CHAPTER 6

Education and Changing Lives

Introduction

These women's educational experiences can offer us ample material with which to explore the constraints impacted on their capabilities and agency, as well as to find out how schooling and education, as a foundational capacity according to Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000), enabled the development of further capabilities and sufficient agency for the women to live lives that they have reason to value. Therefore, this section, through the women's voices, presents the ways education has been a transformative space in providing them with real opportunities to develop their capacities for choosing and enacting valued ways of being and doing. It also draws attention to how education can enact certain gender norms, which reproduce gender inequalities for women and put them in a disadvantaged position in comparison to men. The women's narrations are organised around two themes: The first part looks into the women's perception of education as an intellectual capability, and the second looks into how education processes (dis)empowered women in a number of ways.

The Women's Perception of Education

A persistent factor common to all three generations was that every woman believed education was important to expand and secure their range of physical, social, economic and intellectual capability sets and strengthen their agency, particularly in making strategic life choices.

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The schooling experiences of the three women of the Republican generation took place between 1932 and 1948 at a time when the country had the lowest literacy rate. The schooling rate of girls was low and few women were able to benefit from the opportunity of entering primary school (although primary school was compulsory) under the control of patriarchal power. Access to education after primary school was even more difficult due to poverty, the inadequate number of secondary and high schools across the country and the unaffordable cost of schooling. Considering the given context, it was unusual that these three participants went to school and furthered their education at fully funded village institutes. For them, education was the only pathway towards having more freedom and getting a qualification to gain an occupational skill so that they could work, gain economic independence, and be freed from poverty as well as the influence of gendered and rigid family norms. At the same time, they had little hope of furthering their education after primary school due to poverty:

> I wanted to further my education so much, just to be able to get a job and look after my mother and sisters and release them from the oppression of my stepfather (…) and to look after them (Arzu, G1).

> Studying was important for me to gain a job and economic freedom so that I could live in better conditions (…) Seeing that even rich families' children could not study because there were not many secondary schools, let alone universities or colleges, it was only a dream for me until my father sent me to the village institute; it changed my entire life (…) I could have been married at an early age with many children, lived in poverty, and spent my entire life working on the farms to feed myself and my family (Berrin, G1).

> We could barely feed ourselves. I never thought I would be able to study and become a teacher. (…) Being able to further my education was important for me to change my life and get out of poverty (Canan, G1).

These women valued education as a means to expand their physical capabilities of being free from poverty and having adequate food and shelter. Further, it was a means of expanding their economic capabilities in order to be able to generate their own income, and to develop agency in order to be in control of their lives rather than forming adaptive preferences and living up to social expectations. What is noted in this analysis is education's role in alleviating poverty, including escaping from the network of

relationships in which gender and poverty overlaps and shapes structures of inequality (Unterhalter 2012a). So, women stressed the importance of schools and education as a platform to break gendered relationships of poverty that limits their freedom and choice about their lives such as who they marry and at what age.

All six Amazon women's schooling experiences took place between 1961 and 1983 at a time when girls' schooling was gradually increasing with modernisation of the country. However, the literacy and schooling levels of women remained low.[1] Like the Republican generation, these women were among the small minority of women who were able to further their education to university and receive higher education. They valued the attainment of education as a means to acquire the freedom to develop the economic capability of generating an income, and the social capability of being treated on equal terms with their male peers. Education gave them the capability to have a voice and bargaining power in their future marriages, as well as developing the intellectual capability of practical reasoning in making life decisions. They believed education was important in granting them freedom and agency to choose a life that they valued:

> By the age of 7, I witnessed the gender hierarchy in my family; my mother was doing more house chores than anyone else, and this was being taken for granted by everyone (…) These small things made me understand what kind of a life was waiting for me (…) I became aware that I had to study to get a job, to emancipate myself from this world and to form my own family where I would not be working like a slave as my mum did (Sinem, G2).

> Studying was important for me to gain more freedoms. I knew that this could happen only by economic independence (…) Then I could work, earn my own income, decide whom to marry, form a more egalitarian family (…) I would lead my life without being in need of anyone in case of the death of my parents, or divorce (Oya, G2).

Unlike the Republican women, these women valued education more for economic independence rather than for being released from poverty, because gaining their independence was a pre-requisite for a number of capabilities they could develop. The women's narrations also pointed to gender becoming more important as sheer poverty recedes. In comparison to the previous generation, these women expressed their desire to be free from any gender oppression or gendered family life through the independence that education would grant them.

All six women of the postmodern generation received their education between 1984 and 2006. In their time, the schooling of girls, at least at the primary level, was high and there had been a considerable increase in the enrolment rates of girls in higher education. Cultural prohibition condemning girls' schooling still continued but was mainly limited to the conservative and/or economically deprived parts of the country, which generally constitute the Eastern and South-eastern parts of Turkey. These women stressed how education supported the attainment of economic independence, and agency in leading a life that they valued:

> Men can do any work, but, for women, education is a must to build a life and to gain economic independence. I knew from my primary school years that, as an educated woman, I would stand better on my feet, could have a voice in my life, and would not have to put up with an abusive marriage (Banu, G3).

> Education, without doubt, was a must for me. It is a security for a woman to gain a job, to earn her economic independence, to have a life of her own and to make choices; to release one's self from the pressure of the family or neighbourhood (Fisun, G3).

> I knew that if I became a teacher, I could be freer, spend my salary as I wished, live my life as I have always wanted, and marry whomever I want. I believe educated women are less likely to put up with the gendered and cultural expectations and have the potential to challenge the structures that put them down (Tuba, G3).

These women's narrations, like the Amazon women, suggest that the importance of education lies more in the economic independence of being free to make their own choices in life rather than escaping from poverty. Similarly, as poverty was not an immediate concern, they placed greater emphasis on gender issues depriving them of their freedoms and expressed the importance of economic independence as a necessary condition for releasing themselves from gender pressures of living up to social expectations.

In summary, common to the women's narrations is that each generation saw education contributing to an expansion of their freedoms and independence. Particularly economic independence was believed to bring greater freedom and opportunities regarding the formulating of their own preferences without any interference, and escaping from traditions.

The variance could be seen in the importance that generations attached to the different capabilities which they wished to achieve through education. The Republican women highly valued the physical capabilities of living a better life (such as having adequate food, shelter and being healthy) as they were brought up in poverty. With the younger generations, poverty was not so great a concern, whereas their aspiration to achieve a level of gender equality in their lives through education was prominent. They valued the social capability of being treated on equal terms, building more gender equitable families/relations and leading a life without any societal and gender restrictions. This variation suggests the link between education, gender and poverty that Unterhalter (2012a) has described: With poverty, the sexual division of labour at home is associated with the economic relations of survival, and therefore it becomes difficult for women to transform the gender relationships which are embedded in their lives. Even schooling as a means for rising above the poverty threshold does not guarantee that the individual will develop the ability to challenge gender inequalities, because inequalities also exist in schools (such as distribution and inequitable gender norms, misrecognition of certain groups, girls or minorities). This was the case particularly for the Republican generation of women, as I will explain in the next section. Thus, the poverty and enmeshed gender inequalities of Republican women's natal families did not necessarily lead the women to conceptualise gender equality as an important capability to aim for through education, unlike the younger generations.

Education Processes

Experiences of education processes that emerged from interviews included curriculum, extra-curricular activities provided by the school; pedagogical approaches to girls' learning; the socio-political setting of the schooling experience; and the school environment. Women highlighted different aspects of their education processes and experiences across different eras and education provision contexts; therefore, this section does not aspire to equally address each education process by generation, but rather to present the processes women have highlighted in their lives as an important factor of their schooling experiences.

In all three Republican women's educational experience, two dimensions of the education process appeared as a significant factor in expanding women's physical, social and intellectual capability sets and agency.

First, the curriculum and learning outcomes were meaningful for learners to meet their practical needs in the poor socio-economic conditions of the country. Second, gender relations opened up space for women to get recognition and attain equality under the socio-cultural context of patriarchy. Considering that these women's educational lives took place during the nation-building process, the education of boys and girls at primary schools was uniform and constituted co-education in the real sense that a gender-biased curriculum was followed at every level of education (Arat 1994b). Women, as students of the village institutes, had gender-segregated courses in addition to the academic classes such as maths, history and science which were offered to both girls and boys in the same classroom. According to the Minister of Education of the time, the reason for the gendered curriculum was to offer training for work that would be of 'concern to villages and housewives' and would include activities such as sewing, childcare, nursing, agricultural crafts, embroidery and home economics for girls (Yucel 1938, cited in Arat 1994c: 92). Boys, on the other hand, would study painting, handcrafts, calligraphy, military instruction, house construction and masonry. Therefore, upon becoming teachers, both men and women could teach the peasants the skills of their gender. Given that the society of the 1930s and 1940s was very poor and uneducated, these skills were considered as a springboard for peasants to enjoy modernisation and improve their quality of life.

This curriculum in the village institutes was highly gendered to the extent that it strengthened gender roles and promoted gendered socialisation by today's standards. However, for that time, it was quite empowering for women because they underwent a transformation in terms of gendered relationships and the development of their capabilities:

> As girls, we would learn a different skill every week, such as sewing, needlecraft, embroidery, cooking, childcare, nursing or home economics, whereas boys would be taught forging, or architectural design, carpentry and house construction (…) Life conditions in villages were tough in our time (…) They taught us all the necessary skills we might need there. Otherwise, we would not be able to overcome the infrastructure, housing, water or electricity problems we faced (Arzu, G1).

> At school, both girls and boys had different vocational specialisations. For instance, when boys were building the food hall during the summer time to practice the skills they learned, girls were doing the gardening or painting. We were working equally (…) If I had not learned those skills at school,

> how would I bake my own bread in famine-stricken villages, or chop my own wood when my husband was away for compulsory military service? (Canan, G1).

The education offered to these women was empowering in the sense that it made them capable of managing many different skills that had relevance in their lives as it prepared them to work and live in the tough physical and economic conditions of the villages. At the same time, the schools contributed to the production of enmeshed gender norms concerning the kinds of activities women and men take up and thus shaped the socialisation of the women. Even in its gendered form, education distinguished them from other women like peasant women, as they were not being constrained in the same way because they had access to more opportunities than the uneducated women. For instance, the teaching of basic life skills such as bread-making or building houses and painting contributed to their physical capability sets of surviving and living in adequate shelter in the poor districts. For these women, education served to develop their social capability sets of sharing an equitable amount of labour with men (though gendered), thereby placing them on an equal footing with their male peers for the first time.

Not all courses were deeply gendered. These women also talked about an educational formation that involved mixed relations and activities with boys, as well as a common curriculum they followed in subjects such as literature, geography and science. All of this contributed in their view to their academic and intellectual knowledge, and shaped them as teachers:

> We were raised academically and intellectually well-equipped (…) The co-education structure of village institutes used to create qualified and confident Turkish women who can freely talk among men. Boys would always support women (…) We all received equal treatment from our teachers. We enjoyed literary works, world classics, and different kinds of world music. They took us on a thirty-three day tour of Turkey where we got to know more about our culture (Arzu, G1).

Curricular and extra-curricular activities also triggered the women's intellectual capability of developing self-confidence and self-respect, expanding their horizons in terms of different lifestyles, being able to read world classics, learning different cultures within Turkey, and having knowledge about the world.

Additionally, the co-educational practice and the availability of mixed gender relations constituted an important aspect of the education that the Republican women received. It was an opportunity for them to release themselves from the rigid moral and social oppression they experienced as girls in their natal families. They portrayed gender relations that were based on equality and there was a trust and brotherhood between girls and boys. Nonetheless, to some extent, their narrations also implied that there was a rigid monitoring of gender relations and of the extent to which they could mingle with each other: the entering/exiting of schools, the seating in classrooms and the dorms being separated by sex:

> Boys and girls were equal. We would work on the farm together, eat together, build our school buildings together. We would learn both traditional dances and modern dances such as the waltz. We were like brothers and sisters. These were important things to modernize the country and to eradicate backward thoughts regarding girls (…) of course, there were some rules at school, any kind of emotional relationship between a boy and a girl was banned. I even remember that a boy and a girl from the older classes were sent away from the school as they had mutual feelings for each other. So, even if you loved a boy, you would keep it secret, like I and my husband did (…) On the day we graduated, we announced our relationship and got engaged. Our teachers were happy because they supported marriage among students upon graduation so that we could be sent to the villages to work together as couple teachers (Arzu, G1).

> We were nine girls and 61 boys, but still our dorms would be separate. The girls' dorms were outside the school campus and they used to drive us fifteen minutes to school every day. We would only gather with guys during the classes (…) but girls would sit in front and boys in the back (…) but we would come back to school, work with boys to mend our own school, work on the farm with boys (Canan, G1).

Mixed gender relations and the fact of being only a few girls in a highly male-populated school was an important opportunity for them to develop their social capability of having the space to appear with boys without shame in a public setting like school. In this sense, the schooling experience transformed social inequalities by sparking a process of recognition that girls could be on the same terms with boys. Even with the restrictions on the extent to which girls could mingle with boys, for these women, there was a transformation of their gender relations which they could have

never gone through if they had not studied. Therefore, they did not consider any of the control and regulations as restrictive, but rather valued being engaged in mixed relations and sharing social activities with boys.

For a generation who had lived through extreme poverty and illiteracy, education, albeit gendered, was designed to serve the existing conditions of the country at the time and provided many openings for women in developing their physical, social and intellectual capabilities. It prepared them to work as teachers in the public domain and thus further expanded their social capability set of being able to take responsibility for their own nation and community without a feeling of harassment. As the first formally educated women teachers of the country, this opened a potential space to develop collective agency to work for the modernisation of the country in the nation-building project. In contrast to other social institutions such as family, the neighbourhood and society in general, schools, as sites for equity and justice, emerged as the only places where they received a minimum level of justice, treated them in an egalitarian way and placed them on equal footing with boys. As Walker (2006) argues, education in these women's lives had a redistributive effect in reducing gender inequalities being perpetuated by the household and in family settings.

The Amazon women's educational experiences pointed out four different processes of education which influenced their capabilities. Extracurricular activities and being engaged at a social and intellectual level with teachers and other peers developed their capabilities. Contradictory to these two processes, rigid control on female bodies and the unsafe school environment outside the school and state repression during the 1970s diminished their capabilities.

With the closure of the village institutes in 1954 and the end of the nation-building period, from 1950 to 1980, a major socio-economic change took place in Turkey, which was also reflected in the educational context of these women. First of all, growing industrialisation and Westernisation increased the demand for education and diverted the gendered curriculum to girls' and boys' vocational high schools exclusively. However, receiving an education up until higher education and becoming a teacher were still achievements. Second, towards the end of the 1960s, the political atmosphere of Turkey diversified. Students' movements increased and many students, teachers, universities and teacher unions became highly politicised and caused polarisation of the left and right wing which lasted for a decade (1968–1980) (Nohl 2008). This affected

the educational system directly as numerous acts of violence took place, mostly at high schools and universities. Students were denied entrance to their schools based on their political ideology, teachers and students were killed and schools and universities had to close because of certain incidents (Okcabol 2005).

Returning to the women's educational experiences, first of all, for Amazon women, schools were the only sites where more progressive gender relations were normalised. They talked about how gender relations and their sense of self-worth and confidence were encouraged at school through a wide variety of facilities both within and outside the school, such as in theatre plays, cinemas, school festivals and end-year ceremonies. These social events organised by the school were an opportunity for these women to enjoy gendered relations without worries of neighbourhood pressure, monitoring and feelings. They also afforded opportunities for the girls to discover their potential, talents and abilities. In particular, their female teachers played a progressive role in encouraging gender relations and in breaking down cultural stratification:

> In high school, I became outgoing with the influence of my teachers. Particularly our female teachers gave us the understanding that it is quite normal to go to a café with your male friends and enjoy your time. They motivated us to take part in different activities. I joined the debate club, danced folklore, and went to youth camps (…) My parents would approve and allow anything organized by the school (Oya, G2).

> With puberty, I was taken from playing outside in the neighbourhood to socialising at home and helping my mother (…) The only relations I could have with boys or opportunities I had to engage in mixed gender games, group works or activities, were within the school. In this sense, I think schools were one step ahead of society (Irem, G2).

As these remarks suggest, the school atmosphere, through various engagements and the support the girls received from their teachers, was highly important for the women to enhance their social capability set of speaking back, taking responsibility, being able to establish relations with the opposite gender and engage in social events, as well as their intellectual capability of developing self-confidence and recognising their own potential and inherent value (which were not entirely available to them in their families).

Second, four of the women (Meltem, Irem, Nesli and Sinem) talked about the regulation and disciplining of girls' bodies as well as imposing uniforms and behaviour rules. These women were subjected to scrutiny regarding their behaviours and dress codes at school (by their teachers), whereas no such restrictions were applied to boys. As Meltem puts it:

> There were certain things that I disliked about my school years. For instance, every morning we were allowed to walk to the classrooms in a single row. Teachers and the school principal would check our uniforms, skirt sizes, ties, and hairstyles (…) They would not intervene with boys. I have always thought this was for girls (…) Things did not change when I went to university because I was studying at a school of education. Our lecturers would expect us to dress like teachers, neatly and elegantly. The particular way in which I dressed, in tight jeans or leggings with short tops, would disturb some of them and they would reprimand me saying that I don't look like a student who is going to be a teacher in the future (Meltem, G2).

This points out that schools and teachers were the agents of keeping moral order, reflected the appropriate gendered norms and beliefs in the girls' lives and reproduced the patriarchal ideology. Such attitudes displayed only towards girls promoted certain societal values, such as that girls should be dressed in an acceptable manner that does not reveal any lavishness or sexuality, or that they should act in a way that displays obedience or submissiveness, suggesting that the female body should be under scrutiny. This can be seen as a limitation of the participants' social capability set of being treated without gender-based discrimination. These findings also reflect a similar result found in the research of Tan (2000) as well as Acar et al. (1999) in Turkish schools, whose studies showed that girls are exposed to more oppression and control concerning their manners and clothes at schools as compared to boys.

Third, the issue of unsafe environments surrounding the school came up in two of the six Amazon women's (Sinem and Nesli) accounts. Sinem talked about the verbal and physical assault she was exposed to at high school, while Nesli told the story of having razor blades thrown at her by the conservative young boys of the region when they were marched to the stadium for the celebration of national days (Republican Day, Children's Day and Youth Day). The purpose of this assault was to condemn the length of girls' dresses, which was the same for all performers:

> You know each school prepares a dance to perform at the stadium. When we were walking from school to the stadium carrying the Turkish flag and singing songs with our performance clothes, the bigoted and narrow-minded young boys would throw razor pieces at our legs to hurt us. Thus, in their own way, they were trying to give us a moral lesson. This was very scary indeed for all of us (…) The school could do nothing about it because it was outside the school (Nesli, G2).

> Outside our school there would be guys hanging out and harassing girls verbally. One of those guys once followed me until the shop where I was selling my carpet design models and he started to chase me in the street at the back of the shop until I was able to run safely into the shop. Other days, I asked my elder brother or mother to accompany me to school (Sinem, G2).

The women's narrations illustrate that unsafe school conditions constituted a limitation on the women's physical capability of being free of violence. It could be argued that having a safe environment in which to study was only limited within the school, and the conditions threatening the students' well-being out of school was often recognised as falling outside the responsibility of school administration or education policies.

A final point is that women's schooling experience fell into an era of immense politicisation of society and students. Schooling, coupled with the socio-political context of the time, opened up transformative space in which women engaged in critical and inquiring dialogue with others, developed their critical reflection on their own positions, developed political identities, became politicised and found themselves in new positions as political activists in the public sphere. The intellectual debates with teachers and their peers at school were particularly influential in their process of politicisation:

> My high school and university years coincided with the 1970s political era. I remember even in high school debating about politics with my friends and in some classes with my teachers (…) We were talking about why there was political chaos (…) and the dominant political debates of the age. I was conscious about what was going on (…) When I was at university, I became a pioneering activist of my age (Hatice, G2).

> In high school, we would talk politics with our female and male friends. Everyone was talking politics. Some of our teachers would scatter comments during the classes, some would try to impose their ideas, some would make comments in favour of anti-capitalism and sovereignty and some would condemn communist

> ideas. In a way you listen to these at school, talk about this and then when I went to university, I became irresistibly politicised as I engaged more with political groups (…) and organised many events (Irem, G2).

> At high school, both our teachers and students would have ongoing debates regarding the political situation of the country. We could see the polarization and politicization among the teachers, which were very often reflected to us (…) Having been in this environment, as I started university I found myself irresistibly driven in these acts through preparing leaflets to invite people to join our side of the cause (Nesli, G2).

Gender and social relations at schools (including universities), teachers and the socio-political context of the eras were all influential in the process of women's identity transformation to developing powerful voices. This also developed their political capability set of developing political knowledge to speak up on their political ideas, and developing their political participation through protests and their agency in being part of collective movements to bring change. However, their legal rights of freedom of speech and taking part in political acts were curtailed in their university schools' years by the repressive and violent acts of governments to suppress the increasing student movements. To this end, although all the women had witnessed and experienced physical/verbal assaults, two of the six women (Irem and Hatice) were particularly affected by this. Hatice was denied access to university on the basis of her political ideology and endured a long trial process, and Irem was exposed to police violence and harassment in demonstrations and was under the police custody:

> I usually took my place on the frontline, pioneering and organising many demonstrations at my school. I could not attend university for six months. I was on the blacklist of the university and the police did not allow me inside the campus because, according to them, I was an anarchist and a communist who was causing social disruption. I did not give up and brought my issue to court with a couple of my friends who were in the same situation. After a year of struggle, I won the case and continued my degree (Hatice, G2).

> I organised unauthorised acts, but I was never in favour of armed action. However, as frontline activists in the demonstrations, we would be exposed to police violence. Even in custody, harassments and tortures would continue. But, this did not deter me from my cause to strive for a just and equal society (Irem, G2).

As is evident, state repression of the time not only curtailed the women's political freedoms of protest and physical well-being but also deprived them of having access to education. Despite the hollowing democracy that highly constraints their well-being and options, women displayed their agency to pursue what they value and possessed altruistic goals to challenge the system.

The postmodern women's educational lives were spent in an apolitical environment and at a time when women's education was widely spreading, although higher education was not very common. Their experiences revealed that three different forms of educational processes had been both empowering but also limiting of their freedoms. Extra-curricular activities at schools, which brought engagement in wider social relations, expanded the women's social and intellectual capabilities, whereas unsafe school surroundings and gendered perspectives towards girls constituted factors diminishing their intellectual, social and physical capability sets.

First, like the older generations, for all these women, schools were also the sites where more enabling gender relations were normalised and the socialisation of students was supported by extra-curricular activities. Women valued the opportunity of being able to engage freely in mixed gender relations at schools, which were morally undesirable in their neighbourhoods. Being able to engage in social activities was also an important factor in developing their own interests, recognising their potential and supporting their self-confidence and enhanced self-worth.

Second, like the Amazon women, two women out of the six (Seda and Aycan) talked about the unsafe school environment and the verbal harassment they experienced around school, which made them feel unsafe:

> There would be a group of boys roving in front of the school, waiting for girls to leave the school so that they could molest or mock them. They would verbally harass you, stare at you, and point at you. They could even follow you with the intent to attack you. I used to feel a bit unsafe outside the school because of these people (…) The teachers and the principal must definitely have seen this but I don't think any steps were taken to prevent it (Aycan, G3).

> In Turkey, I find the school environment very unhealthy. Many gangster-looking guys hang out outside the school and this was the same during the time I was studying. There would always be some boys wondering around and harassing girls or trying to hit on them. I would feel unsafe and was worried that they would stalk me (Seda, G3).

Unsafe school environments and gendered interactions around the school were not given attention, as they were likely seen as falling outside the remit of the school. Therefore, school management did not feel obliged to secure female students' physical capability of feeling secure and comfortable on their journey to and from school. This could imply that women's issues are not given serious enough consideration in education settings.

Finally, four women (Seda, Aycan, Meryem and Fisun) mentioned a gendered perspective towards girls and their learning at school. Undermining perceptions towards female students' ability and capacity to learn and academic ability in maths and science classes, as well as the promotion of male candidates for the students' school union, were discouraging factors of girls' academic achievement and motivation:

> One of my teachers was obviously discriminating. He did not appreciate girls' achievement. He was more interested in boys. It could have discouraged someone else but this behaviour of his spurred me on to study, because I needed to reply five correct answers to prove my success and worth as a student, whereas a boy would need only one (Seda, G3).

> We would hold an election at school for school presidency. There would be both female and male candidates. However, male candidates would be encouraged more and therefore a boy would be elected as a president, whereas a female student could only be his deputy. I wanted to become a president in my final year but was not really supported much by my teachers. I remember feeling very disappointed about it. It feels that there is a limit to what you can be or achieve as a girl (Aycan, G3).

It can be seen that gendered practices amplified discriminatory practices, which posed a limitation on women's social capability of being treated equally without discrimination and their intellectual capability of feeling self-confident. This also suggests that schools reproduced gendered assumptions and perceptions about girls' and boys' learning, thus influencing girls' identity by suggesting that certain courses are not culturally appropriate or that girls should remain in the background. There is, however, no systematic data or extensive research showing how social and cultural reproduction takes place at schools in Turkey. From the limited research in this topic in the Turkish context, some scholars (Cin and Walker 2016; Akhun et al. 2000; Tan 2000; Sayilan 2008) have argued that arrangement of learning process and education based on a gender-based model and the gendered manners of teachers discourages girls'

participation in learning and makes them lacking in confidence. Likewise, a 2003 UNICEF report on gender review in education in Turkey touched upon the role of teachers in constructing a weak sense of gender identity, in that they accept cultural scripts about subordination and that most of the time teachers cannot recognise gender discrimination because of internalised gender roles.

Conclusion

The women's educational experiences showed that education opened up opportunities that they were culturally deprived of in their private spheres (e.g. the social capability of engaging in mixed gender relations and adopting a wide range of social activities that mattered to them). It contributed to their capacity to participate in a democratic life, develop authentic and expressive voices and construct a life they valued living. School was the only institution where they received some level of justice. So, education served as a transformative space in fulfilling women's aspirations, widening their opportunities to make life choices and giving them the necessary resources to secure their future well-being.

It also became apparent how the socio-political context was also a determinant in the educational experiences of all generations. The context that interferes with the education system and its practices determines which capabilities are more likely to be developed. For instance, we could see that the state ideology of building a nation offered a gendered education based on raising strong, Kemalist and nationalist women so that they could be active participants of the political revolution of the Republican era and act as representatives of a new modern Turkish woman. Such an education enabled the necessary conditions for women to achieve all their valued capabilities and to lead a life they value. The political context of the Amazon women triggered the capability expansion of their political ideas and women adopted activism as an essential part of their lives.

Additionally, schools were also gendered sites of power and created inequalities in relation to learning and teaching, that is the kind of work women could do, the subjects they could study. We could see how this inequality causes women to perform reserved, shy, obedient girl identities. This suggests gender inequality at school is much more associated with the informal spaces of schools such as families and also with labour market and institutions (which is the focus of the next chapter). Relations in these institutions shape the gender roles such as who does the care work and

who becomes more prominent in decision-making. In this sense, schools are the back-garden of social realities and to an extent reflect gendered practices and cultural codes. Nonetheless, schools and education can also transform some of the gender inequalities of the private sphere; but they have a limited ability to do this with respect to social, cultural and political relations (Unterhalter 2012b). This is because education, particularly in Turkey, usually reflects the cultural hegemony of the ruling class and state and does not ensure gender equality. Whatever their agenda is (imposing conservative or nationalist education), developing a balanced perspective and education towards gender equality is never a priority. Therefore, prevailing masculine norms and pattern remain deeply rooted in education and offer women a marginal space to truly achieve who they want to be.

Generally, the women's educational lives opened up spaces and freedoms which would otherwise not have been possible. One of these freedoms was their ability to take up work and take their place as professional women in the public sphere. This is a significant aspect of this book in terms of highlighting how these educated women (empowered by education) are engaged in education to work for gender justice. So, the next section presents professional experiences of women.

Note

1. The literacy rates of women in 1955, 1965 and 1980 were respectively 26%, 33% and 46.6%. Women with a primary level of education constituted only 36.9% in 1980, although primary education was compulsory (TUIK 2012).