

**Educational Governance in Turkey?**  
**A Centralized National Education System under the Influence of Civil Society and**  
**International Organisations**

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**Introduction**

“Looking at the international scientific discourse, it seems there is surprisingly little work on the Turkish education system” (Nohl et al. 2008: 7). This is especially astonishing if seen in the context of the German case, where Turkish immigrants constitute the biggest group of pupils with migration background and where the difficulties in reaching the same educational level as the German population for those people cannot be denied.<sup>1</sup> Within the framework of my dissertation project, I discuss the Turkish education system in general and its incipient transformation from a traditionally strong centralized system to a more decentralized network of *Educational Governance*<sup>2</sup> in particular. This process takes place under the growing influence of civil society and international organisations that are trying to impact state educational policies by implementing alternatives to the national education concept of schooling. A focal point of investigation will be the question of how newly invented international education concepts fit into the respective national system and if the process of implementing them is to be seen as decentralization or merely as adaption to a state system that stays centralized. Differences between newly adapted models of education (such as Montessori, Waldorf and concepts of democratic school) will be investigated as well as the country-specific implementation and adaptation in international comparison.

The paper has been structured as follows: in the first section a theoretical background of the scientific discussion about Educational Governance and the use of this concept in connection with a perspective of social and cultural anthropology will be discussed. There will follow an overview of the educational system of the Republic of Turkey, as the subject of the dissertational project will be given. This gives the background for the following discussion of sub-state and international actors trying to influence state politics on education and about the question of whether, and in what way educational governance is increasing in Turkish educational politics. In addition, existing alternative education concepts will be discussed in their specific way of implementation in the Turkish context.

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<sup>1</sup> A comparison of educational achievement between Turkish migrants and German total population can be found in the report of the Federal Statistical Office of Germany „Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit – Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund“ 2010 (Federal Statistical Office of Germany 2010) and in the report on education in Germany 2010 „Bildungsbericht 2010“ (Educational Reporting Consortium 2010: 38).

<sup>2</sup> For an extensive definition of educational governance see Altrichter et al. 2007 and the following theoretical remarks.

The paper proposes that the implementation process of alternative education strategies in Turkey has to be seen as a newly shaping process that is on his way to gain influence in educational policies. Nevertheless, possibilities of influencing the centralized education system are limited until today and that there is still a long way to go in terms of alternative education in Turkey.

### **Educational Governance: Theoretical Remarks**

Since the 1990s the term *Governance* has gained remarkable interest in political and economical science as an abstract concept to characterize interacting modes of cooperative ruling on sub-national, national and inter-national level. (Schuppert 2008: 14) Because of its broad reception in different disciplines definitions of governance vary considerably. Instead of discussing varieties most disciplines agree in the meantime that the advantage of the concept is not to be found in a fixed terminological differentiation but in a certain perspective on reality which directs interest on complex network interactions instead of simple hierarchical government control. (Benz et al. 2007; Kooiman 2003; Pierre, Peters 2000) This perspective pushes sub-national actors into the focal point of studies concerned with political questions and asks how civil society as well as inter- and transnational actors are influencing national politics and intervene into decision making via complex network interaction. Educational Governance *deals with corresponding activities in the field of education and focuses on political interaction processes in the multilevel field of educational politics between supra-national, national and sub-national actors. Even though the field is mostly dealt with in educational science, as in other questions of governance, an interdisciplinary approach is needed here to fill the existing gap of micro-analytical research and to allow different perspectives on the phenomena of educational politics.*

Because of its connection to the doctoral program „International and Comparative Research on Education and Education Policy in the Welfare State“, conducted by the Faculty of Economics and Social Science at the Eberhard Karls University Tübingen, Germany, the doctoral thesis has a strong interdisciplinary connection and benefits especially from the interaction of political and educational science. Nevertheless, its primary place is in the field of social and cultural anthropology. For this reason there will be special attention paid to the question of whether the concept of governance is useful in the context of approaches to social and cultural anthropology. Even though there exists a partial discipline called *Anthropology of Governance*, the governance concept couldn't be established in the context of anthropological research until now. When the term governance is used in the context of social and cultural anthropological investigation, it mostly occurs in connection with anthropological work on developmental cooperation and the concept of *Good Governance* as „the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development“ (World Bank 1992: 1). Besides the binding of good governance to official institutions of government and administration the concept is used in a Eurocentric context in many cases and needs to be examined sincerely before utilisation. A critical discussion of this inappropriate use has not yet been given sufficiently. If governance is used in a broader context, as in Henrietta Moores „The Future of Anthropological Knowledge“, it remains free of further definition and is seen merely as a substitute of Foucault's term of *Governmentality* as „[t]he ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of knowledge political economy, and, as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.“ (Foucault, Faubion 2001: 221). Even though the similarities of the approaches are obvious, the governmentality approach draws attention to influences that affect human behaviour

through a certain „Art of Government“(Rose et al. 2006: 84). The complex apparatus of political interaction is subject of this approach as well as for the governance perspective but governmentality investigations are focussed on how subjects are influenced and formed by that apparatus whereas the governance approach draws its attention to the apparatus and its composition itself.

The inappropriate use of the concept of governance is especially astonishing if seen in the light of the theoretical overlap with the subject of political anthropology, focussing on political activities that are based at the local level. Besides the local level international, state and regional levels are also integrated into observation and the sub-discipline of political anthropology calls for „analysis not only of how global structures impose themselves at a local level, but also of how these impositions are resisted and opposed.“ (Lewellen 2003: XI) In this context actors, institutions, ideologies and practices which have an impact on politics come to the fore, although they aren't considered political in the narrower sense of being connected to actors of the official government or administration of a state. Accordingly there seems to be a broad overlap of the governance perspective with the subject of political anthropology. The latter stresses the impact of interactional networks built by informal institutions and actors of civil society as the core of investigation since its beginnings, similar to the new political and economic approach of the governance perspective.

A concept of “Anthropology of Governance” could bear advantages for the interdisciplinary governance research as well as for the discipline of social and cultural anthropology. As for governance research the approach of social and cultural anthropology can be a useful tool to analyze micro-political processes on the local level because the discipline offers a broad range of analytical tools for micro analytical studies. By using anthropological field investigation consisting of participant observation, network analysis and interview methods, micro-political processes can be investigated from where they take place – at the local level. For the discipline on the other hand the governance approach can be useful not only because of its theoretical overlap with themes of political anthropology but foremost to connect itself to current discussions in the interdisciplinary field of political research.

In the present case an anthropological governance approach is of considerable advantage. By asking for influences on the Turkish educational system caused by actors of civil society, the governance approach stresses the multilevel connection of political processes whereas the methodological access to the field provided by anthropology facilitates insight into micro-political activities that are often neglected by governance studies because of their merely theoretical approach. Access to local networks of educational policy making will be gained by actors trying to implement alternative educational concepts in the highly centralized and standardized educational system of Turkey introduced in the following section.

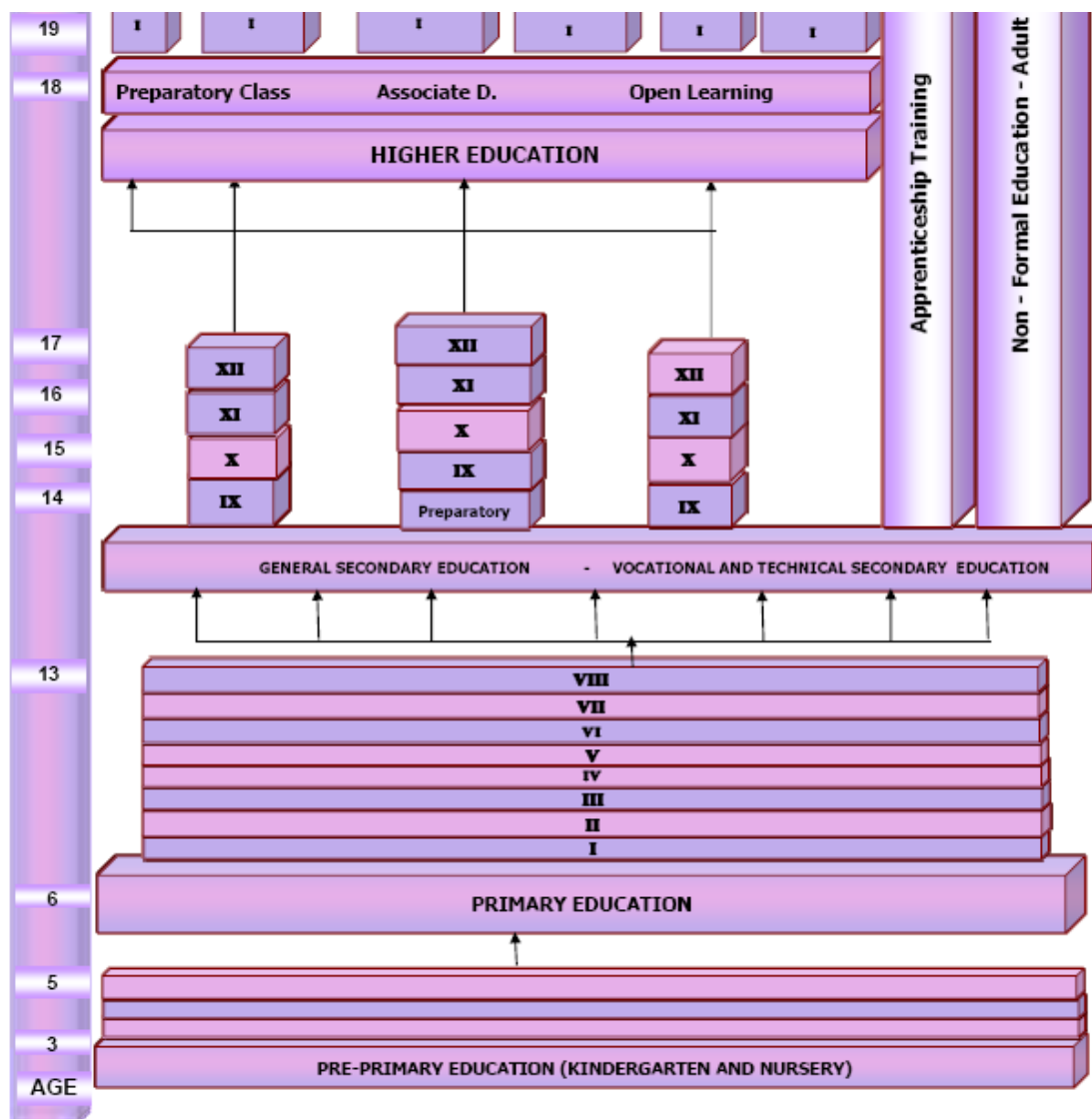
## **The Educational System of Turkey – An Overview**

The roots of the present-day educational system of Turkey can be found in the first reforms aimed at secularizing schooling in the late Ottoman Empire. (Varli 2008: 96ff; Nohl et al. 2008: 17ff; Somel 2001) In connection with the Ottoman period of reformation known as Tanzimat (1839-1876) and under the influence of the movement of the Young Turks (1876-1923) the mostly religious education system previously reserved to the offspring of the state apparatus started a period of change. Adaptations of European concepts of education and broader access for normal citizens were the guiding principles of these reforms. Despite the introduction in 1846 of a four-year compulsory primary education, early attempts of implementing broader schooling possibilities were doomed to fail because of lacking financial resources and infrastructure for a nationwide school operation.

Not until after the formation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 did the educational system experience a significant change. Already in 1924, with passing the Education Integrity Law (430/1924), the Ministry of National Education was made responsible for all educational institutions and all educational training. For this reason all formerly religious educational institutions were placed under control of the secular institution that decreed the closure of all religious schools (Medreses) within days later and thereby put an end to the long tradition of the religious character of education in the Ottoman Empire. (Nohl et al. 2008: 24) This went hand in hand with further reforms such as the implementation of co-education, the “new Turkish letters” based on Latin alphabet as replacement for the Arabic letters used before, the upgrading of the social status of teachers by the teacher image given to the founder of the state Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who travelled through the countryside to teach the new alphabet, and a five-year compulsory primary education for both sexes. Primary education in state schools started to be offered free of cost and construction of new schools as well as training programs for teachers helped to increase the schooling rates significantly in the following years. (Varli 2008: 99)

As part of a broad campaign for the improvement of conditions of socially and economically disadvantaged social groups in 1997 and 2002 the last major reformations of the Turkish education system were carried out. The compulsory primary education was extended from 5 to 8 years in 1997 by law number 4306. New schools were built and teachers trained to cope with the increasing number of students. The budget spent on formal education was raised and infrastructure improved, especially in rural areas. (Dulger 2004: 5ff) Pupils from the countryside were started to be bussed into villages offering the corresponding schooling possibilities and new schools in rural areas were built. The aim of the campaign was to raise the access rate to primary education which stood below 90 % until the school year 1997/98 (Ministry of National Education 2009: 1) as well as the goal of decreasing the influence of social background on school attendance. The extension of educational infrastructure and additional support for economically disadvantaged children through free school books and meals resulted in a rise of the school attendance to 96.49 % until the school year 2008/09. (Ministry of National Education 2009: 1)

The structure of the contemporary Turkish national education system which will be discussed in detail with regard to pre-school and school sector below can be seen in the following illustration. Besides compulsory primary education, every other part of the educational system is optional.



Source: Ministry of National Education 2009: XX

The **Ministry of National Education** (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı - MEB) is responsible for development of the national educational program on all educational levels and simultaneously serves as controlling body of all educational establishments. These duties date back to the founding of the nation where all educational fields were put under the control of a single national body. The broad range of duties of the ministry lead to a centrally organized educational landscape which, despite repeated demands, has not been changed in the reforms of the last years „because of central bureaucracy’s resistance to change.“ (Dulger 2004: 18) This supports Nohl et al. (2008) in saying that the MEB still holds a remarkable monopoly status. „The Turkish education system is centralist. All major decisions are taken at the Ministry of National Education [...] and their implementation is controlled from there.” (Nohl et al. 2008: 43)

Not only the monopoly status of MEB, but also its Kemalist national background can be traced back to the founding times of the republic. This is obvious in law number 3797 which has been adopted in 1992 and doesn't only describe the responsibilities of the ministry but gives the ideological framework for schooling as well. According to the law the duties of the ministry are as such:

„to plan, program, implement, monitor and control education and training services targeted at teachers and students in the educational institutions at all levels affiliated to the Ministry with the objective of raising individuals who are committed to Atatürk's principles and reforms, and to the [sic!] Atatürk's nationalism defined in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, who adopt, protect and develop the national, ethical, spiritual, historical and cultural values of the Turkish nation, who love and elevate their families, homeland and nation, who are aware of their duties and responsibilities to the Republic of Turkey – which is a democratic, secular and social state ruled by law and based on human rights and the basic principles defined at the beginning of the Constitution – and who behave accordingly.”  
(Ministry of National Education June 2005: 4-5)

Accordingly, there is a theoretical uniformity of educational establishments who have to follow the same curriculum, the same rules on school uniform, books, buildings, pictures of Atatürk and rituals like raising the flag. (cf. Karakaşoğlu-Aydin 2002: 561; Schwarz 2009: 70ff) Nevertheless, as will be seen below, in practice there are remarkable differences in contemporary schooling in Turkey connected to regional differences as well as to various state and private educational offers.

On the level of **pre-primary education** there are optional private and state offers for children in the age of three to five which are supposed to help children to develop physically, mentally and individually, and develop their ability to use the Turkish language to prepare them for primary school. In addition there are crèches for children who didn't reach the age of three. Both institutions are run in line with the guidelines of the General Directorate of Pre-School Education of the Ministry of National Education. Because of the inadequate supply of training places which exists foremost in rural areas in the south-east of the country, there is a low access rate to pre-primary establishments. This leads the OECD to comment in their review of Turkish national policies for education „that the general situation in pre-primary education [...] requires considerable improvement“ (OECD 2007: 34). This estimation is supported when seen in the light of access rates of 33 % in the school year 2008/09 in Turkey (Ministry of National Education 2008: 4) in comparison to an OECD average of 67.8% (OECD 2007: 35). Nevertheless there has been a considerable improvement in access rates to pre-primary education in the last years (Ministry of National Education 2008: 4; Özgan 2009: 317) and a plan for expanding the ratio to a comprehensive 50 % access rate until 2013 exists (Ministry of National Education 2008: 12). It remains to be seen if these goals can be achieved in problem areas in the rural south-east as well as in urban areas of the country.

**Primary Education** constitutes the only compulsory part of the Turkish educational system and comprises an eight-year basic training in state or private schools. State schools are free of charge whereas private schools differentiate in their charges. According to the first article of the law for primary education (number 222/1961) „Primary education is the basic schooling that serves all Turks of both sexes and their physical, mental and moral development in accordance with national aims” (quoted in Gümüş 2008: 49). Registration and participation rates increased significantly following the reforms on primary education in 1997 mentioned above. Whereas the access rate to primary education remained under 90 % until the school

year of 1997/98 it increased to 96.49 % of the relevant age group in school year 2008/09. (Ministry of National Education 2009: 1) Until 2013 the ministry wants to gain a 100 % access rate for six to fourteen years old citizens nationwide. (Ministry of National Education 2008: 12) To achieve this goal the educational system has to deal with specific problems that continue to cause low school attendance rates until today.

First of all there exists a remarkable educational shortfall in between western urban and south-eastern rural regions. In the western metropolises of Istanbul and Izmir the access rates are at a level of 99 %, whereas in the south-eastern rural provinces of Van and Muş the access rate to compulsory primary education rests at 88 % (cf. statistics in Ministry of National Education 2009: 2-5). In line with regional differences there exists a gender-specific access inequality which also appears particularly in south eastern regions. Despite the broad UNICEF campaign „Haydi Kızlar Okula!“ (Come on girls lets go to school!) 2003 which improved conditions for girls and called for a greater awareness of the importance of sending girls to school, the OECD report of 2007 had to remark that „[t]he gender gap remains“ (OECD 2007: 46). This becomes obvious in the national statistics of education, which show the south eastern province of Van has a 92 % access rate of male students whereas the female ratio remains at 85 % in the same school year of 2008/09 (statistics in Ministry of National Education 2009: 5). In addition to problems which differ in regions, there exists a nationwide socio-economical educational shortfall which has to be seen in connection to the division of state and private schools differing considerably in their teaching quality. Connected to the fact of high costs of private establishments those are not visited by pupils out of socio-economically disadvantaged families. Even though all schools are bound by the same regulations and curricula by the Ministry of Education, the disparity in schooling quality is remarkable and increases with the growing number of private schools. This leads to the fact that instead of adjusting access possibilities on all levels of schooling „the effect of socio-economic background is having an increasing impact on educational opportunities.“ (Gümüş 2008: 73)

**Secondary education** is an optional further education which lasts at least four years and covers the age group of fourteen to eighteen years olds. Secondary education can be split up into schools offering general education and schools with a vocational and technical character. Both areas are again served by state as well as by private schools. Access rate to this educational sector is 58.52 % of the relevant age group in school year 2008/09. (Ministry of National Education 2009: 1) Difficulties like regional differences, gender imbalance and educational shortfall connected to socio economical background described for primary education continue in secondary education and even intensify in imbalance of schooling ratio between male and female students. (Okçabol 2008: 95-100; OECD 2007: 79)

Final tests in secondary education are not sufficient to enter higher education. Instead there are additional central organized nationwide tests necessary to be passed. For this reason besides the last year of secondary education many students enter the additional schooling system of establishments preparing them for university entrance tests. The institutes called Dershane are private establishments that charge additional fees and build another hurdle for children out of socio economical disadvantaged families.

## Educational Governance in Turkey

As seen above educational politics are centralized and controlled by the Ministry of National Education which is responsible for decision taking and implementation of laws in educational practice. Nevertheless, decision taking without influences from international and civil society is not possible in a country bound to inter- and transnational organisations and containing civil interest organisations concerned with political topics as well. Concerning inter- and transnational influences on Turkish national education politics, a growing number of interactions can be found connected to the integration of the Republic of Turkey into organisations like United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe and World Trade Organisation (WTO). Those institutions have an impact on implementation of laws as part of the adaption of common guidelines. Besides that, educational projects like the campaign for extending compulsory primary education from five to eight years and to increase the schooling ratio starting in 1997 mentioned above are funded by the World Bank. Through funding the World Bank gains influence on educational politics by getting access to decision making and controlling of the new regulations in the educational sector. (cf. Eginli 2010)

What will be of main interest in the doctoral thesis are influences on national education politics exercised by actors of civil society and how those actors interact with supra-national organisations. As access point and main focus of the study initiatives trying to implement alternative concepts of education have been chosen. Alternative education in this context refers to a wide range of concepts sharing the characteristic of representing educational approaches which are seen as an option besides the state concept of schooling. Common private schools are not seen as alternative schooling possibility because they refer to the same curriculum as state schools and differ only in their financial resources and possibilities to offer a higher standard of educational training by means of providing more classrooms for smaller groups of students and more teachers per student as well as additional offers like swimming and other sport classes. Their educational concept however stays the same.

The establishment of independent schools offering a different curriculum and pedagogical program has not been possible in Turkey until now and integration of concepts of alternative education into the national predefined schooling system is difficult. This has to be seen in the light of historical events preceding actual processes. The model of “Village Institutes” (Köy Enstitüleri) (cf. Karaomerlioğlu 1998 among others) which was carried out in between 1940 and 1954 as part of a rural development project is considered to be an early mode of alternative education in Turkey in some discussions about Turkish education because the concept of those institutions was to start education from a rural, work-centred program which included general education as well as practical lessons in agriculture and handcraft. Resentments against the institutes by people fearing that they would educate children in line with communist thoughts, a damning statement during the Cold War, forced the government to close the village institutes in the early 50s and instead regular primary schools were implemented in rural areas. To connect this part of the Turkish educational system with alternative education however is too limited and the concept has to be seen much more differentiated and in connection to historical facts of the period following World War II when economical development of rural areas was one of the main topics on Turkish political agenda. Even though there have been alternative political and ideological discussions spreading out from village institutes it can be agreed with Akdağ and Korkmaz that “[t]hey blatantly pursued the aim of spreading the principles of revolution of Republican Turkey via missionary teachers and became part of mainstream education project of Turkey during 1940ies.” (Akdağ and Korkmaz 2008: 172).



In connection to the broad movement of alternative education which accompanied the 68 movement on the other hand, a formation of different voices in the field of education started to occur in Turkey as part of a worldwide movement. This first attempt to get closer to alternative concepts of education however was not successful because of suppression of those movements by military interventions and a rigid government “this era was closed before any questioning over the institutions was initiated.” (Bumin 1998: 33 quoted in English in Akdağ and Korkmaz 2008: 172)

In fact, the history of implementation of alternative education in Turkey starts much later. There are no signs for a broad discussion about the topic as can be seen from the late translation of reference books and articles about alternative education into Turkish which didn't happen until the 1990s. In fact the first official discussion on alternative education in Turkey was organized by professors and students of universities in Istanbul in 2005. A symposium was arranged as discussion panel with international guests presenting different methods and schools in the scope of various models of alternative education like Montessori Education, Democratic Education, Summerhill Schools, Critical Pedagogy and alike. Those were discussed with people interested in alternative education from around Turkey. The event is seen as the spreading point of discussions and work on implementation of alternative concepts of education in Turkey. (ibid.: 174)

Until today however actors in this field exist in a limited number. Successful implementation of alternative concepts is a rare occurrence and has been possible only in the sector of pre-schooling in the metropolis. Besides a few Montessori pre-schools in Istanbul and Ankara being operated in lines with the guidelines of the Ministry of National Education there are no successes in implementing alternative schools officially. Nevertheless there are initiatives working on implementation of alternative schooling like a Waldorf initiative and a work group on democratic education. The Waldorf initiative organized a seminary which takes place in Istanbul, training teachers in line with Waldorf aspects in cooperation with German Waldorf teachers and planning to open a Waldorf kindergarten. Another initiative called “Another school is possible” (Başka Bir Okul Mümkün) which is working on democratic education is located in Istanbul as well and works on concepts of democratic education and the possibility to open a democratic school as long-term project. The Alternative Education Association (Alternatif Eğitim Derneği) which developed after the 2005 symposium and coordinates interest groups and arranges meetings in between people interested in alternative education can be seen as an umbrella organization and connection point of different actors in the field.

In addition to secular initiatives there are initiatives interested in implementing an educational concept which includes religious facades, too. Gaining access to those groups is difficult because of resentments in Turkish public against officially forbidden religious schooling which is seen as a try to infiltrate the secular system of the Turkish state by some parts of society. As the most important religious movement influencing schooling, the Fethullah Gulen network has to be mentioned here. The Turkish scholar and Islamic preacher Fethullah Gulen is supposed to influence schooling from an Islamic perspective and to build up a wide-scale religious alternative education network. Even though there are no official Gulen schools in Turkey, the movement originating there and runs schools in 80 countries. Its influence on many Turkish schools is obvious and a much discussed issue in Turkish society. (cf. Yavuz 1999)

Accordingly there are various actors from different interest groups trying to implement schooling which can be described as alternative to state concepts. Their interaction with state authorities and international actors involved in the field of educational politics in Turkey is the central focus of ongoing fieldwork conducted in Turkey in 2011-12. Besides political interaction in terms of governance another focal point of investigation is how concepts which can be seen as imported from international contexts are adjusted to the Turkish context. This can only be studied in connection with Montessori pedagogy because there are no other alternative concepts being implemented comprehensively until now. As has been stated above Montessori pre-schools in Turkey operate in the frame of the guidelines of the General Directorate of Pre-School Education of the Ministry of National Education. They are seen as an additional tool to improve state school curriculum instead of an alternative which dissociates itself from state educational politics. As mentioned in interviews school managers as well as people being active in the implementation movement of Montessori pedagogy mentioned repeatedly that the biggest advantage of Montessori has to be seen in its ideological independence and the possibility to combine Montessori methods with the ideological background of the national education system. This seems to be part of the reason why Montessori is the only method which succeeded in being implemented in line with the Turkish system.

For this reason the concept is not seen as a foreign educational method used in a new context but as an additional tool which can be used at the service of common local concepts. This can be seen in connection with the theoretical concepts of the political science discussions about "Policy Borrowing and Lending" (Steiner-Khamsi 2002, 2004, 2006, 2009) and Marshall Sahlins' theory on "Indigenization of Modernity" (Sahlins 1988, 1993, 1999, 2001; Kumoll 2007) out of social and cultural anthropology. In accordance with these concepts external influences will not be seen as part of a domination by western influences in connection with globalization but as an active adaptation of cultural external concepts into the own cultural context. As for the adaptation of Montessori pedagogy this seems to be a concept much more adequate than the idea of adoption of an external system into the own educational system for the reasons mentioned above.

The study is in the first stage of field investigation which takes place in cooperation with Turkish and international civil society organizations trying to implement alternative educational concepts in Turkey. Because of the urban and academic character of the phenomena Istanbul and Ankara will be the main spots of investigation. After field investigation a period of theoretical work and analysis of collected data will follow to be completed by a second stage of field investigation, completing the set of data. The outcome of data collection and analysis is expected to contribute to the closure of the research gap in scientific work on the educational system of Turkey, to answer the question about how international educational concepts are adapted to regional political systems of education and to how political centralized systems are influenced by civil society in the frame of establishment of broader governance networks. With this aim the study will not only search for existent networks influencing Turkish educational politics but analyze the outcome of those educational governance structures as well.

## **Educational Policy in Turkey – Change or Consistence of Centralized Educational Politics?**

The existence of various external actors trying to influence the centralized educational system of the Republic of Turkey can be confirmed consequently. In questioning the ability of those actors to influence the existent system and to implement themselves as factors participating in the change of the political landscape of the Turkish educational system there has to be drawn a clear line in between international actors and interest groups from civil society. The former have to be seen as influential in the classical hierarchical sense of political action as performed by influencing decision making about laws and guidelines in the educational sector. Civil society actors on the other hand try to gain influence from a local network concentrated on practical approaches. Nevertheless, as stressed by the governance perspective, interaction in between international organizations and local actors are an important influence factor and change the pyramidal appearance of political interaction into a complex circle of network interaction. As for the success of the Montessori approach there has to be stressed interaction with the international Montessori organisation “Association Montessori Internationale” (AMI) as well as growing pressure by regulations in connection with the accession negotiations with the European Union. The latter pushes educational politics to decentralize and open up to a more decentralized network structure. Regulations connected to the European Union position can be seen as a background pressure, influences exercised by AMI on the other hand are much more direct and visible on the local level by means of endeavours in the areas of implementation of a formalized training program of Montessori school teachers as well as in raising the number and quality of Montessori schools in Turkey.

As shown above successes are fixed to methods that fit into the national educational concept as well as to the sector of pre-primary education. This has to be seen in connection to the low access rate to pre-primary education caused by missing kindergarten schooling possibilities mentioned above. Montessori pre-schools don't get financial support by the state but operate in line with state guidelines and therefore contribute to fill the gap of missing school operation without additional costs for the state. For those reasons it has to be concluded that alternative education in the sense of an alternative to state concepts of schooling doesn't really exist and that influences from the local level are on their way to grow stronger but not successful to change Turkish educational politics yet. They even seem to be utopia without the interaction with international supporters and nationwide interest groups. This supports Akdağ and Korkmaz (2008) in saying that

“we may state that Turkey has a long way to go in terms of Alternative education. We understand that this process would become much easier if there is cooperation among our friends both inside and outside of Turkey. We do believe that any individual or institution that wants to come to Turkey in order to share their experiences and organize coordinated activities will immensely contribute to this newly shaping process.”

(Akdağ, Korkmaz 2008)

Whether this process will lead to a broader acceptance of influence from the sub-national level in the sense of educational governance and thereby contribute to the decentralization of Turkish educational politics or only reflects the change of the centre in favour of integration of fitting modes of education to serve the lack of pre-school offers in Turkey has to be seen in the following years. Independent of future developments what can be stated today is the formation of a complex network of different actors interested in taking influence on educational politics in Turkey.

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