

# A Complex Issue in the Turkish Education System: Gender Imparity (2000–2015 Period)

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**Abstract** The importance given to education and investment in it has increased since the various governments of Turkey realised that education is vitally important for them to be able to develop. Developed countries have undertaken vast improvements to provide equal education opportunities to all their citizens. However, inequality in education is still a big problem in developing and underdeveloped countries. Gender disparity, which is directly related to development, is one of the main disparities in the Turkish education system. Gender imparity is a complex problem encompassing a number of factors at its roots and its solution is also as complex. Some solutions for the educational problems have been searched for both at national and international arenas. Valuable efforts have been given to solve these problems via some partnerships and local initiatives. “Education for All” is one of the most worldwide goals It is sensitive to gender parity issues and Turkey is one of the member countries in this action. In this study, a qualitative research method will be used and the reasons of this complex problem, evaluation of the problem within the perspective of complexity, reasons of girls’ non-attendance in Turkey, background information for the act, goals and the strategies determined for the issue, efforts and attempts of Turkey to deal with this chaotic problem will be handled and some suggestions for the solution of the problem will be given.

**Keywords** Education for all · Gender imparity · Reasons of not going to school · Education campaigns · Complexity

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## 1 Introduction

The particular points with which we are moving to assess the education level of a country are average education life, literacy rate and schooling rate. When these points are examined it is seen that there are some inequalities having serious effects on education and they are more common in developing countries (Ayvaz Kızılgöl 2012). As a developing country, Turkey's inequalities in education are usually between regions, rich and poor, village and city and male and female.

Gender parity is the one which the most measures have been taken both nationally and internationally since it is directly related to development (Sarpkaya 2008). Social states are responsible to give free education service to all their citizens, male or female, equally. It is possible for individuals to believe in democracy only in this case (Gül 2008). However, although providing this service is vitally important to be a real social state, it is a fact that achieving this goal is highly difficult since there are lots of factors of the problem and so it is a really complex issue.

In Article 42 of the Constitution of Turkey, education is guaranteed as a basic right for each citizen. The provision in that article is that "Primary Education is compulsory for all citizens of both sexes and is free of charge in State schools". Achieving gender equality has also a place in Basic Law on National Education in Article 4: "Educational institutions are open to all regardless of race, gender or religion. No body, no family, no community and no class can be privileged in education". In addition to them, this issue has been a matter in a lot of government programs, development plans and Councils of Ministry of Education and some various efforts have been made to solve the problem.

It should be noted that so long as the policies that are developed to promote women's further access to education and effective participation in business markets are merely based on providing opportunities, the solutions are doomed to remain incomplete. This may only be a part of the solution. What is more complex is the rearrangement of domestic roles and relations and bringing about fundamental changes for improving women's status and promoting a labour division that is based on the abilities of the individuals instead of a traditional one (Özden 1990). It is, without any doubt, also important in fundamental changes that the complexity and the period of change are managed effectively.

In this study, we aim to expose how much progress Turkey has made to achieve gender equality in education, which is one of the six goals of Education for All (EFA) held in Dakar, Senegal between 26 and 28 April in 2000 and to evaluate the mid-decisions, policies and applications which have been factors to make improvements. In this sense, firstly the goals which were determined to solve gender imparity in education in 2000 for 2015 and the strategies to be able to reach the goals will be introduced. Next, the legal and administrative regulations and some valuable works that Turkey has carried out to solve this problem will be presented. Finally, the progress Turkey has made between those years will be evaluated within the framework of these regulations and works. This study is hoped

to be a useful source for decision makers with the evaluations and suggestions emerging from the evaluations. Furthermore, since no study dealing with the relation between the regulations of The Turkish Government and the EFA indicators has been met in the literature, it is aimed to contribute to the literature with this study.

In the direction of the aim, document examination will be used and in this respect 2000 Dakar Framework, Global Monitoring Reports between 2000 and 2015, Turkish political plans and papers concerning the issue and reports including and evaluating the efforts about it like grants, aids, campaigns and projects will be analyzed.

## **2 Review of Related Literature**

It would be accurate to examine the fundamentals of the problems in the first place in order to effectively assess the legislative and administrative regulations and implementations in Turkey by addressing the gender imparity issue that is present in the education system. In this part, therefore, the obstacles on the ways of girls and women to have access to education will be addressed. Then the function complexity has in solving the problem will be handled. Developments that led to the formation of EFA The Dakar Framework for Action that gives particular coverage to this issue and the first step of EFA, 1990 Education Movement, will be generally handled.

### ***2.1 Causes of Gender Inequality Problem in Education***

The first string in the process of solving the problems is to put forth the causes. Various researches have been and are being conducted so that all causes of the gender imparity problem—one of the primary problems in the Turkish education system—can be revealed with all its aspects and that studies on the problem can be performed.

The questions where the inequality is mostly experienced and what the causes are has been a popular subject in a number of researches. Participation in education is altered by rural–urban areas and socioeconomic levels. It is noted in the report of ERG in 2008 that the gender-based inequality in education is mostly experienced in eastern and southeastern regions of the country. In one of their studies, Gümüş (2010) also points out that there is a strong connection between gross national product and gender-based schooling; and that in provinces where gross national product is on a lower level; general schooling rates and the schooling rates of girls are also on decrease; indicating, as well, that most of these provinces are located in the eastern part of Turkey.

In the Report on Gender Inequality in Turkey (TTCER), the causes of the gender disparities in education are listed as; demand for child labour especially in certain regions, transportation problems, the insecurity and violence environment, traditional division of labour as the basis of the family structure and beliefs (2008). A similar list is also given in the Report on the Determinants of Access to Education in Turkey. It is suggested in the report that the determinants of not going to school are poverty, traditional family values and the social status of the household (Bakış et al. 2009).

Following the researches within the scope of “Haydi Kızlar Okula” that was conducted under the cooperation of United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (2001–2005), the main barriers to girls’ education were specified as (UNICEF 2003):

- There is a shortage of schools and classrooms;
- Schools are often located far from residential areas and most parents do not want their children, especially daughters, to travel that far;
- Parents do not want to send their children to schools that are in a poor physical state with no toilets or running water;
- Most families suffer from financial difficulties;
- The traditional gender bias of families favours men and boys over women and girls;
- Families tend to keep their children at home to work so that they can contribute to the family income;
- Many parents consider the early marriage of their girls more important than their education;
- Female role models in rural regions are rare or simply absent;
- The fact that opportunities for secondary education are limited diminishes the interest towards primary education.

İlhan Tunç (2009) examined studies investigating the attitudes of girls towards education and the reasons why they do not attend school and put the reasons together under four titles:

- Low income
- Low status of the woman
- Negligence of families towards education and the low number of educated persons within their inner circle
- Absence of schools in immediate surroundings.

As can be seen in the titles, one of the causes of inequality is poverty—low family income in other words. Some families cannot send their children to school due to the lack of financial opportunities. According to the statements made by the Directorate General for Status of Women in 2008–2013 National Action Plan for Gender Equality, families with low income have difficulties in sending their children to school and they prefer sending boys rather than girls when they have the opportunity to choose.

Another cause of discrimination against women in terms of education is the low status of women in society. There are certain designated roles and responsibilities in the society, that fall upon individuals. These roles and responsibilities correspond to the concept of gender and the status of women is prescribed over these roles. There are a number of factors that set the framework of gender. These roles and responsibilities vary by time and space. There exists discrimination between man and women on the point of benefitting from sources and services that are present within the society and under these circumstances it is generally the woman who is the injured party (Buyruk 2008–2009; Çabuk Kaya 2013). Even when the gender equality is achieved on the schooling part, it is still within the bounds of possibility that the discrimination goes along. In a gender discrimination study, they conducted with prospective teachers, Esen (2013) dwelled upon the sexist approaches of teachers towards male and female students. Research findings indicated that male students witness sexist approaches within the first stage of primary education while their female counterparts experience the same situation mainly in secondary education. Whereas male students go through gender discrimination on the point of disciplinary punishments, female students witness it in the process and implementation of education (i.e. usage of sexist discourse, distribution of duties and responsibilities, methods of evaluation and sexual harassment). It is also worthy of attention how male teachers, implicitly and explicitly, employ a style and discourse that remind adolescent female students of the roles of mother and wife and exclude them.

It is also possible that some families tend to maintain a negligent or negative attitude towards education. The fact that the number of people who attend school is low also corroborates this attitude. Such families do not feel the urge or need to send their daughters to school (İlhan Tunç 2009). The presence of female teachers in schools is of great importance in breaking the resistance of families against sending their daughter to school. However, the percentage of female teachers tends to drop from the western regions to the east. It may also constitute an impediment to raise awareness in the families that are already negligent over education that there are not so many educated women in their surroundings.

There are some researches that have presented the remoteness of schools as one cause of not attending school (Tansel 2002). Although Regional Primary Boarding Schools (YİBOs), student dormitories (PİOs) and student transfer based education are employed in order to address this issue, they are not fully effective in solving the problem. There are troubles in the provision of service, particularly in terms of equipment and personnel.

It is possible to count various barriers to the schooling of female students in the view of the information above. These barriers have their roots in different variables such as the structure of family and society, education policies and, even, schools. This further complicates the problem itself. Thus, it is a chaotic and complicated practice to enable female students to equally participate in education and to optimally benefit from educational opportunities.

## ***2.2 Chaos and Complexity in Solving the Problem of Gender Imparity***

Chaos theory was first coined in 1960s when a meteorologist, Edward Lorenz, realized that a small change he made in the data in his computer could lead to greater changes in the end. According to the theory, what we consider a tiny change may cause major unexpected outcomes. Chaos theory appeared, at first, in circles of natural sciences and then became useful in the social sciences. It is possible to apply this theory effectively by studying social organizations as complex systems (Ferreira et al. 2014). According to chaos theory, the system is dynamic and changes over time; it is unstable and complex but it may have simple causes. It is nonlinear and although it is aperiodic and unpredictable, chaotic behaviour is not random because the system is deterministic (Valle 2000). From a traditional perspective, chaos is simply regarded as irregularity, disorder and randomness and it should be avoided. However, chaos in its meaning with respect to chaos theory is not similar to the traditional understanding of it. Chaos theory focuses on deterministic factors and these factors indicate nonlinear relationships (Erçetin et al. 2013).

Complexity theory, which is highly similar to chaos theory, is also another construct that came to light in a post-modern world. Certain characteristics of complexity includes; a large number of similar but independent elements, adaptiveness to new situations to ensure survival, self-organization, local rules for each factor and persistence in complexity (Valle 2000). Complexity theory has also found itself an area of application in social sciences, like the chaos theory. There are not so many mechanical relations in social systems. The social system has more complex social relations and interactions. It is, therefore, possible to utilize complexity theory in understanding the complexity that is present in the nature of societies and organizations (Erkoçak and Açıklın 2013).

In some studies, chaos and complexity theories are addressed as the same thing. Although they are related to each other, they have definite differences. In chaos, there is an order which is formed from constantly repeating actions within the framework of some rules. Unlikely, since complex systems have a feature of orientation, they have a tendency to be far from repetitions and the rules are not permanent but temporary (Sayğan 2014). According to these two theories, it is necessary to focus on and examine the nature and the source of the change to be able to understand it. Complexity theory has become popular in social sciences due to their being open to change and improvement (Tekel 2006). In this study, gender imparity problems in education and gender discrimination are the main source of it having been handled in terms of complexity.

Women who used to be engaged in housework and childcare in previous times found the chance to participate in work life with the help of industrialization. This led to a shift in the social equilibrium. However, this shift could not have its way through attitudes and expectations towards the women's role at the same pace and rate. A cultural gap emerged from this non-concurrence and this sowed the seeds for

explicit gender discrimination (Coleman et al. 2002; cited in: Demirbilek 2007). Gender discrimination is generally experienced within educational, economic, political and social areas (Demirbilek 2007).

Processes of eliminating gender discrimination and securing gender equality are not easy. The idea of and efforts to ensure equality may lead to dissidence, conflict, chaos and complexity. Chaos and complexity are the situations that societies and governments mostly do not desire to see. However, it is inevitable to trigger the change in order to eliminate the problem. Thus, it is a necessity, for the ones who are involved with the solution process, to accept chaos and complexity as part of the change and turn this into an opportunity (Doğru 2013).

Fundamental systems should be reshaped in order to rule out gender imparity. Roles of women and man should be redesigned to a great extent in the first place. If the case is that these roles have their roots deep down in a number of areas such as culture, religion and power; coming up with a solution and implementing it gets harder and there comes a time to make radical decisions. Considering the power of education in triggering changes within society, taking steps towards removing the inequalities in the education system should be a priority.

It is the responsibility of policy makers in the area of education to provide quality, effective, equitable and innovative education service (Erçetin et al. 2013). While providing this service, they carry the burden of meeting the needs of individuals who are different from each other and meeting domestic and international education objectives. Therefore, today, it is an enviable merit to overcome chaotic situations within the process of change by making use of innovative and novel approaches instead of traditional ones. Being ready to embrace innovation and adopting a flexible administration style in order to benefit from the chaotic situations is of paramount importance. It would be helpful for administrators to have knowledge of the abovementioned theories and make use of them in developing a solution to the problem.

In the process of providing a solution to gender imparity, which is a complex problem in the Turkish education system, Turkey collaborated with other countries and made commitments by signing several agreements in order to ensure improvement within this context. The next part of the study will generally address Education for All movement, which lays a special emphasis on the issue, and the conventions and agreements in which Turkey took part.

### ***2.3 World Wide Developments that Provide a Basis for EFA 2000 Education Movement***

The State of the Republic of Turkey has taken part in international activities and signed conventions related to the provision of education for all men and women. Below are listed the related binding declarations and conventions that were

established with the participation of a number of countries and their provisions regarding the current problem.

- It is stated in Article 26 of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) in 1948 that education is a right for all individuals: “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.” (UNICEFa 2004).
- *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) was signed in 1979 (UNICEFb 2004). Turkey signed this convention in 1985.
- Signed in 1989, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) guarantees a right to education for each and every child. It is emphasised in the convention that the education should be compulsory and free.
- With 1990 *Education for All* (EFA) movement, objectives to be reached until 2000 were set and 4th out of these 6 goals was about gender parity. The objective of this goal was to reduce the rate of illiteracy and to give priority to teaching women to read and write so as to eradicate the inequality between man and women, and to reach success at the rate of 50 percent until 2000.
- In 2000, with the participation of 189 countries, 8 goals were established under the name of *The Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) and the third and fourth goals are about education and gender equality. Goal two is “to achieve universal primary education” and goal three is “to promote gender equality and empower women” (UNDP 2010).

Worldwide economic stagnation and decline in the 1980’s drove several countries into dept. The whole world witnessed a rapid population growth and widening economic disparities among and within nations prevailed. Amongst the problems the world experienced during those years were war, unemployment, civil strife, violence, millions of preventable child deaths and serious environmental pollution (World Education Forum 2000). Reflections of all these hardships on the education systems of each country were different. While these problems led to setbacks in education in underdeveloped countries; in some others, economic growth was sufficient to finance education expansion. In most countries, millions had to stay away from schooling due to poverty and in certain industrialized countries, cut-backs in government expenditure led to the deterioration of education (World Education Forum 2000).

All the negativities experienced constituted a basis for the first worldwide education movements and UNESCO’s (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) “Education for All” campaign was launched in the World Conference held on 5–9 March 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. The committee, which consisted of delegates from 155 countries, considered education as the key to ensure a safe, healthy, prosperous and environmentally conscious world (EFA, 1990 Background Document). Additionally, with inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), different learning needs of children, adolescents and adults were also



taken into account with the perspective that “Everyone—children, adolescents, adults—has the right to benefit from an education that meets their basic learning needs.”

### 3 Findings and Interpretation

In this part of the study, findings regarding the above mentioned study objectives are presented respectively.

#### 3.1 *EFA 2000 Dakar Goals and Action Strategies*

The EFA Summit that was held in Dakar, Senegal on 26–28 April 2000 and hosted by UNESCO with the participation of 164 countries 10 years after the 1990 EFA World Conference in Jomtien. During the summit, the vision of EFA Education Movement was reviewed by focusing on the extent of progress from 1995 to 2000. Assessments of the previous 10-year period revealed that the goals set in 1990 Jomtien EFA World Forum could not be achieved and a new action framework was constructed (International EFA Strategy 2002). It was stated that the Dakar Action Framework was a collective initiative that embraced all humanity and that the countries would learn from their own efforts to upgrade their education system and from other countries’ approaches to solve the problem (The Dakar Framework for Action 2000). An averse view would be unacceptable.

In EFA 2000, an assessment was carried out to specify the reasons behind the failure in achieving the goals. These assessments are considered to be the most thorough assessments regarding education until then. The reasons behind the failure in achieving the goals are listed as; lack of full democracy, lack of professionalism in educational policy and assessment, lack of continuity and coherence, especially of non-formal education programmes, authoritarian teaching style and inappropriate learning methods, irrelevant content that is not suitable for the structure of society and refusal of the right to education for girls and women (Müller 2000, s. 3).

With the light of these observations, in the 2000 Dakar Summit, the goals that were specified during the 1990 Jomtien Summit were reviewed and three goals out of six emphasized gender imparity in related areas while this number was only one among six goals of 1990 (The Dakar Framework for Action 2000):

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children,
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality,

3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes,
4. Achieving a 50 % improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults,
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality,
6. Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Twelve strategies were laid down in an EFA World Education Forum to specify the ways of achieving the goals above and the necessity for the countries to follow the strategies in order to reach success was emphasized. Most of the strategies are indirectly related to ensuring an equitable education with items 6 and 8 being directly invested in this issue. While item 6 includes “implementing integrated strategies for gender equality in education that recognize the need for change in attitudes, values and practices”, the emphasis is put on “Creating safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning, with clearly defined levels of achievement for all” in item 8 (The Dakar Framework for Action 2000).

## ***3.2 Policies and Studies Towards the Issue of Gender Imparity in Turkey After 2000***

### **3.2.1 Government Programmes**

Six separate governments were formed in Turkey between the years 2000 and 2015 except for the one interim government. In all these governments Justice and Development Party (AKP) held a parliamentary majority. Six government programmes were declared publicly during these years.

There were a few points concerning education in the programmes of the 58th and 59th governments but no special coverage was allocated for gender imparity. In the programme of the 60th government, the success of “Haydi Kızlar Okula”s Campaign was touched upon and it was underlined that such implementations would continue to enable stronger participation of girls and women in each and every stage of education.

The success of “Ana-Kız Okuldayız”s Campaign in contributing to the increase in the number of literate citizens and the establishment of “Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men” were presented as positive progress in the programme of 61st government and breaking down the social barriers to women was set as a goal. It was also pointed out that necessary precautions would be taken to enhance women employment.

There was no account included in the 62nd government programme regarding the issue. The programme of the 63rd government, however, was the most comprehensive one in this regard. It was covered in detail, under the title of women, that a set of programmes, projects and policies would be developed and pertinaciously implemented to secure improvement in a number of areas from education of girls (starting from early childhood) and women, to women employment and to status of women in the family and society. It can be seen that the suggested solutions for the problems demonstrate a more specific pattern in this programme.

### **3.2.2 National Education Councils**

The most striking decision that was made during the 17th National Education Council held in 2006 was to launch studies on extending the duration of compulsory education to 12 years and to accelerate preliminary infrastructure works to that end (MoNE Board of Education and Discipline). Considering the data that indicates an increasing gender gap that goes along with higher levels of education, it would not be wrong to say that the aforementioned decision is an important step towards overcoming the problem. There was no other decision declared in the council that can be interpreted as an effort to close the gender gap.

The 18th National Education Council was held in 2010. Among three Councils held after 2000, it is the 18th Council in which most decisions aimed at increasing girls' schooling were made. Among the decisions made we can count; increasing encouragement for female students to continue with secondary education, and accordingly, taking necessary precautions to improve the quality and quantity of YİBOs and to make them more accessible for girls. It was also decided to appoint health professionals for these schools. Additional regulations on student transfer based education were discussed, as well. It was emphasised that there should be encouragements intended to raise the number of women principals in the appointment process and that permanent positions should be allocated, in accordance with the conditions and structure of the schools, for women in the appointment process of deputy principals and school counsellors (MoNE Board of Education and Discipline). This intervention may be regarded as a positive step towards eliminating the problems regarding the status of women, which is one of the major barriers to ensuring gender equality.

No precautions on ensuring gender equality among students were put forward in the 19th National Education Council which was held in 2014. There was only one decision that necessitated adopting a positive discrimination approach aimed at increasing the number of women principals in schools and it was assigned to school administrations to determine the percentage of these women principals (MoNE Board of Education and Discipline).

### 3.2.3 MoNE Strategic Plan

Under the section about primary education stage in 2010–2014 Strategic Plan of Ministry of National Education, a special chapter was allocated for an action plan on improving student transfer based education and YİBOs. It was stated that the ministry would continue to cover the clothing and stationery expenses of the students. The necessity to uphold the Haydi Kızlar Okula Campaign that was being implemented to increase girls' schooling and the Conditional Cash Transfer practice was emphasised. It was declared in the Action Plan of 60th Government Programme that the projects on preventing gender discrimination would be continued and there would be interventions as to gender discrimination and rights of the child at school, district and province levels (MoNE Presidency of Improving Strategic Plan).

We see remarks on eliminating gender gap in plans regarding the secondary education stage, too. The objective for this stage was taking the action to eliminate gender and regional gaps, increase schooling rates and scale the percentage of the gap between girls' and boys' gross schooling rates, which is now 8.91 %, down to 2 %. It was also deemed necessary to take steps towards guaranteeing that girls take further advantage of dormitories and scholarship (MoNE Presidency of Improving Strategic Plan).

There were no measures or plans included in the Strategic Plan on ensuring gender equality at the point of higher education and life long learning.

#### Development Plans

Since there is a strong link between development and education, it has also a place in development plans. Development plans in Turkey cover a 5-year period. After 2000, the eighth and ninth plans were declared.

The Eighth Five-Year Development Plan (2001–2005) laid emphasis, again, on the importance of women's having education in development and it was noted that the desired degree of development could not be achieved in literacy rates, especially in Eastern and Southeastern regions. There were also comments in the plan that the 8 years of compulsory education would contribute to the education level of women (Ministry of Development).

The Ninth Five-Year Development Plan (2007–2013) brought up two measures to be taken regarding the difficulties female students face in terms of schooling. The first measure was upon preventing girls in rural areas from dropping out of school and the second measure included practices towards increasing the rate of girls' continuing education with secondary education (Ministry of Development).

### 3.2.4 The National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2008–2013

Targeting the period between 2008 and 2013, in this plan there are four objectives devoted to education. Responsible institutions and organizations were specified for each objective, along with collaborating institutions and organizations. The first objective was to increase the schooling rates of girls (registry, attendance and

completion) at all levels of education in line with the Development Plan. The second objective was to increase the physical and technical capacity in all stages of education, particularly for girls' schooling. The third objective included increasing women's literacy rate among adults while the fourth intended to render educators, education programmes and education material more "gender" sensitive (KSGM 2008).

### **3.2.5 The Workshop of Gender Equality Sensitive Universities**

The Presidency of the Board of Higher Education arranged a workshop with the participation of academic staff from different universities and non-governmental organizations interested in women problems and women studies. In the workshop, the regulations and precautions of universities to solve gender inequality problem were the main topics which were discussed on. At the end of the workshop, the decisions made for the problem were reported.

In the report, there are 11 resolutions to ensure a gender sensitive environment at universities. One of the remarkable rulings is to allow students to raise awareness in every semester. Some issues are within the scope of safety such as making some arrangements on campus and in classes for female students in order to be sure that they are safe, providing them with safety transportation and placing them in dormitories which are in or near the campus. There are also some measures of revealing and eradicating sexual harassment and mobbing. Another important decision is to set up "Women Studies and Problems Unit in Colleges" for female staff and students to find solutions for the problems they have especially because of their gender.

### ***3.3 Public and NGO Practices After 2000 Towards Solving the Gender Disparity Problem in Education in Turkey***

There are several promising initiatives in Turkey to ensure gender equality and full participation of girls in education. For example, there have been no efforts spared to build awareness among families about education and convince them to send their daughters to school. A number of campaigns have been mounted for this purpose. Students were awarded scholarships to eradicate the problem of non-attendance due to financial problems. There have also been such interventions at regional primary boarding schools and student transfer based education (ERG 2008).

### 3.3.1 MoNE Scholarship Programmes

In the Report on Gender Inequality in Turkey (2008), the percentage of female students who were granted scholarships was calculated as 45.5 % according to the data of MoNE regarding the scholarships given in 2006–2007 academic year. It was noted in the report that despite the increase in girls' benefitting from scholarships, a full equality could not be achieved. The gap gets wider in scholarships to study abroad. No special emphasis on this issue was observed.

### 3.3.2 Accommodation

In the Report on Gender Inequality in Turkey (2008), a considerable increase in the proportion of female students staying in YİBOs was observed. Yet a full equality could not be achieved. While the ratio of girls who stayed at these schools was 25 % in 2000, this figure rose to 40.5 % in 2007. Benefiting from this service is less in eastern and southeastern regions. That the number of male teachers is higher than that of female could be regarded as a barrier to an increase in this figure.

An examination of the findings in the abovementioned report regarding accommodation reveals that the rate of female students who benefit from student dormitories is lower than the rate of those benefitting from YİBOs. It was also noted in the report that the number of private dormitories and the rate of access to them for female students is low. The best result was yielded by the intervention of giving priority to female students in the dormitories of the General Directorate for Credit and Dormitories Agency (KYK). The proportion of female students in these dormitories is 57.3 % according to the data from 2005–2006 academic year.

### 3.3.3 Student Transfer Based Education

Student Transfer Based Education aims to provide education for students living in areas that are far from any education institution. An increase was observed between the years 2000 and 2007 in the number of female students who have access to student transfer-based education. The rate jumped from 45.3 to 47.68 %. Difficulties in transportation, out-of-schedule departures of the buses, distrust of personnel, strangers' being taken into the bus despite it is forbidden, poor physical conditions of the schools that students are transferred to and adaptation problems of the students to the conditions of the centre they are transferred to are the obstacles to the spread of student transfer based education (Arı 2003; Karakütük 1998; Küçüksüleymanoğlu 2006).

### 3.3.4 Monetary Aid

After the economic crisis of 2001, the Ministry of Education put the projects of Education and Health Grant for Families with Low Income and Conditional Cash Transfer into practice with the cooperation of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, General Directorate for Social Aids and the World Bank. Children of poor families could receive grants on the condition that they attend primary and secondary stages of education and pass their classes.

The amount of the grant was amended in a way that is advantageous for female students after 2005. Moreover, the quantity of the grant was augmented according to gender as long as the students continue with secondary education. No data was shared after the implementation of this intervention, making it hard to assess to what extent it was effective in terms of girls' schooling (MoNE Conditional Cash Transfer).

### 3.3.5 Campaigns and Projects

In order to keep to the international conventions, there has been a rapid increase in the number of campaigns after 2000 to enable every individual, particularly girls who are subjected to discrimination, to access education. These campaigns have yielded significant results and rendered it possible to reach a wider spectrum of population. The most effective one of these campaigns was the Haydi Kızlar Okula Campaign (Maya 2013).

The Haydi Kızlar Okula Campaign was started with the cooperation of UNICEF in the province of Van in 2003 with the purpose of removing individual and familial barriers to girls' schooling. The goal of the campaign was to eliminate the problem of disparity in primary school enrolment by the end of 2005 with the provision of basic education in 53 provinces where the schooling rate is lowest. The companies who invest in this campaign were awarded tax exemption and those investments were utilized in providing scholarship and textbooks for female students. 81 % of the girls who had been out of school were integrated into the system but the goal could not be fully attained (UNICEF 2003).

Another campaign in this regard is the Baba Beni Okula Gönder Campaign launched by the Doğan Media Group on 23 April 2005. The main objective of this campaign was to raise social awareness on this matter and improve the financial situation of girls who were out of the education system. Doğan Media Group has made a contribution of 1 million Turkish Liras to the campaign within 9 years and the total amount of donation has reached up to 35 million Turkish Liras. With this campaign, 33 dormitories and 12 primary schools were built and some 10,500 girls were given scholarships. Female students were also provided with the opportunity of benefitting from music courses and training programmes on career and health. Besides, Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) organized training seminars in 5 different provinces with the participation of 500 mothers and fathers.

Another project that aimed at integrating girls into the system is the Anadolu'da Bir Kızım Var Project. The goal of the project was, similarly to others, to provide equal opportunities for girls who could not attend school due to the poor financial condition of their families. It was also aimed with the project to turn the girls into modern individuals who have a profession. In line with this aim, the objectives were set as: increasing the schooling rate of girls up to 100 % in primary education stage, raising attendance rates in other stages as well, decreasing drop-out rates and bringing the importance of the matter to the attention of society. The project was launched by Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (ÇYDD) in 2001–2002 and reached up to 1267 female students in 2013–2014. These students received scholarship, participated in personal development programmes and attended social and cultural activities that were organised for them.

Kardelenler was another project on this matter. It was realized as a joint project of Turkcell and ÇYDD in 2000. The number of female students who received scholarship through this project is estimated to be over 100,000. Apart from scholarships, Turkcell also organised culture trips and various activities for these students with the purpose of expanding their horizon.

Ana Kız Okuldayız campaign was launched in 2008 within the framework of the MoNE regulation on Non-formal Education Institutions. The primary goal of the campaign was to increase literacy among adolescents and adults who are over the age of compulsory education and it was planned to be terminated in 2012, after a 4-year education period. The campaign also aimed at directing adults, particularly women, who could not take place in the education system due to low socioeconomic status and are over the age of compulsory education, towards higher education as well as providing them with necessary education to gain literacy. The objective was to enable 60 % of illiterate people to read and write.

Delegation of the European Union to Turkey launched the project of “Increasing Girls’ Enrolment at Secondary School Level” in 2007. The objective of this project was to increase enrolment rates, particularly for girls, in secondary education and the vocational education and training sector, to decrease drop-out rates, to increase the vocational skills and competences of the labour force. It was aimed to reach 43 provinces and the project was piloted in 12 of them. Catch-up courses were provided for the girls who had already dropped out of school and special modules were also developed to compensate the education of academically under-achieving students.

The impossibility of reaching clear data and detail on the campaigns states above constitutes a severe problem. No information can be found in the database of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) on the students who could or could not have access to these campaigns and on how effective the campaigns were.



### 3.4 An Indicator-Based Evaluation of the Related Policies and Implementations

Table 1 was prepared to demonstrate the change in gender equality in Turkey between the years 2010 and 2015. The two most recent years from which data could be retrieved for the three stages of education are 1999 and 2012. For literacy data, the two most recent years are 1995 and 2012. Participation of women and men are presented in percentages but for the year 1999, no percentages could be found for secondary education. Yet we have Gender Equality Index (GEI) data for that year. Gender Equality Index shows the proportion of women to men in given indicator values. A value between 0.93 and 1.03 refers to the existence of gender equality. Any value below that indicates an inequality against women while a higher value denotes an inequality against men (UNICEF).

It can be observed from the table that there is an increase in the percentage of participation in early childhood education from 1999 to 2000. It is possible to say that the participation rates are still low although an improvement is visible. There have been some campaigns, including monetary aid, aimed at raising awareness among families so that children's participation in pre-school education is ensured. "7 Çok Geç" (AÇEV 2005) and "3-4-5 Erken Eğitimi Seç" (UNICEF) campaigns drew considerable attention. Despite there being no specific goal or tendency towards increasing the participation of female students, there is not a significant difference in the participation rates of male and female students in 2012. A positive change is indicated between the given years in terms of GEI and there is no indication of an inequality against female students, according to the index.

The duration of compulsory education was 8 years in Turkey between the given years and in EFA 2015 Monitoring Report, data from the first 5 years of those 8 years was considered as part of primary education and evaluated accordingly. Last 3 years of the period were considered as the first stage of secondary education.

**Table 1** Turkey's gender-based enrollment and literacy rates and Gender Equality Index between EFA 2000 and 2015

Year	ECCE (Education) gross enrollment ratio (3–5 age)		Universal primary education gross enrollment ratio		Secondary education enrollment ratio				Literacy rate (15 and over)	
	1999	2012	1999	2012	Lower secondary		Upper secondary		1995–2004	2005–2012
Male (%)	7	31	107	101	...	102	...	78	95	98
Female (%)	7	30	98	99	...	100	...	71	80	92
GEI	0.93	0.97	0.91	0.99	0.91	0.99	0.68	0.92	0.84	0.93

Source It was composed of statistics from the EFA 2015 Global Monitoring Report

So, it would be accurate to evaluate them together. Data regarding the primary education and the first stage of secondary education indicates that the issue of gender imparity in primary education is almost completely resolved and equality is ensured to a large extent. It is the primary education stage in which most policies and interventions on closing gender gap in education were implemented. A number of campaigns were launched, monetary aid for families were provided and girls were given priority in YİBOs and student transfer based education practices. Incentives for the continuation of the successful campaigns and implementations are being provided and a special emphasis is put on this issue in the strategic plan.

According to the data regarding the second stage of secondary education, a dramatic decrease is present in both boys' and girls' schooling rates. There is a general decrease in schooling rates at this education stage and, compared to other stages, the gap between boys and girls is wider. This problem is touched upon in "the Ninth Five-Year Development Plan" and the project of "Increasing Girls' Enrolment at Secondary School Level" was put into practice during the same year. Supporting, particularly, girls who are or will be attending high school was the objective of "Kardelenler" and "Anadolu'da Bir Kızım Var" projects. The vast gender gap has been narrowed since 1999 but it is still far from the desired level. It is possible to anticipate further improvements on the matter together with the policy of 12-year compulsory education.

As can be inferred from the table, there have been improvements in gender equality in literacy rates but full equality has not been achieved yet. In the "National Action Plan for Gender Equality" certain precautions were planned to be taken in order to increase women literacy and "Anne Kız Okuldayız" project was put into practice in 2008. It can be asserted that this project made contributions to an improvement in gender index on literacy. However, there is a prediction in EFA 2015 Monitoring Report, under the predictions on literacy rates, that Turkey will not be able to make any progress. It is stated in the same report that the improvement might have stemmed from the replacement of older staff by a younger and educated one or the spread of mobile technology (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015). Still it is promising that, in the programme of the 64th government, there may be obligations to be imposed regarding this issue.

## 4 Conclusion

It can be said that, at the primary education level, Turkey has considerably achieved its gender parity goal which has a great importance for EFA and the policy and the projects have had undeniable influence on the achievement. However, it is difficult to say the same for other educational levels. Despite the fact that the gender imparity is not deep at early childhood education level, Turkey is among the countries which are far from the goal 2 aiming at reaching 70 % enrolment (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015). Early childhood education should be compulsory to achieve the enrollment ratio and the definite equality. When it is considered that

8-year compulsory education has worked at lower secondary education level, it is possible to think that a 12-year compulsory education will be effective at upper secondary education level. Thirteen-year compulsory education involving pre-school education may be the ideal solution for the problem.

The government should focus not only on primary education but also on other educational levels; early childhood, secondary and tertiary education. In addition, schooling should be achieved via both formal and informal education. Since lack of consciousness of mothers or women about the importance of education is among the reasons of girls' not going to school, it will be meaningful to reach these women by informal education (Stromquist 2006).

It is a fact that there are still some problems with the regional primary boarding schools. The physical conditions of these schools should be improved, the quality of education given should be enhanced and the number of these schools should be increased. In the same way, student transfer based education should be revised, improved and spread.

It is a well-known fact that families have a big role in their children's education life. Thus, since their involvement and support is notably important, paying attention to their participation to the education and decision process will be influential in sending their children to school more voluntarily (Maya 2013). During the campaigns, there were some meetings with the families and they were informed about the education and its importance. These trainings should continue to be spread.

Equality in point of numbers does not always mean gender equality has been achieved actually but it just means accessibility to education has been provided. Various measures should be taken to make both males and females benefit from education equally. It is really important to deal with gender imparity in the society first to be able to eliminate gender imparity in education and find permanent solutions for it.

Some precautions should be taken to remove gender parity in the society. First of all, the legal regulations should be gone over. It is also important for the government to be determined to make the changes and the decisions taken into consideration and applied. In a study, it has been asserted that there is not a meaningful difference in the attitude of men from different education levels towards violence and abuse against women (Altınay and Arat 2007). The study underlines that focusing on the solution of gender imparity in society is as important as the one in education.

Education has a crucial importance on providing gender parity. It should be avoided from sexist expressions and pictures in school books and the other materials making inequality deeper. The books should even have expressions supporting the equality (Stromquist 2006). Moreover, democracy and human rights education should be given importance at schools (Maya 2013).

Besides syllabuses, it is also important to lead teachers, directors and supervisors to exhibit supportive attitude towards gender parity and to provide an equitable atmosphere at school (Maya 2013; Stromquist 2006; Eurydice 2009; ERG 2008). Children learn not only from books but also observing people around them. Slight

awareness which will come to children may result in a butterfly effect (Ertürk 2012). If girls become aware of how important it is to be an educated person, they will be more demanding, enthusiastic and questioning in their education and social life. In this case, the change will be seen not only in classes and schools but also in other systems like family and society. For that reason, it is vitally important to eradicate the sexist approaches of school books and the sexist attitude and discourses of the actors of education. It is a fact that things which are thought to be small can cause bigger problems.

Making some change in male and female roles and raising the status of women are the key elements of solving the problem named before. Thus, making girls and women take educated and successful women as a model and rendering women more conscious increasing their literacy rates will be good attempts (Gümüş and Gümüş 2013).

To sum up, policy makers should take more appropriate and more specific decisions to make citizens benefit from education equally and to improve schools including their physical conditions, education programs, and the attitudes of the education actors since they all cause the problem to be reproduced. It will be useful to understand and interpret chaos theory which focuses on change and to apply it in complex systems such as schools to be able to solve the problem effectively. According to this theory, change is inevitable and it occurs within different parameters (Sayğan 2014). Based on the theory, it can be said that schools and their environment will undergo a transformation together affecting each other and this change will help the problem with a lot of variables to be solved.

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