Social Justice in Turkish Education System: Issues and Interventions

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the research and practice in social justice in education in Turkey. Economic, social, political, and demographic developments that create and perpetuate disparities in different societies are equally valid for Turkey. In order to capture the state of social justice in education first, Turkey's social, demographic, and economic status of the country was discussed. Turkey has a relatively young population, which increases the demand for public education. The key figures on the schooling rates in Turkey suggest that Turkey has been improving its performance in providing access to school to its young population. However, economic performance of the country suggest that significant part of population suffers from inequality in income distribution. Social, economic, and demographic issues as well as the key issues in the structure of education system in Turkey give way to quality of education issue in Turkey. Particularly economic

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disparities contribute largely to social justice issues in education. The issues caused by the economic structures are perpetuated by the centralized education system. It is argued that the centralized education of Turkey and functionalist sociology exist in a symbiosis, which leads to several false assumptions about developing and delivering educational services in the country. Assuming that the central authority is able to neutralize the differences across the schools so that the students attending any school in the system have access to the elements of education of the same quality level; assuming that the students attending any school have the same capacity to benefit from educational provisions; and assuming that school improvement models can be applied in the same way to every school setting largely lead to ignoring the social, political, and economic disparities eliminating the students' access to quality educational provisions. The equal approach deepens the deprived status of the disadvantaged students. The dilemma of granting access but failing to provide quality is related to the concepts of horizontal-vertical inequalities. On the other hand, scholarly work on social justice in education can be grouped under macro- and micro-sociological perspectives. Research on micro-sociological perspective in Turkey largely focus on the role of principal in mitigating the effect of disparities on educational attainment of the students, while research stream on macro-sociological perspective focuses largely on impact of certain setups on students' schooling. However, research in both of these streams highlights four important gaps in social justice in education of Turkey. First, research gap suggests that scholarly work on social justice in Turkey rely extensively on Western concepts and terminology. The policy gap suggests that Turkey lacks a broad social justice in educational policy, which accounts on every institution in the country. The leadership gap suggests that school principals and teachers do not have a formal role definition for social justice leadership. Rather, social justice behaviors of school leaders are motivated by personal, altruistic, or moral endeavor of the principals. Finally, the institution gap suggest that the centralized education system's hidden assumptions form obstacles for true social justice practices in education.

Introduction

Economic, social, political, and demographic developments create and perpetuate disparities in societies (Archer, Hutchings & Ross, 2003). These disparities are the main causes of inequitable educational provisions (Ballantine & Hammack, 2009). In many countries inequitable educational provisions cause an achievement gap and successively lead to the failure in attainments of economic and social status in the society. Particularly the disadvantaged groups in the society suffer from the inequitable educational provision. Taysum and Arar (2019) argued that different disadvantaged groups face with different levels of challenges which require adjusted

leadership reactions from leaders in schools. As a result, finding out the ways to eliminate the disparities, developing methods of equitable educational provisions, and developing policies for attainment of economic and social status in the society have been key scholarly concerns.

Several scholars defined social justice as the total effort of responding the needs of the disadvantaged groups in the society, where none of the members is excluded because of his/her background (Berkovich, 2014; Bogotch, 2002; Gerwitz, 1998; Shields, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Particularly the emergence of new social and economic stratification in new economic order created by the industrial revolution toward the end of the nineteenth century has largely been the cause of the emergence of the concept (Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore, & Hodgins, 2007). Wang (2018) stated that asymmetries of power and access prevail in societies, which can be considered as the basis of physical, social, political, cultural, and economic marginalization of different groups. In a socially just society, the members find access to public services. Hence, they do not suffer from lack of access to public services, which are very critical to survive a standard life. As a result, all members of the society are able to benefit from prosperity and welfare in their own ways. In different country contexts, the discussion on disadvantaged groups and social justice in education focuses on various indicator such as race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, culture and social class, gender, and socioeconomic status (Gardner & Holley, 2011; Grebennikov & Skaines, 2008; Hofman & Van Den Berg, 2003; Shah & Widin, 2010). However, different from other country contexts, the social justice and disadvantaged discussions in Turkey largely focus on the socioeconomic status, gender, and disability as factors leading to disadvantaged status (Beycioglu & Ogden, 2017). Finally, Arar, Beycioglu, and Oplatka (2016) identified the cross-cultural differences in the understanding and practice of social justice. Comparing the principals in Turkey and Israel, the authors identified that in both Turkish and Israeli cases, the principals deviate from the common Western propensities to reflect their own respective religious traditions. However, there are obvious differences between Israeli and Turkish context in terms of motivators, facilitators, and inhibitors of social justice. Arar et al. (2016) concluded that the context plays a key role in the way that the key constituencies conceptualize and practice social justice.

Demography and Schooling in Turkey

As in the case of many other countries, economic and social structures in Turkey produce and reproduce inequities. Therefore, in this chapter first key economic and demographic indicators were summarized in order to give an idea about the performance of Turkey toward the socially disadvantaged groups in Turkey. The demand for education in Turkey, as in the case of other countries, is closely related to the demographic characteristics of the country. Demographic characteristics of Turkey make it one of the most vibrant contexts in education. According to 2017 data (TUIK, 2018), Turkey inhabits 80,810,525 citizens. The median age is 31.7. However, approximately 24% (19,033,488) of this population ranges between ages of

0 and 14. These demographic indicators clearly show that the high demand for public education will continue in the foreseeable future. It is important to note that Turkey has been performing high in responding to the demand for education. The schooling rates at all levels have been at a steady increase (see Table 1) (MONE, 2018). More importantly, the schooling rates for both males and females are almost equal. In other words, the overall figures show that Turkey has been improving its quantitative capacity in education. However, it is important to note that these schooling rates may decrease when moved from urban to rural areas and when moved from western part of the country toward the eastern parts of the country. Besides, in eastern and southeastern parts of the country, male students' schooling rate is higher than female schooling rates. When higher education is concerned, two important outcomes characterize schooling in Turkey. Firstly, in all of the regions, male schooling is higher than female schooling. Secondly, schooling rate in higher education in Turkey is still low compared to other OECD countries. According to the OECD (2018a) data in in 2017, 31.6% (OECD average 44.5%) of the population in 25–34 age group possesses higher education degree in Turkey. This performance put Turkey in the 13th rank among other OECD countries in schooling at higher educational level (OECD, 2018a). This data suggest that in Turkey geographical and gender-based disparities are important issues in education. Besides, low schooling rate at higher education indicates the existence of the gap for disadvantaged students in developing skills and competencies which may lead to employability. As several scholars suggested, higher education and the resulting employability are very critical in social justice discussions (Shah, Lewis, & Fitzgerald, 2011; Williams, 2007).

An important discussion in social justice education discussion is related to students with disability. How the system approach students with disability and how effectively these students served are two important concerns in social justice education discussion. According to 2011 census data, 6.9% of the total population is with disability of various groups. Although the school age population with special needs is not evident, the Ministry of National Education (MONE) provides formal education to 353,610 (see Table 2) special student (approximately 2% of the

Table 1 Schooling rates at primary, secondary, and higher education in Turkey

	Total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Primary	91,54	91,42	91,68
Lower secondary	94,47	94,26	94,69
Upper secondary	83,58	83,77	83,39
Higher education	45,64	43,99	47,36

Table 2 Total number of special education students

	Number of schools		Student			Teacher		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
Total	1395	353,610	224,728	128,882	12,846	5510	7336	

total student population) with special needs. Students with special needs form a unique group of disadvantaged students. Special education has always been a concern in Turkey. Although the gap in special education is provided in key statistics of MONE, the figures provided in Table 2 in comparison with the total percentage of the people with special needs suggest that in Turkey there is a performance gap in providing formal education to school age population. In Turkey education for students with special needs is organized by the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance in MONE. Since the 1950s providing education to children with special needs has always been a concern of the Turkish governments. As a result, numerous legal amendments have been issued to provide a legal basis and structure special educational services to students. Turkey has invested in increasing the number of special education teachers, which has been contributing to broaden the capacity of Turkey for providing education to the students with special needs. As part of this effort, 21 universities provide special education teacher training programs at undergraduate level (Güner Yıldız, Melekoglu, & Paftalı, 2016).

The ongoing economic and political developments around Turkey have made the country a destination for forcibly displaced people. As a result, educational services for the migrants, forcibly displaced people, and refugees form an important domain of social justice practices in Turkey. Especially the Syrian migrants form the major group among the forcibly displaced people awaiting educational services in Turkey. As a result, Turkey has been developing various educational services to the Syrian migrants (Kondakci & Onen, 2019). Since the conflict broke up in Syria in 2011, approximately 3,652,000 migrants fled from Syria into Turkey, and more than 1.7 million of the Syrian migrants in Turkey are in the ages ranging between 6 and 24, which refers to basic, secondary, and higher education (DGMM, n.d.). As a result, there is a huge pressure on Turkish education system at all levels to provide education to this huge student population. As a result, Turkey's policy to provide education to this large group of students has been evolving to include different practices (Kondakci & Onen, 2019). Although Turkey has been performing out-standingly to respond to the educational needs of the Syrian migrants, the scale of this group will continue to be a challenge for Turkey.

This data suggest that socioeconomic structures make Turkey a highly vulnerable context for disadvantaged groups in accessing, completing, and transiting to the economy. Based on this conclusion in relation to educational and economic data presented above, the following section was built to discuss the macro- and micro-sociological bases of social justice in education in Turkey.

Macro-economic Indicators in Turkey

Economic performance of any country is key to socially just educational services. It is important to discuss key macro-economic indicators in order to identify the country's gap in social justice practices. According to the 2018 data (OECD, 2018b) in Turkey, the GDP is 25,665 USD/capita (OECD average, 42,168 USD/capita). One of the key economic indicators closely related to social justice is income inequality

(Gini coefficient). Turkey's Gini coefficient is 0.40, the fifth highest country among OECD countries (OECD, 2018c). This data shows that economic performance of the country is likely to be a key producer of socially unjust educational provisions in Turkey. Parallel to the performance in Gini coefficient, Turkey has the sixth highest poverty rate (0.17) among other OECD countries (OECD, 2018d). Compared to many European countries, private spending on education is growing (tertiary 0.41% of GDP; primary to postsecondary 0.51% of GDP) as well (OECD, 2018e). Considering the aggregated expenditures of the all authorities in Turkey (central government, local municipalities), there is a growing trend in the total educational expenditures. In 2008 3.5% of the GDP was spent on education. In 2015 the educational expenditures reach 4.6% of the GDP in Turkey. However, after 2015 the grown slope turned down to 4.3% of the GDP (ERG360, 2018). The broad economic outlook of the country and the composition of expenditures on education make socioeconomic background a critical factor in access and attainment of quality educational services. The increasing trend toward widening the share of private education and the cultural trends of Turkish parents toward generously spending private monies in education of their children make economic background of the families a critical determinant to access and attainment of quality education (Şimşek, 2018).

Turkish Education System and Social Justice

Reflecting Turkey's unitary constitutional and centralized public administration systems, Turkish education system is structured in a highly centralized manner. Unlike federal systems, key educational practice (policy toward teachers' employment, investment, education system structure, curriculum development, etc.) in Turkey rests in the hands of the central authority, the Ministry of National Education, which formally leaves less room to school-level constituencies for developing and implementing social justice practices in schools (Kondakci, Zayim, Oldaç, & Şenay 2016).

In this chapter it is argued that the centralized education system (which is rooted in the political and public administration system of the country) and the classical structuralist-functionalist sociology in education exist in a symbiosis. As a result, the assumptions emanating from the classical structuralist-functionalist sociology characterize educational provisions in Turkey (Kondakci et al., 2016). Structural-functional perspective on the role of education and distribution of surplus in the society dominates the formal discourse on education in Turkey. In Turkey education is proposed as the basic tool of upward mobility in the social stratification. The system runs on an absolute equality in educational opportunities assumption. According to this assumption, individuals have the opportunity to develop necessary skills and competencies by attaining free educational opportunities. Hence, meritocracy is the basic tool in distributing benefits in the society. In this idealized education and society depiction, regardless their social background, hardworking individuals receive benefits and rewards in accordance with their capacities. Parallel to the

arguments of Parsonian sociology, the centralized education system in Turkey claims that every citizen in Turkey has equal chances of access to quality education. This perspective goes even one step forward to claim that private education is an opportunity to broaden the chances of the low socioeconomic income groups for a better education (Kondakci, Beycioglu, Oldac, & Senay, 2018).

Based on these sociological assumptions, the centralized education system itself in Turkey holds parallel assumptions regarding the schooling of the students. First, the centralized school system assumes that the central authority is able to neutralize the differences across the schools so that the students attending any school in the system have access to the elements of education of the same quality level (e.g., teacher quality, curriculum, materials, etc.). In other words, the system assumes that every student has the equal educational opportunity and they are able to benefit from this opportunity. Second, the students attending any school have the same capacity to benefit from educational provisions. That is, the students have similar social, academic, and economic capacity, which are necessary to benefit from educational provisions. The third problematic assumption is related to school improvement efforts. According to the centralized education systems, school improvement models can be applied in the same way to every school setting. This assumption largely ignores the social, political, and economic disparities eliminating the students' access to quality educational provisions. In reality, there are basic differences eliminating students' equal access to and benefit from these provisions. However, in Turkey domestic migration, international migrations, and economic turmoil create disadvantages and perpetuate these disadvantages.

As stated by several scholars for different country contexts, unlike the basic argument of Parsonian sociology, the disadvantaged groups in the society either do not find access to quality education or do not find access to education at all (Brandsma, 2002). Scheurich and Skrla (2003) argued that equal education provisions ensure access to education; however, such access is unlikely to ensure the skills and competencies, which are necessary for integration to social and economic system in the society. Parsonian sociology is not highly attentive to individual differences. Local differences are reflected into education systems (Matthew, 2011). As several school effectiveness scholars argued, there are important quality differences across the schools, and this is the prime reasons of achievement gap in schools (Kyriakides, Creemers, Antoniou, & Demetriou, 2010; Samy & Cook, 2009). Being less attentive to inter-school differences is one of the prime causes of the emergence of disadvantaged schools. Equal practices in many different countries are the main cause of deepened disadvantaged status of these schools. Turkey makes important investments in teacher education, technology integration to education, and physical infrastructure of the education system. However, equal approach deepens the deprived status of the disadvantaged students. On the other hand, training of the basic constituencies about social justice and disadvantaged students is another problem.

Recent discussions highlight different dimensions of social justice in education. Access to education is one of the key challenges for social justice in education. Access to education problem typically results from limited financial sources,

disability, limited social capital (Perna 2006), or lack of familial or societal orientation toward schooling. However, access to education is not the core problem in Turkey. As presented above, the central issue regarding social justice in education in Turkey seems to be related to the *quality* of education. As stated by other scholars, the quality of education for disadvantaged groups and the consequences of this education are problems faced by many disadvantaged groups nowadays (Shah et al., 2011). According to Lucas (2001), ensuring access to education does not eliminate disadvantaged status of students in absolute terms. Parallel to these discussions, quality of education has been the top concern among scholars in Turkey (Gümüş & Atalmış 2012). Limited experiences of teachers and principals, low financial resources, and poor materials characterize the schools attended by the disadvantaged students. The situation in Turkey is not very different. For example, the average experience level of teachers working in the Eastern part of the country is significantly shorter than the Western part of the country. Kondakci et al. (2018) argued that the dilemma of granting access but failing to provide quality is related to the concepts of horizontal-vertical inequalities. As a result of these limitations, disadvantaged students do not find leverages to progress to higher levels of education and get a diploma which facilitates their employment. Shah et al. (2011) argued that disadvantaged students find access to newly established programs, which potentially have low chances of employability for these students. It is commonly argued that finding access to education must match with increasing the prospect of employability in order to overcome the state of disadvantage.

It is important to state that the recent trends and developments in delivering education as a public service have also implications on social justice in education. The welfare state era has witnessed to broad public policies to serve every citizen in Turkey as well. During this era, key public services were free for every citizen. However, the decline of the social state notion in the world and the constant blows on free public education for all are two of the main causes of the resurgence of the concept in its current form. After the 1980s economic policies have been promoting market-oriented logic toward key public services. As a result, the notion of welfare state has disappeared. Rather, the notion of the social state has replaced the concept. Like many other European countries, the notion of the social state is still valid in Turkey. However, there is a very strong tendency toward neoliberal logic for key public services. Particularly public education in Turkey is under the close scrutiny of the neoliberal movements (Simsek, 2018). As a result, it is not difficult to anticipate the growing discussions around social justice in education in Turkey.

Brief Literature Review on Social Justice in Education in Turkey

The issue of social justice in education has been increasingly gaining the attention of scholars in Turkey. Sisman (2006 as cited in Bozkurt 2017) indicated that social justice discussions in Turkey have evolved from democratic practices into equal opportunity, while after the turn of the twenty-first century, the concept of social justice in education has been adopted by scholars in educational research.

The basic frameworks provided by educational sociology offer an analytical approach to discuss the social justice in Turkish education system. Ballantine and Hammack (2009) grouped theoretical perspectives in sociology of education into macro and micro perspectives, referring to macro-sociology as the branch which considers education systems of the countries and world trends while micro-socio-logical as the branch which focuses on school- or classroom-level interactions. Relying on this conceptualization of sociology of education, the literature on social justice in education in Turkey is classified under these two broad perspectives. The first perspective holds a macro-sociological perspective and chases the sources of inequality in macro-sociological structures. How key sociological institutions contribute and perpetuate inequitable educational provisions across different groups (mainly gender and socioeconomic status) is one of the main concerns of this perspective. Individuals who deviate from the economic and social structures are marginalized, and disadvantaged individuals are the main focus the first perspective. It is interesting to note that such studies are conducted by the representative of civil society in Turkey (e.g., Batyra, 2017; Oral, 2016). As a result, this perspective proposes policy recommendations from macro-sociological lens. The second per-spective is inspired by the recent micro-sociological perspectives. This perspective focuses more on micro-relationship at school and attempts to document issues in social justice in the relationships in and among the key constituencies of the school including teachers, students, principals, and parents. One of the major research streams reflecting this perspective focuses on the social justice leadership in educa-tion and documents causes and consequence of this type of leadership in schools for social justice. In Turkey, this perspective generates management and policy recom-mendations for improving the skills of social justice leadership of school principals, facilitating their environment and empowering school leaders for broadening their social justice practice and behaviors at school (Arar, Beycioglu & Oplatka, 2016; Beycioglu & Ogden, 2017; Kondakci et al., 2016; Özdemir, 2017). Below these two perspectives are presented and discussed in detail.

Social Justice in Education Literature from Micro-sociological Perspective

As stated above, this perspective focuses on the relationships between and within different groups which constitute the key players of formal education. In very broad terms, how education, school, and schooling are perceived and practiced by these groups is the main focus of the analyses conducted from this perspective. The criticisms from critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 2004) and sociology perspective prove that schools and school systems play a key role in maintaining the inequities in the society. The analyses from these perspectives reflect micro-sociological approach to reveal the bases of inequities in education. These perspectives argue that access and attainment of educational services and later on employability are curbed by certain sociological setups, which are established and perpetuate in micro-relationships between different groups that belong to different social classes in the society. It is important to note two main characteristics of this literature in Turkey. First, it is relatively new compared to the literature on macro-sociological

perspective that is reported in the previous section. Second, the studies in this stream of research majorly focus on the school principal. Social justice in education in Turkey has grown around leadership discussions and concentrates on the leadership role of the teachers and principals in mitigating the effect of differences on basic societal rights of the citizens. In other words, these studies are presented from the perspective of social justice leadership in education, and they are greatly influenced by research on social justice leadership around the globe. This research stream claims that leadership can be a critical tool to eliminate the impact of disadvantages on students (e.g., Oplatka, 2010; Furman, 2012; Miller & Martin, 2015; Theoharis, 2007). Likewise, Turkish scholars report on the role and responsibilities of the principal to accomplish socially just education in their schools (Arar et al., 2016; Beycioglu & Ogden, 2017; Kondakci et al., 2016; Özdemir, 2017; Özdemir & Kütküt, 2015). These studies do not empirically document the socioeconomic bases of social justice in education; rather, they approach social justice in education as an issue which can be largely resolved at school setting. These studies share the perspective that school leadership is the leadership practice of opening space for people with different racial, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation. The lack of focus on social justice issues in the mainstream leadership theories is one of the reasons why leadership attributed a broad role in social justice. Özdemir (2017) indicated that this is largely because mainstream leadership approaches fail to consider diversity and individual differences in leadership perception and practice. The author maintained that for an effective schooling, leadership should be perceived in its own context. Hence, such leadership tying itself to its own context in defining and implementing its policies is considered as a socially just leadership. Tomul (2009) in his study with school principals indicates that social justice is an issue for students coming from low-income families, students experiencing adaptation problems, and students with disability. Limited resources, lack of knowledge of key constituencies about social justice, lack of community support, and limited legal bases are some of the basic challenges in social justice in education (Tomul, 2009). Kondakci et al. (2016) suggested that underdeveloped legal bases make the school principal de facto authority address issues of social justice in the school system. The authors stated that despite the absence of a formal role definition for social justice, school principals act as social justice leaders in order to broaden educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Bozkurt (2017) implied that social justice leadership role of principals can be traced from the relationships they establish with their environment. The author argued that school principals are the key constituency which is responsible from establishing and implementing social relations and responsibilities at school. Similarly, Arar et al. (2016) and Beycioglu and Ogden (2017) in their study on social justice leadership revealed that principals that are relatively accepted as social justice leaders in Turkish education system portray their implementations to create a just school as a personal endeavor rather than a centralized initiative. The tendency to perceive the school principal as the key constituency in social justice practices contributed largely to the adapting the concept of social justice leadership into Turkish context. Arar et al. (2016) strikingly explained the reason behind the motivation of school principals to undertake the role

social justice leadership with a deep cultural roots of the country and suggested that social justice leadership in Middle Eastern countries has moral connotations rather than formal or legal imperatives. Gender issue as a challenge in social justice leadership has been highlighted by some scholars. Arar, Orucu, and Kucukcayir (2018) argued that there are high expectations from school principals regarding fulfillment of social justice roles. However, limited resources and narrow job description of the principals present challenges for school principals in fulfillment of their social justice leadership roles. The authors maintained that these challenges are more prevailing for women school principals and make the jobs of the women principals even more complex. Arar et al. (2018, p. 30) concluded that gender-based stereotypes, which led to perceiving principalship as a "man's job," are prevalent in Turkish context.

However, the emergence and key role attributed to the principals should not mean that teachers and other constituencies did not have any role in ensuring equitable educational practices in the country. Karacan , Bağlıbel & Bindak, (2015) claimed that the teachers have the key role in accomplishing social justice practices in Turkish schools because the teachers are the key agent delivering educational service at school. This perspective claims that the teachers are not only responsible from academic and/or intellectual growth but also from transmitting key value of open and democratic societies including democracy, equality, and participation. Particularly lack of a sound and comprehensive educational policy to ensure socially just educational practices in the country leads to broadening the role of social justice leadership to cover the teachers as well.

Building on international literature on social justice, Karacan et al. (2015) identified distributive, recognitional, and participative forms of social justice in education in Turkey. In their scale development study, they identified these dimensions as different components of their social justice measure. Distributive leadership practice proposes social justice in education on the basis of equality principle. This understanding asserts that every citizen has an equal access to key public services. Recognition is related to accepting the differences and serving these differences with multicultural strategies at system, school, and classroom levels. Any difference which can be potentially a source of disadvantages is recognized, and asymmetric approach is followed in serving the groups who belong to these differences. As a result, recognition approach may involve more in equitable rather than simple equal practices in education. In Turkey, particularly the policies and projects toward girls and working children can be considered around the recognition principle. Participative social justice is related to enactment of democracy. Democracy is prerequisite of social justice. Democracy grants the basic rights of making choice and defining his/her position in the society. Free expression of self is seen a key to participation and development as a citizen (Karacan et al. 2015). Turkey's democratic practice has a very old history, compared to its neighboring countries in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The parliamentary democracy understanding and practice, although interrupted several times in the last 60 years, are longer than many other countries. This practice is largely influential in internalizing the democratic culture and practice among Turkish citizens. Recently, several initiatives have

been introduced by the Ministry of National Education, universities, and civil society in order to promote democratic life and internalized democracy as a value at all levels. For example, introducing the course on democracy and human rights is one of these initiatives. Özdemir and Kütküt (2015) proposed a slightly different dimensionality for social justice in Turkey. They defined social justice as an umbrella concept which covers "rights, equality, equal opportunity, diversity and related concepts" which ideally helps eliminating the marginalization of any disadvantaged groups in the society. Referring to Gewirtz and Cribb (2002), Özdemir and Kütküt (2015) defined three types of social justice: distributive, cultural, and relational. Distributive social justice refers to distribution of tangibles in a fair or just approach. Cultural social justice refers to equality of all subcultures in a given society. In other words, none of the cultures dominate others. Relational social justice refers to the active participation of disadvantaged groups to the decisions related to their own lives. In their elaboration on the composition of social justice leadership, Özdemir and Kütküt (2015) described the several tenets of socially just leaders. These tenets differentiate them from others and push them to act against any mechanism excluding, labelling, or suppressing the "others." The authors stated critical thinking, supporting the disadvantaged students and advocacy for their rights, inclusion and mainstreaming as the key components of social justice leadership.

The studies from micro-sociological perspective are largely driven by quantitative tradition. With some exceptions (e.g., Arar et al., 2016; Beycioglu & Ogden, 2017), most of the studies are designed in order to develop a quantitative measure of social justice, social justice leadership, and disadvantaged groups perception of education (Bozkurt, 2017; Karacan et al., 2015; Özdemir & Pektaş, 2017; Tomul, 2009). The growing orientation toward quantitative tradition may be a result of over relying on the knowledge base on social justice which is built in different cultural settings. Instead of redefining the boundaries of social justice and related dimensions (e.g., social justice leadership) with qualitative methodologies in the local context (Turkey), the scholars directly adapt the main concept of social justice and its subdimensions in education. Hence, in Turkey methodologies of the studies on social justice show a growing orientation toward quantitate investigations. Several scholars have particularly involved in developing the measures toward the social justice and social justice leadership. However, these scales identified different target groups as targeted participants. Karacan Bağlıbel, and Bindak (2015) identified the students as participants and developed a measure soliciting the views of the students on social justice of practices of the school principals. Similarly, Özdemir and Kütküt (2015) developed a scale working on the same principle, that is, asking the students to identify the social justice role of the school principals. Tomul (2009), however, asked the principals themselves to identify their social justice practices. Özdemir and Pektaş (2017) and Bozkurt (2017) developed their scales asking the teachers to identify the social justice leadership behaviors of the principals.

Research on social justice leadership in Turkey focuses more on micro-sociological perspective and focus more on mitigating the effect of disadvantaged status on students by focusing on the school and its environment. However, it is important to

state that some national-level reports identify the bases of social (in)justice for disadvantaged groups in sociological structures. Nevertheless, these two streams of research do not communicate and inform each other in order to accomplish a total intervention for socially just educational practices.

Social Justice in Education Literature from Macro-sociological Perspective

The literature under this research stream focuses on how key sociological institutions contribute to problems of social justice in the country. In general, this research stream on social justice in education focused on the issues in access of the disadvantaged groups to quality education and deprivation of these groups from accomplishing standard lives in the society. The quality of education in Turkey is under close public scrutiny. The basic reason behind the pressure on public education is related to the deep achievement gap in the education system. Particularly schools located in disadvantaged settings have limited capacity to improve students' acquisitions. These schools perpetuate achievement gaps between different student groups. Besides, educational policies in most cases perpetuate the disadvantaged status of students belonging to these groups (Polat, 2007).

Several reports and studies suggest that the problem is related to deep sociological structures in the societies. These scholars and reports defined social justice from this perspective. In general, these studies tend to focus on gender issues and economic structures as the key in social justice in education. The narrow focus of studies was criticized by some authors. Karacan et al. (2015) argued that social justice in education is related to economic structures and skipped the relevance of the concept in relation to ethnic and racial differences. Polat (2007) argued that social justice in education is related to the total effort toward accomplishing equality in access to, sustainability in, and positive outcomes from education. Parallel to the tendencies in other country contexts, some other scholars related the concept to multiculturalism, equity, equality, and democratic society (Tomul, 2009). A limited number of studies focus on different sociological and political factors behind achievement gap in Turkey's education system. Although Roma population in Turkey legally does not constitute an ethnic minority, they are severely affected from social stigmatization which leads to low achievement and low attainment in education (Zeybekoglu-Caliskan, Simsek, & Kondakci, 2017).

Using the 2015 PISA data, Batyra (2017) investigated the gender-based achievement gap in Turkey. The report document broader number of reasons behind the achievement gap in Turkish education system. Parallel to the international trends in Turkey, female students perform higher in reading but perform lower in mathematics. In science both male and female students perform at the same level. This data shows that although males and females have similar access patterns in different regions of the country, the achievement gap is still a challenge in accomplishing gender-based educational equity in the country. Concerning home-related variables, Batyra (2017) reported that emotional support of parents is related to male students' reading scores. Besides, talk to parents emerged as another home-related variable

in students' achievement in all three subjects. Students that work in and out of home were found to be detrimental for their achievement in all three subjects. Using parents' educational levels as the indicator of socioeconomic status, Batyra (2017) reported that fathers' educational level is more related to achievement level of both males and females than mothers' educational level. However, the work status of parents is more related to mathematics and science achievement of female students. Socioeconomic status is closely related to mathematics scores of both males and females, while it is closely related to females' science and reading scores as well. Batyra (2017) interestingly reported that the impact of the role of socioeconomic indicators tends to decrease when school-level variable of discipline is included. This finding suggests that improving the school climate is likely to contribute to the increment in the achievement of the students in Turkey. Batyra (2017) showed that school's socioeconomic and cultural status is a strong associate of students' achievement in science, math, and reading. Besides, public schools in general underperform compared to the private counterpart. Batyra recommends widening both monetary and nonmonetary support to disadvantaged groups in order to deal with the achievement gap in Turkey. Referring to the findings indicating socioeconomic and cultural factors as the cause of the achievement gap in Turkey, Batyra (2017) particularly recommended addressing the issue of stratification of Turkish education system according to the economic, social, and cultural background and allocating more monetary and nonmonetary resources for disadvantaged schools and families. Particularly dealing with home-related factors constitutes important part of policy recommendation of Batyra (2017).

Some studies approached social justice in education from inclusive and multicultural education perspective. Oral (2016) stated that there is a need for inclusive education for learners at all levels in Turkey. Referring to the legal basis of education in Turkey, Oral argued that legal bases secure the right to access to education. Particularly basic education is free and compulsory for all. However, the author claimed the legal bases is not strong enough to ensure the access to education for groups with different sexual orientation, gender, language, religions, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status. Although gender-based discrimination is strictly prohibited, policy for female education is not effective enough to bring them to schools at all levels. Even when the legal basis is evident, they are still not effective in schooling of the girls. Based on these disparities, the author stated that there is a need for effective inclusive education strategies to ensure access of disadvantaged groups to quality education. In this process, the policy makers, school-level constituencies, families, and students need to cooperate and communicate actively. As a result, key constituencies of education in and out of school can get into agreement on inclusive education, demand broader and stronger legal base for an education reform granting access of the disadvantaged groups to education, and improve capacity of education at local and national level for inclusive education, providing support for key constituencies of education (particularly teachers) (p. 11). Oral (2016) stated a policy with three legs for inclusive education: (1) inform students, teachers, and families, (2) improve teaching materials for ensuring inclusive education, and (3) design and implement training programs for teachers.

Conclusions

The brief review of theory, research, and practice on social justice in Turkey suggests the gaps in research, policy, and practice. First, there is an evident gap in research. Research on social justice in education is its infancy. The theories that the scholars utilize to investigate the issue are rather Western origin ones. As a part of limited practice on the issue, lack of nationwide strategy for social justice is one of the reasons why the disadvantages are perpetuated in Turkey. Turkey's state of social justice in education shows that there are several missing components of socially just educational provisions. These missing components are related to practice and research. First, research on social justice is still on its infancy in Turkey. There is a need for more research both from macro- and micro-sociological perspectives. Recently, more and more studies have been conducted on PISA and TIMMS in order to identify the bases of the achievement gaps among disadvantaged students. Such studies need to be broadened to inform the role of other sociological institutions in social justice in education. Besides, studies from micro-sociological perspective in Turkey seem to focus extensively on the principal. Studies integrating the perspective of the teachers, students, parents, and community at large are needed to inform social justice in education. More importantly, there is a need to integrate the knowledge base on these two levels, in order to inform the policy, which is missing.

Second, there is a policy gap in social justice in education in Turkey. It is difficult to claim the existence of a comprehensive policy at different levels (national and local) with different players. Rather, social justice practices are fragmented across different municipalities, and more importantly these practices do not inform each other. In Turkey the key state apparatus responsible from social justice practice and protection of the family is the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. However, the Ministry of National Education is the only public authority which has a direct reach to the students. Besides, the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice partly share the authority for the protection of the disadvantaged groups. As a result, an effective policy requires active collaboration and coordination of these authorities both at central (ministerial) level and at local (provincial) levels. Besides, the municipalities hold certain level the public authority toward protection of disadvantaged groups. However, there is not any mechanism for accomplishing coordination among these authorities. As a result, previous interventions toward protecting and ensuring their attendance in school were not successful. Parallel to these arguments, Arar et al. (2016) suggest that unlike many other countries, the centralized educational policies make it difficult to connect to local agents (authorities and public) for leveraging their social justice leadership profile and hinder the chances of empowering their social justice profile by tying to local education agents. According to the authors, this issue is caused by the centralized education system.

The third gap is related to the leadership gap. As stated above, at the school level, the school principals are not held accountable on the basis of their practices toward the disadvantaged groups. As stated above, several studies have reported school principals' social justice interventions. However, several studies on the role of key

constituencies in education in Turkey (principals and teachers) suggest that the key actors of education and micro level (or school level) take actions in the form of organizational citizenship or altruistic behaviors. Moreover, different analyses on the leadership role of school principals suggest that they enact the social justice leadership role implicitly (Gündüz & Balyer, 2013; Sunmak & Özgan, 2007). Although they do not have a formal role definition (a form of empowerment) toward social justice, school principals go beyond the formal role definition and involve in socially just behaviors such as finding additional resources, establishing a healthy school environment, and developing a productive school-environment relationship serving all students (Turan, Yıldırım, & Aydoğdu, 2012). Arar et al. (2016) and Beycioglu and Ogden (2017) suggested that school principals in Turkey enact their social justice leadership with personal and local acts rather than being motivated or guided with formal rules or policies. In other words, social justice leadership in Turkey is a moral endeavor of the school principals (Arar et al., 2016). Hence, principal succession leads to loss of the social justice interventions without continuity. As a result, in Turkey social justice in education largely remained as a school-level initiative, and dealing with inequalities largely remains at the hand of school principals and teachers. The formal role definition of school principals lacks a clear statement obliging the principals to take formal actions toward mitigating the disadvantaged states of the students (Kondakci et al., 2016). The leadership gap deepens the issues of social justice in education. It is necessary to state that these arguments do not verify that the majority of teachers and principals in the system tend to exhibit similarly toward social justice in the country. Low awareness of school constituencies about the disadvantaged students may lead to further deprivation from attainment of educational provisions. Especially in socially and economically disadvantaged contexts, perceiving the diversity as a threat to school's achievement goals leads to vicious circle in student achievement. It is not possible to lift the achievement of the total school without lifting the achievement of the disadvantaged students. Hence, a sound social justice leadership is essential for breaking the vicious circle established around student achievement. Turhan stated that teacher candidates have a low sense of social justice role and recommended adding a social justice component to the training of teacher candidates in Turkey. Other studies suggested that conducting more systematic analyses to identify the disadvantaged students and provide guidance for these students is a core role of school principals which aligns with social justice leadership. However, Bayhan (2015) implied that part of the problem regarding social justice in Turkish schools is related to limited number of professionals who can intervene with the social justice issue, and based on this issue, the author suggested employing school sociologist who may act as mediator between different groups in dealing with social justice issues and develop solutions for social problems impeding education of the disadvantaged groups. Similarly, Nadir and Aktan (2015) indicated the same professional gap in school and suggested employing social workers in schools in order to provide remedies for psychosocial problems of the students.

Socioeconomic background was highlighted commonly in the literature on social justice in Turkey. Parental engagement, perception of schooling, and attitudes

of families toward the schools and schooling of their children have commonly been indicated as a challenge in different studies. Demirtaş and Küçük (2014) found that lack of familial attention on the schooling of their children is one of the core challenges in their principalship. However, it can be argued that lack of familial attention is a socioeconomic factor. Özbaş (2013) suggested that although the parents value education of their children, they do not possess the know-how on the proper engagement of their children education. Therefore, the authors argue that the families need training toward how to engage in education of their children.

In relation to the leadership, a fourth gap in social justice in education is related to institution gap. The centralized education system is indicated as a key challenge in dealing with social justice issue. The centralized system endangers development of local and fast solutions to social justice issues. The centralized system creates an illusionary state that every school in Turkey enjoys the same resources and opportunities. Hence, the centralized education system makes it difficult to approach disadvantaged schools differently, practice positive discrimination for these schools, bring more experienced and successful teachers, and even implement a different curriculum serving the disadvantaged students. On the other hand, attempting to implement the same curriculum in every school of the country and for students enrolled in these schools is the other challenge for socially just schooling system in Turkey. Kondakci et al. (2016) claimed that inequality in income distribution is reflected directly upon schools and schooling in Turkey. However, dealing with these issues with a centralized approach is not realistic. Therefore, micro level constituencies need to be empowered to deal with social justice issues. For example, the principals have a key role in attracting the students to school in the rural side of the country. The principals act as significant others in the lives of the students. Another key role of school principals is related to building belief that the students can learn and contaminating every constituencies in the school, particularly the teachers for education of the disadvantaged students. Another challenge for social justice in education at institution level is that Turkey does not apply a specific policy toward disadvantaged students and setting (schools). For example, Turkey does not have a magnet school strategy for disadvantaged students. This is largely related to the assumptions of the centralized school system. The teachers and principals working in disadvantaged schools do not receive specific training; there is not specific curriculum for these schools. The same curricular practices are put in practice as in the same way in any school in the country. It is aimed that the same curricular practices will result in the same outcomes as in the case of any other school. These problematic assumptions are largely related to the underperformance of Turkey in serving its disadvantaged groups. Part of the policy recommended above for social justice in education needs to focus on the schools themselves. Part of this strategy is to train the principals and teacher and raise a belief about the fact that the disadvantaged students are able to learn. As several social justice in education scholar indicating raising the positive belief about the students is key to their success in education (Brown, 2004; Jean-Marie, 2008; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). As part of this strategy, identifying goals of success, building classroom setting for these students, building social justice leadership skills of teachers and

principals, and managing the relationship between the school and the environment would strengthen a more socially just education system. In Turkey another challenge is related to building a supportive school environment. As indicated by Hoy and Tarter (1997), a supportive school environment rather than environment arbitrarily interviewing in the school is key to the success of the disadvantaged students. Thus, it could also be claimed that a more supportive environment would be of help for education practitioners to create a just school and consequently a socially just education for all students and stakeholders that suffer from inequities.

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