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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### SCHOOL BUSSING IN PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY, UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION IN TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

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#### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand school bussing in primary and lower secondary, upper secondary education in Turkish Education System with its reasons and evaluate school bussing in primary and secondary education with different aspects, especially the development of school bussing in terms of years. The focus is on the development of school bussing after the changes on the duration of compulsory education. At this point, the role of school bussing on spreading compulsory education is important and numerical data show that school bussing made a major contribution to the process especially in and after the period of eight years and 12 years compulsory education. With the transition to 12 years compulsory education in the academic year 2012-2013, school bussing expanded and it will continue to expand possibly. At present, almost 900,000 of school age population are on the scope of school bussing. Finally, it can be asserted that school bussing is of great importance for Turkish Educational system and therefore, the determination and analysis of problem issues and finding constructive and effective solutions to problems is very important for the functioning of the school bussing in a more useful and healthy way.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Educational activities are conducted by The Ministry of National Education on a central level in the Republic of Turkey. The national education system aims to educate all citizens as individuals who are able to cope with the challenges of the information and technology era, are able to think critically, have developed problem-solving skills, have high sense of responsibility, are respectful for democratic values and are committed to the principles and reforms of Atatürk. Compulsory education is 12 years consisting of three stages including 4+4+4 years. Each level of education is made up of Pre-School, Primary and Lower Secondary, Upper Secondary and Higher Education. Primary and lower secondary, upper secondary schools are compulsory education organizations whose duty is to realize the aim of Turkish National Education. The fact that primary and lower secondary, upper secondary education is compulsory for all male and female citizens and it is free of charge in the State schools is stated clearly in the Constitution, Basic Law for National Education (Law No: 1739) and the Law for Primary Education and Training (Law No: 222). Compulsory education became 12 years in 2012. Three stages of education came into force First stage (from 1st to 4th grade), second stage (from 5th to 8th grade) and third

grade (from 9th to 12th grade). Compulsory education includes the education and training of children between ages of 6 and 18. Compulsory education is given in primary and lower secondary, upper secondary schools and the students who graduate from these schools are given a primary and lower secondary, upper secondary education diploma (Law No: 4306). The objective of primary and lower secondary, upper secondary is to ensure that every Turkish child acquires the basic knowledge, skills, behaviors and habits to become good citizens, is raised in line with the national moral concepts and to prepare them for life and further education parallel to his/her interests, talents and capabilities.

#### School Bussing

School Bussing aims to provide education for the children of school age living in less populated and sparsely settled areas. It aims to reduce the number of schools with combined classes and offer more qualified education and training services. students are bussed to central schools from their regions on a daily basis. The Ministry of National Education (MONE) meets the needs of transported students such as transportation, lunch, books and stationery (Mone, 2000; meb gov tr). School Bussing started as a pilot implementation in Kırklareli and Kocaeli provinces in the academic year 1989-1990 for the first time in Turkey and in addition to these provinces, Antalya, Balıkesir, Çankırı, Gaziantep, Konya, Çanakkale and Van

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provinces were added to school bussing in the academic year 1990-1991. The number of provinces included in school bussing increased to 57 in the academic year 1994-1995. With the transition to 8 years compulsory education in the academic year 1997-1998. School Bussing was expanded to 70 provinces by determining its principles and standards. School Bussing continues to expand since 1989 and especially with the transition to 12 years compulsory education in the academic year 2012-2013, school bussing will continue to expand. At this point, the role of school bussing on spreading compulsory education is important and numerical data show that school bussing made a major contribution to the process especially in and after the period of eight years and 12 years compulsory education. Development of the school bussing in terms of years were given below (Table 1).

primary education. With the start of continuous and compulsory education of eight years, it is discussed how students in small residential units will take the advantage of this practice. It is expensive to carry enough education and training services (school, teacher, material etc.) and efforts to reduce costs lower the quality of service. First of all, it is clear that primary schools can't be carried to each of that small settlements. As a result, in order to give a qualified primary education in small settlements, necessity of school bussing in primary education is obvious (Ari, 2002). The general directorate of primary education sorted reasons of school bussing in four main articles as providing equality of opportunity and increasing the quality in education and training, internal migrations, scattered settlements and the importance of school bussing.

**Table 1. Development of school bussing in terms of years**

| Academic Year | Number of Provinces | Number of Districts | Number of Bussed Schools | Number of Central Schools | Number of Bussed Students |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1989-1990     | 2                   | -                   | 12                       | 5                         | 305                       |
| 1990-1991     | 9                   | 35                  | 258                      | 78                        | 3.289                     |
| 1991-1992     | 29                  | 160                 | 1.094                    | 408                       | 18.256                    |
| 1992-1993     | 43                  | 325                 | 2.371                    | 938                       | 53.676                    |
| 1993-1994     | 56                  | 537                 | 4.416                    | 1.653                     | 84.263                    |
| 1994-1995     | 57                  | 493                 | 4.683                    | 1.630                     | 74.981                    |
| 1995-1996     | 62                  | 557                 | 5.994                    | 2.182                     | 95.554                    |
| 1996-1997     | 64                  | 576                 | 2.336                    | 7.502                     | 120.998                   |
| 1997-1998     | 72                  | 740                 | 18.213                   | 4.803                     | 281.833                   |
| 1998-1999     | 75                  | 810                 | 27.081                   | 5.697                     | 521.218                   |
| 1999-2000     | 75                  | 812                 | 27.994                   | 5.633                     | 635.041                   |
| 2000-2001     | 76                  | 791                 | 25.967                   | 5.249                     | 607.918                   |
| 2001-2002     | 78                  | 801                 | 27.665                   | 5.373                     | 636.508                   |
| 2002-2003     | 79                  | 814                 | 28.044                   | 5.424                     | 661.757                   |
| 2003-2004     | 79                  | 812                 | 28.493                   | 5.634                     | 642.133                   |
| 2004-2005     | 80                  | 809                 | 29.145                   | 6.337                     | 698.061                   |
| 2005-2006     | 80                  | 807                 | 30.383                   | 5.742                     | 667.537                   |
| 2006-2007     | 81                  | 805                 | 31.076                   | 5.843                     | 694.520                   |
| 2007-2008     | 81                  | 798                 | 31.874                   | 6.164                     | 692.369                   |
| 2008-2009     | 80                  | 802                 | 34.519                   | 5.851                     | 683.415                   |
| 2009-2010     | 80                  | 802                 | 32.504                   | 5.759                     | 667.641                   |
| 2010-2011     | 81                  | 805                 | 36.208                   | 5.852                     | 687.056                   |
| 2011-2012     | -                   | -                   | -                        | -                         | -                         |
| 2012-2013     | 81                  | -                   | 27.635                   | 7.037                     | 810.809                   |
| 2013-2014     | 81                  | -                   | 23.880                   | 10.551                    | 825.090                   |
| 2014-2015     | 81                  | -                   | 27.921                   | 10.748                    | 850.405                   |

Source: Ministry of National Education (MONE) General Directorate of Primary Education; MONE Quantitative data on National Education 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; MONE National Education statistics 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014, meb.gov.tr.

When the Table 1 is analyzed, it is seen that since the beginning of the school bussing in the 1989-1990 academic year, 305 primary education students in 2 provinces were bussed to 5 central schools from 12 settlements. In the academic year 1995-1996, the number of provinces included is 62 and the number of bussed students is 95.554. The number of bussed students doubled in the academic year 1998-1999 and became 521.218. The reason for that increase is the number of students who enrolled in primary and lower secondary education after the academic year 1997-1998 on which 8 years of compulsory education takes place. The number of bussed students became 810.809 in the academic year 2012-2013. The reason for that increase is the number of students who enrolled in upper secondary education after the academic year 2012-2013 on which 12 years of compulsory education takes place. and. In the academic year 2014-2015, 850.405 students benefited from the right of education in school bussing.

#### Reasons of School Bussing

The fact that small residential units in our country are too many and scattered caused not to get the desired success in

#### Providing Equality of Opportunity and Increasing Quality in Education and Training

The multiplicity of the scattered settlements due to Turkey's geographical, social and cultural reasons adversely affect the execution of education and training services in a healthy way. Building well-equipped schools and assigning teachers to these units not only increase costs but also reduce the quality of education and training. As schools were built in residential areas where the population was less without the necessary preliminary studies in the past, many schools were closed due to the shortage of students for practicing education and training. School bussing is more economic and functional than that kind of high-cost implementations. Students who come from different residential areas to central schools are able to get the opportunity to blend with their peers and to be educated on equal footing with them. Erpolat (1991) emphasize that school bussing has prevented the unnecessary construction of schools in small settlements and has provided a better upbringing to the students in an educational sense. The quality of education can't be increased to the desired level in schools

operating under capacity and schools with only one teacher. However united class system might disappear and teachers who care only one class instead of five might be more productive when students are carried to the proper central schools. Moreover, multiple (at least five) teachers in central schools can be provided to benefit each other's knowledge and experience. (Karakütük, 1996)

### Internal Migrations

Large migrations have started from rural areas to urban centers, especially for economic reasons, causes the number of students to decrease and the schools to serve under their capacity and even to closure of them. The fact that it is unable to take advantage of the teachers who work in the schools serving under capacity makes school bussing practice necessary.

### Scattered Settlements

There are approximately 35.000 villages throughout Turkey. Considering sub-villages, the number increases up to approximately 80.000. The majority of this scattered settlements are small and under-populated. To take educational services to these settlements not only requires many personnel but also causes too high costs.

### The Importance of School bussing in terms of Compulsory Education

School bussing is necessary for compulsory education into today's population and increasing the rate of schooling. School bussing is indispensable for enabling our children being in small settlements to benefit from right of education with better possibilities, increasing education services equably across the country, providing the equality of opportunity and possibility and increasing the quality.

### Advantages of School Bussing

School bussing has been useful in terms of many aspects especially education and training since the year which it started in. The first results of school bussing were stated by General Director of Primary Education below (Yangın, 1991):

- **Education-Training:** With this application, equality of educational opportunity was enabled, application of unified class was over, students had the opportunity of having education in normal and better primary education schools, lack of teacher was decreased, information exchange started between teachers, students being in settlements which had not secondary schools got the opportunity of secondary school, the secondary school attendance for girls increased, qualified education environment was prepared by directing resources such as teacher, investment and equipment.
- **Success of students:** There was an increase in the success of students.
- **Views of Manager, Teacher, Student and Parents:** Managers, teachers, students and parents are pleased with bussed primary education. Some parents in these settlements in which this application was carried out complain about their closed schools; some of them wanted

their villages to be included in the application.

- **The effect of social environment:** Because the students joined much more developed environment in terms of social and cultural aspects, there occurred positive developments with regard to behavior, clothing, cleanness and health. Furthermore, they got the opportunity of benefitting from sport, culture and health facilities in the centre.
- **Economical advantage:** Teachers included in the application in 256 primary schools were charged in other schools because of need; school and lodging construction were stopped in small settlements, a fund was not allocated for the costs of closed schools, these schools were able to be used as teacher lodging and Public Education Center; parents didn't have to send their children to the city center or county for education.

The advantages of school bussing are collected under three titles by the General Directorate of Primary Education:

#### A. In terms of education-training

- Because it was found that most of the students having education-training in unified classes could not keep up with reading and writing, they were taken to the body of school bussing in primary education and had education and training in separate classes. As a result of this, they learned reading and writing in a very short time and their knowledge, skill, and behaviour were developed.
- It was proved that there was a great increase in academic success of students included in school bussing and the rate of success was between 90% and 100%.
- Students learning Turkish well showed positive behaviour in using lesson instruments methodically.
- Teachers working in small settlements have problem in adapting to the environment and search for the solutions of going to the nearest settlement. Furthermore, in these settlements where combined class programme is implemented trainee teachers have difficulty in solving these problems, so they are unhappy because they can't take what they deserve. Because of these, teachers assigned to these settlements are searching for going away from here. Teachers working in city centre and county or central schools are able to compensate their social needs in better conditions, give lessons in equipped and independent schools and develop themselves professionally. Consequently, because teachers working central schools behave positively, they also act as a model for students.

#### B. Social and Cultural Aspects

- It was observed that those students, who have difficulty in getting used to a new environment, have overcome this problem in time, they got self-confidence and they contributed group activities.
- Students have chance to improve themselves by attending social and cultural activities.
- It was observed that the students who attended school bussing have positive improvement in attitudes of caring dressing, obeying etiquette.

### C. Economic Aspects

- It is necessary to give at least one form tutor to every village which attends school bussing program. 2009-2010 education period 32,504 places (village) were included school bussing programme and this means there is austerity on the same amount.
- When student cost is analysed, it is approximately same with school bussing cost and the cost of schools which have unified classes in villages. The cost of school bussing student is approximately %62 cheaper than a student studying in a school which has a dormitory.
- Students started to study in central schools via school bussing and by sending the materials in village schools to the central schools; there is a save up on the expense of materials and more students benefit from them.
- There is a save up on electric, water, heating, staff and reparation expenses of schools whose students will be carried to central schools.
- The ticket expenses of primary school inspectors will decrease and the time allocation for consultation and inspecting in central schools will increase.
- Devoting empty buildings to public institutions has helped the economy.
- There is no more need to construct new school buildings in villages and towns which have no schools and which are in the school bussing programme.
- Migration from town to city centre has been prevented via school bussing and even there are comebacks in some places.

School bussing has conveyed many problems besides its all positive sides. These problems prevent the system to work properly. It is very important to distinguish, analyse and find out positive and effective solutions to carry out the system properly. At present when thought the student population and the field where the school bussing in primary education is effective, it is understood better how important to solve the problems.

#### Problems Encountered in Bussed Primary Education

The findings of the studies related to the problems encountered in school bussing were summarized below. In the research done by Karakütük (1996), the most important problems concerning school bussing are as follows: A mess hall where students can eat meals is not available. No questions have been asked to the school management and no recommendations have been taken from them. A central school is not available concerning teachers and classrooms. The sum met by the government is not enough and the roads leading to the central school are in poor condition. According to the results of the research done by Altunsaray (1996), it has been observed that the students have interacted positively in terms of education; but it has been observed that these schools are physically inadequate and inefficient in terms of equipment. It has been observed that bussed students have nutrition problems. In the research done by Özkan (1997), the problems related with school bussing is that the central schools have insufficient physical capacity, there is lack of required teachers and personnel. There is a problem related to children's lunch and an increasing anxiety on traffic accidents as the drivers are not

trained. According to the findings of the research done by Büyükboyacı (1998), insufficiency of suitable places for lunch meals, insufficiency of resources provided by central government and bad quality of transportation vehicles are seen main problems.

When the findings of the research done by Receptoğlu (2006) were analyzed; according to the managers, teachers and students, insufficiency of school's laboratories, class materials, libraries, technology classes, sports salons, lunch meals and suitable place for lunch meals, necessary school personnel, social and cultural facilities and insufficient attendance of most of the students to social activities and sports facilities are seen as main problem areas. According to the managers, teachers, students and bus drivers, Difficulties faced in transportation because of deteriorated and blocked ways in winters, according to the students, absence of seat belts in transportation vehicles, bus driver's cigarette smoking and taking any kind of people to these vehicles except students and personnel and according to the bus drivers, absence of guide teacher or personnel who will control and take care of students in transportation vehicles are seen as a main problem areas.

According to the findings of the research done by Kabaş (2006), the administrators, the teachers and the parents think that there has been no problem at all regarding the topic that the students travel standing in the vehicles. As for the topic whether school bussing causes extra expenses for the parents or not; the administrators, the teachers and the parents think that they have no problem at all about that. The administrators think that they occasionally have problems regarding the topic that bad road conditions which cause difficulty in transporting in winter time and the difficulty of adaptation of the transporting students to their schools and friends. As for the common problems found out by the administrators, the teachers and the parents as well as the diagnosis are the difficulty of transporting students because of the bad road conditions in winter time and the increase in the problems of school administrations due to bussed primary education.

In the research done by Küçük (2010), it is stated that there are problems in transportation, catering, education, parent-school relations, and workload dimensions in varying degrees in bussed primary education. When findings of the research done by Boğa (2010) were evaluated; according to the leading people in the village, the villagers and the parents of the students; the lack of school in the village and that the duty of school to inform the environment is not done by the central schools causes social deficiency and the students can't participate in social and cultural activities. It is stated that especially in the bussed villages the participants were worried about bussed students and because of the bussed primary education; the public of the village had to move from the village to the centre. Most of the participants reported that they thought positive about the expectations of opening a school in the village. The participants reported that there are some problems in that the students have to travel without having seats in the bus and the driver's misbehaviors are bad examples for the students.

The findings of the research done by Turan (2011) can be summarized like that: The vehicles used for school bussing are found as on "average safe" by most of the teachers and the

principals who participated the research. The principals and the teachers who participated the research, largely have the opinion that the drivers can establish “a partly adequate” communication with the students. The principals and the teachers largely have the opinion that “rarely” a passenger is allowed to travel in the vehicles used for school bussing except students. According to most of the students, it happens “sometimes” The students largely have the opinion that the vehicles are late to the school because of “the students’ making them wait” and “the bad weather and road conditions” According to the research findings, there isn’t a dining hall or a place prepared for this purpose for the bussed students of the central schools. The principals who participated the research, largely state that, the meal given to the bussed students is inadequate. Research findings show that the principals and the students largely believe that the meal given to the bussed students is inadequate because of two reasons “similar kinds of meals” and “cold service of the meals”.

The principals and the teachers largely have the opinion that the bussed students mostly adapted to the school. According to most of the principals and the teachers, the bussed students are “partly” adopted by the central school students. There are students who claim that they are excluded by other students as they come from the village. Research findings show that the bussed students. Participation in extra- curricular activities is limited. The principals largely have the opinion that the parents of the bussed students. Communication with the school is inadequate. According to the research findings, it can be said that, compared to the bussed students, the central school students have a higher academic success.

## Conclusion

When the findings of the studies are evaluated, it is seen that some problems still continue in school bussing. It is seen the problems are widespread especially on bussing vehicles, bus drivers, road conditions and lunch meals. Determination and analysis of these problem issues and finding constructive and effective solutions to these problems is very important for the functioning of the school bussing in a more useful and healthy way. Because almost 900,000 of school age population are directly affected by school bussing and the problems encountered.

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