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The effects of education system on to the child labour: an evaluation from the social work perspective

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Abstract

Education is an important tool for development of individuals and societies. Children as a part of education system and the adults of future are a vital importance. The education system should be covered, especially children, including every human being in order to develop. In Turkey the process of education raised to twelve year, is known 4+4+4 system, and this decision got so much reaction because of its possible results. One of this results is the child labour problem. The aim of this study is to discuss the effects of education system on the child labour and bring into question social work intervention in order to eliminate this problem.

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1. Introduction

Among other members of a community, a child is an individual who needs looking after and private caring because of having a nature sensitive, sentimental and cognitive characteristic open to learning. Progression of a society is merely possible with the development of children in that community, who are strong psychosocially and physically. While child abuse dates back early humans, any child abuse in whatsoever form it is requires medical and psychosocial treatment, in addition the person who are involved in child abuse is subjected to legal act. Child abuse is mainly grouped as physical, emotional, sexual, and economical and negligence, and child labour is one of the prime issues of the economical abuse.

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Economical abuse can best be defined as hiring a child for a work in which his rights are infringed, low payment is made, and his personal development is hindered (Bahar et. al, 2009). It is an insurmountable issue in our country as well as in many other developed and developing countries as a clear result of the distribution of unbalanced economic and technological growth. The need for human workers in the industries has gained an utmost importance because of the competition in the global markets in a correlation with globalisation; it has resulted in a crowded mass of labour class first in Europe and all around the world respectively (Alp et.al, 2009; Sunal et.al, 2008; Yıldız, 2007; Kavi, 2006; Özdemir, 2005; Sapancalı, 2002; exp.: Güler, 2001). As expected, first male workers and then in time female workers and in a short span of time child workers have been employed in industries, which has led a disturbance in the physical, sensorial, kinaesthetic, social, medical and moral development and his right for education has been disregarded. That has brought about children being prone to every threat, for they have adopted all the negative experiences and way of behaving in the work life.

2. The Issue Of Child Labour

To make a definition of child labour necessitates the definition of child. It can best be done by taking the age criteria and the children rights into consideration. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (commonly abbreviated as the CRC, CROC, or UNCRC) defines a child as any human being under the age of eighteen.

Child labour refers to the employment of children in any work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful. According to ILO (international Labour Organisation), the definition of working child and that of child labour do not overlap (FAO, 2013).

Child labour has always been considered as the series of acts that deprive the children of their childhood, main potentials, and the most importantly their honours, and that give a serious harm to their physical and mental development. All these prevent them from attending school and even if they do so, they lead them to work in heavy jobs that last for hours. To decide if a job is child labour or not is solely depends on the kind of job, the age of the child, the content the hours of the job, the working conditions, and the goals of the country; therefore, it varies from country to country and from sector to sector (ILO, 2004).

In Turkey, in accordance with the labour law of 2003, it is forbidden for employers to employ children under the age of 15; however, those who are in their 15 legally and have completed secondary school education or those who continue their education could be hired for the jobs as long as these jobs do not harm their physical, mental, and moral developments. For employment, it is a requirement for the workplaces to consider children's safety measures, their physical, mental, and psychological developments, personal tendencies, and abilities. It is necessary for works not to hinder them from going to school, and vocational training. Working hours of the children who have completed the compulsory education and do not attend to school is not allowed to be more than 7 hours per day and 35 hours per week, but for those who have completed the age of 15, the time could be extended to 8 hours per day and 40 hours per week (Labour Law No: 4857, Article 71).

It is clear that education system has considerably important to shape the working conditions of children. It would be useful to have a look at the prospects of child labour both in our country and in the World before giving the details of education.

3. A General Overview Of Child Labour Both In Turkey And In The World.

Almost 1/3 of the World population is comprised of children under the age of 18. Children and youngsters constitute almost half of the whole population in most countries (Unicef, 2006). Although according to the statistics of ILO there are a plethora of children who are employed under the age of 5, almost all of the children employed are those under at the age range of 5-17. In accordance with the records of ILO, 306 million out of 1.586 billion children in the World (19.3%) are in the employment sector, and 250 million (around 70%) of these children are child worker, which shows that one out of every seven child in the World is child worker. 115 million of these children are performing very dangerous tasks (ILO, 2010).

The same statistics 176 million children at the age range of 5-14 are in industry and it is clear that the number of child workers is 153 million, of whom 53 million are employed in dangerous tasks. 129 million children at the age

range of 15-17 in the industry of whom 53 million are employed in dangerous tasks are child workers and all of the workers in that range have been working in dangerous tasks (ILO, 2010).

As of considering the rates from gender point of view, the records reveal that 15.6 % of male children and 11.4% of female children at the age range of 5-17 are child workers. In other words, the number of female workers is 88 million, while the same number applies to 128 million for male children. 9.4% of the male children and 5.4% of the female children at the same age range has been working for dangerous jobs (ILO, 2010).

60% of the children at the age range of 5-17 in the World has been employed in the agriculture sector and are subjected to work accident or occupational disease (FAO; 2013) most of the male children are employed in the industrial and agricultural sector, while female children operate in service sectors. 67.5 of the children employed work without payment, and 21.4% are paid, and 5% work freelance. The rate of female children who work without payment is 72% and the same rate is 64% for males (ILO, 2010).

According to 2012 records of Turkey Institute of Statistics, the population of children at the age range of 0-17 constitutes of 30% of the total population (22 691 179). It is a reality that the issue of child labour which is relevant to a huge segment of the society should not be ignored. The exploitation of the labour of the children has still been an issue that has been deeply affecting the country which has promised to strive for the exploitation of child labour and has started to implement some laws to regulate the issue. The issue of child labour has been observed in two ways as both employing the children under the legal age illegally and forcing them to work under heavy work conditions.

According to the records of the questionnaire of child labour in Turkey in 2012, children at the age range of 6 - 17 have mostly been employed in agricultural sector. The second sector in which they are employed abundantly is service sector and the third one industrial sector. Considering the gender, the records show that female children are mostly employed in the agricultural sector, but male children are hired for service sector. When the records between 2006 and 2012 are compared, it comes out that the number of child workers has increased, while the number of male and female children working in service and industrial sectors has decreased, but the number of those working in agricultural sector has risen.

Considering the questionnaires about child labour in 2006 – 2012 , the results have shown that in 2012 , 413.000 children out of 893.000 in Turkey have worked as family workers , and 470.000 are paid workers and that 10.000 run their own businesses. It is a striking point that the number of children who work as family workers without payment is huge. It is interesting to note that the number of children has dramatically fallen in comparison with those of 2006 and that the number of family child workers unpaid (<http://www.tuik.gov.tr>).

4. Reformation Of The Education System As 4+4+4 Causing Children To Work In Turkey

The response to be given to the question of why children work or have them work could best be explained by the economic conditions of the family, the increasing tendency for the illegal employment, the gender roles, social security working against women and children, and the effects of immigration on children, in addition the instability on the education policies takes the priority.

The education system in Turkey is classified as public and vocational education. Public education is comprised of primary, secondary, high school education and tertiary education. Vocational education is defined as the education system that aims to teach reading and writing to the elderly, and the vocational schools in which students are able to put what they have learnt all throughout their education life into practice (Senar and Garip, 2013). It is indisputable to go for some changes in education system as a requirement of modern era. However, the point that should be considered well is to what extent all these changes will affect students, parents, and teachers and more importantly the future of the country.

A new formulation has been required in the education system on the grounds that the compulsory education for 8 years, which was legislated at the 28 February process in Turkey, is not satisfactory enough to meet demands for teaching all the contemporary topics to the new generation; therefore, the compulsory education has been enlarged to 12 years, and the logic behind that policy has been stated as Turkey being far behind the other nations in terms of the number of schools and graduate students. Another important point highlighted by the new policy is the need for democratization of education system and making the education system more flexible (<http://www.meb.gov.tr>).

With the new system that started in 2012- 2013 education year, education has been divided into levels in which first 4 years is primary school, and the next 4 years is secondary school and the last 4 years is planned to be the high school. The age to start to school has been decreased with that new system that has been objected much by public.

Children 66 months old have been decided to start the school. However, the point to be discussed is that a child at the age of 5.5 is lack of physical, cognitive and psychological capabilities; namely, psycho-social situation of the child is unable to meet the demands of such an education. The new system has stated that a student at the second level of the education (secondary school) or parents have got the right to choose the suitable eclectic course in accordance with the wishes and the talents of the child. A critic to be given to that matter is that children can be directed to the religion classes without getting the wishes of the children (<http://www.egitimsen.org.tr>).

Also, the implementation of 4+4+4 system has been objected by many unions and protest walks have been held (<http://www.radikal.com.tr>). According to a study carried out by Karadeniz Bahtiyar (2012) in which 468 teachers are involved, it has been concluded that 82.3% of the teachers feel that the new law has not been discussed properly before implementation, 79.1% feel that teachers have not been advocated beforehand, 62.8% of the teachers do not support the law, 64.3% of the teachers feel that the new law will enable students to graduate from the high school without attending the school.

According to a study having been carried out by Memişoğlu and İsmetoğlu (2013), the interviews with the school managers have shown that 8 of them feel the new law is missing in many points and that, although the new law might be considered appropriate, there are many deficiencies in planning and implementation and that it has to be in the form 5+3+4; there is a rush and enforcement in implementation and the weekly hours are more than required. Moreover, it is another matter of dispute that the implementation is limited to only Religious Vocational Schools.

On condition that students are unable to pass the proficiency test after 8th grade (SBS), they might have a chance to sign up Religious Vocational Schools or other Vocational School with the coordination of governors. The issue that arises at that point is that it is uncertain whether students could be followed well since the system will run e-school (<http://www.meb.gov.tr>). That issue should also be considered from the social gender roles. It is necessary to take into consideration that the children who will graduate at an early period have the risk to start to work as child workers and that female children have the risk to get married at an early age and that necessary measure should be taken immediately.

It is evident that the new system of 4+4+4 has been objected much indeed. It is necessary to carry out enough studies to accommodate the needs to arise and to prevent the issues from happening about the children who started to the first grade at the implementation of the system and study at the 5th grade for the time being and also for the current students of 8th grade who will start to high school. For the sake of the country and education system, it is highly important that the law should be re-evaluated to the extent that the missing points are filled.

5. Child Labour And Social Work

The fight with the issue of child labour which is a kind of economical exploitation requires a holistic approach; therefore, the social work to be applied should cover micro, mezzo and macro levels. The implementation of social work at micro and mezzo levels should be started with the definition of the characteristics of the families who force their children to work and the main reasons of that issue. The awareness that depriving children of the right to study is a violation of human rights should be raised on the families' side. The child and his family have got the right to get the social benefits provided by the government; therefore, social worker should direct the child and his family to the use of these economical resources. It is necessary to follow a way to maximize the benefits of these resources in order to prevent child labour.

According to Karataş (2007), one of the major things that should be taken into consideration, while deciding on child care system in Turkey, is whether an inclusive and straightforward approached has been implemented. Even though there are a lot of judicial, managerial applications about the matter, it could be said that all these do not reflect the necessities required by a contemporary world. The prime feature of the existing policies is that they have developed themselves separately from each other in the span of time. As stated above, the interference to be developed at macro level could best be provided by using constructive child caring policies and social policies. The interference to be applied at macro level by social workers could be summarized as follows.

- To be able to enforce some dissuasive sanctions to families who consider children as child workers unpaid by depriving them of the right of education and to employers and families who force the children under a certain age set out by laws.
- To promote some social events which are educational, advocacy, and empowering the right based in parallel with the needs and characteristics of the populations which the implications and applications cover.

- To select the children of the families who are under the socioeconomic level and provide scholarship to them.
- With the accompany of the social workers employed in the ministries, to take the role of enforcement in order to prevent child labour and to engage in lobby facilities.

Furthermore, social work and social workers should take an active role in shaping social policies and regulations that are required for the fight with the issue child labour.

6. Conclusion And Proposals

Child labour which is a kind of economical exploitation is a growing issue in both our country and all around the World. The most important measure to be taken to prevent child labour is education. One of the main responsibilities of a nation aiming to increase social welfare is to shape the education to an extent to cover the whole nation. While the changes the educational policy is parallel with the needs of contemporary World, the issue of how to shape is a matter of concern, for the changes implemented might result in children to be away from school or to be ousted from school.

The compulsory education has been increased to 12 years after 2012-2013 school years and designed as 4+4+4. The new education system has been discussed since the age to start to school has gone down, Religious Vocational Schools have opened as a result of conservative social structure, these students have been desired to be sent to these schools, female children have been forced to get married at an early age as a requirement of compulsory religion classes and patriarchal social structure.

Social workers are mainly responsible for providing the individuals who have lost their social functions as a result of their interactions to their environments with these positive qualities again. Social workers who evaluate the life of every child and his family should take major role against every policy that will make the child away from education and help them get their shares equally from education. Also, people who are knowledgeable enough should engage in law making policies in order to strengthen the education system.

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