

# **The Role of Teachers in Building Societal Peace**

## **How is the Kurdish Issue Projected onto School?**

Report on Field Research of Encouraging & Empowering Teachers as an Actor  
in Peace-Building & Democratization Project and Policy Proposals

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## Preface

There is a “moment” in some children’s lives. A moment when they find themselves enlightened in front of doors opening to all the secrets of life as a whole; of numbers, letters, wars, trees, mountains and meadows... In that moment, the kid understands what grammar and arithmetic, geography and history are good for. In fact, they help one to understand and believe in oneself and others, and to grow up as a person that would never lose enthusiasm... Most of the time, the hero of such moments is a teacher, who helps each and every student in a classroom to find his or her own unique way of life; an invaluable teacher.

The book that you are holding in your hands is prepared within the framework of a project that specifically aims to enhance teaching skills of educators who work in challenging social environments. The project, titled “Encouraging & Empowering Teachers as an Actor in Peace-Building & Democratization”, aimed at analysing the traumatic environment in Turkey, created through decades of violence and conflict, from the perspective of the field of education, developing policy proposals for change, and supporting skills and knowhow of primary school teachers and teacher candidates. The project was carried out jointly by Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly<sup>1</sup>, Boğaziçi University and Muş Alparslan University, in association with Van 100. Yıl University, and lasted from February 2012 to September 2013.

As part of the project, we organised seminars and workshops in Muş, Van, and Istanbul, which primary school teachers and teacher candidates participated in. These programmes aimed at providing educators with tools to deal with challenges that stem from the Kurdish issue—which affects the field of education as well as every other aspect of life—and to contribute to the

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<sup>1</sup> Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly (hCa) aims at transforming the principles of freedom, peace, human rights, an economical system based on ecological integrity and social justice, pluralist democracy, and the rule of law into practices of everyday life. In order to introduce these basic rights and freedoms accepted in international agreements and outlined by universal standards into daily life, hCa conducts activities that encourage the strengthening of pluralism, building inter-social peace processes and democratic methods, and conflict-resolution through dialogue, civic initiatives and politics. The Helsinki Final Act, which has founded the basis for the improvement of the necessary conditions of a peaceful environment in Europe, proclaimed human rights to be a common value that every community had to respect throughout the world. The word “Helsinki” in the organisation’s title refers to the exceptional importance of this agreement. hCa aims to extend the Helsinki process, which continues along with OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and the Charter of Paris, as well as at the level of states and governments. It believes that the goals, principles and values defined by the Act and other similar international instruments can only be realised from the grass-root level, and that inter-communal dialogue must be enriched.

establishment of an atmosphere of peace and reconciliation at school setting. With these programmes, we wanted to inform and inspire teachers on skills and approaches that could be employed to eradicate discrimination at the classroom and to democratically manage the classroom. The programmes were also instrumental in training teachers on creating a critical classroom environment while teaching contradictory issues.

This book, titled ***The Role of Teachers in Building Societal Peace / How is the Kurdish Issue Projected onto School?*** brings together the summary report of field research of the project and a series of policy proposals. The book also provides suggestions that were specifically developed to empower teachers who could play crucial roles in building societal peace. Teachers, parents, and teacher candidates expressed their opinions and experiences on how the Kurdish issue and conflict is projected onto school setting and everyday life through interviews conducted as part of field research. They provided suggestions, in light of their own experience, on what kind of support they may need in order to be more effective in building societal peace. All these interviews guided us in the preparation of this report.

The qualitative field research of the Encouraging & Empowering Teachers as an Actor in Peace-Building & Democratization project is based on focus group meetings and semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews with teachers, school administrative staff and parents of students in Muş, Van, and Istanbul.

The first chapter of the report, titled “Peace building, Education, and Teachers” presents an overview of approaches to the concept of “peace” and the relation between peace and education, while the second chapter elaborates on projections of the Kurdish issue onto the field of education. The chapter titled “Field Research” summarises findings from interviews with teachers, administrative staff and students’ parents which was the basis of an almost year-long field research and evaluates their opinions, experiences and suggestions on the issue. In the final chapter, “Policy Proposals” are presented for protecting children’s right to education in violent or conflicted zones, as well as approaches and reforms that could be integrated to the curriculum, the education system, and teachers’ training programmes. The policy proposals are presented under four main headings: School culture, school climate; Training teachers and the profession of teaching; Education in mother tongue; Locality, democracy, and school...

We hope that this study will contribute to the peaceful endeavours that would enlighten the lives of teachers, administrations, school staff, parents, and finally, children...

**Ebru Uzpeder**  
*Project Coordinator*

*"It is harder to crack prejudice than an atom."*

**Einstein**

## **Introduction**

The Republic of Turkey has long been in a historical process of intense social and physical violence and conflict. It is possible to talk of a general situation of "problem" between the Kurds of Turkey and the Republic of Turkey, although this has been referred to with many different names. And when physical conflict is not in a state of "low intensity warfare", in various platforms this problem reveals public demands of education in mother tongue, the freedom to use mother tongue in public domain, and equal citizen rights.

This report has been prepared within the framework of a project that had a specific objective of supporting the teaching skills of educators working at regions directly affected by the violence and conflict in the context of the Kurdish issue. The project, titled "Encouraging & Empowering Teachers as an Actor in Peace-Building & Democratization", was initiated with the belief and hope that in order to reach a resolution in the Kurdish-Turkish issue, in parallel to the government's policy making decisions, the education institutions that have an important role in the young people's lives, as well as the teachers who are one of the main components of these institutions, could contribute to the establishment of peace. Today, we see that Kurdish people—who have not really internalised the government schools and education throughout a certain period of the history of the republic—more and more believe in the power of education in improving things in their lives, and that they value education more and more. (Aktan H., 2012) Therefore, it is also important that this research was conducted in parallel to such a process.

Several education theories refer to "interrelations of school, education, culture, society, economy, and power". Education and school cannot be understood and defined with only pedagogical practices; it is task of educational sciences to analyse the relation between education and social, as well as to reveal the unfair practices, bring them into view and work towards a solution. Consequently, this project did not only try to evaluate and portray the teaching skills of the teachers of children and young people living in conflict zones; throughout the project, workshops and activities have also been organised to empower them.

The issue at hand implicates the field of education; nevertheless the problematic is directly related to a wider socio-economical and socio-political field, as well as the experiences of in-school education and pedagogy. This problematic could be analysed on a macro level with regard to social issues and the education system, as well as on a micro level with regard to inner-class practices. We have to find the answers of the following questions within this context:

- How is the Kurdish issue projected onto school?
- How and to what extent is the conflict projected onto the classroom environment?
- What kinds of situations do the teachers and other elements of school face at school?
- What kinds of situations do they face in the classroom?
- How do they cope with such problems, or why cannot they cope with them?

- What could be recommended on such an issue?

Even though the main objective of the research as part of the “Encouraging & Empowering Teachers as an Actor in Peace-Building & Democratization” project was to empower teachers, the subjects to the above-mentioned questions are students at school, as well as the teachers. Additionally, another very important aspect of the issue is the physical, spiritual, emotional, and psychological realities that the students in conflict zones find themselves within, when they cannot attend the school or leave it indefinitely. Teachers have to go beyond knowing the students in conflict zones; they have to understand them, to empathise with them, and to make the school a pedagogical environment that offers a democratic educational process where they can realise themselves. This is where the teacher and the school’s equipment come into scene. This report discusses how crucial both the pedagogical and educational skills of teachers and the school environment and culture are. What is at stake here is not only the sensitivity of the teachers of children who grew up in conflicted environments and who try to cling to life and to school. Sensitivity is the bare minimum of being human. The field that is problematized here is the empowerment of teachers in terms of what to do and what not to do when they share a classroom with children who have been living within the conflicted environment of “low intensity warfare” conditions, children who have been politicised, children coming from internally displaced families who suffer from forced migration – children who have chosen struggle over victimhood or children who silenced themselves as a mode of resistance (Güneş, 2013). The field research chapter of the project presents an extensive overview of a rich accumulation of experience, and case studies of successful and unsuccessful attempts of going past beyond the problems.

The relationship of the education system with the given social order demonstrates itself in a wide variety. The school being the ideological state apparatus is one of them. Althusser (1992) points out that it is important not to mix the ideological state apparatus with the repressive state apparatus. The function of the repressive state apparatuses (governments, army, police forces, jailhouses, courtrooms, etc.) is based on repressing and oppressing, but they also function as ideological apparatuses. Religious institutions, state or private schools, family, trade unions, communications, etc. function as the ideological state apparatus. The main difference between the ideological state apparatuses and the repressive state apparatuses is that the ideological state apparatuses function predominantly by ideology and not by repression. Notwithstanding this argument, it should specifically be kept in mind that schools can both be repressive apparatuses and ideological apparatuses. Nevertheless, the school is not always under the absolute control of the state. The school as a social organisation deserves being labelled as a field of struggle; as a *contested terrain*. It should never be forgotten that just like other social sciences, educational sciences are also inevitably political. As a matter of fact, when the relationship of Kurdish children with school is analysed, the relevance of the struggle practice becomes crystal clear. A study conducted by Ay (2013) analyses how children who have resettled in Mersin after forced migration resist the school and school climate in spite of their families, and how they use the school to transform the oppressive and hegemonic relationship towards their identities.

The conflict surfacing in the context of the Kurdish issue dates back to the times when Turkey was first established as a nation state. Political issues based on ethnical and/or racial differences specifically surface in such processes leading to the establishment of nation states around the world. The crucial thing here is how this issue is dealt with. In the time of nation states around the world, these ethno-political issues have always been tried to be suppressed with oppression and violence; violence is still a valid tool... In Ireland, in South Africa, in Spain’s Basque region, states have tried to suppress the struggle for rights by using violent forces for long years. There have been lots of

casualties. Finally, the conflicts in the aforementioned countries evolved into peace processes involving political negotiations.

Following the establishment of the nation state in Turkey, homogenisation politics were employed towards ethnic groups, who were seen as a threat to political unity. Armenians, Greeks, Arabs have been put through exclusion mechanisms such as population exchange, deportation, discrimination, or assimilation. Few Armenian, Greek, and Jewish citizens who stayed within the Turkish borders were equipped with rights to education and publication in mother tongue as well as freedom to practice religion, in accordance with the Lausanne Treaty. It is worth to note that these rights do not prevent social exclusion. As stated in the Constitution of 1924: Even though “there are people of other ethnicities in our country who are entitled to the rule of law,” “the state does not recognise any other nation than Turks;” because “our state is a nation state”. In this respect, the constitution was very clear: The citizens other than non-Muslim minorities recognised by the Lausanne Treaty were Turks, even if not, being a Turk was to be adopted as an identity.

Even though there was no prohibition of “mother tongue” in the Constitution of 1924, practices of banning the use of mother tongue at school have endured throughout the history of the Republic. The 80<sup>th</sup> article of the Constitution of 1924, the article dealing with education and teaching as part of the “Public Rights of Turks” section, merely states that “All kinds of lawful teaching under the government’s watch and supervision are free”. Nevertheless, unofficial testimonies show that this was not the reality during those years. For example, writer and researcher M. Recai Özgün tells about how the Laz language was oppressed:

“...In the 1930s, there were working teams at school, such as ‘Cleaning and Order Team’ or ‘Red Crescent Team’... One of the teams among these were ‘Struggle Team Against Those Who Speak in Laz Language’... I remember being the team captain for a while, in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I couldn’t make any sense of what I did at this team. Of course, I would warn those who spoke in Laz language at school, but when I came home, when I go up the village, I had no effect on my grandparents or my neighbours, who didn’t even know Turkish... Telling them not to speak in Laz language meant telling them not speak at all. They didn’t know any other language. When we told them not to, they would laugh at us, doubtful of our intelligence. This was such a huge contradiction. These conflicted emotions in my childhood would drive me to understand the roots of the issue, but I wouldn’t be able to find a way to explain these either. I would think myself as a hypocrite and as far as I remember, I would be very ashamed of myself.” (Lazca.org, 2013)

As seen in the above example, in Anatolian lands where different ethnical and religious groups live together, there have always been oppositions to assimilation efforts, either openly or secretly. Kurds, who are among the indigenous people of Anatolia, have also resisted assimilation; they fought for their cultural rights, identities, and autonomies. While explaining the reasons behind the strength and persistence of this resistance, Yeğen (2006) underlines the importance of Kurds being almost 15% of the population during the establishment of the republic (in most of the towns in the east of Firat river, this percentage was above 50) and continues:

*Communities who adopt a new country through migration generally show a tendency towards assimilation. The fact that for Kurdish people this tendency was not ‘that strong’ must be partly because they are the indigenous people of the land that they live in today. It is clear to see that the fact that they have long been living on the lands that they inhabit today has equipped the Kurds with a stronger sense of being ‘us’, when compared to immigrant communities (2006, p. 13).*



The Kurdish issue should be evaluated as a multi-layered, deep-seated problem that spans over a long historical process. While this study does not encompass this issue's historical progress or the struggle and the developments that occurred throughout these processes, it analyses its projections onto the educational environment. It is a fact widely known that Kurds have been subjected to hate speech or hateful actions because their struggle to gain a statute and autonomy and their staking a claim to their culture and their language is seen as a threat to the political unity of the country. As many school and educational experiences also show, Kurds have never been "desirable citizens". There are no other communities who had to practice death fast to attain the right to education in mother tongue, which is regarded internationally by the democratic community as an integral component of the right to education and a prerequisite of equality in education. The roots of this problem go back to when the nation state was first established, a process during which oppression politics were practiced, adopting a uniforming education, imposing unilingualism and neglecting lingual and cultural equality. Very recently, as of 2012-2013 school term, education in mother tongue has been boiled down to an issue to be solved with two hours of weekly elective courses. As we can clearly see, this is the violation of a basic principle of co-existence: it is by no means possible to bargain on the basic democratic rights of the citizens. It is of vital importance for the teachers and the school administration to be aware of the problems, inequalities and discriminations caused by the lack of multilingual education.

One of the crucial points about the problem that is publicly known as the "Kurdish issue" is the oppression on the Kurdish language, identity, and culture. Once the nation state was built, the official ideology stated that there were no Kurds in Turkey, and that Kurdish was a degenerated dialect of Turkish. Some scientists, "esteemed" opinion leaders, and media outlets admitted this approach. This demonstrates a "successful" example of the education system functioning as the state's ideological apparatus as conceptualised by Althusser. What is even worse, after the 1980 coup-d'état, speaking in Kurdish was banned altogether. While the previous constitutions stated that "the official language of the state is Turkish", the Constitution of 1982 narrowed this statement down: "the language of the state is Turkish". Actually, this narrowed definition was practiced as an explicit prohibition of language as stated in the 26<sup>th</sup> article, part of the "Freedom of Expression and Dissemination of Thought" chapter: Even though the chapter's title includes the word freedom, the borders of this freedom is drawn bluntly: "No languages prohibited by law can be used to express or disseminate thought." Another prohibition is stated in the constitution's "Right and Obligation to Education and Learning" chapter. "...No other language than Turkish can be thought to Turkish citizens as mother tongue in the educational institutions. Principles regarding schools teaching in foreign languages as well as the foreign languages that these schools would teach will be regulated by law..."

The process following the 1980 coup did not only feature the denial of diverse identities; there were tortures leading to the total eradication of the Kurdish identity, in many different places, and in the Diyarbakır Military Prison in particular. Following these oppression and denial politics, part of Kurdish youth decided to participate in armed struggle. The alternative to being a part of the educational system was to "go up to the mountains". In eastern and south-eastern towns, there are some families who had one child at school, another one on the mountains, and another one in the army.

The "ideological state apparatus" function of the education system was employed in a multi-faceted fashion in Turkish society, due to the belated nation state establishment process. The institutes for girls should also be mentioned here. The Republic's founders, who wanted to reach the civilisation degree of the western world, designed the institutes for girls as a part of the official educational system in order to raise the new modern state's model women citizens. These schools were part of the pursuit of a new family style that would help build a "healthier" and stronger nation. It is known

that the institutes for girls targeted the development of “successful housewives, who would be flawless house managers with outmost national and democratic values”. A very striking example of these institutes functioning as a tool of assimilation in Kurdish towns is the Elazığ Institute for Girls. The situation is clearly shown in the book *Dağ Çiçeklerim* (Mountain Flowers) by Sıdıka Avar, where the writer collects 20 years’ memoirs from her years at the Elazığ Institute for Girls and the Bingöl-Tunceli region. The information provided in this book shows that the educational system of this period had gone beyond shaping a new community and establishing a citizenship regime; it represented an assimilationist approach linked to a colonialist relationship (Gök, 2011 p.104). We will also talk about the regional boarding primary schools (YİBO) later on, as these were other important settings for assimilation during that period. The YİBO were frequently mentioned during the in-depth interviews as well as the focus group discussions.

Textbooks should also be particularly analysed. A few years ago, the History Foundation published a research, analysing textbooks with regards to human rights. Yamanlar (2001) points out to a contradiction in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Citizenship and Human Rights Textbook:<sup>2</sup> While the 42<sup>nd</sup> article of the Constitution says “nobody can be deprived of the right to education and learning”, it also states that “no other language than Turkey can be taught to Turkish citizens as mother tongue in educational institutions” (p. 104). While putting these two statements together, nobody paid attention to the fact that this creates a contradiction for children whose mother tongue is not Turkish. Here is a quotation from the a chapter of the Citizenship and Human Rights textbook of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, titled “Being National in Contemporary Education” by Nihat Bilgen:

*“Education should provide our people with the Turkish identity. The unwavering features of the national and spiritual values of this identity should contain the flag with the star and the crescent, the holy lands of our country that are soaked with the martyrs’ blood, as well as our dear nation.”* (p. 101)

Education and the schools have undertaken very important functions in the eastern and south-eastern parts of Turkey, as one of the tools of legitimising the hegemony of the state. The tradition of a centralist and security-based state has regarded the Kurdish people’s claims of their cultural, lingual and identity rights, as well as their demands of autonomy and self-determination, as a path towards separatism and responded with violence and/or ideological repression mechanisms.

One of the most important violations of educational rights is the lack of education in mother tongue. The experiences of the educators interviewed as part of the field research for this report, as well as the teachers, parents and administrative staff that participated in the focus group discussions provided us with very important information. During the interviews conducted at schools with a higher percentage of Kurdish students in Van, Muş and Istanbul, we have seen that teachers were helpless. The school is a place of contradictions and it does not have a pedagogical structure based on freedom and equality. In order to deal with the Kurdish students’ street-life practices, which can even turn into clashing with the state, it is necessary to re-formulise the school, the teacher, as well as the dominant perception and culture at school. Students or not, children are deeply wounded by the conflict environment. Additionally, the conflict is observed to sharpen the discriminative behaviours between girls and boys among the children... A teacher we interviewed in Van told us that many children are forced to begin working at very early ages, due to the fact that their fathers are political convicts or prisoners. These kids work at hazardous jobs, working all through the night. When asked how teachers deal with conflict-based problems, the same teacher said: “If the educator

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<sup>2</sup> This subject is no longer a part of the curriculum. In 2011, the Citizenship and Democracy course was included in the 8th grade curriculum.

is sensitive, he/she embraces the kid, it is mostly the Kurdish teachers who do this. The teacher keeps a pencil, books, shoes, textbooks at their lockers for these students; they pay the students' exam fees (TL 15). Teachers coming from outside (teachers who are not Kurdish) do not behave the same way, they even make the students wear gloves because they are dirty." Darıcı (2009) in the article titled *Violence and Freedom: The Politics of Kurdish Children*, analyses how children of very early age are becoming political at the Gündoğan neighbourhood of Adana, where internally displaced people reside. Through everyday practices and subjective narratives, Darıcı tells us about complex yet informative situations that introduce the kids with politics and mobilise them within the Kurdish movement. For the Kurdish children, the struggle against the state and its institutions is a struggle against oppression. Darıcı shows us how they go beyond the standards of their families, and even of the Kurdish movement, transforming the politics of this movement (p. 17).

The "Policy Recommendations" chapter of this report suggests a set of solutions for the above-mentioned issues. For example, the pedagogical and psychological damage created by the lack of education in mother tongue may be avoided at classrooms of teachers who know Kurdish. The schools being reformed as a place of freedom and democracy, the reformulation of teachers' training programmes are also among the recommendations presented in this chapter.

The first chapter of the report, titled "Peace-building, Education and Teachers" presents different approaches to the concept of "peace", as well as the relation of peace and education. The second chapter features the background of Turkish-Kurdish issue in the educational field of Turkey. Later on, the findings of the field research held in Muş, Van, and Istanbul as well as the opinions, experiences and recommendations of teachers and students' parents regarding the issue are evaluated. The final chapter presents policy recommendations regarding the school culture and climate, training of teachers, education in mother tongue, and localisation in the field of education.

### **Peace Building, Education and Teachers**

Peace is a frequently used concept, however one can't say we dwell on its meaning, discuss it or agree upon it. How could we answer the question "What is peace?" What does peace specifically mean in context of Kurdish-Turkish conflict/issue? We should first think of how and where to search the answer of these inquiries. Should we look at everyday practices? Should we assume there is a supracultural and universal meaning of peace? Could one reconcile how peace reaches out with demands of a section of society? Could one speak of peace, or institute it when there is inequality in the distribution of power? How should the issue of representation be brought up for discussion with regard to peace? Between which types of entities could one establish peace? Should we settle for a negative definition of peace -- in other words could one say "the absence of x, y, z" be called "peace"? Or at least for some specific contexts could we speak of a positive definition and under which conditions could it be brought about? Is it possible to think of sufficient and required conditions for peace in certain contexts? We just mentioned peace as a "condition" -- is peace just a name of a certain condition or is it something more? What if it extends over attitudes and a process which takes a certain time, isn't handling it as a condition is deficient then? What about "peace process"? What makes us say whether or not the peace process is on course, what is it that makes us think this process is interrupted? This report aims to discuss how the Kurdish/Turkish issue is projected onto the field of education and the role of teachers in peace process, with a perspective on the historical context of Kurdish/Turkish issue. This section will examine different perspectives on societal peace that are related to education.

The study which was used as a source for this report has an empirical research leg that consists of focus group meetings and face-to-face in-depth interviews with teachers and parents in Van and Muş

and neighborhoods of Istanbul that receive intense internal migration from eastern and southeastern Anatolia. To turn back to the issue of perceptions of peace, the following anecdote may perhaps portray the multitude of diverse understandings encountered. Upon reading the “Information and Consent Form”, which informs the participants of the research topic and guarantees the secrecy of personal information and participants’ rights, a teacher interviewed in Istanbul said, “I will sign this, but I don’t agree with the phrase ‘peace process’. Peace could only be between countries. Talking about peace within country borders is meaningless”. The teacher then signed the form after striking through the words “peace process” and consented to interview. Talking about peace process of course covertly implies present conditions involve a kind of armed conflict, war or disagreement. We observed other teachers in interviews distancing themselves from such implications, though not going so far as striking through the phrase “peace process”. These teachers expressed that one should not give credit to the expressions of those who intendedly try to play people against each other. When looking at the Kurdish/Turkish issue as one of mutual coexistence and thinking on its projections upon education, one could say that the mutual recognition of the existence and respectful expression of different identities and opinions without any exclusion or humiliation, as well as the assurance of equal and democratic participation in society are prerequisites of peace. It is hard to say current conditions match these prerequisites. As seen on surveys of textbooks (Çotuksöken, Erzan & Silier, 2003; Tüzün, 2009) alienation of most ethnic groups in the country, portraying them as internal enemies, furthermore perceiving differences as threats to unity and conditioning them so as to match the preferences of dominant elements of the society in nation building process does not seem to serve peace. Furthermore, a narrative of history that strengthens prejudice and the projection of this attitude to education and social life does not serve peace either. Eventhough textbook writing partially improved as a result of critical studies in recent years, there is still much to be done. All primary and secondary schools in Turkey use the same history book which is approved by the Ministry of National Education. No matter the content of the books, the process of understanding and internalisation that pupil go through is guided by teachers and it is imperative to empower teachers as actors that could have a critical position on building peace.

### **Where to begin peace building?**

One could argue there are two major approaches to a discussion of social conflict/peace and what to do about it between educators. One is based on the notion that if one could raise individuals with behaviour, manner and abilities that serve peace, then the social conflict would be resolved and setting for peace could be instituted, independent of the socio-political context of conflict. The motto “peace starts with the individual” symbolises this approach. The second one sees socio-political context of the conflict as determinant and argues that social peace could not truly be established unless national and transnational policies and attitudes of critical actors that escalate conflict is changed. Some peace education programmes are criticised with the argument that they serve the interests of hegemonic authority or power loci, as they prevent communities from pursuing right struggles and pacify them towards coexisting with prevailing conditions without conflict.

Even though there are commendable arguments for both approaches, in this section it is argued that the lack of collaboration and communication between the two approaches prevent both approaches from complementing each other and that this is something that should be worked on. Our starting point will be that finding a common ground and moving towards social peace from there is an important step.

The project “Empowering Teacher as an Actor in the Peace Process” was developed with a belief and hope that teachers could make important contributions to social peace, with help from each other, civil society and institutional arrangements. These important actors could complement state policy

decisions that help resolve the Kurdish/Turkish issue. As we stress necessity and importance of support for teachers' contribution to peace process, we should also remind ourselves that part of the responsibility lies with educational and state institutions and it will be beneficial to develop recommendations on how this assistance could take shape.

If a pilot scheme yields results, it could potentially push political actors to take action. A similar study about discrimination was carried out a short while ago by a team from Istanbul Bilgi University with contribution from teachers working on the field. Its results were published as a book, *Ayrımcılık: Örnek Ders Uygulamaları* (Çayır & Alan, 2012).

One could say that socio-political and socio-psychological aspects are the two major elements that characterise ongoing wars, conflicts and social disagreement. It is of course imperative not to overlook the fact that these two aspects are always interacting. One cannot tackle certain aspects of conflict such as fear, violence, hate rhetoric or lack of mutual confidence independent from either the historical, political, economical aspects or from social demands, struggles and inequality of rights/power. Since 1970s, the concept of peace building treats peace not as a situation, but as an active social process. Johan Galtung (1973) who coined the term "sustainable peace" underlined the importance of building structures and systems that would support peace through the mobilisation of local capacities, acting on the basis of analysing the fundamental reasons of conflict. Galtung also proposed two concepts of peace, negative and positive. "Negative peace" represents a setting of non-conflict where there is no physical or direct violence between groups. "Positive peace" represents processes that include mutual understanding, acceptance and cooperation. Another important term that Galtung contributed to the peace literature was "structural violence". It refers to aspects of inequality, injustice and violence those projects onto social structure, which could sometimes become institutionalised. For Turkish/Kurdish issue, the lack of violence between PKK and the Turkish Armed Forces could qualify as "negative peace" but fast and decisive steps need to be taken to build positive peace.

Another author who contributed to the literature on peace education is Gavriel Salomon (2002) who says that peace education has different meanings for different individuals and settings. In some instances, peace education may change the way of looking at the problem or intellectual setting. Its fundamental aim is to establish mutual understanding, respect and tolerance between historical rivals (Oppenheimer, Bar-Tal & Raviv, 1999) and cases in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Israel are cited as examples (Cairns & Hewstone, 2002). In other instances peace education aims to improve conflict resolution skills and establishment of anti-violence attitudes. School programmes such as conflict resolution and peer mediation could be cited as examples. Mostly in third world countries human rights advocacy takes on a primary role, but Salomon (2002) states peace education programmes in relatively affluent countries could encompass disarmament, environmental awareness and peace culture (p. 4).

The project workshops for teachers and teacher candidates held twice in Van, Muş and Istanbul on fall 2012 and spring 2013 had components from the three approaches stated above. The sessions began by participants telling their opinion on and evaluation of the projection of conflict in school setting and continued with awareness building activities on covert curriculum, discrimination, fundamental rights, individual and social pain/traumas, acceptance and evaluation of students. The workshops also included activities that would enhance skills that participants expressed a need of during the preparatory sessions. These activities focused on topics such as democratic administration of classroom, critical thinking, communication skills, and discussion of challenging issues in classroom. The workshop programmes are presented in Annex 1-6. The workshops were able to bring teachers and teacher candidates with different views and approaches together in a setting facilitating constructive dialogue. The workshops also enabled the discussion of issues that lie on the

intersection of Kurdish issue and the field of education. It is not possible to facilitate these discussions, which are considered taboos, neither on teachers' training in faculties of education, nor on in-service trainings delivered by Ministry of National Education or NGOs.

It is clear that recommendations for peace building should be authentic to the context and developed with an eye on the socio-political context of the issue, and with a thorough knowledge of actors and prevailing conditions as well as an in-depth understanding of reasons of disagreement and demands. However, there are many things to be learned from experiences in actual conflict zones, previous programmes and their apparent impact. Three contributors shared their experiences through presentations and answered questions of participants in the workshops. Mario Novelli from Sussex University Centre for International Education gave a presentation on the role of education in conflict zones from around the world and peace building, Neşe Yaşın from Cyprus University and Lucy Nusseibeh from Al-Kuds University Institute of Modern Media gave presentations on experiences of Cyprus and Palestine/Israel respectively. Participants' evaluations suggested that the presentations were useful so far as they provided adaptable examples and implementation tools.

While Salomon (2002) suggests a classification which could make the transfer of experience in peace education simpler, it makes a point that in intractable conflict zones peace education programmes should take into account a cascading interaction of layers as opposed to small scale peace education in zones of conflict where issues don't have yet penetrated deep into collective memory. It will be more fitting to think of Kurdish/Turkish issue in the intractable category. Azar (1990) says that ethnic/national/religious rivalries are interlocked with long periods of unequal development and despair regarding future, which seem to be a fitting definition for Kurdish/Turkish issue. Salomon (2002) classifies the obstacles that programmes of peace building may face, with regard to three aspects of the issue: First, the conflict is not between persons but is social and between communities. Second, there is a bitter collective memory of and collective tales regarding the long history of the issue. And finally, the conflict is nested in deep inequalities (pp. 7-8). While Kurdish/Turkish issue is a conflict based on ethnic identity, there are interlocking issues such as education in mother tongue or right to social services—both of which could be seen through perspective of fundamental human rights and citizenship rights—as well as economic inequality between regions.

Stories of the bitter history of the conflict that is ingrained in the memories of people—also including teachers and parents that we interviewed—of South Eastern Anatolia where the Kurdish population is at its most intense level, are conveyed between generations: villages forcefully evacuated and later burnt down, home raids, forced migration and poverty, tough conditions in places of relocation, humiliation and discrimination, being treated as a terrorist because of ethnical background, torture of close associates under custody and sometimes eventual loss, an unfulfilled pursuit for justice, close associates who join the militants who sometimes return in a coffin or are never heard from again, traumas of children who are alienated from school because they can't find anything in common with their culture at school, an educational setting where speaking mother tongue is persecuted, children afraid because ethnic background of their family will come under attention (in big cities, destinations of migration), parents afraid of going to school... Being able to listen to collective memories of the other side has a strong impact for both sides, but especially for the side that feels they were treated unjust and were historically oppressed. Interviewed teachers, who were raised in western and northern parts of Turkey and assigned to eastern and southeastern provinces, say what they have seen and heard there have especially been transformative. The project workshops also featured activities where family narratives were conveyed. In a session titled "What's in my luggage?" the participants listened to personal and family stories of each other, they re-told

these stories as if they were their own, and then they conveyed what kind of an impact this experience had on them.

In an essay discussing critical pedagogy of peace education, Shapiro (2002) underlines the validity of the claim that justice is a prerequisite for peace. With the authors' own words, "Human history, with all of its miseries, suffering, exploitation, genocide and brutalizing of one group of people by another, ensures that the degree of stored up pain and anger is, unfortunately, abundant. The demand for justice, if not vengeance, is not easily satisfied. It is because of this that the process of peacemaking – the bargaining between aggrieved parties- is often a glacial process, full of heartbreaking misunderstandings, difficulties and failures. (p. 64). As it could be recalled, the previous peace process regarding Kurdish/Turkish issue ended without any resolution in 2011 because of national "sensitivities" and escalating mutual violence. Then some authors (eg Hasan Cemal [Milliyet, 3 December 2011], Mithat Sancar [2009]) wrote in their articles that peace should be taken as a process and that processes like these took years in different cases around the world and reminded resolution required patience and determination. Neither them, nor calls by groups that suffered from escalating conflict, civic initiatives like Saturday Mothers or Appeal for Justice for Children, or works of civil society organisations (Anadolu Kültür, DİSA, TESEV and others) could prevent the peace process from leaving its place to a re-escalating conflict. In this timeframe, political arrests increased significantly along with armed conflict. It is estimated that there are thousands of people arrested in connection to PKK-KCK investigations. Because of new arrests and releases following court trials, it is hard to reach an exact figure.

With the restart of ceasefire and restart of negotiations in the beginning of 2013, the peace process was revived, however the interviewed teachers from Muş and Van said eventhough they wanted to be hopeful, due to previous experience they had concerns about fragility of the process and were not always sure whether to trust the government or not. However some teachers said they observed a more hopeful and jubilant atmosphere on streets after relaunch of peace process, following a year of heavy armed fighting and an almost two month hunger strike started by political prisoners in October 2012.

The most significant change from the previous year regarding education was that for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic, Kurdish could be a part of the curriculum as an elective course at schools where there was sufficient demand. Interviewed teachers said that Kurdish as a two hour elective course was far from meeting demands of education in mother tongue. Some Kurdish citizens are even reported to have said that proposing Kurdish as a two hour elective course was akin to insult. And the school year of 2012-2013 was mired with problems regarding the elective course. The lack of communication with parents and students about elective courses and the insufficiency in the number of teachers that have the ability and necessary certification to instruct in Kurdish because of former government policies, as well as the unwillingness of school administrators to open elective courses is frequently voiced by both teachers and parents. If there is genuine interest in establishing an inclusive and pluralist school culture, as opposed to an exclusive one, teaching not only the hegemonic but also languages that relate to all cultures in Turkey should be encouraged. Furthermore, criticism on methods of teaching mother tongue as a foreign language with only a few hours a week should be regarded with utmost care. Studies on and pilot implementations of multilingual models of education that respect demands of education in mother tongue as a human right, that evaluate the impact of language policies implemented in Turkey and that make use of the pedagogical advantages of assigning a proper place to mother tongue in education should be encouraged (See Coşkun, Derince, Uçarlar, 2010; Eğitim-Sen [2011, 2013]; DİSA [2011a, 2011b]; Derince [2012]).

Shapiro (2002) says that one primarily needs negotiation and confrontational reconciliation to break the vicious circle of violence, hate and injustice, but also defends something more than an agreement between political leaders is needed for peaceful cohabitation of people. For Shapiro, this kind of an existence is not possible without a transformative change in widespread cultural attitudes, beliefs and behaviour, in fact, without a fundamental change in people's methods of interaction with those who share their earthly existence. While political accord is necessary for a world where differences are accepted with respect and violence is eliminated, it is not sufficient. In the same article Shapiro expresses hope for the development of a new education system where we could keep away our children from dangerous stereotypical judgements and intolerant, dismissive behaviour and take a lesson from the savagery and barbarism of the past century. The author says that in spite of what some political or business leaders may want us to believe, the qualitative superiority of the next century will lie not with increasing technological abilities but with not exerting violence on each other and make each other suffer (p. 64). Also as Shapiro reminds us, many past and present atrocities in the world is connected to the creation of masses that unquestioningly implement the orders they receive. Just as independent and critical thinking, obedience to authority is also a learned behaviour. Democratic citizenship does not come naturally; it is only possible through a supporting system and education. Individuals who grow up in democratic environments can internalise a critical approach instead of directly obeying the authority; avoiding behaviours that fail to comply with human dignity. Additionally, they are more likely to feel responsible about the decisions made. With this in mind, it would be beneficial for us to review the definition of desirable student and desirable citizen in Turkey. As research on this matter (Üstel, 2004) also stress, especially in the aftermath of the 1980 coup, the curriculum anticipates a homeland that constantly is in need of protection against internal and external threats, as well as obedient individuals and a citizenship and campaign of "extraordinary situation" (Üstel, 2004, p. 328) It can be said that until the 2004-2005 educational term, the dominant understanding of education and the teaching programmes were glorifying nationalism and state authority.

With regulations of 2004 "ability to think critically" is now a common skill that is aimed to be developed in all classes (M.E.B 2004, 734). But as *Ders Kitaplarında İnsan Hakları II – Tarama Sonuçları* (2009) report on the survey of textbooks regarding human rights states, there are still phrases that go against this objective in textbooks. For example statements like "Adopts the world view of Atatürk and becomes a defender of his thought system" (M.E.B. 2006, article 8) found among the main objectives of 8th grade history course, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İnkılâp Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük*, limit the object of critical evaluation. An education programme, which presets and limits what perspectives a student could adopt can't support free thought or rational critical thinking and grounding of new information. Another frequent occurrence in textbooks is basing the validity of an argument on references to authority. This has the impact of reinforcing the perception of "things that a respectable authority figure says must be true and accepted as such" and does not reinforce the adoption and use of reasoning.

Wintersteiner (2010) states that after 1945, firstly the apolitical approach of "education for international understanding" was more dominant but from 1970s onwards, a more political approach, namely "critical peace education" became widespread (p.57). According to Wintersteiner, the concept of "culture of peace", which took hold as culture became more dominant in social theory in 1990s, bridges the gap between that which is personal and which is political. "For much too long, some highlighted the role of political structures, and thus neglected the subject, the learners, while others emphasized the role of consciousness of each single person and thus ignored the impact of the political structures. ... The concept of a culture of peace is likely to overcome this false opposition. It is the missing link between the psychological or pedagogical and political approaches. It integrates both into a comprehensive model of social transformation" (Wintersteiner, 2010, p. 56).



Asan (2007) summarizes UNESCO's suggestions for the transformation to a culture of peace:

1. A culture of peace should consist of a culture of social interaction and sharing, based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, tolerance and solidarity,
2. a culture that rejects violence, endeavours to prevent conflicts by tackling their roots and to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation,
3. a culture which guarantees everyone the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the endogenous development of their society.
4. The implementation of such a project requires a collaboration of education, culture, communication and social sciences. (Çev. Asan, 2007, s. 169).

Working on the culture of peace, de Rivera (2004) states that there are four measurable dimensions of culture of peace. The first one is what de Rivera calls liberal development, measured through freedom of press, gross domestic product, average life expectancy, democracy, literacy and the status of women in social life. The second dimension is inequality, based on the gini coefficient, which gives an idea on income inequality, in addition to some human rights metrics. The third one is non-violence dimension, which takes into account defense spending and incarceration ratio; and the last one is the fundamental dimension that takes into account budget for education, opportunities provided to refugees and the representation ratio of women in the parliament.

Whether the studies and education models centered on the concept of culture of peace give enough weight to power inequality, power relations, confrontation and social justice for social conflict is a contentious issue. Gur-Ze'ev (2001) thinks the approach of UNESCO (1995) declaration to culture of peace is based on negative peace (defining peace as non-conflict) and criticises it because the declaration gives the idea, as if teaching conflict resolution skills could lead to overcoming social injustices.

In the article titled "Reclaiming Critical Peace Education", Bajaj (2008) defends a "critical peace education", which is attentive to structural inequalities and to which empirical research targeting understanding/reproducing the local knowledge of participants becoming transformative subjects is central. This approach is reminiscent of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) and Frankfurt School. Galtung (1969) a theorist of critical peace education in 1970s, also mentions that social and economical injustices are an impediment to total peace.

We also think that peace that is confined to non-violence and that does not address demands for social justice is not sustainable and conflict cannot be resolved with trainings that disregard the power relationships that belie the conflict. This study presents recommendations on how to support teachers as peace building actors in the Kurdish/Turkish conflict within a framework of democracy, equal participation and social justice. The findings from the field research and the resulting recommendations are presented in the following chapters.

## **Projections of the Kurdish Issue onto the Field of Education and Teachers**

There is a two-way relationship between the Kurdish issue and the national education system in Turkey. The national education system is one of the reasons behind the Kurdish issue and the social conflict that it creates, while the existence of the Kurdish issue is one of the determinant factors of the national education system. This two-way relation might be more visible when it is considered that what gave life to the education system is the distinctive imagination of a discriminative, informing mind-set that belongs to the nation state structure, which is itself one of the reasons behind the Kurdish issue's permanency over decades.

While focusing on the projections of the Kurdish issue and the social conflict around it onto the school environment, and how teachers deal with the situation, the research was shaped around the following questions:

- What is the teachers' assessment of social conflict and the problems it creates?
- What are the problems based on social conflict that are faced with in the school and classroom?
- How do teachers define the conflict-based problems that they face at the school and the classroom?
- Do teachers believe in themselves to be able to overcome these problems?
- What kinds of methods do teachers use to deal with such issues?
- Do teachers find themselves qualified to overcome these issues?
- What kinds of empowerment do the teachers need to overcome these issues?
- Are there any institutions or people who would support them while dealing with these issues?
- What kind of a role could the teachers have in establishing societal peace?
- Which skills do the teachers need to be equipped with?
- How do they evaluate the teachers' training system and in-service trainings?
- What are the teachers' recommendations regarding building societal peace and confronting realities?

The following chapter explains in detail how these questions were formulated and how the field research was conducted. The findings and evaluations of the interviews with these questions can also be found in the next chapter. This chapter elaborates on the establishment and maintenance of national education in Turkey, the relationship of the Kurdish issue and education, societal conflict, societal peace, confrontation and education/teachers, and finally, the teachers' assignment system and in-service training in Turkey.

## **Establishment and maintenance of “national education” in Turkey**

The nationalisation of education is a project that began with the establishment of the Republic. As stated in many different studies (Keyman, 2013; Kaplan, 1999; Ahmad, 2006; İnal, 2004; Aydın, 1998; Üstel, 2004) this was a social engineering project targeting the modernisation of social, political and cultural life. Within this context, we see that education in Turkey is has been institutionalised as part of the Kemalist modernisation project, beginning from the early Republican era. During the legitimisation and persistence process of the state, which claimed to be modern and reformist, education functioned practically as a reflection of the desire to unify the individual with the societal through disciplinary and authoritarian fields such as school.

As targeted by the modernisation project, education has been given important roles in the transformation of communities into national societies. Through opportunities provided by education, the society that was homogenised as part of the Kemalist vision and materialised as a national ego, would act and obey this factual imagination. While a new nation was created with Kemalist ideological practices, “the identities of the state and the citizens who bring it into existence have begun to overlap” (Suavi Aydın, 1998, s. 22). The people who adopted this new identity were imagined by the Kemalist ideology as a standardised mixture united around “common goals”, a group of people who are inseparable, identical, and complementary. Throughout this process, especially the institutions monopolised by the state have remarkably increased the functionality of the power structure, and the Kemalist ideology’s pursuit of functionality have been put into practice through education. Not only children and youth but also the whole population was subject to education: Turkish Hearths, Community Centres, Nation’s Schools, Turkish Historical Society, and Turkish Language Association were run under state supervision, as institutions that reproduced the (educational, directing, and disciplining) discourse. The modernist and positivist organisation of the Republic and the educational ideology that was developed around it adopted a political methodology that would minimise opportunities for resistance in all fields of daily life, through the help of numerous comprehensive mechanisms. The state tried to establish its own knowledge generation system and its own reality regime with mechanisms such as the Alphabet Reform. The institutionalisation of education as a pacifying tool resulted in different identities’ exclusion by the state’s official ideology (Kurds, Alevis, LGBT people, ...) abstaining from expressing their differences, in order to be a part of the system.

### **The Kurdish issue and education**

There are several researches and studies that have analysed the relation of Kurdish issue and education, with regard to different contexts, through different qualitative and quantitative variables. There are more and more studies capturing the uniforming, discriminating, nationalist, racist, militarist, sexist, conservative, elitist spirit of Turkey’s educational system, through different perspectives, contexts, periods and localities. This discriminative, uniforming, and conservative mind-set besieges all public and private domains alike, through the means of the state. Therefore, it is not possible to analyse the educational system without considering the interrelations of school, power structures, society, and the individual. It is also not possible to speak about education without taking into account the structure that was created among the aforementioned net of relations. While some of the previous researches underline these facts, it is seen that either consciously or not, several studies ignore these interrelations.

As a multi-layered, complex problem, the Kurdish issue’s projections onto the educational system create a twofold effect. While the existence of the Kurdish issue affects the knowledge produced and organised by the educational system, in many ways, the knowledge that is produced and organised

by the system nourishes the existence of the Kurdish issue. Until recently, the national educational system was disabled by politics of denial and assimilation, making it impossible for Kurds to exist in this mechanism without concealing their ethnical identities. Arayıcı (1999) expresses this clearly:

*In 17 eastern provinces and villages where Kurds who lack education in mother tongue live, there are great differences between the town and the village, and between women and men, in terms of population's (ages of 6 and above) rate of literacy in the "official language". The main reasons behind this are the insufficient school resources and teachers, and most important of all, the fact that the people living there are prohibited from education in mother tongue and their own cultures, and that for long years they have been subject to assimilation and racist politics.*

Similarly, Işık and Arslan (2012), discusses in detail how boarding schools in Kurdish towns function as institutions of assimilation. The spatial (confinement similar to prison) and educational-lingual (central- Turkish) organisation model as well as the regional dissemination of the boarding schools (as of 2008, more than half of the YİBOs are functioning in Kurdish towns) might be regarded as indicators of the assimilation politics.

Nevertheless, the popularisation of long-term resistance practices prevented the success of the politics based on the denial of different identities. The recent development of Kurdish being taught at school as an elective course indicates a positive change in the state's political stance. While the state accepts the existence of Kurds, it is hardly possible to say that exclusion is eradicated. As Saraçoğlu (2011) states, it is now the case of "excluding with recognition". Undoubtedly, this recognition mostly depends on the categorisation of Kurds into a group of people with several qualities that are attributed to them. Since the language produced by the middle class "is mostly expressed through a rhetoric of humiliation, in practice, the recognition process cannot be regarded as free from exclusion" (72).

A study that is similar to what Saraçoğlu did with the middle class in İzmir is Çağlayan, Özar, and Doğan's (2011) research focusing on Kurdish women who have resettled in metropolises after forced migration. This study narrates how Kurdish women are excluded with recognition in daily life. The stories of Kurdish women who conceal their identities in order to prevent recognition and exclusion, who try to change their dialects in order to be able to find a job, clearly shows the unhealthy and asymmetrical relation of the society with Kurdish people, through striking examples. Parallel to this, practices of exclusion with recognition such as TRT 6 and elective Kurdish courses provide a basis for Kurds to be subjected to discrimination in different levels.

In their book titled *Türkiye'de Kürtler ve Toplumsal Algılar* (Kurds and Social Perceptions in Turkey)<sup>3</sup>, Bilgiç and Akyürek (2012) also provide assessments regarding education. The book compiles 192 in-depth interviews conducted in 2009, in 19 Kurdish towns<sup>4</sup> in eastern and south-eastern Turkey, in Mersin—a major immigration destination of the last decade—and in 5 western towns of Turkey that have previously received internally displaced people. Among the problems mentioned in this study are crowded classes, insufficient amount of classrooms and teachers, and employment of substitute teachers (Bilgiç ve Akyürek, 2012, p. 63). This picture that is based on a limited number of in-depth interviews can be seen statistically in a study by the Ministry of National Education, titled "Statistics

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<sup>3</sup> We would like to state here that there are many aspects of this study by Bilgiç and Akyürek that we do not agree with, and find problematic.

<sup>4</sup> Bilgiç and Akyürek define these 19 towns as "cities of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia with intense Kurdish population" and call the geography encompassing these towns: "region". Due to its othering and negative connotations, we chose not to use the term "region" in this study.

of National Education: Formal Education 2012-2013". On the other hand, the indicator charts prepared by the Education Reform Initiative (ERG) also provide sufficient information on this issue. Based on the 2011-2012 data from all 81 cities, these charts provide different indicators and data such as participation to education, dropouts, students per teacher, classroom, and computers, or grade repetition, with comparisons to the regional and national averages.

As these resources also show, the perimeters of discrimination and deprivation caused by societal conflict are very wide. The school is a place where the most concrete examples are seen and where the discriminative mind-set reproduces itself everyday, therefore it should be regarded as one of the crucial places in the struggle for building societal peace. In the following chapters of this report, we will be focusing on the teachers' training system in Turkey, and how the teachers could play a role in peace-building processes.

### **Social conflict, confrontation, education, and teachers**

Education for societal peace is a subject that is widely thought and written about recently. Texts regarding the issue usually provide a discussion of demands and requirements in addition to recommendations based on human rights (Smith, 2006; Davies, 2010; Sancar, 2010). The programmes developed in the field of education have the potential to contribute greatly to the peace-building efforts. Nevertheless it should not be forgotten that it is not enough to tackle the collective memory regarding complex, systematically censored, or even officially contorted issues, with projects and programmes that can be attended by a limited group of people.

The studies dealing with the role of teachers and public education regarding this matter are important and necessary for the establishment of peace, but they remain insufficient and should be supported by other social institutions and practices.

In this context, we would like to draw attention to the importance of following aspects in the process leading from physical conflict towards political and social resolution: truth and justice commissions, independent media, participation of damaged parties in the process, independent lawyers who are well equipped in the field of human rights philosophy, discussion and changing of laws and regulations such as the civil code or the criminal code that are vague and open to abuse, the widening of rights regarding freedom of expression, as well as the preparation of necessary environments for the upbringing and working of free academics and researchers.

### **Teachers' training system and in-service trainings**

There are 869,630 teachers who are on the permanent staff of governmental or private institutions. This number does not include either the 300,000 teachers who have not been assigned to posts yet, or the 70,000 newly assigned teachers, teachers who have just become permanent staff from being contractual teachers, or teachers who work at private training institutions. When added together, this makes up a group over one million people. Considering the yearly increase in this number, it is clear to see that this group has the potential to transform a whole population.

Specialty teachers from elementary or secondary schools as well as teacher candidates from the education faculties of different universities<sup>5</sup> participated in the workshops of this project. This also targeted to facilitate a sharing of experience between teachers and teacher candidates, enriching the

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<sup>5</sup> The teacher candidates who participated in the workshops were from: Muş Alparslan University, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, as well as Boğaziçi University, Maltepe University, Yıldız University, and Marmara University in Istanbul.

workshop and widening the scope of the project. While focusing on teachers' skills regarding peace-building and reconciliation, this methodology of bringing together students of education faculties with teachers who have been trained in different programmes also provided means to discuss the teachers' training programmes. While the field research did not encompass teacher candidates, during the in-depth interviews, teachers frequently expressed that the teachers' training system is not sufficient in providing skills for dealing with problems based on societal conflict and it did not provide an intercultural pedagogical training. Additionally, the interviewed teachers stated that the in-service training programmes of the Ministry of National Education were insufficient and far from providing skills that would empower them in terms of conflict resolution, peace-building, and reconciliation<sup>6</sup>.

Currently in Turkey, teachers are trained in faculties of education or science and literature. Before we analyse the structure of these two faculties, we shall summarise the history of teachers' training system, which has an institutional tradition of 160 years in Turkey. The first training institution in Turkey, the Secondary Teacher School (Darülmüallimin-i Rüşdü) was established in 1848 (Akyüz, 2004; Okçabol 2005). Certainly, this was a school of Western style, a "modern training institution" that trained teachers for modern institutions. Prior to the establishment of such training schools, the teachers were provided by the official educational institutions of the time, namely the *madrasah* (Okçabol et al. 2003). With the establishment of the Republic began the building of a nation, which necessitated qualified manpower, which led to the increasing importance of teachers as part of the educational move that was initiated in this context. For Kemalism, the founding ideology of the new republic, teachers had the grand mission of creating the new generation<sup>7</sup>. In order to train the teachers who would accomplish this mission, the Republic moved quickly; new institutions were established, professional training and implementation techniques were reviewed, and new laws were enacted.<sup>8</sup>

The most original teachers' training experience in Turkey, in terms of pedagogical approach and the political debate they initiated are the village institutes. There were a total of 21 institutions, established on the basis of two laws enacted in 1940 and 1942. The village institutes had similarities with the teachers' training models for villages from different countries. These institutes were not only a project of training teachers, but also a "multi-purpose" project (Ilgaz, 1999, p. 311). Through these institutes and its graduates, the Kemalist ideology was to reach the rural territories and the villages, leading to the development of the villages. The village institutes were also criticised in many ways.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the village institutes are regarded as part of a different project, answering to the "needs that were caused by the regional geography of the country" (Ilgaz, 1999, p. 311) with "similarities yet different conditions and qualities" (Ilgaz, 1999, p. 311). This is a project of nurturing the "desirable citizen", a project of Turkification, during the nation state building process (Karaömerlioğlu, 2009). As a part of both the teachers' training system and the project of a single nation and a single language, the village institutes are still a subject of hot debate.

Following the village institutes, lots of changes were made in the teachers' training system. Teachers were trained in different methodologies determined in accordance with the necessities and the political/social dynamics of the period. An important threshold was 1982, when teachers' training was incorporated into university level: with an executive order, all the teachers' training programmes

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<sup>6</sup> Will be analysed in detail in the field research chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Mustafa Kemal said in a Teachers' Union meeting on 24 August 1924: "The new generation will be your creation." (conveyed by Okçabol et al., 2003).

<sup>8</sup> For a resource providing a summary of the history of teachers' training system in Turkey see Okçabol, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> For a critical review of the village institutes see Karaömerlioğlu, 1998 and Özsoy, 2004.

of the time were instituted under universities with different names. Actually, this change was highly debated at the time.<sup>10</sup>

Another controversial implementation was the “Pre-service Teachers’ Training” project of 1997, which changed the teachers’ training system of the time dramatically as part of a project implemented together with World Bank. In accordance with the changes that the project brought, the specialty teachers of foreign languages, computer, pre-school, physical education, and fine arts as well as primary grade teachers would be subjected to four years’ education. When the teacher candidates graduate from these departments, they would be assigned to elementary schools. On the other hand, the secondary school teachers would be trained in two different methods: The teacher candidates who enrol in the faculties of education would be trained for three and a half years with classes they choose from the science and literature faculties, and then they would be trained for one and a half years in faculties of education for formative teachers’ training, after which they would be assigned to schools as teachers with masters’ degrees. Following the other method, the graduates of science and literature faculties may enrol in faculties of education, with a certain enrolment fee, where they would take their formative training, and may afterwards begin working as teachers with masters’ degrees. This masters’ degree does not require the submittal of a masters’ thesis, and the following courses would be taught as part of the programme: Introduction to Teaching as a Profession, Development and Learning, Planning and Evaluation in Teaching, Special Teaching Methods I, School Experience I, Teaching Technologies and Material Development, Classroom Management, Special Teaching Methods II, School Experience II, Teacher Implementation, Teacher Implementation Seminar, Counselling (Okçabol et al., 2003, p. 19). When this model was constructed, no other institutions were consulted but World Bank.

Together with the change in the image of teachers that this model created, teaching and learning has been undermined to merely a technical issue. Courses dealing with the social and political aspects of learning, such as educational philosophy, educational sociology, history of education or research in education are not included in this model. These courses are either abandoned altogether, or turned into electives that may be taught to attentive students. The teacher is no longer an educator but a technician. While this is the case in pre-service training, the in-service trainings are also no different. For example, of all the in-service trainings realised between 2001 and 2004, 18,4% were about specialty knowledge, 51,8% were about professional knowledge, and 29,8% were about general knowledge (Ministry of National Education, 2006). The Ministry’s 2006 data also show that none of the training programmes with highest participation rates were about pedagogical, social or political aspects of teaching. This model, which “redefines the teacher as a ‘technician’ instead of a professional with critical judgement and reaction capabilities”, undoubtedly does not provide the teacher with the necessary skills for conflict resolution in class, at school or outside school. Şahin Firat (2010) narrates the striking stories of teachers without these skills, who are caught in between “real life and the curriculum”: “While ‘nationalist’ teachers bring present-day discussions into the classroom without any links to the subject and content of the lecture, they use negative, exclusive, and humiliating expressions about Kurds.” (p. 49). On the contrary, the “democratic” teachers abstain from bringing such discussions into classroom, and if they do, they find a way to fit them into the curriculum with eliminating some aspects. Coşkun, Derince and Uçarlar (2010) give examples of the lack of equipment of “technician” teachers in the context of mother tongue. The school experience of Kurdish kids who do not know Turkish are striking examples of the teachers’ insufficiency and how they help the reproduction of discrimination: “We couldn’t speak in Kurdish in the classes of Turkish teachers. We were rebuked, as if we were swearing.”; “And sometimes (the teacher) would lose his temper: ‘I’m explaining and I’m explaining, don’t you understand?’ And we

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<sup>10</sup> For more detail about these debates see Okçabol et al. (2003) and Duman (1991).

honestly wouldn't understand"; "Our teacher once humiliated us saying 'why are your perceptions this slow?'; "We had a teacher from İzmir who said: 'You are people who do not want to learn Turkish... There is no Kurdish, there is only Turkish that has been turned into Kurdish'" (p. 44-45).

Undoubtedly, it is crucial to support the teachers during the pre-service training as well as in-service training programmes, to enable them to become efficient actors in the peace process, to be able to resolve the conflicts in the classroom and to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, tools, and perception that would sustain a democratic class management during all classes.



## Field Research

This report provides a set of suggestions that would encourage and empower the teachers, who have an important facilitation potential towards societal peace building. Throughout this study, we have interviewed teachers, parents, and teacher candidates who are currently students of Teachers Colleges. We have collected testimonies regarding their experiences and opinions about the projections of the Kurdish issue and the conflict onto the field of education. The interviewees also provided suggestions on how teachers could contribute more effectively towards peace building, speaking from experience of what support mechanisms they needed themselves. All of the interviews were highly beneficial in the shaping of this report.

The qualitative field research conducted for the Encouraging and Empowering Teachers as an Actor in Peace-Building Project is based on focus group discussions and semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews with teachers, school administrators, and parents in Muş, Van, and Istanbul. When inviting the teachers and administrative staff to the interviews and discussion meetings, we first contacted teachers that were affiliated with us, asking them to open up a call to other colleagues at their schools. We also contacted teacher's unions, aiming to achieve variety in the sample used for the research. Focus group discussions were held in May and November 2012 in both Muş and Van, in addition to those held in March and April 2012 in Istanbul. A total of 10-20 teachers participated in each meeting, as well as the project staff from Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, and academics/researchers from project partners Boğaziçi University and Muş Alparslan University and project associate Van Yüzüncü Yıl University. The focus group meetings began with an introduction of the objectives of the project and continued with the group discussing the issues they face in the field of education with regard to the Kurdish issue, sharing experiences and offering solutions in a relaxed atmosphere. The participants were allowed to speak for as long as they liked, in an unordered manner.

The parents' focus group in Istanbul was realised in July 2013, with 11 parents who were contacted through the Migrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (Göç-Der). In Muş and Van, a total of 10 parents were contacted through the teachers who participated in the focus group discussions in 2012. The parents were asked about the reflections of the Kurdish issue on the lives of their kids, as well as the quality of their communication with the school as parents. They were invited to provide comments, requests and suggestions regarding the problems they perceive.

The semi-structured one-on-one, face-to-face interviews were held in Muş, Van, and Istanbul between April 2012 and June 2013, with a total of 38 teachers working at state schools, most of them being primary and secondary school teachers, and 9 of them being headmasters or vice-headmasters. The interviewees in Istanbul were selected among those who work (or have previously worked) at schools located in neighbourhoods that are destinations of internal migration from Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia. The framework of the in-depth interviews can be seen at

Appendix 7 (Questions for Teacher Interviews), Appendix 8 (Questions for Interviews with Headmasters and Vice Headmasters), and Appendix 9 (Questions for Parent Interviews).

In order to ensure a trustworthy environment and to eliminate possible drawbacks and concerns regarding expressing opinions on a delicate and contradictory issue, the participants were guaranteed that no voice recording or personal data would be shared with third parties and that all raw materials would be exterminated after the report was finished. The Information and Consent Form can be seen at Appendix 10.

In the beginning of the research, interviews with students were also planned, in order to better understand how the conflicted environment in Turkey is reflected on the students' everyday and school lives. Nevertheless, observing the drawbacks of parents, teachers and students alike, it was understood to be impossible to prevent these interviews to create worries. Therefore, the interviews were cancelled, with the hope that the necessary conditions for such a research could be achieved in the future.

During this research, we aimed at developing proposals for empowerment and encouragement of teachers in peace building depending on the experiences and opinions of teachers, and we wanted to achieve this together with the teachers, without constructing a hierarchical relation between researchers and participants. Due to the selected research methodology, the research does not claim to represent the mentioned towns or Turkey. None the less, we were specifically careful about including a diverse range of teachers from different backgrounds and experiences, who have different opinions and approaches towards the issues that the research tackles.

### **Findings of the interviews with teachers**

#### **Othering, prejudices, standardisation, and the issue of language of instruction**

The issues that the teachers underlined the most have showed us that the basic problems that were intensified by the conflict were othering, the lack of trust towards the "other", in addition to unequal representation and reputation of different identities, cultures, and languages on the level of society, and consequently, on the field of education.

The teachers told us about the challenges (and even traumas) that stem from ignoring the importance of the acceptance of the kids at school with their qualities inherited from their families, their sense of belonging, and the language that they express themselves. From time to time, the teachers have also mentioned their own experiences as students:

"The teacher is dealing with a tiny brain, sculpting it. When you oppress a student, when you break his confidence, he carries the effects with him all through his life... Kurdish kids out here lack confidence, they are submissive, have difficulties in expressing themselves, are unsuccessful... Sometimes they try to mimic, but it's impossible, they cannot be similar. First of all, our language does not allow this. I'm speaking as someone who faced the same problems... The kids have these inscribed on their brains, on their hearts... Today they are spoken of as aggressive, like this, like that. But this is what lies beneath... There was an Azeri teacher at the school that I worked in Kars; he was clearly a militant nationalist. He placed Kurdish and Turkish students on different desks, never assigning responsibilities to the Kurdish kids." (A teacher from Muş, who works in Istanbul in a neighbourhood that receives internal migration)

A teacher from Muş, who also works there, when asked about the Kurdish/Turkish issue and the reflections of the conflict on the field of education:

“I don’t think this is a Turkish-Kurdish conflict. I do not see it that way. Maybe from a certain perspective it may seem like that, but it is indeed **the conflict between the state and Kurds**; the conflict of Kurds with the impositions of the system. My son-in-law is Turkish; the father of my grandchild is Turkish. I try to teach my grandchild Kurdish. We have given away our daughters in marriage and welcomed their daughters in our homes. There is no conflict between Kurds and Turks. There is a resistance, an allergy that is caused by the impositions of the system. **Here now, one says ‘I am myself’. The other says ‘no, my friend, you are not yourself.’ Hey man! I am like this. Do you see me in front of you? They tell me ‘I do, but not as yourself’. All conflict arises from this.**” *(Emphasis added by editors)*

The same teacher, about his years as a student:

“As of the first grade and for eight years I have been a student at Muş Korkut Provincial Primary Boarding School. When I first enrolled in school, I did not know Turkish. My mother is Circassian and my father is Kurdish. I understood but could not answer. I survived through them cutting my hair, even to buzz cut (as punishment)... I was writing poetry in Kurdish. During the time of Tansu Çiller, I was scared and I hid them away. In 1976, I got beaten for 280 times on my hand just because I said I was Kurdish. I couldn’t count it, but my friends did. I was at sixth grade. I couldn’t face the man, I was filled with such a grudge, such an anger, that I ate up my lips.”

The same teacher (who is also the headmaster of the school that he works in), talking about the coexistence of Turks and Kurds in work life:

“There are numerous Turkish friends among our colleagues. There are Kurds, Turks, and teachers from other ethnicities. We never say ‘you are this, you are that’. I judge a man with how he does his job. But it’s not like that in the western provinces. We know what happened to our friends who went there. Unfortunately, people are knee-deep in racism in the western provinces, there is grudge and hatred especially towards the Kurds...”

The association of Kurdish people with negative qualities in textbooks and social life leads some students towards resentment, silence, while it provokes some students towards rebellion, and some towards denying the identity of their parents. Teachers and parents that we interviewed in Istanbul told us about Kurdish students who wanted to change their names, who spoke ill of Kurds and Kurdishness in hopes of being accepted, who thought they could achieve self respect only through identifying with the dominant identity:

“One of my students was continuously speaking ill of Kurdish people. He was like ‘They are killing our soldiers, they are bad like this, they are awful like that...’ Hateful expressions... Then I met with his parents. His mother told me ‘I am an immigrant and my husband is Kurdish’. I was shell-shocked. I learned that he was yelling at his father when he spoke to his grandmother in Kurdish over the phone; he yelled ‘Why are you speaking in this language, stop it, I don’t want to hear!’... Is there any other community who have been turned against themselves to such extent? Whose brains, whose souls have been played with to such extent? He denies himself... Being a Kurd is a pain in the neck; it’s unsuccessfulness, ignorance, alienation, being an “other”... Whatever negativity there is, it is associated with being a Kurd... The kid doesn’t understand history but he grows up with rage against his own people.” *(A Kurdish teacher in Istanbul)*

A teacher in Muş tells:

“As a teacher I have to respect the kid’s culture. There shouldn’t be a repressive mind-set. Out here, kids at a very small age begin growing up with political identities – people coming to this region should be aware of that... I work at a boarding school; up until three years ago, students who talked in Kurdish among themselves were threatened by beating. We changed that. The atmosphere of the school changed. Now children can speak in Kurdish during break time.”

A (bilingual) teacher who speaks to the Kurdish students during recess in Istanbul:

“Once, when I was speaking in Kurdish with a student, another student covered his ears and told me he didn’t want to hear...”

A teacher working in Van, whose mother tongue is Turkish:

“The kids’ first encounter with Turkish is when they come to school. The problem is: Kurdish is a language. Do we value it the way we should? In Europe, bilingual students are encouraged; here, this quality is not valued. I do not know any Kurdish, but I began learning it from my students.”

Most of the Kurdish teachers working in Van mentioned the problems regarding the kids not being accepted at school with their mother tongues:

“When I first entered the classroom, the kids told me they didn’t know Kurdish even though they did...”

“I am bilingual. I am a geography teacher. At the classroom, I hardly contain myself from telling the Kurdish names of this region’s plants. When I do tell, the students better understand what I’m talking about, their faces lighten up.”

“The kids find themselves worthless in an environment that praises Turkish and Turkishness. Even though not frequently, I do use Kurdish during the classes. When I speak in Kurdish, I see the students’ eyes are glowing...”

“There was a kid at the kindergarten class, who was constantly crying. The teacher didn’t know what to do. One day I saw them both crying. I started talking to the kid in Kurdish. In time, the kid grew to be calmer. Every morning we talked in Kurdish for a little while. That’s how the kid got used to coming to school...”

A counselling teacher working in Van:

“The mother tongue issue is especially serious for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders... The kids who speak in Kurdish at their homes face difficulties in self-confidence when they come to school. The unilingual education system is problematic. Because of the pressure ‘to speak in Turkish’ the kids begin detaching from their families, go in limbo, get out of the lingual sphere that they express themselves and enter a new zone, facing difficulties. Once the kids begin speaking in Turkish, they get detached from their mothers; the mothers do not know Turkish.”

A very important problem was mentioned by the teachers working at locations in Muş, Van, and Istanbul, which are destinations for internal migration: Many kids who are unsuccessful at school because the language of instruction is not their mother tongue; they are thus referred to the Counselling Research Centres with suspicions of “mental disabilities”. And since the tests at the centres are also not in the mother tongue of the kid, the Kurdish kids are diagnosed with “mental

disabilities”, taken from regular schools and dispatched to special education facilities. Sometimes when the classrooms are too crowded, the teachers cannot see that the real problem is that the kid does not understand the language. Even if the teachers and psychological counsellors do diagnose that the unsuccessfulness or behavioural disorder of the kids rely on the difference of the language of instruction from the kids’ mother tongue, since there is no regulation, effort, or in-school facilities to address the issue, they remain mere witnesses to the kids being stigmatised as “mentally disabled”, being treated differently throughout the rest of their school lives, remaining under their mental potentials, apart from their “normal” peers.

At school, in the textbooks, during celebrations, no Kurds are mentioned. The kids’ community is almost regarded as non-existent. The kids realise this and react against it.

A teacher in Istanbul:

“In the poem it says ‘Turkish kid’. The student objects: ‘why Turkish? It should be all of the kids...’

A teacher working in Muş:

“We took the kids to Çanakkale. It writes: ‘Turkish commanders who lost their lives here’. The kids ask us: ‘Where are the Kurdish, where are the Arab commanders?’ Here the teacher has to act after considering the rightfulness of the question...”

A Kurdish teacher working in Istanbul:

“They say that the kids do not really recognise what is being said in the National Oath. The Kurdish kids are very well aware of it.”

When evaluating the curriculum, teachers have stated that the curriculum approved after 2004 has some positive sides, but it still does not reflect Turkey’s cultural diversity sufficiently, and it still is not clear of ultranationalist elements that praise violence.

A primary school classroom teacher in Istanbul:

“In the Basic Social Studies class, ‘raising awareness of differences’ is targeted but some differences are still left out because they are considered as separatism.”

A different teacher:

“It is very hard to teach the kids stuff that I do not approve myself. The new curriculum is also prepared in a very cunning manner; all of the questions to be asked in the classroom come in a package, so the teacher is not allowed to invent his/her own questions.”

A teacher from Istanbul who expressed that it was wrong to have violent poems in textbooks or national celebrations:

“There is a problem with poetry in the curriculum and its implementation. Following every chapter, the students are asked to write a poem. On national holidays, bloody-violent, nationalist poems are being read, some of which have no poetry value but are full of ‘rage’... For example: ‘I will shatter the nest of the bird that flies without saluting you’... There are even poems to use on days of civil defence. The poetry competitions also incite nationalism.”

Another teacher underlining the same issue:

“I have witnessed kindergarten kids wearing soldier uniforms with toy guns at their hands, representing war against the enemy. When I was critical about this, what the administration

told me made my blood run cold: 'We instil patriotism. They will know how to be martyrs, they will know how to fight a war.'

Kurdish teachers who work in Istanbul told us that they feel the class inspectors' suspicious eyes watching them especially when the National Anthem is being sung, or news about armed conflict or martyrs arrive:

"When the tension rises and the armed conflicts increase, a reaction towards the Kurdish teachers is heavily felt both among the students and the teachers. For example, they are directly blaming Kurdish teachers for the actions of PKK. Polarising discussions are held at the teachers' lounge following the conflict times... Kurdish teachers are followed in detail to see whether they join in when the National Anthem is being sung."

Another teacher is uncomfortable with discriminations observed during inspections:

"Serious incidents of discrimination are experienced in the inspection of Kurdish teachers. The Kurdish teachers are expected to try harder to prove their 'Turkishness'. On top of all, the teachers also feel that they are obliged to do so; I have seen a Kurdish headmaster starting every little gathering with the National Anthem...The inspectors also force the Kurdish kids to do so, I have witnessed them asking the Kurdish kids: 'Is there Atatürk's mausoleum in your classroom?' Most probably, he's speaking of a picture of the mausoleum, but the kid feels entrapped... I have once been asked why the photographs at the Atatürk corner were not updated."

A teacher from Muş says that there is lack of mutual confidence:

"When they disseminated milk at school with the latest campaign, I didn't drink a tiny bit, I was so scared. I thought, 'If it was a good thing, the government would not give it to us'. Giving out milk was actually a good idea. It would be good for deprived families' kids. But there is a lack of confidence against the government; there are prejudices. A while ago, the government disseminated light bulbs. People did not want to use them because there were rumours that they were bugged."

The issue of confidence, which is tightly connected with cultural belonging and social conflict, also affects the communication between the parents and the school. Several teachers told us some Kurdish parents were distanced and distrustful towards the school because they thought:

"Westerner teachers wouldn't understand our problems, they wouldn't think we're right, I wouldn't be able to explain myself". We have been told that the teachers were looking for ways to overcome this issue. A bilingual teacher working as a psychological counsellor in Istanbul told us that when a parent was invited to school to speak about a student who has behavioural issues, the parent was submissive, never told anything, until the teacher began speaking in Kurdish. That was when the parent began openly expressing the difficulties that the student faces at school.

The Kurdish issue also affects the manners of students who have no liabilities regarding the issue:

"I have witnessed that in the aftermath of big incidents of conflict, the Kurdish students were looked upon as the 'other'. Nevertheless, I couldn't intervene, because as teachers, we have to remain our distance to both sides. For example, kids who have Kurdish names face difficulties only because of this. The students who arrived here after the earthquake in Van couldn't manage to fit in and they had to go back."

We have learned that Turkish teachers are more comfortable at class than Kurdish teachers, when for example they are singing Kurdish folk songs at the classroom. That is because it is highly unlikely

for them to be investigated or labelled as “separatist”. When a Kurdish teacher facilitates the same thing, it can be understood as a threat or a sign of bad intentions.

### **The teachers’ approach to differences at school and problems based on conflict**

We have seen that among the interviewees, the majority of Western teachers who work at the East and West preferred saying: “you all are the same and equal, and have no difference from each other”. Some primary school class teachers working in western provinces said they thought there was no need to pay special attention to the subject, as the younger students were not yet aware of different ethnic and cultural identities. However further on during the interviews, interviewees cited examples that showed how students were aware of cultural differences of their friends. For example, when Kurdish channel of state broadcaster TRT-6 was on air, a group of second grade students got in the habit of teasing their Kurdish friend Barış by shouting rhymes at him “TRT şeş, free for Barış (TRT şeş, Barış’a beleş)”. Some teachers who witnessed the word Kurd being used as profanity said they could only censure the students, but they were aware that this line of response was not enough to overcome social stereotypes, prejudices and marginalisation.

A few teachers in Istanbul said that there were neither problems nor conflict and the problem of Kurdish/Turkish ethnicities was a product of governments and separatists. Also regarding the demand for education in mother tongue as a separatist claim that would damage unity of the country, these teachers thought that bringing the issue up for discussion was no good. Teachers working in eastern provinces of Muş and Van opined that Kurdish students got political consciousness very early on and that state and social violence were introduced in their early years. They also stressed that the children grew up hearing discussions of Kurdish ethnicity, as this was a big part of lives of their families. As the teachers were perceived as representatives of state at class level, the teachers, unless they were Kurdish, had difficulty in gaining students’ trust.

As in Muş and Van, students in Istanbul districts that receive internal migration from the East were the most curious about the hometown of their teachers. It was told that the students were inclined to perceive hometowns of their teachers as a basis for categorising the teacher as someone close or an outsider.

Western teachers working in the east said that an effort to learn Kurdish was instrumental in earning the trust of students. Learning Kurdish also carried a message that the teacher was neither trying to impose a hegemonic language nor the values and culture of the majority, which had positive outcomes. Students who had a more developed sense of politics could ignore, rebuke or in some rare instances could, citing irrelevant pretexts, threaten teachers if they believed the teacher did not value their culture.

When asked what they thought about sufficiency and quality of the instruction received in teachers colleges and in service training and whether it was sufficient to enable them to work in any part of the country and whether they were equipped to resolve problems emanating from conflict and marginalization, most teachers expressed instructions received on their respective specialty of teaching was adequate but pre-service training on implementation was insufficient. Teachers working in eastern provinces expressed they received no instruction to prepare them for the service ground and this made them feel like fish out of water. They were able to overcome their prejudice through time, but they feel they have done injustice to some students in the mean time. Some others said only through experience were they able to learn how wrong it was to look down upon locals and that they were able to hear, learn, and understand the recent history of Turkey only after they started working in the east.

In many interviews conducted in Muş and Van, a problem that came up again and again was the low dedication of western teachers, who wanted to return back home as soon as possible. We were told that when teachers were frequently changed, or they did not fully embrace the school as they were waiting to be re-assigned in short periods of time, this had a negative impact on their attitudes towards the school and the education of their students. Concern of safety by teachers and their families, harsh conditions of work and accommodation, long distances to travel and lack of social and cultural activities and being left out of social life outside school because lacking local language all decrease motivation and cause intimidation.

The most promising side of this project was that nearly all of the teachers interviewed gave a positive answer to the question of whether they saw themselves as an important actor for societal peace. We observed that all were ready to candidly discuss problems and were open to improve their faculties. The teachers found the multi day workshops (see appendix 1-6 for summary of the programmes) very useful in finding ways to discuss delicate issues in a democratic setting, raise awareness on differences, prejudices and stereotypes and handle these issues in a class setting and exchanging and improving methods to deal with these problems with their colleagues.

Some interviews with the teachers were done during the increased violence and arrests prior to the “peace and negotiation process” and when political prisoners were on hunger strike. Some were conducted after the negotiations restarted. We have to point out that the hopeful atmosphere of a possibility of a peaceful end to armed conflict was felt in interviews conducted in Muş and Van, and those negotiations and studies that assessed the demand and needs of local community were perceived positively by teachers.

### **Findings from interviews with students’ parents**

Parents taking part in the study were asked how Kurdish/Turkish issue was projected onto schools, how it affected their communication with the school, what were the prevalent social conflict-based problems in schools, how these problems affected children, how teachers and administrators reacted when faced with these problems and how the parents thought they were behaving against their children. Furthermore, parents shared recommendations for peace building on the field of education.

Some parents clearly stated they did not have a problem in communicating with schools, while some others said they had some problems that were directly related to the Kurdish issue, and the social conflict in Turkey. Some of those who said they had good communication with the school said further on in interview that they had several problems.

A Muş resident parent conveyed a problem encountered with school administrators, and defined the basis of the problem as marginalization through identity and ignoring based on discrimination.

“As my older kids went to school we were living in Malatya. In parent meeting that I attended, administrators were highlighting (my child’s) political inclinations and ideas, every time. We had arguments a few times. They especially stressed nationalism. When I went into meetings, they said ‘Everybody is Turkish, everyone should feel that way’. They are Kurds themselves... And I said, ‘I don’t accept this. I’m Kurdish, this is who I am’. This is true when you look at it through Islam too. This caused a certain detachment.

The same parent said that this detachment also had an impact on the children:

“My children had problems about this too. The argument I had with the teachers had an impact on them.”



It was observed that, parents' views on parent meetings, which is the most important mechanism for their communication with the school, is generally negative. A Van resident parent expressed how families perceived the meeting:

“Around here parent-teacher meetings are not very productive. It is done mostly for the record. Parents around here, us included, ask themselves ‘Do they need money? Does the school need something? Did my child pick on a student? Or break windows? Or talk too much? Generally the meetings create a negative perception.”

It was seen that not only parent-teacher or parent-administrator but also parent-parent relations had a considerable impact on communication with the school. Especially parents we interviewed in Istanbul told that they felt excluded during the parent-teacher meetings, where the parents got to socialise, because of problems on the basis of Kurdish issue. Similarly families pointed at issues with language as to why Kurdish parents were left out.

Additionally, during the interviews, it was stated that the communication between the parents and the school did not operate on only one direction (from the school and other actors at school to the parent) but two directions (also from the parent to the school and other actors at school). As stated by the interviewees, the level of education and the socioeconomic state of the parents as well as their attitude towards education and their kids have great impact on the quality of the communication between the school and the parents...

The parents told us about how social conflict was projected onto schools, by emphasising on othering, discrimination, neglecting of cultures and languages, as well as the impact of armed conflict. Some pointed these out as problems that their children have, while some created a general framework together with their own observations. Sometimes the parents began by a story that was based upon them. They sometimes narrated a tension that their kids lived through at school, sometimes scenes from their own experiences at school, or their everyday lives, their work atmospheres. When the parents were talking about the projections of the conflict, they underlined issues such as disagreement, dissociation, polarisation, and confining or detaching relationships. For example, a parent talks about personal experiences as a student and tells us how the mentioned conflict evolved into hatred, and how that hatred created a negative attitude towards the school:

“(The social conflict) is reflected on school life for sure. I tell it from my own experience. You go to school, you come back from school, you hear at home: ‘That relative of ours was sentenced for 30 years. Your uncle was tortured for 80 days.’ And he was an uncle I loved dearly. Once you hear this kind of things, you begin feeling enmity towards the government. When you go to school, somehow this stays with you. Wanting revenge, at school you leave the lights open or you leave the faucets running. This way or that way you become an enemy.”

Some parents also told us that they witness polarisation at school, similar to what they see in their everyday lives and work environments. As a result of this, they say, a group of students are seen othering another group of students, humiliating them:

“The administration or the teachers did not tell us about problems emerging from this. But somehow the kids tell us about how they remain silent in fear when confronted with other friends' behaviours. For example, their friends can say or do stuff that humiliate Kurdish people...”

This polarisation can also be seen in the testimony of a parent from Muş, who tells us about an incident that happened after an armed conflict:

“When my oldest kid was at 5<sup>th</sup> grade, his teacher wanted me to visit the school. It was the aftermath of an armed conflict, many soldiers have died and there were children of soldiers at the class. I learned that when the issue came up, a group of kids including mine have argued with a group of soldiers’ children. This was followed by a fight between the two groups.”

The same parent told us that following this tension, the teacher acted as a negotiator, soothing both of the groups.

The impact of armed conflict on children was an issue that was frequently pointed out by the parents. There were also some parents who told us that this impact was clearly seen especially on the following day of the conflict, and that the kids wanted to discuss these issues at school. Similarly, parents also stated that social demonstrations or incidents affect the school environment. This can be experienced as a demonstration such as a school boycott or parents keeping their children at home instead of sending them to school, with worries of psychological and physical harm.

Parents told us that teachers could adopt stereotypical judgements and act in a discriminative and othering manner, mostly because of the identities of the children:

“My children have Kurdish names. Of course the teachers are not the same. There are also democratic teachers, as well as those who don’t like these names. Sometimes our children face difficulties with such teachers.”

The othering and discrimination that the children experience at school is not only caused by the school system, curriculum, or the teacher; other students’ parents also can show such attitude. A mother from Tatvan (an Eastern province) tells us:

“My older daughter Selma was a 1<sup>st</sup> grade student in Bağcılar. One evening she came to me, crying, ‘Mom, are we Kurdish?’. And I said ‘Yes, we are Kurdish. Why, what happened?’ She had a classmate from Tokat (a Northern town), Tuğçe, whose mother told the teacher ‘Get my daughter away from Selma’s school desk, she’s Kurdish, they are Kurdish.’ My daughter was really crying. Then I went to the teacher, and I said ‘Why didn’t you say no? Why do you treat this child like that, just because we’re Kurdish? She was crying at home’. The teacher told me ‘The other parent came, so I changed your kid’s desk.’ Believe me she did...”

As seen above, even if teachers are not playing a direct role within the othering and discriminating mechanism, they can be actors who sharpen and sustain the impact of discrimination. Additionally, just like in this case with the teacher who does not take into account the trauma that may be experienced by the discriminated kid, education professionals most of the time are not equipped with the necessary skills to be aware of discrimination, let alone the skills to effectively fight with it.

Sometimes the othering and discriminating mechanisms that are put into work by teachers or other children cause a child to get in a conflict with his/her own identity. During a focus group meeting in Istanbul a mother from Bitlis told us:

“The kids understand it as well. They tell ‘Kurds are at school’. My son tells me: ‘Mother, do not come to the school wearing that white scarf around your head. Don’t let the teacher see you like this. When you speak with the teacher, speak in a proper Turkish’.”

A very striking point within the context of the teachers’ approach to conflict-based problems was a dichotomy pointed out by the parents: Westerner vs. “from around here” (Easterner) or Turkish vs. Kurdish. In Muş and Van, this dichotomy was expressed as Westerner vs. “from around here” while it

was described as Turkish vs. Kurdish teachers in Istanbul. The parents think that this difference is very important for the teacher's attitude. For example, a parent from Muş says:

"My son, who is in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade is slightly hyperactive... The Kurdish teachers are not so much disturbed by him being too restless or more talkative than other kids; but the others (teachers who are not Kurdish) are too uncomfortable with it, they exaggerate. That's how I see it. Of course, I do not tell the kids about this. When I go to visit the school, only these other teachers are complaining about him. You can see the difference."

The parents that we interviewed in Van and Muş stated that teachers coming from Western Turkey to Van have a negative understanding of the Kurdish kids, which leads them to act reluctant and heartless in performing their professions, which in turn affects the students negatively, and thus creates academic failure.

When parents were talking about the negative outlook on the region and the people of this region, or about the lack of professional dedication or motivation of the "Westerner" teachers (as they call them) they were specifically underlining the problem of the shortness of the period these teachers work at their schools. On the other hand, the families believe that the teachers they call "from around here" increase their children's success.

Parents that we interviewed in Istanbul stated they observe some differences between Turkish and Kurdish teachers. A parent from Van:

"Last year, my daughter had a Turkish teacher. My daughter (13 years old) was very enthusiastic about reading in Kurdish language, and she told this to her teacher. Believe me, when she took her report card, all of her grades were low. And she wasn't lacking anything. She was studying very well at home. So I said last year, 'these low grades (from your teacher) may be caused by your interest in Kurdish language'. This year, she had a Kurdish teacher. This year she brought home a certificate of appreciation. The attitude, language, style, discipline, and the standpoint of this year's teacher could be seen clearly. He was from Muş. These two are as different as chalk and cheese. When the teacher understands the student, the difference is remarkable."

Parents' approach to these social conflict-based problems is mostly calming, protective and promoting reconciliation. Additionally the parents also think that their children are negatively affected by the TV, distant relatives with different opinions, streets, neighbourhoods, and other kids.

According to the families, the attitude and political stance of the kids regarding the Kurdish issue crystallise as they grow up. Among the parents that we interviewed, there were also those who were uncomfortable with their kids being affected by the Kurdish issue and becoming politicised.

Without a doubt, the most powerful reflection of the Kurdish issue on school and the field of education can be seen in the issue of education in mother tongue. This issue was also frequently emphasised by the parents during the interviews. A parent from Van also underlined the importance of multilingualism:

"I would very much like my child to be educated in 'that language' (Kurdish)... Of course, one would wish that kids would be educated in many languages. There are lots of advantages to it; the kids would be very well equipped that way."

When we ask them about how the children are affected by the lack of education in mother tongue, the parents whose mother tongue is Kurdish answered us by comparing their own experiences with those of their kids. The general conclusion that this comparison shows is that nowadays, the mother

tongue is less an issue than before. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note here that the interviews were mostly made in Muş and Van with parents who are located at the city centres for a long time. A parent from Van:

“When the kids first started school, they knew both Kurdish and Turkish. Therefore we didn’t have any problems (regarding the mother tongue). Because we didn’t migrate from outside...”

It can be said that in Istanbul, migration is not determinant regarding mother tongue in education. A parent who moved to Istanbul due to internal displacement told us that their kids did not face any problems because they knew both languages (Turkish and Kurdish), and that this problem was mostly faced in the villages.

The parents who speak in Kurdish at home told us that their kids learn Turkish via TV or on the streets, therefore they may face problems during the first days of school but later on their teachers do not report any trouble regarding this issue.

An important thing that was pointed out during the interviews was that a certain approach was adopted by the kids towards their mother tongue, as soon as they became more acquainted with Turkish at school. The parents told us that while the kids were motivated towards speaking in Turkish, they get estranged to their mother tongue and they didn’t prefer speaking in Kurdish at home or on the streets. There is also a big difference between Istanbul and Muş & Van; while in Istanbul the parents told us that their kids insist on speaking in Kurdish at school, even to the extent of—as seen in the above example—facing problems with their teachers.

The parents’ suggestions regarding the eradication of conflict-based problems at school were focused on changing the current structure of the education system that is based on a single ethnic identity and belief, and adopting a new structure that allows the co-existence of different identities, ethnicities, languages, and belief systems.

The parents stated that they find the teachers to be crucial actors in peace building. For example, a parent from Muş says:

“Teachers have so many roles regarding this issue. Teachers have to respect the value systems of the children; and not only in terms of ethnic identity, but also in terms of their belief system. There are a lot of Allevite kids, how will the teachers react when these kids do not select elective classes such as ‘The life of Prophet Mohamed’ or ‘the Quran’? This is very important...”

Another parent stated that only an “objective and democrat” teacher could undertake such a task. There were also parents who said that teachers would be more successful in the peace building process if they were supported by government policies.

Almost every parent that we interviewed mentioned the issue of elective Kurdish courses. Almost all parents were displeased with the fact that Kurdish is an elective course at school:

“People are not pleased with Kurdish as an elective course. Why would our mother tongue be an elective? It is the language that our God gave us... For me, the foreign language is Turkish. Only Turkish can be elective for me.”

There were also parents who told us that even though they wanted their kids to sign up for the elective Kurdish course, they couldn’t succeed. Some parents said they thought not opening this course widely might be a conscious choice.

In general, the findings of the interviews with parents are parallel to those of the interviews with teachers. This similarity between two crucial elements of the school is positive and promising with regards to rising above the issue at the focus of this study, as well as overcoming the problems caused by this issue.

### **In place of conclusion**

It is incontrovertible that attitudes of teachers are very important during development of social and individual awareness and consciousness. The fact that uniformity is not a prerequisite for equality and that differences should be recognised and valued, as well as the thought that equality could only be achieved with equal and democratic participation in society, never had the required weight in education. The “you have no differences” attitude is not realistic and examples from previous sections show that for small children, it is not convincing. How a child develops a relation with those who is similar and different from him is directly related about how these issues are handled in school.

It is important that both schools and teachers create an environment where they could get to know kids with their indigenous family culture, socio-economic, lingual and other differences and where kids could express themselves with self-confidence and respect. For this to happen it seems imperative to review present attitude and practices relating language, the most prominent aspect of cultural sense of belonging in Turkey. Furthermore, curriculum and other educational activities in schools should be shaped in such a way so as to be mindful of diversity in Turkey as well as of problems and demands. In order to do this, heterogeneous workshops, which would be attended by parents, students, teachers and related NGOs and researchers, should be held.

It is very important for teachers to act with confidence, without the fear from challenging topics, when nationalist elements of the curriculum, a current politic issue or a matter of conflict are brought to discussion; it is important for them to be open to listening and understanding the students, and to avoid any censoring, repressive or prohibitive attitudes. Behaving as if armed conflict or disagreements did not exist or thinking of school as a platform above these issues is not realistic. An education platform that is detached from social problems could trivialize the school and teachers for students. For teachers to facilitate open debate, their employer, which is the state, should be able to trust them on these issues. If the teachers encourage their students to build foundations for their arguments, to fully understand counter-arguments, and to make multi-dimensional, analytical evaluations, the kids would be empowered to come up with democratic solutions towards reconciliation of contradictory and challenging social issues, while still taking into account the bases of different opinions and approaches.

Teachers think the training they receive in teachers college does not prepare them for teaching, especially in conflict areas and multicultural settings. It would be beneficial to reform the curriculum of teachers colleges so as to enable teacher candidates to see Turkey’s multicultural and multilingual nature, recent history and up to date information on prevalent social problems.

Teachers who are natives of Western provinces and serving in Muş and Van said if Kurdish was offered as an elective course during their training they would have found it beneficial. It is a positive step that some universities now offer such courses. Learning a language through contact with the culture and literature that the language facilitates, lessen problems in communication and enriches a person. It would be positive in many levels for teachers to be encouraged to learn at least one more language being spoken by different communities in Turkey.

The fact that teachers assigned from western provinces to the East is mostly inexperienced and wants to leave as soon as possible have a negative impact on the education of children. Both

colleagues and parents said that teachers that don't want to stay in the East have low dedication to their jobs and less motivation to internalise the school and students. Also many times when the teacher and students develop a bond and establish a working relationship, teachers are assigned to another area and the same hard process (of trust based relationship) has to be repeated. The problems that teachers encounter should be resolved and state policies should encourage teachers to stay in the same school at least for a few years. As teachers assigned to eastern and south-eastern provinces may face similar issues, it would be beneficial to arrange virtual platforms where more experienced educators could share experiences with new teachers and where teachers socialise in solidarity with each other, as well as holding forums to discuss issues and devise solutions.

Findings show that parents' communication with the school and the teachers has a strong impact on academic and personal development of a student. It is clearly seen that the most important venue of communication are the parent-teacher meetings, but both teachers and parents stated that the meetings were ineffective and pointless, citing different reasons. To overcome social conflict on the sphere of education, both parents and families have a significant role, along with school. Thus, involvement of families in processes related to school needs to be re-evaluated to enable deeper involvement.

Finally, looking at interviews with both parents and teachers, it is observed that issues stemming from social conflict recede when an atmosphere of reconciliation and peace is strong, and the classroom/school environment contains less tension and is more peaceful along with everyday life.

## Policy Recommendations

### I. School culture, school climate

Schools have been established for the benefit of the individuals who attend them as students. The school environment harbours complex relationships. Undoubtedly, the most important among these is the relation between the students and teachers. What we call the school culture includes the holistic approach and mind-set that shape all relations at school, creating the educational climate that would nourish a democratic process of education. The school environment involves both formal and informal structures. There is an official curriculum and a hidden curriculum. While teachers follow the official curriculum, they act within the framework of the school's existing cultural pedagogical climate and understanding. But when we ask questions such as "What kind of a place is school?" or "What does the teacher do?", we are faced with processes that would go way beyond the official curriculum and the environment structured hierarchically by the state. Not only teachers, but also the school management and other administrative and educational bodies at school function beyond the curriculum. The school socialises students in harmony with the given social system. It disciplines them. Even though everyone goes through the same official curriculum within the existing educational system, the students graduate in accordance with the values and structure of a social system of injustice. Therefore, the school sorts out students in line with the necessities of the social structure, and categorise them with regard to various criteria (gender, social class, ethnicity, etc.).

While the freedom of education and pedagogical approach is targeted, the social structure also has to be transformed in a liberal, egalitarian way. We are hereby speaking of a new social structure that is not based on economical exploitation, but that is socially and culturally egalitarian and liberal; for example, a structure that supports education in mother tongue for everyone.

There are some basic efforts and planning that has to be completed in order to create a democratic school culture. It would be highly beneficial to begin these efforts as soon as possible, since they would only be able to achieve their goals in the long term:

1. Teachers, administrators and school staff should participate in an education process that would help them internalise a democratic education model.
2. In order to succeed, all state institutions and all local officials should be well aware of the social functions of education, and have a profound perspective on this issue. Actions should be planned to achieve this.
3. Teachers, the main component of schools, should only be assigned to schools after they are mentally well equipped with a critical approach to social structure, power relations in the society and education-society relations, during their education at the faculties of education. They should regularly participate in workshops, trainings and discussion meetings during their duties.

4. Every child comes to the school with a different background and a different set of skills. The pedagogical and cultural climate of the school should protect and respect these differences. The fact that the mother tongue and culture of the children are different than the majority of the society may be enriching and advantageous for children, if multilingualism is supported accordingly.
5. In order to internalise the culture of participatory democracy, the school should also be managed with the principles of participatory democracy. Teachers, students and all of the staff should take part in decision making processes regarding themselves, they should be free to express their thoughts, and they should be encouraged to evaluate criticism in a constructive manner.
6. Official curriculum and textbooks should be rearranged in an egalitarian methodology based on a liberal educational mind-set, with the target of eradicating discrimination.
7. Laws and regulations should be arranged to achieve gender equality on every level of the educational system. Actions should be planned and measures must be taken on the level of cities, districts, villages, and most importantly on the school level.
8. A horizontal and egalitarian relation should be developed between the school and the neighbour/family that the child comes from. Only then can the hierarchical relation between the school and the community be ruptured.
9. The “collaboration of school and parents” has a special significance in terms of the Kurdish issue. For most cases, the Kurdish kids see the school as the incarnation of state and the hegemonic culture, while the family represents their home and own culture. Some Kurdish families see the school as an effective tool of assimilation against their cultural existence, therefore having the minimum contact with school. However, when the gap between the family and the school enlarges, the students can feel a rupture in the way they experience reality and their personality: almost all the time the children are damaged by this. It is of utmost importance for the family and the child to actively participate in school life, for the development of children as well as their resolution of internal conflicts and contradictions. In order to achieve this, basically, the relations between the school and the family, as well as between the school and the child should be redefined.
10. A significant opportunity in terms of school and parents’ collaboration is the parent-teacher meetings. Currently, neither parents nor teachers can fully benefit from these meetings; measures must be taken to re-functionalise them as an effective communication tool.

## **II. Training teachers and the profession of teaching<sup>11</sup>**

There are a few subjects that the academic staff working on educational sciences, the general educational community, parents, and other relevant parties all agree upon. Nevertheless, everyone agrees on the critical importance of teachers in the whole educational process. Today, the most significant determiner of learning and educational processes is the teacher.

Turkey’s educational history is rich in terms of the experience regarding teachers’ trainings. Many different models have been put into practice from the final years of the Ottoman Empire until today. Some of these models were valuable in terms of social necessities, and attentive and accurate in terms of pedagogy. Nevertheless, the heritage of educational and pedagogical accumulation is not regarded when new arrangements are made on Turkey’s educational system.

The model that was adopted after the 1980 coup rearranged the educational system in a hierarchical manner. This model transferred the teachers’ training task to the educational faculties of universities.

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<sup>11</sup> We would like to thank Meral Apak and Welat Ay, whose ideas inspired this section.



And for the last 29 years, the teachers begin their assignments as graduates of four-year universities. Even though they may be educated in prominent universities, they are indeed being educated in accordance with the official curriculum prepared by the Higher Education Council (YÖK) and they graduate without being able to get to know the multilingual, multicultural social texture (from different ethnic groups, with or without different belief systems, embracing diverse lifestyles) of Turkey. On the other hand, there are lots of existing teachers who have been trained by different resources. We see that in many different periods there are incidents of compensating the need for teachers with university graduates who have received insufficient pedagogical formation or haven't received this formative training at all.

In accordance with the data we collected as part of this project's field research, we can divide the possible policy recommendations regarding teachers' training and the profession of teaching into two: scientific and pedagogical recommendations, and recommendations regarding the democratisation of education... While most of the times these two categories intertwine, we find this distinction essential in underlining the importance of the issue.

Assessment and recommendations regarding educational sciences and pedagogy:

1. As widely accepted, the three prerequisites of training a teacher are providing specialty knowledge, pedagogical formative training, and general knowledge. While it would be impossible to imagine a teacher who is insufficient in his/her own specialty area, today, there are many teachers whose expertise is debatable. Especially, when we move from the centre towards the peripheries, away from "desirable" cities, we see paid teachers who are paid on an hourly basis are assigned to schools. When assigning teachers, their expertise should be taken into account and the existence of unassigned teachers on this subject should also be considered.
2. Educational science is a multi-disciplinary field under social sciences. The pedagogical formative trainings should involve philosophical, social, economical and historical fundamentals of education. Philosophy and psychology has an important role in pedagogical formation. But the pedagogical dimension of education is a unique and fruitful field of thought and praxis, raising fundamental questions regarding humanity and social life, problematizing the ways of society. It is crucial for the teacher candidates to be well equipped in this dimension. It is not possible to imagine a teacher who does not know the educational heritage of Turkey's geography, who does not internalise the basic principles of educational sociology, or who has not sufficiently absorbed educational psychology. The existing training programmes should be re-evaluated with this perspective. The Educational Sociology and Educational Philosophy courses, which are not compulsory today, should be required courses of the curriculum of faculties of education.
3. Teachers should be equipped with basic skills regarding universal and local culture and arts. In addition to the re-arrangement of the curriculum of faculties of education, it is very important for the academics of these faculties to be multidimensional scientists.

Assessment and recommendations regarding democratisation of education:

1. The teachers' training programmes under the faculties of education should be re-evaluated and rearranged in accordance with a pluralist educational model that recognises and protects the dignity of Turkey's multilingual, multicultural structure and the multiple identities it consists of.
2. When teacher candidates graduate, they should be equipped with a critical approach and general knowledge to allow them to successfully analyse the dynamic relationship of

school/education and the inequalities and discriminations faced in Turkey's society. If teachers were supported with such knowledge and methodology, they could be empowered and encouraged to become actors of peace building.

3. The curriculum of the faculties of education should provide opportunities for teachers to think about the ideological functions of education. The teachers should also be introduced to the general universal and local educational literature.
4. The teachers should be provided with opportunities and means to get to know the damage caused by the prohibition of education in mother tongue, as well as the potential benefits of lifting this prohibition.
5. At the faculties of education, the teacher candidates shall be trained through special programmes, allowing them to analyse social issues. Field researches may be conducted in different regions in order to develop these special programmes. Internships shall not be limited to schools, pedagogical materials shall be created with the aim of understanding social conflict and of developing methods of dialogue and resolution. Field researches should also be conducted to create these materials.
6. When working on the potential functions of teachers in peace building, it would be beneficial to analyse examples from around the world on the role of school and teachers during peace processes in post-conflict societies.
7. A pedagogical and cultural climate shall be fostered to enable a language of peace to dominate the educational faculties and pedagogical processes. Methodologies shall be developed to enable the teachers to criticise themselves and their languages, and to transfer this to the classroom.
8. The school is not only a place for conveying knowledge. The teacher candidates should be able to act upon the knowledge that every child has a history prior to coming to school, that they have a life other than the school and that every child's cultural development might follow a different path. The teacher should be able to analyse the relationship between school and the social territory of the child.
9. Teachers should be equipped with pedagogical methodologies that take the personal life narrative and the family history of the child into account during the learning and teaching processes. The child should also be included in the knowledge generation process. This way, the self-expression and socialisation fields for the child may be further enriched.
10. Instead of banal in-service trainings, which do not have the potential to contribute to their individual and professional development, teachers should be provided with knowledge, skills and material that would enable them to effectively deal with discrimination and exclusion at school. These training programmes should not be passive sessions during which teachers merely listen to presentations, but should be designed as interactive workshops that would encourage them to develop their own original solutions with their own personal experiences. Such in-service training programmes might include the following subjects: Speaking about challenging issues, Conflict resolution in classroom environment, Alternative evaluation approach and methodologies, Discrimination based on different approaches, Democratic class management...
11. Mechanisms and structures should be built to support teachers in dealing with social conflict-based problems. The working processes of the schools' guidance and counselling services as well as the Guidance Research Centres (RAM) should be re-evaluated through this perspective.
12. It is known that due to the challenging conditions, teachers do not prefer some eastern provinces and that they demand to be re-assigned as soon as they are assigned to these towns. More resources should be allocated to improve the conditions in challenging regions and relevant incentives should be provided to encourage teachers to work at these towns. (Additional payment, covering transportation fees for teachers whose families are in long

distance, adequate housing conditions, prioritisation for the next assignment—at least four years later on the elementary school level—to be assigned to their first choice of location, etc.)

### III. Education in mother tongue<sup>12</sup>

Freedom to use and being educated in mother tongue is one of the fundamental and natural demands of the Kurds, who are among the indigenous people of Turkey's land, and who, through years of oppression and prohibition, have been continuing the struggle to maintain their language, their literature, their culture, in order to be able to exist with the Kurdish identity.

Many international agreements, which are universally recognised and also ratified by Turkey, anticipate education in mother tongue and reject language-based discrimination. However, Turkey has put reservations on several articles in these treaties regarding mother tongue—such as Article 30 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>3</sup>, regarding children of minorities and indigenous people—with regard to national legislation. The survival and development of a language, a culture or a literature depends on how it is incorporated to everyday life and whether it can be conveyed to future generations through education. Kurdish citizens of Turkey demand the right to education in mother tongue as a fundamental human right.

For the children who speak in Kurdish—their mother tongue—at home, there are many pedagogical downsides to finding themselves in an environment that only provides education in Turkish. The students whose mother tongue is ignored, who cannot understand what the teacher says, who are slower learners than students whose mother tongue is Turkish, or who even are treated as mentally disabled children, naturally feel less comfortable with developing a healthy relation with school and expressing themselves with confidence. Families who foresee these disadvantages may choose not to speak in Kurdish with their children during pre-school years. However, it is both possible and necessary to learn, teach, and use Turkish and another (or multiple) language(s) simultaneously in social life.

There are many good practices of multilingual education around the world. There are also schools in Turkey that successfully provide multilingual education. The students at these schools can use Turkish at least as good as those who study at unilingual schools, and they benefit from the advantages of receiving bilingual education. If necessary conditions and opportunities are provided, a multilingual education model that involves Turkish, Kurdish, and an additional foreign language can be successfully implemented in Turkey.

Measures must be taken to realise the right to education in mother tongue, starting from today. It is especially important in this regard to implement transformative policies regarding teachers' trainings, to realise pilot actions, and to develop new projects with the objectives of achieving a transformation towards a new mind-set that acknowledges different languages, different cultures, and different identities equally.

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<sup>12</sup> Throughout the project and the field research, we focused on the peace process in the context of the Kurdish issue, in addition to the damage caused by the lack of education in Kurdish, the potential contributions of education in Kurdish in the establishment of societal peace, and the positive impact that this change would have on an entire generation. Undoubtedly, there are many other languages spoken in Turkey and for some of these languages there are demands for education in mother tongue and academic/cultural studies conducted on this issue. Acknowledging that the demand of education in mother tongue involves other languages, for this report, we needed to narrow the issue with only focusing on Kurdish.

<sup>3</sup> In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

The following actions could be taken in order to overcome the damages created by unilingual education and to prepare for multilingual educational models:

1. In demanding regions and neighbourhoods, preliminary spadework may be carried out to open bilingual educational programmes that are equally divided in Turkish and Kurdish. To begin working on this issue, the Ministry of National Education is recommended to form a sub-unit that would bring together representatives and experts from relevant communities.
2. The dignity of a language/culture in a society is also related to the promotion and acknowledgement of cultural products in that language. The joint literature curriculum should also feature works of Kurdish literature (translated when necessary).
3. The schools and educators should be encouraged to organise activities that would target keeping the Kurdish language alive as a dignified language among society. (Kurdish Language Day, activities targeting Kurdish writers and musicians, etc.)
4. It would be highly beneficial to make sure that at least one guidance/counselling teacher knows Kurdish in schools where there are students whose mother tongue is Kurdish.
5. Needs analysis should be carried out in order to prepare in-service training programmes suitable for the needs of teachers assigned to Eastern and South-eastern Anatolia.
6. The education of kids whose mother tongue is different than the language of education is a field of expertise. While different multilingual educational models are discussed, a certificate programme featuring relevant courses may be developed for the educational faculties, targeting teachers who will be assigned to the region during the transition period.
7. Solutions should be developed to deal with the problems of students who are failing at school due to the language barrier. Transferring these students to different facilities, especially to special educational centres for disabled kids, is damaging and against children's rights. Supporting courses may be opened for these kids at their schools, or at a single school for each region. The classes should not be too crowded and language abilities should be fostered with enjoyable activities designed for relevant age groups.
8. Parents and educators have criticised the idea of spreading pre-school education in Turkish in towns where mother tongue is mostly Kurdish, due to the fact that it may have a negative impact on the kids' abilities in Kurdish language. Practices in this field should be designed and implemented with regard to the priorities and requests of the local community, in addition to the experts.
9. Through policies developed for using Kurdish as a language of education, it may be possible to prevent emotional, psychological, economical and societal (including gender-based discriminations against girls) discriminations in addition to linguisticism.
10. Special attention should be given to building a specific model for education in mother tongue in Turkey, appropriate for the needs, demands, and current conjuncture, as well as to creating the necessary environment that would open this model to discussion with regard to scientific methods. Different needs should be regarded, considering people whose mother tongue is Kurdish is not a homogeneous group. Studies by NGOs and researches (such as the report and publications of Şerif Derince, conducted for Diyarbakır Institute of Political and Social Studies/DİSA) may be beneficial for such processes.
11. Pre-service and in-service training programmes for multilingual teachers should be developed immediately. Teacher candidates should be trained with a curriculum that provides information about Turkey's lingual and cultural diversity.
12. Kurdish education in different levels may begin with the help of teachers who have been trained abroad or in Kurdish institutes. Additionally, teachers who are currently assigned and who already know Kurdish may be supported with teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches in order to be well equipped for educating in mother tongue. Teachers assigned

to Kurdish towns without knowing Kurdish should be encouraged to learn Kurdish. Additionally, through in-service programmes, the teachers should be trained to be sensitive to linguistic and cultural differences.

13. Preparations should begin for developing Kurdish textbooks and course materials in all levels.
14. Encouraging non-Kurdish students to learn Kurdish would serve building societal peace while increasing respect towards and dignity of different languages. Current elective Kurdish courses may be used for this purpose.

#### **IV. Locality, democracy, and the school**

In order to bring an equality and justice-based resolution to the Kurdish issue, we need to embrace an approach that employs democratic participation and pluralism towards social change. There have long been discussions in Turkey about increasing the authority of local government, the opportunities and “risks” of decentralisation, as well as about the problems of central governance. These discussions have been shaped around different thematic angles such as empowering local governments, decentralisation of power, democratic autonomy or federative models implemented in different countries. It would be beneficial to analyse these discussions on the basis of pluralism and participatory principles. It is possible to use the recommendations regarding the democratic and peaceful resolution of the Kurdish issue, as an opportunity for Turkey in terms of democratising the rigid, centralist, and hierarchical state structure... Moreover, we have lots of examples from different countries regarding decentralisation of central government.

In order to achieve socialisation of democracy and reconciliation, every member of the society should be recognised with their differences, should be respected, be able to freely join in all aspects of life, and participate locally in politics. Self-governance and locality are crucial parts of the peace process. During a holistic change process that involves the resolution of the Kurdish issue, localisation and autonomy may be helpful for achieving a direct and effective approach towards social problems. Local government mechanisms would create numerous opportunities towards the democratisation of education, as well as in the struggle against discriminations based on gender, ecology, or social and economical status. On the other hand, localisation may be helpful for achieving equal representation of different ethnical, cultural, and religious groups. It is crucial to have effective constitutional regulations regarding this issue. Different social groups have also expressed the need of a new constitution in the building process of a democratic post-conflict society. In this regard, the finalisation of the work done by National Assembly’s Constitutional Reconciliation Commission is of critical importance.

Many of the interviewed teachers, administrators and parents insisted on expressing that the Kurdish issue is an issue of democracy. They also underlined the importance of their demands regarding identities, cultural rights and education in mother tongue, with regard to the self-realisation of Kurds as equal citizens. The education system and specifically the schools and teachers have a central role in the process of building a post-conflict, democratic society. Lots can be learned from listening to the experiences, needs and demands of teachers, especially of teachers who work in conflict zones or regions that receive conflict-based forced migration.

Crucial points regarding localisation, democracy, and education are as follows:

1. The transition from a centralist, monistic governance towards self-governance requires the recognition of a multicultural, multilingual social structure. Education in mother tongue is a basic right that is secured with international treaties. The government should acknowledge and constitutionally secure this right immediately. Efforts should be made regarding all negativity created by the deprivation of this right until today. There are numerous countries

with multiple official languages. In some countries while there is a single official language, different ethnic groups receive education in their own languages. In order to achieve societal peace in Turkey, ignoring should be ceased and different identities and cultures should be recognised. A crucial part of this recognition involves the educational system and schools.

2. It is not enough to regard education in mother tongue as a technical matter; it should also be expected to entail the vision of a new multilingual and multicultural society. Therefore, the inclusion of elective Kurdish courses (or other mother tongues) to the curriculum for 2 hours per week is regarded as a superficial solution. Such approaches delay the achievement of societal peace. A basic principle of providing education in mother tongue to all demanding parties shall be followed. Localisation and self-governance should be benefited from with regard to the usage of mother tongue in education and the transition to a multilingual education.
3. Another issue to be regarded in the realisation of the right to education in mother tongue is the heterogeneousness of Kurdish kids. The level of their knowledge and proficiency in their mother tongue and in Turkish should affect the educational models. This also shows the importance of localisation.
4. Another problem of schools is the authoritarian and hierarchical way the relationship between the school and the neighbourhood/household is built, which leads to the kids' parents and other relatives having difficulties in approaching the school. Localisation in the administration would have a positive effect on this relationship and would limit the bureaucracy involved. Localisation and self-governance may also play a role in the democratisation of education; it may lead to the building of a non-authoritarian, non-alienating relationship between the school and the community.
5. Many problems of the school can be resolved on the local level. Pedagogical processes would work in a more meaningful and positive way in a school that comprehends the qualities of the locality and that internalises the critical importance of getting to know the kids and their families.
6. Most of the current educational problems are caused by the schools' detachment from society, and in particular, family. Localisation and self-governance runs with the principle of people governing themselves; therefore, through the managerial networks such as the neighbourhood assemblies, the detachment of society from the school can be prevented. A democratic school does not only recognise the members of the school, but also those that are outside it.
7. One of the reasons of women's exclusion from the education system is the fact that schools are less accessible to girls, and that sometimes they cannot cling on to the school due to economic or social reasons. Localisation makes it easier for women to take part in social life. The self-governance opportunities that are made available through localisation would also enable new possibilities for women to join and stay in the educational system. The importance of quotas for women in local/central government as well as all levels of education and employment should also be noted here.
8. The discrimination that is seen in every level of education may constitute the roots for a larger social and economic discrimination. An experience of autonomy and democracy that operates in accordance with the specific qualities of the locality may be beneficial for providing the discriminated kids with an education that offers sufficient material/physical opportunities as well as skilful pedagogical processes.

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## Appendix 1

### **“Empowering Teachers as an Actor in the Peace Process” Seminar and Workshop Programme**

***21-23 September 2012, Muş Alparslan University Faculty of Science and Literature***

#### 21 September 2012, Friday

09:30-10:00 Opening remarks, project presentation, briefing on the programme, introduction of participants

10:00-11:00 Situational assessment

Participants divide into groups and discuss the projections of social conflict onto class and school environment.

11:00-11:15 Break

11:15-12:30 Assessment (groups rejoin, presentations)

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-15:00 Discrimination: Crises - solutions [Mutlu Öztürk, history teacher, human rights instructor]

15:00-15:15 Break

15:15-16:30 Discrimination: Crises – solutions, cont’d [Mutlu Öztürk]

16:30-17:00 Documentary film screening (*Öteki Kasaba*) and discussion

#### 22 September 2012, Saturday

09:30-11:00 Examining education environment and the teacher... [Fatma Gök, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

11:00-11:15 Break

11:15-12:30 Managing the classroom [Sebahat Şahin, Sakarya University Faculty of Education]

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-15:00 Discussing “tough issues” in class... [Mutlu Öztürk]

15:00-15:15 Break

15:15-17:00 Conflict resolution at school setting [Meral Apak, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

#### 23 September 2012, Sunday

09:30-11:00 Peace building and education in conflict zones: The international experience [Mario Novelli, Britain, Sussex University Centre for International Education]

11:00-11:15 Break

11:15-12:30 Critical thinking in educational environment [Dilek Çankaya, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30-15:00 Evaluation and closing remarks

## Appendix 2

### **“Empowering Teachers as an Actor in the Peace Process” Seminar and Workshop Programme**

***16-18 November 2012, Van Çınar College***

#### 16 November 2012, Friday

13:30-14:00 Opening remarks, project presentation, briefing on the programme, introduction of participants

14:00-15:00 Situational assessment

Participants divide into groups and discuss the projections of social conflict onto class and school environment.

15:00-15:15 Break

15:15-18:00 Discussing “tough issues” in class... [Mutlu Öztürk, history teacher, human rights instructor]

#### 17 November 2012, Saturday

10:00-11:45 What’s in my luggage? Migration as an element that enriches education [Soner Şimşek and Welat Ay, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

11:45-12:00 Break

12:00-13:30 Discrimination: Crises – solutions [Mutlu Öztürk]

13:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30-15:30 Conflict resolution at school setting [Meral Apak, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

15:30-15:45 Break

15:45-17:30 Conflict resolution at school setting, cont’d

#### 18 November 2012, Sunday

10:30-11:45 Psychosocial support for teachers and students in natural disaster aftermath [Öznur Acicbe, Maltepe University Department of Psychology]

11:45-12:00 Break

12:00-13:30 Peace building and education in conflict zones: The international experience [Neşe Yaşın, Cyprus University, Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies]

13:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30-16:00 Evaluation and closing remarks

## Appendix 3

### **“Empowering Teachers as an Actor in the Peace Process” Seminar and Workshop Programme**

***21-23 December 2012, Gönen Hotel, Taksim, Istanbul***

#### 21 December 2012, Friday

13:30-14:00 Opening remarks, project presentation, briefing on the programme, introduction of participants

14:00-15:00 Situational assessment

Participants divide into groups and discuss the projections of social conflict onto class and school environment.

15:00-15:15 Break

15:15-17:15 Discrimination: Crises - solutions [Mutlu Öztürk, history teacher, human rights instructor]

17:15-18:00 Documentary film screening (*Öteki Kasaba*) and discussion

#### 22 December 2012, Saturday

10:00-11:45 What’s in my luggage? Migration as an element that enriches education [Soner Şimşek and Welat Ay, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

11:45-12:00 Break

12:00-13:30 Discussing “tough issues” in class... [Mutlu Öztürk]

13:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30-15:30 Conflict resolution at school setting [Meral Apak, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

15:30-15:45 Break

15:45-17:30 Conflict resolution at school setting, cont’d

17:30-18:00 Student caught in-between teacher and parent [Abdullah Kiran, Muş Alparslan University Department of Public Administration]

#### 23 December 2012, Sunday

11:00-12:30 Peace building and education in conflict zones: The international experience [Lucy Nusseibeh, Institute of Modern Media, Al-Kuds University]

12:30-12:45 Break

12:45-14:00 What do we measure in education and how do we measure it [Cem Kirazlıoğlu, Aydın University, Guidance and Psychological Counselling]

14:00-15:00 Lunch

15:00-16:30 Evaluation and closing remarks

## Appendix 4

### **“Empowering Teachers as an Actor in the Peace Process” Monitoring and Workshop Programme**

**30-31 March 2013, Muş Alparslan University**

#### 30 March 2013, Saturday

10:00-11:15 Opening remarks, briefing on findings of field research

11:15-11:30 Break

11:30-13:00 What’s in my luggage? Migration as an element that enriches education [Soner Şimşek, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:00 Play time! Activities for awareness in school environment

15:00-16:30 In-class practices, group work; combatting discrimination, establishing peace or what do we do at school to democratically manage the classroom [Moderator: Meral Apak, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

16:30-16:45 Break

16:45-18:00 In-class practices, group work, cont’d

#### 31 March 2013, Sunday

10:30-12:00 Child and conflict from psychological, political, social and pedagogic perspectives [Serdar Değirmencioğlu, Cumhuriyet University Psychology Department]

12:00-12:15 Break

12:15-14:00 In-class practices (Group presentations)

14:00-15:00 Lunch

15:00-15:30 In-class practices (Group presentations)

15:30-15:45 Break

15:45-16:00 Evaluation and closing remarks

## Appendix 5

### **“Empowering Teacher as an Actor in the Peace Process” Monitoring and Workshop Programme**

***4-5 May 2013, Elit World Van Hotel***

#### 4 May 2013, Saturday

10:30-11:30 Opening remarks, briefing on findings of field research [Soner Şimşek and Banu Can, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

11:30-11:45 Break

11:45-13:30 Training teachers from the perspective of lingual and cultural difference [Şerif Derince, Diyarbakır Association for Political and Social Research (DİSA)]

13:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30-16:15 Play time! Activities for awareness in school environment [Mutlu Öztürk, human rights instructor]

16:15-16:30 Break

16:30-18:00 In-class practices, group work; combatting discrimination, establishing peace or what do we do at school to democratically manage the classroom [Moderator: Meral Apak, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

#### 5 May 2013, Sunday

10:30-12:30 In-class practices, group work; combatting discrimination, establishing peace or what do we do at school to democratically manage the classroom, cont'd [Moderator: Meral Apak, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education]

12:30-12:45 Break

12:45-14:00 Play time! Activities for awareness in school environment [Meral Apak]

14:00-15:00 Lunch

15:00-16:00 Play time! Activities for awareness in school environment [Mutlu Öztürk]

16:00-16:15 Break

16:15-16:45 Evaluation and closing remarks

## Appendix 6

### **“Empowering Teachers as an Actor in the Peace Process” Workshop and Panel Programme 8-9 June 2013, Boğaziçi University Garanti Cultural Centre**

#### 8 June 2013, Saturday

10:15-10:30 Opening

10:30-12:00 Practices of human rights training in classroom [Mutlu Öztürk, human rights instructor]

12:00-12:15 Break

12:15-13:30 Practices of human rights training in classroom, cont'd

13:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30-15:45 Documentary screening / *Bûka Baranê*

15:45-16:00 Break

16:00-18:00 Panel

Teaching at difficult zones: Findings from the research report – Banu Can and Soner Şimşek,  
Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education

Education in mother tongue, where should it begin?: Models of lingual training and country-  
specific examples – Şerif Derince, Diyarbakır Association for Political and Social Research

Training teachers for peace building in post conflict societies – Assoc. Prof. Kenan Çayır,  
İstanbul Bilgi University Sociology and Education Studies Unit

Moderator: Fatma Gök, Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education

#### 9 June 2013, Sunday

10:15-11:45 In-class practices, group work; combatting discrimination, establishing peace or what do  
we do at school to democratically manage the classroom [Moderator: Meral Apak, Boğaziçi  
University Faculty of Education]

11:45-12:00 Break

12:00-13:30 Play time! Activities for awareness in school environment [Meral Apak, Boğaziçi  
University Faculty of Education]

13:30-14:30 Lunch

14:30-16:30 In-class practices, group work presentations

16:30-17:30 Evaluation



## Appendix 7

### Questions for teacher interviews

#### Occupational Background and Experience

- 1) What is your specialty?
- 2) Which school did you graduate from?
- 3) For how many years have you been a teacher?
- 4) Where did you teach?
- 5) Which school are you working in now?
- 6) For how many years have you been in this school?
- 7) Your labour union activities?

#### Personal Background

- 8) Where is your family from?
- 9) Where were you born and raised?
- 10) What is your ethnic identity? Social belonging?
- 11) Your mother tongue?
- 12) Which other languages do you speak?

#### **Kurdish-Turkish conflict (explicitates usage of conflict does not only refer to physical violence but to any issue that could arise from discord)**

- 13) How do you see the environment of conflict in Turkey in connection with Kurdish/Turkish issue?

#### **Projection of conflict onto everyday life and school environment, and proposals for a solution**

- 14) Does this conflict reflect onto your life and how?
- 15) How does the Kurdish/Turkish issue and its eventualities project onto the school setting and education environment? What are your experiences in schools that you worked in?
- 16) How is the current school structure interacting with conflict and issues related with conflict?
- 17) What is your evaluation of curriculum and course materials with regard to Kurdish issue?
- 18) Could teachers deal with conflict-based problems? How do they deal with those problems? What is your evaluation of their approach? How do you cope with it? What methods did you try? Do you think what has been done/you have done is sufficient?
- 19) From whom are you able to get support from when dealing with conflict-based problems?
- 20) Are you faced with obstacles or resistance when trying different methods? Could you elaborate?
- 21) Do you think teachers could have an important role in resolution of conflict-based problems and establishing peace? How?
- 22) Do teachers need special skills, abilities and instruction when teaching in conflict settings?
- 23) Does formative education that you received as a teacher candidate help you in this regard? How? What is missing? How could it be supplemented?
- 24) As an educator what else would you have done to contribute to peace process?
- 25) Could those be done in the legal framework and workflow of Ministry of National Education?
- 26) What kind of support could be given to students and parents in schools where there is conflict so they don't have or could resolve their problems?
- 27) What could be done politically to resolve Kurdish/Turkish issue? Which groups could take part in the resolution and what roles could those groups play?

## Appendix 8

### Questions for interviews with headmasters and vice headmasters

- 1) Your specialty?
- 2) For how many years have you been teaching?
- 3) Where have you taught?
- 4) Your title as an administrator?
- 5) For how many years have you been on administration?
- 6) Which school did you graduate from?
- 7) Where were you born and raised?
- 8) What's your native language? Which languages do you speak? How did you learn them?
- 9) What are your labour union activities?
- 10) How would you define Turkish-Kurdish conflict?
- 11) How does the conflict environment in the city/region affect the school? How is conflict and Kurdish/Turkish issue projected onto the school?
- 12) How is the school trying to cope with this?
  - a) What are the experiences with the language problem?
  - b) How are you trying to resolve the problems, which are reflections of the Kurdish issue?
- 13) How do parents see the school?
  - a) Do you have problems with parents that stem from conflict around? What are these problems?
  - b) What could you do to resolve those problems?
  - c) Could you get support to resolve those problems? How and from where?
- 14) How do you think the problems that stem from conflict that are projected upon the school could be resolved?
  - At school:
  - Ministry of National Education:
  - Provincial Directorate of Education:
  - The state:
  - Parents:
  - ...

## **Appendix 9**

### **Questions for parent interviews**

- 1) How many children do you have in school? Girl or boy? Which grade are they in?
- 2) How is communication with the school, teachers and administrators?
- 3) What do you think about the environment of conflict in the society?
- 4) Is this projected onto your child's education? Are there conflict-based problems? What are your experiences?
  - What kind of issues does your child bring back home from school?
- 5) Could you communicate with the school on those issues?
- 6) What do you think could be done to resolve the conflict-based problems?

## Appendix 10

### Information and Consent Form

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in this research, conducted as part of the project titled “Supporting teachers as actors in the peace process”, jointly carried out by Boğaziçi University, Muş Alparslan University and Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly.

Your contribution involves an interview with the researchers, expected to take between 60 to 90 minutes. Your personal information will be kept strictly confidential and will not be included in the reports. The voice recording of the interview will only be accessible by the researchers and will be erased after a certain time.

There are no good or bad answers to the questions that will be directed to you. It is intended that interviewees convey their experience and opinions with no reservations in a secure setting. You may choose not to answer questions that you are not comfortable with and may withdraw from the interview at any point with no adverse consequences.

You may contact the researchers for your questions about the research by calling XXX or via the following email addresses: [banu.can@gmail.com](mailto:banu.can@gmail.com) , [gokf@boun.edu.tr](mailto:gokf@boun.edu.tr) or [sonersimsek@gmail.com](mailto:sonersimsek@gmail.com)

If you agree to take part in the project with the information and conditions stated above, please fill the section below.

Thank you.

Participant’s signature:

Date:

## Author biographies

**Banu Can** is an independent researcher. Her areas of interest include theories of social justice, social exclusion, education policies and work sociology. She holds an undergraduate degree in philosophy from Boğaziçi University and graduate degree on Educational Sciences from the same university. She has done postgraduate work on Cognitive Science at Нов български университет, and has taught courses on philosophy, psychology and educational sciences at various institutions.

**Fatma Gök** is a professor at Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education, Educational Sciences Department and is the director of BEPAM Research Centre (Education Policy Application and Research Centre) at the same university. Her areas of research include education policies, education and social gender, social foundations of education and comparative education. She has published on the right to education, discrimination in education, education and social justice, and education and neoliberal policies. A contributor to editing collectives of feminist journals such as *Sosyalist Feminist*, *Kaktüs* and *Pazartesi*, she is also the editor of the book titled *75 Yılda Eğitim*, a historical reckoning of the Turkish education system. Gök co-authored with Alper Şahin the book titled *İnsan Haklarına Saygılı Bir Eğitim Ortamına Doğru*, a critical analysis of school that could also serve as a guidebook for constructing a democratic environment at school. She is also the editor of *Education in 'multicultural' societies: Turkish and Swedish perspectives* with Marie Carlson, and Annika Rabo, published by I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. Gök is currently the president of Turkish Comparative Education Society and vice president of World Council of Comparative Education Societies.

**Soner Şimşek** is a research fellow in Boğaziçi University Faculty of Education, Educational Sciences Department since 2006 and is pursuing a PhD at Adult Education programme at the same university. His research interests include various subjects within the framework of critical pedagogy and education policies. Şimşek works specifically on teacher training, social conflict, reconciliation, confrontation and education, localisation and autonomy in education, new media and education, and queer pedagogy. Şimşek produces and presents radio and TV shows on educational agenda and is the editor and moderator of a news/discussion programme broadcast on TV. He is a founding member of BEPAM Research Centre.