

**Education for Syrian Refugees: Problems Faced by Teachers in Turkey***Pelin TASKIN¹, Ozge ERDEMLI²**ARTICLE INFO****Article History:**

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Providing educational services for Syrian refugee children is a new fact of life in Turkey, and the teachers who work at public schools and temporary education centers encounter some difficulties. The main purpose of this paper is to describe the problems faced in the process of educating Syrian refugee children as well as the solutions to such difficulties recommended by the teachers. **Research Methods:** The study was carried out using qualitative research methods and the phenomenological model to investigate the problems faced in the process of educating the Syrian students'.

The purposive sampling method was used in order to identify the participants. Thereafter; the plan was to interview the participants consisting of nine teachers of Syrian students. Interview forms were designed and developed by the researchers and used in the study. The content analysis technique was used during the analysis of the data. The Nvivo 10 package program was used. **Findings:** In the study, the problems faced by the teachers were identified as a language barrier, cultural problems and discipline problems. While the teachers at the public schools appear to think that the students are on good terms with their friends, teachers and the school principal, the teachers at the temporary education centers seem to have a completely opposite view on the matter. Teachers state that they do not receive adequate support in the process of educating Syrian students and add that the students are provided with limited books and additional class support. Last, to solve these problems, the teachers recommend that the language barrier be overcome by teaching the Syrians the Turkish language, that materials and a curriculum for Turkish language education be developed, that the Syrian students be taught separately from the Turkish students, that the teachers be provided with in-service seminars, and that class populations be reduced. **Implications for Research and Practice:** Teaching so many refugees is a new phenomenon for Turkey. In order to properly overcome this issue, the MoNE must be in close contact with the teachers and educational institutions working in this process. Also, for the healthy functioning of this process, the need for support from both the general public and national and international organizations should not be ignored.

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Introduction

Migration, a phenomenon as old as the history of humanity, appears to be one of the major issues that has recently been the focus of worldwide discussion, particularly with the recent increases in global population movements. While some people immigrate to other countries voluntarily for a better life, others are forced to immigrate to other countries for extraordinary reasons such as war.

The phenomenon of migration was first discussed in the context of men and labor migration, then in the context of women after the 1980s, and in the context of children after the 2000s. Particularly, the increased number of refugee children in several countries has marked children as a new immigrant population (Topcuoglu, 2012). This situation has required many countries to take children into consideration in their immigration policies. Therefore, education policies for refugee children have also begun to be discussed.

Compared to other immigrant populations, refugee children are more vulnerable to serious problems related to malnourishment, diseases, physical injuries, brain damage, and sexual or physical abuse (Neugebauer, 2013). In this respect, access to education may be suggested to be critically important for refugee children. For, refugee children who do not benefit from the right to attend a school are at higher risk of abuse and ill treatment, demonstrate post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms more often, and are less likely to complete their psychological development (UNESCO, 2011). Also, crises experienced in the education of refugees lead to child labor and early marriage. Furthermore, young people who have missed out on the opportunity to be educated are at risk of being led into radical groups (Watkins & Zyck, 2014). Schools enable refugee children to normalize their lives and give them hope for the future (Beste, 2015). This being the case, in order for refugee children to have a better life, it is important to ensure their access to education and identify and solve the barriers to education before they begin their education process.

The conflict between the governing power and the dissidents has displaced many people from Syria to neighboring countries, European countries and countries in the Americas. According to UNHCR (2018) report there are 5,645,914 registered refugees as of 2018, 3,586,679 of whom are in Turkey. Facilitating their access to the right to education is probably the most important arrangement made for refugee children. Turkey has taken significant steps and offered all of these children of compulsory education age the opportunity to receive free education in public schools. However, instead of using the word "refugee", Turkey tends to call these people "temporary asylees" relying on the reservation in the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. After 2011 with Law 6458, Turkey granted "temporary protection" status to the Syrians (Uzun, 2015, 112).

Although the status of the Syrian asylum seekers seems to be important only for countries that are neighbors of Syria, the increased immigration movements, particularly as of 2015, also concern the European countries (Deutsche Welle, 2015). This is because several neighboring countries are regarded by some refugees as a transit point to Europe. Therefore, the problems faced regarding the Syrian refugees

must be addressed and solved on a global scale. The countries in Europe follow different policies on the education of the Syrian children and youth.

When the education policies implemented by Turkey for the Syrian children are considered, pursuant to article 22 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Turkey is a contracting party, Turkey is required to take necessary measures to ensure that all children, including refugee or asylum-seeking children in the country, benefit from all of the rights set forth in the Convention. Also, the Law on the Protection of Children stipulates that every child can benefit from protection, irrespective of their national origin. However, since there was no special regulation on the education of these children, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) published the Circular 2014/21 of September 23, 2014 to regulate the Educational and Learning Services for Foreigners. The following options are available in Turkey for the education of the Syrian children under temporary protection:

Camp education centers. In Turkey, the Disaster and Emergency Administration (AFAD) established a total of 26 camps/temporary accommodation centers in 10 provinces (General Directorate of Immigration Administration, 2016). All of the camps have education centers offering education from primary school through high school (Dillioglu, 2015). More than 90% of the Syrian children living in the camps receive education (UNICEF, 2014).

Public schools. According to the figures, most children living in the camps receive education while very few children living outside the camps receive education (Ozturk, 2015). Therefore, in order to fulfill its international obligations and provide the Syrian children living outside the camps with access to education, the MoNE published the Circular on “Educational and Learning Services for Foreigners” in September 2014. With this Circular, the Syrian children have had the opportunity to receive Turkish education in the public schools, under the MoNE, with a “foreigner identification document” and without the requirement of having a “residency permit”.

According to the regulation, the Syrian students have the right to receive education in the same class with the Turkish students. In these schools, the Turkish education curriculum is implemented for the Syrian students as for all students. The Syrian children do not go through a preparatory stage and are admitted to formal classes taught in Turkish as soon as they enroll. In contrast, in November 2016, the MoNE created the project, “Integration of the Syrian Students with the Turkish Education System” with the European Union for the Syrian students in Turkey to learn Turkish better. Under this project, teachers will be specifically employed to teach the Turkish language to the Syrian students (MoNE, 2016). A total of 36,655 Syrian students enrolled in the primary, middle and high schools in the public education system in Turkey in the 2014–2015 academic year (Human Rights Watch Report, 2015, 12).

Temporary education centers (TECs). TECs are those in and outside the camps established by the AFAD and offer primary and secondary education in Arabic by adhering to the Syrian curriculum for school aged Syrian children and youth (Emin, 2016). In TECs, non-formal educational courses in demand can also be opened by non-formal educational institutions.

In the present study, some information was also received from the principal and assistant principal of the first TEC opened to provide education to the Syrian students living outside the camps. According to the information provided by the school administrators, Turkish students receive education in the morning, and the Syrian students receive education in the afternoon in these schools. The Syrian curriculum approved by the Board of Education is implemented in these schools where six hours of education is provided. Syrian teachers work in these schools, and only the Turkish classes are taught by Turkish teachers. While the Turkish teachers are employed on a contractual basis by the MoNE, the Syrian teachers are found by the Turkish Religious Foundation, and the funding is provided by UNICEF. However, not all of the Syrians working in these schools have a teaching degree. Syrian nationals who practiced a profession before the war in Syria such as medicine, engineering and law teach in these schools. While co-education is implemented in the first four years in these schools, male and female students receive education separately in the subsequent years. Nonetheless, another study conducted in Istanbul suggests the opposite. In that study, researchers visited several schools where all current Syrian teachers were university graduates and an overwhelming majority of them (97.9%) were accredited teachers in Syria, with only a small group of individuals from other backgrounds, such as law (Aras & Yasun, 2016), which points to the fact that there is a lack of consistency in the education of the Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Private initiatives. Another alternative for the education of the Syrian children is private schools established with the help of philanthropists or non-governmental organizations (Dillioglu, 2015). Educational materials and school supplies are donated. In these private schools, a revised version of the Syrian curriculum (the curriculum eliminating the sections regarding Assad) is implemented and subjects of Science, Social Sciences, Mathematics and Turkish are taught (Milliyet, 2014).

As seen, there are various initiatives that have been taken by Turkey to provide the refugee children with access to education. Naturally, despite such initiatives, there are several challenges facing the Syrian children's education today. One of the major problems is ensuring children's access to education. According to a study conducted in Lebanon, most of the Syrian children cannot attend a school yet. The study suggests financial problems, i.e. poverty, as the primary barrier (Mayer, 2015). Turkey, now home to a considerable number of Syrian immigrant children, strives to create various opportunities both inside and outside the camps to overcome this issue. With Circular 2014/21, the Syrian children have been granted the right to enroll in public schools and thus access free education. Also, course books are provided by the MoNE free of charge to all Syrian students enrolled in a public school, which is an attempt to eliminate the financial difficulties constituting a major barrier to education.

Even in cases where the immigrant children's access to education has been achieved, there are yet several problems faced in the education process, to name but a few, language barrier, capacity issues, discrimination, bullying, sectarian tensions, child marriage, and school dropouts (Mayer, 2015). Although language barrier is the primary problem, lack of sufficient educational materials, concerns about safety, lack

of transportation fees, emotional trauma, and ill treatment at schools are among the other problems these students face (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015).

Although the concept of refugee is not a new term, it is impossible to find a universal solution to the problems of refugees and apply it across all situations and conditions leading to refugee status. However, it would be helpful to benefit from the past actions taken to improve the status of refugees while seeking a solution. There are valuable lessons to be learned from the activities of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) for the education of the refugees in Liberia and Sierra Leone between 1990 and 1991. Said program is a good example of a well-structured education program. The program may prove to be an important resource for Turkey in the education of Syrian refugees in respect of the attention given by the program to the selection and guidance of the teachers, effective management and the inclusion of messages and activities in the education program for adolescents and youth displaced due to this civil war (UNESCO, 2017).

The literature includes studies focusing on the process of educating the Syrian children living in Turkey. One of them found that the qualities of teachers at TECs were not deeply vetted by the MoNE and that refugee education might require additional skills for teachers in order to cope with student trauma and provide psychological support to students (Aras & Yasun, 2016, 7). However, no study has been conducted in Turkey like the present study focusing directly on the evaluation of the process from the teachers' perspective. The studies conducted in Turkey focused on the educational activities in the camps or compiled and evaluated the education policies for refugees in Turkey. The admission of Syrians into public schools outside the camps with the Circular 2014/21 has made it necessary to identify the problems experienced in the education process in the new situation.

Acting on this necessity, the objective of this research is to determine the difficulties faced by teachers working in public schools and TECs in Ankara in the process of education of Syrian students and to recommend solutions to such difficulties. Responses to the following questions will be sought in line with the overall objective of the research: According to the teachers' views:

- 1) What are the problems faced by teachers in the process of educating Syrian students?
- 2) How is the relationship between Syrian students and their friends, teachers and principals in the school?
- 3) What support is provided to teachers and students during the integration of the Syrian students within the school and their classes?
- 4) What are their recommendations for the solution to the problems faced during the process of educating Syrian students?

Method

Research Design

The study was carried out using qualitative research methods. A qualitative study is defined as a “research investigating the words and actions of the participants in a descriptive and expressive way to better describe the situations experienced by the participants” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, 3). Specifically, a phenomenological investigation examines the lived experiences of individuals as they relate to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2012). In other words, phenomenological studies investigate daily events from the perspective of the people experiencing them (Seah & Wilson, 2011). This study adopted the phenomenological model to investigate the problems faced in the process of educating Syrian students.

Participants

The purposive sampling method was used in order to identify the participants. Thereafter, interviews with the participants, consisting of nine teachers who teach Syrian students at public schools in Ankara, were planned. Both the teachers working in public schools and the teachers working in a TEC were interviewed to achieve maximum diversity as recommended by Meriam (2013). Five of the teachers work in a public school, and four of them work in a TEC. Of the teachers, seven are female, and two are male.

All of the teachers working in the public schools are primary school teachers, and their length of service varies between 9 and 16 years. All of the teachers working in the TEC teach the Turkish Language and Literature class. The teachers working in this school have yet to complete their first year in the profession and are employed on a contract basis by the MoNE. None of these teachers has attended a training or seminar provided with respect to the Syrian students under temporary protection.

Research Instruments and Procedures

Interview forms were designed and developed by the researchers and used in the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers working in the public schools. The participants from the TECs preferred the interviews to be conducted in the form of a focus group. In phenomenological investigations, it is important to provide participants with an environment that makes them feel comfortable (Ersoy, 2016). Glesne (2013) also suggests that group interviews are particularly appropriate for studies in which participants can express multiple perspectives on similar experiences such as the implementation of a specific policy or an educational program. Considering that all of the teachers from the TECs are a Turkish Language and Literature teacher, focus groups were thought likely to achieve a richer data set on the Turkish education of Syrian students. Therefore, in line with the preference of the participants, it was decided that a focus group interview would be conducted at this school. As a result, both the semi-structured interview and focus group methods were used to collect data.

In line with the information received from the MoNE, the principals of the public schools and the TECs where the Syrian students are educated were contacted by phone to identify the teachers with Syrian students in their class in order to schedule interviews. During the interviews, the participants were asked for their permission to record the audio of the session to avoid any data loss. The views of the participants who rejected audio recording were noted. Each interview lasted about 25-30 minutes. The focus group interview took 45 minutes.

Validity and Reliability

The semi-structured interview form prepared within the scope of the study has been presented to experts for content validity. Through the corrections and suggestions received from the experts, the interview form has been finalized and then the interviews have been carried out.

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the study, characteristics of participants of the research were clearly defined, and detailed information with data collection and data analysis were provided about processes as recommended by Yildirim and Simsek (2011). Also, the participants' views were directly quoted in order to maximize the reliability of the study.

Data Analysis

The content analysis technique was used during the analysis of the data. The Nvivo 10 package program was used. In this context, the audio recording was initially decoded. The transcribed and noted data were transferred fully to a computer program. The coded data was grouped under appropriate themes in line with the objectives of the research. Data analysis was performed by the two researchers collectively. The views directly quoted from the teachers are provided in a smaller font along with the code of the participant in parenthesis. Each participant was assigned a code (the teachers working in the public schools were assigned a number between 1 and 5, and the teachers working in the TEC between 6 and 9) and the letter F (female) or M (male) was added next to the code based on the gender of the participant.

Results

The Syrian students under temporary protection in Turkey have the option to receive off-camp education either in the public schools or in the TECs. These two options offered to the Syrian refugees are explored in line with the research questions. The findings were shaped around four themes explained under the respective headings.

The Views of the Participants on Difficulties Experienced in the Process of the Syrian Students' Education

Difficulties experienced by the teachers in the process of educating the Syrian students, as provided in Table 1, are grouped under three themes including language barriers, cultural problems and discipline problems.

Table 1

Difficulties Experienced by the Teachers in the Process of Educating Syrian Students

Themes	Representative Comments
Theme 1 <i>Language barriers</i>	They have learned how to read and write but have not been able to learn the language. That's why, they cannot understand what they read (3F). Two or three students speak Turkish well. We use those speaking Turkish as translators (6F). We mostly communicate through body language (9F). There are those who do not want to learn Turkish, those who use full efforts to learn Turkish, and also those who are not allowed by their families to learn Turkish (7F).
Theme 2 <i>Cultural problems</i>	They are more hesitant toward the male students and don't want to talk to them. They are on better terms with the girls (3F). When I first arrived, they would be saying salavat when the call to prayer was recited, which seemed very strange to me. They want to pray in the classroom and everywhere (8F). The gender factor is also important. I communicate better with the female students. Since I don't wear a headscarf, there are male students who will not look at my face at all. The small children ask me why I don't wear a headscarf. Some have even written warning letters to me (6F). Since it is more comfortable to communicate with the female students, they learn more easily, and boys find learning harder (9F).
Theme 3 <i>Discipline problems</i>	We have a lot of discipline problems. They were raised by teachers more inclined to violence. We just do with yelling, and that's why they don't listen to what we say (7F). We have discipline problems because different age groups are in the same classroom [. . .] so the older age group uses violence on the younger age group (6F).

Language barrier. According to the teachers, the primary problem experienced in the process of educating the Syrian children is the "language barrier". Under the language barrier, the most important difficulty was stated to be the lack of Turkish literacy. In schools implementing the Turkish curriculum, the Syrian students first learn how to read and write in Turkish. Some of the students learn how to read and write in Turkish, but according to teacher remarks, their proficiency in Turkish is not satisfactory; thus, they have difficulty understanding what they read and write. In other words, according to the teachers, these students copy and write a text/sentence they see, but do not know what it means (1M, 2M, 3F, 4F, 5F). Therefore, the teachers stated that they were teaching the Turkish students the Turkish curriculum at the same time as they were striving to teach the Syrian students how to read and write in Turkish. This may disrupt the harmony of the class as well as prevent the Syrian students from integrating with the rest of the class population. It may also lead to the teacher slowing down and falling behind the syllabus. The teachers also added that they didn't have the opportunity to teach other subjects to the Syrian students because of their poor level of Turkish. The teachers said that they could only teach them how to read and write and that these students had more difficulty when they moved into the regular program after having learned how to read and write (1M, 2M).

The teachers said that they were using the students with a higher level of Turkish abilities as translators, which is how they try to communicate with the class. According to what the teachers said, there are students willing to learn Turkish, but there are also those resisting the lessons. These students are particularly not allowed to learn Turkish by their families with the concerns that they would lose their culture.

Cultural problems. According to the teacher statements under this theme, one of the cultural problems is perceptions regarding gender. Female teachers said that they were able to communicate better with the female students due to the gender factor. The female teachers also said that the male students did not want to engage with them because of their gender. Among the participants, those women not wearing a headscarf said that some of the male students would not communicate with them. A teacher in a headscarf (8F) said that she was able to communicate comfortably with the male students, which may be because the students consider teachers wearing a headscarf close to their culture and religious beliefs. Additionally, the teachers stated that the female students were quite shy toward males.

Another cultural problem expressed by the teachers is the difference between the religious practices. The majority of the Turkish people are Muslim. However, secularism is the fundamental principle of the Turkish Education System. Therefore, no religious service is performed at schools. The Turkish teachers were surprised to see that the students stood up to pray during a class when the call to prayer is recited. Such cultural problems regarding religious practices adversely affects the course of the classes in the education process because students wish to perform their religious service instead of conducting the class during prayer times. Also, this cultural difference affects the view the students have of the teachers. For example, one teacher stated that the students asked her why she was not wearing a headscarf and sent her warning letters (6F).

Discipline problems. The teachers stated that they experienced discipline problems. The most important discipline problem regarding the students is the use of violence. Particularly, the participant teachers observe that the older children use violence on the younger children. According to the teachers, the reason for this discipline problem is that students from different age groups are in the same classroom.

Another discipline problem expressed by the teachers relates to negative behavior and conduct. The participants stated that the Syrian students listened to what the Syrian teachers told them to do but did not heed what the Turkish teachers told them. According to the participants, the reason for this is the frequent use of physical punishment by the Syrian teachers in classroom management. Therefore, the students behave better in the Syrian teachers' classes out of fear.

Views of the Participants Regarding the Relationship between the Syrian Students, and Their Friends, Teachers and Principals in the School

The views of the participants regarding the relationship of the Syrian students with each other, Turkish students, teachers and school administration are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2*Relationship of the Syrian Students with Each Other, Turkish Students, Teachers and School Administration*

<i>Communication Groups</i>	<i>School Type</i>	<i>Communication Status</i>	<i>Representative Comments</i>
With each other	Public schools	Well	The Syrian students treat each other well and have a strong communication and dialog among themselves during intermissions and lunch breaks (2M).
	TECs	Based on violence	Their relationship among themselves is based on violence. Even their jokes contain some fight. They are very cruel to each other (8F).
With Turkish students	Public schools	Well	The Syrian students communicate very well with the Turkish students [. . .] Even if they cannot speak Turkish, children somehow understand each other (4F).
	TECs	Based on violence	The Syrian and Turkish students don't like each other (6F). Last week, the Turkish students and the Syrian students got into an armed fight (9F).
With teachers	Public schools	Respectful	They are very respectful to teachers and me. They ask for permission for everything (for bathroom and other needs) (2M).
	TECs	Disrespectful	They are disrespectful of and disregardful toward Turkish teachers.
With school administration	Public schools	Respectful	They are as respectful to the principal as the other students are (2M).
	TECs	Respectful	The relationship of the Syrian students with the school administration is unproblematic and respectful.
School-family relationship	Public schools	Very little communication	The parents speak very little Turkish. Therefore, I can't directly communicate with the family. The family has Turkish neighbors who have students attending this school, and I try to communicate with them through these neighbors (4F).
	TECs	No communication	We have never established communication with their families (6F, 7F, 8F, 9F).

The teachers from the public schools stated that the students were on good terms with both each other (1M, 2M, 3F, 5F) and the Turkish students (1M, 2M, 3F, 4F). The teachers in the TECs stated that the Syrian students' relationship with each other was based on violence. The students in these centers receive education separately from the

Turkish students, and therefore see the Turkish students only at the beginning and end of school. However, according to what the teachers said, even during such short encounters, the Turkish students and the Syrian students fight with each other. As seen, while the relationship of the Syrian students with each other and Turkish students is positive in the public schools, that in the TECs is based on violence. The reason for this may be the very low number of Syrian students in public schools versus the high number thereof in TECs. The Syrian students display a reserved attitude in public schools because of their low number.

When the relationship of the Syrian students with the teachers and the school administration is examined, the teachers from the public schools state that they are highly respectful toward both the teachers and the school administration (1M, 2M, 3F, 4F, 5F). However, the teachers from the TECs state that the Syrian students are disrespectful and disregarding toward them (6F, 7F, 8F, 9F). The participants attribute the reason for this situation, as mentioned above, as being that the relationship between the Syrian teachers and students was based on violence and punishment.

All of the teachers stated that the relationship of the families of the Syrian students with the teachers and the school administration in the public schools was very limited because the families could not speak Turkish (1M, 2M, 3F, 4F, 5F). However, the teachers try to communicate with the Syrian families through the families' Turkish-speaking relatives or neighbors (1M, 3F, 4F, 5F), which shows that the school-family relationship is achieved through the individual efforts of the teachers. The Turkish teachers in the TECs state that they are not able to communicate with the families of the Syrian students because teachers do not speak Arabic (6F, 7F, 8F, 9F).

The Views of the Participants Regarding the Support provided to Teachers and Students during the Integration of the Syrian Students within the School and Classes

The views of the participants regarding the support provided to teachers and students during the integration of the Syrian students with the school and classes are summarized in Table 3.

The support provided to the Syrian students in the education process is explored in two dimensions including the support provided to the teachers and the support provided to the students. It should be noted that the Turkish teachers both in the public schools and the TECs are funded by the MoNE. The Syrian teachers working in the TECs are funded by UNICEF. The teachers in the public schools stated that they received support from neither the school administration nor the non-governmental organizations.

They experienced difficulties due to the lack of adequate support particularly for language learning, adequate school infrastructure (such as lack of Internet connection and counseling services), and adequate school materials for language learning. Non-governmental organizations provide various support to the teachers in the TECs. For example, UNICEF provided cards for Turkish language education to the teachers for use during the classes (7F, 9F). Also, Yunus Emre Institute sent books to the teachers for Turkish language education (6F, 7F, 8F, 9F).

Table 3

The Support Provided to the Syrian Students in the Education Process

	<i>Supporter</i>	<i>School Type</i>	<i>Support</i>
Support provided to teachers	MoNE	Public Schools	Funding of the Turkish teachers
		TECs	Funding of the Turkish teachers
	School Administration	Public Schools	-
		TECs	-
	Non-Governmental Organizations	Public Schools	-
		TECs	Funding of the Syrian teachers (UNICEF), language cards (UNICEF) and Books for Turkish language education (Yunus Emre Institute)
Support provided to Syrian students	MoNE	Public Schools	Books
		TECs	-
	School Administration	Public Schools	Support education
		TECs	-
	Non-Governmental Organizations	Public Schools	-
		TECs	Books School supply expenses (UNICEF)

As for the support provided to the Syrian students in their education process, the Syrian students receive books provided by the MoNE free of charge to all students. The teachers said that there was no counseling service available for even the Syrian students who had fled from the war. The teachers stated that the school administration directed teachers whose schedule was free to provide support education to those students in one-on-one Turkish language learning sessions; in other words, the only support the school administration provided was for Turkish language learning. Also, the teachers provided reading books to the Syrian students to learn Turkish. In the TECs, on the other hand, the students' books and school expenses are paid by the non-governmental organizations. The Turkish teachers in the TECs use different books, materials and colored drawings to improve the Syrian students' engagement in their classes (6F, 8F, 9F). The teachers motivate the students with trinkets and have them listen to Turkish children's songs (6F, 7F). One of the participant teachers (8F) states, "[...] I also use creative drama techniques in the class".

The Recommendations of the Participants for Solutions to the Problems Faced in the Syrian Students' Education

The teachers from the public schools provided some recommendations for solutions to the problems faced in the Syrian students' education. These recommendations are categorized by theme and presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Recommended Solutions to the Problems Faced in the Syrian Students' Education

	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Representative Comments</i>
Theme 1:	<i>Turkish language education for Syrians</i>	The students definitely need to learn Turkish because they don't understand what is meant even if they can read. The other problems cannot be solved without Turkish (4F).
Theme 2:	<i>Preparation of materials and a curriculum for Turkish education</i>	A formal Turkish Language curriculum should be developed as we do not have one (6F). The Turkish study book currently in use is inadequate and intended for adults. Appropriate study books must be prepared for these children [. . .] (8F).
Theme 3:	<i>Arrangement of separate classes from Turks</i>	Either a separate classroom must be created for these students, or they must attend separate schools (1M). Syrian students must be taught in an environment where there are no Turkish students (3F).
Theme 4:	<i>Seminars for Teachers</i>	We (Turkish teachers) must also be provided with seminars/trainings (7F, 8F).
Theme 5:	<i>Reduced class population</i>	The class populations may be reduced. There are at least 40 students in classes (8F, 9F).
Theme 6:	<i>Other views</i>	Groups can be arranged based on age (6F). They (Syrians) must be taught by teachers who speak their language (2M).

As seen in Table 4, teachers first said that the Syrian students should definitely be taught the Turkish language, and then should be placed in the same class environment with the Turkish students. Secondly, the teachers pointed to the material and curriculum problems regarding Turkish language teaching and stressed that a special curriculum and materials for use in classes should be developed for Turkish teaching. The third recommendation by the teachers is that separate classrooms must be created for the Syrian students in the schools where they are taught according to a program specifically designed for them.

Teachers also seemed to think that they should definitely be provided with trainings and seminars on Turkish language education as a second language (6F, 7F). The teachers recommended that the class population should be decreased because there were at least 40 students in the current classes (8F, 9F). In addition to the above recommendations, it was recommended that the Syrian students be taught by Arabic speaking teachers (2M), and that the Syrian students be placed in classes based on their age and not on their academic levels (6F).

Discussion and Conclusion

This research aims to identify the difficulties faced by the teachers working in the public schools and TECs in the process of educating Syrian students. The primary difficulty faced by the teachers in the education process was identified to be the language barrier. Hence, many studies have identified the Syrian students' lack of language skills to be a major problem in the education process (Human Rights Watch Report, 2015; Bilgi University Report 2015; Dincer et al, 2013; Bircan & Sunata, 2015, 235; Nayir, 2017). Therefore, placing the Syrian students in formal education classes regardless of their Turkish language skills reflects adversely on the education process. Instead, the students may first be placed in classes created as preparatory classes based on their Turkish language levels as in Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. After achieving proficiency in the Turkish language to a satisfactory level degree, the students may then be placed in formal education classes. Such practices would enable the Syrian students to better comprehend the subjects taught in the other subjects. Hence, the teachers who participated in the research stated that the Syrian students should first be taught the Turkish language as the solution to the difficulties faced in their education. Besides, it may be useful to employ translators at schools educating Syrian students to overcome the language barrier.

Another difficulty faced in the process of the education of these students was said to be the cultural problem. Differences between the Turkish and Syrian education systems, and the cultural structures, such as the fact that girls and boys receive education separately in Syria and that the Syrian families want their girls to wear a burqa in school, were noted in previous studies (Nielsen & Grey, 2013; UNICEF, 2014) to be among the cultural and political barriers to education for Syrian students. However, according to the findings of the present study, the differences between the education systems cause the Turkish teachers to experience a cultural conflict. The differences between the Turkish and Syrian cultures therefore impact the education process adversely. In order for the Syrian and Turkish students and teachers to learn about each other's culture, cultural mediators may be employed in schools as in Italy, and integrative activities may be organized in schools with the help of such experts.

As far as the relationships of the Syrian students in the school are concerned, the students in the public schools appear to be on good terms with each other, their classmates and the teachers. However, those in the TECs appear to be on good terms with neither each other nor the teachers. In that case, it may be suggested that teaching the Syrian students separately from

the Turkish students causes them to become more isolated from society while continuing in their old habits, rather than helping them adapt to society. Hence, Krakow (2016) criticizes teaching refugees separately from their German peers in Germany and suggests that the refugees could learn the language and culture faster, have a stronger belief that they are wanted by society, and adapt to society more quickly if they were taught together with the Germans. Therefore, it may be more helpful if the Syrian students are taught together with the Turkish students for them to better adapt to Turkish society.

It is very important that teachers receive support to enable the Syrian students to adapt to the school and classes. However, during the interviews, the teachers working in the public schools stated that they received support from neither the school nor the MoNE nor any non-governmental organization. Teachers in the TECS are provided with various support by non-governmental organizations for language teaching (language cards, etc.); however, according to the teachers, such support is insufficient. The study conducted by Aras and Yasun (2016) also revealed that the teachers lacked qualifications particularly for teaching Turkish to non-native speakers. The teachers stated that it would be helpful if the Turkish Language and Literature teachers teaching the Syrian students were provided with seminars on how to teach Turkish to non-native speakers. This is corroborated by another study that stated that the Turkish teachers needed professional development and support to work with the Syrian students (Cinkir, 2015, 53). Therefore, as expressed by the participants, developing a curriculum for Turkish language education and preparing and sharing appropriate books and materials with teachers would contribute to the improvement of the education process. Another study conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council (2013; as cited by Abu-Amsha, 2014, 33) also revealed that the Lebanese teachers did not receive any support for the education of Syrian students. Whereas it will be helpful if the teachers teaching the Syrian students receive training on psychological support and protection, special education and child-focused pedagogic practices (World Bank 2013b; as cited by Abu-Amsha, 2014, 33). Therefore, it is important to provide support to teachers in order to ensure a quality educational experience for all students.

When the support provided to the students was examined, the students in public schools were provided with free course books by the MoNE, and the school administration in these schools provides support education to the students for Turkish language learning. However, according to the teachers, the Syrian students attending public schools do not receive adequate support. For example, the teachers stated that there were no counseling services

available for the Syrian students who had fled from the war. Bircan and Sunata (2015, 235) stressed the importance of the matter in their research by stating, “the needs of Syrian child refugees in psychological support are still at issue.” Book and school supply expenses of the students in TECs are paid by non-governmental organizations.

Turkish language teaching of is at the top of the list of the recommendations of the teachers to solve the problems faced in the process of educating Syrian students as, according to the participants, reading and writing cannot be effectively achieved because of the students’ lack of Turkish language skills. However, education provided to the Syrians should not be regarded solely in terms of teaching them how to read and write because, as Matthews (2008, 42) said, “literacy is critically important, but schools are not simply literacy delivering machines.” Learning environments and areas must be created at schools where all students can participate, and efforts must be made to enhance the students’ engagement in the education process and their intercommunication and friendships.

In conclusion, the steps taken by Turkey for the education of the Syrian children arriving in the country are crucially important for the future lives of these children. Naturally, teaching so many refugees is a new phenomenon for Turkey. In order to properly overcome this issue, the MoNE must be in close contact with the teachers and educational institutions working in this process. Also, in order to ensure healthy functioning of this process, the need for support from both the general public and the national and international organizations should not be ignored.

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Suriyeli Öğrencilerin Eğitimi: Türkiye'de Öğretmenlerin Karşılaştığı Sorunlar

Atıf:

- Taskin, P., & Erdemli, O. (2018). Education for syrian refugees: problems faced by teachers in turkey. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 75, 155-178, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2018.75.9

Özet

Problem Durumu: İnsanlık tarihi kadar eski bir olgu olan göç konusunun özellikle küresel olarak artan nüfus hareketliliği ile son zamanlarda tartışılan en önemli konulardan biri olduğu görülmektedir. İnsanlar daha iyi bir yaşam elde etmek için gönüllü olarak başka ülkelere göç edebileceği gibi, savaş gibi olağanüstü sebeplerden dolayı zorunlu olarak da başka ülkelere göç edebilmektedir.

Göç olgusu öncelikle erkekler ve emek göçü bağlamında tartışılırken, 1980'lerden sonra kadınlar, 2000'lerde ise çocuklar bağlamında tartışılmaya başlanmıştır. Özellikle birçok ülkede mülteci çocuk nüfusunda yaşanan artışlar, yeni bir göçmen grup olarak çocukları ortaya çıkarmıştır (Topçuoğlu, 2012). Bu durum ise ülkelerin göçmen politikalarında çocukları dikkate almasını gerekli kılmıştır. Dolayısıyla göçmen çocuklara yönelik eğitim politikaları da tartışılmaya başlanmıştır.

Diğer göçmenlerle karşılaştırıldığında, mülteci çocukların yetersiz beslenme, hastalık, fiziksel yaralanmalar, beyin hasarı ve cinsel veya fiziksel taciz ile ilişkili ciddi problemlere sahip olma olasılığı daha yüksektir (Neugebauer, 2013). Bu açıdan eğitime erişimin mülteci çocuklar için kritik bir öneme sahip olduğu söylenebilir. Çünkü okula gitme hakkından faydalanamayan mülteci çocuklar; daha fazla istismar ve kötü muamele riski altında bulunmakta, travma sonrası stres bozukluğu semptomlarını daha fazla göstermekte ve fiziksel ve psikolojik gelişimlerini tamamlamayı başaramamaktadırlar (UNESCO, 2011). Ayrıca mültecilerin eğitiminde yaşanan krizler çocuk işçiliğine ve erken evliliğe neden olmaktadır. Eğitim fırsatını kaybeden gençlerin radikal gruplara sürüklenme riski de doğmaktadır (Watkins & Zyc, 2014). O halde mülteci çocukların eğitime erişiminin sağlanması ve bu çocukların eğitim sürecini engelleyen sebeplerin tespit edilerek çözülmesi onların iyi bir hayata sahip olması açısından önemlidir.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu araştırmanın amacı, Ankara ilinde yasal olarak kayıtlı bulunan Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitim gördüğü devlet okullarında ve geçici eğitim merkezlerinde görev yapan öğretmenlerin, geçici koruma kapsamındaki Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde karşılaştıkları güçlükleri tespit etmek ve çözüm önerileri getirmektir.

Araştırmanın bu genel amacı doğrultusunda aşağıdaki sorulara yanıt aranacaktır: Öğretmen görüşlerine göre;

- 1) Geçici koruma kapsamındaki Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitimi sürecinde yaşanan sorunlar nelerdir?
- 2) Geçici koruma kapsamındaki Suriyeli öğrencilerin okul ortamındaki ilişkileri nasıldır?
- 3) Geçici koruma kapsamındaki Suriyeli öğrencilerin okula ve derslere uyumları sürecinde öğretmenlere ve öğrencilere sağlanan destekler nelerdir?
- 4) Geçici koruma kapsamındaki Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitimleri sürecinde karşılaşılan sorunların çözümüne ilişkin öneriler nelerdir?

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Bu çalışma nitel araştırma modeli benimsenerek yapılmıştır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma desenlerinden fenomenoloji deseni kullanılmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında hem devlet okulunda hem de geçici eğitim merkezinde görev yapan öğretmenlerle görüşme yapılmıştır. Çalışma grubunun belirlenmesinde amaçlı örnekleme tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. Bu kapsamda sınıfında Suriyeli öğrenci bulunan 9 öğretmen çalışmaya dâhil edilmiştir. Öğretmenlerin beşi devlet okulunda, dördü geçici eğitim merkezinde görev yapmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin yedisi kadın, ikisi erkektir. Eğitim durumu açısından ise öğretmenlerin altısı lisans, üçü yüksek lisans mezunudur. Devlet okullarında görev yapan öğretmenlerin hepsi sınıf öğretmenidir ve kıdemleri 9 yıl ile 16 yıl arasında değişmektedir. Bu öğretmenlerden hiçbiri daha önce geçici koruma kapsamındaki Suriyeli öğrencilerle ilgili herhangi bir eğitime ya da seminere katılmamıştır. Geçici eğitim merkezinde görev yapan öğretmenlerin hepsi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı öğretmenidir. Bu okullarda görev yapan öğretmenler mesleklerinde henüz bir yıllarını doldurmamış ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB)

tarafından sözleşmeli öğretmen statüsünde istihdam edilmektedir. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin ilk görev yerleri bu okuldur. Öğretmenler benzer şekilde daha önce geçici koruma kapsamındaki Suriyeli öğrencilerle ilgili herhangi bir eğitime ya da seminere katılmamıştır.

Bu çalışmada veriler öğretmenlerle yapılan görüşmeler aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmada iki farklı görüşme tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. Devlet okullarında görev yapan öğretmenlerle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme, geçici eğitim merkezinde görev yapan öğretmenlerle ise odak grup görüşmesi yapılmıştır. Araştırmacılar tarafından yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu geliştirilerek görüşmeler bu doğrultuda yapılmıştır. Her bir görüşme yaklaşık 25-30 dakika sürmüştür. Odak grup görüşmesi ise 45 dakika sürmüştür. Katılımcılardan toplanan veriler içerik analizi tekniği ile analiz edilmiş ve Nvivo 10 Paket Programından yararlanılmıştır. Veri analizi iki araştırmacı tarafından beraber yapılmıştır. Öğretmenlerden doğrudan alıntı yapılan görüşler küçük puntuyla aktarılmış ve katılımcının kodu parantez içerisinde sunulmuştur. Katılımcılara kod verilirken sırayla kendilerine numara verilmiş (devlet okullarında görev yapan öğretmenlere 1-5 arasında, geçici eğitim merkezinde görev yapan öğretmenlere 6-9 arasında numara verilmiştir) ve numaranın yanına cinsiyetine göre F (female) veya M (male) harfi eklenmiştir.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Katılımcıların Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitimi sürecinde karşılaştıkları sorunlara ilişkin görüşleri “dil bariyeri”, “kültürel problemler” ve “disiplin problemleri” olarak üç tema altında toplanmıştır. Öğretmenlerin görüşlerine göre Suriyeli çocukların eğitimi sürecinde yaşanan birincil sorun “dil bariyeri”dir.

Geçici koruma kapsamındaki Suriyeli öğrencilerin okul ortamındaki ilişkileri Suriyeli öğrencilerin birbirleriyle, Türk öğrencilerle, öğretmenlerle ve okul yönetimi ile ilişkileri şeklinde dört ana tema altında değerlendirilmiştir. Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde sağlanan destekler, “öğretmenlere sağlanan destekler” ve “öğrencilere sağlanan destekler” olmak üzere iki boyutta incelenmiştir.

Devlet okullarındaki öğretmenler, Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde karşılaştığı sorunlara çözüm önerileri getirmiştir. İlk olarak öğretmenler Suriyeli öğrencilere mutlaka Türkçe öğretilmesi daha sonra Türk öğrencilerle birlikte sınıf ortamına alınması gerektiğini belirtmişlerdir. İkinci olarak, öğretmenler Türk dili öğretimi ile ilgili materyal ve müfredat sorunlarına dikkat çekmiş ve Türkçe öğretimi için özel bir müfredat ve derslerde kullanılacak materyallerin geliştirilmesi gerektiğini vurgulamışlardır. Öğretmenlerin üçüncü önerisi, Suriyeli öğrenciler için okullarda ayrı sınıfların oluşturulması ve bu öğrenciler için özel olarak hazırlanmış bir programa göre eğitim verilmesidir.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri: Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde karşılaştıkları güçlükleri belirlemeyi amaçlayan bu çalışmada, öğretmenlerin eğitim sürecinde birincil güçlük olarak dil problemi ile karşılaştıkları tespit edilmiştir. Nitekim yapılan birçok çalışmada (Human Rights Watch Raporu, 2015; Bilgi Üniversitesi Raporu 2015; Dinçer vd., 2013; Bircan & Sunata, 2015, 235; Nayır, 2017) da Suriyeli öğrencilerin dil bilmemelerinin eğitim sürecinde önemli bir problem olduğu saptanmıştır.

Dil probleminin yanı sıra öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde yaşanan diğer bir önemli güçlük kültürel problem olarak belirlenmiştir. Suriye’de kız ve erkeklerin ayrı ayrı eğitim görmesi, Suriyeli ailelerin kızlarının okulda çarşaf giymelerini istemeleri ya da okula devam etmek yerine evlenmelerini tercih etmeleri gibi Türkiye ve Suriye’nin eğitim sistemi ve kültürel yapısındaki farklılıklar önceki çalışmalarda (Nielsen and Grey, 2013; UNICEF 2014) Suriyeli öğrencilerin eğitime erişmelerinin önünde kültürel ve politik engeller olarak algılanmaktaydı. Ancak bu çalışmanın bulgularına göre, eğitim sistemlerindeki farklılıklar Türk öğretmenlerin kültürel çatışma yaşamasına yol açmaktadır. Bu nedenle Türk ve Suriye kültürü arasındaki farklılıklar eğitim sürecini olumsuz etkilemektedir. Suriyeli ve Türk öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin birbirlerinin kültürlerini tanıyabilmeleri için, İtalya’da olduğu gibi okullarda cultural mediators istihdam edilebilir; bu uzmanların da yardımıyla okullarda kaynaştırıcı etkinlikler düzenlenebilir. Atanan bu mediator’lar sayesinde Arapça bilmeyen Türk öğretmenler ile Türkçe bilmeyen Suriyeli aileler arasında iletişim kurulabilir ve böylelikle Suriyeli öğrencilerin akademik başarıları artabilir.

Suriyeli öğrencilerin okul ortamındaki ilişkilerine yönelik öğretmen görüşleri değerlendirildiğinde, devlet okullarında öğrencilerin hem birbirleriyle, hem sınıf arkadaşlarıyla hem de öğretmenleriyle ilişkilerinin iyi olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ancak geçici eğitim merkezinde öğrencilerin hem birbirleriyle hem de öğretmenleriyle ilişkilerinin pek iyi olmadığı tespit edilmiştir. O halde Suriyeli öğrencilerin Türk öğrencilerden ayrı bir şekilde öğrenim görmelerinin onların topluma uyum sağlamaktan ziyade toplumdan daha fazla izole olmalarına ve eski alışkanlıklarını devam ettirmelerine sebep olduğu söylenebilir.

Suriyeli öğrencilerin okula ve derslere uyumlarını sağlamak için öğretmenlerin destek görmeleri oldukça önemlidir. Ancak yapılan görüşmelerde, devlet okullarında görev yapan öğretmenler ne okul yönetiminden ne de MEB ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarından bir destek gördüklerini belirtmişlerdir. Geçici eğitim merkezlerinde görev yapan öğretmenlere, dil öğretimi için sivil toplum kuruluşları tarafından çeşitli destek sağlanmaktadır (dil kartları vb.). Ancak, öğretmenlere göre, bu destek yeterli değildir. Bu kapsamda Suriyeli öğrencilere eğitim verecek Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı öğretmenlerine yabancılara Türkçe öğretimi konusunda seminer verilmesinin faydalı olacağı katılımcı öğretmenler tarafından dile getirilmiştir.

Sonuç olarak, Suriyeliler için açık kapı politikasını benimseyen Türkiye’nin, ülkeye gelen Suriyeli çocukların eğitime erişimi için attığı adımlar bu çocukların gelecek yaşamları için hayati önem taşımaktadır. Tabi ki Türkiye için bu kadar çok sayıda mülteciye eğitim vermek yeni bir meseledir. Bu meselenin hakkıyla üstesinden gelebilmek için bu süreçte görev alan öğretmenler ve eğitim kurumlarıyla MEB yakın ilişki içinde olmalıdır. Ayrıca sürecin sağlıklı bir şekilde işleyişi için hem kamuoyunun hem de ulusal ve uluslararası kuruluşların desteğine ihtiyaç duyulduğu göz ardı edilmemelidir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Suriyeli öğrenciler, eğitim zorlukları, göçmenlerin eğitim hakkı.

