms implemented in TES are examined, it is seen that many changes and reforms that fundamentally affect the education system have been implemented by the Ministry of National Education (Gürol et al., 2015). 8-year compulsory education, constructivist education approach, 12-year compulsory education and 4+4+4 education reform can be considered the most remarkable ones among the practices affected by these policies (Güner et al., 2014). In light of this information, it can be said that efforts to improve education in Türkiye are disorganized and mostly do not affect the fundamentals of education. Although many superficial changes have been made in the past, most of them have not had the desired lasting impact. While the basic systems in TES have mostly remained unchanged, there have been fragmented arrangements, often politically motivated (Akşit, 2007).

It is difficult to ensure the successful implementation of educational reforms created by the Ministry of National Education in schools and this difficult task is carried out by school principals. In other words, school administrators, who assume the responsibility of educational leadership (Vasilescu, 2012), are very important in the implementation of reforms in schools (Goodlad, 1970). Teachers, on the other hand, play a crucial role in the implementation of reforms because their attitudes towards

change are critical to the proper development of change. However, change practices in schools often ignore teachers, who are the main components of the change movement (Kondakçı et al., 2017).

Post-modernism has had an impact on TES, changing the roles of educators, students, and school administrators. This new approach envisioned that the teacher would turn into a mentor, the student would turn into a learner, and the school principal would turn into a leader but unfortunately, this change is not visible in TES (Hesapcioglu, 2010). Change is a process that takes time and continues in a particular pattern, but it is difficult to conclude that the change plans conducted in this way in TES. The top-down adjustments can be cited as one of the chief reasons of this. Successful educational leaders, however, do not impose rigid and top-down bureaucratic rules on teachers but instead seeking to break down barriers, maintain collaboration, and support team performance in the schools in which they work (Çelik, 2010; Middlewood & Bush, 2014).

On the other hand, top-down approaches and high-level bureaucracy make it impossible for centralized educational institutions to successfully implement reforms because the government, specifically the Ministry of National Education, controls the changes and reform practices through top-down approaches (Kondakci et al., 2019). This is a critical problem for the change process because there is no magic bullet that will solve all of the issues on its own. This is an unrealistic expectation (McLaughlin, 2008).

It can be argued that when the education system from the past to the present is examined and the reforms carried out are taken into consideration, it is seen that the expectations from education have changed over time. Moreover, it is obvious that Turkish educational system undergoes periodic changes. Accordingly, there have been large-scale changes affecting TES deeply throughout history.

According to Kondakci et al. (2019), educational reform movements in Türkiye can be classified into four periods due to the alignment between political and educational

improvements. The first period includes the time following the proclamation of the republic. During this time, building the foundation for the new educational system was the main objective. The second period embraces the years from 1946 to 1980. Coups, political turbulence, and different ideologies-related issues were the key causes behind the movements in this period. The third period, from 1980 to 2002, is distinguished by the expansion of neo-liberal educational policies. The last period covers the years from 2002 to the present and includes various education reforms such as constructivist approach, 8-year compulsory education and 12-year compulsory education (4+4+4 education reform). Education reforms have had different functions in different periods, but government policies have directly or indirectly addressed the issue of (in)equality of opportunity through reforms. The concept of equal opportunity, which has an important role in education, was explained in detail in the next section, and in the following sections, the 4+4+4 education reform and its effects were analyzed within the framework of equal opportunity for disadvantaged students.

2.2. Equality of Opportunity in Education and Disadvantaged Students

Equality of opportunity is an important issue in worldwide and the results are quite striking. Because the idea that equality of opportunity in education is an important force that will ensure social justice is generally accepted in society. For this reason, regulations to ensure equality of opportunity in education (EOE) are protected not only by laws and regulations but also by special agreements (Demirkasımođlu, 2012). With the concept of equality of opportunity, which is closely related to all segments of the society, individuals are given the opportunity to gain their status in society by providing equal opportunities to individuals through education (Evans, 1990; Marshall & Bootomore, 2001; Sađlam, 2020; Srivastava, 2017). On the other hand, education can lead to the reproduction of existing inequalities (Bourdieu, 1998; Hamnett & Butler, 2011; Schrijer, 2020; ŐimŐek, 2023) and even make inequalities under the name of equal opportunities (Anderson, 2007; Blossfeld & Shavit, 2010; Skopek et al., 2019).

Educational inequalities in society are the result of events and phenomena involving differences in society. Although eliminating inequalities completely is considered an unrealizable goal, it is possible and important to understand the facts and events that are the source of inequalities (Hesapçioğlu & Dündar, 2011). In addition, since the concept of inequality arises when practices related to equality are neglected, the underlying causes of inequality can be understood more easily when the concepts of equality and inequality are considered together (Köse & Genç, 2021)

Equality of opportunity is defined as the fair distribution of resources and positions and the need for individuals to compete on equal terms, regardless of their social position (Arneson, 2009). In modern societies, this responsibility has been assigned to schools (Oakes, 1986). Equality of opportunity in education refers ensuring that all children have access to education that enables them to overcome the barriers that they may often face in social groups and to be at least equal to children who are not disadvantaged (Nash, 2004).

According to Burrup, Brimley and Garfield (1966), equity and equality are not synonymous concepts. Equality is a concept related to equality of opportunity and within this framework, all children are given equal opportunities to be productive, to succeed in human relations and to gain social responsibility through education. Equality also entails allocating equal resources to each student. The second type of equality is equality of opportunity, but here equality in conditions has emerged because individuals who are not equal at the beginning of the race may be disadvantaged in the race. In this case, it is necessary to start the race from the same point and with relative barriers intervened. This requirement gave rise to the last type of equality: equality of outcomes.

Kurul (2012) defines the most radical type of equality, equality of outcomes, as achieving equality of outcomes through the use of political instruments regardless of the starting point of the race or the natural ability of the individual. It also aims to eliminate inequalities in conditions to ensure equality in outcomes in favor of disadvantaged groups in society such as low-income groups, women, children, ethnic minorities.

When the legal basis of EOE in Türkiye and the world is examined, it is seen that the right to education in Türkiye was granted to all citizens as a right to be enjoyed by all citizens with the proclamation of the Republic. According to Article 69 of the 1924 Constitution, all kinds of individual, group and class privileges were abolished, and according to Article 87, it was accepted that primary education was compulsory for all students, men and women. Furthermore, Article 50 of the 1961 Constitution recognizes the primary duty of the state to meet the educational needs of the people. The same article mentions that the state will help successful students who do not have the financial means to get an education by providing them with scholarships. In the 1982 Constitution, it is underlined that no one can be deprived of education (Topses, 2020). When equality is examined in the international arena, it is seen that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was approved to ensure equality in society and was accepted as universal standards for all peoples. According to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, education is free of charge and primary education is compulsory (Çalık, 2015). Furthermore, Article 28 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child underlines that primary education is free of charge and is a right and obligation to be enjoyed by all children without discrimination (Kurt, 2016). As can be understood from these declarations and the articles in the Constitution, no one can be deprived of the right to education. The state is responsible for ensuring the right to education and therefore those who lack financial means should be supported by the state when necessary.

EOE initiatives in Turkish society made through education in past. One of them was the provision of social mobility through education. In other words, education was an important tool of social mobility in Türkiye. In fact, children from lower-class families should provide the possibility of moving to upper-classes through education (Jackson, Goldthorpe & Mills, 2005; Rothstein, 2013). Educational institutions actually have the task of preparing all members of society for professions in line with their abilities. In this context, education should be considered a key role within the framework of this mission, as it carries the mission of organizing individual and community life and preparing its future (Bowlby, 2015; Collins, 1971; Dougherty, 1988). Although education has this mission, it has not seemed possible for

disadvantaged groups to achieve mobility through education within the scope of equality of opportunity anymore in TES (Küçükdağ, Kaya & Avcı, 2023).

Schools, where education is transferred, are considered institutions where culture, capital and labor are reproduced. Therefore, failure to provide equal opportunities can be seen as a failure of schools. Gatto (2019), on the other hand, argued that schools have been successfully fulfilling what is expected of them since their inception. The task assigned to schools by the state is to educate and supervise students. Thus, in fulfilling this responsibility, schools educate students by differentiating them in the desired direction in line with the expectations of the state (Baker, 2018). Helvetus also claimed that all human beings are created equal, but what differentiates them is education (as cited in Durkheim, 1956).

When the concept of equality is considered one person having the same rights and freedoms as others, it raises a question mark in people's minds about whether it is possible to implement such equality in all segments of society. There are many individuals in society and these individuals differ in terms of race, gender and social status. Perceiving and eliminating such intense diversity as inequality and making individuals equal with each other reflects a difficult process and questions the possibility of equality (Doğan, 2011).

Coleman is an important person when it comes to equality of opportunity, because he was the first to conduct studies on EOE. In the report Coleman wrote when he completed his study, he emphasized the importance of the socioeconomic class of the child's family and the time in which the child lives in order to understand the concept of equal opportunity. In this report, Coleman (1966) emphasized that all factors outside the school should be kept under control in order to ensure EOE, otherwise it is not possible to talk about equal opportunities. Şimşek (2018) also highlights that it is not correct to present only education as an opportunity because there is an expression that blames the child under this expression. According to him, presenting education as an opportunity to children from deprived families actually means that if these children work hard, they can become wealthy, and if they are not successful or

rich, they do not work hard enough or are lazy. However, disadvantaged individuals in the education system are less likely to become someone like Bill Gates or Steve Jobs than they are to win a jackpot in the national lottery. Apple (2006) sees the reason for this situation as practices that reproduce inequality in schools. He also states that the gap between the "haves and have-nots" is widening for disadvantaged students due to inequality that cannot be avoided. Similarly, Bottomore (1997) argues that differences due to economic inequality make visible the differences in educational outcomes.

The obvious source of equality or inequality is the social structure. In society, there are structures to which people belong and these structures include a certain hierarchical order. This classification provides a typical example of social inequality. Rawls (2000) also refers to the concept of social justice in the context of equality and focuses on the equitable distribution of income and resources to reduce class inequalities. Another striking statement Rawls emphasizes is that inequality is produced by unjust practices that benefit a certain group of people but do not benefit everyone.

Popper (2006) thinks that everyone in society should cooperate to eliminate the inequalities produced. According to Popper, the problem of equality is considered a social problem and when this problem is evaluated within the scope of education, he argues that inequality can be solved through social solidarity. Scholarships given to school-age children and assistance given to their families are seen as important steps in ensuring equality of opportunity (Schleicher, 2009). In Türkiye, attempts have been made to increase the budget to ensure equality of opportunity, but despite this increase, the demands and expectations for education have not been met at the desired level.

In a report published by the World Bank (2010), it was revealed that educational inequalities in Türkiye visibly exist, that these inequalities cannot be eliminated and that they are passed on from generation to generation. This situation reveals that the budget resources allocated to education are not enough to eliminate the existing

inequalities (İnan & Demir, 2018; Yıldırım, 2020). The budget allocated to education is important in terms of equality of opportunity. In addition, issues such as the socioeconomic status of the family, the characteristics of the region, student characteristics, and student achievement are among other important issues discussed in the context of equal (in)opportunity (Gamoran & Long, 2007). Despite various methods tried, the problem of inequality of opportunity has persisted and this situation has maintained its place in the list of unsolvable problems of the Turkish education system (Sözer, 2019).

As can be seen, the issue of equal opportunity is much debated and difficult to reach a consensus on and often focuses on issues such as race and social class. In Türkiye, as in most developing countries, the issue of equal opportunities in education is on the agenda. However, Meyer (2016) argues that it would be much more meaningful if the focus on equality of opportunity is broadened to include issues such as democratic equality and improving living conditions for disadvantaged groups.

2.2.1. The Factors Hindering Equality of Opportunity in Education in Türkiye

In order to ensure equality of opportunity in education, it is seen as a fundamental need to increase the quality of education, especially access, and reduce the achievement level differences between regions and school types (Wiseman, 2010). While examining the issue of equality of opportunity in education, it is known that inputs such as teaching methods, learning environments, and the quality of education used in the education process play an important role in the emergence of equality and inequality in the education system (Hutmacher et al., 2001; O'Day & Smith, 2016; Köse & Genç, 2021; Rossmiller, 1987; Scheerens, 1990).

Although the phenomenon of equal opportunity in education is advocated and made a state policy, unfortunately, obstacles arise in the implementation of equal opportunity (Kolluri, 2018; Petó & Manners, 2006; Roemer & Trannoy, 2015). When the factors affecting inequality of opportunity in education are examined, it is seen that the most common factors in the literature are economic factors,

geographical factors and social factors (Aina et al., 2022; Considine & Zappalà, 2002; Palamuleni, 2013).

2.2.1.1. Economic Factors

One of the most important factors preventing equality of opportunity in education, which was also addressed in this dissertation, is economic factors. Socioeconomic factors can be explained by family income, occupation and the economic power of the state. The existence of economic opportunities facilitates access to educational resources (Andrew & Orodho, 2014; Becker & Chiswick, 1966; Early et al., 2020; Kumar, 2016; Nam & Huang, 2009; Zuma, 2020).

The economic status of the family prevents the child from benefiting from educational opportunities. Because the economic income of the family is an important determinant in making educational decisions (Tabak, 2020). Generally, in families with low-income levels, the opportunities for children's education remain limited. Therefore, the income of the family also affects the quality of education the child will receive. While the children of wealthy families with good income have the opportunity to receive a higher quality education, the education period of these children is shorter because families at lower income levels cannot allocate enough budget for their children's education due to financial deprivation, and therefore school dropout is inevitable for them (Abuya et al., 2013; Taylı, 2008). However, school attendance is of great importance for disadvantaged groups. The state needs to develop policies to ensure equality of opportunity in this regard and to reduce the situations that work against the disadvantaged (Geyik, 2020).

Apart from the economic status of the family, there are also studies showing that there is a positive relationship between the education level and occupation of the parents and the education offered to the child. Accordingly, as the level of education of parents increases, the quality of education received by children also increases. Generally, workers in blue-collar jobs are not able to get an education themselves and their financial situation is not sufficient for their children to get an advanced

education, so their children prefer to take a shortcut to business life. Schools do not offer equal opportunities for children from lower-class families and disadvantaged children do not benefit from education (Hackman, 2011).

Moreover, children whose expenses cannot be covered by their families cannot access quality education and they are forced to offer a similar life to their own children because of their incomplete education (McLanahan & Sandefur, 2009). The child of a worker remains a worker, lives at a lower socioeconomic income level and cannot move to the upper-class at any point in his/her life. Their children go through a similar process and thus the state reproduces inequalities through education (Tezcan, 1993). In other words, it can be said that the class cycle is passed down from father to child, causing income inequalities to become chronic (Kalkan, 2014).

As a corollary, it is well known that education is no longer a right benefiting all classes of people. Education is generally accessible to those with better economic power, and education creates an opportunity for children from wealthy families. The fact that the state does not allocate enough budget for education, that quality education is not provided in schools, that private schools have better facilities than public schools and that only children from affluent families benefit from education has made education no longer a right that everyone can benefit from. The results of exams such as PISA and TIMMS confirm these findings (Güner et al., 2014).

On the other hand, ensuring equality of opportunity in education is among the obligations of the state. The state should provide every individual with the right to receive education (Linder & Schwab, 2020; Singh, 2014; Yalçın & Koşar 2023). The state should support disadvantaged children in the education system and monitor them in the subsequent process (Cebe, 2020; Mosley & Chen, 1984; Rymph, 2017). However, unfortunately, the needs of disadvantaged children are not met, these children are left to their own devices and after a while they are thrown out of the education system (Mejer, 2004; Osgood, Foster & Courtney, 2010).

Stiglitz (1994) prefers to explain the economic factors affecting the concept of equality within the framework of the economic power of the state and he explains

this in two dimensions. On the one hand, there are those who believe that the state should provide equal assistance to individuals in education expenditures, and on the other hand, there are those who believe that this would be an unfair distribution and that the state should compensate for the gap. In other words, when the state provides equal amounts of aid to those with high purchasing power and those without purchasing power, the one with high purchasing power will still be ahead of the other. In this case, the existing inequality will continue (Boston, 2013; Chambers, 2006; Sağlam, 2020).

The state, for example, distributes textbooks free of charge in schools, but it does so for everyone. In other words, the state distributes books both to children from prosperous families and to children from deprived families. This does not ensure a fair distribution. When free books are distributed only to children from lower socioeconomic class families, the book fees collected from other families can be used as additional resources for the children of deprived families, or the state can invest all its support in public schools instead of supporting private schools. This is an example of a more equal distribution (Alpaslan & Kartal, 2020; Bayrakdar & Karadaş, 2016; Jencks, 1988). In other words, providing more aid to disadvantaged students may be a more effective method to reduce inequality.

2.2.1.2. Geographical Factors

Within the scope of equal opportunity in education, geographical factors include settlement and regional differences (Ataç, 2019). Geographical differences prevent students from benefiting from education equally (Boyd et al., 2005). A region where school is easily accessible is completely different from a region where school is not accessible or where access to school is provided through transportation (Barca et al., 2012).

First of all, when the differences in terms of settlement are examined, settlements can be evaluated as far and close to the school. The opportunities offered by these two residential areas differ. Today, people prefer to live in central areas more than in the past. It is known that access to education in central areas is much easier than in

villages or small settlements. Looking at school enrollment rates, the number of students attending school is higher in large settlements or more developed regions, while absenteeism may be higher in small settlements or undeveloped eastern regions (Burger, 2011; Shaturaev & Bekimbetova, 2021). On the other hand, living conditions in developed regions can be much more difficult than in undeveloped regions. Nevertheless, considering that opportunities such as education and health are more available in densely populated areas, it is possible to say that living in a developed region offers more opportunities to the individual (Cattaneo et al., 2022; Pateman, 2011).

People living in small areas are deprived in many ways compared to those living in and close to urban centers. In villages, where access to schooling is difficult, the number of educationally deprived children is much higher (Awan et al., 2008; Kazu, 2019; Yu, 2013). Since most small settlements do not have middle and high schools, children here stay in boarding schools (Ceylan & Ünder, 2022; Kurt & Sezek, 2018). Or, another alternative for accessing education is to use transportation (Çetinkaya & Üzümcü, 2021; Şimşek & Büyükkıdık, 2017; Yıldırım & İyibaş, 2017). Since it is more difficult to access post-primary education in small areas, girls' school attendance is more difficult than boys' (Ferreira & Gignoux, 2010). In small rural schools where there is a shortage of teachers, education is not offered to students in the same way as in urban centers or provinces and districts. In rural schools, where there is often a lack of materials, it is very difficult to talk about equal opportunity in education (Sullivan et al., 2013; Yılmaz & Altinkurt, 2011).

In addition, in underdeveloped regions, low-income families and their children having to work can also have a negative impact on children's absenteeism or dropping out of school. For all these reasons, access to education is not easy disadvantaged children in small neighborhoods or in regions. Particularly eastern regions that are deprived in many respects, are kept away from education, and their absenteeism rates increase, moreover, these children drop out of school completely (Punch, 2004).

Since the problem of seasonal child labor is one that increases according to the region, it is deemed appropriate to explain this problem under the heading of regional factors. Considering the seasonal workers included in the education system, it is possible to say that these children cannot benefit from education like other children. Since seasonal worker children migrate with their families for short periods of time, they are disconnected from school in certain periods of their education. This situation causes irreparable learning deficiencies in these children (Avcı, 2023). This necessity to work, which starts at an early age, can continue in higher education and cause disadvantaged students to remain disadvantaged throughout their lives (Tabak, 2019). When developed and undeveloped regions are compared, the opportunities in these two places are not equal. In this respect, it can be said that inequality of opportunity occurs to the detriment of those living in undeveloped regions (Chakanika et al., 2012).

When regional differences are observed, it is known that inequalities in education are particularly intense in Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia. It can be said that education services are more inadequate in Eastern Anatolia. Education in this region is problematic in many ways. For example, schooling rates are quite low in this region. Children are disadvantaged in accessing education (Çabuk, 2003; Gürel & Kartal, 2015). Disadvantaged students who cannot attend school fail high school entrance exams and university exams. This situation causes inequality of opportunity between regions (Seçkin, 2015; Özcan et al., 2018). At the same time, PISA results show that especially in Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia regions, students' reading, science and mathematics skills are low, and this is due to the lack of quality and quantity in education in these regions (Çelen et al., 2011; Yılmaz-Fındık & Kavak, 2013).

In addition, adverse weather conditions in disadvantaged regions also negatively affect education (Ay & Yazıcı, 2009). The harsh climate and long winter season prevent students from accessing school and negatively affect their educational lives. Especially students going to school with transportation cannot access school because

the roads are closed during periods of heavy snowfall (Uzun, 2021; Gürbey et al., 2020).

Another problem caused by regional disparities is the lack of quality in education. In the eastern regions, inexperienced teachers are often appointed and after a few years of service, these teachers seek transfer to different cities. In this case, there is a constant teacher turnover in these regions, which negatively affects student learning and plays an important role in the academic failure of these students in the following years (Arslan & Direk, 2017; Karataş & Çakan, 2018; Kızıldaş, 2021). In addition, there are often infrastructure problems in schools in the eastern regions. Studies have underlined that smart boards cannot be used in these schools because most of them do not have internet infrastructure. In addition, studies show that since infrastructure problems cannot be solved in these disadvantaged regions, applications that can contribute to student learning, such as the FATİH project, cannot be used and thus educational technologies cannot be utilized. This situation directly affects educational outcomes and reveals the inequality of opportunity between regions in education (Ayvacı et al., 2015; Çalışıcı et al., 2023).

2.2.1.3. Social Factors

2.2.1.3.1. Gender

Among social factors, gender-based inequalities are the most prominent group of educational inequalities (Buchmann et al., 2008; Kuchynka et al., 2022; Jain et al., 2022). In Türkiye, girls are not sent to school in many places, especially in the eastern regions (Dilli, 2006; Tonbul, 2011; Tunç, 2009; Yaşar, 2010). The problem of gender-based inequality has not been solved for years and the reforms introduced by the state have not been very successful in this regard (Beltekin & Çete, 2019). With 8 years of compulsory education, it was aimed to increase the schooling of girls, especially in disadvantaged regions, and campaigns such as "Let's go girls to school" and "Snowdrops" were used to increase the schooling rate of girls (Kurttaş, 2021). Although the success achieved in this regard is not at the expected rate, it can

be said that a certain level of increase has been achieved (Ay, 2010). The problem of girls' lack of access to schooling is an important wound in the education system, but great strides are needed to solve it (Saridoğan, 2019). Considering the goals of the 4+4+4 education reform, such as increasing the schooling rate and reducing regional disparities, it may be thought that the state is indirectly focusing on girls' education and the equality agenda. However, it can also be said that challenges such as addressing cultural norms related to girls, and a comprehensive understanding of gender equality and its implementation in schools continue to be encountered, and these problems cannot be fully solved through compulsory education.

Research shows that one of the biggest factors affecting access to education for girls is the traditional structure and conservative attitudes of families. Traditional families view girls as the honor of the family and therefore do not want to send them to school in order to prevent unwanted events from happening to them (Kızılgöz, 2012). In addition, studies have revealed that some families are members of a cult and that these cults do not approve of girls going to school, so families do not give permission for school (Kadı, 2000; Kılıç, 2012). This situation eliminates the right to education for girls (Güven, 2012).

Another reason for barring girls from education is the fear of being shamed by the neighborhood. Families in many cities stated that they were afraid of condemnation if they sent their daughters to school and that they did not send their children to school because they could not afford it (Alat & Alat, 2001; Tunç, 2009). Families that pay attention to what the people around them say and obey the words of elders do not hesitate to marry their daughters at an early age (Burcu et al., 2015). Moreover, transportation and housing problems due to the lack of schools in the immediate vicinity are other obstacles that prevent girls from being sent to school (Gönenç et al., 2002). Moreover, girls who fail academically are not supported by their families and are not sent to school (Engin-Demir, Çobanoğlu, 2012).

When we look at the profiles of families who marry their daughters at an early age, it is seen that these families are generally large families with many children and have low levels of education and income (Maritn & Juarez, 1995). Families that cannot

send their daughters to school due to financial deprivation may prefer to marry them off, considering the expenses at home. In such cases, the state can be expected to cover the educational expenses of these children and, if necessary, provide financial aid to the child and the family. Otherwise, girls may drop out of school at a very early age and have to take on responsibilities that are not expected of them at their young age (Sayılan, 2012).

Another obstacle to equal opportunity in education for girls is the need for girls to do household and field work. Especially children from low-income socioeconomically lower-class families may have to stay at home and take care of their siblings because their families work and they have many siblings. While younger children take care of their siblings, older children may be asked to help with housework or work in the fields instead of going to school (Aslan, 2021; Özbaş, 2010). In this case, the state should intervene with compulsory education policies.

2.2.1.3.2. Language

Another social factor that causes inequality of opportunity in education is the language problem. In fact, it may be more meaningful to consider language and ethnicity problems together. Because this problem may stem from the fact that the Kurdish people living in the Eastern and Southeastern regions do not fully know Turkish (Buyankara, 2015; İnce, 2018). In these regions, Kurdish is spoken in most homes because most mothers do not speak Turkish. In this case, it may be challenging to expect a child who has spoken his/her mother tongue at home for years to suddenly adapt to Turkish. Studies conducted in these regions show that students living in these regions face some problems that put them at a disadvantage because their mother tongue is different from the language of instruction (Özdemir, 2016; Yılmaz, 2016). The linguistic disadvantages of these students negatively affect their reading comprehension, school attendance and academic achievement (Kızıldağ, 2021). In order to prevent these problems and ensure equal opportunities in education, pre-school education can be made compulsory especially in disadvantaged regions where disadvantaged children live in high numbers (Kırmızı et al., 2016).

In addition, students can be allowed to take elective Kurdish courses by implementing educational reforms that will offer a solution (Ciğerci & Tezcan, 2020). Such a practice would not only provide equal opportunities for disadvantaged children, but would also improve students' comprehension skills, which could have a positive impact on their academic achievement (Benson, 2005; Cummins, 1978; Evans & Hornberger, 2005).

As can be seen, there is a need to take strong steps to ensure equality of opportunity in education in Türkiye. In particular, the state is expected to be more inclusive in this regard. However, inequalities that are covered up by the state cause class differences in society. This situation has led to the emergence of functional and conflictual approaches in education and has been discussed from an educational perspective. Detailed explanations on the subject are given in the next section within the scope of theories of (in)equality in education.

2.3. Sociological Theories Explaining Educational (In)Equalities

Many theories have been created to explain the relationship among individual, society and education. Theories in the sociology of education are a powerful tool for society to objectively understand the education system and its sub-elements (Ballantine, Hammack, & Stuber, 2017). Developed approaches have changed according to the social, economic and political conditions of the period they were in and aim to place education in changing conditions. Accordingly, education has moved away from the idea of being a process that takes place only at school and being limited to the individual at school, and social determinants in education are also considered important (Sözer, 2019).

Major sociological perspectives on education are divided into three parts. These are functional, conflict and symbolic-interactionist approaches (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012). The symbolic interactionism theory, which examines at the micro level, focuses on individuals and their interactions and also explains the way of their perception of education and their reactions to educational processes. On the other

hand, the functionalist and Conflict theory which examines at the macro level, focuses on the functions of educational organizations, schools, and social structure, while investigating the formation of different education systems in different societies (Ballantine & Spade, 2009). In this dissertation, functionalist and conflict theories are discussed together with a macro-level analysis of education and theories are explained within the framework of equality of opportunity in education.

2.3.1. Functionalist Theory

According to the functionalist perspective, society is perceived as a machine with connecting parts that provide the dynamic energy necessary for society to function. Most importantly, by focusing on consensus and consent, functionalism emphasizes the process that preserves the social order (Cookson & Sadovnik, 2002). The social structure is analyzed as an organism in functionalist theory. Social institutions emerge from the functions they carry out inside the system, just like organisms do. In functionalist theory, the state of balance in society is very important and balance can be achieved when individuals act according to the rules of society and learn the norms (Wallace & Wolf, 2004).

Functionalist theory supports two main perspectives. The first is related to role differentiation, which emphasizes that there are many roles that individuals have to perform in society. These roles may not be as valuable and do not require similar knowledge and skills. In this context, one of the functions of education is to help people get education in accordance with the roles so that they can practice different roles (Tezcan, 1997). The second perspective is related to social solidarity. Social solidarity helps to achieve a certain level of social balance among different individuals performing different roles. However, the fact that some roles gain significant prestige and status while others do not have these rewards at the same level complicates the process (Aydın, 2014). The functionalist perspective claims that schools are the tools of the socialization process. In this context, education has an important effect on individuals ability to act in a similar way with society by transferring the values of the society to the next generations. Education is effective in

the process of assimilation of the individual with the society and bears the responsibility of limiting the desires of the individuals by adopting the norms of the environment and the values they have (Feinberg, & Soltis, 2004).

To functionalists, educational institutions have important social functions such as transmitting the dominant culture, upholding the social and political order, assuring social control, and bringing about the desired change. They contend that individuals receive compulsory basic education in schools using instructional materials chosen in accordance with curriculums created under state supervision (Ballı & Kartal, 2020). Society is a sacred place whose values should be respected, and these values that make up society are transmitted through compulsory education (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2009). In this context, schools are structured according to how individuals want to be raised in society. Because education serves the objective of raising people for specific reasons. Accordingly, the education system works as a sub-system within the larger social system and provides the desired reproduction of society depending on a social contract. This is the explicit function of education (Erçetin et al., 2006).

When the reforms introduced by the state are analyzed, it is seen that the state really supports reforms that can raise the kind of citizens it wants. The 4+4+4 education reform is one of these reforms. This reform was shaped and presented to society in line with state policies. With the reform, what was expected from citizens was conveyed to society through schools (Güven, 2012). With the 4+4+4 education reform, it was tried to increase schooling and eliminate the differences between regions. According to functionalist theory, this is the responsibility of the state. However, the state also tends to keep schools, which are small societies (Parsons, 1956), under control through reforms. With 4+4+4, the state also aimed to create the type of citizen it wanted to see in society by opening Imam hatip secondary schools and adding elective religion courses to the school curriculum (Yılmaz, 2018). Education, on the other hand, has implicit functions. The latent function is the behaviors that are not included in the official curriculum, but instead they are felt in the school culture or reinforced by teacher behaviors under the name of the hidden curriculum. With the hidden curriculum, the authoritarian attitudes created by the

school administration and teachers in schools enable them to discipline and control the students (Topses, 2020).

Apart from this, one of the most important functions of education throughout history has been to provide social mobility (Themelis, 2013). According to functionalists, education still has an impact on having social status. Underprivileged students from lower social classes have opportunity to move up the higher status thanks to education with the increase in schooling and therefore it is feasible to create a society based on equal opportunities (Heaton & Lawson, 1996). However, education no longer fulfills such a role and students are unable to provide mobility through education (Rist, 1970). Education should actually have an aspect that ensures class mobility as the functionalist theory advocates. It is a well-known fact that there is no other component other than education for disadvantaged groups to move them from their current position to the upper-classes. However, education cannot provide such mobility in the current process. The education policies and reforms implemented do not provide benefits for disadvantaged groups (Clercq, 1997; Hanushec, 1991; Huang, 2015). The results of the 4+4+4 education reform, the last reform carried out by MoNE, have also revealed that education does not have a positive function especially for disadvantaged students (Başdemir, 2014; Özbaş, 2018).

There are two prominent figures in the functionalist theory, which emphasizes the value and transformative effect of education in the transformation of society. These are Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Durkheim and Parsons emphasized that education plays a crucial role in maintaining social order and that the continuity of society is maintained through education.

2.3.1.1. Emile Durkheim

Durkheim believed that society functioned as a whole and utilizes a variety of components to maintain the continuation of a complex group. Besides, he considers that a social phenomenon can only be explained by another social phenomenon.

To Durkheim, social consciousness and division of labor are important concepts when explaining the reason and form of the formation of society (Bahar, 2021). Durkheim cares about social order. Therefore, when the social order is broken, how it can be repaired and what can be made to prevent it are among the topics that he focuses on. Durkheim (2012) argues that moral education essential for the continuity of the social structure. Because of moral education, it becomes easier to discipline students and raise desired individuals. The 4+4+4 reform, which is a large-scale reform, is also thought to have such a mission, thus contributing to the raising of desired individuals through education (Eroler, 2019). Similarly, Balcı (2021) claims that 4+4+4 creates individuals with the profiles expected in schools by disciplining students and raising them within the framework of this discipline. Durkheim (1982) also believed that education and religion could unite different individuals in the same society. According to him, society should be held together by strong values and education has such a function.

Another main purpose of education is to help children have a basic understanding of human nature. To Durkheim, education shapes social existence. Through education, children are prepared in schools for the roles necessary to become members of the wider society. Education is very important for him (Ergün, 1994). Durkheim (1956) explained the importance of education in society. According to him, education is a social issue and it varies from society to society. Besides, the aim of education is to activate and develop certain requirements such as physical, intellectual and moral demanded by the social environment in which the child lives.

Durkheim (1982) asserts that education is one of the basic institutions in society. The function of education is the socialization of the younger generation. In this regard, education helps develop individual talents and qualities in line with societal needs and strengthens social cohesion. In parallel with Durkheim's ideas on education, the 4+4+4 education reform aims to identify individual talents at an early age and educate children in line with their abilities. Durkheim also believed that there should be a sufficient level of homogeneity among its members in order for society to continue.

Education maintains and strengthens this homogeneity by instilling in children from an early age the fundamental similarities that make up a functional society. This socialization process, which incorporates education, shows a process in which balance is preserved. Failure of individuals to accompany this process will disrupt the balance and harm the harmony in society (Sözer, 2019).

2.3.1.2. Talcott Parsons

Talcott Parsons has a way of thinking about society that views it like a system. Rejecting the individualist approach, Parsons states that the theory of society cannot be formed with concrete concepts, and therefore defines the system as an abstract and generalizing set of concepts (Bourdieu, 1973). According to him, one of the basic dimensions of the social environment is the norms and values that determine the choices of individuals. Parsons, on the other hand, asserted that there are factors that contribute to individual variances in preferences and that these changes have a significant impact on the evolution of social patterns, norms, and values (Bourdieu, 1998).

From Parsons' perspective, within the system approach, the system consists of other subsystems and this subsystem has the characteristics of the general system. If the society consists of deviant and incompatible individuals, it is not possible to achieve harmony within the system; whereas, in a harmonious society, members of the society are expected to carry the values of the society they live in (Çetin, 2001). In other words, if there are no individuals disrupting harmony in society, the value system of small groups will also reflect the value system of society. This is vital because the essential feature of a society's value system is that it maintains its place in the larger system (Sullivan, 2002).

Parsons highlights two functions of classes (school) which many sociologists see as small societies (Elmore, 1987), The first is socialization by finding a place in the system, and the second is selection. The first is the development of people's capacities and the adaptations they will need for their future tasks. The second step

entails assigning students to various vocational groupings. In contemporary society, schools have a duty to do this. Children are rewarded or punished according to their success; that is, they can have a profession in line with their success. Hence, education serves to sustain the economy through schools (Palmer, 1981).

More specifically, Parsons thinks that through education children are selected and placed in a certain place in society. According to him, children are educated in schools and do things within the scope of their own capacities and the education they get helps them determine their lives. The state emphasizes this in its reforms and underlines that children can be successful within the scope of their own abilities. Here, all responsibility is placed on the child. If the child is not successful, it is the child who is responsible, he/she has not studied and developed his/her own skills (Bailey, 2009; Karp et al., 2008). In the 4+4+4 education reform, ability is among the most emphasized concepts (Duman et al., 2014). Although the state claims to offer equal opportunities to children in its reforms and practices, children do not start the race from the same line. Therefore, even if they go to the same schools, their learning outcomes are not equal; but in this regard, the state is not questioned for the failure of the reforms it has implemented, while the child is forced to pay the cost of its failures (Noddings, 2017).

On the other hand, schools are institutions of socialization. In schools, individuals are trained to fulfill their adult roles in terms of issues such as relationships and motivation (Ergün, 1994). Parsons believes that social actions result from the coexistence of several systems. Like Durkheim, he values socialization and agrees that school is the most crucial institution for socialization (Margolis et al., 2002). Moreover, Parsons attaches importance to functional ties between educational organizations and other organizations in society. Because schools, which are educational organizations, offer people who will not disrupt the harmony of the society and will fulfill their roles in society as desired (Tezcan, 2021). In this context, schools convey the norms and values of society. The school has an important role in preparing individuals for life with this feature (Sözer, 2019). In the process of preparing for life, individuals learn roles related to adulthood, as well as

how to compete. This competitive situation will be effective in determining the future job and career choices. Accordingly, students who are successful in school will continue to work in more prestigious jobs, while those who are weak will tend to low-paid and low-status jobs (Carnoy & Levin, 1985).

In functionalist theory, the failure of the individual is attributed to the individual. In this case, those who do not work in prestigious jobs are accused of lacking talent and achievement (Prout & James, 2015). Since it is believed that education provides them with the opportunities they need, yet people are unable to take advantage of this opportunity. The current education policy in Türkiye is similar to this idea. Students that are academically successful can go to better universities and have the opportunity to work in better jobs. Where the conflict theory differs is that it is the economic capital of families, not education, that offers these prestigious jobs to students (Ünsal & Korkmaz, 2020).

2.3.2. Conflict Theory

Conflict theory is an approach that analyzes the structure of society and constitutes an important alternative to functionalism (Wallace & Wolf, 2004). The functionalist view of the school as a tool for attaining social harmony is opposed by conflict theory. Contrary to what functionalists assert, they believe that schools are institutions that perpetuate class disparities and serve the objectives of the repressive capitalist order. Students are taught how to regulate themselves, maintain social peace, and obey directions in schools if they have the potential to be employees (Brante, 1988). Moreover, the theory differs from the functionalist approach in that it sees relations based on competition, dominance and conflict rather than consensus and integration in the social structure. In other words, the proponents of conflict theory claims that there is no order in the society; on the contrary, they assert that tension and conflict are frequently seen in society (Ballantine et al., 2017).

The roots of conflict theory are based on Karl Marx and Max Weber (Klinloch, 2014). In particular, the Marxist approach focuses on the inequality-creating effects

of economic injustices. According to the conflict theory based on Marxism, the class structure in society reveals inequalities which stem from the economy. Economically powerful people create specific policies and ideologies to perpetuate inequality. Accordingly, the distribution of resources in society is shaped according to relations of exploitation, and the difference between the strong and the weak is increased (Zencirkiran, 2016). According to conflict theory, societies are the conflict area of different interest groups. Educational institutions are one of these conflict areas (Collins, 1971).

Schools reproduce inequalities as a result of existing conflicts in society. Even the curriculum in schools is organized according to the middle-class (Margolis et al., 2002) For this reason, a language that is difficult for children from lower-class families to understand is taught in schools (Rothstein, 2013). This causes conflicts between classes to persist and perpetuates existing inequalities. The state ensures inequality between individuals through its policies and reforms (Brantlinger, 2003).

The approaches of the conflict paradigm are listed below (Tan, 1990):

- There is conflict based on interests between the units that make up society. Conflict theory aims to find the contradictions in the system and the points that disturb the balance.
- Social groups struggle among themselves to dominate education. It is a known fact that the groups are not equal in this struggle.
- The main purpose of education is not to teach cognitive skills for the profession, but to maintain the current order by making appropriate values accepted.

As can be seen, the conflict approach gives importance to education and considers how education contributes to social inequalities. These inequalities and class position caused by the imbalance in the economy are maintained through education (Macionus, 2017). The pioneers of the conflict theory, as a result of their research on education, concluded that social inequality in education is realized through practices

such as exams, compulsory education, school quality, and hidden curriculum (Baran, 2013). Conflict theory, on the other hand, emphasizes that concepts such as equality of opportunity are deception and that the ruling class hides exploitation with this deception. The education system that maintains the status quo protects the superiority of the ruling class. Although the state directly or indirectly emphasizes equality of opportunity in the reforms it implements in the education system, it cannot be argued that there is actually equality among students. For example, although the 4+4+4 education reform, which is considered to be the latest and most comprehensive, includes some aims that emphasize equality of opportunity, it is not possible to mention equality of opportunity when the results are examined. In this respect, it can be accepted that the concept of equality of opportunity, as claimed by the conflict theory, is a deception (Güner et al., 2014).

Public and private school systems clearly reveal class differences in capitalist cultures. Public and private school systems have emerged in capitalist cultures for this reason. Public schools serve the wider population, whose parents bring their kids to neighborhood areas and do not pay massive tuition. On the other side, individuals whose parents have more money and the opportunity to live a life of privilege and wealth are given access to private schools (Katz, 1976; Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Moreover, private schools serve the purpose of maintaining the status quo for the elite. On the other hand, public schools instill the ideology of submission in the children of the proletariat (Seider, 2008; Finn, 2012).

From the point of view of conflict theory, the education taught in schools carries the values and expectations of the classroom system. For this reason, in societies with neoliberal practices, schooling is organized and implemented in accordance with the expectations of the classes that make up the society. Therefore, different professional groupings (such as technical personnel, workers, public servants, etc.) are decided by taking into consideration societal expectations (Polama, 1993). Marx made significant contributions to conflict theory, which he pioneered, and influenced many people with his ideas.

2.3.2.1. The Proponents of the Theory

The prominent figures of conflict theory are Karl Marx, Samuel Bowles and Helbert Gintis, Louis Althusser, Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein. These pioneers explained inequalities in education from different perspectives.

2.3.2.1.1. Karl Marx

One of Marx's greatest contributions to the understanding of historical processes is that he clarified the concepts of social classes and class struggle. Before Marx, there were historians and politicians who highlighted the significance of social classes in politics and social turmoil, but it was Marx who first examined it with its scope and importance, gave it its current form, and made it one of the cornerstones of political and social philosophy (Beer, 2019). Marx asserts that the history of societies is the history of class conflicts, and from this point of view, these conflicts invariably result in either a revolution that transforms societies or the collective collapse of the struggling classes (Marx & Engels, 2018).

The goal of Marxist educational theory is to create a society without classes. The individual is prioritized in the Marxist understanding of education. In terms of instructors and the organization, the concept of justice is prioritized in the educational system over equality (Öntaş, 2015). Marxist ideology assumes that everyone, regardless of class, should have a higher level of education (Rikowski, 2011). However, by convincing society's citizens that their way of life is equitable, education conceals class consciousness and protects social order. According to inequality theory, education serves to reproduce the institutional structure rather than the individual (Lucas & Irwin, 2018).

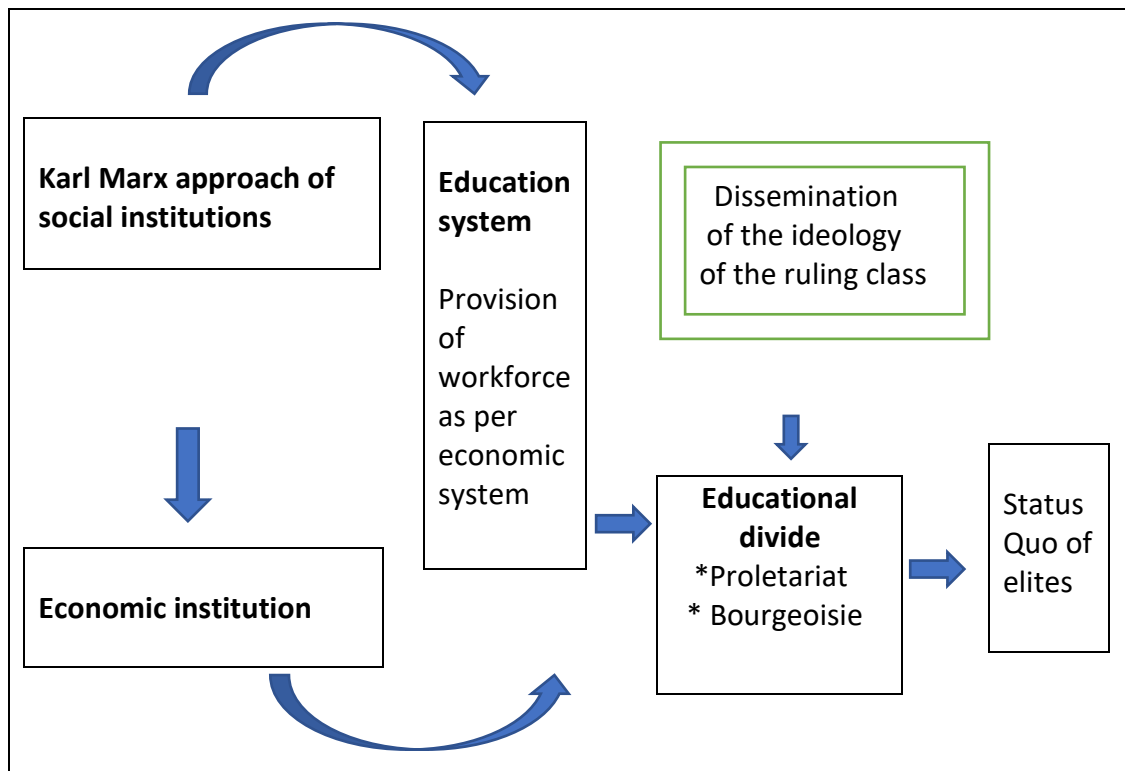


Figure 2. Karl Marx Conflict Theory and Educational System (Omer & Jabeen, 2016).

As seen in Figure 2, Marx believes that the current educational system reproduces pre-existing social classes and this is achieved through education. According to him, the education system supports and maintains the wealth of the privileged in society. In this context, it is argued that education serves the neoliberal understanding by legitimizing exploitation and inequality in society (Omer & Jabeen, 2016). In addition, Marx asserts that public school students have the least social mobility. On the other side, education teaches managers how to dominate the workforce while teaching the working class to accept their own positions and be exploited. When the current education system and the students graduating from schools within this system are analyzed, it is possible to see that this is a very appropriate assessment. It is a well-known fact that the children of families with high economic power go to high-quality schools and receive a good education. Given the education they receive, it is also to be expected that they work in high-paying jobs. Reforms introduced by the state have no power to change this situation (Kantor, 1991; Valenzuela & Montecinos, 2017). It is not possible to claim that the 4+4+4 education reform has

moved socioeconomically disadvantaged students from their current social class to a higher social class (Yazgan, 2019).

Marx also believes that the current education system reproduces pre-existing social classes. Considering that public schools are mostly attended by the children of families with a certain economic capital, it is known that the class status of disadvantaged children does not change after the education their parents provide for them, and so the economic class of their families continues at the same level for their children (Anyon, 2011; Zhang et al., 2020). International exam results such as PISA and TIMSS show that the arrangements introduced in education with the 4+4+4 education reform were not very successful and these children did not have the opportunity to improve their lives by achieving academic success with the education reforms introduced (Başdemir, 2014).

2.3.2.1.2. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis

The most well-known and frequently debated books on the Marxist viewpoint are Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis' "Schooling in Capitalist America." The main idea of these books is that the education system perpetuates social class inequalities (Bowles & Gintis, 2002). According to Bowles and Gintis (2003), all of the criticisms voiced against the school are valid and have been around for a while. In other words, criticism encompasses long-standing opinions. Schools today serve the interests of the capitalist order just as they did in the past. Economic inequalities are still justified through schools.

According to Bowles and Gintis (2003), there is a functional connection between the workplace and the classroom, and developments in either setting have an impact on the other. They believe that schools are similarly structured to industries, that is they look like factories. According to Eskicumalı (2001), the choice, arrangement, and distribution of the content in educational curricula, as well as the interaction between teachers and students, are all closely tied to the workplace. Therefore, the school strives to develop the skills and attitudes needed in the workplace. According to

Bowles and Gintis (2011), education reproduces workplace behaviors and helps students internalize these behaviors. It provides people with patterns of behavior that accept their position in relation to the work they will be doing. For example, in schools, children who are expected to be workers in the future are taught punctuality, fulfilling instructions, respect and obedience to their superiors, while children who are expected to be managers are taught flexibility, the ability to act in moderation, and favorable attitudes towards change and innovation. Moreover, schools teach students who will occupy elite positions in future, the power to do business freely, to work intelligently among alternatives, and to internalize norms instead of following external codes of conduct.

When the studies conducted by Bowles and Gintis (1976) were examined, it was seen that they emphasize three basic propositions. These propositions are about human development, inequality, and social change. Human development is important in predicting the consequences of cognitive skills on economic success. Schools prepare people for the working environment and working rules by bringing them together in a such way that they can work hard without complaining. Interactions and individual rewards are important here. For this reason, it is considered important to focus attention not on the open curriculum but on the implicit curriculum outside the known. Because the hidden curriculum has vital importance in the education system (Bowles and Gintis as cited in Hill, 2016).

Secondly, according to Bowles and Gintis (2002), because of the lack of equal opportunity in education, parents transfer their economic status and opportunities to their children. In this case, the children of families that do not have economic capital are pushed out of the education system, which creates educational inequalities. It is possible to say that the Turkish education system displays similar problems. In TES, children from economically disadvantaged families realize that they cannot participate in the process after a while because their families do not have the capital to transfer to them, fail to achieve academically and eventually find themselves out of the system (Engin-Demir, 2009). Considering the disadvantaged children in Eastern Anatolia and South Eastern Anatolia regions in particular, it is difficult to

claim that the education system has positive effects for these children. It is obvious that a large number of children in the eastern regions are sooner or later pushed out of the education system (Gültekin & Baran, 2022).

Finally, Bowles and Gintis (2003) claim that a democratic or educational goal is not gradually realized as the school system develops. According to them, the change in the education system is dominated by the interests of the owners of leading enterprises. Therefore, reforms do not bring change. When the reforms in the education system are analyzed, it is noteworthy that Bowles and Gintis' statements about reforms are correct. Since the reforms were not planned with lower-class students in mind, it is true that the reforms did not reduce the inequalities faced by individuals from lower classes. Children from lower-class families actively continue their education until a certain age and gradually drop out of educational institutions and start to work. Children who initially go to work with their families as seasonal laborers do not like school as they get older, find work more attractive, and as a result, detach from the education system completely. In other words, education reforms fail to positively change the lives of children from lower-class families (Cordrey, 2014).

2.3.2.1.3. Louis Althusser

Louis Althusser argues that education is one of the capitalist state apparatuses. According to him, the state uses educational institutions to propagate signals, symbols, and language derived from its own ideological forms across society and to codify and educate the whole population in accordance with its own ideological principles. Thus, education dominates a strong and effective domain as a social and political control instrument with the modern state (Lucas & Irwin, 2018).

Althusser (2002) emphasizes two important concepts in his studies. These are the repressive state apparatus and ideological state apparatus. The repressive apparatus of the state is the government, the administration, the police, the courts, etc. The most important factor that distinguishes the ideological state apparatus from the repressive state apparatus is that the apparatus of oppression is carried out by force,

while the ideological apparatus is carried out by using ideology. The ideological apparatus of the state prioritizes ideology (churches, schools, punishment, expulsion, elections, etc.), and the state disciplines both its sheep and its shepherds using the proper means. As one of the reforms introduced by the state, the 4+4+4 is perceived as an ideological reform. Education stakeholders, the implementers of the reform, as well as those who closely followed the reform and took part in its implementation, claim that through this reform, the state promulgated its ideology to schools and then to society. According to them, with the 4+4+4 education reform, an education system that conveys religious values has been adopted (Yılmaz, 2018).

Althusser (2002) also argues that education provided by the state is shaped according to socioeconomic classes. Accordingly, there are varying education rates for laborers, technicians, government officials, and senior employees. Moreover, in schools, individuals are taught to obey the rules of the class they belong to. Since workers, technicians and higher cadres require different education, the education given in schools covers a long period and is shaped according to social classes. Hence, it is guaranteed that the norms of the current order will continue to be followed in addition to the reproduction of the worker. In other words, in addition to providing knowledge and skills, the school also teaches obedience to the dominant ideology. When the textbooks in the current system are reviewed, it is possible to see how the dominant ideology is transmitted to students through the implicit curriculum (Giroux, 1981; Nutt & Clarke; 2002; Orón Semper & Blasco, 2018).

2.3.2.1.4. Pierre Bourdieu

According to Pierre Bourdieu, education serves more than just the purpose of passing along a society's historical knowledge to the following generation and guaranteeing the survival of its culture. Education is not a system that is equally accessible to everyone and that uses its curriculum to highlight the potential of each individual. He distinguished himself from Durkheim with this viewpoint and criticized the functionalist perspective (Bourdieu, 1973).

Bourdieu assesses education in terms of its role in the reproduction of inequality by contemporary institutions. In a similar vein, he views the educational system as a source of conflict and a mechanism that perpetuates existing power dynamics in terms of how power is shared and exercised in society (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). To Bourdieu, class inequality persists because of education, which is viewed as a pathway to the upper class, and the transmission of cultural capital obtained through education to subsequent generations. In this regard, education plays a role in the control of uneven power relations among various classes (Gieser, 2012). Based on this idea, it can be argued that disadvantaged groups are able to attend schools that are appropriate for their habitus and through these schools they reconstruct their own positions (Bourdieu, 2018).

Cultural capital is a key idea that Bourdieu (1997) emphasizes. The most crucial of the three basic capitals he highlights is cultural capital. Cultural capital is an accumulation based on the family and is the knowledge of cultural phenomena that are highly valued in society. Cultural capital is a concept inherited from the family. Schools reinforce this type of capital that children receive from their families. Behaviors such as language skills and writing style inherited from the family are transformed into inequality and reproduced through education. Therefore, children from families with low cultural capital are disadvantaged children and are likely to remain so throughout their educational lives (Atmaca & Aydın, 2019).

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in society and the ability to use and understand an especially educated language (Sullivan, 2002). Cultural capital includes some aesthetic elements and social indicators, as well as some mental skills such as language use, literacy, mathematical and analytical reasoning, achievement motivation, and self-discipline. These skills are associated with academic and professional success (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014). Children of families with low cultural capital have low academic achievement. In this context, it can be inferred that low cultural capital in the family negatively affects the educational life of children (Wang & Wu, 2023; Xu, 2012).

Education builds cultural capital, which is then transferred to the following generation. One factor that maintains social inequality to the benefit of the privileged class is the passing down of cultural capital from one generation to the next (Claussen & Osborne, 2013). Because of the influence of their family's cultural capital and habits before entering the education system, children from upper-class families are more able to understand and adapt to what is taught in schools than children from lower-classes. Given that schools are institutions created for middle-class people, this is an expected situation (Hill, 2016). Although schools seem to provide equal opportunity in education for all students, they actually perpetuate class stratification. For this reason, while the children of middle-class families receive a good education and remain in the same class, the children of lower-class families remain in the lower-class. This situation is an indicator that the alleged equality of opportunity is actually not given to disadvantaged children at all (Özsöz, 2014). Bourdieu and Passeron (2014) identified how the position of children of families with different types of capital changes according to these types of capital and how they offer unequal conditions to students.

The education offered to disadvantaged children from families with low cultural and economic capital in disadvantaged areas is not the same as that offered to children from families with high levels of cultural and economic capital. Reform initiatives in education are not sufficient to eliminate these differences. This situation prevents equal opportunities in education and deepens inequalities in education (Hawley, 1988; Gillborn & Youdell, 1999). The most crucial idea that Bourdieu highlights in this passage is the underappreciated importance of the transfer of cultural capital at home. Thus, as a way of transferring cultural capital, education performs a role that both reproduces and legitimizes inequality (Katsillis, & Rubinson, 1990).

2.3.2.1.5. Basil Bernstein

Basil Bernstein focused on the reasons why a working-class family's academic performance was low and specifically investigated class inequalities. Therefore, he prioritized learning about curriculum and examination policies (Bernstein &

Henderson, 1969). Bernstein studied and worked on the selection of knowledge for curriculum at schools, how society values it, and how these factors affect the distribution of power in society (Eagan, 2010; as cited in Küçükali, 2020).

Additionally, Bernstein (2002), whose research focused on power relations and forms in the cultural and educational spheres, examined the structure and content of educational institutions and processes in order to better understand how the knowledge reproduced the dominance and power of particular classes. Bernstein (2003) considers education as a cultural transfer and school as the place where this transfer takes place. According to him, education and school produce and legitimize the control, dominance and power relations of specific classes (2003). The culture transmitted in schools is basically shaped by middle-class values. For this reason, the middle-class can more easily adapt to the school and what they learn at school and internalize them. However, children from lower-class families have difficulties in understanding the codes of this culture to which they do not belong and therefore cannot be as successful as them in their educational life, which reproduces the existing inequalities on their behalf (Calarco, 2014).

Bernstein focused on the reshaping of education in his article “Classrooms and Pedagogies: Visible and Invisible”. Visible pedagogies emphasize the rapid acquisition of certain skills, while invisible pedagogies are based on weak categorization and a flexible framework. Also, the relationship between family and school is changing in invisible pedagogy. The family culture and the community they live in together are more successful through invisible pedagogy (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999). In other words, Bourdieu's emphasis on the cultural capital of the family emerges in Bernstein's invisible pedagogy.

Bernstein also looked at language codes and concluded that students' languages differed depending on the class coming from. Lower-class students employ limited vocabulary, which devalues them, whereas middle and upper-class students are rewarded for using sophisticated language. This indicates that the function of schools continues to differ based on class (Jones, 2013; Hill, 2016). Disadvantaged students are far behind their middle-class friends due to reasons such as not being able to find

an environment to improve their language skills, not being able to read books with their families, and not having a library in their homes. Accordingly, the school achievement of disadvantaged students is lower than other students. In other words, inequalities are perpetuated through schools (Bradley et al., 2001; Cingöz, 2020; Gofen, 2009; İnce, 2018; Siraj-Blatchford, 2010).

2.3.3. Evaluation of Educational Inequalities in the context of Conflict Theory

Conflict theory demonstrates how the state is truly responsible for the growing inequities in education. Moreover, the theory emphasizes how the state and state policies regarding education perpetuate economically-based inequality between classes (Wallace & Wolf, 2004). Through its policies, the state reproduces inequalities rather than eliminating them. This is because reforms are not designed to make disadvantaged students better (Kondakçı & Beycioğlu, 2020). Regional, economic and gender-based inequalities exist in Türkiye. Since education cannot eliminate these inequalities, each new reform increases class differences, deepens conflicts between groups and deepens existing inequalities (Somel, 2019; Pike et al., 2016).

Conflict theory is based on the ideas developed by Karl Marx. In addition, Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu, Althusser, Bernstein, and others have shaped Karl Marx's studies and developed his ideas in a striking and critical way to reveal inequalities in education. Supporters of the conflict theory and those who are inspired by the ideas in this theory emphasize that students from different classes cannot benefit equally from education and education actually reinforces the differences between students based on learning (Ballantine & Hammack, 2017; Gamoran & Mare, 1989; Van de Werfhorst & Mijs, 2010). Thus, inequalities created by the state become even worse with educational practices in schools. Because, as Çelebi et al. (2014) state, the fact that educational reforms are not inclusive, that is, they do not include disadvantaged students, increases the achievement gap between students, and therefore, reforms result in failure for disadvantaged students.

According to conflict theory, the dominant social classes use education as a means of reproducing their privileges, which justifies their oppression of underprivileged groups while maintaining their own privileged position. Accordingly, "education" serves to perpetuate social injustices (Connell & Connell, 1993). Yanıklar (2010) states that the curriculum created according to the hegemony of the dominant class in schools serves this dominant class, and other segments of society are ignored, thus a race that starts unequally becomes increasingly difficult for the disadvantaged and eventually ends in disappointment.

The commercialization of education entails the state neglecting as much of its responsibilities for providing educational services as feasible and transforming education into a service that is exclusively accessible to middle and upper-class individuals who have access to capital. In this case, those who can afford education will have a financial advantage, and children from lower-income families will not have access to education of the same level and quality. Children from lower-class households attend public schools, whereas children from middle-class families attend private schools. In this situation, it is possible to assert that public schools are becoming more homogeneous and appealing to similar groups (Güneş, 2020). This situation causes the problem of access to quality education. The fact that schools providing quality education are located in areas where people belonging to higher classes live and families from lower-classes cannot reach these areas causes the difference between classes to increase even more. Therefore, the selective and sifting role of education also assumes a discriminatory role in society (Atmaca, 2019).

According to conflict theorists, the class structure affects the quality and duration of the education that the individual will receive. While the children from the lower-class have to start life with a shorter education period, the children from the upper and upper-middle class receive a longer education and tend to professions that require expertise (Collins, 1971). The conflict theory contends that lower-class pupils struggle to keep up with the requirements of the standard educational system. Because the education system represents the middle-class. For this reason, it is

thought that the class that makes the most effective use of education is the middle-class (Labaree, 1986).

Disadvantaged groups from the lower-class cannot adapt to the system as easily as children from the middle-class. Education reforms do not allow for such a situation. Instead of improving the situation of the disadvantaged groups, each reform has a negative impact on them and leads to a worse outcome. Students from the lower-classes have low hopes of moving up to the upper-classes and are therefore less motivated. Changes in the education system, even large-scale reforms, have not changed the situation of disadvantaged groups. Since teachers represent the values of the middle-class, the lower-class feels alienated from these values and does not want to go to school. Since the majority of these students do not believe that education will improve them, they think that education is a waste of time. Therefore, the duration of their education is short (Munns & McFadden, 2000).

According to conflict theory, children from low-income and poor families are guaranteed failure in public schools because of neoliberal policies. By stopping the regulations that positively affect children, especially in primary and secondary schools, the state destroys the educational opportunities of underprivileged groups (Giroux, 2015). In accordance with neoliberal policies, the process of transforming society has been initiated through the education system. Despite the fact that this understanding is a basic human right, it has made it harder for those from lower socioeconomic groups to access education. Although this is a basic human right, it has prevented the lower-classes from access to education. Thereby, inequalities between education and social classes have been reproduced due to neoliberal policies (Hursh & Martina, 2003).

In conclusion, when the education system is examined, it is seen that education does not offer equal opportunities to all individuals. It is an illusion to think that education is accessible to everyone. Especially disadvantaged groups do not benefit from education as much as desired. Because it is not easy for children from the lower socioeconomic class to acquire the skills that those of the upper-class have. They

have difficulty understanding the curriculum that is prepared for the students coming from middle-class. Accordingly, the result does not change in learning process and inequalities are reproduced through education as conflict theory highlights (Holsinger & Jacob, 2009). In other words, the state does not produce reforms that improve the situation of disadvantaged students. Considering that state reforms have negative consequences for disadvantaged groups, it can be argued that reform initiatives further aggravate existing inequalities in the education system.

2.4. The Compulsory Education Practice in the context of Equality of Opportunity: The 4+4+4 Education Reform

Compulsory education policies have been implemented in Türkiye from time to time. In this section, the compulsory education process in Türkiye, 12-year compulsory discontinuous education and the 4+4+4 education reform, which made a great impact, were explained.

2.4.1. The Process of Compulsory Education in Türkiye

Education is an act that contributes to the development of the personality, abilities, mental and physical skills of the child, as well as the acquisition and development of the awareness of the recognition and protection of all kinds of rights (Tarhanlı, 2009). The general functions of education are to help the individual adapt to society and its dynamics, to develop his/her abilities and to support the acquisition of the behavioral forms necessary for their realization (Varış, 1998).

When compulsory education is defined within the scope of education, it is perceived as a concept supported by laws that require a citizen to continue their education in educational institutions when they reach a specific age. When the issue of compulsory education is evaluated worldwide, the work of UNESCO on education for all is important. The common vision of compulsory education, which is supported in UNESCO and other declarations, refers to an educational practice that aims to change the existing society in order to make the lives of students more manageable

and to enable them to demonstrate what they can do in line with their own abilities (UNESCO, 1990; as cited in Kartal, 2007). The aim of compulsory education in Türkiye is to create equality of opportunity in education and to prepare qualified workforce by ensuring that citizens receive education according to their abilities and the needs of the country (Hakan, 2019; Küçüker, 2008; Temiz, 2009).

Compulsory education can also be seen as a tool for maintaining social order. For example, apart from the explicit goal of compulsory education such as increasing literacy rates in society, it also has implicit goals such as reducing crime rates in society, ensuring peace, and solving the problem of child labor (Süzen, 2004). Considering the relationship between the development of a country and its level of welfare and culture, it is seen that the duration of compulsory education in developed countries is at least nine years (Demirtaş, 2011).

In line with the advances in science and technology, countries have to realize changes and reforms in their education systems due to the need for qualified personnel to catch up with the requirements of the age and to keep up with this age in the education system (Erginer, 2009). When the reforms in education in the international framework are examined, it is known that education is organized by taking into consideration the age groups and physical characteristics of students (MoNE, 2012).

When the education system in Türkiye is analyzed retrospectively, it is seen that there have been many reforms (Yıldız & Yıldız, 2016). Within the scope of compulsory education, there have been three different reforms in the history of the Republic. Compulsory education in Türkiye was first increased to 5 years, then to 8 years and finally to 12 years. Compulsory education implemented as 5 years for many years. The law on 8 years of compulsory education was adopted after years of being a draft law (Turan, 2016). Finally, it was accepted that the 12-year compulsory education reform was the most comprehensive reform among all compulsory education reforms and new regulations were introduced by law to ensure that the

practices implemented with this reform could be realized without any problems (Yılmaz, 2014).

2.4.2. The 12-Year Compulsory Discontinuous Education and the 4+4+4 Education Reform

Efforts to reform education have become important with the realization of the positive relationship between a country's economy and its knowledge power. Especially in the information age, countries have started to allocate more budget to their education systems in order to grow faster economically. The aim of educational reform efforts is to educate society. This aim is fulfilled by supporting citizens mentally, physically, and socially, raising their living standards, contributing to the national economy, and increasing the country's competitiveness on the international platform (Peker-Ünal, 2013). In the Turkish education system, various reforms have been made to realize the functions of education.

One of these reforms is the 8-year compulsory education reform. After 5 years of compulsory education remained in force for a long time, MoNE approved the implementation of 8 years of compulsory education. With Law No. 4306 adopted on August 16, 1997, the duration of compulsory education was increased from five to eight years. The first major reform in compulsory education, called the 'Basic Education Law', was adopted with the aim of increasing the schooling rate of all children, especially girls in eastern Türkiye, within the scope of ensuring equality of opportunity in education (Dülger 2004).

With 8 years of compulsory education, the schooling rate of children increased significantly. After this reform, social policies were developed by the state to improve the conditions of poor families and facilitate children's access to school (Engin-Demir & Çobanoğlu, 2012). However, despite being the most comprehensive reform in Türkiye, the 4+4+4 education reform did not increase school enrollment as much as the 8-year compulsory education; on the contrary, school dropouts started to increase with this reform (Cin, Karlıdağ-Dennis, & Temiz, 2020).

After the implementation of 8 years of compulsory and continuous education in Türkiye, new debates have been added to the discussions that started after the transition to 8 years of compulsory and continuous education in the 2000s. As a result of these discussions, it was stated that a new structure was needed in the education system (Çakır, 2017). In this new system, it was aimed to eliminating the problems brought about by eight years of compulsory education and ensuring the transition to the gradual education system applied in developed countries. It was also stated that 8 years of continuous education was provided without taking into consideration the age groups and individual differences of students and that a new system was needed to correct this. In line with these needs, a new education system was created (4+4+4 education system) and with Law No. 6287 dated March 30, 2012, the secondary part of Imam Hatip schools was included in the system. Thus, following the 1997 Basic Education Law, the 4+4+4 education reform was put into effect in 2012 (Kılıç, 2014).

The education reform known in the public as the 4+4+4, which extends compulsory and discontinuous education to 12 years. It is the latest and largest-scale reform in the Turkish education system. Based on the decisions taken at the National Education Council in 2010, Law No. 6287, the 4+4+4 is a very radical reform (Gün & Atanur-Baskan, 2013). Within the scope of this reform, the duration of education was extended from eight to 12 years. It is thought that as the duration of education in countries increases, the level of development of countries also increases. It has been observed that there are system searches for this purpose in our country and when the examples of compulsory education in other countries in the world countries are taken into consideration, the extension of the compulsory education period to 12 years is generally evaluated as a positive development (Kartal 2017).

The 4+4+4 education reform, based on the Primary Education and Training Law No. 6287, has led to radical changes in the education system. With this reform, the education system was divided into levels, the 4+4+4 education reform was accepted on March 30, 2012 and the education system was changed. On April 11, 2012, it was published in the Official Journal and promulgated (Bilge, 2019). 12 years of

compulsory education was legalized and a compulsory discontinuous education system called 4+4+4 was introduced. As a result of this reform, the education system was divided into three different levels and schools were restructured. The first 4 years (grades 1, 2, 3, 4) are primary school, the second 4 years (grades 5, 6, 7, and 8) are secondary school and the last 4 years (grades 9, 10, 11, and 12) are high school. In other words, students who graduate from primary school move on to secondary school (ERG, 2014b). Since there is a transition between the two levels, it is called "discontinuous education". While primary school programs are the same across the country, two different options have emerged at the secondary school level: general secondary schools and Imam-hatip secondary schools. After completing primary school, students can choose either a general secondary school or an Imam-hatip secondary school. With this system, students receive education according to the secondary school they choose, and the number and content of courses differ accordingly (ERG, 2014b). With this reform, many changes were made at all levels of education and this has drastically changed the education system (Örs, et al., 2013).

The new era in the education system that began with the law that extended compulsory and discontinuous education to 12 years has two main objectives. One of these is to increase the average length of education of society and the other is to ensure that the education system directs students in accordance with the interests, needs and abilities of individuals (MoNE, 2012). Within the scope of these two objectives, MoNE (2012a) has more comprehensively highlighted the issues targeted in the preparation of the new education system as follows:

- * Raising the level of education of the citizens of the country
- * To increase the enrollment rate
- * To create programs for students' developmental characteristics, interests and needs
- * Reducing regional disparities in education
- * Providing a democratic education by offering flexible programs and elective courses that appeal to everyone

When these items are evaluated, it is seen that the Ministry gives importance to two issues in the new education system where the 4+4+4 education reform is implemented. One of these is to increase the schooling rate and the other is to create flexible programs based on the developmental characteristics of children (Başaran, 2016).

According to MoNE (2012), the average duration of education in the world is 12 years. In Türkiye, this period is 8 years. In order to close this huge gap between Türkiye and the rest of the world, Türkiye needs to extend the duration of education. By extending the duration of education, Türkiye aims to have more knowledgeable citizens and to increase the schooling rate. Unfortunately, there are regional disparities regarding schooling in Türkiye. By extending compulsory education to 12 years, the aim was to reduce these regional differences.

Secondly, it aimed to make the education system more democratic by introducing a flexible structure. MoNE planned to meet this demand by offering elective courses that would help students develop socially and culturally. In this direction, it is aimed to prepare an education model that includes artistic and cultural activities for students to develop themselves from the 5th grade onwards (MoNE, 2012).

In 2012, after the new system introduced, education was divided into levels. With this system, horizontal and vertical transitions to the next level were enabled and students were offered the opportunity to make choices in the early periods according to their development and ability with a flexible structure (Akpınar et al., 2012). While the first four years are planned as the period in which children adapt to school and acquire basic skills, the second four years are seen as the period in which children develop their skills. The last four years include flexible programs where children receive education according to their own preferences (MoNE, 2012b).

The 4+4+4 education reform has been at the center of various debates since the adoption of the proposed law extending compulsory education to 12 years in an interrupted manner. After the reform was decided to be implemented and during the

implementation process, it was met with different reactions from teachers, political parties, education unions, and all segments directly or indirectly related to education (Epçaan, 2014), and many of these debates are still on the agenda (Demir & Aslan, 2017).

One of the most debated issues regarding the 4+4+4 education reform is the idea that the reform was the result of a political decision and has ideological reflections. According to most education stakeholders, the 4+4+4 education reform is an ideologically based reform and since the day it was introduced, it has made regulations to revenge the 28 February period and has completely changed the ideology of education. Therefore, the decisions taken regarding the reform paved the way for the reform to be perceived as a radical reform (ERG, 2014b). Moreover, although the new education system is referred to as "12-year compulsory education" in legal and official documents, the fact that it is referred to as "4+4+4 discontinuous compulsory education" in society and the press shows that the system is described in different ways according to the ideological purposes of different circles (Bedir, 2022).

The government has often stated in its discourses that it has made regulations in line with its ideology in order to raise the generation it wants, and this is in line with the news in the press (ERG, 2014b). This reform divided society into two groups (Güven, 2012), with one group having high expectations, but the other group harshly criticized the reform as unclear and considered it a failed reform. Psacharopoulos (1989) also stated that education reforms fail due to high expectations, unclear policies, insufficient financial support and similar reasons.

Similarly, Turan (2016) claimed that governments use compulsory education as a political tool, but underlined that the 4+4+4 education reform did not have the expected impact. When educational reforms are analyzed, it is generally known that policies change when governments change. The reason for this is the close relationship between education and politics (Jansen, 2005; Heck, 2008). Another reason is that education can be perceived as an ideological state apparatus as

Althusser asserts. What makes 4+4+4 important and different from other reforms is that the government wants to use this reform to completely change the structure of the education system (İnal 2012). This is also supported by the fact that the 4+4+4 education system was enacted despite the criticisms of the 4+4+4 education reform in the media and newspapers and the opinions and criticisms of prominent universities in Türkiye (Bedir, 2022). In light of this information, it can be argued that reforms are actually reflections of ideologies created by the state. Therefore, when governments change, it is not only the cabinet that changes, but also the idea that the state wants to promulgate (Erberk, 2022).

The fact that teachers, who are the actual implementers of the 4+4+4 education reform, were not asked for their opinions or consulted before the reform was put into practice caused teachers to be critical of the reform. Teachers, one of the implementers of the reform, stated that the reform was suddenly implemented without a plan, that they were not given any in-service training to guide them, and that they had great difficulty managing the process because they did not know how to proceed in the process. Teachers explained that they received information about the new education system, the 4+4+4 education reform, from sources other than the MoNE (Özden, Kılıç & Aksu, 2014). However, if the government wants to extend the duration of compulsory education, education practitioners and stakeholders in the field of education should be aware of the benefits and sacrifices expected to be made (Çevik & Ekinci, 1996).

It is thought that the government put the changes introduced with the 4+4+4 education reform into effect in a short period of time in order to avoid a reaction from society (Noyan, 2016). Teachers emphasized that the uncertainty brought about by the 4+4+4 reform created great confusion in the first year, and therefore this new system introduced with 4+4+4 left negative impressions on them (Durmuşçelebi & Bilgili, 2014). This is normal because the 4+4+ education reform initiated in 2012 was also implemented with a top-down approach and unquestioning obedience was expected far away from the democratic process (Karlıdağ-Dennis, 2017).

The negative perception of the 4+4+4 education reform by teachers also led to their resistance to the reform (Bay et al., 2013; Çapar, 2015; Hatipler, 2014). Moore et al. (2002) underlined that when a participatory policy is not followed in the educational change process and employees are not included in the process, they will resist the change. Starr (2011) also explained that it is not possible to expect employees to comply with the change without informing them. According to Başaran (1992), the adoption of change or reform by employees is effective in solving the problems encountered. Başığit (2009) also stated that since teachers are the people who are most affected by the decisions taken in schools, their inclusion in the process will create a facilitating effect in implementing a new practice.

When evaluated in general, it can be argued that society was not properly informed about the 4+4+4 education system and the purpose of its introduction was not understood. In addition, it can be claimed that it would be more useful to inform all stakeholders and manage the policy process with their opinions and suggestions when making changes in the education system (Noyan, 2016). Unfortunately, it is a well-known fact that the Turkish education system is highly centralized and all important policy decisions are made by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (Nohl 2008), thus, it is a top-down approach that does not leave autonomy and power to schools or stakeholders in the decision-making process (Kanci & Gül-Altınay 2007; Karlidag-Dennis 2017).

MoNE implemented the 4+4+4 reform and supported it by providing reasons why it was a worthwhile reform. However, from the moment the reform was announced, many criticisms of the reform have been raised. Although 4+4+4 was a new and unexpected reform, the public was not given any training to fully understand the reform or enough time to get used to it (ERG, 2012).

Although the 4+4+4 education system contains striking differences in many aspects of the Turkish education system, it was implemented less than two months later. Neither a pilot study nor monitoring and evaluation studies were conducted during the formulation of the policy (ERG, 2014a). The nationwide implementation of the

4+4+4 education reform without a pilot study is another issue criticized by education stakeholders. Pilot implementation is important as it can enable the new system to be reviewed and its negative aspects to be revealed during implementation of change (Arkorful, & Abaidoo, 2015; Dündar & Akçayır, 2014). As a result of the inferences made, the reform can be made to work better. Uncertainty could not be avoided as there was no pilot implementation and the necessary information was not shared with those who would implement the reform (Şentürk, 2016). The fact that such a large-scale reform was not piloted before implementation was not welcomed by the practitioners of the reform.

Many education stakeholders argued that the 4+4+4 reform was not good enough to be implemented easily and without any criticism. They criticized the reform for setting unrealistic expectations. According to them, policy outcomes in Türkiye are far from meeting expectations. Therefore, education reforms fail to meet the expectations of the people. This is because, as Schleicher (2018) argues, theory and practice always proceed differently in the 21st century school system. Although the 4+4+4 education reform was well-planned in theory, it did not work properly in practice, and thus, it hosted many problems during its implementation (Karip, 2019).

2.4.3. The Challenges Facing Reform Practitioners Through the 4+4+4 Education Reform

The 4+4+4 The 4+4+4 education system introduced in 2012 is an example of the introduction and implementation of a different education policy in Türkiye in many aspects, including the starting age of school, the way it is divided into levels, the duration of compulsory education and elective courses (ERG, 2014b).

As explained under the previous title, implementing this reform was problematic for teachers due to several different reasons, such as the sudden introduction of the reform, its unprepared implementation, the lack of a pilot study beforehand, and the lack of consultation with teachers. In addition, there are some regulations that were not adopted by the implementers of the reform and thus caused problems for the

implementers during implementation. The most significant change brought by the reform is the division of the education system into three levels (primary, secondary and high school) as 4+4+4. As a result of the changes introduced by the reform, there were problems at all three levels of education and reform implementers objected to these issues.

In primary schools referring to the first quarter system, the early starting age of students has been criticized by a large group of people despite the lack of periodic readiness (Külekçi, 2013; Karadeniz, 2012). These families, who were not aware of the importance of readiness in the process of children starting school and who generally lived in rural areas, regretted sending their children to school at an early age due to the reluctance, boredom, loss of self-confidence and psychological crises experienced by their children. A group of families were hesitant to send their children to school, but had to keep them in school because of the difficulties in obtaining a medical report. Conscious families, on the other hand, postponed their children's schooling for a year in line with the opinions of teachers and experts (Şentürk, 2016). This situation caused inequality for students in disadvantaged regions. Because while conscious families preferred not to send their children to school, unconscious families did not realize the importance of the situation and negatively affected the learning experiences of their children by sending them to school (Ece, 2019).

It is no coincidence that in many countries around the world, children who are at least 72 months old start primary education and preschool education is compulsory before primary education (Kılıç, 2014). Since the 1990s, education policies in Türkiye have constantly changed under the influence of political inputs. Since the results of education policies can be evaluated after many years, the children who are part of society and who are in the education system pay the price of negative results, not the policymakers (Söke, 2014). One of the practices introduced by policy makers but with severe negative consequences for children is the school starting age (ERG, 2014a).

Primary school is important because it represents a transition period. In Türkiye and many other parts of the world, the calendar age is used as the main criterion for school starting age (Tutal & Oral, 2015), but the developmental stages of children play a critical role along with school starting age (Calp, 2014; Denham, 2006; Snow, 2006; Zaslow, Calkins, & Halle, 2000). Teachers believe that it is cognitively inappropriate for students to start school at 60-66 months. Indeed, many studies have shown that these students have learning difficulties and that this situation continues in the following years. In addition, it was frequently stated by teachers that having different age groups in the same classroom causes an increase in individual differences, there are problems of adaptation among children, schools are not physically suitable for this, there are difficulties in the implementation of the program and achievement of the outcomes, and all these are too difficult for both teachers and students to adapt (Kartal 2017). Moreover, while sharing their experiences with first graders, teachers stated that they had never encountered such cleaning and hygiene problems in their professional lives. This situation led to the disruption of education and also negatively affected the motivation of teachers (Özenç & Çekirdekçi, 2012; Uzun & Alat, 2014). MoNE finally made a new regulation two years later, based on the negativities and criticisms about the issue. According to this regulation, the decision was changed and children younger than 66 months were not allowed to enroll in school without the special request of their parents (Şentürk, 2016).

Despite the many criticisms, when the minister of national education was asked about the disadvantages of starting school at an early age, he said that there were no drawbacks, on the contrary, it would be an advantage for students because the technology and infrastructure in schools were appropriate. He claimed that children can learn all information through technology (MoNE, 2012b). However, contrary to the minister's statement, children who started school at an early age were behind the children who were months older than them and the academic failure continued in the following years (Şahin et al., 2022). It can be argued that this situation adversely affects all primary school-age children in Türkiye and puts them at a disadvantage. For this reason, the results of the research on the subject show that the 4+4+4

education reform is not based on a scientific basis in terms of age change and that starting school at an early age will harm students unless pre-school education is compulsory (Peker-Ünal, 2013).

With this reform, all school-age children were expected to enroll in school. This meant that all children would attend school, including the disadvantaged (children from lower-classes, children with special needs, etc.). However, as the reform was implemented, it became clear that there were not enough classrooms for all children. After the reform, when the starting age for 1st graders was lowered, more students than expected were enrolled in 1st grades, which meant that even a critical grade such as 1st grade was overcrowded and teachers and students had to teach in overcrowded classrooms (Epeçan, 2014). In addition, children with special needs were expected to attend school without extra useful materials such as elevators, special rooms, etc. On the other hand, young children were compelled to enroll in school despite their young age, unless they had a medical report. In fact, it was declared pedagogically inappropriate for five-year-old to attend school. For all these reasons, the new education reform was severely criticized (Toz & Yıldırım, 2014).

Moreover, the inclusion of 5th graders in the second quarter and making them secondary school students drew a great deal of criticism. This issue has been criticized at two different points. The first is that 5th grade students cannot adapt to the secondary school process because they have not yet entered the period of concrete operational processes. Students who were not cognitively and emotionally ready for secondary school could not get used to secondary school for a long time. This situation disturbed secondary school teachers as well as students (Özden, Kılıç & Aksu, 2014). In addition, the fact that 5th graders were required to take classes for seven to eight hours a day when they were included in the scope of secondary school has been cited in the literature as a wrong practice on the grounds that they were not cognitively ready (Eğitim-Sen, 2013). Moreover, when 5th graders became secondary school, this unexpected practice led to the problem of insufficient class sizes at this level (Aybek & Aslan, 2015). Another controversial issue is the fact that primary school teachers became norm redundancy when 5th graders became

secondary school teachers. This situation also created a shortage of branch teachers in secondary schools (Uysal, 2015). Teachers who were allowed to choose branches in their minor disciplines from the redundancy teachers were allowed to do so, and thus the shortage of branch teachers in secondary schools was tried to be overcome. However, while this unfavorable problem was solved in other regions, it was not easy to find teachers in the eastern regions, leading to regional differences and inequalities (ERG, 2014b).

Moreover, in the second quarter, the disadvantages of having primary and secondary school buildings together were emphasized and it was announced that primary and secondary school buildings would be separated in order to eliminate these problems. However, as a result of the unplanned reform initiative, the buildings could not be separated and it was revealed that having more than one type of school in the same building would create a substantial problem (Çapar, 2015). However, with the reform, which planned to introduce a gradual system of primary, secondary and high schools, children would attend schools appropriate for their age and developmental characteristics, so that they would not have to share the same places with older boys and girls in order to receive education. However, the situation was not as expected and primary and secondary school buildings were not separated (Kaya, 2011). In addition, this problem paved the way for another problem. Keeping the two levels together also created an administrative problem in schools. It is very difficult for a single administrator to be the principal of both primary and secondary schools. These problems have once again revealed that theory and practice do not match (Doğan et al., 2014).

Another issue that has been discussed and criticized in relation to the 4+4+4 reform is that although it was emphasized that students would be able to make decisions at an early age according to their interests and abilities in the second four-year period and that vocational guidance would be provided accordingly, this practice was not realized (Gözütok et al., 2014). However, the state argued that at the end of primary school (fourth grade), students are given the opportunity to choose among different types of schools such as basic schools (both private and public), vocational schools

and open education. Öcal (2015), on the other hand, emphasized that students' early vocational orientation only covers imam-hatip secondary schools, and therefore, real guidance cannot be mentioned.

The state, on the other hand, introduced open secondary schools and open high schools into the education system with this reform. It was argued that compulsory education would achieve its purpose through these open schools. This is because policymakers emphasized that open schools would allow students to continue their education without any difficulty (Örs et al., 2013). Since there are no other vocational schools other than imam hatip schools that provide education at the secondary school level (Gün & Baskan 2014), this has led to debates on whether 4+4+4 actually extends the duration of compulsory education. Imam-hatip schools were historically established to train preachers and were classified as vocational schools. When the 4+4+4 education reform was adopted, it also paved the way for the re-establishment of Imam-hatip secondary schools, which led to intense debates and protests among various segments of Turkish society, especially secularists who argued that the 4+4 education reform was introduced to encourage imam-hatip schools and reduce the actual duration of compulsory education to four years (Güven, 2012). According to this view, instead of increasing compulsory education to twelve years and encouraging students to stay in school longer, the reform actually shortened compulsory education and ended formal education by pushing students towards alternative practices such as open education at an early age (Okçabol 2013). This actually hindered the right to access to education and placed obstacles in front of disadvantaged students in disadvantaged regions access to education. In other words, open education has created inequality against children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Peker-Ünal 2013).

The issue of elective courses at the second level is another problem that has remained on the agenda for a long time. While MoNE (2012) claimed that the elective courses (religion courses) added to the curricula with this reform would meet the expectations and sociocultural demands of society, education stakeholders and some segments of society underlined that this practice was again reflecting the ideology of the state (ERG, 2014b). Another problem created by elective courses is that they cause segregation among children. Children are forced to choose elective courses and

students of different religions are forced to take an elective course in a religion they are not members of. The aim here is to raise a religious generation in the desired manner (Eroler, 2019). In other words, elective courses that reveal the existence of different religions have been effective in creating a single type of individual through education in schools within the scope of a one-dimensional course. In schools, only courses such as the Holy Quran and the life of the Prophet Muhammad were offered to students as elective courses. Students who wanted to take different courses were not allowed to take different elective courses for reasons such as the lack of a teacher to teach the course or the lack of sufficient enrollment in the course (Demir et al., 2013).

In high schools, which represent the last four in the education system, inadequate infrastructure has led to various problems. By making high schools compulsory, the schooling rate was intended to increase and positive results were aimed at quantitatively. However, the success claimed to have been achieved in terms of quality has certainly not been achieved in terms of quality. In the years when the 4+4+4 education reform was introduced, the FATİH project was much talked about, just like the education reform. Due to misapplications, this project could not be used effectively due to lack of infrastructure. Technological machines and smart boards were placed in classrooms, but internet connection was not provided (İşçi & Demir, 2015; Çoruk & Tutkun, 2018). Therefore, while most schools in less developed regions did not use technology, other regions were able to benefit from it (Güven, 2012). Moreover, it is a well-known fact that there are differences between schools even if they are located in the same region (Ayvacı et al., 2014). All these explanations show that the minister of national education is not aware of the regional or technological differences between schools. There are infrastructure problems in schools and much more financial power is needed to solve these problems, but unfortunately not enough financial budget is allocated to education (Vatanartıran & Karadeniz, 2015; Göktaş et al., 2013).

The 4+4+4 education reform, which was introduced with a sudden change, is thought to have caused great turmoil, especially in the high school section, due to the lack of

infrastructure support. Since the reform was not well planned and there was no preparation beforehand, there was an overcrowding of compulsory high schools, which led to the problem of insufficient classrooms. The converting of disused or less-used places in schools into classrooms has caused additional problems. In some schools, along with areas such as laboratories and libraries, even the rooms of school administrators were downsized and turned into classrooms (Kayıp & Kartal, 2021). Moreover, due to the problem of insufficient classrooms, dual education was brought back to the agenda in order to use the existing classrooms more conveniently. As a result of dual education, two groups, morning and afternoon classes, were formed and this situation created problems for all stakeholders, including students, teachers, principals and parents, in terms of the start and ending times of schools (Düşmez & Bulut, 2015; Kaştan & Kaştan, 2016).

Overall, there are differences in society, even though this perspective is ignored by the state. Due to these unacceptable differences in society, it can be argued that people have difficulties accepting and adopting reforms. It is seen that an unplanned reform based on the state's own ideology negatively affects all levels of education. Moreover, as a result of the inconsistent policies produced by the state, individuals of society are separated from each other. On the one hand, the state has tried to create programs for children with different characteristics, skills, needs, interests, etc., but on the other hand, it has developed policies that reveal the differences between them and cause discrimination and various problems within society. For this reason, the state has failed to meet the needs and expectations of society with the reforms it has created, and it does not seem possible for a reform created in this way to be adopted by all groups of society and to achieve success.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the research design, participants of the study, data collection tools, data collection process and data analysis. First, the research methodology was explained. Second, participants in the study were described in detail, and lastly, data collection tools, data collection process and the data analysis were presented in depth

3.1. Research Design

This study employed mixed methods research, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Mixed methods research defining as third methodological movement by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) is essential because it is an intuitive way of doing research involving events that are constantly displayed in daily lives and are often preferred by researchers (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative method is based on the positivist paradigm and the qualitative method is based on the constructivist paradigm. However, these methods are insufficient when they are used separately because the problems arising in the research world are too complicated to be explained by a single method (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Hence, using multiple paradigms together in research helps to better understand the phenomenon (Greene & Caracelli, 1997).

In the mixed methods, as quantitative and qualitative approaches are combined, researchers are provided with more opportunities to answer research questions as more than single method is used (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Both of these researchers also claim that mixed methods research is superior to the other research using a single design. They express this assertion with three articles below (p.14):

- Mixed method research can answer research questions that the other methodologies cannot.
- Mixed method research provides stronger inferences.
- Mixed methods provide the opportunity for presenting a greater diversity of divergent views.

Consistent with this explanation, it can be argued that mixed methods research is the study in which different inferences are obtained. That is to say, this research mostly reflects different voices and perspectives, thus they diversify the results (Erzberger & Kelle, 2003).

There appeared to be different mixed-methods design frameworks to make the research more understandable (Shannon-Baker, 2016). As there are many different designs in the literature, choosing the right design which contribute the research is substantial. Accordingly, researchers need to choose a design suitable for the purpose of the study. Typology created by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) was mostly preferred among the different typologies in the studies. According to this typology, there are distinct designs in social sciences such as convergent parallel design, explanatory sequential design, exploratory sequential design, and transformative design. In mixed methods design, the important thing is the time and sequence of the study while determining the pattern. If the researchers determine the pattern by paying attention to these two issues, they will have made progress in accordance with the nature of the mixed method (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

In other words, in mixed methods studies, it is necessary to determine whether the data will be collected according to a certain sequence. Besides, if there is a particular sequence, the study that have a priority should be explained. Explanatory sequential design is the most used design among the mixed method research designs (Creswell et al., 2003). Explanatory sequential design has an order and the study is carried out according to this plan (see Figure1) (Ivankova et al., 2006).

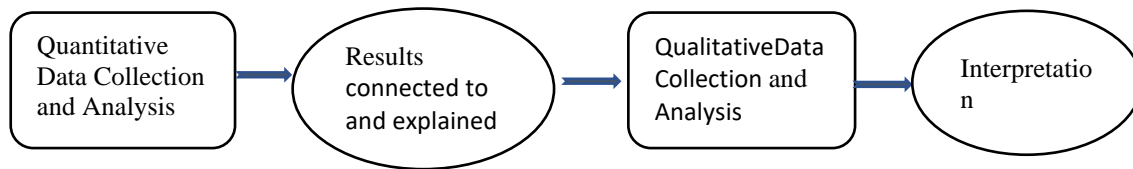


Figure 3. The Diagram of the Explanatory Sequential Design (Ivankova et al., 2006)

As it is seen in Figure 3 quantitative data are collected first and then analyzed in explanatory sequential design. After this analysis process is completed, qualitative data that will support the quantitative data are collected and the data obtained are analyzed. At the last stage, the quantitative and qualitative data are combined and the result is explained. The current study was conducted through explanatory sequential design. Accordingly, quantitative approach was used in the study at first. The quantitative study is a descriptive study. Descriptive research design aims to get information in order to describe a situation, phenomenon or population systematically and also this kind of research design utilize a broad range of research methods to examine one or more than one variable (Kumar, 2018). In this sense, quantitative study helps describe the results of the 4+4+4 education reform on socioeconomically disadvantaged students in terms of some variables such as gender, academic achievement, school type, and attendance. The quantitative approach was utilized to support the development of the qualitative approach, one of the distinct goals of mixed-method research (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Secondly, qualitative approach was used in the study. In the qualitative research, the views of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students were examined in line with the opinions of teachers, school principals and academicians. Besides, implications of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students were investigated in terms of social justice implementations in education and the impacts of government policies on disadvantaged students from low SES backgrounds were investigated. Hence, this design helped to understand the situation of disadvantaged students in depth.

Phenomenological design was utilized in order to carry out this study. People's conscious experiences, such as daily living and social interactions, are known as phenomenology (Schram, 2003). Van Manen (2016), on the other hand explains

phenomenology as a descriptive method for describing people's experiences with a phenomenon or a concept. In the light of information, phenomenological design was preferred to describe the experiences and perceptions of teachers, school principals and academics concerning educational reform and its reflections in the current study. In other words, through the phenomenological approach, some striking outcomes such as reasons for the problems posed by the 4+4+4 education reform, the reflections of this reform on disadvantaged students, and the echoes of the reform in TES were examined deeply. As corollary, the quantitative data and the qualitative data were analyzed separately, thereby the research problem was tried to be understood in a multidimensional way by combining both research findings and analyzing holistically. Figure 4 shows the overall research process.

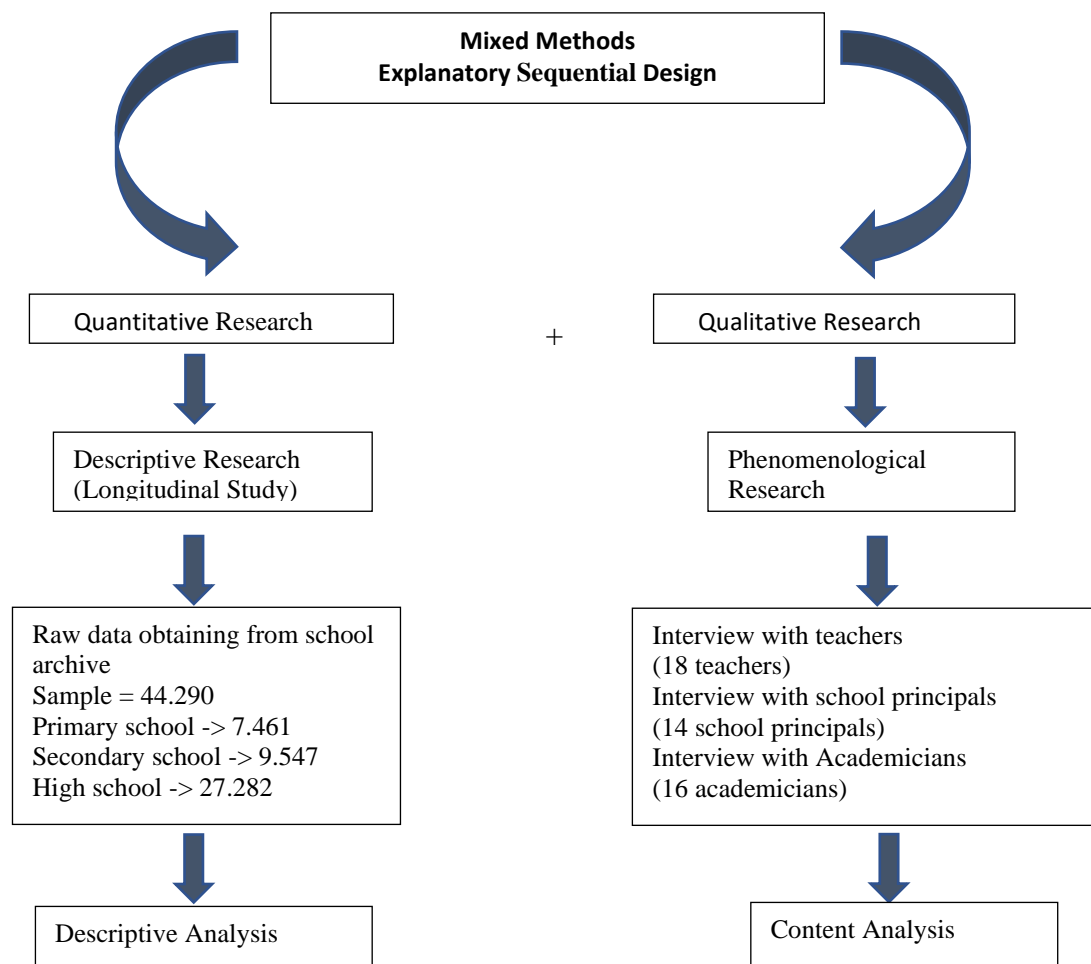


Figure 4. The Research Process

3.2. Sample

3.2.1. Sampling in the Quantitative Study

A population is a group of people who share similar specific features (Creswell, 2002). In this study, the population of the research consists of disadvantaged schools and the students in these schools in two districts of province A in the Eastern Anatolia Region between 2008-2016 academic years. Since constraints on time and financial resources often prevent reaching the entire population, a sample is selected from the research group (population) to represent this group. By doing so, the information needed can be accessed more easily and quickly with less cost (De Vaus, 1990). In this study, cluster sampling method was used to determine the study group. In cluster sampling, separate representable clusters are formed for the units and sampling units are randomly selected from each cluster (Acharya et al., 2013).

In some studies, the researcher may have to select samples at two or more stages. The reasons for this may be that the population cannot be completely defined or is quite large. In these cases, the researcher first creates a list of groups or clusters for the situation of the researcher's concern and then selects from these groups or clusters (Creswell, 2014). In this study, disadvantaged schools were clustered by first obtaining a list of disadvantaged schools in two districts from the provincial directorate of national education.

The schools were randomly selected among the school list according to school types: three primary schools, three secondary schools and two high schools. Although there should be eight schools in total, there were five schools in the study since primary and secondary schools were so called separate but still used the same area. Once the schools were selected, all students attending these schools were included in the sample in order to ensure a meaningful representation of population.

. Therefore, 44,289 students from these schools represented the sample of the study. 17,008 of these students are primary and secondary students and 27,281 of them are

high school students. These students were from socioeconomically disadvantaged schools in a province that has a low ranking in Türkiye in terms of academic achievement. Demographic information about primary and secondary school students is given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Information of Primary & Secondary School Students*

		N	%
Gender	Female	8411	49.5
	Male	8597	50.5
School type	Primary school	7461	43.9
	Secondary school	9547	56.1
Schools	A	8765	51.5
	B	3678	21.6
	C	4565	26.8
Grade	4	3690	21.7
	5	3770	22.2
	6	3241	19.1
	7	3181	18.7
	8	3126	18.4
<i>Total</i>		17008	100

When the information of students attending primary and middle school was examined (Table 1), it was seen that out of 17008 students, 8411 were female (49.5%), 8597 were male (50.5%). They were primary school students (n=7461, 43.9%) or middle school students (n=9547, 56.1%). School A had more students (n=8765, 51.5%) than school B (n=3678, 21.6%) and school C (n=4565, 26.8%). Among them, 3690 were 4th grade students (21.7%), 3770 were 5th grade (22.2%), 3241 were 6th grade (19.1%), 3181 were 7th grade (18.7%), and 3126 were 8th grade students (18.4%).

Table 2. *Demographic Information of High School Students*

		N	%
Gender	Female	9909	38.3
	Male	17372	63.7
School type	High school	27281	100
Schools	D	12695	46.5
	E	14586	53.5
Grade	9	9409	34.5
	10	6301	23.1
	11	5706	20.9
	12	5865	21.5
<i>Total</i>		27281	100

When the information of students attending high school was evaluated (Table 2), it was realized of the 27281 students, 9909 were female (38.3%) and 17372 were male (63.7%). Of these, 12695 (46.5%) went to high school D, and 14586 (53.5%) went to high school E. Out of these students, 9409 (34.5%) were 9th grade students, 6301 (23.1%) were 10th grade students, 5706 (20.9%) were 11th grade students, and 5865 (21.5%) were 12th grade students.

3.2.2. Sampling in the Qualitative Study

3.2.2.1. Sample of Teachers and School Principals for the Qualitative Phase of Study

In phenomenological design, the phenomenon determines the participants as well as the approach (Hycner, 1999), and selecting participants based on the purpose of the research is substantial (Greig & Taylor, 1999) while looking for individuals (as cited in Groenewald, 2004). In this context, there are two kinds of participants in this study. One of them is internal stakeholders (teachers and school principals) experiencing the phenomenon and the other one is external stakeholders (academics) good at conceptualizing and expressing a phenomenon.

Teachers and school principals are participants having personally experienced the event, and the subjective meanings created by their experiences in the process were revealed. In this context, the participants in internal stakeholders group consisted of 18 teachers and 14 school principals. These 32 participants have been working in primary, secondary, and high schools in a region with a high population of disadvantaged students in eastern Türkiye. As Neuman (2017) states, the aim of qualitative research methodology is to collect specific events, examples and actions that will clarify and deepen the topic under consideration. In a phenomenological research, the aim is to reach the essence of the phenomenon by reaching enough people who have experienced the phenomenon. In this context, teachers and principals were selected from purposive sampling techniques primarily according to the criterion sampling technique. There are several predetermined criteria in this study. The first criterion is the selection of teachers and principals working in

disadvantaged schools where disadvantaged students are predominant. For this reason, disadvantaged schools (schools with a high number of socioeconomically disadvantaged students) in the records of the Provincial Directorate of National Education were identified and teachers and principals working in these schools were included in the study.

The second criterion was the tenure of the participants. Teachers and principals who were appointed in 2008 and before (with a tenure of more than 13 years) were selected in order to get their evaluation of the system before and after the reform. The last criterion for the teachers and school principals is the grade criterion. Within the framework of the literature review, it was concluded that 1st, 5th and 9th grade teachers were most affected by the 4+4+4 education reform. Therefore, the teachers in the study group worked in these grades in the first years of the reform which played an important role in the selection of the study group. After determining the criteria, snowball technique was used in order to find teachers and school principals who meet these criteria. According to Babbie (1995), Crabtree and Miller (1992), the snowballing technique involves asking one participant to suggest more participants for interviews. Information on the participants of the study was given in Table 3.

Table 3. *Participants of the Study (Teachers and School Principals)*

Teacher	Gender	Group	Experience	School type	Department	Grade
1.	Male	Teacher (T1)	15	Primary school	Primary sch. teacher	1
2.	Male	Teacher (T2)	22	Primary school	Primary sch. teacher	1
3.	Female	Teacher	27	Primary school	Primary sch. teacher	1
4.	Female	Teacher	14	Primary school	Primary sch. teacher	1
5.	Female	Teacher	15	Primary school	Primary sch. teacher	1
6.	Male	Teacher	18	Secondary school	English	5

Table 3. (continued)

7.	Male	Teacher	17	Secondary school	Math	5
8.	Male	Teacher	21	Secondary school	Science & Technology	5
9.	Female	Teacher	24	Secondary school	Math	5
10.	Male	Teacher	28	Secondary school	Science & Technology	5
11.	Female	Teacher	16	Imam-hatip Secondary school	Social Sciences	5
12.	Male	Teacher	21	Anatolian High S.	History	9
13.	Female	Teacher	14	Anatolian High S.	Philosophy	9
14.	Male	Teacher	32	Anatolian High S.	Chemistry	9
15.	Female	Teacher	18	Anatolian High S.	Biology	9
16.	Male	Teacher	20	Imam-hatip High School	Math	9
17.	Male	Teacher	16	Vocational and Technical High S.	Vocational High school Teacher	9
18.	Female	Teacher (T18)	19	Vocational and Technical High S.	Geography	9
19.	Male	Principal (P1)	18	Primary school	Primary school teacher	-
20.	Female	Principal	17	Primary school	Primary school teacher	-
21.	Male	Principal	22	Primary school	Primary school teacher	-
22.	Male	Principal	25	Primary & Secondary school	Primary school teacher	-

Table 3. (continued)

23.	Male	Principal	27	Primary &Secondary school	Math	-
24.	Male	Principal	26	Primary &Secondary school	Social Sciences	-
25.	Male	Principal	32	Primary &Secondary school	Primary school teacher	-
26.	Male	Principal	17	Secondary school	Math	-
27.	Male	Principal	21	Secondary school	Science &Technology	-
28.	Male	Principal	18	Secondary school	Math	-
29.	Male	Principal	28	Anatolian High S.	Chemistry	-
30.	Female	Principal	21	Anatolian High S.	Geography	-
31.	Male	Principal	24	Imam-hatip High School	Literature	-
32.	Male	Principal (P14)	22	Vocational and Technical High S	History	-

There are 32 participants in the study (Table 1). Of the 18 teacher participants, 8 are female and 10 are male. Teachers' working years vary between 14 and 32 years. Most of the teachers have more than 20 years of experience. Six of the participating teachers work in secondary schools and two of them work in Imam-hatip secondary schools. Seven teachers work in high schools, four in Anatolian, two in vocational and technical and one in Imam-hatip high schools. The rest of the teachers work in primary schools. Of the 14 school principal participants, 12 are male and only 2 are female. School principals have between 17 and 35 years of tenure. Three of the school principals work in primary schools, three in secondary schools, four in schools where primary and secondary schools are integrated, two in Anatolian high

schools, one in Imam-hatip high schools and one in Vocational and Technical high schools. In order to evaluate the views of teachers and school principals on the 4+4+4 education reform, teachers and principals working in different school types were reached and diversity was tried to be ensured by paying attention to their different branches.

3.2.2.2. Sample of Academics for the Qualitative Phase of Study

The external stakeholders (academics), on the other hand, are the participants perceiving the 4+4+4 education reform in a different way than teachers and school principals. That is to say, academics are not the ones who have personally experienced the 4+4+4 education reform, yet they have considerable perceptions about the educational reform because they have conducted research on this subject. That is why 16 academics with different titles and positions working in different faculties and departments of universities in Türkiye were selected as participants for this study.

In the current study, a purposive sampling technique was used. Büyüköztürk et al. (2008) explained that a purposeful sampling method enables researchers to gather more useful information while examining an issue. For that reason, participants, academics, were selected according to this technique. Among purposive sampling techniques, criterion sampling was utilized as suggested by Staruss and Corbin (2014) in phenomenological design. Three criteria were identified in this study. The first criterion is that academics need to have published an article on the 4+4+4 education reform or social justice in education (equality of opportunity) in terms of the reform or have supervised a thesis/dissertation on the same topics in previous years. For that reason, I searched on websites such as web of science and google scholar to find academics who have conducted studies on the 4+4+4 education reform and social justice in education. I also found academics who have supervised thesis studies on these issues through the national thesis center displayed master theses or dissertations afterwards I contacted these academics via email and set up an interview schedule.

The second criterion is that the academics are required to have at least 10 years of experience. The reason academics having more than 10-year experience were selected is because it was thought that the academics who have worked before the reform for a few years would better interpret the 4+4+4 education reform process. Furthermore, it is substantial that these academics would be able to comparatively evaluate the students who were accepted to the universities before and after the reform. The last criterion is that academics need to work one of the two different faculties: Faculty of Education and Faculty of Arts & Sciences. Thus, academics can evaluate the 4+4+4 education reform from both educational and sociological points of view.

After finding suitable academics for the criteria on the aforementioned websites, the snowball technique was utilized. According to Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) snowball technique is another important method in phenomenological design because more qualified data can be collected with participants who have already agreed to participate in the research through someone else. In the present study, this technique was used to trace additional academics. Thus, an opportunity was seized to interview more academics who could provide in-depth information on the 4+4+4 education reform. Detailed information about the academics was displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. *Participants of the Study (Academics)*

A	Gender	Group	Experience	Faculty	Department
1.	Female	Asst. Prof.	16	Faculty of Education	Educational Sciences
2.	Male	Professor	28	Faculty of Education	Educational Sciences
3.	Male	Assoc. Prof.	23	Faculty of Education	Educational Sciences
4.	Female	Asst. Prof.	15	Faculty of Education	Educational Sciences
5.	Male	Professor	26	Faculty of Education	Educational Sciences
6.	Male	Assoc. Prof.	18	Faculty of Education	Educational Sciences
7.	Male	Assoc. Prof.	19	Faculty of Education	Elementary & Early Childhood Education

Table 4. (continued)

8.	Female	Asst. Prof.	17	Faculty of Education	Elementary & Early Childhood Education
9.	Female	Professor	27	Faculty of Education	Mathematics and Science Education
10.	Male	Assoc. Prof.	20	Faculty of Education	Mathematics and Science Education
11.	Male	Asst. Prof.	24	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Sociology
12.	Female	Assoc. Prof.	21	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Sociology
13.	Male	Assoc. Prof.	23	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Sociology
14.	Male	Assoc. Prof.	20	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Sociology
15.	Male	Professor	34	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Sociology
16.	Male	Professor	32	Faculty of Arts & Sciences	Sociology

There are 16 participants in the study (Table 4). Of the 16 academics, only six are female and 11 are male. Tenure of academics vary between 15 and 34 years. The number of academics working for more than 20 years is high. Six academics work at Faculty of Arts and Sciences and 10 of the academics work at Faculty of Education. While six academics work in the department of educational sciences, four of them work in the Elementary and early childhood education department at faculty of education. The other six academics, on the other hand, work in sociology department at Faculty of Arts and Sciences. There is no assistant professor among participants in department of sociology. All academics in sociology department have more than 20-year experience while there is only one academic working over 20 years in the department of elementary and early childhood education. Overall, the number of associate professors is proportionally much higher when compared to other titles. On the other hand, the number of female academics is less than male academics.

Among the participants, academics working in the departments of elementary and early childhood education and mathematics and science education were selected to elucidate the situation of the students having problems in the 1st, 5th and 9th grades at schools and the causes of these problems. In addition, the reason for choosing academics in the department of educational sciences and sociology is that they are likely to enrich the study by providing different mindset from political and sociological perspectives.

3.3. Data Collection Tools in the Quantitative Study

In the quantitative method, data collection tools vary according to the research conducted. Document/record review, questionnaire, test, experiment, observation, interview, focus group, checklist, case study, and ethnography are among the methods commonly used to collect data (Mantha, Menassa, & Kamat, 2015). In this study, e-school data recorded between 2008 and 2016 were used as data collection tools.

The raw data registered in the e-school system covers various information about students. One of them is student report cards. These report cards include information such as the student's name and surname, school achievement score, the number of days absent from school in the first semester and the second semester, and the number of books read in both semesters, etc. Through these student report cards in e-school records, the required data such as gender, academic achievement score and student absenteeism were accessed and thus the research questions of the study were answered.

After showing the permissions obtained for the study in the schools where the study was carried out, the computers where the information of the students in the school was recorded were accessed in the presence of the principal or assistant principals. Since the data for this study required looking back at least 12 years and included information from previous periods, it took a long time to access old data.

3.4. Data Collection Tools in the Qualitative Study

In phenomenological studies, data generation is usually done using in-depth and multiple interviews. Apart from these, various methods such as participant observation, action research, focus groups and analysis of personal texts can be used (Creswell, 2018). In this study, semi-structured interviews were made in order to answer the research questions of the study, (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) were conducted with teachers and school principals to comprehend their viewpoints and firsthand knowledge of the 4+4+4 education reform and its implications on disadvantaged students at disadvantaged schools. In addition, the interviews were made with academics in order to understand their perspectives about the 4+4+4 education reform and outcomes of the reform for disadvantaged pupils.

In order to obtain the data for the study, the researcher developed two different interview forms for teachers and school principals and also academics to reveal their perceptions and experiences on the 4+4+4 education reform and its implications for disadvantaged students from different perspectives. These forms are commonly used semi-structured interview form that reveals unexpected aspects of the subject being researched (Grix, 2004). The results of quantitative research were taken into consideration when preparing the interview form. Then, the questions related to students' academic achievement, the number of female students attending school and absenteeism were included and these issues were scrutinized in depth in qualitative research. After the interview form is prepared, it was scrutinized by supervisor and then questions were sent to two experts who are competent in the qualitative research methodologies, have deep knowledge of change and reform in educational organizations and they provided their expertise in the process of scrutinizing the interview questions. Afterwards, the interview form was reshaped in line with the feedback from the experts. Thus, the semi-structured interview form finalized through 15 questions including 6 sub-questions for teachers and school principals (See Appendix A) and 13 questions including 5 sub-questions for academics (See Appendix B). The questions for both groups are parallel. Because different views on the same topic were aimed to be reached.

Before starting interview with the participants, I asked them a few questions about their demographic information. I took notes instead of recording their information. As underlined by Patton (2014), Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016), having a sensitive attitude towards the interviewee contributes to the establishment of trust and a kind of closeness between the interviewer and the interviewees. So, after creating a comfortable environment, interviewees were ready to give answer to open-ended questions. There are guiding questions and probes in the interview form. The sample questions were below: How do you perceive the 4+4+4 education reform? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the 4+4+4 education reform? What are the implications of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students?

3.5. Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Study

In order for scientific research to be accepted, it needs to be valid and reliable at a certain level. Determining the validity and reliability of the data collection tools, research design and data analysis used in research affects the credibility and acceptance of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Since the nature of inquiry is different in qualitative and quantitative research, which have completely different natures, the methods of obtaining validity and reliability are also different (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2015).

It is a common belief that studies should be analyzed in accordance with some criteria in order to have a scientific value; however, there are also many opinions that developing criteria or conducting a study dependent on a criterion is contrary to the nature of qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 2016; Patton, 2014). Unlike quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers emphasize reaching different perspectives instead of reaching a single truth (Patton, 2014; Creswell, 2013). The validity and reliability of the study play an important role in determining the quality of qualitative research (Punch, 2005). Houser (2015) stated that there should be trustworthiness in qualitative research and there are some criteria for this. These criteria given under four headings by Guba and Lincoln (1982) are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility deals with the truthfulness of the meaning obtained (Guba, 1981). There are various methods to enhance credibility. Prolonged involvement, member checking and peer debriefing are among these methods (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). In this study, peer debriefing was used to ensure credibility. Peer debriefing method increases internal validity. Accordingly, expert opinions were obtained from three experts in order to rise internal validity of the study. Two different data were sent to these experts simultaneously and they were asked to analyze the data by creating codes and themes. Two of these experts work at the department of educational sciences and the other one works at the department of basic education and they are familiar with the subject. As a result of the simultaneous coding, harmony was achieved between three coders (Maxwell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Experts provided feedback throughout the process and at the end of the coding process, inter-coder agreement was achieved (Glesne, 2016), and the credibility of the study increased through the feedback (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996; Houser, 2015).

Transferability, another criterion, shows the extent to which the results can be applied to different groups and situations (Guba, 1981). External validity, which is expressed as transferability in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 2016), emphasizes the generalizability of the results. However, the expression of generalization here is that the results of the study can be repeated in similar situations (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011) or that similar events at similar times can give similar results at different times (Merriam, 1998; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). There is no generalization purpose in qualitative research; however, in order to ensure transferability, some criteria should be determined in advance in the selection of participants and the characteristics of the participants and the reasons for their selection should be explained in detail (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

In this study, in order to ensure transferability, participants were selected according to certain criteria (such as working in disadvantaged schools, being appointed before 2008, working in different types of schools or different regions in Türkiye) and the reasons for this were explained in detail. Direct quotations were also employed in this study since doing so would promote transferability by giving the reader the data

in its raw form (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). It is important for validity to present individuals' perceptions, awareness and experiences about the subject by using quotations (Patton, 2014).

To ensure dependability, the most widely known and applied strategy is the triangulation technique. Triangulation is the comparison of the results of two or more data collection methods (e.g. interviews and observations) or two or more data sources (e.g. individual interviews with different group members) (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). In this study, three different data sources were used in this study. Teachers, school principals and academics were interviewed about the same topic (the consequences of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students). Thus, it was possible to scrutinize the issue from multiple perspectives.

Lastly, the confirmability, external reliability, was ensured by audit trail. The audit trail is the reporting of decisions, proposals, procedures and the process of analysis and their complete, rigorous reflection through the study. The aim is to present the evidence for conclusions as much as possible (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Accordingly, the data were recorded on the voice recorder and the notes taken during the interviews were kept in order to ensure confirmability in the study, and these data were supported by the quotations included in the findings of the current study.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection procedure part include both data collection procedure in quantitative study and data collection procedure in qualitative study. Both processes were explained in detail under the relevant section.

3.6.1. Data Collection Procedure in Quantitative Study

The Human Subjects Ethics Committee (HSEC) of Middle East Technical University (METU) gave permission to conduct the study in January, 2020. (Appendix C). After that, the Provincial Directorate of National Education in the province where the

study would be done was asked for approval, and it granted permission for the study to be conducted in March 2020 (see Appendix D). After obtaining the necessary permissions, the researcher had to wait for a while due to the pandemic. When the effects of the pandemic subsided gradually, the researcher went to schools and started collecting stored data. Data were collected in the 2020-2021 academic year between September and March.

After the necessary permissions were taken, the researcher visited the disadvantaged schools randomly selected by clustering method. When she went to school, she explained the data she needed to the school principal. Despite having permission for the research, some principals refused to provide the recorded data. Therefore, the researcher visited the school principals who gave permission to use the data and collected the data from these disadvantaged schools. The appointments were made with the school principals in the schools since the schools were not yet actively opened. When the schools were visited, access to the computers where the data were kept was provided with the aid of the school administrators. Three primary and secondary schools and two high schools were visited at different time periods and the data needed were obtained from the e-school system. Since the aim was to obtain data between 2008 and 2016, the computers of school administrators were used to access the data.

While the data collection process was shorter in primary and secondary schools due to the relatively small number of students, it took longer in high schools due to the large number of students and branches. Although most of the data in primary schools were entered manually in schools, it was not possible to enter all of the data manually because there was a big data set in secondary schools and especially in high schools, so the remaining data were transferred to the hard disk. In order to obtain all of the data, the researcher had to visit the data center several times. Thus, the researcher visited the province where the study was conducted several times within a 6-month period to access all of the the data and the data collection process was completed.

3.6.2. Data Collection Procedure in Qualitative Study

Before collecting the the data, the Human Subjects Ethics Committee at Middle East Technical University (METU) approved this study in January 2020 (see Appendix A). Following that, permission was requested from the Provincial Directorate of National Education in the province where the study would be conducted and Provincial Directorate of National Education gave its consent to carry out the study in March 2020 (see Appendix B). After all permissions were obtained, socioeconomically disadvantaged schools were identified from the school lists in the Provincial Directorate of National Education. Since the pandemic started during this period, interviews were postponed for a while. In the 2021-2022 academic year, the the data were collected. In this process, the interviews which started to be conducted online during the last periods of the pandemic continued face-to-face with teachers and school principals who met the predetermined criteria after the risk decreased between May and October 2021. Before the interviews, the participants were shown the "research consent" and were informed about the purpose of the research, the content of the interview, and the estimated duration of the interview. During the interview, an environment that allowed the interviewees to express their own perceptions freely without any manipulation.

Most of the interviews were conducted as one-on-one interviews with teachers and school principals. They were mostly made in the teachers' room with teachers. When the room was crowded and noisy, the teachers were interviewed in any of the empty classrooms. In addition, interviews were made with school principals in their own room. On the other hand, as some of the data were collected during the last periods of the pandemic, some of the interviews were conducted with the participants through online zoom meetings. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants; however, since four teachers and three school principals did not allow audio recording, these interviews were followed up by taking detailed notes as Bogdan & Biklen (2007) suggested.

Second, the interviews with academics were carried out who met the predetermined criteria were connected with the help of websites and other academics. The

determined participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the interview, and then suitable days were determined for the interview. Most of the interviews were conducted online in order to meet the criterion of academics working in different provinces of different regions in Türkiye. Moreover, since it was a pandemic period, it was not possible to meet the participants face to face for a long time. For that reason, a number of participants express their views through online zoom program. After the negative effects of the pandemic subsided, face-to-face interviews were conducted with academics in Ankara and some other cities. In addition, a group of academics stated that they would attend the national education council to be held in Ankara (December 3-5 in 2021), thus the rest of the interviews were carried out face-to-face with academics attending the 20th national education council. These interviewees were invited to METU and the interviews were made in the classes at METU. Accordingly, the process of data collecting lasted from October 2021 to February 2022.

The interview duration ranged between 38 minutes and at 164 minutes. Taking into consideration all interviews, the average time is approximately 82 minutes. All of the interview sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

3.7. Data Analysis

This section presents how the data were analyzed. According to the order of the study, first the quantitative data and then the qualitative data analysis process was explained.

3.7.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

After all the data were collected, a total of 44,290 student data, including 17,008 primary and secondary school students and 27,282 high school students between 2008-2016 academic years, were entered into the Microsoft Excel file. After the excel file was checked backward and forward, the data entered incorrectly were corrected. Hence, the data control was completed. After that, the data in Excel were

transferred to the SPSS 28 program. Then, the data in SPSS were checked. In light of this control, the missing data were found. As all of the data were copied to the hard disk, the missing data was completed and so no missing data left in the study. To analyze the data, descriptive analysis was used.

Within the scope of the first research question of the study, the 4+4+4 education reform the was examined in terms of school achievement (GPA) variable through the data in Microsoft Excel file. After the grade point average (GPA) was taken and the coding of GPA data was made in the Excel program according to years from 2008 to 2016. After the GPA data were analyzed, the result of the academic achievement analysis was shown with a line graph, one of the graphics in the excel program in different years including both before and after reform.

In line with the second and third research questions of the study, percentage and frequency techniques of descriptive statistics were used. Firstly, the gender variable was scrutinized for the second research question according to descriptive statistics. Through descriptive analysis, the number of male and female students before and after the reform was obtained, the number of students was examined, and the number of students attending school was analyzed descriptively considering the pre and post-reform period to see whether the reform made a positive change in the number of male and particularly female students.

In the basis of the third research question in the study, the absenteeism variable was also examined using percentage and frequency techniques of descriptive statistics as stated before. The number of absent days of the students before and after the reform was investigated to see whether the state of absenteeism changed positively or negatively both before and after the reform. In other words, by looking at the number of absent days, it was examined whether the reform changed students' school attendance positively. By doing so, the collected data were analyzed through descriptive analysis in line with the research questions.

3.7.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis involves organizing the data, creating codes and themes by organizing these data, presenting the data and interpreting them (Creswell, 2013). Data analysis is a complex process of inductive and deductive inferences between concrete data and abstract concepts (Merriam, 2009). In this process, the researcher firstly listened to the 14 recorded interviews and transcribed them verbatim. Since four teachers did not give permission to be audio-recorded, their responses were noted in detail. On the other hand, the audio recordings of 11 school principals were listened to and transcribed, but the answers of three school principals who did not allow the recording were carefully noted and followed. The notes taken from the participants during the interview make an important contribution to the analysis of qualitative data (Lonkila, 1995). These notes were then transferred to the computer.

After that, recordings of 16 academics were listened and transcribed. After the transcription process of all interviews was completed, the researcher carefully read and analyzed all the data and this review process allowed the researcher to see the data as a whole (Bradley, Curry & Devers, 2007). Secondly, code lists were prepared simultaneously by three researchers and initial codes were grouped. In this study, codes were created inductively. In inductive coding, data are generated from raw data (Thomas, 2006). In the process of creating the codes, the researcher used analytical coding. Analytical coding focuses on interpretation and meaning and codes are created accordingly (Richards, 2005).

Finally, themes were identified in line with the generated codes. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest pattern coding at this stage to present the data in smaller pieces. Therefore, the researcher tried to find the themes that best represent the codes. After that, the analysis of the data was done through content analysis. Patton (2014) defines content analysis as the process of capturing meaning in a large data set and making sense of qualitative data. In addition, content analysis aims to reach conclusions beyond the information in written texts and to discover things beyond

what is seen. The data were analyzed in depth and the emerging themes were presented with quotations. Each teacher was identified as T1, T2, ... T18; each the school principal was coded as P1, P2, ... P14; and each academic was defined as A1, A2,A16.

3.8. Limitations

There are three main limitations of the current study that should be considered when evaluating the results. First of all, the raw data of the students in the quantitative part of the study includes only the students attending Anatolian high schools (though qualitative part of the study include all types of schools). This is seen as a limitation of this study and because different schools including disadvantaged pupils could add to the study in order to evaluate the results of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students on a large scale.

Secondly, the current study is limited to student data from the 2008-2016 academic years. The study is a longitudinal study. In order to better understand the before- and after-reform process, the study was examined four years before and four years after the reform. For a more detailed analysis, studies covering a longer time period can be conducted.

Third and last, this study covers only one province in eastern part of Turkiye. Although most of the schools determined by the cluster sampling method were selected by random sampling method, the fact that the sample of the study in the central districts of a province limited the results of the study, so the study could not be generalized to the whole country.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, quantitative and qualitative data analyses were presented within the scope of the research questions. Before proceeding to the results, the missing value analysis was checked. Accordingly, the results of descriptive statistics were reported. Finally, in line with the research questions, the results of the content analysis were presented.

4.1. Quantitative Findings

In this study, the results of the 4+4+4 education reform were analyzed in terms of some variables such as academic achievement, gender and absenteeism. These variables analyzed within the scope of the research questions of the study. The results of the quantitative study are explained below in light of the first, second and third research questions.

4.1.1. Implications of the 4+4+4 Education Reform Regarding Academic Achievement

The 4+4+4 education reform enacted in 2012 has affected all levels of education: primary, secondary and high schools. First of all, when the data for primary and secondary schools were analyzed, it was seen that the 4+4+4 education reform particularly affected the 5th grade, which was primary school before the reform and secondary school afterwards. Relevant information was shown in Figure 5.

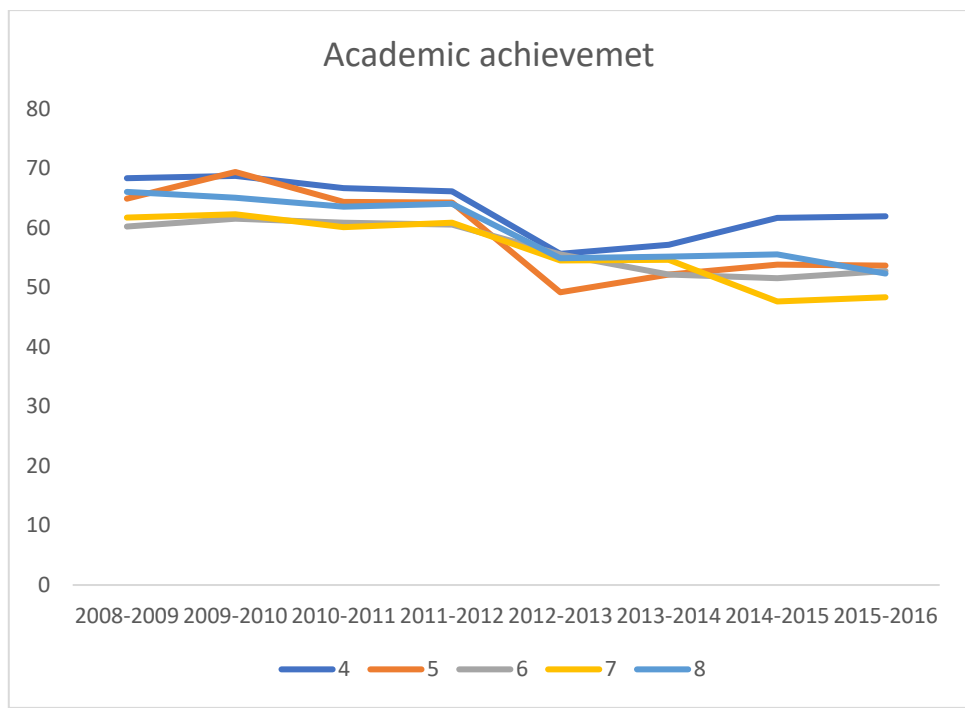


Figure 5. Academic Achievement Outcomes for Primary & Secondary School

When the achievement graph of primary and secondary school students over years was analyzed, it was seen that the 2012-2013 academic year was a breaking point and academic achievement decreased at all levels from 4th to 8th grade (Figure 1). However, the academic achievement of the 5th graders decreased dramatically compared to the other grades. Moreover, when the academic years following 2012 were analyzed on the graph, it was seen that academic achievement partially increased in the following years after the reform but never reached the level of the pre-reform period. All these findings showed that the 4+4+4 reform and the transformation of the 5th grade into a secondary school had a negative impact on academic achievement. Secondly, when the results of the 4+4+4 education reform approved in 2012 were analyzed in terms of academic achievement in high schools over years, it was seen that there was a sudden decline in 2012 at all levels. The information about this issue was displayed in Figure 6.

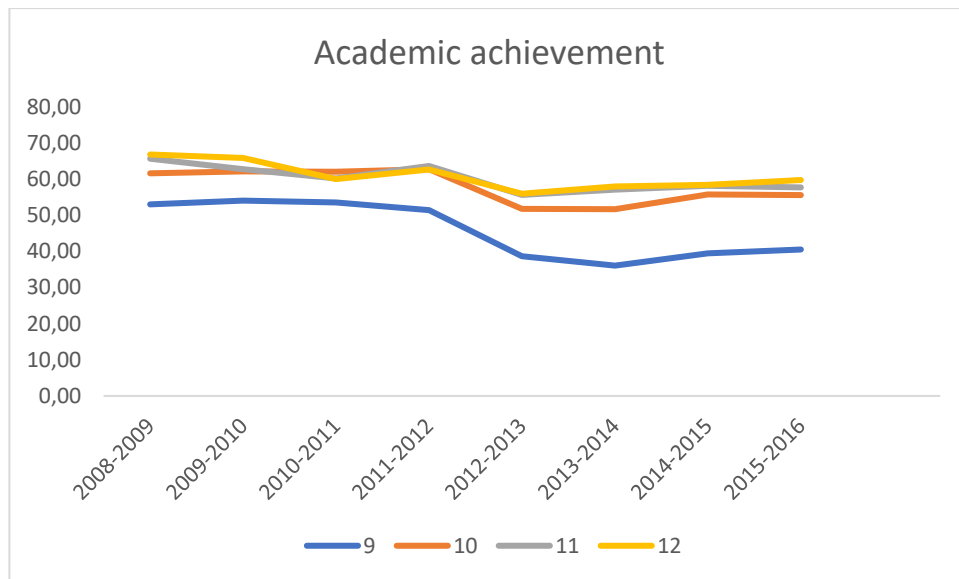


Figure 6. Academic Achievement Outcomes for High School

When the academic achievement graph of high school students according to years was scrutinized, it was understood that students' academic achievement decreased sharply. Comparing 9th grade students with other grades, it was obvious that 9th graders experience academic failure more concretely than other grades such as 10th, 11th, 12th grades. Moreover, after the 4+4+4 education reform was implemented in 2012, it was seen that none of the high school grades had reached the academic achievement levels before the reform was approved. According to these results, the 4+4+4 reform affected adversely academic achievement in high schools and had a negative impact especially on the 9th grade.

4.1.2. Implications of the 4+4+4 Education Reform on Female Students

When the results of the 4+4+4 education reform were analyzed according to the gender, we first looked at the distribution of male and female students before and after the reform. Since the schools were divided into two groups as primary and secondary schools and high schools, the results were evaluated separately for the two groups. Table 5 showed the distribution of primary and secondary school students according to gender.

Table 5. *Gender Distribution of Primary & Secondary School Students*

		Before Reform		After Reform	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	3341	39.7	5070	60.3
	Male	3571	41.5	5026	58.5

According to gender distribution at primary and secondary schools, there were 5070 female students (60.3%) and 5026 male students (58.5%) before reform while there were 3341 female students (39.7%) and 3571 male students (41.5%) before reform. When the distribution was examined it was noticed that the number of both female and male students increased. However, it can be said that the ratio of female students increased more than that of male students enrolled at primary and secondary schools.

Table 6. *Gender Distribution of High School Students*

		Year			
		Before Reform		After Reform	
		N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	4763	48.1	5146	51.9
	Male	8532	49.1	8840	50.9

When the number of high school students participating in the study was evaluated, it was seen that the number of female students increased from 4763 (48.1%) to 5146 (51.9%). Similarly, the number of male students increased up to 8840 (50.9%) from 8532 (49.1%) (Table 6). As can be seen, the number of male and female students increased when the pre- and post-reform periods were compared. However, when the number of male and female students was examined over the years, it was realized that the number of both groups of students decreased after the reform. When the pre- and post-reform period is considered especially in terms of female students according to years, it was noteworthy that the number of female students decreased after the 2012-2013 academic year. The number of female and male high school students over the years was shown in Table 7.

Table 7. *Gender Distribution of High School Students Over Years*

		<i>Gender</i>			
		Female		Male	
		N	%	N	%
Year	2008-2009	1123	33.8	2199	66.2
	2009-2010	1124	35.1	2076	64.9
	2010-2011	1216	35.7	2187	64.3
	2011-2012	1300	38.6	2070	61.4
	2012-2013	1514	36.2	2673	63.8
	2013-2014	1230	35.6	2227	64.4
	2014-2015	1179	37.5	1967	62.5
	2015-2016	1223	38.3	1973	61.7
	Total	9909		17372	

It can be said that the number of female students (n= 1514, 36.2%) and the number of male students (n= 2673, 63.8%) in the 2012-2013 academic year, which was higher than in the years before the reform (Table 7). However, the number of female students dropped from 1514 (36.2%) in 2012, when the reform was implemented, to 1230 (35.6%) just one year later. In parallel, the number of male students dropped from 2673 (63.8%) to 1973 (61.7%) in the years following the reform. When the enrollment rates of boys and girls are analyzed, it is seen that the enrollment rate of boys is higher than the enrollment rate of girls in all academic years.

Regarding the given descriptive statistics, the reform did not lead to an increase in the number of female students who are considered to be more disadvantaged groups. In this case, the results clearly indicated that although the 4+4+4 education reform increased the number of female students in the first years of the reform, it did not have the expected positive impact in the following years for high schools.

4.1.3. Implications of the 4+4+4 Education Reform on Absenteeism

When the results of the 4+4+4 education reform were analyzed in terms of absenteeism, it was observed that students' school attendance decreased both in the first and second semesters after the 4+4+4 education reform. Information on primary and secondary school students' absenteeism before and after the education reform was given in Table 8 and Table 9.

Table 8. *The Distribution of Absenteeism of Primary & Secondary School Students in the 1st Semester Before and After the Reform*

		Before Reform		After Reform	
		N	%	N	%
Absenteeism 1	Full attendance	2023	54.9	1662	45.1
	Between 1 and 9.5	3678	36.9	6289	63.1
	Between 10 and 19.5	625	37.6	1037	62.4
	Between 20 and 39.5	337	41.1	483	58.9
	40 and higher	249	28.5	625	71.5

When the number of days absent in the first semester of the reform was analyzed, it was observed that the number of days for students with full attendance was higher before the reform (n=2023, 54.9%) and decreased after the reform (n=1662, 45.1%). While the number of students with 40 or more days of absenteeism was 249 (28.5%) before the reform, this number increased to 625 (71.5%) after the reform. Considering that 40 or more days of absenteeism has a negative impact on the educational process, the results showed that the 4+4+4 education reform has had a significant impact on the inclusion of students in school.

Table 9. *The Distribution of Absenteeism of Primary & Secondary School Students in the 2nd Semester Before and After the Reform*

		Before Reform		After Reform	
		N	%	N	%
Absenteeism 2	Full attendance	2339	51.5	2206	48.5
	Between 1 and 9.5	3577	38.1	5822	61.9
	Between 10 and 19.5	489	34.7	919	65.3
	Between 20 and 39.5	203	31.8	435	68.2
	40 and higher	304	29.9	714	70.1

When the number of absent days of primary and secondary school students in the second semester after the reform is analyzed, it is seen that the number of days of students with full attendance was higher before the reform (n=2339, 51.5%) but decreased after the reform (n=2206, 48.5%). The number of students who were absent between 20 and 40 days was 203 (31.8%) before the reform. This number

increased to 435 (68.2%) after the reform. While the number of students with 40 or more days of absenteeism was 304 (29.9%) before the reform, this number increased to 714 (70.1%) after the reform. This high rate of absenteeism draws attention to the negative consequences of the 4+4+4 education reform on education.

Table 10. *The Distribution of Absenteeism of High School Students in the 1st Semester Before and After the Reform*

		Year Reform			
		Before Reform		After Reform	
		N	%	N	%
Absenteeism 1	Full attendance	1322	35.0	2460	65.0
	1- 9.5	8417	50.9	8118	49.1
	10- 19.5	2620	55.5	2104	44.5
	20- 39.5	377	44.2	476	55.8
	40+	559	40.3	828	59.7

After the reform, absenteeism rates increased, especially for students who did not attend school for a long time (Table 10). An analysis of students' first semester absenteeism in high school revealed that the number of days of full attendance was lower before the reform (n=1322, 35.0%) and increased after the reform (n=2460, 65.0%). In addition, the number of days of absenteeism between 20 and 40 days, 20 is a criterion for passing the class, increased after the reform (n=476, 55.8%) compared to the before reform (n=377,44.2%). While the number of students with 40 or more days of absenteeism was 559 (40.3%) before the reform, and this number increased to 828 (59.7%) after the reform.

Table 11. *The Distribution of Absenteeism of High School Students in the 2nd Semester Before and After the Reform*

		Year Reform			
		Before Reform		After Reform	
		N	%	N	%
Absenteeism 2	Full	501	16.9	2459	83.1
	1- 9.5	6064	53.1	5354	46.9
	10- 19.5	3633	51.8	3381	48.2
	20- 39.5	2647	59.1	1831	40.9
	40+	450	31.9	961	68.1

The second semester absenteeism of high school students was in parallel with the first semester absenteeism results, with the number of days of full attendance being lower before the reform (n=501, 16.9%) and increasing after the reform (n=2459, 83.1%). Moreover, the number of absent days of at least 20 days, which is a passing criterion, till 40 days decreased after the reform (n=1831, 40.9%) compared to before the reform (n=2647, 59.1%). The number of students with 40 or more days of absenteeism was 450 (31.9%) before the reform; however, this number rose by twofold after the reform (n= 961, 68.1%) after the reform. Considering that students with 40 or more days of absenteeism detach from school, it was seen that the 4+4+4 education reform did not increase the school enrollment rate; on the contrary, it led to an increase in school dropouts, which was one of the negative outcomes of the 4+4+4 education reform.

4.2. Qualitative Findings

In this section, the themes and sub-themes obtained from the data were discussed within the framework of the research questions. The findings reflected the views of two different groups: internal stakeholders (teachers and school principals) and external stakeholders (academics). Since the first one is those who experienced the reform first-hand (teachers and school principals) and the second one is the researchers who observed and researched the reform, it was thought that it would be more useful for the understanding of the subject to exemplify the views of these two groups separately. For this reason, the views of teachers and principals who experienced the reform were given first, followed by the views of academics and their direct quotations. In this context, firstly, three themes of the 4+4+4 education reform were revealed according to views of teachers, school principals and academics. These are: “Views on the 4+4+4 education reform, experiences and observations on the 4+4+4 education reform, implications of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students”. Since academics were not the ones who directly experienced the reform, only one theme differed between teachers and principals and academics. While teachers and principals shared their experiences about the 4+4+4 education reform, academics shared their observations about the reform and their

thoughts reflecting the results of their research on the reform. In addition, there are sub-themes under these main themes. Besides, sub-themes were explained in detail under each theme.

4.2.1. Views on the 4+4+4 Education Reform

Voices of teachers, school principals and academics on the 4+4+4 education reform are obvious parallel. When we consider in-school and out-of-school stakeholders as two separate groups, both groups evaluated the 4+4+4 education reform as a top-down reform and criticized the sudden and unprepared implementation of this reform. Sub-themes such as “large-scaled reform in education, the 4+4+4 education reform as idler pulley, fallacy of the reform, ideological concern over the 4+4+4 education reform, metaphoric mindset related to the 4+4+4 education reform” emerged under the theme “views of the 4+4+4 education reform” in relation to the fourth research question.

In this theme, firstly it was investigated how in-school stakeholders perceived and defined the reform, and in this context, the perspective of teachers and school principals towards the 4+4+4 education reform and their approach to the reform were revealed. These participants evaluated the 4+4+4 education reform as a “large-scale reform”. Most of the teachers and principals stated that the 4+4+4 education reform was a comprehensive reform as it included changes at all primary, secondary, and high school levels. Emphasizing that the reforms made so far generally did not affect all levels, the participants evaluated the 4+4+4 education reform as a reform with a large impact. Although most of the participants did not find this reform successful, they acknowledged that it had a great impact on the education system. The views of teachers and principals on this issue are given below:

"When we look at the reforms so far, 4+4+4 is a bit different because the others did not affect all school levels. For example, the transition to handwriting is a reform in the education system, but in the first phase it only affected primary school students and teachers. Or when the university entrance exam was changed, it only affected high school students and teachers. But when we looked at the 4+4+4 reform, this reform affected

students in primary school, secondary school and high school students in a different way." (T2)

"The 4+4+4 reform has influenced teachers and students at all levels. All students and teachers in the education system have been affected by this system. Primary schools were affected by this reform because of age problems, 5th graders were influenced because of lack of periodical readiness for secondary school, and high schools were affected because of various infrastructure problems." (T12)

"The 4+4+4 education reform has been a reform that has affected all stakeholders. There have been many reforms so far, but I have never seen a reform that went from homes to schools, from schools to provincial directorates of national education and remained on the agenda for so long in my 25 years of professional life. It has been more than 10 years since it was accepted, it is still a reform on the agenda and its effects on many issues are still ongoing." (P4)

In addition, teachers and school principals defined the 4+4+4 education reform as **"idler pulley"**. (This is because the word "idler pulley" is used in daily language for something that repeats itself and has unpleasant consequences). Although the reform is a reform with a wide range of effects, participants underlined that the 4+4+4 reform is like other reforms and it is sudden, unplanned, centralized, top-down and does not cover all students, and in this respect. For that reason, it resembles an idler pulley.

In this context, participants described the 4+4+4 reform as "centralized, unplanned, problematic, uncertain, arbitrary, complex and non-inclusive". While almost all of the participants' evaluations of the education reform centered around negative views, their main criticisms were that the reform was sudden and unprepared, that it was prepared without consulting the stakeholders of education, that it was a top-down reform and that it contained many problems. The criticisms of teachers and principals on this issue are as follows:

"Teachers are one of the most important part in the education system. But nobody asks our opinions about any change. For that reason, most of the changes are unplanned in education system. They don't care us. However, we are people who implement the changes. We know whether any changes can be implemented or not. For example, if they asked us before introducing the reform, we as teachers could tell them 60-month children are not qualified to

learn how to read and write. We could also say that a child in the 5th grade would not be able to adapt to secondary school lessons because he or she was still at concrete operational stage.” (T4)

"As a product of the centralized education system, reforms are top-down. We are going through a complicated process. Even 10 years after the reform, there are still unresolved problems. It is an uncertain process and as a school principal, we need to take the initiative in this process. Otherwise, it is not possible to move forward. Planning is insufficient. We have to find solutions ourselves, especially in the first years of the reform, we were left alone." (P3)

"The 4+4+4 reform came so suddenly that no one even had the chance to resist it. I believe that even Ömer Dinçer, the minister of national education of that period, may not have been aware of this reform. Because if someone knew about it, it would have been mentioned, it would have been reported on the news. We have never heard of it. And here is another proof that it was carried out without a plan: We, as teachers, have to take seminars for the simplest things such as environmental education, sensitivity to climate differences. But you bring in such a large-scale reform and you don't even mention it. It's very strange and definitely not something that was expected or planned." (T17)

Academics also defined the 4+4+4 education reform in parallel with teachers and school principals. The opinions of academics towards the education reform were mostly shaped in a negative sense. The academics also accused the reform of being a top-down reform and agreed that it was an unexpected reform. In addition, academics who claimed that the reform was based on ideological rationales criticized the 4+4+4 education reform for not being an inclusive reform. The conceptual schemes created in line with the common views shared by all participants are shown in Figure 7.

It is clear that the 4+4+4 education reform is mostly perceived as a negative phenomenon as an expression of existing attitudes and beliefs by participants (Figure 1). Accordingly, it is noteworthy that a large number of the participants evaluated the 4+4+4 education reform as a failed reform and claimed that compulsory education did not provide the expected results under the current conditions.

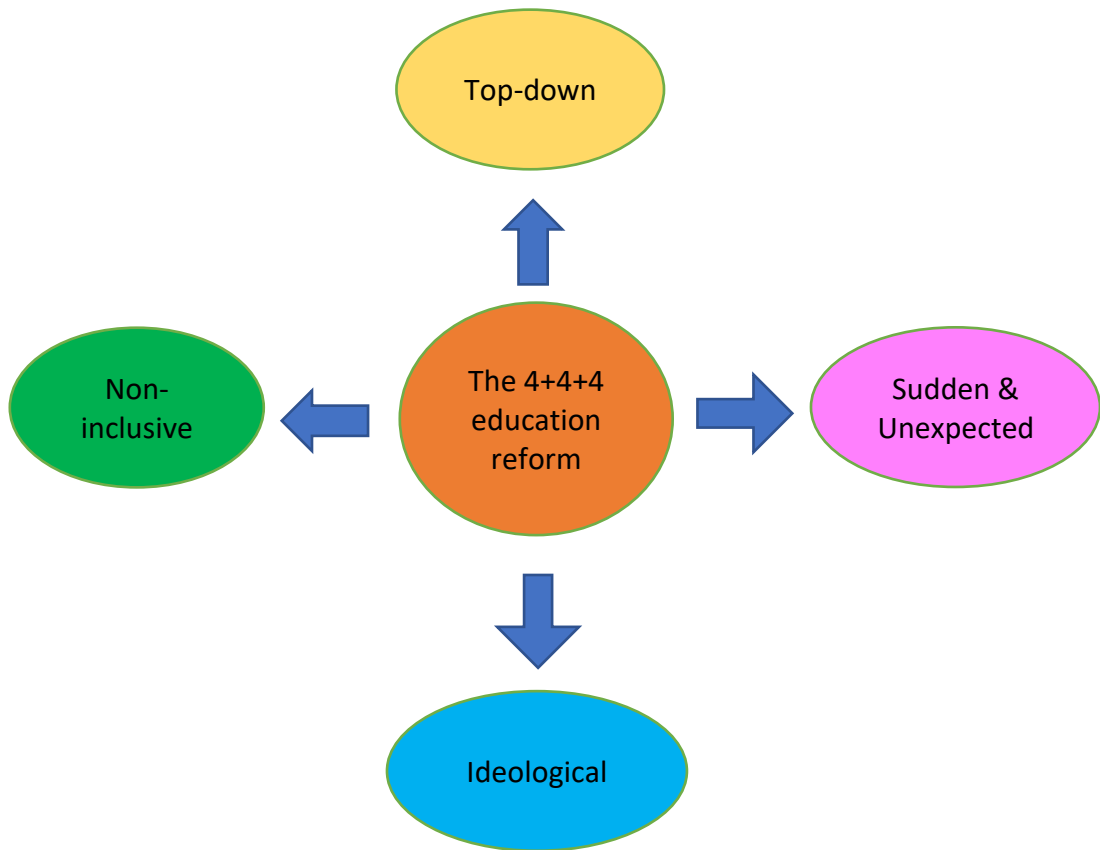


Figure 7. The Conceptual Schemes Related to the 4+4+4 Education Reform

Stating that they could not understand why the 4+4+4 education reform was introduced, the academics explained that the negative consequences of this reform which has been implemented without any preliminary stages will continue to increase over the years. While one of the academics, A7, stated that the 4+4+4 education reform was not inclusive and that he had not witnessed the same reform being in practice for 20 years so far, therefore a new implementation was started without seeing the real results. Another academic expressed her opinions about the 4+4+4 education reform as follows:

"We don't know why we abandoned the previous system. There is no concrete data showing what the current system has achieved for education. There was no needs analysis beforehand and no evaluation analysis afterwards. Even though the central exams reveal how unsuccessful the reform was, policy makers have not made any statements about the negative consequences of the reform. Education reforms show their results in 10-year periods. We have experienced the results of the first 10 years, but we need to experience the

second 10-year period to see the individuals that this reform has brought to society. To my way of thinking, a problematic reform produces flawed products. The reason for this is the sudden and unaccepted decisions taken in the education system."(A1)

Another sub-theme is "fallacy of reform". Under this theme, all three participant groups had similar opinions and nearly all of them clearly stated that they did not see the 4+4+4 education reform as a reform. Participants who presented a critical view of the 4+4+4 education reform emphasized that 4+4+4 was not actually a reform, and claimed that the reform should have different characteristics, but 4+4+4 did not reflect any of them. Teachers and principals generally emphasized the contribution of the reform to the current system by evaluating the situations within the school and claimed that 4+4+4 was not a reform. The views of teachers and principals on the reform fallacy are as follows:

"4+4+4 is not a reform, because reforms should be creative and solve current problems in the system of education, yet the 4+4+4 not only failed to find a solution to the problems in education system, but also add more troubles to the system. For that reason, this cannot be seen as a reform."
(T6)

"I don't consider 4+4+4 as a reform. It is an example of change with various political views underlying it. But it is a well-known fact that reforms create bigger effects. Through the reform, only the duration of education has changed. But there was no change or innovation in the quality of students' learning, in the quality of learning, in the style of teaching. It remained the same as it was before. In short, 4+4+4 is not a real reform, it is an illusion."
(P6)

Academics, on the other hand, assessed the reform from a different perspective and stated that 4+4+4 was not a reform and did not reflect the features that would serve the society. In addition, these participants argued that the reform violated the rights of students and claimed that 4+4+4 was not a reform but a fallacy.

"4+4+4 was not designed as an educational reform, because in reform studies, the answer to which knowledge and skills, which competencies and basic skills students should have been sought. The focus is on what kind of person we want, not what kind of person we want ideologically. Our policy makers could not spare time for this part because they were too busy discussing the ideology of the reform. How literate do I want the person on

the street to be? How much basic math skills do I want him/her to have, how much communication skills do I want him/her to have, how much understanding of the world he/she lives in, how much reading skills do I want him/her to have, these are the questions we should be asking. Do you know what you are actually defining when you ask these questions? You are defining a person at the end of compulsory education. Now you go back and say, what kind of an education process can I use to raise such a person with these competencies, these skills, these equipments, and how many years will it take? At this point, it might not have been 12 years, it might have been 10 years, it might have been 11 years. 4+4+4 is not an example of a reform because it was not planned in detail.” (A5)

“The most important movement that I can call a reform in the education system is the establishment of the village institutes. This is a real reform. Why is it a real reform? First of all, there was a very strong philosophy behind it. Secondly, the organization of the ministry worked very actively and productively for the implementation of this philosophy. In other words, there is the ministry organization in accordance with the philosophy of education. There are local organizations in line with the ministry organization. This is a great deal of cooperation to create a transformation based on a philosophy. I don't think that 4+4+4 is such a reform. Far from any concerns that could disrupt the balance in the system, it was introduced with a purely political rationale and with the logic of creating a desired society.” (A16)

The common point that all participant groups share is that the 4+4+4 education reform is not a reform. Besides, many participants have **“ideological concern over the 4+4+4 education reform”** and these participants criticize the 4+4+4 reform emphasizing that the reform does not contribute to education but through 4+4+4 the government has successfully achieved its political goals. Moreover, the 4+4+4 education reform was seen by many participants as a form of retaliation and a form of revenge for the events of February 28. While it was expected that vocational high schools would open secondary schools, no such step was taken and only Imam-hatip high schools were considered vocational high schools and the secondary school section was opened. Accordingly, the vast majority of participants criticized this situation and the reform was seen as a reflection of the ideological belief of the government. The voices shared by teacher, principal and academic participants on this issue are given respectively below:

“The 4+4+4 reform is an ideological reform. This reform is the reflection of the government's ideology on education. This reform was enacted as a “retaliation” for the events of February 28th. Created with the motive of

taking revenge for 8 years of compulsory education and its consequences, this reform does not benefit neither students nor teachers. A reform that does not carry any benefit cannot be introduced so easily except for ideological reasons." (T1)

"I don't believe the changes are sincerely for the benefit of children. The government has acted in a vengeful manner and the future of many children has been negatively shaped. Many students, especially high school students, have told me that my score is not enough for the high school I want, I don't want to go to an imam hatip high school. I will continue for one year and go to an open high school. And they did so. Particularly students in public schools left school. Children from socioeconomically well-off families were pushed to private schools, but children from lower-class families either dropped out or transferred to so-called open schools. Disadvantaged children in the education system lost their future because of an ideology." (P11)

"The 4+4+4 education reform is an ideological reform. Unfortunately, as a society, we are victims of the ideology advocated by the government. We are sacrificing millions of our children in this bulky system by submitting to whatever policy the head of the government defends and supports. The formless, shapeless, cumbersome system takes our children from us and throws them into a hole."(P7)

According to academics, the 4+4+4 education reform is based on the ideology of the state. Stating that one of the aims of education is to raise desired citizens, these participants underlined that the government will obtain the human profile it wants to raise through education. Academics also emphasized that such political approaches and ideologies have a negative impact on educational institutions. The opinions of a few academics are as follows:

"4+4+4 has created an education system shaped by ideological logic. An education system shaped by ideological logic changes with changes in power. Both governments and administrations impose the education systems they want to raise the kind of people they want to raise on society. 4+4+4 is a reform that has been introduced in exactly this way. Although such ideological and political approaches harm many institutions of society, they harm the education system the most." (A6)

"With the 4+4+4 reform, we see that the current government, beyond the needs of the society, has implemented a regulation aimed at raising new generations that will be politically and ideologically suitable for its own base. Therefore, rather than the needs of the country, the needs of the society and the fact that education is a very important component of upward

mobility, these are regulations made for ideological reasons, and the twelve years of compulsory education and the excessive emphasis on imam hatip schools can be considered efforts to legitimize this." (A2)

A large number of participants emphasized that a successful reform should not be based on political and ideological concerns. According to them, reforms with ideological sanctions are far away from scientific qualities and so it is not feasible to be accepted by the whole society.

Moreover, it was claimed that this ideology perceived differently than it appears in the society would not be supported when it does not provide any benefit to the society and does not meet the expectations of the society, and it was pointed out by the participants that even if the number of schools that are the product of an ideology is relatively higher, families would not prefer these schools. Participants expressed their views on this issue as follows:

"I do not define the 4+4+4 education reform as a successful reform because it failed to influence even the people in its own dominant environment. Even families considered close to the current government as mentally close did not prefer to send their children to these schools. While poor families enrolled their children in different schools because they did not see a future in these schools, wealthy families eliminated imam hatip schools from their preferences in order for their children to receive a better education. Moreover, well-off families sent their children to private schools. Accordingly, an education reform that failed to influence even a group close to its own ideas cannot be considered successful." (P2)

"Education reform should not be based on an ideological base. The main purpose of 4+4+4 is to pave the way for Imam-hatip high schools, establish Imam-hatip secondary schools and increase the number of students who prefer these schools. When we look at it, yes, there are many of these schools, but there are no students demanding them. In other words, there is no student potential at the level they expect. If there was more demand, private schools would have been opened. Why are there no private imam hatip high schools? If there is Robert College, TED College, and many other colleges, why are there no private Imam-hatip colleges? If there is so much demand, why aren't there any? In other words, this is an issue that has been created from a political and ideological point of view rather than the needs of the society." (A11)

As the last sub-theme, the participants were asked to explain “*the metaphoric mindset related to the 4+4+4 education reform*”. Participants explained what they likened the 4+4+4 education reform to in response to this question. Participants produced metaphors such as "labyrinth, mother's slippers, automobile with a flat tire, caravan, puzzle, staircase, chameleon, a Picasso's painting, seed, iceberg, space shuttle, lottery ticket, surprise box" while explaining the 4+4+4 education reform. Although the teachers and school principals who created metaphors about the 4+4+4 education reform made positive analogies, they acknowledged that education stakeholders could not adapt to the reform. They also explained that although the reform was introduced with good intentions, it was not fully matured and therefore had painful consequences. Nevertheless, there are participants who believe that the reform will mature like a seed over time. Some metaphors with positive meanings regarding the images that teachers and principals visualized in their minds about the 4+4+4 education reform and their reasons are given below:

"I think of the 4+4+4 education reform as a Picasso's painting, because in order to understand the painting, one needs to understand the meaning, one also needs to know the paint used in it, one needs to analyze the brush strokes well. In this way, you can develop a relationship with the painting over time. Like a Picasso's painting, 4+4+4 has been talked about and discussed since the day it was put into effect, but it is not fully understood." (T11)

"The 4+4+4 resembles a seed, because a seed does not grow as soon as it is planted in the soil, it needs to mature. When it doesn't grow, you don't immediately pull out the seed and throw it away. You give it some time. That's why I likened the reform to a seed. This reform may have some shortcomings, but I think we should give it time and wait for it to mature and eventually bear fruit." (T2).

"To me, the 4+4+4 education reform is like a slipper thrown by your mother, because it was a slipper thrown with good intentions, but it hurt." (P13)

The metaphors having negative meanings were produced by teachers, school principals and academics in order to criticize the implementations brought through 4+4+4 education reform. Most of the participants argued that the reform has damaged education stakeholders in different ways because it has not addressed pre-existing deficiencies and errors in the education system and because it is not inclusive. Teachers explained that the uncertainty and lack of flexibility were

detrimental to them and claimed that their students would be left out of the education system because they could not easily adapt. Some unusual metaphors criticizing the 4+4+4 education reform created by the participants are given as follows:

"The 4+4+4 education reform resembles a space shuttle, because 4+4+4 represents a discontinuous education. Accordingly, it makes me think that students are moved to secondary school after they complete the fourth grade of primary school, and when they reach the fifth grade, the capsule is separated, similarly, when the secondary school ends, some of the students, are separated for high school, and with each separated capsule, the students are detached from the system." (T15).

"The 4+4+4 reform is similar to an automobile with a flat tire, because you get in and expect it to take you somewhere, but before you get to the destination, the tire explodes and you have to change it, and I don't like it when a tire explodes every twenty meters. Maybe the tires are not the right size, maybe the road is broken, these things need to be investigated and found and the tire should be prevented from exploding and the road should be continued safely. In our education system, the road is continued without solving the problems. Then somewhere the system breaks down. That is why I see this reform as a car with a flat tire that is constantly on the road. As someone who is in that car, I say that all four wheels are flat." (T12)

"From my point of view, education reforms in Türkiye are generally like a patched bundle. But the 4+4+4 reform is the perfect example of this. Because from the very first day it was introduced, something has always been missing. These shortcomings are either changed or some more things are added to them. Because there is no reform that was put forward with participatory views from the beginning, because it does not embrace all layers of society, because it does not cover disadvantaged groups in society. As such, in the process of implementing the reform, deficiencies are constantly being covered up with new patches. The result is a patched bundle." (A14)

Some participants having negative views on the 4+4+4 education reform emphasize the impact of 4+4+4 education reform in terms of educational inequality. The participants stated that with each reform, there is an unnecessary hope that inequalities in education will be eliminated, and unfortunately, this hope ends up being lost in the system. Academics argued that the 4+4+4 education reform made inequalities in education as visible as black and white.

Some of these metaphors were "maze, caravan, lottery ticket, different colored pens, and litmus paper". Examples of metaphors given by the participants are as given below:

"To my way of thinking, the 4+4+4 education reform looks like a labyrinth. Many new regulations have been introduced with this reform, but none of them are clear. Neither teachers, nor students, nor principals know how to navigate the system, the labyrinth. It is very difficult to find the exit in this maze. In my opinion, the maze does not contain signs to guide disadvantaged groups to the exit. Therefore, it is the advantaged groups who reach the exit, while disadvantaged students get lost in the maze." (P8)

"The 4+4+4 education reform seems to me a bit like a litmus paper, it crystallized and sharpened the inequalities in society, making the advantaged more advantaged and the disadvantaged more disadvantaged. Especially in rural areas, small settlements and schools where children from lower income groups attend, this problem was experienced in a much more profound way. I think that the 4+4+4 reform widened the gap in education even more, crystallized it even more, and aggravated inequality even more." (A11)

4.2.2. Experiences and Observations of Teachers, School Principals and Academics on the 4+4+4 Education Reform

In line with the fifth research question, under this theme, sub-themes such as "*virtues and drawbacks of the 4+4+4 education reform, problems arising from the reform, strategies for coping with the problems, and suggestions for an efficacious reform*" were found. Through these sub-themes, the participants explained the advantages and disadvantages of the reform, the problems that the reform caused, the strategies they developed to cope with these problems, and their suggestions for making 4+4+4 more successful reform. In this framework, when the participants were asked about "*the virtues and drawbacks of the 4+4+4 education reform*", they explained positive or negative sides of the reform in terms of some subjects such as the quality of education, discontinuous education, transported education, identification of talents, and increased pressure on teachers, and segregation of the society.

The number of participants who considered the extension of the education period to 12 years as a feature of developed countries is quite high. Most of these participants stated that the content of education is as critical as the duration of education and

stated that an education system that does not develop students can only result in unemployed people with diplomas. A small number of participants argued that 12 years of education is an advantage in every respect. According to them, the longer the duration of education, the higher the schooling rate. In this context, the positive views of teachers and principals on the advantages of the reform are given below:

"Through the 4+4+4 education reform, the duration of education has been extended to 12 years. This is a kind of situation seen in developed countries. The extension of school time is among the criteria of development. For this reason, I consider this is crucial. Many students were not attending high school. Now, these students are studying high school and going to university. At least, they are high school graduates. I see this as an advantage." (T16)

"With 4+4+4, students stay in school for 12 years, thus increasing the duration of schooling, which in turn increased the schooling rate. This is a good success quantitatively. Although qualitative success has not been achieved at the same rate, I find quantitative success valuable in the first stage and I think it is a virtue." (T14)

Participants also mentioned some disadvantages of the 4+4+4 education reform. Transported education was evaluated as one of the disadvantages of the reform by a few participants. The fact that very young children leave home before sunrise in the morning and return home after sunset in the evening due to schooling in dual education has been criticized by teachers and school principals and is considered a significant disadvantage of the reform. The point of views of the participants on this issue is as follows:

"Little children had great difficulties in going to school, because the time was so early for them. Moreover, the practice of transported education increasingly went on. Because each region did not have secondary schools. Particularly after accepting the 4+4+4 education reform, high schools became compulsory and so MoNE began to use transportation system in order to help students to go to high school much more than before. Otherwise, it would not be possible for children living in disadvantaged areas to take education. It is unfortunately a well-known fact that unless you have enough fund or capital in disadvantaged regions, you cannot have high expectations." (P14).

"Before the 4+4+4 education reform was enacted, problems should have been considered and efforts should have been made to solve these problems. However, we can see from the continuation of transportation that children

still have problems accessing school in this century. As a government, you have to anticipate the problems that may arise and try to eliminate them. You cannot base your reforms on the secondary class as you did when you prepared the curriculum. You have to plan reforms with disadvantaged regions and disadvantaged children in mind. Before making high schools compulsory, you should have planned how these children would access the regions where there are no high schools. In the 21st century, a reform cannot be implemented due to deficiencies such as lack of infrastructure and lack of planning. This is a very grievous situation.” (A9)

In addition, some teachers and principals severely criticized the 4+4+4 education reform and claimed that some of the situations that are thought to be positive are in fact negative examples of the reform. According to teachers and principals, the separation of school buildings, which is presented as an advantage in the statements, is actually a problem that is only on paper and has no real-life implications. Although it was stated that primary and secondary school buildings would be separated, no problem-solving step has been taken in this direction despite the years that have passed since the reform. This practice, which would have relieved students, teachers and even school principals, has been ignored for years, and educational stakeholders within the school have had negative experiences for years due to the non-fulfillment of this practice. Participants views on this issue are as follows:

"Actually, the 4+4+4 education reform is completely disadvantageous. With this reform, it was said that primary and secondary school buildings would be separated from each other, and that children and teachers would stay in their own schools; however, this has been done in some schools, but not in our schools here. Because there is no place to separate them. It was not checked whether it was ready or not, whether we had enough materials. The reform was implemented even though there were no classrooms in high schools, even though it was known that schools could not support the reforms. While some important changes could have been advantage, they turned into disadvantages in the system." (T3)

"With the 4+4+4 education reform, education was extended to 12 years. It was called compulsory education, but in fact it is not compulsory at all. In the first years it was introduced, only primary school was compulsory. There were open programs as secondary school and high school. Later, secondary school also became compulsory, but we lost many children in that period. In the 8-year compulsory education, they were at school at least until high school. In the first years of this reform, girls were not sent to school. Boys worked on the streets. The next day a parent came to the school and threatened me, thereby asking why you are disturbing us. I have the right not

to send her to school. In the previous system, they could not do that. They were afraid that they would be penalized, but they are not afraid anymore, and this affected the children the most as always." (P9)

Participants thought the reform as a disadvantage that families make all choices such as the school children would attend and the elective courses they would choose in the secondary school. Moreover, participants criticized the fact that the family's way of thinking affects the child's entire life. The views of teachers and principals who underlined that in the old system, a child who reached the age of 15 could make choices with his/her own will, but with the 4+4+4 education reform, the child's choice was completely eliminated are given below:

"The 4+4+4 reform is a reform that strikes a blow to the free mind of the child. With this reform, society was tried to be shaped in a desired way. Families have received support from schools in order to transfer their political ideas to their children. A child in 5th grade is at most nine years old in this system, and a child at this age cannot decide what he or she wants exactly. Therefore, the family takes on this task and can push the child into a process far beyond the education they should receive. Most of these children were sent to Imam-hatip secondary schools. If they were at high school age, they could have stated that they did not want to go, but the age of nine is not suitable for this." (T10)

"With this reform, the only schools that were easy for students to attend were imam-hatip high schools, and that was a decision taken by the parents' choice. Supposedly, vocational high schools would also be offered. But the secondary school level of vocational high schools was not opened. Students who were supposed to go to vocational schools were able to go at the age of 14, that is, in high school, as before. This made us think that selecting children at an early age under the name of skill development was a cover for Imam-hatip secondary schools. I see 4+4+4 as a project that has achieved its purpose." (P10)

"We went and talked to the principal as teachers about the elective courses. Children's math knowledge is very weak, some children cannot read fast or write well. We said let's put these courses as elective courses and let them benefit the children. The principal completed our 30-hour limit by adding courses and the children had to choose religion lessons again. The aim was not to teach something, it was to impose top-down sanctions." (T9)

"Through the 4+4+4 education reform, they put elective courses in the secondary schools, but the courses need to be chosen were already determined. Because of the sociological structure of this region, parents wanted either religion courses or Kurdish elective courses. Of course, when

we reported the situation to the Provincial directorate of national education, they told us that there were no teachers who could teach Kurdish, and that we should do what we needed and make sure that they would choose courses included in the curriculum by paying attention to the number of teachers who could teach them. The courses that met these conditions were courses such as the Quran and the life of our prophet. So, we did what we were told and made sure that these courses were chosen." (P4)

As another disadvantage, participants emphasized that with the 4+4+4 education reform, society was segregated and students and families were labeled. In schools, especially in the region where the research was conducted, parents were divided into two groups because of elective courses. In the region where Kurds and Turks live together, Turks demanded that religious courses be offered as elective courses, while Kurds demanded that Kurdish, their mother tongue, be offered as elective courses. Although there were many requests for elective courses in Kurdish, teachers and principals turned down the requests of the Kurdish people living there on the grounds that there were not enough teachers. This situation led to negative incidents in the school as well as among the people of the region. Participant views on this issue are given below:

"Students were labeled with the courses they chose, and since it was their parents who made them choose these courses, they were also labeled through their children. Everyone in the school and even in the neighborhood knew who had chosen which course. Those who did not choose religion classes were excluded. There are no Alevi in this region, but I heard from my relatives in other cities that Alevi did not choose these classes. Some families didn't want their children to be friends with these students. In other words, imagine that if you don't choose the imposed elective courses, your origin is revealed and both the children and their families are adversely affected by this situation and excluded from society. Unfortunately, I witnessed a similar situation in the teachers' room at school. A group of teachers, including myself, argued that religion classes would not be beneficial for children and that they should prefer courses that would be more beneficial for them, and therefore were segregated in our school, our own small society." (T7)

"Our school is a bit complex socioculturally. It is different from other schools in the region. While most of the schools here have a majority of Kurdish students, our school has a mix of Kurdish, Turkish, Zaza and Syrian students. Thus, I didn't want to have only one elective. With a little difficulty, I added drama and music classes to the list in addition to religious culture classes. Of course, the children chose fun classes. But we were criticized by both parents and the provincial directorate of national education. Kurdish citizens said I

was not using my authority because I could not add Kurdish lessons, Turks and other ethnic groups complained that I was preventing children from learning religion. People who had been living together for years became enemies. Because of these elective courses, we had neither peace at school nor in the neighborhood." (P10)

Academics explained the segregation of society as one of the disadvantages of the 4+4+4 education reform but argued that this segregation was class-based. According to them, with the 4+4+4 education reform, class differences in society have become even more apparent. Wealthy families opposed the corruption in the education system and enrolled their children in private schools instead of public schools. Thus, children coming from poor families were forced to attend public schools even if they did not like them because they had no other option, while children from secondary class families used a different alternative and enrolled in private schools. The opinions of academics who explain that this situation crystallizes the advantageous and disadvantaged groups in society are as follows:

"There have always been and will always be economically different classes in society. However, I have not witnessed another reform in my professional life where this distinction is seen so clearly. As academics, we owe our present lives to public schools, we have sent our children to public schools for years. But we cannot do the same for our grandchildren. Because public schools can no longer offer quality education. Education has been depleted with meaningless reforms and practices. With the 4+4+4 reform, ideological tendencies dominated rather than increasing academic achievement. The reform is political, the curriculum and elective courses are products of ideology. As such, well-off parents did not want to drag their children into such chaos. Since 2012, the number of private schools has increased. Demand for private schools has increased. There is a supply-demand issue here. People did not want their children to grow up in an ideological framework. They sent their children to schools where they could learn foreign languages instead of compulsory religion classes. This not only caused a class segregation in society but also produced a new inequality." (A2)

As the second sub-theme, teachers and school principals addressed the “**problems arising from the reform**”. Academics, on the other hand, explained their observations about the reform. The experiences and observations of the participants, who mentioned many important points in this regard, varied according to the level of the schools they worked at or they made research. In particular, problems such as

school starting age for 1st grades, 5th grades as a secondary school, and insufficient infrastructure in high schools were pointed out by teachers, principals and academics. All of the participants who expressed their views on these subjects emphasized that these were wrong decisions. The examples concerning the views of teachers, principals, and academics on these issues were given below:

"Students aged 60 and 66 months were enrolled to school. When 72-month-old students who were already of school age enrolled, three different groups of students were placed in the same classroom. Years ago, I worked in a village school where students from first to fifth grade were studying together in the same classroom. I was giving homework to children from different periods according to their grade levels and teaching them at the same time. I had the same problem in the 21st century. They were children of different grades and could be managed somehow, but here you were trying to maintain coordination between students in the same class. They all had the same homework to do, but because their comprehension capacities were different in terms of the period they were in, they couldn't do it. This was one of the biggest problems we had encountered as primary school teachers. In the following years, they realized the gravity of the situation and turned back from their mistake, but it was too late." (T5)

"The starting age for primary education was earlier, resulting in a decision that was not appropriate for the child's developmental and cognitive development. Most children at this age are not even able to perform self-care skills on their own. It is inappropriate to apply this approach that interrupts the progress of the student. Therefore, only children who have completed 72 months should have primary education. Otherwise, a large mass of children will be wasted, which we will see examples of in the future." (A8)

In addition, some teachers made striking explanations about early schooling age. According to them, the 4+4+4 education reform has more negative effects on disadvantaged students. However, students who are not normally considered disadvantaged due to the early starting age were also disadvantaged because of this reform. One of the explanations made by teachers was below:

"With the 4+4+4 education reform, we lost many of our students. This is a disadvantaged region and our school is also disadvantaged, and such an outcome may seem usual here. However, my sister teaches in a different city and in a school where education is supported by conscious parents. She told me that her students are suffering a lot from this reform and that student achievement has dropped. Therefore, I think that with this reform, not only disadvantaged students but also students who are not defined as

disadvantaged have become disadvantaged. If research were conducted on this issue, that is, if the results were analyzed from the year the reform was implemented until they started school and graduated from primary school, I believe that the number of students who failed is quite high." (T6)

Apart from this, one of the issues emphasized by the participants under this sub-theme was that 5th graders became secondary school. All of the participants thought that the inclusion of 5th graders in secondary school is not appropriate for the period they are in. According to the participants, there are many drawbacks for 5th grade students who are still in the concrete operational stage to attend the same school with secondary school students who are in a different stage. Views belonging to the teachers and school principals on the subject were given below:

"The transition of 5th graders to secondary school caused students emotional distress. Before they could get over it, they were faced with secondary school lessons. Students had difficulty in understanding secondary school subjects. As teachers, we had a hard time conveying the subjects to them. I am a Math teacher. I had a lot of difficulties on my own behalf. We were explaining it to students before the reform and even those who did not understand it did not have as much difficulty as 5th grade students. It took a lot of time for them to even realize what X and Y are. They struggled understandably because they came from a very different practice. I think it was a very wrong decision to include 5th graders in secondary school." (T9)

"With this reform, classroom teachers were in a difficult situation. When 5th graders became secondary school, teachers became over-normed and were compulsorily transferred to their sub-branches. This situation, which I characterize as forced exile, pushed many teachers into a challenging situation. My colleagues who worked in primary schools for years complained that they could not even get used to the teacher's room in secondary schools. Even in terms of preparation for the classes, teachers had to take classes within the scope of the minor programs they had taken at university years ago, which was exhausting for them. 4+4+4 is a challenging reform in all respects." (P1)

The academics addressed the issue of 5th grade becoming a secondary school from the perspective of teacher education and focused on the difficulties that this situation would create for both teachers and students. They emphasized that this situation was explained in detail by many pedagogues, but decision-makers did not take these explanations into consideration. Additionally, the academics stated that it was a wrong decision to make the school starting age earlier, but that this wrong decision

was changed in favor of students and teachers, and that they expect that this extremely wrong practice will be changed in the following years with a similar practice.

"In the education system, current teacher training programs are ignored. In the current teacher training programs, primary and secondary school teachers are trained according to different pedagogical principles. Therefore, in the new system, teachers will go beyond their undergraduate education and will have to take responsibility for the education of a group different from the targeted age group. I find it very inconvenient for them to transfer the principles they have not learned to groups they are not familiar with."
(A12)

Another problem frequently mentioned by teachers and principals was that this reform was not suitable because of decrepit infrastructure of schools. The schools that were suitable did not have enough students. In this context, participants criticized both the lack of adequate physical capacity of schools and the infrastructure problem that existed in schools and could not be fixed. In addition, another issue that the participants strongly criticized was the turning of some places in schools into classrooms. The views of teachers and principals on this issue are given below:

"The 4+4+4 reform has worsened the already inadequate opportunities. This unnecessary reform implemented without planning has taken away the opportunities that students did not have. These students are already disadvantaged. The only place where they can get an education is school, and ministers are destroying the places where these children can learn because of unplanned changes and reforms. I am a Chemistry teacher. We can't buy the materials that are already very expensive, so we try to do experiments using the cheap materials we have, but in line with the reform brought by the Ministry of National Education, everything in the school is being turned into a classroom. We still can't use our laboratory effectively even after many years. In my 32 years of teaching, I have seen many changes and reforms, but I have never seen a reform with such devastating consequences like this one."
(T14)

"Our schools still have infrastructure problems. 4+4+4 reform did not solve these problems, on the contrary it increased them. Our smart boards broke down because of the crowded classrooms filled with students who had nothing to do except giving damage to school materials. They attended school because it was compulsory. The students in this region do not have computers or tablets at home. In the pandemic, we had a great deal of trouble with the

students because of consequences. They only had cell phones to follow the lessons. In other words, the only technological device that children could access was the cell phone. They experienced the difficulty of this at home. In schools, not every classroom is connected to the internet in the same way. In some places, smart boards cannot be used because the internet is not detected. If the technology revolution initiated with the FATIH project had been done in a planned way, I am sure the result would have been very different, especially during the pandemic period. But unfortunately, it didn't work, the 4+4+4 reform is a failed implementation like other changes, reforms and projects." (P14)

Under another sub-theme, “**strategies for coping with the problems**” brought about by the reform, teacher participants stated that they were not provided with any support and therefore they tried to cope with the difficulties brought about by the reform in their own ways and through school principals. Teachers claimed they extended the programs they had been using for years for these children and gave up their own methods to make it easier for fifth graders to understand, despite the fact that they typically don't give symbolic rewards to pupils at secondary school. School principals, on the other hand, stated that they tried to support teachers and prepared their schools for change by providing guidance and psychological counseling services to students. The opinions of teachers and school principals about this issue were given below:

"As teachers, we did not receive any help from the Ministry of National Education to implement the reform, neither before nor after the reform. There was no pilot implementation, and we were not given any instructions about the reform. As a primary school teacher, I had lots of difficulties with the 1st graders. We did different activities with students of different age ranges. I asked for help from more experienced classroom teachers. I think I was able to manage the process a little better with their help. Otherwise, I might not have been able to cope with all this." (T4)

"As a secondary school teacher, I had difficulty in getting used to 5th graders as much as they did. I conducted lessons in coordination with primary school teachers for a while. In addition, when they answered the questions correctly, I gave them materials such as candies, chocolates, stars to keep their interest in the lesson alive. Sometimes I was interested in what they needed one by one. Although this wasted time in crowded classes, it gave me a chance to win the children. It was a complicated process." (T9)

"As a school principal, I had heavy workload. I had to discuss so many things with my colleagues. We tried to find the answer to the question of how we

could get through the process without much difficulty by including experienced teachers in the team. We also demanded help from teachers in different schools and offered a short-term training to our teachers in the form of in-service training. Moreover, we ensured for the pupils that the Guidance and Counseling Services worked in an organized and coordinated manner. It was a difficult leadership experience." (P8)

Within the framework of the last sub-theme of the related theme, “**suggestions for an efficacious reform**”, when the participants were asked what could be suggested to avoid similar problems as a result of their experiences, it was seen that all participants agreed that expert opinions should be taken and pilot implementation should be carried out before reforms are implemented. In addition, most of the participants emphasized that the opinions of teachers, who are the actual implementers of reforms, should have been consulted and the essential conditions for change should be prepared before the change is carried out. A few explanations given by the participants on the subject were as follows:

"If they engage in change without involving teachers in the process, it is not possible to get these changes to be accepted. Because the person who implements the change is the teacher. No matter how much you say this by using your authority, if the teacher doesn't want it, they won't do it properly despite your position. It's something similar that even though you don't believe in God, you go to mosque because you are afraid of the elder members of your family. If you do something reluctantly, it will not benefit you or those around you. Coming back to the main issue, they never asked us teachers something related to reforms. They did not ask us "We are planning to change this system and you are the implementers of change and reform, my teachers, what do you think about new system? or the students who will be tested there, what do you think about the system? And our parents, look, this is the system we are going to raise your children in and what do you say? No, they never asked something like that. When even a cow is planned to relocate, its temperature of the new place is checked first. The circumstances are checked in order to control the productivity rate, and so forth. But no study is done on issues that can affect human beings. Because people are not prioritized in our country. However, people are at the center of everything." (P12)

"Before a reform is implemented, first of all, it is necessary to investigate whether the background is suitable for it. You cannot put a tango dress on a farmer. Hence, the pupils, the schools, the teachers, every part effected through reform need to be prepared for it. If there is no preparation, it is very hard to succeed the change itself. Change takes time, if you don't give it the necessary time, you will just do it for the sake of doing it." (P2)

Another issue voiced by the participants was the necessity of creating the essential conditions for change before the change is carried out. A successful reform should remove the negative aspects of the education system. Participants underlined the need for an inclusive education reform as a society and evaluated the reform on the basis of problems such as the quality of education, professional competencies of teachers and dropout rates. The views of participants on this issue are given below:

"As a nation, we need a modern, science-based, self-realized education system. In other words, reforms should not be based on the criteria of individuals, ideologies, thoughts or beliefs. We need to somehow use whatever contemporary science and systems are universal. But before that, I think other problems need to be solved. For example, there is an infrastructure problem, problem of teacher shortage. There is the problem of substitute teachers. Look, most of the schools have substitute teachers. People who graduated from two-year vocational high schools and have an associate degree are now working as temporary teachers throughout Türkiye. This creates the problem of qualified teachers. Teachers are not appointed. I think we need to solve these and similar problems first and then try to change the system." (T13)

"From my point of view, there should have been planning on how to fill compulsory education without giving up on compulsory education. Today, a large number of children are dropping out of school. This is most common in high schools. When we look at it, the highest number of classes are in the 9th grade of high schools and the highest number of dropouts are in these grades. Particularly disadvantaged groups drop out of school because they cannot get additional courses to supplement their school lessons. Then we discuss the problem of child labor. First, we need to develop programs that will make children love school, that will not drive them away from school. Reduce the number of academic courses and include courses in the school curriculum where children can feel free and develop themselves in different areas. Fill in the curricula with interesting topics, increase the quality of education. By doing these things, you can prevent the problems in education, otherwise you will have a useless, wasted youth in front of you." (A3)

4.2.3. Implications of the 4+4+4 Education Reform on Disadvantaged Students

The 4+4+4 reform has had several implications on the education of disadvantaged students. When the implications of the 4+4+4 were asked, the participants provided answers highlighting the negative consequences of the reform and how these consequences are multiplied by other crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The

participants reflected on the implications of the reform on disadvantaged students in terms of different angles. Regarding to the sixth research question, under the theme "Implications of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students", sub-themes such as "*disadvantaged students, being disadvantaged in pandemic, social justice implementations in education, the dark side of the medallion and the impacts of government policies on disadvantaged students from low SES backgrounds* " were presented.

When the teachers and principals who participated in the study were asked who they considered to be "disadvantaged students" and who the most prominent disadvantaged group in Türkiye was, most of the participants identified children from lower SES families as disadvantaged. The second most frequently mentioned disadvantaged group of students were those who had to work and could not have access to school. While many participants characterized any student, who cannot access education as disadvantaged, the most prominent disadvantaged group in Türkiye was socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. The views of teachers and principals on the subject are as follows:

"To my way of thinking, children from families with poor socioeconomic status and having insufficient resources are disadvantaged. Apart from that, children whose schools are far away from where they live, who need transportation, but who walk to school because they do not have the money to pay for the bus are disadvantaged. If you are already transporting too many students from one place to another and if this has become very widespread throughout the country, it means that the schooling rate is insufficient in your country, and insufficient schooling rate creates a serious disadvantage. In this context, girls can be thought as more disadvantaged groups, but in general the most obvious disadvantaged student group in Türkiye is the socioeconomically disadvantaged families" (T10)

"When I evaluate it regionally, the children of families with socioeconomically inadequate budgets are disadvantaged, but other than that, students who are absent or drop out of school, migrant students, disabled students, child laborers, even children of families whose parents are divorced... etc. All these can be considered disadvantaged children. The most prominent disadvantaged group in our country are those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged." (P7)

The academics took a broader perspective on disadvantage and defined disadvantaged students as including girls from conservative families, children living in rural areas, children from families without a certain cultural capital, children accessing school through transportation, children who cannot receive education in their mother tongue, children of divorced parents, refugees, female students and child laborers. Like the other participants, the most disadvantaged group in Türkiye is children from families with lower SES. The views of academics on the subject are as follows:

"The most prominent disadvantaged group in Türkiye is the children of families with low socioeconomic status. Because I think a child from a lower-class family is disadvantaged in many ways. Of course, there are also degrees of disadvantage. For example, girls are considered disadvantaged. Imagine that this girl is the child of a lower-class family, living in a rural area where there is no access to school. Moreover, this girl is Kurdish and cannot receive education in her mother tongue. Look, disadvantage has become insurmountable. This girl would be at the very bottom of disadvantage. But imagine it like this. A girl from a Kurdish but rich family. This child overcomes many disadvantages. How, thanks to the socioeconomic power of her family. If she doesn't understand the lessons, she gets private lessons, she is sent to different schools, resource books are provided and she goes to school. This is how important socioeconomic status is." (A11)

"The most obvious disadvantaged group, in my opinion, are the children of families who lack a specific cultural capital. This also means not having socioeconomic capital. Think about who has access to quality education in Türkiye. Generally, families with high economic and cultural capital have access, and if they have economic capital, they already have social and cultural capital. If families have a high level of readiness and accumulation in this area, this can be returned to children as academic success, but if the family does not have any type of capital, especially economic, cultural and social capital, these families and children are at the greatest disadvantage." (A13)

Under the sub-theme of **“being disadvantaged in pandemic”** “does the disadvantaged status change periodically or according to the current conditions, or does any change or reform maintain the disadvantage of disadvantaged students under all circumstances?” were asked to the participants and all participants highlighted that the pandemic multiplied the impact of negative consequences of the

reform on disadvantaged students. Participant opinions on the subject are given below:

"I think the pandemic period is a time when the peak of being disadvantaged is experienced for me. During the pandemic period, children in this region experienced desperation deeply. We witnessed their lives as teachers. There was no internet at home, no mobile phone. Some of them did not even have a television. In pandemic period, these children were very deprived from knowledge. On the one hand, there were computers, tablets, all kinds of books, personal rooms, private lessons; on the other hand, a house without technology! Don't think how it's possible to have a house like this in the age of technology of the 21st century, I witnessed it unfortunately. And I can say that socioeconomic disadvantage has become the plague of the age with the pandemic." (T17)

"During the pandemic, students, disadvantaged students, only had books distributed by the state. Most of them have seven or eight siblings. There is already no equal opportunity in education. Equality of opportunity, which was tried to be eliminated to some extent, has completely collapsed with the pandemic. After pandemic, children couldn't access to education easily. Academic success decreased and never increased again. Therefore, I honestly think that the pandemic has affected disadvantaged students in an indescribable and irreversible way." (T4)

"Children had a very difficult time during the pandemic. They tried to follow the lessons on EBA TV at home, there were students who could not even find a phone. We couldn't see most of the children after the pandemic, their connection with school was completely disconnected. They were already disadvantaged, but the pandemic aggravated their disadvantages. Imagine that you have been stuck with a knife, but in order not to bleed to death, you keep that knife there even though it hurts. But something happens and the knife goes deeper. Now you have no choice but to remove the knife because it is damaging your organs. That knife needs to be removed through an operation, but because you don't have the money for surgery, you are left to die. This is the effect of the pandemic on disadvantaged students from my point of view." (P12)

"Every innovation, every unexpected event makes disadvantaged groups more disadvantaged. We saw this during the pandemic process. The pandemic has actually made the existing situation more visible. During the pandemic process, the issue of the conditions under which qualified education is realized in terms of not being able to access education has attracted some attention, so a second inequality has emerged for those who experienced inequality in previous situations. Not being able to access resources and being deprived of technological devices created a significant difference between peers. If we make a comparison, there is a big difference between the ability of children in higher academic and socioeconomic groups

to access higher knowledge and improve themselves and other children. The pandemic has revealed this and the disadvantages of disadvantaged groups have multiplied by 2 or even 3 times." (A13)

In “*social justice implementations in education*” sub-theme”, participants stressed the importance of the support provided by the State for socioeconomically disadvantaged students. In this regard, the participants underlined two issues in particular. The first one is the financial support by the State, the second one is educational inequality for disadvantaged pupils in society. Within the scope of financial support, teachers and school principals explained the free distribution of books as an example of equal opportunity in education. One of the teachers explained his opinion on the subject as follows:

"The children we define as disadvantaged need all kinds of financial support. Free books distributed by the state, free meals at schools are very important for them. These children do not have TV, phone or internet in their homes, but they have books. During the pandemic, we saw how important books are for them while they were not going to school. If they did not have books, they could have completely lost their education. In this context, the support of the State is very important for them." (T8)

Some teachers and principals pointed out that this was not actually an example of social justice because the books were distributed to students coming from low SES and were also given to students coming from high SES. The participants argued that the books distributed regardless of the financial adequacy of the students' families create inequality of opportunity rather than equality of opportunity. One principal expressed his view on this issue as follows:

"We cannot mention a fair distribution in terms of giving free books to both the poor and the rich. Equality was tried to be ensured here, but equity could not be created. Instead of giving books to well-off children in public schools or children in private schools, they can buy supplement books for students coming from low SES with the budget allocated to them. This could be a real example of social justice." (P9)

The academics criticized that there are no practices that would cover disadvantaged students and that there is a bureaucratic inequality in the distribution of resources. Emphasizing that being equal is a different concept from being equitable, academics

evaluated the education system as a platform that produces inequality within itself. In addition, the opinions of academics who stated that social justice practices cannot meet the needs of disadvantaged students, and therefore the gap between disadvantaged students and other students is gradually increasing are given below:

" Disadvantaged students are actually supported by the state. For example, there is a concept called school budget. This is a very wide concept, but it is a system developed by the state to publicly fund schools according to the school's resources and socioeconomic situation. Accordingly, practices such as funding the existing school, meeting its needs and providing material support to the school in kind are included in this system. However, these practices are not adequately controlled. For example, you are helping a disadvantaged school. You provide the students there with various supports mentioned above. But the municipality also helps that school and the ministry also helps it. Do you know what occurs this time, as a ministry, you create a new inequality among disadvantaged groups in the name of eliminating inequality." (A3)

"Since the books are provided by the state, it could be a good practice in ensuring equality, but since they are of poor quality, they cannot close the gap between children. Because the child who is only contented and fed with those books lags behind the advantaged children. By distributing free books to both groups of children, the state actually exacerbates the existing inequality. For the children of families from high SES families have access to hundreds of resources. They widen the gap. As you come from a disadvantaged family, your child is forced to buy unqualified books prepared with the logic of how many years ago. These books are never enough to close the gap and eliminate educational inequality in disadvantaged groups." (A2)

"The FATIH project was launched recently with the 4+4+4 education reform. Huge expenditures were made. The age of information, the age of technology, smartboards, a number of expenditures... But in the end, it failed. Tablets were distributed to all students. This is like giving tuxedos to the poor to help them with clothes. There is no sense in giving it without meeting basic needs. Children who have never seen a tablet before in their lives... And tablets are not the primary needs of these children. That resource could have been spent in a much more meaningful way for disadvantaged children. The project failed and the funds of the state were wasted. There has been no improvement in the disadvantaged status of disadvantaged groups, in fact, since this project works better in developed regions with internet infrastructure in central locations, perhaps it has turned into something that reproduces existing differences and inequalities." (A15)

“The dark side of the medallion” as a sub-theme covered the consequences of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students in within the scope of gender,

absenteeism, and academic achievement. Participants focused on these three topics in terms of educational outputs. The positive opinions expressed by the participants regarding the 4+4+4 education reform are mostly related to the schooling of girls. According to them, the 4+4+4 education reform enabled girls to attend high school. Girls who have completed high school and are more self-confident by age have been more persuasive in obtaining their families' permission to go to university, thus the possibility of early marriage has been partially postponed for them, and this is a significant step for girls. Supporting this view, teachers, school principals, and academics stated the following:

"The number of female students increased. This difference was especially noticeable in high schools. Thanks to this reform, girls became free and were not kept at home and were able to start their education life. This is a great transformation for them." (T18)

"After the reform, there was a significant increase in the number of girls enrolled in schools. This was a development that I am happy for the girls. From my point of view, I can say that it is an encouraging step. It means that girls who successfully complete high school find a way to go to university and thus overcome the misfortune that is characteristic of the girls of this region." (P13)

"One of the most important benefits of the 4+4+4 education reform is that it created change for girls. With this reform, girls were able to attend high school. This is actually a very important and big step for girls. A young girl who graduates from high school is more confident in standing up to her family, because there is a big difference between a secondary school and a high school graduate. This reform has positive implications for girls because, especially in disadvantaged areas, girls are not sent to school, are kept at home to take care of children, are employed in the fields and, even worse, are married off at an early age. The 4+4+4 reform aims to eliminate these serious problems, enabling girls who could not go to school and had to drop out of school to attend school, paving the way for them to have a profession, and to some extent, this reform has had the effect of reducing social inequality." (A9)

The rest of the participants, on the other hand, claimed that during the first years of the reform, the number of female students increased, especially in high schools; however, in the following years, these students' enrollments were transferred to open high schools. Namely, there is also the invisible, dark side of the medallion. In addition, these participants emphasized that the number of male students, as well as

female students, decreased due to open high schools and the reform, which actually aimed to increase the schooling rate by ensuring children's attendance, did not fully meet its expectations, especially for disadvantaged students. The view of a teacher who made comment on this issue was as follows:

"The number of male students has decreased over the years as well as female students. The discontinuous education made open high schools an attractive choice. This was because girls could take care of their siblings at home and even get married, while boys could work on the streets and earn money. When we evaluate the situation in this context, it is not ensured the safety for these children, actually in disadvantaged groups, to continue their school life actively. Therefore, the reform does not serve its purposes." (T13)

The teacher and principal participants who claimed that the 4+4+4 education reform had a negative impact on attendance explained that the 4+4+4 education reform did not meet expectations and that the targeted number of active students could not be reached due to the fact that it was interrupted despite being called compulsory education. Moreover, teachers and principals claimed that students who did not attend school for a long time or who could not achieve academic success were directed to open schools and that disadvantaged students were left helpless by being excluded from the system due to open secondary and high schools. One of the teachers, T3, underlined that due to the use of open high school programs as a result of the 4+4+4 education reform, many students dropped out of formal education, thus reducing both the quantity and quality of education.

Academics, on the other hand, stated that while open high schools have negative consequences for disadvantaged students, they provide an advantage for children from upper-class families. Emphasizing that the effects of the same situation on lower and upper-class children are different, academics underlined that while upper-class children can turn the helm of the ship in the direction they want under any circumstances, it is not possible for lower-class children to survive the storm. A striking opinion of an academic summarizing the situation is below:

There are positive and negative sides to anything, but in our country, it is always the wealthy who benefit from the positive sides while it is the poor

who experience the negative sides. I am one of those who believe that this is the case with the open high school. The children of wealthy families continue their education with private lessons and supplementary courses until the last grade of high school. When they reach the end of high school, they drop out of school and transfer to open high school because they believe they can study better without going to school. The additional points they get from open high school are higher. Thus, they manage to get a high score in the university exam and get into a good university. Now let's look at this situation from the other side, from the perspective of the child of the poor. The child of a lower-class family is transferred to open high school voluntarily or by the school. He does not study at home anyway. Due to financial constraints, he cannot take private lessons and family members cannot help him with his studies. The child is completely alienated from school. Since the family also needs working individuals, the child finds a job and works. Thus, the child's right to education, one of the most fundamental rights, is taken away." (A15)

In addition, when teacher and school principal participants were asked whether absenteeism has changed after the 4+4+4 education reform, a large number of participants stated that student absenteeism increased after the reform. Participants claimed that students did not attend school in certain periods before, but after the reform, absenteeism increased more and more because students were able to attend open high schools, and after a while, they dropped out of schools. The opinions of teachers and principals supporting this view are as follows:

"Students in this region go to work in May and return in October. They are usually high school students who go for such a long time. They work in tourism or construction sector. I once asked them why they prefer these jobs and they said that when we go to work in a construction site or a hotel, we don't pay for food and accommodation, so we keep the whole money we work for. Children have to think about these kinds of things. They take on great responsibilities at a young age." (T15)

"There are not many agricultural workers around here, since agriculture is not practiced, but there are children who work summer and winter. There are jobs for every age group in this region. For example, primary school students sell things on the street. Secondary school students go to the plateau and graze animals until the weather gets colder, namely, work as shepherds, high school students go out of the city and find long-term jobs. They mostly go to work in construction. The younger age group is the worst. They are always on the streets. Their school attendance is dramatically low." (P11)

"After the implementation of open secondary and high schools, absenteeism has noticeably increased. This has reduced the schooling rate, but this is a hidden consequence of the reform. Because while the reform is visibly

thought to increase the enrollment rate, it pushes students away from school and out of the education system. This situation is very dangerous for disadvantaged students. Because open high schools may be preferred for religious reasons or for reasons such as keeping girls at home. While this shows that the reform is ideological, it also shows that even if the explicit goal of the reform is not achieved, the ideological hidden goal is achieved.” (P5)

Another issue focused on by the participants is the consequences of the 4+4+4 education reform on "academic achievement". All of the participants stated that they did not think that this reform had a noticeable positive impact on academic achievement. Emphasizing that the achievement in schools has not increased, on the contrary, it has gradually decreased, the student profile is much worse than before, and the number of successful students is gradually decreasing, the teachers claimed that due to the wrong education policy of the government and the wrong practices of 4+4+4, both a failed and a lost generation has been raised. The teacher's opinion on the subject is as follows:

"4+4+4 itself is a failed reform and its failure was officially transferred to students and teachers. Imagine, they started students who could not even fully meet their physical needs in the 1st grade. These children couldn't learn, then they told the teachers that it was enough to pass the class if the students could learn to read and. When they moved to the second grade, they had more difficulties. 5th grade is another period where they have problems. You cannot expect success from these children. Because they were pushed to failure by a reform. I remember, especially in the first years of the reform, we were unproductive, the lessons were inefficient, and the quality dropped. 4+4+4 destroyed a large mass like a weapon. The generation that started school with 4+4+4 is a lost generation, a generation whose future has been taken away. PISA results and local reports show this. The scores of students who were forced to start primary school in the first years of the reform indicate that these students consistently failed." (T8)

In addition, academics consider that academic achievement cannot be increased by a useless reform such as 4+4+4, and that the education system and teacher training programs need to be changed in order to increase academic achievement. Emphasizing that academic achievement has always been low and that schools were at the same academic level before and after the reform, academics claimed that the 4+4+4 education reform did not have a positive impact on academic achievement.

According to many academics, the reason for the academic failure in schools is based on the existence of a centralized education system in the country, the inability of the current education system to enact a reform that is inclusive of all children, and the inadequacy of the programs that prepare teachers, who play an important role in the success of children, for the profession. The opinion of the academic on the subject is as follows

"I do not think that the 4+4+4 reform increases academic achievement because 4+4+4 is not a reform with this power. The factors that will increase success are clear. First of all, the inequality between schools should be eliminated. Then, it is necessary to provide social welfare support to children's families. You cannot do this with a centralized education system. Regional decentralization is essential. Students should be provided with food in schools. A child who cannot eat well is unlikely to be successful. Teachers are one of the most important factors in ensuring academic success. Therefore, teacher training programs need to be revised. Teachers need to adapt themselves to time and technology. The time allocated by the teacher to the student should be increased, and an educational environment where students can take an active role should be provided. Because children who think, question and produce learn. If you raise students like sheep to fit the type of citizen you want, you will not achieve success. 4+4+4 is a reform reflecting the government and it wants an obedient individual. These students cannot achieve success. When we look at PISA results and ERG reports, we see that academic achievement is declining year by year." (A10)

Academics also evaluated this issue by considering the universities and stated that the students who have recently arrived and who are the product of 4+4+4 are more unsuccessful in terms of academic achievement compared to previous years. In addition to this, academics explained that students at universities are apathetic, avoid responsibility and do not reflect a desired student profile. The opinion of the academic on the related issue is as follows:

"Considering that the 4+4+4 education reform was implemented in 2012, these students who started high school at that time first came to university in 2016-2017. In addition, considering that this reform mostly affected primary and secondary schools, that is, secondary school students who were in the 5th grade, we can say that children who were in the 5th grade and who were secondary school at that time are now university students. In the last couple of years, these students have been placed in universities and it is hard to say that these students are more successful due to the impact of the reform. I can even say that there is a more unsuccessful group with you. In general, we

academics are not satisfied with this new student profile. In the past, when you explained something, there was a student profile that was curious, questioning, investigating the reasons and reacting, but now there is a group that just stares at your face with a dull look when you explain a subject. They cannot communicate in a healthy way, they cannot express themselves. They are not able to discuss ideas and thoughts in a classroom environment. I think this is due to the education system. The new profile gives me despair every day." (A4)

Another sub-theme is ***"the impacts of government policies on disadvantaged students from low SES backgrounds"***. Most of the teachers and principals believe that the positive effects of the state on disadvantaged students are disappearing and that educational inequalities have detrimental impacts on disadvantaged students due to inadequate state policies. According to them, socioeconomic inequalities in society negatively affect disadvantaged groups in many ways. The participants stated that one of the outcomes of these inequalities is academic achievement and considered it as an example of injustice that children whose families have difficulty in supporting their education are subjected to the same exams as those who study in colleges. Besides, participants emphasized that education, which used to be seen as a means of class mobility, does not have the same role now. Sample quotations on the subject are as follows:

"There is an education system that makes a student from a secondary school in Hakkari or Şırnak enter the same high school entrance exam with a student from TED college or a student graduated from Robert College enters the same university entrance exam with a student educated in a rural area. Students who take private lessons and are supported with supplementary resources cannot be the same with students whose family can barely afford to send school, even though education is free of charge. There is huge injustice in society." (T1)

"The State does not have a policy for disadvantaged students. For that reason, disadvantaged groups keep on being disadvantaged all the time. The child of a worker cannot easily get a very high-status profession. Somehow, he continues his life in difficulties. When we look back 20 years ago, there was a possibility. My father was also a worker, but I was able to move up a class. I can't think of the same thing for my own child now. I mean, being a member of a higher class, otherwise he will have a profession, I will do my best for that. But I don't know if he will be able to live in better conditions than me. Today, a child of worker can't afford to have private lesson, and they can't get supplementary resources for their child. If they need to pay for

the education, it will be impossible to go to the school. He will probably live in the same conditions as his father.” (P9)

The opinions of the academics who argue that the 4+4+4 education reform, which is the product of a wrong political decision, separates disadvantaged groups from others by building an invisible wall in the education system are as follows:

"The 4+4+4 education reform makes the distinction between students more obvious with its invisible lines. While upper secondary and upper-class families create new ways for their children to mitigate the negative consequences of this reform, the children of poor families perish in the system. This is because children from lower-class families do not have the economic capital to compensate for the deficiencies in the system, and so they resign themselves to their fate and wait for the system to throw them out by invisible forces. Therefore, education guarantees that the children of lower-class families remain in their existing class and cannot move up to the next class, thus perpetuating the existing inequality." (A12)

Evaluating the issue from a sociological perspective, a group of participants argued that education has the power to change the lives of students; however, this power is not used today and disadvantaged groups are condemned to their fate. Moreover, the number of academics who think that the state is no longer a magic wand that will save disadvantaged students from the unfavorable conditions they are in, that there is no longer any belief that disadvantaged students can rise in line with their skills if they are academically successful; on the contrary, the number of academics who think that education has lost its function in this sense is quite high. In addition, participants believe that there is an unequal social structure and that disadvantaged groups will remain disadvantaged under all circumstances within this system. Participant views on this issue are as follows:

"There are many problematic issues regarding disadvantaged students in our education system. Disadvantaged students suffer inequality in many ways in terms of the region they live in, the place they live in, the family that they are a part of, etc. If students are disadvantaged, their life in our education system is similar to the song of Cem Karaca: "You are a worker, and you will be a worker". Even if these children go to university, generally associated degree program, they are still classified as workers when they graduate, because they cannot go to the universities which the children coming from the upper-class or secondary class prefer. Hence, being disadvantage is not only

experienced in primary or secondary school. They finish secondary school and it will continue at high school, high school is over and they go on being disadvantaged at university. But as I said before, life starts after that and the situation of being disadvantage continues in the following periods of their whole life. They cannot get rid of this situation." (P12)

"I believe that schools have the power to realize change and transformation, but I think that this power is not being used anymore. Schools have such a transformative effect and if used correctly, it can be a good advantage. But if used incorrectly, it can turn into a weapon, so it is important how you use it, which is why I attach great importance to schools. In other words, schools can be a tool of change that can lead people to skip their own classes with a qualified, quality system. However, when we look at the current education policies, unfortunately the way for this is blocked. You know, in the current situation, I agree with Karl Marx, if you are a worker, remain a worker. This is because the disadvantaged child goes to a disadvantaged school, receives a disadvantaged education because he/she goes to a disadvantaged school, progresses with low academic success in this education, and in this case, loses the potential to jump through education." (A1)

In addition, the participants were asked whether the 4+4+4 education reform had changed the situation of disadvantaged students. While a small number of participants emphasized that the situation of these students had not changed, nearly all of the participants highlighted that the 4+4+4 education reform make the situation of being disadvantaged students worse. According to participants, the 4+4+4 education reform did not permit the socioeconomic development of disadvantaged groups. Underlining that academic success is closely related to the socioeconomic status of the family, the participants explained that each period has its own inequalities, that this inequality is reproduced with the reform, and that the reforms therefore aggravated the situation of disadvantaged students. The perspective of the school principal and academic participants on the subject is as follows:

"I think the 4+4+4 reform has had a very negative impact on the disadvantaged status of disadvantaged students. It has adversely affected academic achievement, and the lower-class of society. I don't see a successful situation that education can create with its own internal dynamics. As if the children of socioeconomic groups who were academically successful 25 years ago are still successful today, and the children of socioeconomic groups who were unsuccessful are still unsuccessful today. If it were otherwise, education would continue to be a stepping stone for disadvantaged student groups. But unfortunately, it does not have such a function and this situation perpetuates the disadvantage of disadvantaged students." (P5)

"I believe that every period brings its own inequalities. Just as education is intertwined with and fed by politics, academic achievement is also fed by the economy. Just as the government opens certain opportunities to those close to it, it is a well-known fact that education favors families with SES advantages. When we look at the children who are academically successful and graduate from good universities and pursue master's degrees abroad, I am talking about universities that have proven their quality of education, we see that these are the children of at least secondary class, well-off families with high cultural capital. This shows that social, economic and cultural capital in the Bourdieusian sense is a mechanism through which they send their own children there and reproduce their own bureaucracy without sharing it with anyone outside their own habitus. Unfortunately, as the reforms introduced fail to boost academic achievement, disadvantaged children cannot be offered a prosperous life. This aggravates the situation of disadvantage of disadvantaged students." (A2)

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the functions and implications of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students. In this chapter, first, the findings were evaluated in terms of academic achievement, gender and absenteeism variables and the perceptions of different educational stakeholders such as teachers, principals and academicians about the 4+4+4 education reform and its implications on disadvantaged students are discussed in light of the literature. Second, implications for theory research and practice are suggested. Finally, considering the results and limitations of the study, suggestions for further research are made.

5.1. Discussion and Conclusion of the 4+4+4 Education Reform and Academic Achievement

The current study examined the academic achievement of socioeconomically disadvantaged students before and after the reform. The findings revealed that the 4+4+4 education reform adversely affected all levels of education. According to the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study, the students most affected by the reform are 1st, 5th, and 9th grade students. When the literature is examined, it can be observed that the changes brought by this reform especially affected the same grades in primary, secondary, and high schools. According to the findings of the study, the early school starting age applied in the 1st grades caused many children to have academic problems. Kılıç (2014), Sarioğlu (2016), Senturk (2016) also reached similar results in their studies. In 5th grade, students' inability to adapt to secondary school made it difficult for them to understand the lessons, which negatively affected their academic success in this study. The studies of Çelebi and Narinalp (2020) and

Eğerci (2019) also have similar results. In high schools, 9th graders had to study in overcrowded classes as a result of unplanned practices, which had a negative impact on their academic achievement. According to Civriz (2019) and Temizkalp (2019) supported the negative effects of overcrowded classes on academic success. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the interview results obtained from teachers, school principals and academics support the idea that the reform did not produce the desired results.

In this study, the results of the qualitative analysis of the views of teachers, school principals, and academics also highlighted that the reform did not create the desired results for socioeconomically disadvantaged students. According to the results of the study, all stakeholders (teachers, school principals and academicians) agreed that the 4+4+4 education reform was a top-down reform and that it was introduced in a sudden and unplanned manner. In fact, according to the participants, the reform was introduced so abruptly that even the minister of national education may have known about it at the last minute. Numerous studies confirm that the new education system was prepared in an unplanned way and put into effect suddenly (Akbaşı & Üredi, 2014; Bay et al., 2013; Cerit et al., 2014; Dalkıran, 2018; Ertuğ, 2019; Güngör & Demir, 2017; Kaya et al., 2015; Turan, 2018). In addition, teachers stated that there was no pilot implementation of the 4+4+4 education reform and that they were not even informed about this reform. It is a remarkable finding that the reform was introduced in a top-down manner without giving any information to teachers, who are the implementers of the reform. Because it is known that teachers play an important role in the success of educational reforms (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). The fact that 4+4+4 was introduced without any pre-plan, suggests that it does not satisfy the key characteristics of educational reform. Therefore, it may not be categorized as a reform by definition. Harris (2011) also explained in her study that the fact that many approaches to reform and change are top-down and imposed on schools without paying attention to the creation of sufficient capacity for change or thinking about the implementation process causes practitioners to perceive it as a fallacy of change.

Academic achievement is an important indicator in the evaluation of education systems. While monitoring a change in the education system, the academic achievement of students is also observed and academic achievement of students plays an important role in evaluation (Beaton et al., 1999; Ross & Jürgens Genevois, 2006). In this context, the academic achievement criterion was considered important in this study while evaluating the 4+4+4 education reform. In this study, the 1st grade was not evaluated in this study because there are no achievement scores for the 1st grade in e-school records. However, the qualitative findings of the study emphasized that the early starting age of the first grade with the 4+4+4 education reform was very hard for students and that adapting to this process was a challenging process for both students and teachers. Moreover, teachers shared striking information that these students who started school at an early age are not academically successful in their school life. The results of the studies carried out by Dağ (2017) and Şahin et al. (2022) support the views of the teachers in this study on the academic achievement of students who start school between 60-66 months in the following years. In addition, while the teachers in this study stated that the reforms generally affected disadvantaged students, they asserted that the early school starting age implemented through the 4+4+4 education reform adversely affected all first-grade students in the education system and put them in a disadvantaged position.

When the 5th grade academic achievement graph was analyzed, it was seen that academic achievement decreased with the reform in all 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. However, the drop in academic achievement was the sharpest in the 5th grade. The reason for this change may be that 5th graders became secondary school with the 4+4+4 reform. Because it is possible that children who cannot adapt to this new situation may have problems in understanding secondary school lessons, and this situation may negatively affect their academic achievement. Additionally, Kaştan and Kaştan (2016) and Özkan (2019) pointed out in their studies that secondary school teachers expressed that 5th grade students had difficulty understanding some course subjects. In addition, some previous studies have revealed that 5th grade students have difficulties communicating with students and teachers about being in a secondary school (Çoruk, 2019; Demir, 2014; Gültekin,

2016; Karabıyıkoglu, 2018; Tura, 2018; Yardibi, 2017). It is surprising that the same problem (5th grade problem) has still persisted in the 10th year of the reform. When the results of the qualitative findings in this study were analyzed, it can be seen that teachers, principals and academicians also criticized this implementation. Furthermore, they considered that it was not a correct way of practice for secondary schools to be in the 5th grade. According to them, as these students are in the concrete operational stage (Piaget, 1971), they are not suitable for the profile of secondary school students and should not be expected to have the competencies of secondary school students.

As emphasized by many teachers in this study, 5th grade students, who have not yet entered the formal operational stage, have not gained the skills that should be acquired in secondary school. There are some studies (Metin, 2017; Özenç et al., 2016; Özdemir, 2018) suggesting in the literature that 5th grade students are not emotionally ready to be secondary school students. Besides, it might be understood that secondary school teachers also suffer from the issue of 5th graders becoming secondary school students. Most teachers stated that 5th graders could not grow up and that they still had childish attitudes, which made it difficult for them in subjects such as teaching and classroom management (Göktaş, 2018; İzci & Göktaş, 2014).

It would be intriguing to consider the 4+4+4 education reform as a method that is at odds with pupils' cognitive development, but this is the reality. Because the 8-year continuous education was criticized on the grounds that it did not pay attention to the age groups and individual differences of students and due to this deficiency, the need for a new structure in the education system was emphasized and the 4+4+4 education reform was introduced (Peker-Ünal, 2013). However, with the 4+4+4 education reform, children in three different age groups (60-66-72 months) were exposed to schooling in the same classroom without considering their individual differences, while children in the 5th grade were included in secondary school without considering the stages of students. In parallel with the findings of this study, Boz and Yıldırım (2017) and Bayyurt (2014) thought that the cognitive stages of the students are substantial and effect learning stages. Based on these practices, it is possible to

say that the government has repeated a wrong practice that was criticized in the previous education system through the 4+4+4 education reform.

When the academic achievement of high school students was analyzed in the study, the results showed that there was a sharp decline in the 2012-2013 academic year when the reform was implemented. When the following years were scrutinized, it was observed that academic achievement in high schools did not reach the level before the reform at any level. One reason for this may be that in the early years of the reform, and especially in the 9th grade, enrollment in previously non-compulsory high school education increased, leading to overcrowded high schools. Considering the inverse relationship between overcrowded class sizes and academic achievement (Uzun & Bökeoğlu, 2019; Yaşar, 2018), it is possible that 9th graders have low academic achievement.

Moreover, since the study was conducted in disadvantaged schools, it is possible to argue that disadvantaged students may be affected by negative situations much more than other students. Because while students with conscious families about education can complete their learning gaps with private lessons or supplementary resources even if they study in crowded classes, disadvantaged children do not have such an opportunity. In this case, education becomes a tool to maintain inequalities (Dündar & Hesapçioğlu, 2011). From this point of view, it is possible to say that crowded classrooms reproduce educational inequalities, especially in disadvantaged regions.

Dinçer and Uysal-Kolaşin (2009) emphasize that inequality in education is considered in two dimensions: access to education and quality of education. While schooling rates are observed for access to education, academic achievement is assessed for the quality of education. As can be understood from this distinction, the quality of education plays an important role in measuring academic achievement. Especially in disadvantaged regions, the quality of education is as important as access to education because although providing access to education is important for disadvantaged students, it is not enough. When these students are not provided with quality education, they may feel inequality more deeply and may be left out of the

education system. In parallel with this view, Güner et al. (2014) underlined that the results of exams such as PISA, TIMMS and PIRLS, which are among the determinants of inequalities in the quality of education, further deepen the situation of children from families from lower socioeconomic classes.

As the results of the qualitative analysis indicated, this unprepared reform led to difficulties in implementation due to the lack of infrastructure. The problem of overcrowded classrooms could not be solved even with the turning of important educational spaces such as laboratories and libraries into classrooms. Participant teachers working in schools with disadvantaged students emphasized that students do not receive education under equal conditions with the students studying in very good high schools. Students studying in disadvantaged regions and schools take the same university exam and it is unfair to expect the same performance from these disadvantaged students. Principals also emphasized that these inequalities in education keep the students in the class they are in and that disadvantaged children remain disadvantaged throughout their lives and that education does not have the power to change their situation. In addition, academicians emphasized that education is actually a very powerful tool for transformation and that there have been examples of this in the past, but the current education system does not allow this transformation. The qualitative findings on the retraining impact of education on the social mobility of disadvantaged students were verified by other scholars in Türkiye. For example, Kesik and Bayram (2015) concluded in their study that education has lost its effectiveness in ensuring social justice and equality.

In this study, participant views supported the conflict theory's arguments regarding the field of education. The participants emphasize that there is no equal opportunity in education in disadvantaged schools. Moreover, when asked who is the most obvious disadvantaged student group in this study, the academics gave a striking answer the children of families who do not have economic capital as well as insufficient cultural and social capital. This explanation is parallel to Bourdieu's explanation for inequalities. Bourdieu (2000) stated that children come from different backgrounds with different capitals in their backpacks, even if they go to

the same schools and even to the same classes, and this is an important factor in the creation of inequality among students (Çelik, 2021; James, 2015; Lee et al., 2020; Thomson, 2020). Consistent with Bourdieu's explanations, the academicians in the current study revealed that disadvantaged students are more affected by the even small changes in the education system adversely than other students. This is because while children coming from families from middle or upper socioeconomic classes can manage the situation with supplementary support and resources, children from lower-class families do not have such a chance. While it was expected that the new reforms in the education system would include sanctions that would at least ensure equal opportunity in education for disadvantaged students, it can be argued that the disadvantages of the disadvantaged have increased with the reform practices. In this sense, a school principal in the study described the 4+4+4 education reform as a labyrinth, while an academic saw it as a litmus paper. According to the principal there are no signs that will help children who are trapped in a maze with the reform to get out of that maze. It is the children of middle-class and upper-class families who have these signs and can benefit from them. In addition, an academician participant claimed that the 4+4+4 education reform separates disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in schools, just like a litmus paper separates acid and alkali. As can be seen, despite their differences, both metaphors point out that the 4+4+4 education reform does not benefit disadvantaged students and endangers their life in terms of education, economic, and social ways.

All education stakeholders in this study used the pandemic as an example of an event pattern that clearly demonstrates disadvantage and stated that disadvantage reached its peak during the pandemic and disadvantaged children experienced desperation deeply during the pandemic. Emphasizing the importance of books, especially for these children who are deprived of technological devices such as computers and phones, the common consensus among the participants was that the pandemic affected disadvantaged students in an indescribable and irreversible way and deepened educational inequalities. Besides, studies in the literature have provided evidence consistent with the pandemic-related findings of this study (Barnova et al., 2021; Dee & Murphy, 2021; Ertuğ & Ozan, 2021; Sahlberg, 2020; Themane

&Mabasa, 2022). Stating that the education system was already in a crisis before the pandemic, Yıldız et al. (2020) underlined that this crisis worsened with the pandemic. Frohn (2021) and West and Lake (2021) also asserted that the situation of disadvantaged students has impeded after pandemic crisis and these pupils have become more and more vulnerable. When considering the COVID-19 pandemic's potential effects, it is apparent that the epidemic will almost certainly aggravate already-existing educational inequality all over the world (González & Bonal, 2021; Frohn, 2021).

Based on these results, it can be argued that the current practice of schooling invalidates the claims of the functionalist theory and eliminates the fact that education can move disadvantaged groups to an upper-class (Giroux, 2001). At least for the studied group of students, the results verify the core arguments of conflict theory. Conflict theory asserts that education will not allow students to move from their current status to a higher status, and that a person from the lower-class will not even be able to move to the middle-class, and therefore the existing inequalities will continue to persist in a life of people (Collins, 1971). For instance, Bowles and Gintis (1976) argue that the education system reproduces the class system to which one belongs. Bourdieu (2000) examines the reproduction of educational inequalities through education. The social stratum and unequal structure of individuals are legitimized through educational institutions. Conflict theorists even argue that this inequitable cycle will last a lifetime that the child of a worker will also be a worker, so that one cannot provide a better life for one's child than the father provided for himself (Piketty, 2000). In parallel with this idea, Willis (1977) asserts that children coming from lower-classes have a poor chance of social mobility. This is the path that education has set for disadvantaged families and children today (Bowles and Gintis, 2003). It would not be wrong to say that the number of disadvantaged children who turn their lives in a different direction and shape their lives through education is almost negligible. In other words, it is possible to say that education is no longer a rescue for disadvantaged children and that these children are lost in the inequalities reproduced through education. Blackledge and Hunt (1991), Cleaver (2005) also discussed similar consequences in their studies. The studies of Bernstein

(1975), Bourdieu and Passeron (2000), Freire (1996), Gidens (2005), Rowls (1971) have also noteworthy studies in terms of educational inequalities.

5.2. Discussion and Conclusion of the 4+4+4 Education Reform and Schooling of Girls

The results of this study indicated that the number of girls and boys enrolled in school increased in both secondary and high schools before and after the reform. However, after this increase, the result did not change and the number of male students attending school continued to outnumber female students. The results show that girls and boys do not benefit equally from education.

The inequality between girls and boys in accessing educational opportunities is obvious in Türkiye. Although Türkiye has achieved a quantitative increase in education, it has not fully succeeded in ensuring access to schooling for girls (Yıldırım et al., 2018). The roles assigned to men and women in the country are an important determinant of this inequality (Kurttaş, 2021). Some of the responsibilities assigned to girls include helping with housework, working in the garden, and taking care of their siblings at home, and these obligations may have an impact on their low schooling rates.

According to the World Bank (2010) report, gender is the most prominent determinant of school dropout in Türkiye. However, girls are more disadvantaged than boys and this is not geographically homogenously distributed across the country. The disadvantage is more pronounced in the eastern regions in Türkiye. In addition, girls growing up in rural areas are less likely to attend school than their peers. Therefore, it is possible to say that girls in rural areas, who are forced into a different life than their urban peers, are in a more disadvantaged position. The Eastern Anatolia region, where the study was conducted, is still one of the regions where the number of disadvantaged students is high, academic achievement is low and disadvantage is intensely experienced. Girls in this region live in more disadvantaged conditions compared to many other regions (Özaydınlık, 2014). In

parallel with this finding, the results of the qualitative analysis in this study indicated that there are degrees of disadvantage; for example, one of the academics asserted that a child coming from a family with a low socioeconomic status is considered disadvantaged, whereas a girl coming from a family with a low socioeconomic status is considered more disadvantaged than the other. Moreover, if this girl comes from a lower socioeconomic class, lives in rural areas and is Kurdish, she is considered to be much more disadvantaged than the other two cases. However, even if the daughter of a socioeconomically wealthy family does not speak Turkish as her mother tongue, she will close that gap and have the opportunity to succeed in the education system because she comes from a wealthy family. Korkmaz and Aygül (2018) stated that there is degree of being disadvantaged in their studies. This perspective shows that coming from a socioeconomically well-off family removes the visibility of many disadvantages. Therefore, the education of socioeconomically disadvantaged students should be funded by the state (Demirbilek et al., 2021). In this study, participants similarly advocated that economic inequalities among students should be addressed through state intervention, but emphasized the importance of paying attention to the concepts of equity and equality while ensuring social justice. These concepts are important for the participants because providing the same financial subsidies to everyone to be equal may create new inequalities. For example, when books are distributed free of charge to the wealthy and poor, affluent families can transfer the money they would have spent on school books to additional resources. For this reason, some participants believed that taking book fees from wealthy families and providing extra resources to the children of poor families with this money would provide more social justice in education (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Polat & Özan, 2020). Consistent with the findings of this study, Young (2006) explained that the unfair distribution of resources would not ensure equality of opportunity, but rather perpetuate existing inequality in education.

The results of the study for female students revealed that the schooling rate of female students may be a good indicator in terms of equality of opportunity. However, this indicator needs to be interpreted with caution, otherwise the results may be misleading in general. That is to say, when the results of the current study were

evaluated before and after the reform, the number of female students seemed to have increased after the reform. In fact, the number of female students increased from 1300 just before the reform to 1514 in the year the reform was implemented in the current study. Although the number of girls seemed to increase in an overall analysis, a more comprehensive evaluation by years showed that the reform did not have the expected effect. The number of female students, which had reached 1514 (36.2%) after the reform, dropped again to 1230 (35.6%) just one year after the reform. In this context, the results of the current study indicated that in the following years after the 4+4+4 education reform was put into practice, the number of female students decreased in the following years and never reached the number of female students just the reform was implemented. Although there is a similar situation for male students, it is observed that the number of male students outnumbered the number of female students in all years between 2008 and 2016. It can be said that the reason for this is again inequality of opportunity based on gender in education.

According to the current study, the school level with the smallest difference in terms of schooling between girls and boys is primary school. This is followed by secondary school. However, at the high school level, the gap between girls and boys increased significantly. In other words, while there is no striking difference between the number of male and female students in primary and secondary schools, the difference between male and female students at the high school level is almost double the number of female students. This situation is similar both before and after the reform.

While the 4+4+4 education reform was expected to have an impact on the last 4 as part of the 12-year compulsory education, the expected impact was not seen at this level. With high schools becoming compulsory, it was expected that the number of students in high schools would increase and thus the gap between the number of girls and boys would decrease. However, when the number of male and female students in high schools before and after the reform was scrutinized, it was observed that there was no positive change in the number of students after the reform. In fact, when the distribution by years was analyzed, it was found that while the number of students

enrolled in school decreased, the difference in the number of male and female students increased. In parallel with the results of this study, Gürel and Kartal (2015) pointed out that while the enrollment rate at lower levels of education increases year by year, the enrollment rate decreases as the level of education increases.

When the qualitative results of the study were analyzed, results supporting and contradicting the quantitative findings were obtained. Similar results can be found in positive (Giren, 2021; Özenç & Memiş, 2012; Doğan et al., 2014) and negative (Güven, 2012; Ercan, 2016; Özaydınlık, 2014) opinions on the schooling of girls in the literature.

It was observed that the participants who expressed negative opinions on many issues related to the 4+4+4 education reform differed on the issue of schooling for girls. Some participants, albeit in small numbers, stated that the 4+4+4 education reform provided girls with access to schooling, which was especially advantageous for girls in high schools. A large number of participants, on the other hand, expressed opinions that supported the quantitative findings of the current study. According to these participants, schooling rates for girls have not actually increased. Just like the other side of the medallion, contrary to what is seen, female students are detached from education due to the effect of open schools.

Contrary to the findings of this study and the researchers who argue that the reform has negative outcomes, for example, some studies claim that the number of female students has increased after the 4+4+4 education reform, thus the reform has positive effects for female students (Doğan et al., 2014; Kayıp & Kartal, 2021; Kasa & Ersöz, 2016). On the other hand, as a striking finding, Aybek and Aslan (2015) criticize the positive results of the 4+4+4 education reform on the schooling rate of girls and argue that the 4+4+4 education reform hinders access to the right to education and creates inequality in terms of schooling to the detriment of children from lower socioeconomic levels. Moreover, the results of the qualitative analysis of this study showed that in disadvantaged areas, girls are not sent to school because they help with housework, take care of their siblings, and work in the gardens. In addition,

some of the participants' views on female students were that they were not sent to school and married at an early age. Obviously, girls are affected by the negative conditions in life much more than boys. In other words, unfavorable conditions such as low-income level, low level of parental education and the size of the household hinder equality of opportunity and adversely affect access to education for girls in particular (Tomul, 2008).

When a general evaluation is made and the number of female students enrolled in school is analyzed before and after the reform, this assertion may seem to be true. On the other hand, when analyzed by years before and after the reform, this study showed that the 4+4+4 education reform did not actually increase the number of female students; in fact, it caused a noticeable decline immediately after the reform. The reason for this may be that the 12-year compulsory education was introduced in a discontinuous manner. In relation to this, it can be argued that the 4+4+4 education reform did not provide equality of opportunity in education and did not result in favor of female students.

5.3. Discussion and Conclusion of the 4+4+4 Education Reform and Student Absenteeism

The results of the current study indicated that the number of students with full attendance in primary and secondary schools decreased after the reform, while the number of days of absenteeism increased. In this case, it can be stated that the 4+4+4 education reform did not increase the number of female students attending school, nor did it ensure that students attended school when evaluated in the overall framework. One of the reasons for this may be the discontinuous implementation of 12 years of compulsory education in the form of 4+4+4.

In the current education system, primary and secondary school students do not fail even if they are absent for a long period of time; instead, different alternatives can be applied to these students. Especially when absences of 40 days or more are analyzed, it was seen that the number of absent days increased considerably after the reform. In

primary and secondary schools, this number almost tripled in the first semester and more than doubled in the second semester. The reason for the higher absenteeism in the first semester than the second semester for primary and secondary school students can be highlighted as the negative effects of gradual education in the 4+4+4 education reform.

Under the 4+4+4 education reform, it became possible to continue compulsory education after the 4th grade through open secondary schools within the scope of open education. This situation seemed to affect female students the most. Güven (2012) believes that because of open secondary schools, girls are prevented from continuing their formal education for reasons such as religious reasons, being needed at home, and financial inadequacies. This can lead disadvantaged students, who are already deprived of quality education, to drop out of education altogether.

The qualitative findings of the study demonstrated that the reform's goal of increasing the schooling rate was not achieved. The participants in the study emphasized that opening secondary and high schools was initiated with some ideological concerns and that the opening of Imam-hatip secondary schools and increasing the number of imam-hatip high schools for religious reasons was revenge for the events of February 28. In addition, the participants emphasized that this reform was prepared without considering the benefit of children and it was a reform that contributed to the state's creation of desirable citizens. There are a number of studies in the literature that are parallel to these findings and conclude that the 4+4+4 education reform is an ideological reform (Balcı, 2021; Coşkun, 2012; Epçaçan, 2015; Eroler, 2019; Noyan, 2019; Şiraz, 2020). In connection with the findings of this study, we can focus on Althusser's views on education. According to Althusser (1994), among many institutions ranging from bureaucracy to the army, schools are the most important ideological apparatus of the state. Moreover, Althusser argues that the state conveys its dominant ideology to the people through schools. Through compulsory education, this ideology is easily disseminated in the curriculum and books distributed through the centralized system in schools. Thus, ideal individuals are raised in educational institutions and what is taught there is transferred to new

generations through education (Althusser, 2006; Valero, 2017; Yılmaz, 2018). In addition, with Foucault's panopticon structuring, it is possible to see the power relations of knowledge in various institutions such as the economy, psychology, sociology, and education, especially in educational institutions and various disciplinary practices in educational programs. In other words, Foucault can provide a basic argument for the findings on the mission of education in this study by saying that society has turned into a surveillance society and that education undertakes an important task for power by ensuring the continuity of this system (as cited in Asan, 2013).

It can be argued that the educational institutions offered by the state to the public for ideological purposes serve their purpose on the one hand, but on the other hand, it does not fully serve their purpose. Because the results of the qualitative analysis show that one of the reasons why students drop out of schools is that they do not want to attend imam-hatip schools. Children who did not want to continue to these schools left the schools and turned to open secondary or high schools. Considering the ideological aims of this reform, it can be concluded that it was a failed reform because even families who were seen as sympathetic to the government by society did not want to send their children to these schools, and even parents who were expected to enroll their children in Imam-hatip secondary and high schools because of the scoring system enrolled their children in private schools because of the state's ideological policy. These findings are confirmed by İnal's (2019) study, which shows that the number of private schools suddenly increased especially after 2014 with the effect of 4+4+4.

According to the results of the study, family-related factors were found to be another reason affecting absenteeism in secondary schools (Hoşgörür & Polat, 2015). When family-related factors such as the socioeconomic status of the family, the way the family raises children and intra-family relations are shaped negatively, this situation affects the child negatively and triggers school absenteeism (Ulusoy et al., 2005). In addition, low family income and low level of education can push children into school absenteeism at first and force them to find a job and work in the following periods

(Güler, 2002). Thus, disadvantaged students lose hope in education and choose a different and more challenging path for themselves.

Considering the characteristics and conditions of the region where the study was conducted, the fact that students go to work with their families after the schools close in the summer and have to work for a while after the schools open can be considered another reason for the high number of absent days in the first semester of secondary school students. When the qualitative results of the study were evaluated, it was revealed that the students went to the plateaus with their families and since their families were engaged in animal breeding, they had to stay in the plateau with their families until the late-fall season. Because families going to the plateaus in July usually return home at the end of October. In this case, students are away from school for about two months and cannot continue their education and training. Accordingly, Aküzüm et al. (2015) revealed in their study that the responsibilities burdened on children by families in rural areas such as grazing animals and meeting the needs of animals are one of the prominent reasons for absenteeism of students.

When the absenteeism status of high school students in the study was examined, it was observed that the number of students with full attendance increased in both periods after the reform. This may be due to the fact that high schools became compulsory after the reform and accordingly, the number of students increased. In addition, the fact that secondary schools were already compulsory before the reform, while high schools were optional, and that the number of students was much higher after the reform than before, with high schools being compulsory after the reform, may have also contributed to the results in this way. Failure in high schools occurs when students miss more than 20 days of school with an excuse and more than 10 days without an excuse. If these students have the right to receive formal education, they repeat the grade by taking the same courses again the following semester. Students who do not have the right to formal education or who do not want to continue formal education are enrolled in open high schools (MoNE, 2016). Considering this situation in the current study, when students who were absent for 40 days or more were analyzed, it was observed that the number of absent days

increased in the second semester. When this number was compared to the pre-reform period, it was observed that while the number of absenteeism rates rose in the first semester, the number of days absent in the second semester grew even more and the absenteeism rate more than doubled. The primary reason for the rise in absenteeism in high schools can be related to the discontinuous education practices implemented with the 4+4+4 education reform and the existence of open high schools.

The discontinuous education introduced with the 4+4+4 education reform paved the way for open high schools. Open high school is an educational institution for those who are of secondary school age but cannot attend formal education institutions that provide face-to-face education (Teker, 1995). The qualitative findings of the study showed that one of the participants perceived the interrupted education implemented with the 4+4+4 education reform as a space shuttle. The teacher claimed that after each 4 in the system, students would be periodically separated from the capsule and with each capsule separation, students would be detached from the education system. In light of this view, it is possible to infer that students are actually thrown out of the system by being sent to open education programs. Tanrısevdi & Kırıl (2018) also concluded that students who do not attend school are enrolled in open secondary or high schools, which can be interpreted as depriving these students of their right to formal education and deepening inequality in these regions. In addition, Çam-Tosun and Bayram (2015) emphasized in their study that open education in high schools prevents equal opportunity. It is a known fact that there are huge differences between schools. However, while inequality cannot be prevented even among students attending the same schools, another point emphasized in the study is that the open high school application will produce much deeper inequalities.

High school students' absenteeism may be due to many reasons (Pehlivan, 2006). The most prominent of these reasons are individual reasons, environmental reasons, institutional reasons (Gül et al., 2016), reasons stemming from teachers and school administration, reasons stemming from academic anxiety (Altınkurt, 2008; Yıldız & Şanlı-Kula, 2012), family reasons and socioeconomic reasons (Sakınç, 2013). There are many studies supporting that students who transfer to open high school have

families who are generally unconscious about educational issues and come from lower socioeconomic classes (Belen et al., 2021; Çuhadar-Öncü, 2017; Dağ, 2018; Kıvanç & Kemerli, 2019). Students of high school age who take on responsibilities such as earning money and providing for the household cannot continue formal education. On the contrary, students who voluntarily prefer open high schools do not experience socioeconomic problems. In fact, their families consciously support their transition to open high schools so that these children can better prepare for the university entrance exam (Can & Sakallı, 2023).

As this study was conducted in disadvantaged schools, the sample included children coming from socioeconomically lower-class families. Therefore, there is no conscious parental preference for students who are pushed out of the system due to absenteeism and guided to open high schools. In this context, when the reasons for the increase in absenteeism in high schools, especially in the second semester, were examined, the fact that students go to other cities to work may be the cause of the increase in absenteeism. The results of the qualitative analysis indicated that in addition to seasonal labor migration in this region (grazing animals in the plateaus), disadvantaged children in this region either go to work in construction or work in hotels. Ahsan and Duman, (2022) and Tüm (2009) explained in their studies that the reasons for preferring these jobs are that the wages paid are higher than other jobs and that their needs such as accommodation and food are met at the place of work.

In a general assessment of absenteeism in secondary and high schools and the open secondary and open high schools (open education) that are seen as a natural consequence of this problem, it can be argued that open secondary and open high school practices failed and added a new one to the existing problems in the education system. When the literature is reviewed, it is possible to reach the results that many educators criticize for this practice implemented with the 4+4+4 education reform. In addition, many researchers have shared their views that open high school implementation negatively affects students, particularly female students (Kalkan & Gürses, 2017; Suğur & Şavran, 2006). Similarly, Çamlıbel (2015) stated that open secondary school and open high school practices would be detrimental to girls and

would create problems in schooling. He also alleged that the practice of open secondary schools and open high schools would create undesirable situations such as child labor and child marriages. Particularly teachers and school principals in this study criticized the open education practice on the grounds that it impedes equality of opportunity in education and has negative consequences as a result of the 4+4+4 education reform as Coşkun and Gündoğdu's study highlighted (2013).

Although open education practices are mostly perceived negatively for girls, there are also studies in the literature that evaluate these practices in a positive way (Demiray, 2013). These studies consider open secondary and high school programs as an opportunity for girls who cannot find the chance for formal education to improve themselves. On the other hand, researchers who present an opposing view have strongly criticized open education practices by underlining that school is not just a place where you go aimlessly, and that children not only receive education there, but also gain behavioral changes and develop their social skills (Güven, 2012).

Overall, the result of the study revealed that the aims of the 4+4+4 education reform did not accomplish their goals because the most prominent goal of this reform extending compulsory education to 12 years was to increase the schooling rate, increase the average length of education in society and to eliminate regional differences in schooling. In an indirect way, it can be assumed that the aim was to eliminate the gap between disadvantaged students and other students, as the regions with low schooling rates are the regions where disadvantaged students are concentrated. In this context, when the enrollment rate of girls is taken into consideration, it is seen that the enrollment rate did not actually increase; in fact, the number of students attending school decreased in the years following the reform due to open secondary and high schools. This is parallel to the findings of other studies (e.g., ERG, 2015). Due to open education (open secondary and high schools), the schooling rate of especially female students has decreased considerably (Kaya, 2019). Therefore, since the schooling rate has not increased and formal education is ceases after a certain period of schooling (Belen et al., 2021), it is not possible to claim that the average duration of education has been extended.

It can be said that the reform's goal of eliminating regional disparities in schooling was not achieved for similar reasons. The region where the study was conducted is a disadvantaged region with low schooling rates. It is not possible to say that the number of students, particularly girls, has increased noticeably on a regular basis in the schools where the study was conducted. The results of the current study also indicated that the number of students who were absent for more than one month increased after the reform. The number of days of school attendance is an indicator that directly affects academic achievement (Özkan, 2018; Tekin 2020). Therefore, it is expected that students who do not attend school have low academic achievement. The most prominent challenges faced in schools is poverty. For this reason, poverty and its consequences such as inequality and deprivation are among the most common problems in access to school. High levels of poverty prevent students from progressing academically (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Ylimaki et al., 2007; as cited in Arar, et al., 2020). Considering that children in this region do not go to school, it can be thought that the reform does not actually serve the purpose of eliminating the difference between regions. This is because it is a well-known fact that disadvantaged children in disadvantaged regions still cannot attend school regularly. Moreover, considering that academic achievement is affected by regional differences (Ataç, 2017), it is possible to conclude that disadvantaged students in disadvantaged regions cannot receive a quality education and therefore equality of opportunity in education is not ensured for them; on the contrary, inequalities in education deepen and the situation of disadvantaged students aggravates in light of the results of this study.

5.4. Implications for Practice and Theory

This study revealed the functions and implications of the 4+4+4 education reform on socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Considering the results of the reform, it can be concluded that the 4+4+4 education reform did not include findings that mitigated the situation of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Indeed, both achievement and attendance figures revealed in this study that socioeconomically disadvantaged students face a risk of further marginalization as a result of receiving

weak educational services after the 4+4+4 education reform. When the reform is planned to be improved, especially within the framework of disadvantaged students, some implication-based recommendations can be made in order not to exclude them from the education system and to keep them in the learning process.

First of all, the results of the study indicated that the purpose of the reform did not overlap with what was done. In this context, it can be considered that the reform did not serve its purpose. Namely, it can be concluded that the 4+4+4 education reform, which aims to increase the schooling rate, reduce inter-regional learning differences and provide skill-based education at an early age, has actually failed to achieve these goals. The quantitative findings of the study showed that the schooling rate did not increase, especially for girls. One of the biggest obstacles to this is the discontinuous nature of education. The second obstacle is that open secondary school and open high school programs (open education) are allowed to be preferred after the first 4 years. It can be argued that this situation adversely affects socioeconomically disadvantaged students and pushes them out of the education system. In addition, since the number of students in open secondary and high schools is included in the schooling rates, this rate does not give the real number. Based on this result, abandoning discontinuous education and closing open education (open secondary and high school) programs for individuals of formal education age may be a solution to increase the schooling rate substantially (Doyran, 2019; Gültekin & Baran, 2022; Güven, 2022).

Moreover, according to the research results, it can be asserted that the 4+4+4 education reform has caused both a quantitative and qualitative decline in education. While the implementation of discontinuous education and open education schools led to a decline in quantity, it can be argued that teaching in crowded classrooms due to the lack of infrastructure and turning places such as laboratories and libraries, which have important contributions to the learning process, into classrooms due to the lack of classrooms decreased the quality of education. In light of these results, it can be suggested to solve the problems of inadequate infrastructure for the implementation of the reform (Canlı, 2019; Canpolat & Köçer, 2017; Ceylan & Kürekli, 2021).

Furthermore, both quantitative and qualitative findings of the study revealed that the 4+4+4 education reform did not have a positive impact on the schooling and academic achievement of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Based on this result, the principle of inclusiveness of education should be taken into consideration in future and policymakers should develop reforms that include especially socioeconomically disadvantaged students. (Reyna & Farley, 2006; Slee, 2011).

Reducing regional disparities, another objective of the reform, has not been achieved. Especially in disadvantaged regions, educational outcomes still do not meet the desired results. There are many factors that contribute to the low academic achievement of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Among these, poor nutrition, a lack of a suitable home environment for studying, a lack of informed parental support, and a lack of pre-school education for these children stand out among many other reasons (Cummins, 2014; Kpinga, 2014; Mcloyd, 1998). In this context, in order to increase the academic achievement of socioeconomically disadvantaged children, pre-school education can be made compulsory, especially in disadvantaged regions, and then across the country. Considering that many disadvantages are based on socioeconomic reasons, it can be argued that improving the condition of socioeconomically disadvantaged students would alleviate many problems. On the other hand, it will take time for young children living in unfavorable conditions to catch up with their peers academically. Making pre-school education compulsory for them can have a positive impact on closing both learning gaps and learning losses (Amders et al., 2011; Burlacu, 2013; Ekinci & Bozan, 2019; Güzelyurt et al., 2019; Kaya & Köse, 2020; Sylva, 2014).

Another objective of the reform is to provide skills-based education at an early age. When skills-based education is discussed, apprenticeship training and vocational high schools come to mind. However, with the 4+4+4 education reform, only the secondary school section of imam-hatip schools was opened. Considering that skills are more meaningful when they are acquired at an early age, the opening of secondary school departments in vocational high schools such as medical vocational high schools and vocational and technical high schools can be recommended in terms

of ensuring equal opportunity in education. Therefore, this practice revealed that the reform did not serve the emphasized purpose of acquiring skills at an early age. For this reason, presenting alternative vocational secondary schools might be recommended as it may provide disadvantaged students with a career alternative and make the reform more effective for them.

Another issue that came up on the agenda with the 4+4+4 education reform, which was also revealed in the qualitative study, is that the reform has ideological roots. According to the results of the research, it can be argued that the government has shaped education in accordance with its ideology in order to raise the type of citizens it wants. Considering this situation, it can be suggested that school principals take the initiative and make decisions that will benefit students. In this context, it can be suggested that school principals offer students elective courses such as mathematics, English, science, etc. which disadvantaged students experience learning deficiencies. The priority of governments while making changes should be improving situations in favor of students rather than imposing an ideology. Otherwise, when changes are highly political, it would be more difficult to expect positive results from the change or to fulfill the expected goals.

The 4+4+4 education reform is considered a reform that was developed without the feasibility and preliminary studies expected before a reform movement is initiated. As a matter of fact, the results of this study reveal that the reform brought many problems during the implementation process because it was not well planned. In the qualitative findings of the study, teachers stated that the early starting age of 1st graders would pose a problem and that 5th graders would not be able to adapt to secondary school lessons, which would have been discussed in advance if teachers had been consulted, and perhaps these mistakes would never have been made. Teachers also stated that they could have explained that when high schools are compulsory, the classes, especially the 9th graders, will be overcrowded and that the high school classes will not be big enough to handle this. Most of the internal stakeholders in the study explained that they did not actually consider 4+4+4 as a reform. Their failure to embrace the reform made it difficult to solve the problems

that arose. As Fernandez and Rainey (2006) suggest, before initiating major change practices, the people who will implement the change should be consulted and they should be reconciled on the issues they disagree with. Such a compromise will involve them in the process and eliminate the possibility of resistance to change (Bantwini, 2010; Ford & Ford, 2010; Lolenzi & Riley, 2000; Terhart, 2013). In light of this information, it may be suggested that before a reform is undertaken, a platform should be established between MoNE and schools to discuss views on the reform. Commissions can be formed in MoNE in which experienced teachers and school principals can participate. Otherwise, reforms that are not adopted by practitioners may cause inequality of opportunity among schools.

Moreover, it is seen in the qualitative findings of the study that when the 4+4+4 education reform was implemented, a great number of teachers were not informed about the reform. In particular, teachers teaching in the 1st and the 5th grades stated that they did not know how to treat children in this age group. Therefore, teachers who stated that they had difficulties in teaching and classroom management had difficulty adapting to the new system for a long time. Based on these findings, although there is a teacher training curriculum structure that is sensitive to educational levels according to Higher Education Commission (HEC), both the adaptation problems of teachers due to the 4+4+4 and the findings of teachers at educational levels in teacher training suggest that HEC and MoNE should work in cooperation to develop policies that include measures to improve the current situation. At the most basic level, the reforms to be introduced by MoNE can be ensured to be included in the system by increasing the awareness and consciousness of prospective teachers at the higher education level. In this context, teacher training programs should be revised and shaped according to the new education system. Hence, it should be ensured that prospective teachers receive an appropriate education for the new system planned to be introduced with the reform. Those who are already teachers should be provided with in-service trainings and practical seminars to help them adapt to the new system. These trainings should explain the process in detail and especially teachers should be informed about the new practices and they should be monitored during the process and given feedback to improve

themselves. Hence, öğretmenlerin reformları uygularken değişime bağlı olumsuz duyguları daha az hissetmeleri sağlanabilir (Zayim, 2015).

The quantitative findings of the study showed that the achievement of disadvantaged students also declined after the reform. Considering this result, practices that reduce the learning differences between students from families with high socioeconomic status and disadvantaged students can be included in the education program. Moreover, government funding for disadvantaged students can be increased as suggested by the World Bank (2013), and an improvement fund can be created to cover them. Furthermore, as the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study have highlighted, children cannot attend school in both the first and second semesters because they have to work. With the fund that the state will create for these students, disadvantaged children can be ensured to attend school. Furthermore, teacher training can be redesigned according to the needs of disadvantaged students. The suggestion of Day and Sammons (2013) provides a clue about socioeconomically disadvantaged students. To recall, it may be useful to indirectly benefit from the experiences of experienced teachers who have achieved success by working with disadvantaged students living in deprived homes.

As emphasized in the qualitative findings of the study, in the current system, education no longer has a redemptive role for disadvantaged children. Education is no longer a "superman" to save them from where they are. However, the success stories of those who came from disadvantaged groups and succeeded in becoming teachers, even if it was in the past, can inspire these children with hope and motivate them, just like the support of teachers with their experiences. Seeing real-life examples can revive the lost hopes of these pupils for the future.

5.5. Recommendations for Future Research

The aim of the study is to uncover the consequences of the 4+4+4 education reform on disadvantaged students. In the study, students who are disadvantaged by their SES were analyzed in terms of academic achievement, gender, and absenteeism variables.

In addition, the study aimed to reveal the perceptions of different stakeholders in education regarding the 4+4+4 education reform. Considering the limitations of the study, various recommendations were made for future research.

First, the quantitative findings of the study showed that the schooling rate did not increase and even started to decline after the reform. On the other hand, the qualitative findings supported by the literature indicated that missing students who were not in formal education enrolled in open education programs (ERG, 2014; Kaya, 2019; Yorğun, 2014). In light of this information, the number of students who left formal education and enrolled in open education schools after the 4+4+4 education reform can be investigated. Furthermore, interviews can be conducted with the people who manage these units to get in-depth information about open secondary school and open high school programs. Research on open education programs, which represent the mysterious and dark side of educational research, is highly recommended for future research.

Moreover, the quantitative part of this study was conducted in the central districts of a province in which disadvantaged students are highly populated and ranked low in academic achievement. Therefore, the findings can only be generalized to these districts. This is a limitation of this study. In order to overcome this limitation, disadvantaged schools in different cities in different regions can be included in future studies, and the results of the reform on students in these schools can be investigated.

Thirdly, this study covers the data of students attending public schools. The study can be conducted by including student data that are collected from private schools. In the literature, there are studies showing that the quality of teaching differs positively in private schools (Cavalcanti et al., 2010; Choy, 1997; Dixon & Tooley, 2013; Magulod, 2017). Considering the existence of a mechanism where students can maintain their economic class in private schools just like in public schools (Opare, 1999), comparative studies involving socioeconomically different groups can be conducted by examining the differences in achievement between children from lower-class families and children from upper-middle-class or upper-class families.

Furthermore, in the qualitative part of the study, striking data on the results of the 4+4+4 education reform were obtained from both internal and external stakeholders: teachers, school principals, and academicians. Additionally, the perspective of non-governmental organizations such as civil society organizations can also be included in the study to enrich the research by adding different perspectives, and interviews can be conducted with representatives of these organizations. Additionally, a different data collection tool can be included in the study. In this study, data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Since most of the study was conducted during the pandemic period, a different data collection tool could not be included in the study. However, in future research, the study can be enriched by adding classroom observations.

Moreover, the qualitative findings of the study indicated that the participants perceive education as a tool for which the current ideology instilled in children. Based on this results, the role of education can be analyzed within the framework of Althusser's perspective in future research.

Sixth, the qualitative findings obtained in this study revealed that early school starting age would negatively affect the child's later educational life. There are studies supporting this finding in the literature (Coşkun & Gündoğdu, 2013; Dinç et al., 2014). Based on this result, in future quantitative research, the achievement scores of children who started primary school at the age of 60-66 months in the year the reform was enacted (2012) can be monitored over the years. Secondary school achievement scores, high school entrance exam scores, and high school grade point averages of the same children who were followed from primary school onwards and who are now probably attending high school can be analyzed. Furthermore, their performance on university entrance exams can be analyzed.

Finally, the quantitative study utilized retrospective data on variables before and after the reform. Within the scope of this study, K12 students were investigated. The results of the 4+4+4 education reform on primary, secondary and high school students in disadvantaged schools were investigated and discussed. In future

research, it may be recommended to conduct a similar study in higher education. The results of the reform in higher education can be evaluated by examining the students who started secondary or high school in the year the reform was implemented (2012) and those who continue their higher education at university.

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APPENDICES

A. TEACHER AND SCHOOL PRINCIPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Türk Eğitim Sisteminde gerçekleştirilen deęişimler hakkındaki görüőleriniz nelerdir?
2. Eğitimde deęişimlerin etkisini (bir öğretmen / okul yöneticisi olarak) nasıl deęerlendiriyorsunuz?
3. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu hakkındaki düşünceleriniz nelerdir? Sizce bu reform duyurulmadan önce yeteri kadar hazırlık yapıldı mı? Eğitim paydaşlarına yeteri kadar zaman verildi mi?
 - a. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile ilgili avantaj ve dezavantajlar nelerdir?
4. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile ilgili gözlemediğiniz veya deneyimlediğiniz problemler var mıdır? Varsa nelerdir?
5. Reformu uygulama sırasında karşılaştığınız problemler var ise bu problemlerle nasıl başa çıktınız / çıkmaktasınız?
6. 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin deęişiklikler uygulamaya başlanmadan önce sizce neler yapılmalıydı?
7. Dezavantajlı öğrenciler denildiğinde ne anlıyorsunuz? Sizce hangi öğrenciler dezavantajlı olarak nitelendirilmektedir?
8. Sizce Türkiye’de en belirgin dezavantajlı öğrenci grubu hangisidir?
9. Dezavantajlı olma durumu dönemsel olarak ya da içinde bulunulan şartlara göre deęişim gösteriyor mu, yoksa gelen herhangi bir yenilik ya da deęişim dezavantajlı öğrencileri her koşulda daha da dezavantajlı hale getiriyor mu?
10. Devlet politikalarının Sosyo-Ekonomik Statü bakımından dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerinde pozitif etkileri Var mıdır? Var ise nelerdir?
11. Devlet okulları sizce dezavantajlı öğrencileri bulduklarından bir üst tabakaya geçişlerini kolaylaştıran bir kurum mudur? Bu konudaki düşüncelerinizi paylaşabilir misiniz?
12. Öğrenciler açısından sizce devlet tarafından uygulanan sosyal adalet uygulamaları nelerdir? Bu uygulamaları nasıl deęerlendiriyorsunuz?
13. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu kız çocuklarının eğitim durumunu nasıl etkilemiştir? Reform uygulanmaya başladıktan sonra okula kayıtlı olan kız öğrencilerin sayısında bir artış gözlemlediniz mi?
14. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu devam-devamsızlık sorununu ne düzeyde etkilemiştir? Reform uygulanmaya başladıktan sonra okula kayıtlı olan öğrencilerin devam durumlarında herhangi bir deęişiklik gözlemlediniz mi? Devamsızlık yapan öğrencilerin sayısında artma ya da azalma oldu mu?
15. Açık Lise uygulaması hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Bu uygulama sizce öğrenciler açısından fayda veya zarar sağlamakta mıdır?

16. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu çocukların akademik başarı düzeylerini ne derecede etkilemiştir?
Önceki yıllarla karşılaştırdığınızda reform sonrası öğrencilerin başarı seviyelerinde bir farklılık oldu mu?
17. Eğitim Sistemindeki değişimleri göz önünde bulundurarak bir metafor üretseniz 4+4+4 eğitim reformunu neye benzetirsiniz? Neden?
18. Genel bir değerlendirme yaptığınızda alt-amaçlarından bazıları dezavantajlı öğrenciler ile ilgili olan, örneğin bölgeler arasındaki farklılıkları gidermeyi amaçlayan 4+4+4 eğitim reformu sizce amacına ne derece hizmet etmiştir?
Dezavantajlı öğrencilerin dezavantajlılık durumu sona ermiş midir, dezavantajlı öğrencilerin durumunda hiçbir değişim olmamış mıdır, yoksa dezavantajlılık durumları daha da derinleşmiş midir?

B. ACADEMICS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Türk Eğitim Sisteminde gerçekleştirilen değişimler hakkındaki düşünceleriniz nelerdir?
2. Eğitimde değişimlerin etkisini bir akademisyen olarak nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
3. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu hakkındaki görüşleriniz nelerdir?
4. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile ilgili avantaj ve dezavantajlar nelerdir?
 - a. 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun eğitim sistemi açısından avantaj ve dezavantajları nelerdir?
 - b. 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun eğitim paydaşları açısından avantaj ve dezavantajları nelerdir?
 - c. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile ilgili gözlemlediğiniz veya deneyimlediğiniz problemler var mıdır? Varsa nelerdir?
5. 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin değişiklikler uygulamaya başlanmadan önce yapılması gereken adımlar sizce nelerdir? Sizce gerekli bu adımlar ne düzeyde yerine getirilmiştir?
 - a) Pilot uygulama
Sizce pilot uygulama yapılsaydı farklı sonuçlar elde edilebilir miydi? Evet ise örneklendirerek açıklayınız?
 - b) Paydaşların fikirlerini alma
4+4+4 eğitim reformunun eğitim sistemi ve paydaşları açısından avantajları ve dezavantajları nelerdir?
 - c) Öğretmenlere danışma
Sizce öğretmenlere yeni düzenlemeleri uygulayabilmeleri için gerekli bilgi ve adapte olabilmeleri için yeterli zaman verilmiş midir?
6. Dezavantajlı öğrenciler olarak hangi öğrencileri tanımlarsınız?
7. 4+4+4 eğitim reformunu dezavantajlı öğrenciler ile nasıl ilişkilendirirsiniz? (öğretim programı, ders kitapları, teknolojik araç-gereç ve donanım bakımından)
8. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu sosyo-ekonomik statü bakımından düşük olan ailelerin çocuklarını nasıl etkilemiştir?
9. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu kız çocuklarının eğitim durumunu nasıl etkilemiştir? Reform uygulanmaya başladıktan sonra üniversitede eğitim alan kız öğrencilerin sayısında bir artış gözlemlediniz mi (özellikle 2016 ve sonrasında)?
10. 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun akademik başarıyı etkilediğini düşünüyor musunuz? Önceki yıllarla karşılaştığınızda reform sonrası (özellikle 2016 ve sonrasında) üniversiteyi kazanan öğrencilerin başarı seviyelerinde bir farklılık oldu mu? Dezavantajlı olarak nitelenen öğrencilerin başarılarında gözle görülür bir düşüş veya artış gözlemlediniz mi?
11. Eğitim Sistemindeki değişimleri göz önünde bulundurarak bir metafor üretseniz 4+4+4 eğitim reformunu neye benzetirsiniz? Neden?
12. Genel bir değerlendirme yaptığınızda 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki olumlu ve olumsuz yansımaları (sonuçları) ile ilgili neler

söyleyebilirsiniz? Dezavantajlı öğrencileri daha iyi bir konuma getirmeyi hedefleyen bu reform sonuçları düşünüldüğünde sizce amacına ne derece hizmet etmiştir? Dezavantajlı öğrencilerin dezavantajlılık durumu sona ermiş midir, dezavantajlı öğrencilerin durumunda hiçbir değişim olmamış mıdır, yoksa dezavantajlılık durumları daha da derinleşmiş midir?

C. ETHICS APPROVAL OF RESEARCH BY METU

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21 Ocak 2020

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof.Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Elif ERBERK'in "The Functions And Implications Of Educational Reform On Disadvantaged Students" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 012-ODTU-2020 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.


Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY

Başkan


Prof. Dr. Tolga CAN

Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT

Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ

Üye

Doç.Dr. Pinar KAYGAN

Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şerife SEVINÇ

Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Süreyya Özcan KABASAKAL

Üye

D. ETHICS APPROVAL OF RESEARCH BY MONE



T.C.
[Redacted]
İl Millî Eğitim Müdürlüğü

Sayı : 77157353-605.01-[Redacted]
Konu : Veri Toplama Talebi
(Elif ARBERK)

06/03/2020

VALİLİK MAKAMINA

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Eğitim Yönetimi ve Planlaması doktora programı öğrencisi Elif ERBERK'in "Eğitim Reformunun Dezavantajlı Öğrenciler Üzerindeki Etkisi" konulu anket çalışması kapsamında İlimiz [Redacted] ve [Redacted] ilçelerinde görev yapmakta olan öğretmen ve müdürlere anket uygulama çalışması yapılması hususundaki yazıları incelenmiştir.

Söz konusu anket uygulama çalışması Müdürlüğümüzce oluşturulan "Anket uygulama ve Araştırma İzin Talepleri Komisyonu" tarafından incelenmiş olup 04/02/2020 tarih ve 17 nolu karar ile belirtilen açıklamalar doğrultusunda uygulanması Valilik onayının üç gün süre içerisinde okullara duyurulması; ayrıca denetimleri ilgili okul ve ilçe millî eğitim müdürlükleri tarafından gerçekleştirilmek üzere derslerin aksatılmaması kaydıyla ve gönüllülük esasına göre yapılması müdürlüğümüzce uygun görülmektedir.

Makamlarınızca da uygun görülmesi halinde olurlarınıza arz ederim.

[Redacted]
İl Millî Eğitim Müdür Yardımcısı

Uygun görüşle arz ederim.

[Redacted]
İl Millî Eğitim Müdürü

OLUR
<06/03/2020

[Redacted]
Vali a.
Vali Yardımcısı

E. CURRICULUM VITAE

ELİF ERBERK

Education

- October, 2016 - August, 2023**
(Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D.)
Middle East Technical University (METU)
Education Faculty
Department of Educational Sciences
Educational Administration and Planning
- January, 2014 – August, 2016**
(Master of Science, M.S.)
Van Yüzüncü Yıl University
Education Faculty
Department of Educational Sciences
Educational Administration
- September, 2004 – June, 2008**
(Bachelor of Science, B.S.)
Cyprus International Universtiy
Education Faculty
English Language Teaching (ELT)

Main Academic Positions

- January, 2014 – October, 2016**
Research Assistant
Van Yüzüncü Yıl University
Education Faculty
Department of Educational Sciences
Educational Administration
- October, 2016 – ongoing**
Research Assistant
Middle East Technical University (METU)
Education Faculty
Department of Educational Sciences
Educational Administration and Planning

Research Interests

Equality of Opportunity in Education
Change and Reform Practices in Education
Social Justice Implementation in Education
Social Justice Leadership
Inequality Theories in Sociology of Education

Research Experience

May, 2018 – Şubat, 2021

Higher education policy for displaced people:
(METU Research Fund)
Implications of Turkey's higher education policy for
Syrian migrants.
[Directed by Prof. Dr. Yaşar Kondakçı]
Middle East Technical University, Turkey
*Researcher

Selected Journal Articles

Erberk, E. & Memduhoğlu, H. B. (2023).
Organizational depression as an illness of the time: A
phenomenological study on the experiences of high
school teachers. *Educational Academic Research*.
DOI: 10.5152/AUJKKEF.2023.22054

Arar, K., Kondakçı, Y., Kaya-Kaşıkcı, S. Erberk, E.
(2020). Higher Education Policy for Displaced People:
Implications of Turkey's Higher Education Policy for
Syrian Migrants. *Higher Education Policy*, 33, 265-
285. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-020-00181-2>

Selected Conference Presentations

Erberk, E., & Engin, C. (2023). *Rethinking Educational Policy: Ideological Implications of Educational Reforms*. Paper presented at The European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Glasgow: University of Glasgow, Scotland.

Arar, H., Kondakçı, Y., Kaya-Kaşıkcı, S., & Erberk, E. (2019). *Access and Survival of Syrian Migrants in Turkish Higher Education*. Paper presented at The European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Hamburg: Universitat Hamburg, Germany.

Erberk, E., & Memduhoğlu, H. B. (2018). *Organizational depression as an illness of the time: A phenomenological study of teachers' experiences at high schools*. Paper presented at The European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Bolzano: The Free University of Bozen- Bolzano, Italy.

Book chapters

Erberk, E. (2022). Türk eğitim sisteminde reform ve yenileşme, H. Tabak & F. Şahin, (Ed.), *Türk eğitim sistemi ve okul yönetimi*, içinde (s. 154-176), Pegem Akademi Yayıncılık.

Memduhoğlu, H. B., & Erberk, E. (2022). Mıknatıs okul, H. B. Memduhoğlu & M. M. Mazlum, (Ed.), *Teorik ve pratik yönleriyle alternatif okullar ve alternatif eğitim uygulamaları*, içinde (s. 115-157), Pegem Akademi Yayıncılık.

F. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

1. GİRİŞ

Değişim örgütler için kaçınılmazdır. Örgütlerin hayatta kalabilmesi için değişimlere ayak uydurması gerekmektedir (By, 2005; Karanja, 2015). Örgütler kendilerini değişime hazır hissetseler de hissetmeseler de dış baskılar nedeniyle kendilerini değişimin etkisi altında bulabilirler. Başka bir deyişle, ekonomide, politik ve sosyal düzende, kültürel yaşamda ve teknolojiye sürekli yeni gelişmelerin meydana gelmesi birçok alanda değişimi beraberinde getirmektedir (Garvin, 1993). Böylesi bir değişim hızı eğitim sistemini de değişime zorlamakta ve dolayısıyla eğitim örgütlerinin değişim sürecine girmesine neden olmaktadır. Çünkü eğitim, toplumsal değişimlere en duyarlı sistemlerden biridir (Ryder, 1985). Örgütlerde değişimin sebepleri yeniliklere ayak uydurmak, teknolojik gelişmelere adapte olmak ve gelişmiş ülkelerin gerisinde kalmamak olabilir. Eğitim örgütlerinde bu değişikliklerin sebebine mevcut reformun eksikliklerini giderme ve eğitimde fırsat eşitliğini sağlama çabaları eklenebilir (Akpınar vd., 2012).

Eğitimde reform çabaları, ülke ekonomisi ve bilgi gücü arasındaki pozitif ilişkinin anlaşılması ile önem kazanmıştır. Özellikle bilgi çağında ülkeler ekonomik olarak daha hızlı büyümek için eğitim sistemlerine daha çok bütçe ayırmaya başlamıştır. Eğitimde reform çabalarının amacı toplumun eğitimini sağlamaktır. Bu amaç vatandaşları zihinsel, fiziksel ve sosyal yönden desteklemek, onların yaşam standartlarını yükseltmek, ülke ekonomisine katkıda bulunmak ve ülkenin uluslararası platformdaki rekabet gücünü arttırmak yoluyla hayata geçirilmektedir (Peker-Ünal, 2013). Türk eğitim sisteminde de eğitimin işlevlerinin gerçekleştirilmesi için Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB) tarafından çeşitli reformlar hayata geçirilmiştir (Gürol vd., 2015). Bu reformlardan en çarpıcı olanlar 8 yıllık

zorunlu eğitim, 12 yıllık zorunlu eğitim ve beraberinde getirilen 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna yönelik politikalarıdır (Güner vd., 2014).

5 yıllık zorunlu eğitimin uzun süre yürürlükle kalmasının ardından MEB, 1997 yılında sekiz yıllık zorunlu eğitime geçilmesini uygun görmüştür. 16 Ağustos 1997 tarihinde kabul edilen 4306 sayılı kanun ile zorunlu eğitim süresi beş yıldan sekiz yıla çıkarılmıştır. 'Temel Eğitim Yasası' olarak adlandırılan zorunlu eğitimdeki ilk büyük reform, eğitimde fırsat eşitliğini sağlama kapsamında tüm çocukların okullaşmasını özellikle de Türkiye'nin doğusundaki kız çocuklarının okullaşma oranını artırmayı hedeflemiştir (Dülger 2004). Reformun kabul edilmesinden sonra bu hedefe büyük ölçüde ulaşılmış, 8 yıllık zorunlu eğitimle birlikte çocukların okullaşma oranı önemli ölçüde artmıştır. Bu reformdan sonra devlet tarafından yoksul ailelerin koşullarını iyileştirmek ve çocukların okula erişimini kolaylaştırmak için sosyal politikalar da geliştirilmiştir (Engin-Demir & Çobanoğlu, 2012).

Türkiye'de 8 yıllık zorunlu ve kesintisiz eğitime geçilmesinin ardından başlayan tartışmalara 2000'li yıllardan itibaren yeni tartışmalar eklenmiştir. Bu tartışmalar sonucu eğitim sisteminde yeni bir yapılanmaya ihtiyaç duyulduğu belirtilmiştir (Çakır, 2017). Bu yeni sistemde sekiz yıllık zorunlu eğitimin getirdiği sorunları gidermek ve gelişmiş ülkelerde uygulanan kademeli eğitim sistemine geçmek öncelikli hedef olmuştur. Ayrıca 8 yıllık kesintisiz eğitim ile öğrencilerin yaş grupları ve bireysel farklılıkları dikkate alınmadığı ve bunu düzeltmek için de yeni bir sisteme ihtiyaç duyulduğu belirtilmiştir. Bu ihtiyaçlar doğrultusunda yeni bir eğitim sistemi oluşturulmuş (4+4+4 eğitim sistemi) ve 30 Mart 2012 tarihinde 6287 nolu kanun ile 12 yıllık zorunlu eğitim kabul edilmiştir. Böylece, 1997 tarihli Temel Eğitim Kanunu'nun ardından 4+4+4 eğitim reformu 11 Nisan 2012 tarihinde Resmi gazetede yayımlanmış ve yürürlüğe girmiştir (Kılıç, 2014).

Kamuoyunda 4+4+4 olarak bilinen ve zorunlu- kesintili eğitimi 12 yıla çıkaran eğitim reformu oldukça radikal bir reform olarak değerlendirilmektedir (Gün & Atanur-Baskan, 2013). Ayrıca bu reform eğitim sistemini tamamen değiştirmiş ve eğitim sistemindeki tüm paydaşları etkilemiştir (İnal, 2012). Eğitim sisteminde köklü

değişiklikler oluşturması yönüyle 4+4+4 eğitim reformu Fullan'ın (2004) büyük ölçekli reform tanımına uymaktadır. Ülkelerdeki eğitim süreleri arttıkça ülkelerin gelişmişlik düzeyinin de arttığı bilindik bir gerçektir. Zorunlu eğitim süresinin dünya ülkelerindeki örnekleri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda zorunlu eğitimin 12 yıla çıkartılması genel olarak olumlu bir gelişme şeklinde değerlendirilmiştir (Kartal, 2017). Öte yandan reformun ani ve plansız şekilde yürürlüğe girmesi, öncesinde pilot uygulamanın yapılmaması, ideolojik bir reform olarak algılanması ve reformu uygulayacak kişilerin sürece dahil edilmemesi gibi nedenlerden dolayı toplumun bazı kesimlerinde ve reformu uygulayacak kişilerde reforma karşı olumsuz tutumlara sebep olmuştur.

MEB (2012) zorunlu ve kesintili eğitimi 12 yıla çıkaran kanunla eğitim sisteminde başlayan yeni dönemin iki genel amacı bulunduğunu belirtmiştir. Bunlardan biri toplumun ortalama eğitim süresini arttırmak, diğeri ise eğitim sisteminin bireylerin ilgi, ihtiyaç ve yeteneklerinin gerektirdiği şekilde öğrencilerin yönlendirmesini sağlamaktır. Bu genel amaç çerçevesinde ise aşağıdaki alt amaçlara ulaşmak hedeflenmiştir (MEB, 2012):

- *Ülke vatandaşlarının eğitim seviyesini yükseltmek
- *Okullaşma oranını arttırmak
- *Öğrencilerin gelişim özelliklerine, ilgi ve ihtiyaçlarına uygun programlar oluşturmak
- * Eğitimde bölgeler arası farklılıkları azaltmak
- *Herkes hitap edecek esnek programlar ve seçmeli dersler sunarak demokratik bir eğitim sunmak

Tüm bu hedefler uluslararası bir eğitim sistemi geliştirme sürecinde önemli ve olumlu bir adım olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Üstelik bu hedeflere ulaşmanın eğitimde fırsat eşitliğini sağlamada olumlu etkisinin olacağı düşünülmektedir (Yavuz & Derinbay, 2014).

Zorunlu eğitimi kesintili bir şekilde 12 yıla uzatan yasa teklifinin kabul edilmesinden itibaren 4+4+4 eğitim reformu çeşitli tartışmaların merkezine oturmuştur. Bu reform

uygulanmaya karar verildikten sonra ve uygulanma sürecinde, başta öğretmenler olmak üzere, siyasi partiler, eğitim sendikaları, doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak eğitimle ilişkili olan tüm kesimler tarafından farklı şekillerde tepkilerle karşılanmıştır (Epçaçan, 2014) ve bu tartışmaların çoğu hala gündemdeki yerini korumaya devam etmektedir (Demir & Aslan, 2017).

Fullan (2000) büyük ölçekli reformların bilinçli politik ve stratejik girişimler olduğunu belirtmiştir. Büyük ölçekli bir reform olan 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun da benzer şekilde bilinçli bir politik karar olduğu düşünülmektedir. Toplumun büyük bir kesimi 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun ideolojik temelli bir reform olduğuna ve bu reform 28 Şubat döneminin intikamını almaya yönelik düzenlemeler içerdiğine dikkat çekmiştir. Dolayısıyla, reform ile ilgili alınan kararlar reformun radikal bir reform olarak algılanmasına zemin hazırlamıştır (ERG, 2014b). Ayrıca, hukuki ve resmî belgelerde yeni eğitim sisteminin adı "12 yıllık zorunlu eğitim" olarak geçmesine rağmen toplum ve basında '4+4+4 kesintili zorunlu eğitim' olarak söz edilmesi sistemin farkı çevrelerin ideolojik amacına göre farklı şekillerde betimlendiğini göstermesi açısından önemli görülmektedir (Bedir, 2022).

4+4+4 eğitim reformu farklı görüşler çerçevesinde değerlendirilmiştir. Bir grup bu reformu pilot uygulama olmadığı, pek çok soruna yol açtığı ve yoğun bir ideolojinin izlerini taşıdığı gerekçesiyle olumsuz olarak değerlendirirken (Bedir, 2022; Dinç vd., 2014; Eroler, 2019) diğer grup müfredatta çeşitlilik oluşturması, öğrenciler için eğitimde fırsat eşitliği sağlaması ve öğrencilere erken yaşta becerilerine yönelik mesleki yönlendirme konusunda yardımcı olması açısından olumlu bir reform olarak değerlendirilmiştir (Akpınar vd., 2012; Doğan vd., 2014; Örs vd., 2013).

4+4+4 reformu aniden getirilen ve eğitim paydaşlarının görüşleri alınmadan uygulamaya geçirilen bir reform olması yönüyle de eleştirilmiştir. Noyan (2019) hükümetin toplumdaki tepki görmemek için 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile getirilen değişiklikleri kısa süre içinde yürürlüğe koyduğunu iddia etmiştir. Karlıdağ-Dennis (2017) de 4+4+4 reformunun tepeden inme bir şekilde yürürlüğe koyulduğunu ve demokratik süreçten uzak bir şekilde alınan kararlara sorgusuzca uyulmasının

beklendiğini belirtmiştir. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile reformun uygulayıcıları olan öğretmenlerin sürece dahil edilmemesi, onların fikrinin alınmaması bu düşünceleri doğrular niteliktedir. Reform uygulanmaya başladıktan sonra ise öğretmenler reformu sert bir şekilde eleştirmiştir (Epçaçan, 2014). Bu durum okullardaki değişim uygulamaları konusunda değişim hareketinin ana bileşenlerinden biri olan öğretmenlerin yeterince önemsenmediğini göstermektedir (Kondakçı vd., 2017).

6287 sayılı kanuna dayanan 4+4+4 eğitim reformu pek çok eleştiriye rağmen yürürlükte kalmaya devam etmiştir. Reform ilk olarak eğitim sistemini üç ayrı kademeye ayırmış ve okulları yeniden yapılandırmıştır (Bilge, 2019). Öğrencilerin öğrenim gördüğü birinci 4 yıl (1, 2, 3, 4. sınıflar) ilkokul, ikinci 4 yıl (5, 6, 7, 8. sınıflar) ortaokul ve son 4 yıl (9, 10, 11, 12. sınıflar) ise lise şeklinde belirtilmiştir. İki kademe arası geçiş olduğu için “kesintili eğitim” adı verilmiştir. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu okula başlama yaşı, kademelere ayrılış şekli, zorunlu eğitim süresi ve seçmeli dersler başta olmak üzere birçok yönüyle Türkiye’de farklı bir eğitim politikasının getiriliş ve uygulanış şekline örnektir (ERG, 2014b). Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi ani bir şekilde getirilmesi, ön uygulama yapılmaması, uygulayıcı fikirlerinin alınmaması gibi nedenlerden ötürü bu reformu uygulamak problemlidir. Bunların dışında reformun uygulayıcılarını zorlayan bazı düzenlemeler de mevcuttur. Eğitimin her üç kademesinde de bu düzenlemeler yüzünden sıkıntılar yaşanmış ve reformun uygulayıcıları sık sık reform ile ilgili şikayetlerini dile getirmiştir.

İlk dördük sisteme karşılık gelen ilkokullarda, dönemsel olarak öğrencilerin hazırbulunuşluğunun olmamasına rağmen öğrencilerin okula başlama yaşının erkene çekilmesine toplumun büyük kısmı tepki göstermiş ve bu durum büyük bir kitle tarafından eleştirilmiştir (Küleççi, 2013; Karadeniz, 2012). İkinci dördte ise 5.sınıfların ikinci dörde dahil edilerek ortaokul yapılması büyük eleştiri toplamıştır. Bu konu iki ayrı noktada eleştirilere maruz kalmıştır. Birincisi 5.sınıf öğrencilerinin henüz soyut işlemler dönemine girmedikleri için ortaokul sürecine adapte olamayışdır. Bilişsel ve duyuşsal olarak ortaokul olmaya hazır olmayan öğrenciler uzun bir süre ortaokula alışamamıştır. Bu durum öğrencileri olduğu kadar ortaokul

öğretmenlerini de huzursuz etmiştir (Özden & Aksu, 2014). Ek olarak, 5.sınıflar ortaokul olduğunda bu beklenmedik uygulama bu kademe de sınıf yetersizliği sorununa yol açmıştır (Aybek & Aslan, 2015). Bir diğer tartışma yaratan konu ilkökul öğretmenlerinin norm fazlası olma durumudur. Bu durum aynı zamanda ortaokuldaki branş öğretmeni açığı da ortaya çıkarmıştır (Uysal, 2015). Norm fazlası olan öğretmenlerden yan dallarındaki branşları seçmek isteyenlere izin verilmiş, böylece ortaokuldaki branş öğretmeni eksikliği de giderilmeye çalışılmıştır. Ancak bu öğretmen açığı sorunu diğer bölgelerde çözüme kavuşturulabilmişken doğu bölgelerinde öğretmen bulmak kolay olmamış, bu durum ise bölgesel farklılıklara ve eşitsizliklere neden olmuştur (ERG, 2014b).

Üstelik ikinci dördte ilkökul ve ortaokulların binalarının birlikte olmasının getirdiği olumsuzluklar vurgulanmış ve bunları ortadan kaldırmak için ilkökul ve ortaokul binalarının ayrılacağı açıklanmıştır. Ancak plansız reform girişiminin bir sonucu olarak binalar ayrılamamış ve aynı binada birden fazla okul türünün bulunmasının önemli bir sorun yaratacağı ortaya koyulmuştur (Çapar, 2015). Oysa ilkökul, ortaokul ve lise olarak okullarda kademeli bir sisteme geçilmesini öngören reform ile çocuklar yaş ve gelişim özelliklerine göre kendilerine uygun okullara gidecek, böylece eğitim almak için kendilerinden büyük kız ya da erkek çocuklarla aynı mekanları paylaşmak zorunda kalmayacaklardı. Ancak durum beklendiği gibi olmamış ilkökul ve ortaokul binaları ayrılmamıştır (Kaya, 2011). Ayrıca bu sorun başka bir soruna daha zemin hazırlamıştır. İki kademenin bir arada tutulması okullarda idare problemini de ortaya çıkarmıştır. Tek idarecinin hem ilkökul hem de ortaokulda müdür olması oldukça zordur. Yaşanan bu sorunlar teori ile pratiğin birbirini tutmadığı bir kez daha gözler önüne sermiştir (Doğan vd., 2014).

4+4+4 reformu ile ilgili tartışılan ve eleştirilere maruz kalan konulardan bir diğeri de ikinci dört yıllık dönemde öğrencilerin ilgi ve yeteneklerine göre erken yaşta karar verebileceklerini ve kendilerine uygun şekilde mesleki yönlendirme yapılacağı vurgulanmasına rağmen bu uygulamanın gerçekleştirilmediğidir (Gözütok vd., 2014). Ancak devlet ilkökulun sonunda (dördüncü sınıf) temel okullar (hem özel hem de devlet), meslek okulları ve açık öğretim gibi farklı okul türleri arasından

öğrencilerin seçim yapabilme fırsatının verildiğini savunmuştur. Güven (2014) ise öğrencilerin erken yaşta mesleki uygulama yönlendirmelerinin sadece imam hatip ortaokullarını kapsadığını, bu nedenle de gerçek bir yönlendirmeden bahsedilemeyeceğini vurgulamıştır.

Devlet, öte yandan, bu reform ile açık ortaokul ve açık liseleri eğitim sistemine dahil etmiştir. Bu açık okullar sayesinde zorunlu eğitimin amacına ulaşacağı ileri sürülmüştür. Çünkü politika yapıcılar açık okullar sayesinde öğrencilerin zorlanmadan eğitimlerine devam edebileceklerinin altını çizmiştir (Örs vd., 2013). Oysa bu durum zorunlu eğitimi on iki yıla çıkarmak ve öğrencileri okulda daha uzun süre kalmaya teşvik etmek yerine, aslında zorunlu eğitimi kısa kesmiş ve öğrencileri erken yaşta açık öğretim gibi alternatif uygulamalara yönelterek örgün öğretimi sonlandırmıştır (Okçabol, 2013). Bu durum eğitime erişim hakkını engellemiş, dezavantajlı bölgelerdeki dezavantajlı öğrencilerin eğitime erişiminin önüne engeller koymuştur. Başka bir ifade ile açık öğretim uygulaması alt sosyo-ekonomik düzeyden gelen çocuklar aleyhine eşitsizlik oluşturmuştur (Peker-Ünal, 2013). İkinci kademedeki seçmeli dersler konusu gündemdeki yerini uzun süre korumuş olan bir başka sorundur. MEB (2012) bu reformla birlikte eğitim programlarına eklenen seçmeli derslerle (din dersleri) toplumun beklentilerinin ve sosyo-kültürel taleplerinin karşılanacağını iddia ederken eğitim paydaşları ve toplumun bazı kesimleri bu uygulamanın yine devletin ideolojisini yansıtan bir uygulama olduğunun altını çizmiştir (ERG, 2014b).

Eğitim sistemindeki son dördü temsil eden liselerde ise alt-yapı yetersizlikleri çeşitli sorunların oluşmasına zemin hazırlamıştır. Liseler zorunlu tutularak okullaşma oranı arttırılmak istenmiş ve niceliksel olarak olumlu sonuçlar hedeflenmiştir. Ancak nicelikte yakalandığı iddia edilen başarı kesinlikle nitelik olarak sağlanamamıştır. Ani bir değişime gidilerek getirilen 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun da özellikle lise bölümünde alt-yapı desteğinin sağlanamamasından dolayı büyük kargaşaya sebep olduğu düşünülmektedir. Reform iyi planlanmadığı ve öncesinde bir hazırlık yapılmadığı için zorunlu olan liselere yığılma olmuş ve bu da sınıf yetersizliği sorununu beraberinde getirmiştir. Okullardaki kullanılmayan ya da az kullanılan

yerlerin sınıfa çevrilmesi ek problemlerin ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Labaratuvar, kütüphane gibi alanların dışında müdür odalarının küçültülerek sınıfa çevrildiği bile görülmüştür (Kayıp & Kartal, 2021). Dahası, sınıf yetersizliği problemi yüzünden mevcut sınıfları daha elverişli kullanmak adına ikili eğitim yeniden gündeme gelmiştir. İkili eğitim sonucunda sabahçı ve öğlenci olmak üzere iki grup oluşmuş ve bu durum okulların başlama ve bitiş saatleri açısından öğrenci, öğretmen, müdür ve veli olmak üzere tüm paydaşlar açısından sorun yaratmıştır (Düşmez & Bulut, 2015; Kaştan & Kaştan, 2016).

4+4+4 eğitim reformu pek çok konuda değişikliği gerçekleştirmiş olsa da sosyoekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı öğrencilerin yaşamları üzerinde olumlu bir etki yaratmamıştır (Özer, 2020). Dezavantajlı grupların okullardaki durumu eğitim sisteminde bir sorun teşkil etmektedir. Alt sınıftan gelen öğrencilerin ihtiyaçları karşılanmadığında, eğitim sisteminde daha düşük kalite ve daha fazla çatışma ile karakterize edilen daha büyük sorunları oluşacaktır (Levin, 1988). Sonuç olarak, eğitimdeki eşitsizliklerin gelecekte daha büyük sorunlara yol açması ve eğitim sistemini olumsuz etkilemesi olasıdır. Devlet, eğitimde fırsat eşitliğini sağlamadığı takdirde eğitim sisteminde sosyal adalet yaratmayı başaramayacağını farkındadır (Ayata, 2018). Öte yandan, fırsat eşitliği açısından çeşitli düzenlemeler getiren 4+4+4 eğitim reformu, eğitim eşitsizliklerini de içinde barındırmaktadır. Hatta, eğitim eşitsizliklerinin bu reform sonrasında yeni bir boyut kazandığı söylenebilir. Bu bağlamda, bu tez, eğitim reformlarının sosyal adaletsizlikleri ve dezavantajlı grupların durumunu hafifletmede başarısız olduğu argümanına dair kanıtlar elde etmeye odaklanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda, çalışmanın amacı 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçlarını araştırmaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına yanıt aranmıştır:

- a) Eğitim reformunun akademik başarı açısından dezavantajlı öğrenci üzerindeki işlev ve sonuçları nelerdir?
- b) Eğitim reformunun cinsiyet açısından dezavantajlı öğrenci üzerindeki işlev ve sonuçları nelerdir?

- c) Eğitim reformunun devamsızlık açısından dezavantajlı öğrenci üzerindeki işlev ve sonuçları nelerdir?
- d) Öğretmenler, okul müdürleri ve akademisyenler 4+4+4 eğitim reformunu nasıl algılamaktadır?
- e) Öğretmenlerin, okul müdürlerinin ve akademisyenlerin 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin deneyimleri/gözlemleri nelerdir?
- f) Öğretmenler, okul müdürleri ve akademisyenlerin bakış açısından 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçları nelerdir?

1.1. Çalışmanın Önemi

Bu çalışma, 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin önceki çalışmalardan farklı bir bakış açısına sahiptir. Çalışma, dezavantajlı öğrenciler için eğitimin ve eğitim reformlarının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Reform, başta İşlevselci ve Çatışma kuramları olmak üzere eğitimdeki sosyolojik kuramlar çerçevesinde kuramsal olarak analiz edilmiş ve çalışmanın sonuçları sosyo-ekonomik eşitsizliklere vurgu yapan çatışma kuramı perspektifinden değerlendirilmiştir. Bu çalışma, reformun dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçlarını incelediğinden, eğitimde eşitsizlik kuramlarının kullanılması çalışmayı zenginleştirmiştir. Ayrıca bu çalışma zaman içindeki değişimi analiz eden ve güvenilir çıkarımlar yapılmasına olanak tanıyan boylamsal bir çalışma olduğu için reform öncesi ve sonrası durumu ortaya koymuş ve bu anlamda literatüre önemli bir katkı sağlamıştır (Cohen vd., 2007).

4+4+4 eğitim reformunun amaçlarına baktığımızda, reformun tüm amaçlarının doğrudan dezavantajlı öğrencileri içermese de dolaylı olarak dezavantajlı öğrencilerle ilgili çıktılar içerdiği görülmektedir. Literatürde bu konuyu açıklayan çalışmalar bulunmakla birlikte konunun genellikle tek boyutta ve tek yöntemle incelendiği görülmektedir. Bu anlamda açıklayıcı karma desenin kullanıldığı bu çalışma metodoloji açısından önem taşımaktadır. Açıklayıcı karma desenin doğasına uygun olarak bu çalışmada öncelikle 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun sonuçlarını ortaya koymak için anlamlı bir veri seti ile nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu aşamada kullanılan veriler ile sosyoekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı okullardaki tüm

kademelerdeki K12 öğrencileri akademik başarı, cinsiyet ve devamsızlık gibi değişkenler açısından incelenmiş ve aynı değişkenler reform öncesi ve sonrası veriler karşılaştırılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bunu, dezavantajlı öğrencilerin durumunu derinlemesine inceleyen nitel bir çalışma izlemiştir. Nicel bulguların olası nedenleri görüşmelerle desteklenmiştir. Bilindiği kadarıyla literatürde bu kadar kapsamlı boylamsal bir çalışma bulunmamaktadır ya da varsa bile çok sınırlıdır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın literatürdeki bir boşluğu doldurduğu ve bilinmeyen bir konuya ışık tuttuğu söylenebilir.

Ayrıca, bu çalışmanın nitel bulguları, merkezi Türk eğitim sisteminde reform uygulayıcılarının görüşlerinin de politika yapıcılar kadar önemli olduğunu ortaya koymuştur (Çelik, 2004). Reformlar ihtiyaç odaklı olduğunda reform girişimleri politika üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahip olduğundan, reformlar uygulamaya konulmadan önce paydaşların bilgilendirilmesi ve sürece dahil edilmesi önemlidir. Bu aynı zamanda reformların uygulanmasını da kolaylaştırır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, Lingard vd. (2017), Tefera (1999) ve Zimmerman'ın (2006) da altını çizdiği gibi, tepeden inme reformların eğitim sistemine verebileceği zararları ortaya koymuş ve eğitim paydaşlarının görüşleri dikkate alındığında karşılaşılabilecek birçok sakıncadan nasıl kaçınılabileceğine dair önemli bilgiler sağlamıştır.

Üstelik, bu çalışmanın nitel kısmında katılımcılar önceden belirlenmiş kriterlere göre seçilmiş ve reform öncesi ve sonrasını daha iyi değerlendirebilmek için reformdan önce en az 4 yıldır görevde olanlar seçilmiştir. Ayrıca hem literatürün desteğiyle (Gür & Aykurtlu, 2021; Kırmızı & Yurdakal, 2016; Yardibi, 2017) hem de öğretmen ve okul müdürlerinden oluşan iç paydaşlarla uzlaşılarak alınan karar neticesinde her kademede görev yapan öğretmenler çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Reformun sonuçlarını daha iyi ortaya koyabilmek için reformun ilk yıllarında reformdan en çok etkileneceği düşünülen 1, 5 ve 9. sınıflarda görev yapan öğretmenler tercih edilmiştir. Bu seçicilik ve kapsayıcılık çalışmanın önemini artırmaktadır.

Son olarak, literatürde oldukça sınırlı olan akademisyen görüşleri de çalışmaya dahil edilmiş ve K12'de uygulanan bir reformun yükseköğretim perspektifinden nasıl

algılandığı ortaya konulmuştur. Bu çerçevede değerlendirildiğinde çalışmanın literatüre önemli bir katkı sağladığı söylenebilir.

2. YÖNTEM

2.1. Araştırma Deseni

Bu çalışmada karma yöntem araştırma deseni uygulanmıştır. Karma yöntem araştırma desenleri arasından sırasıyla önce nicel çalışma sonra da derinlemesine incelemek amacıyla nitel çalışmanın yürütüldüğü açıklayıcı desen kullanılmıştır.

2.2. Örneklem

Çalışmanın evrenini 2008-2016 eğitim-öğretim yılları arasında Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nde A iline bağlı iki ilçedeki dezavantajlı okullar ve bu okullardaki öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmada çalışma grubunu belirlemek için küme örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada, öncelikle il milli eğitim müdürlüğünden iki ilçedeki dezavantajlı okulların listesi alınarak dezavantajlı okullar kümelenmiştir.

Okullar, okul türlerine göre okul listesinden rastgele seçilmiştir: üç ilkokul, üç ortaokul ve iki lise. Toplamda sekiz okul olması gerekirken, ilkokul ve ortaokullar sözde ayrı ama yine de aynı alanı kullandıkları için çalışmada beş okul yer almıştır. Okullar seçildikten sonra, bu okullara devam eden tüm öğrenciler örnekleme dahil edilmiştir. Dolayısıyla, bu okullardan 44.289 öğrenci çalışmanın örneklemini temsil etmiştir.

İlkokul ve ortaokula devam eden 17008 öğrencinin 8411'i kız (%49,5), 8597'si erkektir (%50,5). Bu öğrenciler ilkokul (n=7461, %43,9) veya ortaokul (n=9547, %56,1) öğrencisidir. A okulunun öğrenci sayısı (n=8765, %51,5) B (n=3678, %21,6) ve C okullarından (n=4565, %26,8) daha fazladır. Bunların 3690'ı 4. sınıf (%21,7), 3770'i 5. sınıf (%22,2), 3241'i 6. sınıf (%19,1), 3181'i 7. sınıf (%18,7) ve 3126'sı 8.

sınıf (%18,4) öğrencisidir. Liseye devam eden 27281 öğrencinin 9909'u kız (%38,3) ve 17372'si erkek (%63,7) öğrencidir. Bu öğrencilerin 12695'i (%46,5) D lisesine, 14586'sı (%53,5) E lisesine gitmektedir. 9409'u (%34,5) 9. sınıf, 6301'i (%23,1) 10. sınıf, 5706'sı (%20,9) 11. sınıf ve 5865'i (%21,5) 12. sınıf öğrencisidir.

Elde edilen nicel verilerin ön analizi yapıldıktan sonra araştırmanın nitel boyutu kapsamında görüşme yapılacak öğretmenler, müdürler ve akademisyenler ölçüt örnekleme tekniği ile seçilmiştir. Öğretmenler ve müdürler eğitimdeki iç paydaşlar, akademisyenler ise dış paydaşlar grubunu oluşturmaktadır. İç paydaşlar grubundaki katılımcılar 18 öğretmen ve 14 okul müdüründen oluşmaktadır. Bu 32 katılımcı, Türkiye'nin doğusunda dezavantajlı öğrenci nüfusunun yüksek olduğu bir bölgedeki ilkökul, ortaokul ve liselerde görev yapmaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada önceden belirlenmiş birkaç kriter bulunmaktadır. İlk kriter, dezavantajlı öğrencilerin ağırlıklı olduğu okullarda görev yapan öğretmen ve müdürlerin seçilmesidir. Bu nedenle İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü kayıtlarında yer alan dezavantajlı okullar (sosyoekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı öğrenci sayısının fazla olduğu okullar) tespit edilmiş ve bu okullarda görev yapan öğretmen ve müdürler çalışmaya dâhil edilmiştir.

İkinci kriter ise katılımcıların görev süreleridir. Reform öncesi ve sonrası sisteme ilişkin değerlendirmelerini almak amacıyla 2008 ve öncesinde atanmış (13 yıldan fazla görev süresi olan) öğretmen ve müdürler çalışma için seçilmiştir. Öğretmenler ve okul müdürleri için son kriter ise sınıf kriteridir. Literatür taraması çerçevesinde, 4+4+4 eğitim reformundan en çok 1., 5. ve 9. sınıf öğretmenlerinin etkilendiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Dolayısıyla çalışma grubunda yer alan öğretmenlerin reformun ilk yıllarında bu sınıflarda görev yapmış olmaları çalışma grubunun seçiminde önemli rol oynamıştır. Kriterler belirlendikten sonra, bu kriterleri karşılayan öğretmenleri ve okul müdürlerini bulmak için kartopu tekniği kullanılmıştır.

Dış paydaşlar olan akademisyenler için de birkaç kritere bakılmıştır. İlk kriter, akademisyenlerin 4+4+4 eğitim reformu veya eğitimde sosyal adalet (fırsat eşitliği) konularında daha önceki yıllarda bir çalışma yayınlamış veya aynı konularda bir tez yönetmiş olmalarıdır. Bu nedenle, 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ve eğitimde sosyal adalet

konularında çalışma yapmış akademisyenleri bulmak için web of science ve google scholar gibi sitelerde arama yapılmıştır. Ayrıca ulusal tez merkezi aracılığıyla bu konularda tez danışmanlığı yapmış akademisyenlere ulaşılmış ve bu akademisyenlerle e-posta yoluyla iletişime geçilerek bir görüşme takvimi oluşturulmuştur.

İkinci kriter ise akademisyenlerin en az 10 yıllık deneyime sahip olması gerekliliğidir. On yıldan fazla deneyime sahip akademisyenlerin seçilmesinin nedeni, reform öncesinde birkaç yıl çalışmış akademisyenlerin 4+4+4 eğitim reformu sürecini daha iyi yorumlayacağına düşünülmesidir. Son kriter ise akademisyenlerin iki farklı fakülteden birinde çalışıyor olması gerekliliğidir: Eğitim Fakültesi ve Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi. Böylece akademisyenler 4+4+4 eğitim reformunu hem eğitim hem de sosyolojik açıdan değerlendirebileceklerdir. Yukarıda bahsedilen internet sitelerinde kriterlere uygun akademisyenler bulunduktan sonra daha fazla kişiye ulaşabilmek adına kartopu tekniği kullanılmıştır.

2.3. Veri Toplama Araçları

Bu çalışmada nicel araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak 2008-2016 yılları arasındaki e-okul verileri kullanılmıştır. E-okul sisteminde kayıtlı ham veriler öğrencilere ilişkin çeşitli bilgileri kapsamaktadır. Bunlardan biri de öğrenci karneleridir. E-okul kayıtlarındaki bu öğrenci karneleri aracılığıyla cinsiyet, akademik başarı puanı ve öğrenci devamsızlığı gibi gerekli verilere ulaşılmış ve böylece çalışmanın araştırma soruları yanıtlanmıştır. Nitel araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak öğretmen, okul müdürleri ve akademisyenlerin 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ve reformun dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçlarına ilişkin algı ve deneyimlerini farklı perspektiflerden ortaya koymak amacıyla iki farklı görüşme formu geliştirilmiştir. Görüşme formu hazırlanırken nicel araştırma sonuçları dikkate alınmıştır. Görüşme formu hazırlandıktan sonra sorular nitel araştırma metodolojilerinde yetkin, eğitim örgütlerinde değişim ve reform konusunda derin bilgiye sahip iki uzmanın görüşlerine başvurulmuştur. Daha sonra uzmanlardan gelen geri bildirimler doğrultusunda görüşme formuna son hali verilmiştir.

2.4. Araştırma Geçerliliği ve Güvenirliği

Houser (2015) nitel araştırmalarda güvenirliliğin olması gerektiğini ve bunun için bazı ölçütlerin olduğunu belirtmiştir. Guba ve Lincon (1982) tarafından dört başlık altında verilen bu ölçütler inandırıcılık, aktarılabirlik, güvenirlilik ve teyit edilebilirliktir.

İnandırıcılık (Credibility), elde edilen anlamın doğruluğu ile ilgilidir (Guba, 1981). İnandırıcılığı artırmak için çeşitli yöntemler vardır. Uzun süreli katılım, üye kontrolü ve akran bilgilendirmesi bu yöntemler arasındadır (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996). Bu çalışmada inandırıcılığı sağlamak için akran bilgilendirme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Akran bilgilendirme yöntemi iç geçerliliği artırmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, araştırmanın iç geçerliliğini artırmak için üç uzmandan uzman görüşü alınmıştır. Bu uzmanlara eş zamanlı olarak iki farklı veri gönderilmiş ve kodlar ve temalar oluşturarak verileri analiz etmeleri istenmiştir. Bu uzmanlardan ikisi eğitim bilimleri bölümünde, diğeri ise temel eğitim bölümünde çalışmaktadır ve konuya aşinadırlar. Eş zamanlı kodlama sonucunda üç kodlayıcı arasında uyum sağlanmıştır (Maxwell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Uzmanlar süreç boyunca geri bildirimde bulunmuş ve kodlama sürecinin sonunda kodlayıcılar arası uyum sağlanmış (Glesne, 2016), geri bildirimler sayesinde çalışmanın inandırıcılığı artmıştır (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996; Houser, 2015).

Bir diğeri ölçüt olan aktarılabirlik (Transferability), sonuçların farklı gruplara ve durumlara ne ölçüde uygulanabileceğini gösterir (Guba, 1981). Nitel araştırmalarda aktarılabirlik olarak ifade edilen dış geçerlilik (Miles & Huberman, 2016), sonuçların genellenebilirliğine vurgu yapar. Ancak buradaki genelleme ifadesi, çalışma sonuçlarının benzer durumlarda tekrarlanabilmesi (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011) ya da benzer zamanlarda benzer olayların farklı zamanlarda benzer sonuçlar verebilmesidir (Merriam, 1998; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Nitel araştırmalarda genelleme amacı yoktur; ancak aktarılabirliğin sağlanması için katılımcıların seçiminde bazı kriterlerin önceden belirlenmesi ve katılımcıların özellikleri ile seçilme nedenlerinin ayrıntılı olarak açıklanması gerekir (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Bu çalışmada da aktarılabirliği sağlamak amacıyla katılımcılar belirli kriterlere göre (dezavantajlı

okullarda çalışıyor olmak, 2008'den önce atanmış olmak, farklı okul türlerinde ya da belirli fakültelerde çalışıyor olmak gibi) seçilmiş ve bunun nedenleri detaylı olarak açıklanmıştır. Ayrıca verilerin olduğu gibi okuyucuya aktarılması aktarılabilirliği artıracığından (Guba & Lincoln, 1982) bu çalışmada doğrudan alıntılar kullanılmıştır. Bireylerin konuya ilişkin algı, farkındalık ve deneyimlerinin alıntılar kullanılarak sunulması geçerlilik açısından önemlidir (Patton, 2014).

Güvenilirliği (Dependability) sağlamak için en yaygın olarak bilinen ve uygulanan strateji üçgenleme tekniğidir. Üçgenleme, iki ya da daha fazla veri toplama yönteminin (örneğin görüşmeler ve gözlemler) ya da iki ya da daha fazla veri kaynağının (örneğin farklı grup üyeleriyle yapılan bireysel görüşmeler) sonuçlarının karşılaştırılmasıdır (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Bu çalışmada iç güvenilirliği arttırmak için üç farklı veri kaynağı kullanılmıştır. Öğretmenler, okul müdürleri ve akademisyenlerle aynı konu (4+4+4 eğitim reformunun dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçları) hakkında görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Böylece konunun çoklu perspektiflerden incelenmesi mümkün olmuştur.

Son olarak, teyit edilebilirlik (Confirmability), yani dış güvenilirlik, denetim izi ile sağlanmıştır. Denetim izi, kararların, tekliflerin, prosedürlerin ve analiz sürecinin raporlanması ve bunların çalışma boyunca eksiksiz ve titiz bir şekilde yansıtılmasıdır. Amaç, sonuçlar için mümkün olduğunca kanıt sunmaktır (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Bu doğrultuda, çalışmada teyit edilebilirliği sağlamak amacıyla ses kayıt cihazına kaydedilen veriler ve görüşmeler sırasında alınan notlar muhafaza edilmiş ve bu veriler mevcut çalışmanın bulgularında yer alan alıntılarla desteklenmiştir.

2.5. Veri Toplama Süreci

Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi (ODTÜ) İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Komitesi (İAEK) ve çalışmanın yapılacağı ildeki İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü'nden onay istenmiş ve çalışma için gerekli izinler alınmıştır. Çalışmanın nicel verileri 2020-2021 eğitim-öğretim yılında Eylül ve Mart ayları arasında toplanmıştır. Gerekli izinler alındıktan

sonra kümeleme yöntemiyle belirlenen dezavantajlı okullar ziyaret edilmiş ve müdürlerin desteği ile bilgisayardan e-okul verileri indirilmiştir. Pandemi dönemi olduğu için verilerin tamamına ulaşmak altı ay sürmüştür bu süre içinde çalışmanın yapıldığı ile birkaç kez gidilerek veri toplama süreci tamamlanmıştır.

Nitel araştırma verileri pandemi sürecinden dolayı bir süre ertelenmiştir. Riskin azalmasının ardından 2021-2022 eğitim öğretim yılının Ekim ve Şubat ayları arasında yapılan görüşmeler sonucu nitel veriler toplanmıştır. Bazı görüşmeler katılımcıların isteği doğrultusunda online olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşme öncesi katılımcılara araştırma izni gösterilmiş ve araştırmanın amacı, görüşmenin içeriği ve görüşmenin tahmini süresi hakkında bilgi verilmiştir. Görüşme sırasında, görüşülen kişilerin herhangi bir manipülasyon olmaksızın kendi algılarını özgürce ifade edebilecekleri bir ortam yaratılmıştır. Akademisyenler ile görüşmeler de aynı şekilde bir kısmı yüz yüze bir kısmı online (Zoom üzerinden) olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bir grup akademisyene de Ankara'da yapılacak olan milli eğitim şurasına (2021 yılında 3-5 Aralık) katıldıklarında yüz yüze görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Görüşme süresi 38 dakika ile 164 dakika arasında değişmiştir. Tüm görüşmeler dikkate alındığında ortalama süre yaklaşık 82 dakikadır. Tüm görüşme oturumları kaydedilmiş ve kelimesi kelimesine yazıya dökülmüştür.

2.6. Verilerin Analizi

Nitel verilerin analizi için tüm veriler toplandıktan sonra 2008-2016 eğitim-öğretim yılları arasında 17.008 ilkokul ve ortaokul öğrencisi ile 27.282 lise öğrencisi olmak üzere toplam 44.290 öğrenci verisi Microsoft Excel dosyasına girilmiştir. Daha sonra Excel'deki veriler SPSS 28 programına aktarılmıştır. Örneklem grubuna ait bilgi sağlamak amacıyla frekans, yüzde gibi betimsel istatistik değerler incelenmiştir. Verilerin analizinde betimsel analiz kullanılmıştır. Nitel verilerin analizi sürecinde öncelikle görüşmeler deşifre edilmiştir. Daha sonra üç araştırmacı tarafından eş zamanlı olarak kod listeleri hazırlanmış ve kodlar gruplandırılmıştır. Son olarak,

oluşturulan kodlar doğrultusunda temalar belirlenmiştir. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizi kullanılmıştır.

3. BULGULAR

İlkokul ve ortaokul öğrencilerinin yıllara göre başarı grafiği incelendiğinde, 2012-2013 eğitim-öğretim yılının bir kırılma noktası olduğu ve bu yılda 4. sınıftan 8. sınıfa kadar tüm kademelerde akademik başarının düştüğü görülmüştür. Ancak 5. sınıf öğrencilerinin akademik başarısı diğer sınıflara kıyasla dramatik bir şekilde düşmüştür. Ayrıca 2012'den sonraki (reformdan sonraki) yıllarda akademik başarı kısmen artmış ancak reform öncesi dönemdeki seviyeye ulaşamamıştır. İkinci olarak, 2012 yılında onaylanan 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun sonuçları liselerdeki akademik başarı açısından yıllara göre incelendiğinde, 2012 yılında tüm kademelerde ani bir düşüş yaşandığı görülmüştür. Lise öğrencilerinin yıllara göre akademik başarı grafiği incelendiğinde, öğrencilerin akademik başarılarının keskin bir şekilde düştüğü anlaşılmıştır. Diğer sınıflarla karşılaştırıldığında, 9. sınıf öğrencilerinin 10, 11, 12. sınıflara göre akademik başarısızlığı daha belirgin bir şekilde yaşadıkları görülmüştür. Ayrıca, 2012 yılında 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun hayata geçirilmesinden sonra, lisedeki hiçbir sınıf düzeyinde reformdan önceki akademik başarı seviyesine ulaşılmadığı görülmüştür.

İlk ve ortaokullardaki cinsiyet dağılımına göre, reform öncesinde 3341 kız öğrenci (%60,3) ve 3571 erkek öğrenci (%58,5) bulunurken, reform sonrasında 5070 kız öğrenci (%39,7) ve 5026 erkek öğrenci (%41,5) bulunmaktadır. Dağılım incelendiğinde hem kız hem de erkek öğrenci sayısının arttığı görülmektedir. Araştırmaya katılan lise öğrencilerinin sayısı değerlendirildiğinde, kız öğrenci sayısının 4763'ten (%48,1) 5146'ya (%51,9) yükseldiği görülmüştür. Benzer şekilde, erkek öğrenci sayısı da 8532'den (%49,1) 8840'a (%50,9) yükselmiştir. Görüldüğü gibi, reform öncesi ve sonrası dönemler karşılaştırıldığında kız ve erkek öğrenci sayılarında artış görülmektedir. Ancak yıllar itibariyle kız ve erkek öğrenci sayıları incelendiğinde, reform sonrasında her iki grup öğrenci sayısında da azalma olduğu görülmüştür. Yıllara göre özellikle kız öğrenciler açısından reform öncesi ve sonrası

dönem ele alındığında, 2012-2013 eğitim-öğretim yılından sonra kız öğrenci sayısının azaldığı dikkat çekmiştir.

2012-2013 akademik yılında kız öğrenci sayısının (n= 1514, %36,2) ve erkek öğrenci sayısının (n= 2673, %63,8) reformdan önceki yıllara göre daha yüksek olduğu söylenebilir. Ancak, reformun uygulandığı 2012 yılında 1514 (%36,2) olan kız öğrenci sayısı, sadece bir yıl sonra 1230'a (%35,6) düşmüştür. Buna paralel olarak, reformu takip eden yıllarda erkek öğrenci sayısı 2673'ten (%63,8) 1973'e (%61,7) düşmüştür. Kız ve erkek öğrencilerin okullaşma oranları incelendiğinde, tüm akademik yıllarda erkek öğrencilerin okullaşma oranının kız öğrencilerin okullaşma oranından daha yüksek olduğu görülmektedir. Verilen betimleyici istatistiklere bakıldığında, reformun daha dezavantajlı gruplar olarak kabul edilen kız öğrencilerin sayısında bir artışa yol açmadığı görülmektedir. Bu durumda sonuçlar, 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun ilk yıllarda kız öğrenci sayısını artırmasına rağmen, sonraki yıllarda beklenen olumlu etkiyi yaratmadığını açıkça göstermiştir.

Birinci dönemde devamsızlık yapılan gün sayısı incelendiğinde, tam katılım gösteren ilkokul ve ortaokul öğrencilerinin gün sayısının reformdan önce daha yüksek olduğu (n=2023, %54,9) ve reformdan sonra azaldığı (n=1662, %45,1) görülmüştür. Reform öncesinde 40 gün ve üzeri devamsızlık yapan öğrenci sayısı 249 (%28,5) iken, reform sonrasında bu sayı 625'e (%71,5) yükselmiştir. 40 gün ve üzeri devamsızlığın eğitim sürecini olumsuz etkilediği göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, sonuçlar 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun öğrencilerin okula dahil edilmesi üzerinde önemli bir etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Reformdan sonraki ikinci dönemde ilkokul ve ortaokul öğrencilerinin devamsız gün sayıları incelendiğinde, tam devam eden öğrencilerin gün sayısının reformdan önce daha yüksek olduğu (n=2339, %51,5) ancak reformdan sonra azaldığı (n=2206, %48,5) görülmektedir. Reformdan önce 20 ila 40 gün arasında devamsızlık yapan öğrenci sayısı 203 (%31,8) iken reformdan sonra bu sayı 435'e (%68,2) yükselmiştir. Reform öncesinde 40 gün ve üzeri devamsızlık yapan öğrenci sayısı 304 (%29,9) iken reform sonrasında bu sayı 714'e (%70,1) yükselmiştir. Bu yüksek devamsızlık oranı, 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun eğitim üzerindeki olumsuz sonuçlarına dikkat çekmektedir. Reformdan sonra, özellikle uzun

süre okula devam etmeyen lise öğrencileri için devamsızlık oranları artmıştır. Öğrencilerin lise birinci dönem devamsızlıkları incelendiğinde, tam devam edilen gün sayısının reformdan önce daha düşük olduğu (n=1322, %35,0) ve reformdan sonra arttığı (n=2460, %65,0) görülmüştür. Ayrıca, sınıf geçme kriteri olan 20 ile 40 gün arasında devamsızlık yapılan gün sayısı reform öncesine (n=377, %44,2) kıyasla reform sonrasında (n=476, %55,8) artmıştır. Reform öncesinde 40 gün ve üzeri devamsızlığı olan öğrenci sayısı 559 (%40,3) iken, reform sonrasında bu sayı 828'e (%59,7) yükselmiştir.

Reformdan sonra, özellikle uzun süre okula devam etmeyen lise öğrencileri için devamsızlık oranları artmıştır. Öğrencilerin lisede birinci dönem devamsızlıkları incelendiğinde, tam devam edilen gün sayısının reformdan önce daha düşük olduğu (n=1322, %35,0) ve reformdan sonra arttığı (n=2460, %65,0) görülmüştür. Ayrıca, sınıf geçme kriteri olan 20 ile 40 gün arasında devamsızlık yapılan gün sayısı reform öncesine (n=377, %44,2) kıyasla reform sonrasında (n=476, %55,8) artmıştır. Reform öncesinde 40 gün ve üzeri devamsızlık yapan öğrenci sayısı 559 (%40,3) iken, reform sonrasında bu sayı 828'e (%59,7) yükselmiştir. Lise öğrencilerinin ikinci yarıyıl devamsızlıkları birinci yarıyıl devamsızlık sonuçlarıyla paralellik göstermiş, tam devam edilen gün sayısı reformdan önce daha düşükken (n=501, %16,9) reformdan sonra artmıştır (n=2459, %83,1). Ayrıca, geçme kriteri olan en az 20 günden 40 güne kadar olan devamsızlık gün sayısı reform öncesine (n=2647, %59,1) kıyasla reform sonrasında azalmıştır (n=1831, %40,9). Reform öncesinde 40 gün ve üzeri devamsızlığı olan öğrenci sayısı 450 (%31,9) iken, reform sonrasında bu sayı iki kat artmıştır (n= 961, %68,1). Devamsızlık süresi 40 gün ve üzeri olan öğrencilerin okuldan koptuğu göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun okullaşma oranını artırmadığı, aksine 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun olumsuz sonuçlarından biri olan okul terklerinin artmasına neden olduğu görülmüştür.

Çalışmanın nitel bulguları iki grubun görüşlerini yansıtmaktadır: eğitimdeki iç paydaşlar (öğretmenler ve müdürler) ve dış paydaşlar (akademisyenler). Katılımcı görüşlerine göre 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna dair algılar 3 tema altında toplanmıştır. Bunlar: “4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin görüşler, 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin

deneyimler ve gözlemler ve 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçlarıdır.” Ayrıca bu ana temalar altında alt temalar da yer almaktadır. Dördüncü araştırma sorusuna ilişkin olarak "4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin görüşler” teması altında katılımcılar reforma dair algılarını açıklamıştır.

Bu tema altında eğitimde büyük ölçekli reform, avara kasnak olarak 4+4+4 eğitim reformu, reform yanılığsı, 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin ideolojik kaygı, 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin metaforik algı" gibi alt temalar ortaya çıkmıştır. Katılımcılar 4+4+4 reformunu tüm kademeleri etkilediği için büyük ölçekli bir reform olarak değerlendirmiştir. Ancak bir grup katılımcı 4+4+4’ün önceki reformları tekrar eden, monoton, can sıkıcı bir değişim olduğunu (avara kasnak) diğer katılımcılar ise 4+4+4’ün aslında bir reform olmadığını vurgulayarak bunun reform yanılığsından ibaret olduğunu iddia etmişlerdir. Üstelik katılımcılar reformun ani getirilmiş bir reform olduğunu, pilot uygulama yapılmadan uygulamaya geçildiğini, plansız olduğunu ve reform hakkında görüşleri alınmadığını bildirmiş, bu nedenle de reformu olumsuz değerlendirmiştir. Ayrıca katılımcıların neredeyse tamamı reformun ideolojik temelli olduğunu vurgulamış ve reformu 28 Şubat olaylarının intikamını almak üzere getirilmiş bir reform olarak yorumlamışlardır. 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin katılımcıların ürettiği metaforlardan bazıları olumlu (Picasso’nun tablosu, anne terliği, tohum) bazıları da olumsuz (uzay mekiği, lastiği patlamış otomobil, yamalı bohça) anlam içermektedir. Bazı metaforlar ise eğitimde fırsat eşitliğini vurgulayan olumsuz anlamlar içermektedir (labirent, turnusol kâğıdı).

Beşinci araştırma sorusu doğrultusunda, 4+4+4 eğitim reformuna ilişkin deneyimler ve gözlemler teması altında “4+4+4 eğitim reformunun avantajları ve dezavantajları, reformdan kaynaklanan sorunlar, sorunlarla başa çıkma stratejileri ve etkili bir reform için öneriler" gibi alt temalar bulunmuştur. Bu alt temalar doğrultusunda katılımcılar, reformun avantajlarını ve dezavantajlarını, reformun neden olduğu sorunları, bu sorunlarla başa çıkmak için geliştirdikleri stratejileri ve 4+4+4’ün daha başarılı bir reform olması için önerilerini açıklamışlardır. Bu çerçevede, katılımcılara "4+4+4 eğitim reformunun avantajları ve dezavantajları" sorulduğunda, katılımcılar “eğitimin kalitesi, kesintili eğitim, taşınmalı eğitim, yeteneklerin belirlenmesi,

öğretmenler üzerindeki baskının artması ve toplumun ayrışması” gibi konularda reformun olumlu ya da olumsuz yönlerini açıklamışlardır. Katılımcıların bir kısmı 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile 12 yıllık zorunlu eğitim getirildiği için eğitim süresinin uzamasını bir gelişmişlik göstergesi kabul etmiş ve reformu bu anlamda olumlu değerlendirmiştir. Diğer katılımcılar ise eğitimin süresi (niceliği) kadar içeriğinin de önemli olduğunu, niteliksel bir artış sağlanmadıkça zorunlu eğitimin diplomalı işsiz sayısını arttıracığını belirtmiştir. Katılımcılara göre ilkokul ve ortaokul binalarının birbirinden ayrılmaması reformun dezavantajıdır. Çünkü kâğıt üzerinde yapılacağı belirtilen binaların ayrılması işlemi gerçekleşmemiştir ve farklı yaş gruplarındaki çocuklar aynı binalarda eğitim almak durumunda kalmaya devam etmiştir. Ayrıca seçmeli derslerin aileler tarafından seçilmesi, toplumu ayrıştıran bir etkisi olması ve seçmeli ders olarak farklı alternatiflerin sunulmaması sebebiyle katılımcılar seçmeli dersler ile ilgili olumsuz duygularını ifade etmiştir. Katılımcılar reformdan kaynaklanan sorunlar olarak her üç kademedeki sorunlara da değinmiştir. İlkokulda okula başlama yaşının erkene çekilmesi, ortaokullarda 5.sınıfların ortaokul olması, bunun sonucunda norm fazlası öğretmenlerin oluşması, liselerde ise alt-yapı yetersizliği sebebiyle yeterli sayıda sınıfa ulaşılamaması gibi sorunlar katılımcılar tarafından vurgulanmıştır. Tüm kademelerde planlama yapılmadan hayata geçirilen reformun olumsuz sonuçlarının deneyimlendiği görülmüştür. Reformun uygulayıcıları reformdan kaynaklı sorunlarla baş edebilmeleri için herhangi bir şey yapılmadığını, kendi imkanları sayesinde sorunların üstesinden gelmeye çalıştıklarını belirtmiş, bunların yaşanmaması için de pilot uygulamanın ve uzman görüşlerine başvurmanın şart olduğunu altını çizmiştir.

Altıncı araştırma sorusuna ilişkin olarak "4+4+4 eğitim reformunun dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçları" teması altında "dezavantajlı öğrenciler, pandemide dezavantajlı olmak, eğitimde sosyal adalet uygulamaları, madalyonun diğer yüzü ve hükümet politikalarının düşük sosyo-ekonomik sınıftan gelen dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki etkileri" gibi alt temalar sunulmuştur. Katılımcıların bir kısmı eğitime erişemeyen öğrencileri dezavantajlı bulurken çoğu katılımcı sosyo-ekonomik olarak yetersiz olduğu için pek çok şeyden yoksun kalan öğrencileri dezavantajlı bulduklarını açıklamıştır. Katılımcıların neredeyse tamamı Türkiye’de yoğun bir

şekilde bulunan dezavantajlı grubun sosyo-ekonomik olarak dezavantajlı olanlar olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Katılımcılara dezavantajlı olma durumu dönemsel olarak veya koşullara göre değişiyor mu diye sorulduğunda katılımcıların tamamı pandemiye örnek göstererek pandeminin dezavantajlı öğrencilerin durumunu kat be kat kötüleştirdiğini iddia etmiştir. Katılımcılara göre 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun olumsuz sonuçları devam ederken pandeminin sürece eklenmesi öğrenciler arasındaki eşitsizliği derinleştirmiştir. Eğitimde sosyal adalet uygulamaları alt temasında ise katılımcılar devlet tarafından sağlanan desteğin önemini altını çizmiştir. Bu konu kapsamında katılımcılar mali destek ve eğitim eşitsizliği konularının üzerinde durmuştur. Eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin tam anlamıyla sağlanamadığını vurgulayan katılımcılar eşitlik adı altında aslında eşitsizliğin yeniden üretildiğini belirtmiştir. Madalyonun diğer (karanlık) yüzü alt teması altında katılımcılar akademik başarı, cinsiyet ve devamsızlık konularında madalyonun bir de karanlık tarafı olduğuna dair açıklamalarda bulunmuşlar, aslında olumlu görünen bazı şeylerin incelenip bir de diğer taraftan bakılması gerektiğini vurgulamışlardır. Son olarak hükümet politikalarının düşük sosyo-ekonomik sınıftan gelen dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki etkileri konusunda çok sayıda katılımcı devletin dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki olumlu etkilerinin ortadan kalktığını ve yetersiz devlet politikaları nedeniyle eğitim eşitsizliklerinin dezavantajlı öğrenciler üzerindeki olumsuz sonuçlarının arttığını ifade etmiştir. Katılımcılara göre toplumdaki sosyo-ekonomik eşitsizlikler dezavantajlı grupları birçok yönden olumsuz etkilemektedir. Bu eşitsizliklerin sonuçlarından birinin de akademik başarı olduğunu belirten katılımcılar, aileleri eğitimlerini desteklemekte zorlanan çocukların özel okullarda okuyan çocuklarla aynı sınavlara tabi tutulmasını bir adaletsizlik olarak değerlendirmiştir. Ayrıca katılımcılar, eskiden sınıfsal hareketliliğin bir aracı olarak görülen eğitimin artık aynı role ve etkiye sahip olmadığını vurgulamıştır. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu sonucu dezavantajlı öğrencilerin durumunu değerlendiren az sayıda katılımcı reformdan sonra dezavantajlı öğrencilerin durumlarında bir iyileşme ya da kötüleşme olmadığını yani durumlarının değişmediğini vurgularken katılımcıların çoğu reformun öğrencilerin durumunu daha da kötüleştirdiğini ve var olan eşitsizliklerin reform ile birlikte derinleştiğini belirtmiştir.

4. TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Bu çalışmanın bulguları akademik başarı, cinsiyet ve devamsızlık değişkenleri üzerinden değerlendirilmiş ve nitel bulgular eşliğinde tartışılmıştır. Bulgular 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise olmak üzere tüm kademeleri akademik başarı açısından olumsuz etkilediği sonucunu ortaya koymuştur. Özellikle 1. 5. ve 9.sınıflar diğer sınıflara göre reformun olumsuz sonuçlarından daha fazla etkilenmiştir. Literatürde bunu destekleyen çalışmalar mevcuttur (Epeçan, 2014; Kandemir vd., 2013; Odabaşı, 2014). Öğretmen, müdür ve akademisyenlerle yürütülen görüşmeler de bu sonucu desteklemiş ve bu sonucun nedeni olarak reformun ani ve plansız bir şekilde yürürlüğe koyulmasını göstermiştir. Çok sayıda araştırma reformun plansız ve pilot uygulama yapılmaksızın uygulamaya başladığını doğrulamaktadır (Akbaşı & Üredi, 2014; Bay vd., 2013; Cerit vd., 2014; Dalkıran, 2018; Ertuğ, 2019; Güngör & Demir, 2017; Kaya vd., 2015; Turan, 2018).

Bulgular özellikle reform değerlendirilirken akademik başarının önemli bir gösterge olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Çalışmanın sonuçları incelendiğinde 4,5,6,7, ve 8.sınıfların tamamında reform ile birlikte akademik başarının düştüğü görülmektedir. Ancak akademik başarıdaki en sert düşüş 5.sınıflarda gözlenmiştir. Bu durumun nedeni olarak 4+4+4 reformu ile 5.sınıfların ortaokul olması gösterilebilir. Çünkü yeni duruma adapte olamayan öğrencilerin ortaokul derslerini anlamada sorun yaşaması, dolayısıyla bu durumun onların akademik başarılarını olumsuz etkilemesi olasıdır. Kaştan ve Kaştan (2016) ve Özkan (2019) da çalışmalarında ortaokul öğretmenlerinin 5.sınıf öğrencilerinin bazı ders konularını anlamakta zorluk çektiği sonucuna ulaşmıştır. Nitel araştırma verileri de öğretmen, müdür ve akademisyenlerin 5.sınıfların ortaokul yapılmasının doğru bir uygulama olmadığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu katılımcılara göre 5.sınıf öğrencileri henüz soyut işlemler dönemine geçmediği için ortaokul öğrencisi profiline uygun değildir. Bu çalışmanın bulguları ile paralel olarak çoğu öğretmen 5.sınıf öğrencilerinin büyüyemediklerini, hala çocuksu tavırlarının devam ettiğini bunun da ders anlatımı ve sınıf yönetimi gibi konularda kendilerini zorladığını ifade etmiştir (Göktaş, 2018; İzci & Göktaş, 2014; Özenç vd., 2016; Özdemir, 2018).

Araştırmada lise öğrencilerinin akademik başarıları incelendiğinde sonuçlar reformun uygulanmaya başladığı 2012-2013 eğitim öğretim yılında sert bir düşüş yaşandığını göstermektedir. Sonraki yıllar incelendiğinde liselerde akademik başarının hiçbir kademede reformdan önceki düzeye gelmediği görülmektedir. Bunun nedenlerinden biri daha önce zorunlu olmayan lise eğitimine kayıtların artarak liselerde yığılmaya sebep olması olabilir. Bunun sonucunda da kalabalık sınıflar ortaya çıkmıştır. Kalabalık sınıf mevcudu ile akademik başarı arasındaki ters ilişki dikkate alındığında (Uzun & Bökeoğlu, 2019; Yaşar, 2016) ve özellikle dezavantajlı öğrenciler söz konusuysa onların bu olumsuz durumlardan diğer öğrencilere göre daha fazla etkilenmeleri mümkündür. Çünkü eğitim konusunda bilinçli ailelere sahip öğrenciler kalabalık sınıflarda okusa bile öğrenme eksikliklerini özel dersler veya yardımcı kaynaklar ile tamamlayabilirken alt sınıftan gelen ailelerin çocuklarının böyle bir fırsatı olmamaktadır. Bu durumda eğitim, eşitsizlikleri pekiştirmede bir araç haline gelir (Dündar & Hesapçioğlu, 2011). Buradan hareketle, kalabalık sınıfların özellikle dezavantajlı bölgelerde eğitim eşitsizliklerini derinleştirdiğini ve yeniden ürettiğini söylemek mümkündür.

Nitel bulgular göstermektedir ki hazırlıksız bir şekilde getirilen bu reform alt-yapı eksikliği nedeniyle uygulama aşamasında zorluk yaşanmasına neden olmuştur. Kalabalık sınıf mevcudu sorunları okullardaki laboratuvar ve kütüphane gibi eğitimde önemli yeri olan alanların sınıfa dönüştürülmesi ile dahi çözülememiştir. Dezavantajlı öğrencilerin buldukları okullarda çalışan katılımcı öğretmenler öğrencilerin eşit şartlarda eğitim almadıklarının altını çizmiştir. Müdürler ise eğitimdeki eşitsizliklerin öğrencilerin buldukları sınıfta kalmalarını garantilediğini açıklamış üstelik dezavantajlı çocukların hayatları boyunca dezavantajlı kaldıklarını ve eğitimin onların durumunu değiştirecek gücünün olmadığını vurgulamıştır. Ek olarak akademisyenler de eğitimin aslında dönüşüm için çok güçlü bir araç olduğunu, geçmişte bunun örneklerinin yaşandığını ancak mevcut eğitim sisteminin buna izin vermediğini ifade etmiştir. Kesik ve Bayram (2015) da yürüttükleri çalışmada eğitimin artık sosyal adaleti ve eşitliği sağlama konusunda etkisini yitirdiği sonucuna ulaşmıştır.

Bu çalışmadaki katılımcı görüşleri Çatışmacı teorinin eğitim alanındaki görüşlerini desteklemektedir. Onlara göre dezavantajlı bölge okullarında eğitimde fırsat eşitliği sağlanamamaktadır. Üstelik bu çalışmadaki en belirgin dezavantajlı öğrenci grubu kimdir sorusuna bazı katılımcılar ekonomik sermayeye sahip olmadığı gibi kültürel ve sosyal sermayenin de yetersiz olduğu ailelerin çocukları şeklinde çarpıcı bir cevap vermiştir. Bu açıklama Bourdieu'nun kültürel sermayeye verdiği önemi gözler önüne sermektedir. Çünkü Bourdieu (2000) aynı gitseler de çocukların sırt çantalarında farklı kapitallerle geldiğini ve bu durumun öğrenciler arasındaki eşitsizliğin oluşmasında önemli bir etken olduğunu belirtmiştir.

Bourdieu'nun açıklamalarıyla paralel olarak bu çalışmadaki akademisyenler dezavantajlı öğrencilerin eğitim sistemindeki en ufak bir değişimden diğer öğrencilere göre daha fazla etkilendiğini ortaya koymuştur. Çünkü orta veya üst sosyo-ekonomik sınıflardan gelen ailelerin çocukları ek destek ve kaynaklarla durumu idare edebilirken alt sınıftan gelen ailelerin çocuklarının böyle bir şansı bulunmamaktadır. Eğitim sistemindeki reformların dezavantajlı öğrenciler için en azından eğitimde fırsat eşitliği sağlayacak yaptırımlar içermesi beklenirken gelen reform uygulamalarıyla dezavantajlıların dezavantajlıklarını arttığı söylenilebilir. 4+4+4 eğitim reformunu çalışmadaki bir okul müdürü labirentte benzetirken bir akademisyen ise turnusol kağıdına benzetmiştir. Katılımcı müdüre göre reform ile bir labirentte gibi sıkışıp kalan çocukların o labirentten kurtulmalarını sağlayacak işaretler bulunmamaktadır. Bu işaretlere sahip olan ve onları kullanabilen yine orta sınıf ve üst sınıf ailelerin çocuklarıdır. Akademisyen bir katılımcı ise 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun tıpkı bir turnusol kağıdının asit ile bazı ayırdığı gibi okullardaki dezavantajlı olan ve olmayan öğrencileri ayırdığını iddia etmiştir. Görüldüğü gibi her ne kadar farklı olsa da her iki metafor da 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun dezavantajlı öğrencilere fayda sağlamadığını hatta içinde buldukları durumu daha da çıkmaza soktuğunu açıklamaktadır.

Bu çalışmadaki tüm eğitim paydaşları dezavantajlılık durumunu açıkça gözler önüne seren bir olay örüntüsü olarak pandemiye örnek vermiş ve pandemi döneminde dezavantajlılığın zirveye ulaştığını ve dezavantajlı çocuklarının pandemi döneminde

çaresizliği derinden yaşadığını belirtmiştir. Özellikle bilgisayar, telefon gibi teknolojik aletlerden yoksun olan bu çocuklar için kitapların önemini vurgulayan katılımcıların ortak paydada bulunduğu nokta pandeminin dezavantajlı öğrencileri tarif edilemez ve geri döndürülemez bir şekilde etkilediği ve eğitim eşitsizliklerini fazlasıyla derinleştirdiği fikri olmuştur. Literatürdeki çalışmalar da bu çalışmanın pandemi ile ilişkili bulguları ile tutarlı kanıtlar sunmuştur (Barnova vd., 2021; Dee & Murphy, 2021; Ertuğ & Ozan, 2021; Sahlberg, 2020; Themane & Mabasa, 2022).

Bu sonuçlardan hareketle eğitimin İşlevsel teorinin iddialarını geçersiz kıldığı ve eğitimin dezavantajlı grupları bir üst sınıfa taşıyabileceği gerçeğini ortadan kaldırdığı söylenebilir (Giroux, 2001). Bu sonuçlar doğrultusunda Çatışmacı teorinin savunduğu düşüncelere katılmak mümkündür. Şöyle ki Çatışmacı teori öncülerinin eğitimin kişinin olduğu statüden üst bir statüye geçmesine izin vermeyeceğine, alt sınıftan gelen birinin orta sınıfa dahi geçemeyeceğine bu nedenle de mevcut eşitsizliklerin kişinin hayatında var olmaya devam edeceğine inanır (Collins, 1971). Hatta Çatışmacı teoriyi destekleyenler bu kısır döngünün hayat boyu süreceğini, işçi çocuğunun da işçi olacağını böylece kişinin çocuğuna babasının kendisine sağladığından daha iyi bir hayat sunamayacağını iddia eder (Piketty, 2000). Bu düşünceye paralel olarak Willis (1977), alt sınıflardan gelen çocukların sosyal hareketlilik şansının düşük olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Bugün eğitimin dezavantajlı aileler için belirlediği yol budur. Hayatlarına farklı bir yön veren ve eğitim yoluyla yaşamlarını şekillendiren dezavantajlı çocukların sayısının yok denecek kadar az olduğunu söylemek yanlış olmayacaktır. Başka bir deyişle, eğitimin dezavantajlı çocuklar için bir kurtarıcı olmaktan çıktığını ve dezavantajlı çocukların eğitim yoluyla yeniden üretilen eşitsizlikler içinde kaybolduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Blackledge ve Hunt, (1991), Cleaver (2005) da çalışmalarında benzer sonuçlara ulaşmıştır.

4+4+4 eğitim reformu çocukların özellikle de kız çocuklarının okullaşması açısından değerlendirildiğine çalışmanın sonuçları göstermektedir ki reform öncesi ve sonrasında okula kayıt olan kız ve erkek öğrencilerin sayıları hem ortaokul hem de lisede artmıştır. Ancak bu artış sonrasında sonuç değişmemiş ve okula devam eden

erkek öğrencilerin sayısı kız öğrencilerin sayısından fazla olmaya devam etmiştir. Bunun nedeni olarak çalışmanın yürütüldüğü bölge de göz önünde bulundurulduğunda kız ve erkek çocuklarının eğitimden eşit şekilde faydalanamaması gösterilebilir. Bu bulgu şaşırtıcı değildir çünkü kız ve erkek çocukları arasında eğitim olanaklarına erişimde yaşanan eşitsizlik Türkiye’de yoğun bir şekilde hissedilmektedir. Ülkede kadına ve erkeğe biçilen roller bu eşitsizliğin oluşmasında önemli bir belirleyicidir (Kurttaş, 2021). Kız çocuklarına yüklenen sorumluluklardan bazıları ev işlerine yardım etmeleri, bahçe işlerinde çalışmaları ve evde kardeşlerine bakmalarıdır ve bu yükümlülükler onların okullaşma oranının düşük olmasında etkili olabilir.

Dünya bankasının (2010) raporuna göre, Türkiye’de cinsiyet okuldan ayrılmaya neden olan koşullar arasında en belirginidir. Ancak kız çocukları erkeklere göre daha dezavantajlı konumdadır ve bu durum ülke genelinde coğrafi olarak homojen bir şekilde dağılmamıştır. Dezavantajlılık Doğu bölgelerinde daha yoğun bir şekilde görülmektedir. Ayrıca kırsalda yetişen kız çocukları diğer hemcinslerine göre okula devam etme konusunda daha şanssızdır. Dolayısıyla kentteki yaşlılarından daha farklı bir hayata çekilen kırsaldaki kız çocuklarının daha dezavantajlı konumda olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Çalışmanın yürütüldüğü Doğu Anadolu bölgesi hala dezavantajlı öğrencilerin fazla olduğu, akademik başarının düşük olduğu ve dezavantajlılığın yoğun olarak yaşandığı bölgelerden biridir. Bu bölgedeki kız çocukları diğer bölgelere göre daha dezavantajlı koşullarda yaşamlarını sürdürmektedir (Özaydınlık, 2014). Bu bulgu ile paralel olarak bu çalışmadaki nitel analiz sonuçlarına göre dezavantajlılığın da derecesi vardır.

Örneğin çalışmaya katılan akademisyenlerden biri düşük sosyo-ekonomik statüden gelen bir ailenin çocuğu dezavantajlı olarak nitelenirken hem sosyo-ekonomik olarak düşük aileden gelen hem de kız çocuğu olan biri diğerine göre daha dezavantajlı görünmektedir. Üstelik hem alt sosyo-ekonomik sınıftan gelen hem kız hem kırsal kesimde yaşayan hem de Kürt öğrencilerin diğer iki duruma göre çok daha dezavantajlı olduğu iddia etmiştir. Ancak sosyo-ekonomik olarak varlıklı bir ailenin kızı ana dili Türkçe olmasa bile varlıklı bir aileden geldiği için o açığı kapatacak ve

eđitim sisteminde başarılı olma fırsatı yakalayabilecektir. Korkmaz ve Aygöl (2019) de dezavantajlılığın dereceli bir olgu olduğunu çalışmalarında belirterek bu çalışmanın sonuçlarını desteklemiştir. Bu perspektif göstermektedir ki sosyo-ekonomik olarak varlıklı bir aileden gelmek pek çok dezavantajın görünürlüğünü ortadan kaldırmaktadır.

Demirbilek vd. (2021) sosyo-ekonomik olarak dezavantajlı konumda olan öğrencilerin eğitiminin devlet tarafından finanse edilmesinin önemini vurgulamıştır. Bu çalışmada da katılımcılar benzer şekilde öğrenciler arasındaki ekonomik eşitsizliklerin devlet tarafından müdahale edilerek çözülmesi gerektiđi belirtilmiş ancak sosyal adalet sağlanırken eşitlik ve adalet kavramlarına dikkat çekilmiştir. Bu kavramlar önemlidir çünkü katılımcılara göre eşit olacağım diye herkese aynı desteđi sağlamak yeni bir eşitsizlik üretebilir. Örneđin zengin yoksul herkese kitapları ücretsiz dağıttığında varlıklı ailelerden gelen çocuklar okul kitapları için harcayacakları parayı ek kaynaklara transfer edebilecektir. Bu nedenle bazı katılımcılar varlıklı ailelerden kitap ücretlerinin alınarak bu paralar ile yoksul ailelerin çocuklarına ek kaynak sağlamanın eğitimde sosyal adaleti daha fazla sağlayacağına inanmaktadır. Young (2006) da bu çalışmanın bulguları ile tutarlı şekilde kaynakların haksız dağıtımının fırsat eşitliğini sağlamayacağını aksine var olan sınıfsal ayrımcılığı devam ettireceđini açıklamıştır. Literatürde bu çalışmanın bulguları ile örtüşen çok sayıda çalışma da bulunmaktadır (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Polat & Özan, 2020). Öte yandan bu çalışmanın bulguları ile ters düşen çalışmalar da yer almaktadır (Altan, 2016, Brooks vd., 2007; Bayakdar & Karataş, 2015; Connell, 1993; Gewirtz, 1998; Lupton, 2005).

Kız öğrenciler için çalışmanın sonuçları incelendiğinde kız öğrencilerin okullaşma oranı fırsat eşitliği açısından iyi bir gösterge olabilir. Fakat bu göstergenin iyi yorumlanması gerekmektedir şayet sonuçlar genel çerçevede yanıltıcı olabilir. Şöyle ki mevcut çalışmanın sonuçları reform öncesi ve reform sonrası olarak değerlendirildiğinde kız öğrencilerin sayısı reformdan sonra artmış görünmektedir. Yani reformdan hemen önce 1300 olan kız öğrenci sayısı reformun uygulanmaya başladığı yıl 1514'e ulaşmıştır. Genel değerlendirme yapıldığında kızların sayısı her

ne kadar artmış görünse de yıllara göre daha kapsamlı bir değerlendirme yapıldığında aslında reformun beklenen etkiyi vermediği görülmektedir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre reform ile 1514'e ulaşan kız öğrenci sayısı reformdan sadece bir yıl sonra yeniden düşmüş ve 1230 olmuştur. Bu bağlamda mevcut çalışmanın sonuçları 4+4+4 eğitim reformu uygulamaya koyulduktan sonra izleyen yıllarda kız öğrenci sayısının azaldığını ve reform kabul edildiği yıldaki sayıya asla ulaşamadığını ortaya koymuştur. Erkekler için de benzer bir durum söz konusu olmakla birlikte 2008-2016 arasındaki tüm yıllarda erkek öğrencilerin sayısının kızlara göre daha fazla olduğu görülmektedir. Bunun nedeninin yine eğitimdeki cinsiyete dayalı fırsat eşitsizliği olduğu söylenilebilir.

Mevcut çalışmaya göre, kız öğrenciler ve erkek öğrenciler arasında okullaşma açısından farkın en az olduğu okul kademesi ilkokuldur. Bunu ortaokul takip etmektedir. Ancak lise düzeyinde kız öğrenciler ve erkek öğrenciler arasındaki fark gözle görülür derecede artmaktadır. Başka bir ifade ile, ilkokul ve ortaokuldaki öğrenci sayılarına bakıldığında kız ve erkek öğrenci sayısı arasında çarpıcı bir fark gözlenmezken, lise düzeyinde öğrenciler arasındaki farka bakıldığında erkek öğrencilerin sayısının kız öğrencilerin sayısının neredeyse iki katı olduğu görülmektedir. Bu durum reform öncesinde de reform sonrasında da benzer oranlarda seyretmektedir.

4+4+4 eğitim reformunun 12 yıllık zorunlu eğitimin bir parçası olarak son 4 üzerinde etkili olması beklenirken beklenen etki bu kademede görülmemiştir. Liselerin zorunlu olması ile liselerdeki öğrenci sayısının artması ve dolayısıyla kız erkek öğrenci sayısı arasındaki farkın azalması hedeflenmiştir. Ancak reform sonrasında bu hedefe ulaşılmamış ve liselerde erkek öğrenci sayısı kız öğrenci sayısının neredeyse iki kat fazla olmuştur. Üstelik yıllara göre dağılım incelendiğinde okula kayıtlı öğrenci sayısı azalırken kız ve erkek öğrenci sayılarındaki farkın arttığı gözlenmiştir. Gürel ve Kartal (2015) da bu çalışmanın sonucuyla paralel olarak daha alt basamaklardaki eğitim kademelerinde okullaşma oranının yıllar geçtikçe artarken eğitim kademesi yükseldikçe okullaşma oranının azaldığını belirtmiştir.

Araştırmanın nitel sonuçları incelendiğinde nicel bulguları destekleyen ve nicel bulgularla çelişen sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile ilgili pek çok konuda olumsuz görüş bildiren katılımcıların kızların okullaşması konusunda farklılaştığı görülmüştür. Az sayıda da olsa bazı katılımcılar 4+4+4 eğitim reformu sayesinde kızların okula erişim sağladığını ve bunun özellikle liselerdeki kızlar için avantaj sağladığını belirtmiştir. Çok sayıda katılımcı ise çalışmanın nicel bulguları destekler nitelikte görüş bildirmiştir. Bu katılımcılara göre kızların okullaşma oranları aslında artmamıştır. Tıpkı madalyonun diğer yüzü gibi görülenin aksine açık öğretim okullarının da etkisiyle kız öğrenciler eğitim hayatından kopmaktadır. Literatür incelendiğinde benzer sonuçlara ulaşılmaktadır. Kız öğrencilerin okullaşması konusunda olumlu (Giren, 2021; Özenç & Memiş, 2012; Doğan vd., 2014) ve olumsuz (Güven, 2012; Ercan, 2016; Özaydınlık, 2014) görüşler literatürde yer almaktadır. Aybek ve Aslan'ın (2015) çalışmaları da 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun eğitim hakkına erişimi engellediği ve okullaşma açısından alt sosyo-ekonomik düzeyden gelen çocuklar aleyhine eşitsizlik oluşturduğunu ortaya koyulmuştur.

Genel olarak reform sonrasında kız öğrencilerin sayılarının arttığı söylenebilir, reform öncesi ve sonrası şeklinde tıpkı bu çalışmada olduğu gibi yıllara göre bir analiz yapıldığında 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun aslında kız öğrencilerin sayısında artış oluşturmadığı aksine kız öğrencilerin sayısında fark edilir düzeyde bir düşüşe sebep olduğu görülebilir. Bununla ilişkili olarak 4+4+4 eğitim reformun kız öğrencilerin eğitim hayatında olumlu bir ilerleme sağlamadığı, onlar için eğitimde fırsat eşitliği yaratmadığı kısaca reformun kız öğrencilerin lehine olacak şekilde sonuçlanmadığı söylenebilir.

4+4+4 eğitim reformu devamsızlık durumu üzerinden değerlendirildiğinde çalışmanın sonuçları ilkökul ve ortaokullarda da tam katılım gösteren öğrencilerin sayısının reform sonrasında azaldığını, öte yandan devamsızlık yapılan gün sayısının arttığını göstermektedir. Bu durumda, 4+4+4 eğitim reformu okula giden kız öğrenci sayısını arttırmadığı gibi genel çerçevede değerlendirildiğinde öğrencilerin okula devam durumunu da sağlayamadığı söylenebilir. Bunun nedenlerinde biri olarak

yine 12 yıllık zorunlu eğitimin 4+4+4 şeklinde kesintili olarak uygulanması gösterilebilir.

Mevcut sistemde ilkokul ve ortaokul öğrencileri uzun süre devamsızlık yapsa bile sınıfta kalmamakta bunun yerine bu öğrenciler için farklı alternatifler uygulanabilmektedir. Özellikle 40 gün ve üzeri devamsızlıklar incelendiğinde öğrencilerin reformdan sonra devamsız gün sayılarının oldukça arttığı görülmüştür. Bu sayı ilkokul ve ortaokullarda birinci dönemde neredeyse üç katına çıkarken ikinci dönem devamsızlıkların iki katından fazla olduğu görülmektedir. İlkokul ve ortaokul öğrencilerinin birinci dönem devamsızlıklarının ikinci dönemden fazla olmasının sebebi olarak 4+4+4 eğitim reformundaki kademeli öğretimin olumsuz etkilerine dikkat çekilebilir.

4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile zorunlu eğitime 4.sınıftan sonra açık öğretim kapsamında açık ortaokullardan devam etmek mümkün hale gelmiştir. Bu durumun en çok kız öğrencileri etkilediği düşünülmektedir. Güven (2012) açık ortaokullar yüzünden kız öğrencilerin dini sebepler, evde ihtiyaç duyulma, maddi yetersizlikler gibi nedenler öne sürülerek örgün eğitime devam edilmesinin engellendiğine inanmaktadır. Bu durumun sonuçları göz önünde bulundurulduğunda kaliteli eğitimden zaten yoksun olan dezavantajlı öğrencilerin eğitimden tamamen kopmasına neden olabileceği söylenebilir.

Çalışmanın nitel bulguları reformun okullaşma oranının artması hedefine ulaşılmadığını göstermektedir. Çalışmadaki katılımcılar açık orta okul ve lise uygulamasının bazı ideolojik kaygılarla getirildiğini, dini sebeplerden ötürü imam hatip orta okullarının açılarak ve imam hatip liselerinin sayılarının arttırılarak 28 Şubat olaylarının intikamının alınmaya çalışıldığını vurgulamıştır. Ayrıca katılımcılar bu reformun çocukların yararı gözetilmeden hazırlandığını ve devletin istedik vatandaş yaratma isteğine katkıda bulunan bir reform olduğunun altını çizmiştir. Literatürde bu bulgularla paralel olan ve 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun ideolojik bir reform olduğu sonucuna ulaşılan çalışmalar mevcuttur (Balcı, 2021; Coşkun, 2012; Epçaçan, 2015; Eroler, 2019; Noyan, 2019; Şiraz, 2020). Bu

çalışmanın bulgularıyla bağlantılı olarak Althusser'in eğitim ile ilgili görüşlerine odaklanılabilir. Althusser'e (1994) göre bürokrasiden orduya pek çok kurum arasında eğitim kurumları olan okullar devletin ideolojik aygıtlarının en önemlisidir. Ayrıca Althusser devletin okullar aracılığıyla kendi baskın ideolojisini halka aşladığını savunur. Zorunlu eğitim aracılığıyla okullarda merkezi sistem sayesinde aktarılan müfredatla ve dağıtılan kitaplarda bu ideoloji rahatlıkla yayılmaktadır. Böylece istedik bireyler eğitim kurumlarında yetiştirilmekte ve orada öğretilenler yine eğitim aracılığıyla yeni nesillere aktarılmaktadır (Althusser, 2006; Valero, 2017; Yılmaz, 2018). Ayrıca Foucault'un panoptikon yapılanması ile ekonomi, psikoloji, sosyoloji, eğitim gibi çeşitli kurumlar üzerinde, özellikle eğitim kurumlarında ve eğitim programlarında çeşitli disiplin uygulamalarında bilgi iktidar ilişkilerini görmek mümkündür. Başka bir ifade ile, Foucault toplumun gözetim toplumuna dönüştüğünü ve eğitimin bu sistemin devamlılığını sağlayarak iktidar için önemli bir görevi üstlendiğini söyleyerek bu çalışmadaki eğitimin misyonuna dair bulgulara temel bir argüman sunabilir (akt. Asan, 2013).

Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre ortaokullarda devamsızlığı etkileyen başka bir neden olarak aile kaynaklı faktörler ortaya çıkmıştır (Hoşgörür & Polat, 2015). Ailesel faktörlerden ailenin sosyo-ekonomik durumu, ailenin çocuk yetiştirme şekli ve aile içi ilişkiler gibi unsurlar olumsuz şekillendiğinde çocuk olumsuz olarak etkilemekte ve bu durum okul devamsızlığını beraberinde getirmektedir (Ulusoy vd., 2005). Ayrıca ailenin gelir düşüklüğü ile birlikte eğitim düzeyinin de düşük olması çocukları önce okul devamsızlığına itmekte sonraki dönemler de ise iş bulup çalışmaya zorlayabilmektedir (Güler, 2002). Böylece dezavantajlı öğrenciler eğitimden umudunu yitirmekte ve kendilerine farklı ve zorlu bir yol seçmektedir.

Çalışmanın yapıldığı bölgenin özellikleri ve koşulları göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, yaz döneminde okullar kapandıktan sonra öğrencilerin aileleri ile birlikte çalışmaya gitmesi ve okullar açıldıktan sonra da bir süre daha çalışmak zorunda kalmaları ortaokul öğrencilerinin birinci dönem devamsız gün sayılarının fazla olmasının bir diğer sebebi olarak düşünülebilir. Çalışmanın nitel sonuçları gözden geçirildiğinde öğrencilerin aileleri ile birlikte yaylalara çıktığı ve aileleri

hayvancılıkla uğraştığı için de havalar serinleyene kadar aileleriyle yaylada kalmak zorunda kaldıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Çünkü temmuz ayında yaylara giden aileler genellikle ekim ayının sonlarında evlerine dönmektedir. Bu durumda öğrenciler yaklaşık iki ay okuldan uzak kalmakta ve eğitim-öğretim hayatlarına olması gerektiği gibi devam edememektedir. Aküzüm vd. (2015) da çalışmalarında kırsal kesimlerde ailelerin çocuklara hayvanları otlatma gibi yüklediği sorumlulukların öğrencilerin devamsızlık yapmalarında öne çıkan nedenlerden biri olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

Mevcut çalışmadaki lise öğrencilerinin devamsızlık durumları incelendiğinde reformdan sonra her iki dönemde tam katılım gösteren öğrencilerin sayısının arttığı görülmektedir. Bunun nedeni olarak önce ortaokulların zaten zorunlu iken liselerin isteğe bağlı olması ve reformdan sonra liselerin zorunlu olmasıyla birlikte öğrenci sayılarının eskiye göre kat be kat fazla olması da sonuçların bu şekilde çıkmasında etkili olmuş olabilir. Liselerde sınıfta kalma durumu öğrencilerin 20 günden fazla özürlü 10 günden fazla da özürsüz şekilde okula gitmediğinde gerçekleşmektedir. Bu öğrencilerin örgün öğrenim alma hakkı varsa bir sonraki dönem aynı dersleri yeniden alarak sınıf tekrarı yapmaktadır. Örgün öğrenim hakkı olmayan veya okula örgün olarak devam etmek istemeyen öğrencilerin kayıtları ise açık öğretim liselerine alınır (MEB, 2016). Mevcut çalışmada bu durum göz önüne alınarak 40 gün ve üzeri devamsızlık yapan öğrenciler incelendiğinde ikinci dönem devamsız gün sayılarının arttığı görülmektedir. Bu sayı reform öncesi ile kıyaslandığında birinci dönem devamsızlık sayılarının arttığı gözlemlenirken ikinci dönem devamsız gün sayılarının daha da arttığı ve devamsızlığın iki kattan daha fazlaya ulaştığı görülmüştür. Liselerde devamsızlığın artmasının öncelikli sebebi olarak yine 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile getirilen kesintili eğitim uygulamaları ve açık liselerin varlığı düşünülebilir. 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile uygulamaya giren kesintili eğitim açık liselerin önünü açmıştır. Açık lise, ortaöğretim çağında olduğu halde yüz yüze öğretim yapan örgün eğitim kurumlarına devam edemeyenlere yönelik bir eğitim kurumudur (Teker, 1995).

Çalışmadaki nitel bulgular katılımcıların 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile uygulanan kesintili eğitimi tıpkı bir uzay mekiği gibi algıladıklarını göstermiştir. Katılımcı

öğretmenlerden biri sistemdeki her bir 4'ten sonra öğrencilerin periyodik olarak kapsülden ayrılabilceğini ve ayrılan her kapsülle de öğrencilerin eğitim sisteminden kopacağını iddia etmiştir. Bu görüş ışığında, öğrencilerin açık öğretim programlarına gönderilerek aslında sistemin dışına atıldığı çıkarımında bulunmak mümkündür. Başka bir ifade ile, okula devam etmeyen öğrenciler açık ortaokul veya liselere kayıt olmakta bu da bu öğrencilerin örgün eğitim hakkının ellerinden alınmasına ve bu bölgelerdeki eşitsizliğin derinleşmesine sebep olmaktadır (Tanrısevdi & Kırıl, 2018). Çam-Tosun ve Bayram (2015) da çalışmalarında açık liselerin fırsat eşitliğini engellediğinin altını çizmiştir. Okullar arasında çok büyük farklılıklar olduğu bilinen bir gerçektir. Ancak aynı okullara giden öğrenciler arasında bile eşitsizlik engellenemezken açık lise uygulamasının çok daha derin eşitsizlikler üreteceği çalışmada vurgulanan bir diğer noktadır.

Lise öğrencilerinin devamsızlık yapmaları pek çok nedene bağlı olabilir (Pehlivan, 2006). Bu nedenlerin en öne çıkanları ise bireysel nedenler, çevresel nedenler, kurumsal nedenler (Gül vd., 2016) okul yönetiminden ve öğretmenden kaynaklanan nedenler, akademik kaygıdan kaynaklı nedenler (Altınkurt, 2008; Yıldız & Kula, 2012), ailevi nedenler ve sosyo-ekonomik nedenlerdir (Sakınç, 2013). Açık liseye geçen öğrencilerin genellikle bilinçsiz, eğitime önem vermeyen ve sosyo-ekonomik olarak alt sınıftan gelen ailelerin çocukları olduğunu destekleyen pek çok çalışma mevcuttur (Belen vd., 2021; Çuhadar-Öncü, 2017; Dağ, 2018; Kıvanç & Kemerli, 2019). Para kazanmak, evin geçimini sağlamak gibi sorumlulukları üstlenen lise çağındaki öğrenciler örgün eğitime devam edememektedir. Tam tersine kendi isteği ile açık liseleri tercih eden öğrenciler sosyo-ekonomik olarak bir sıkıntı yaşamamaktadır. Hatta bu çocukların üniversite giriş sınavına daha iyi bir şekilde hazırlanabilmeleri için aileleri bilinçli bir şekilde açık liseye geçiş konusunda onları desteklemektedir (Can & Sakallı, 2023).

Bu çalışma dezavantajlı okullarda yürütüldüğü ve çalışmanın örnekleminde sosyo-ekonomik olarak alt sınıftan gelen ailelerin çocukları yer aldığı için devamsızlık nedeniyle sistemin dışına itilen ve açık liselere yönlendirilen öğrenciler konusunda bilinçli bir ebeveyn tercihi söz konusu değildir. Bu bağlamda liselerde özellikle

ikinci dönem devamsızlığın artma sebebi olarak öğrencilerin çalışmak zorunda kalmaları düşünülebilir. Nitel analiz sonuçları, bu bölgede mevsimlik tarım işçi göçü olmadığı için bu çocukların ya inşaatla çalışmaya ya da otellerde çalışmaya gittiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu işleri tercih etme sebepleri verilen ücretin diğer işlere göre fazla olması olduğu gibi barınma ve yemek ihtiyaçlarının da çalışılan yerde karşılanmasıdır (Ahsan & Duman, 2022; Tüm, 2009).

Ortaokul ve liselerdeki devamsızlıklar ve bunun doğal bir sonucu olarak görülen açık ortaokul ve açık liseler (açık öğretim) ile ilgili genel bir değerlendirme yapıldığında açık ortaokul ve açık lise uygulamalarının başarısız olduğu ve eğitim sisteminde var olan sorunlara bir yenisini eklediği söylenebilir. Literatür tarandığında pek çok eğitimcinin 4+4+4 eğitim reformu ile getirilen bu uygulamayı eleştirdiğine dair sonuçlara ulaşmak mümkündür. Ayrıca birçok araştırmacı açık lise uygulamasının öğrencileri, özellikle kız öğrencileri, olumsuz şekilde etkilediğine ilişkin görüşlerini paylaşmıştır (Kalkan & Gürses, 2017; Suğur & Şavran, 2006). Çamlıbel (2015) de benzer şekilde açık ortaokul ve açık lise uygulamalarının kız çocuklarının aleyhinde olacağını, okullaşma konusunda sorunlar yaratacağını belirtmiştir. Ayrıca Çamlıbel açık ortaokul ve açık liselerin açılmasının çocuk işçiliği ve çocuk evlilikleri gibi istenmeyen durumların önünü açacağını iddia etmiştir. Özellikle öğretmenler ve okul müdürleri eğitimde fırsat eşitliğini baltaladığı ve 4+4+4 eğitim reformu üzerinden olumsuz sonuçlar doğurduğu gerekçesiyle açık öğretim uygulamasını eleştirilmiştir (Tok, 2013; Topdemir, 2014).

Açık öğretim uygulamaları kız çocukları açısından çoğunlukla olumsuz algılansa da literatürde bu uygulamaları olumlu değerlendiren çalışmalar da bulunmaktadır (Demiray, 2013;). Bu çalışmalar, açık ortaokul ve lise programlarını örgün eğitim olanağı bulamayan kız öğrencilerinin kendilerini geliştirebilmeleri için bir fırsat olarak yorumlamaktadır. Buna karşıt görüş sunan araştırmacılar ise okulun sadece amaçsızca gidilen bir yer olmadığını, orada sadece öğretim verilmediğini aynı zamanda çocukların orada davranış değişikliği de kazandığını ve sosyal becerilerini geliştirdiğinin (Güven, 2012) altını çizerek açık öğretim uygulamalarını şiddetle eleştirmiştir.

Genel bir deęerlendirme yapıldığında, alıřmanın sonuları incelendięinde 4+4+4 eęitim reformu ile hedeflenen amalara ulařılamadıęı sylenilebilir. ünkü zorunlu eęitimi 12 yıla ıkaran bu reformun amalarından en nde olanları okullařma oranını arttırmak, toplumun ortalama eęitim sresini ykseltmek ve okullařmada blgesel farklılıkları ortadan kaldırmak olduęu iddia edilmiřtir. Buradan hareketle, dolaylı bir řekilde dezavantajlı ęrenciler ile dięer ęrenciler arasındaki farkın da ortadan kaldırılmasının amalandıęı da dřnlebilir, ünkü okullařma oranının dřk olduęu blgeler dezavantajlı ęrencilerin yoęun olduęu blgelerdir. Bu baęlamda kızların okullařma oranı gz nnde bulunduurulduęunda aslında okullařma oranının artmadıęı hatta reformu takip eden yıllarda aık orta okullar ve liseler nedeniyle okula devam eden ęrenci sayısının azaldıęı grlmektedir (ERG, 2015). Aık ęretim (aık ortaokul ve lise) nedeniyle zellikle kız ęrencilerin okullařma oranının olduka dřtę bilinmektedir (Kaya, 2019). Dolayısıyla okullařma oranı artmadıęı iin ve belli bir sre okula gidildikten sonra rgn eęitim sonlandırıldıęı (Belen vd., 2021) iin ortalama eęitim sresinin de uzatıldıęından sz etmek mmkn olmamaktadır.

Reformun okullařmada blgesel farklılıkların ortadan kaldırılması amacına da benzer sebeplerden eriřilemedięi sylenilebilir. alıřmanın yapıldıęı blge okullařma oranının az olduęu dezavantajlı bir blgedir. Bu blgedeki alıřmanın yrtldę okullarda ęrencilerin zellikle kız ęrencilerin sayısının dzenli olarak gzle grlr řekilde arttıęını sylemek mmkn deęildir. Ayrıca bir aydan fazla devamsızlık yapan ęrencilerin sayısının da reform sonrasında arttıęını mevcut alıřmanın sonuları gstermektedir. Okula devam edilen gn sayısı doęrudan akademik bařarıyı etkileyen bir gstergedir (zkan, 2018; Tekin, 2020). Dolayısıyla okula devam etmeyen ęrencilerin akademik bařarılarının dřk olması beklendik bir durumdur. Bu blgedeki ocukların alıřmak iin okula gitmedikleri dřnldęnde reformun aslında blgeler arasındaki farkı kaldırmak amacına hizmet etmedięi sylenilebilir. ünkü dezavantajlı blgelerdeki dezavantajlı ocukların hala dzenli bir řekilde okula gidemedikleri bilindik bir gerektir. Ayrıca akademik bařarının blgesel farklılıklardan etkilendięi dřnldęnde (Ata, 2017) dezavantajlı blgelerdeki dezavantajlı ęrencilerin kaliteli bir eęitim alamadıęını ve

bu nedenle de onlar için eğitimde fırsat eşitliğinin sağlanmadığını aksine eğitimdeki eşitsizliklerin derinleştiğini söylemek de mümkündür.

4.1. Öneriler

Çalışmanın sınırlılıkları göz önünde bulundurularak gelecek araştırmalar için çeşitli önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

İlk olarak, çalışmanın nicel bulguları okullaşma oranının reformdan sonra artmadığını ve hatta düşmeye başladığını göstermiştir. Öte yandan, literatür tarafından desteklenen nitel bulgular, örgün eğitimde olmayan eksik öğrencilerin açık öğretim programlarına kaydolduğunu göstermiştir. Bu bilgiler ışığında, 4+4+4 eğitim reformu sonrasında örgün eğitimden ayrılarak açık öğretim okullarına kayıt yaptıran öğrenci sayısı araştırılabilir.

Ayrıca, bu çalışmanın nicel kısmı dezavantajlı öğrencilerin yoğun olarak yaşadığı ve akademik başarıda alt sıralarda yer alan bir ilin merkez ilçelerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Dolayısıyla bulgular sadece bu ilçelere genellenebilir. Bu durum, bu çalışmanın bir sınırlılığıdır. Bu sınırlılığı aşmak için gelecekteki çalışmalara farklı şehirlerdeki dezavantajlı okullar dahil edilebilir ve reformun bu okullardaki öğrenciler üzerindeki sonuçları araştırılabilir.

Üçüncü olarak, bu çalışma devlet okullarına devam eden öğrencilerin verilerini kapsamaktadır. Çalışma, özel okullardan toplanan öğrenci verileri de dahil edilerek yürütülebilir. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada elde edilen nitel bulgular, okula erken başlama yaşının çocuğun sonraki eğitim hayatını olumsuz etkileyeceğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuçtan hareketle, ileride yapılacak nicel araştırmalarda, reformun yürürlüğe girdiği yıl (2012) 60-66 aylıkken ilkokula başlayan çocukların başarı puanları yıllar içinde izlenebilir. İlkokuldan itibaren takip edilen ve şu anda muhtemelen liseye devam eden aynı çocukların ortaokul başarı puanları, liseye giriş sınavı puanları ve lise not ortalamaları analiz edilebilir.

Son olarak, bu çalışma kapsamında K12 öğrencileri incelenmiştir. 4+4+4 eğitim reformunun dezavantajlı okullardaki ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise öğrencileri üzerindeki sonuçları araştırılmış ve tartışılmıştır. Gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalarda benzer bir çalışmanın yükseköğretimde de yapılması önerilebilir. Yükseköğretimde reformun sonuçları, reformun uygulandığı yıl (2012) ortaokul veya liseye başlayan öğrenciler ile yükseköğrenimlerine üniversitede devam eden öğrenciler incelenerek değerlendirilebilir.

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English):

THE FUNCTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM ON SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

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