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Shadow Education from Shadows to the Light: Case of Basic High Schools in Turkey *

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Abstract

This study situates how shadow education has become more visible in Turkey after an educational policy change in 2014 that regulated the closure of private tutoring centers –*dershanes*- and their transformation into a new type of private school called Basic High School - Temel Lise. In this multiple-case study, we interviewed school stakeholders and observed various processes such as classes and recitation hours at five Basic High Schools in Ankara, Turkey. The findings mainly revealed that Basic High Schools had a dual education structure in which the formal curricula were implemented and students were prepared for the university entrance examination, with an emphasis on the latter. Teaching to test was prioritized in these shadow schools for profit while most of the aspects of school quality were neglected. Further, since these schools were categorized as private schools, the school fee for these schools, although lower than the elite ones, was affordable for middle and high-socio-economic-status families. Such an approach, we conclude, exacerbated existing educational inequalities in Turkey while widening the achievement gap on the university entrance examination between students from different socioeconomic classes. The findings of this study might help educators and policy-makers in the organization of the schooling process at private schools to eliminate educational inequalities while ensuring quality education for all.

Keywords

Educational equality
High-stakes testing
Multiple-case study
Neoliberal policies
Private schools
School quality

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Introduction

This article mainly intends to situate the impact of neoliberal policies on schooling while focusing on the educational inequalities they perpetuated in the Turkish education system. We, specifically, dwell on a policy decision that paved the way for educational privatization: closure of *dershane*s[3] and their transformation into a new type of high school named Basic High Schools (BHS) (hereafter the transformation policy decision). The transformation policy decision and the embedded processes of its implementation were studied by scholars; nevertheless, a critical examination of what actually happens at BHS has been an overlooked aspect in the field of curriculum. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to this genre of literature while disclosing the schooling process at BHS based on the perceptions of school stakeholders.

Neoliberal policies have been dominating the market since the 1970s, the times a global economic crisis occurred (Brathwaite, 2017). Infiltration of neoliberalism into the governments' market policies resulted in decreased public expenditures and liberation of the public services such as health and education under the color of increased efficiency and quality (Apple, 2006). Also, so-called structural reforms of the modern era were introduced by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These reforms opened the doors for a capitalist economy (Wallerstein, 1974) in which only productive members of society could survive. Accordingly, education has evolved into a means by which future citizens are trained for the labor market to contribute to the economic growth of their societies (Anderson & Keys, 2007; Rutkowski, Rutkowski, & Langfeldt, 2012).

The alliance between economy and education has attracted many scholars (e.g. Hanushek & Wossmann, 2010). The problem with the existing studies is that they mainly rely on quantitative measures to ground their arguments, or, they use standardized test scores as an indicator of increased income in the labor market (e.g. Murnane, Willett, & Levy, 1995). Those studies also neglect the contextual and cultural differences in schooling and assume that a year in school leads to the same expected outcomes in different countries (e.g. Hanushek, 2015). They further underestimate the influence of non-formal education environments, family background, and variations in education quality across schools that degrades schooling into a standardized process.

Embedded in the fallacies of the economic perspective of education, Critical Theorists argue that on the one hand, too much emphasis on the labor force and economic growth attributes education to a technical role by training skilled, thus productive, citizens (Hursh, 2005). On the other hand, the battle among individuals in the savage capitalist arena does not only transform education into a privilege that is available for only families with certain socioeconomic backgrounds but also reproduces power relations in societies (Apple, 2001a). These power relations are triggered through shadow education institutions that mirror mainstream schooling (Bray, 1999). Families who do not want their children to be left behind invest in private tutoring (Mahmud & Bray, 2017). Further, problems in public schools such as large class sizes also direct students and parents to shadow education institutions since larger class sizes meant less individualized attention (Bray & Lykins, 2012).

Behind the façade is that private tutoring opens the gates for a higher level of education and a demanding career as it promises a teaching approach that emphasizes preparation for the standard examinations by employing different test teaching practices such as presenting the questions to be asked in the exams and short ways to answer them (Kwo & Bray, 2014). In other words, attending a shadow education increases the likelihood of one's participating in higher education (Bray, 1999; Lee, Park, & Lee, 2012) causing achievement inequalities on standardized test scores between students who attend and do not/cannot attend these institutions since enrolling in a shadow education is highly correlated with the socioeconomic status of families (Kim & Chang, 2010; Stevenson & Baker, 1992).

[3] *Dershane*s were private tutoring centers in Turkey that prepared students and adults for standardized tests. In this paper, we use the term *dershane* to represent private tutoring centers that prepared students for the university entrance examination.

Built on the critical literature on neoliberal policies on education, we intend to provide an in-depth depiction of how education privatization and high-stakes testing influence the pedagogical practices at schools in Turkey. We specifically examined Basic High Schools (BHS) –*Temel Lise*- that were introduced into the Turkish education system in 2014 with the amendment to Private Education Institutions Law, No. 5580. The amendment legislated the closure of *dershane*s and their transformation into BHS. These schools were categorized as private high schools that serve 9th to 12th graders under the Ministry of National Education's (MoNE) centralized control with the flexibility to implement extra school hours. After the transformation policy decision, most of those schools, except for the few institutionalized ones that were able to adapt to the top-down policy change thanks to the economic and social capital they had, continued their activities in *dershane* buildings most of which were located in apartments or commercial buildings until the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Onwards, the ones that meet the private school standards regulated by the MoNE (Regulation for Private Education Institutions Standards) operate as private schools in the Turkish education system. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do the participants perceive the mission of Basic High Schools?
2. How do the participants address school quality at Basic High Schools?
3. How do the participants perceive the schooling process at Basic High Schools?

Conceptual Background

Education Privatization

Neoliberal policies and their embedded practices have resulted in the privatization of public services. Privatization is defined as:

> … the transfer of activities, assets, and responsibilities from government/public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies.' Also, privatization is often thought of as 'liberalization' – where agents are freed from government regulations, or as 'marketization' – where new markets are created as alternatives to government services or state allocation systems (Belfield & Levin, 2002, p. 19).

Education privatization, then, broadly refers to the transfer of education, and educational decisions in some cases, from state to private entities (Adamson, 2016). According to Ball and Youdell (2008), there are two forms of education privatization: endogenous and exogenous. The former refers to the "importing of ideas, techniques, and practices from the private sector to make the public sector more like businesses and more business-like" (p. 9) while the latter means, as used in this study, "the opening up of public education services to private sector participation on a for-profit basis and using the private sector to design, manage or deliver aspects of public education" (p. 20). The authors further assert that the grim reality is that both forms alter the equal distribution of educational opportunities and the meaning of educational equity itself. Nonetheless, the common belief among the public is that private schools are more qualified than public schools. To develop such a hoax, public schools are labeled as failing businesses in foregrounding standardized test scores of the students and teacher underperformances as justification (Ravitch, 2013). Such visions legitimize standardized testing under the mask of meritocracy (Au, 2016). By doing so, Apple (2001a, p. 39) claims that the dominant groups "export the blame" from themselves "onto the state and poor people."

Shadow Education

The ever-growing power of neoliberalism has altered the education systems by creating a consciousness of performativity and accountability based on student performance on high-stakes tests (Ball, 2016). In contemporary societies, high-stakes tests are used to convince the public that "equity is both possible and desirable", Macedo (2013, p. 35) manifests. Beneath the surface, nevertheless, test scores are used to track schools and students in their social roles (Apple, 2001b) while shifting the focus of education from students to student performance (Ball, Bowe, & Gewirtz, 1994).

The critical role of high-stakes testing in accessing quality education has instilled the proliferation of shadow education institutions -parallel schools- that support students' academic development by implementing a banking model of education in which students develop test-taking skills (Au, 2011; Bray, 2009; Loyalka & Zakharov, 2016). Flexibility in time planning and prioritization of tutoring, along with tutors' emphasis on patterns followed in the past examinations, have increased the demand for those institutions (Chan & Bray, 2014; Liu & Bray, 2020).

There are three critical problems caused by the spread of shadow education institutions. First is that these institutions alter the way the education systems operate (Liu & Bray, 2020). In this regard, Bhorkar and Bray (2018) assert that rather than supplementing, shadow education institutions supplant mainstream schooling, particularly at the 11th and 12th-grade levels. Second, the alleged success of shadow education institutions attracted many parents which resulted in parents' investment in private tutoring. These families were made to believe that the more students get higher scores in the standard examinations, the more likely it is that they get higher education at distinguished universities as a passport to working at prestigious jobs (Tansel & Bircan, 2004). Put differently, embedded in the competitiveness among students to enter the top universities, shadow education institutions have exacerbated existing educational inequalities (Bray, Kobakhidze, Zhang, & Liu, 2018). Third, the banking model of education adopted by private tutors and/or private tutoring centers neglects the quality aspect of education while offering one-size-fits-all examination techniques (Yung, 2020). These centers, furthermore, re-locate the role of education in societies while altering the meaning of quality of and equity in education (Mazawi, Sultana, & Bray, 2013).

Contrary to the mounting literature on shadow education and its different forms across the world including Asia (Bray, 1999; Bray & Lykins, 2012; Stevenson & Baker, 1992), Mediterranean countries (Bray, Mazawi, & Sultana, 2013), and European countries (Bray, 2021), shadow education phenomenon has attracted scholars in Turkey, particularly within the last two decades (e.g. Baştürk & Doğan, 2010; Berberoğlu & Tansel, 2014; Gök, 2005; Tansel, 2013a; Tansel & Bircan, 2005). First founded in the early 1930s as adult training institutions, *dershanes* evolved into shadow education institutions that prepared students for the high-stakes tests in Turkey. This role led to the proliferation of those institutions in numbers across the country. There were interwoven causes behind the increasing demand for those institutions that were mainly derived from the problems of public schools including teacher shortages, crowded classrooms, physical deficiencies, and regional inequalities (Akyüz, 1989; Turan, Armağan, & Çakmak, 2015; Yelken & Büyükcan, 2015). The centralized testing system in Turkey that regulates the transition from one education level to another is mounted to those mentioned problems. The test-taking skills taught at those institutions were perceived as a remedy by parents who did not want their children to be left behind (Tansel, 2013b; Tansel & Bircan, 2004; Turan et al., 2015). All these together resulted in the never-ending demand for *dershanes.*

Succinctly, *dershanes* were categorized as shadow education institutions as they taught test-taking skills (Boydak-Özan, Polat, Gündüzalp, & Yaraş, 2015; Temelli, Kurt, & Köse, 2010) and compensated problems of public education (Turan et al., 2015). The growing number of those institutions, indeed, pointed out that shadow education was no longer in shadow in Turkey. Considering these arguments, along with the political drives that aimed at eliminating the reign of certain groups' in this market, *dershanes* were closed down in 2014 with an amendment to the Private Education Institutions Law. The amendment regulated also their transformation into a new type of private school named BHS. These schools functioned in the Turkish education system until the end of the 2018-2019 school year as a continuum of *dershane* (Büyükcan & Biçer, 2016). This transition was critical in two aspects. First, there were more than one million students enrolled at *dershanes* and 50,000 teachers were working at those institutions (MoNE, 2014). Considering these people along with their families, a serious number of citizens would be affected by the closure of *dershanes.* Second, the primary discourse behind the closure of *dershanes* was to eliminate the inequalities they triggered in the Turkish education system (see Baştürk & Doğan, 2010; Saltık, 2015; Tansel, 2013c; Tansel & Bircan, 2006 for a comprehensive discussion of the inequalities caused by *dershanes*). Nevertheless, instead of eliminating educational inequalities, new forms of inequalities were created with the transformation policy decision

(Aksoy, 2016; Büyükcan, & Biçer, 2016; Yelken & Büyükcan, 2015). For instance, the government provided incentives both for the BHS owners and the families who wanted to enroll their children at BHS. These attempts were interpreted as part of the education privatization policies of the government (Eğitim Sen, 2015; Yelken & Büyükcan, 2015). Accordingly, Büyükcan's (2015) account of the examination economy in Turkey provides valuable insights into the ongoing discussions on the transformation policy decision. He remarks that the closure of *dershanes* would not be a remedy to the economic burden on families unless the critical role and impact of national examinations were eliminated. He further argues that the transformation policy decision would increase the educational expenditures of middle and upper-class families causing educational inequalities and stratification between different social classes. Entrenched with these arguments, in this paper, we aim to address how the transformation policy change legitimated shadow education to become more visible while exacerbating existing educational inequalities in the Turkish context.

School Quality Research

In mapping the educational practices provided by shadow education institutions, it is important to examine the school quality at these institutions. Starting with the work of Heyneman and Loxley (1983), scholars have focused on school quality by claiming that particularly in low and middle-income countries, schools matter more than family background. Built on this genre of research, a new scholarly room has emerged as school quality research (e.g. Edmonds, 1979; Hargreaves, 2001; Scheeren, 1992). In this context it is argued that the quality of school facilities has a significant impact on student achievement, as well as teacher behavior and attitude (Uline, Wolsey, Tschannen-Moran, & Lin, 2010). Parallel to the outcome-oriented definitions of effective schools, Edmonds's (1979) designation of effective schools from the organizational theory perspective adds to the literature with a claim that schools are accepted as effective only if they fulfill the intended educational goals.

Inherent in the market-oriented interpretation, school effectiveness has also been studied within the blurred lines of privatization. The literature reveals that privatization and education quality are directly related (Castro-Hidalgo & Gómez-Álvarez, 2016). From a critical perspective, though, the discourse on the alleged quality of education at private schools is deliberately produced by power groups, particularly by the neoliberals (Lafer, 2014; Levin, Cornelisz, & Hanisch-Cerda, 2013). Accordingly, in his critical analyses, Apple (2017) draws our attention to the illusion created by neoliberals. He asserts that the studies which document that private schools perform better than public schools do not provide robust evidence for their assertions and require a careful interpretation.

Turkish Context

Neoliberalism has started to influence much of the discourse and policy-making in Turkey since the 1980s. As Erol, Özbay, Türem, and Terzioğlu (2016) explicate in their introductory chapter, neoliberal governmentality has become more evident in Turkish society starting with the military coup in the pre-80s. The changes in governmentality were followed by the liberalization of the market and the implementation of structural reforms introduced by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Akçay, 2018). The liberalization of the market also created a new class named the "new-right" (Aksoy & Eren Deniz, 2018) that represents the Turkish-Islamic-market intersection despite the different roots they ground (Özkazanç, 2011). Different than the new-right project triggered during the 80s, *"a populist pushback against the neoliberal agenda"* was experienced right after the 1991 elections under the coalition government (Erensü & Madra, 2020, p. 5). Until the 2002 elections, the coalition governments adopted a market policy that resulted in short-term high-interest loans provided by private international banks. The inevitable consequence of this period was the major economic crisis that occurred lastly in 2001. After almost the collapse of the economy in Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (JDP) came into power on 3rd November 2002. The measures that the government took to cure the economy decreased the interest rates and created a smooth economic environment until the global economic crisis affected the European market after 2008 (Özden, Akça, & Bekmen, 2017). The party employed political strategies that enabled the enforcement of neoliberal and neoconservative policies (Aksoy & Eren Deniz, 2018). As a result, privatization has gained impetus within the last two decades (İnal, 2012; Özden et al., 2017).

The adaptation of neoliberal policies has also infiltrated the education system in Turkey transforming education into a meta that serves the owners of the capital (Gök, 2004). It has been exercised in different forms including, but not limited to, the decrease in the public budget allocated for education and the growing number of private education institutions (Aksoy & Eren Deniz, 2018). Adding to the visible practices, hidden forms of neoliberalism such as promotion and sponsorship, which are promoted by global and local organizations and institutions, have become a reality in the education system in Turkey (Aksoy, 2011). These practices have multiplied existing educational inequalities such as access to quality education (Acar, Günalp, & Cilasun, 2016; Bayram, 2018).

In this context, the role of national standardized examinations in accessing quality education has become more critical particularly for the "have nots". To this end, *dershane*s were accepted as alternative or shadow education institutions that prepared the attendees for high-stakes tests in Turkey by offering test teaching practices. These institutions, except for the elite ones, mainly served the students of low- and middle-class by promising a chance to enroll at recognized schools/higher education institutions. Nevertheless, *dershanes* were always at the center of hot debates among the public, education practitioners, and policy-makers as they ignited educational inequalities (Gök, 2005; Tansel & Bircan, 2004). To illustrate, at the beginning of the 2000s, spending on private tutoring of households was almost equal to the country's spending on public education (Tansel & Bircan, 2006). Also, the number of students enrolled at *dershane*s reached over one million (Anadolu Agency, 2014).

Entrenched with the problems triggered by their existence of them, the closure of *dershane*s was always on the political agenda. Finally, in 2014, they were closed down with the Private Education Institutions Law amendment, No. 5580. The amendment also regulated their transformation into private schools causing fierce criticisms among public and educators because of their political orientation and actions (e.g. Garipağaoğlu, 2016; Önder, 2018; Saltık, 2015) The objections centered upon the new forms of inequalities created with this policy decision. The scholars, in this regard, argued that *dershane* was not the problem itself rather it was the consequence of high-stakes testing in Turkey (e.g. Boydak-Özan et al., 2015; Tansel, 2013c).

Among the standardized tests in Turkey, generally known as the university entrance examination (UEE) has the highest stakes. High school graduates have to take the UEE to enroll in a higher education institution. The UEE is a two-stage exam. In the first stage, attendees take the Basic Proficiency Test (*Temel Yetenek Testi*) which consists of the following tests: Turkish Language, Social Sciences, Basic Math, and Science. The Qualification Test (*Alan Yeterlik Sınavı*), on the other hand, includes Turkish Language and Literature, Social Sciences-1, Social Sciences-2, Math, and Science. Nevertheless, the attendees answer only the tests required for the type of score they want to be calculated. Besides, examinees who want to be placed at Foreign Language Departments take the Foreign Language Test (*Yabancı Dil Testi*). The exam is held in Arabic, English, French, German, and Russian languages. There is a separate question booklet for each language. In the exam, the candidate is given a question booklet of the foreign language s/he has declared in the application.

As the number of students taking those exams is high and there exists a limited quota particularly for attending the top institutions, the Turkish education system is accepted as highly competitive. According to the 2020-2021 statistics announced by the MoNE (2021), of almost 2,5 million candidates, only 17.72% were placed in an undergraduate program. Besides, the recognized universities accepted the top 1.5% of applicants. These statistics are significant not only do they provide insights into the Turkish education system but also verify the link between economy and education. In this regard, Ünal (1988) argues that any form of privilege (e.g. diploma) that enables one to be recruited later provides permanent advantages in her/his whole organizational life. Supporting her, more recently, Ataç (2017) concludes that education is one of the determinants of one's social and economic positioning in society. Based on the critical analysis of PISA, the author contends that Turkey is among the bottom five countries in which the achievement differences across schools are the highest. However, within the school differences are reported to be very low meaning that school segregation is a reality in the Turkish

education system. Considering the UEE scores, she further discloses that private school graduates are more likely to enroll in an undergraduate program compared to those in public schools. Furthermore, following science high schools (schools that accept only the top students based on the Transition to Secondary School Examination scores) whose graduates constitute the top 10%, private high school graduates are listed between the top the 20%-30% range. She also draws our attention to regional differences in explaining educational inequalities by reporting that the percentage of students who are placed in an undergraduate program is higher in the north and south-west regions while it is the lowest in the east and south-east regions.

Given the never-ending discussions about education privatization and high-stakes testing, it is noticed that the literature about the interpretation of privatization of education through the lenses of the sociology of education (e.g. inequalities caused by the marketization of education systems) is scarce. Accordingly, there is a need for scholarly research that focuses on the embedded practices of privatization at the classroom level (Burch, 2009). On the other hand, much of the scholarly work that examines the impact of neoliberal policies is grounded on the theories of economy, not on education theories (Laitsch, 2013). Those studies also adopt a reductionist approach which neglects the complexity of the curriculum field (Rutkowski et al., 2012). These deficiencies of the current literature, indeed, urge for a critical analysis in education that mainly operates to "illuminate how educational policy and practice are connected to the relations of exploitation and domination in the larger society." (Apple, 2006, p. 681). Dwelling on these arguments, in this paper, we intend to provide an in-depth depiction of how education privatization and high-stakes testing influence the pedagogical practices at schools in Turkey through the examination of the schooling process at Basic High Schools – *Temel Lise*- with an emphasis on the educational inequalities they perpetuated.

Method

Research Model

In this paper, our aim was to anatomize the schooling process at BHS particularly within the scope of shadow education literature to unveil how shadow education had come out of the shadows with the transformation policy decision. Bearing this aim in mind, we designed this research as a multiple-case study to portray a holistic picture of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). We included five BHS that were located in Ankara. We selected the cases by employing a maximum variation sampling strategy to document the unique characteristics of each case while depicting common aspects of them (Patton, 2002). We used the following criteria to decide on the research sites to collect data: the district where the cases were located (three districts with different SES), the institutional characteristics of the schools (mission of the school, founder of the school, the reputation of the school, branches of the institution, publications of the institution), and the physical facilities of the schools (e.g. building type, building size, school size, classrooms, academic facilities, social facilities). Considering these criteria, we selected five schools: three from Çankaya, one from Yenimahalle, and one from Altındağ districts (see Table 1 for details and Appendix A for more detail).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Schools

School Name		A	B	C	D	E
District	High Socio-Economic Status	X	X	X		
	Middle Socio-Economic Status				X	
	Low Socio-Economic Status					X
Institution Type	Chain school	X		X		
	Franchised School				X	X
	Boutique School		X			
In operation	0-10				X	X
(years)	10-20	X				
	>20		X	X		
School Building	Apartment	X		X		X
	Within a commercial building		X			
	Single building designed as a school				X	
School Size	100-150	X				X
	150-200				X	
	>200		X	X		
Classroom Size	10-15	X	X	X	X	X
	>15	X		X	X	X
Number of	15-25	X			X	X
Teachers	>25		X	X		

During the 2017-2018 school year, one of the authors collected the data by entering the research sites one by one to eliminate confusion, as Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest. The researcher gave a one-week break before entering the next research site which enabled us to organize and review all the oral and written data. It also provided us with the opportunity to collect and analyze the data simultaneously. In the final phase, we completed the within-case and cross-case analysis and the reporting of the data analysis (Stake, 2013).

Data Sources

We employed the within-case sampling method to select the participants and decide on the activities, processes, and times to be explored (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In doing so, we tried to maximize the representativeness of different perceptions and incidents (Creswell, 2007). For instance, we selected both female and male teachers, teachers with different experiences in the profession, and teachers with different positions (e.g. head teacher, vice-principal, etc.). On the other hand, we prioritized observing classes of different subject matters (math, science, social sciences, visual arts, etc.) to increase the likelihood of providing a thorough account of the processes in each case (see Appendix B).

We interviewed 39 students (9^{th} to 12^{th}-grade levels), 38 parents, 19 teachers from different majors, five school principals, and three school counselors. We conducted face-to-face individual interviews after taking the consent of the participants. The interviews lasted between 15 minutes to 90 minutes. We audio-recorded all the interviews and transcribed them verbatim.

Moreover, one of the authors observed various processes (e.g. classes, recitation hours, administration of practice tests, counseling hours, meetings, breaks, etc.) in each of the cases during whole school hours in a week. In total 42 classes (10 in Case 1, eight in Case 2, three in Case 3, 11 in Case 4, 10 in Case 5) and more than 100 school hours were observed. In the selection of the classes to be observed, we considered the subject matter and the grade level. For other processes, field notes were taken during the whole school day to depict the routines and/or noteworthy incidents that include student and teacher activities during the breaks and lunch hours, teachers' practices when they did not have a class, etc.

Besides, we examined the school documents (e.g. mission of the school, websites of the schools, school brochures, exams, yearly plans), physical artifacts (e.g. school boards, materials, visuals, announcements), and design of the school spaces -which provided evidence with regards to covert meanings of school culture-. In total, the qualitative data -the transcriptions of the interviews, the field notes, and the document analysis- yielded almost 800 pages of data.

Data Collection Tools

We used three different tools to collect the data. Interviews were the main data collection tool while observations and analysis of the documents and physical artifacts aimed to supplement the interview data. After piloting the instruments in one of the recognized BHS chains and consulting the experts for their feedback on the instruments, we developed the final versions of the instruments. The final version of the interview protocols consisted of questions with regards to the participants' demographic information and their current experiences at BHS (e.g. aim of the school, description of a typical class, courses offered, etc.). The interview protocols consisted of 14, 10, nine, and six questions respectively for teachers, principals, students, and parents. As an example, the teacher interview protocol included the following questions: "How do you perceive your role as a teacher at this school?", "How would you describe the change in a typical class of yours after the transformation?" To this end, interviews enabled us to depict how the school stakeholders defined the mission of BHS, addressed the school quality, and described the schooling process (e.g. curricular and test-preparation activities).

The observation form included two main parts allocated for classroom observations and observation of the other sites within the schools. The classroom observations included four sub-categories: i) the context (e.g., class size, seating arrangement, classroom board, teaching, materials), ii) scheduling patterns (timeline for periods and scheduling of the session), iii) the formal structure of the classroom (e.g. information about roles, interactions), and iv) instruction (teaching approach, teaching methods, teaching materials, and the flow of the session). As part of the depiction of the curriculum delivery at BHS, the classroom observations allowed us to complement interviews in regards to various assets of the classroom practices such as the delivery of the content and student assessment. For instance, during the interviews, most of the teachers exclaimed that they tried to encourage student participation in their classes; nonetheless, classroom observations provided us with evidence that student participation was limited to students' responding to the teachers' questions (that mostly required basic computation or recall of prior knowledge). Besides, field notes were taken during the observation of other places in the schools such as study halls and teachers' rooms. These field notes, empowered us to unravel data that were less likely to reach through the interviews such as laboratories were used as study halls. These field notes particularly served us while describing the school quality and process other than classes (e.g. recitation hours and administration of practice tests).

Lastly, we examined the school documents and physical artifacts. These data were useful in answering all the research questions specified above. For example, in regards to the mission of the schools, we concluded that primarily exam-related materials were posted on the school boards, or, exam-related explanations were featured on the websites/handouts of the schools. On the other hand, these data were useful in portraying the actual picture that was not specified in the interviews. To illustrate, elective courses were reported as offered in the official documents of the schools; nonetheless, as interviews and observations revealed, those class hours were run as recitation hours or designed as an extra math class.

Data Analysis

As employed in this study, the content analysis yields the generation of new themes from the data and includes the steps namely, coding, finding themes, organizing and describing themes, and interpreting findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2017). Bearing the purpose and the research question of this study in mind, initially, we completed a close reading of all of the oral and written data and assigned codes to meaningful segments by using the qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA 2018 (VERBI Software, 2017). There were two major drives behind using the software. First, since we had almost 800 pages of data, it enabled us to have easy access to the data and organize them.

Second, since we followed an iterative process in analyzing the data, the program allowed us to easily move among codes and themes and to make revisions when needed. Then, we brought together the codes which had identical meanings to generate the initial themes as 1) Mission of BHS, 2) School Facilities at BHS, 3) Schooling Process at BHS, 4) Strengths of BHS, 5) Drives Behind Enrolling at BHS. After the second reading, we consulted two professors who are experienced in qualitative data analysis. They coded approximately 10% of the qualitative data, as suggested in the literature (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). Miles and Huberman's (1994) agreement formula was used to calculate inter-coder reliability. The reliability value was calculated as .85 which is an adequate reliability value (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Based on their feedback, we merged some of the themes and made changes in the wording of the themes. Finally, three main themes were generated: 1) Mission of the BHS and 2) School quality at BHS, and 3) Schooling process at BHS.

Trustworthiness

Before elucidating the trustworthiness, it is important to describe the researcher's role since researcher bias might become a major threat to presenting reliable and valid findings (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). One of the authors had worked as a part-time physics teacher in one of the most recognized chain *dershanes* in Ankara during her undergraduate education. Although her experiences allowed the researchers to best capture test-based practices at BHS, they also limited her focus, particularly during the observations. In order to eliminate her bias, she kept a reflexive journal during the fieldwork and shared it with the second author. Through negotiations, we tried to depict a whole picture of the schooling process at BHS by including various aspects such as educational materials and student assessment. We also tried to rival explanations by providing direct quotations from the interviews.

To provide authentic findings, other than conducting a pilot study, we employed the following strategies as part of trustworthiness. For conformability, we checked for the representativeness of the data (i.e. interviewing different school stakeholders and employing maximum variation sampling in the selection of the interviewees), triangulated data sources and data collection methods, and checked out rival explanations. To ensure dependability, we recorded all the oral and written data and used low-inference descriptors to take field notes. We also informed the participants about data confidentiality when the participants had hesitation to share information about critical issues at their schools. Next, to establish credibility, we employed the strategies pro-longed engagement, triangulation of data sources and data collection methods, peer-debriefing, and member-check. Lastly, we used purposeful sampling and provided detailed information about the cases, when necessary to ensure transferability.

Limitations

This study entails two major limitations. First, albeit it is a multiple-case study design, the study generated findings that depended on the cases selected for this study. Also, the perspectives presented here belong to the participants who were interviewed and might not reflect the opinions of other people in each case. Besides, although we spent a week in each of the cases and made observations during school hours the whole day, the incidents displayed here are limited to those processes and activities observed during the data collection and might not reflect all the processes in the selected schools. To overcome this limitation, we followed the following strategies. Primarily, we used three different data collection methods to enhance our findings. Then, we employed maximum-variation sampling strategy to decide on the interviewees and the processes to be observed. And thirdly, we observed the schools throughout the day from the beginning to the leaving time. This enabled us to observe various processes such as classes and recitation hours along with the weekly schedule at each case.

Second, the topic of the study is a controversial issue among scholars and the public. Therefore, it is possible that some of the participants shared limited information or hid their objective perceptions. To overcome this limitation, almost all of the stakeholders in each of the cases (students, teachers, school principals, and school counselors) were interviewed and interviews were complemented with in-depth field notes. Informal communications with the participants also helped us to unclose the hidden elements of the schooling process at BHS.

Findings

We present our findings under three main themes: 1) The Mission and 2) School Quality (School Infrastructure/Physical Facilities), and 3) Schooling Process.

The Mission of Basic High Schools

Analysis of the data yielded that BHS mainly had two missions: profit-oriented and exam-oriented. In other words, BHS had a dual structure that merged *dershane* practices into the schooling process while seeking profit.

The profit-oriented mission of BHS

> "2.3 million Liras are run in this school. Just imagine the amount of legal money in the market. There is also the illegal one, but I do not even mention it. This is a decision that was made only in pursuit of money so that somebody can make money."(The school principal at Case 1)

The findings unveiled that as private educational institutions, BHS had a profit-oriented mission. In this regard, a 12th-grader at Case 1 uttered that: "If we get high scores in the UEE, their (the schools') reputation will increase and they (the owners of the school) will make more money." A 9th-grader at Case 1 and a 12th-grader at Case 3 also admitted that the only aim of BHS was to ensure more student admissions for the following year by advertising the names of students who were placed at a higher education institution. Accordingly, a 12th-grader at Case 1 uttered that:

> There are no students in Anatolian High Schools now. The ones who have money transfer to the Basic High Schools. The ones who do not have money will not study at all. Dershanes did not use to be so expensive in the past. The dershane fee is 20,000 TL, now. What can a poor student do?

Supporting the student views, a Biology teacher at Case 4 drew attention to the inequalities BHS perpetuated. He highlighted that the school fee of BHS was almost three times more than the *dershane* fees. Therefore, he continued, the transformation policy decision served high SES people and expelled low SES ones from getting an education. Likewise, the History teacher at Case 3 contended that the transformation policy decision was a part of the privatization attempt of the government. She clarified that the school fee for Case 3 was more than 20.000 TL which was not affordable even for middle-class families.

A salient finding of this study was that the school principals also affirmed that they had profit-oriented missions. While complaining about the expectations of the school owners, P1 (the school principal in Case 1) alleged that:

> …They (the school owners) are interested in how much profit has been made. I am the school principal but I also work as a repairman and fix anything broken. I walk through the school corridors and take care of everything. I pay my teachers whatever they deserve. I pay the bills monthly and taxes. However, in the end, it depends on how much profit we make. They (the school owners) ask me how many student admissions I guarantee for the next year.

The principals in other cases also indicated that they had to think about how to make a profit to afford the school and personnel expenses. The school principal of Case 2 further exclaimed that the transformation decision of *dershane*s into BHS cemented the marketed education system in Turkey. He critically noted that anyone who has money can open a school and asked "Can a contractor open a pharmacy? But he can open a school in our country to make money!"

The parent interviews also yielded similar findings. Most of the parents classified themselves as families with lower-middle or middle socio-economic status. Therefore, they added, they had difficulties in affording the school fee. However, as one of the parents uttered, due to the quality problems at public schools, they felt responsible for sending their child to a private school. She continued as:

> In our times, public schools were not such bad. We did not need to enroll at even dershane to get a high score in the university entrance examination. If one studied, she would get a high score. But now, it is not that easy. The number of students taking the university entrance examination is much more. Therefore, we have to send our children to private schools. I guess we all sacrifice many of our other expenses to afford the school fee.

A critical finding of this study was that most of the students, particularly at Case 5, which was located in a low SES district in Ankara, disclosed that their parents had side jobs to afford the school fee. As the school counselor at Case 5 delineated, most of the mothers worked in domestic service to contribute to their family income so that they could send their children to BHS. She continued that BHS was "a touch of hope for low-incomers" where their children could get the opportunity for "upward social mobility" through participating in higher education. A 12th grader at Case 5 who transferred to BHS from a vocational high school lucidly reported that:

> My family's financial status is not that good and they have three school-age children. I gave all my internship money to pay the school fee and my father paid the remaining price. They are paying debts, the school expenses of the three kids, and my school fee. It is difficult for them to afford all of them. I will get really sad about my family's efforts if I cannot enter a university. I do not get very sad about anything else. To me, I can try again but I have to manage it this year for my family."[4]

The exam-oriented mission of BHS

> "There is no education here! Only training and practicing for the university entrance examination!" (a 12th grader at Case 1)

The findings revealed that the hub of education at BHS was built on the UEE which was more visible at the 11th and 12th-grade levels. The majority of teachers remarked that particularly at the 12th-grade level, they mainly intended to prepare students for the UEE. In this regard, the school principal of Case 2 alleged that students transferred even from the most recognized Anatolian High Schools to be prepared for the UEE. He further uttered that:

> The main purpose of our school is to place students in universities. For example, for the 12th graders, we have an intense training program to review the previous grades' content before the semester begins so that students do not have problems while learning the 12th-grade content. We evaluate our success based on the number of students who are placed at the university. Public schools do not have such a responsibility. We, for example, have intense programs especially one month before the exam. We start revisions. We ask students the topics they did not understand until that day. We ask the teachers to review that content in those classes. This takes 15 days. After these 15 days, students take an exam (a practice test) every day.

Likewise, the school principal at Case 4 reported that:

> … We are busy. We are exam-oriented. While saying this, I mean one of our five words is the university. That is our goal. We need to motivate students for this. That is why I do not want to make them tired of the projects or so. If we do, we do the best but I do not think that is necessary now. Those kinds of projects should be in middle school. I think that a student in high school thinks more academically.

[4] This female student, whose parent are workers, transferred from a vocational high school to be prepared for the UEE. In Turkey, vocational high school students are required to complete an internship as part of the graduation requirements. During the internships, they are employed by a company and their insurance entry are officially made. They also get paid almost 30% of the minimum wage in Turkey (~1300 TL). Nevertheless, this amount only meets 10% of the BHS fee, at best.

Our findings disclosed that the exam-oriented mission was perceived as a strength, the topmost strength indeed, by most of the participants. Specifically, the parents exclaimed that the dual education structure was a golden opportunity for them since they did not have to allocate extra time and budget for school and *dershane*. The following excerpt from the parent interviews illustrate the parent perceptions:

> Before, my daughters were at a public school. I used to take them from school and leave them to dershane. They had their meal on the way. Sometimes, I did not have time to drive them to dershane and I was quite worried on those days. (Father of two 11th graders)

From a critical perspective, the Math teacher at Case 1 blamed the education system for providing no choice but to adopt such a mission. She marked that the exam-oriented mission prioritized training students for getting a high score in the UEE while neglecting their social and personal needs. A head teacher at Case 3, further, stated that:

> We are not rising a whole person (at this school). We are neither a school nor a dershane. The relationship between teaching and education is contradictory in BHS. Firstly, the educational philosophy we adopt is wrong. I mean there is a problem in the educational system, not in BHS.

School quality at BHS

> "This is not a school. Students cannot go out. They are like tigers in cages." (Math teacher at Case 2)

Our findings revealed that among the five cases, only one of them was removed to a new building after the transformation decision, others continued to serve at buildings that they used as *dershane*. Furthermore, only Case 1, though small, and Case 4 had a school garden. An interesting finding was that only a few students complained about BHS's not having a school garden. An 11th grader at Case 3 uttered that:

> We need to get some fresh air; however, the school does not have a garden, we are in an apartment-like building. During breaks, we just walk through the corridors or ask our questions to teachers because there is nothing to do!

Other students asserted that not having a garden was an advantage for them during their preparation for the UEE, as illustrated in the following excerpt from the interview with a 12th grader at Case 2:

> If one prefers to enroll at a BHS, it means, s/he knows the physical deficiencies at these schools. For example, they (BHS) do not have a garden. It is not a problem for the one who wants to get higher scores in the university entrance examination. Having a garden can be distractive. You know, we are young and sometimes we need to play but since there is not a garden we study even during breaks.

Contrary to the students, the majority of the teachers and all of the principals lucidly admitted that the students needed a school garden. The Geography teacher at Case 2 reported that:

> Now we're transforming the places (dershanes) where the students used to stay for two or three hours into schools. This is not good. Students have lots of energy to burn. Instead of getting an education at schools that have a garden and playgrounds, they are stuck in a building and try to prepare for the university exam. This affects their physical appearance, too. Most of them are getting fat.

Moreover, it was observed that although the schools had a room labeled as the laboratory, none of the cases had a laboratory in use. Case 1, to explain, had a laboratory on the basement floor. There were a few pieces of equipment in the room but they were not used. The room was used as a space for recitation hours. Case 3 and Case 5 also had a laboratory used as a study hall. Case 2 and Case 4, on the

other hand, had a room labeled as the laboratory that was not in use. A salient finding of this study was that most of the students argued that they consciously preferred BHS to focus only on exam preparation and not to waste time in laboratories. They added that laboratories were not in use in public schools, either.

As laboratories, the cases of this study had a room labeled as the library on the sign. To clarify, Case 1 had a library on the top floor which included two tables and bookshelves on which there were test books. On the other hand, the library was used as a study hall in Case 3 and Case 4. Case 5 had a library that was on the backside of a classroom. There were test books on a small bookshelf.

Lastly, it was observed that none of the cases had an indoor sports hall in use. There was an indoor sports hall in Case 1, yet, it did not function as an indoor sports hall; instead, the students had their lunch there. Similarly, the indoor sports hall at Case 2 was used as a cafeteria. Case 4, in addition, had an indoor sports hall in which there was a game of table tennis and table soccer. On the other hand, there was not any room for indoor sports hall in Case 5. Different than other cases, Case 3 contracted a fitness center near the school; however, as the participants noted it was just to accomplish the official procedures.

Schooling process at BHS

Under this theme curriculum implementation, recitation hours, and practice tests are presented.

Curriculum implementation

This category included the following subcategories: courses, educational materials, and student assessment.

Courses. Since Turkey has a centralized education system, BHS implemented the national formal curricula as other types of high schools. They offered compulsory courses: Math, Turkish Language and Literature, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, and Geography. However, as reported by most of the students, when compared to public schools, BHS allocated more class hours for Math and Science courses since the more correct answers students have in those tests, the more likely that they are placed in departments starred by the market. The school principals and majority of the teachers also reported that compared to other schools BHS offered more class hours for the main courses (math, science, and language)

Furthermore, it was observed that different than other types of high schools, Geometry was taught as a separate course at BHS. English as a course, on the other hand, was offered only at Case 4 and Case 5. Besides, the Physical Education and Sports course was not offered in any of the cases. An interesting finding of this study was that, according to most of the teachers, even to students, not attending the Physical Education and Sport classes was not a problem for the students, on the contrary, it enabled them with extra time to study for the UEE.

Moreover, as stated in the Weekly Course Schedule for BHS (policy decision of the Board of Education and Discipline, dated 14/8/2014 and numbered 73), BHS was supposed to offer elective courses. Nevertheless, it was observed that Case 1, Case 4, and Case 5 offered only the Visual Arts course as an elective course, Case 2 and Case 3 did not offer any elective courses in practice. A few participants admitted that elective courses were listed only in the official documents.

Educational materials. The findings unveiled that as sources of information, the teachers mainly relied on the textbooks and test books provided by their schools. Almost all of the students and the teachers denoted that published materials of their schools (test books, modules, textbooks) were used as the main source of information in the classes. It was noted that the teachers presented examples from modules or gave homework from the test books.

Furthermore, almost all of the participants disclosed that the students, particularly the 12th graders, were supposed to pay for additional books since they had to complete a certain number of tests in a week as homework. Some of the teachers stated that they wanted the students to buy test books to make the students familiar with different question types about a certain topic. They added that the key to the success in the UEE requires working on multiple-choice questions from different test books as many as possible.

Lastly, the textbooks provided by the MoNE were also used at BHS, particularly at the 9th and 10th-grade levels. A few teachers and the school principals denoted that the teachers used those textbooks as a guide in their instruction. The Language and Literature teacher and the Physics teacher at Case 3 enunciated that the passages and activities in those textbooks helped them to enhance their instruction, particularly at the 9th and 10th-grade level. A few students also noted that the teachers sometimes used the textbooks given by the MoNE as a source to provide examples or give homework.

Student assessment. Analysis of the qualitative data showed that all of the cases assessed student achievement as regulated by the MoNE Regulation for Secondary Schools yet with an emphasis on the UEE.

Paper-based exams, performance homework, projects, oral exams, quizzes, active participation, homework, and class notes of the students were used to assess student achievement. Nevertheless, it is important to note that particularly at the 12th-grade level, most of the exams included only multiple-choice items. Besides, homework and projects functioned as one of the gears of preparation for the UEE. The students, for example, were assigned weekly homework which required completion of a certain number of tests about the given topic. Similarly, projects or performance homework intended to familiarize the students with the question types asked in the previous years' UEE.

A salient finding of this study was that some of the students admitted that they got higher grades after enrolling in the BHS. The reasons were threefold: easy exams, the teachers' giving the answers to some of the questions in the exam, and working on similar questions just before the exam. For instance, a 12th grader at Case 1 claimed that:

> In X basic high school, I enrolled before this school, the teachers gave the answers to all questions in the exams. Thus, none of us were studying for the exam. However, here, they (the teachers) give us the answers that count for 65- 70 points. We answer the rest.

Another 12th grader similarly uttered that:

> At first, my family did not want me to enroll at a BHS because according to them, being a graduate of X college (a recognized private high school in Ankara) is a privilege. But for me, the important thing is getting a high score at the UEE, not the school I graduated from. I got higher grades after enrolling in this school; therefore, they are also happy now.

Nevertheless, due to the accusative claims directed to BHS, most of the participants preferred not to talk about grading issues during the interviews; instead, they shared their experiences during personal conversations. Besides, a few critical incidents were noted during the observations such as teachers talking about how to write the correct answers on the board; yet, they were not included in this study to secure the confidentiality of the cases and the participants.

Recitation hours

Different than other types of high schools, BHS was allowed to implement additional 10 class hours per week. These hours functioned as recitation hours in which students were prepared for the UEE through test-based practices.

To begin with Case 1, recitation hours started after 3.30 P.M. when the curricular hours ended. The students, particularly, the 12th graders, stayed in their classrooms, or the classrooms on the 1st floor, where the teachers' room was also placed, and worked on solving problems in multiple-choice tests. The teachers visited the classrooms and answered the questions of the students until almost 6 P.M.

Similar to Case 1, in Case 2, recitation hours were implemented after the curricular hours ended. However, different than Case 1, the teacher waited in a classroom and the students went to those classrooms to ask their questions. In addition, the students were allowed to ask a maximum of five questions each time to ensure that every students' questions were answered, the 12th graders voiced.

Differently, recitation hours were integrated within the curricular hours at Case 3. To explain, each course had more class hours than it was stated in the weekly course schedule which enabled the teachers to allocate more time for each topic and present multiple-choice test questions about those topics in the classroom. However, after the classes ended, a teacher from each subject matter had to stay at the school to guide the students who continue studying after the school hours ended.

Case 4, similar to Case 3, runs the recitation hours within the curricular hours by extending the class hours allocated for each course. During these hours, the teachers either answered the students' questions or distributed tests that consisted of multiple-choice questions to the students. Besides, the school started a new practice on the first day of the observations. As in Case 3, a teacher from each subject matter (Math, Turkish Language and Literature, Social Sciences, and Science) stayed at the school after the classes ended at 4.30 P.M. until 6 P.M. to supervise the students who continued to study.

Lastly, as in Case 3 and Case 4, a similar practice was observed in Case 5. However, different than Case 3 and Case 4, recitation hours were run by less experienced teachers at the school. Those teachers answered the students' questions or distributed tests to the students. The Chemistry teacher at Case 5 reported that recitation hours not only functioned as a means to prepare students for the UEE but also as a way to monitor students: whether they completed their homework; solved tests about the past topics; used different test books to comprehend a new content.

Practice tests

The findings revealed that practice tests were a quintessential aspect of schooling at BHS. Practice tests consisted of multiple-choice questions similar to the ones asked in the UEE; therefore, the participants underlined, they enabled the students to become familiar with certain types of questions. Besides, as noted by almost all of the participants, thanks to these tests, the students also learned, or developed strategies, about how to manage time in the exam. Besides, they got used to handling exam anxiety. Consequently, they were expected to get higher scores in the UEE.

Moreover, the majority of the participants reported that practice tests were also used to monitor student progress. They delineated that a record of practice test scores of each student was kept by the school counselors and parents were informed about each test score. Besides, the students were assigned extra homework or issued detention as a punishment if they got lower scores on the practice tests.

A salient finding regarding the practice tests was that they not only functioned as a means of preparing the students, particularly, the 12th graders, for the UEE but also were used as a rationale to form the classrooms. However, contrary to the few participants who specified forming homogenous classrooms based on the practice test scores as a strength of the school, this practice was criticized by most of the students who claimed that more experienced teachers were assigned to the top classes and the needs of these classes were prioritized by the school board.

Discussion

Grounded on the impacts of neoliberal policies on education, much has been reported in prior research; however, unlike what Apple (2011) recommends to critical educators, many educators neglect to report what happens at schools and in classrooms. Building on this missing, yet, critical aspect, this paper intended to examine the impact of a policy decision in Turkey– that of the closure of *dershanes* and their transformation into BHS -by providing evidence on everyday practices and experiences at the school and classroom levels.

Our findings mainly showed that BHS had a dual education structure that blended curricular and exam preparation practices, with an emphasis on the latter. We conclude that such an approach paved the way for shadow schooling. The exam-oriented practices infiltrated into almost all of the processes at BHS from teaching methods to the content covered in the classes, particularly at the 11th and 12th-grade levels (Güçlü, 2015; Şanlı, 2015). The practices such as teaching to test, strict monitoring of student progress, and individualized attention were also part of the exam preparation at BHS. Shedding a light on the reason for perceiving BHS as shadow schools, prior research on shadow education institutions reports similar findings (e.g Baker, Akiba, LeTendre, & Wiseman, 2001; Baştürk & Doğan, 2010; Bhorkar & Bray, 2018; Bray, 1999; Caner & Bayhan, 2020; Gök, 2005). In Turkey, particularly, lack of, or problems with, quality education at public schools as well as the emergence of an even more competitive environment for students to enter top universities and promising departments prompted parents to pursue those alternative institutions as a so-called remedy (Duman, 1984; İnal, 2012; Özden, 2010; Turkish Education Association, 2005, 2010). On the other hand, other opportunities that are less likely to occur at public schools such as homogenous classrooms (formed based on test scores of the students on practice tests), small class size, and close teacher-student relations boosted the demand for those centers (Temelli et al., 2010). As a result, *dershanes* became for-profit institutions that sold "hope" to their consumers (Gök, 2010).

Moreover, as test-based practices at BHS enabled more students to enter particularly the top universities, BHS has become popular among the public. According to the MoNE (2019) Statistics, the percentage of BHS graduates who were placed in an undergraduate program was almost equal to graduates of Science High Schools who accept the top students considering their scores on the Transition to Secondary Education Test. Hence, the so-called success of BHS resulted in a student exodus from public schools, even private schools in some cases, to BHS. Indeed, the same drives were effective in the dramatic increase in participating *dershanes.* Previous research on *dershanes* reported a significant positive relationship between receiving private tutoring and getting placed in an undergraduate program (e.g. Berberoğlu & Tansel, 2014; Tansel & Bircan, 2005). In this regard, Gök (2010) argues that private tutoring centers adopted a teaching method that was based on memorization and getting familiar with certain questions and their answers. In doing so, she continues, those centers aimed at enabling students to correctly respond to more questions in the test.

Furthermore, our findings support the existing literature that reports the problems regarding the quality of education provided by shadow education institutions. In this paper, while talking about school quality, we included pedagogical processes at BHS considering pedagogical orientation toward school quality that includes "teaching skills, patterns of school organization and curricular content as the essential components of quality" (Stephan, 1989 as cited in Urwick, & Junaidu, 1991, p. 20). The findings unveil that in contrast to the alleged quality of BHS, there were serious problems regarding the education provided at those schools. The exam-oriented mission resulted in an educational approach in which the students were taught only the knowledge that is emphasized in the UEE through rote-memorization. Fragmentation of knowledge and presentation of test-taking skills instead of emphasizing the students' whole development leave the doors open for student exploitation and deprive the teacher autonomy. In other words, as reported in the critical literature on neoliberal policies and high-stakes testing (Apple 2001b; Au, 2009; Giroux, 2001; McLaren, 2015), BHS functioned as a barrier in front of students' self-emancipation. Supporting these arguments, in her paper on private tutoring centers, Gök (2010) remarks that "Evaluation tests and trial exams have had a profound impact

on the normalization of a system in which individual features of students are homogenized and the outcome can be expressed with nothing but a single score" (p. 126). Similarly, Berberoğlu and Tansel (2014) note that exam-based practices of *dershanes* deprived meaningful learning environments at schools. From a critical perspective, diverging from its function to raise future citizens who will actively participate in the transformation of their societies, schools have become legal institutions where educational development is neglected for the sake of educational screening (Halliday, 2016) to legitimize and secure unequal distribution of economic and social capital in societies (Bernstein, 2003; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Supporting this genre of literature, our findings disclose that the students with certain economic capital transferred to BHS to be better prepared for the UEE while the lower-class students were destined to get an education at public schools which do not promise most of the exam-oriented practices offered at BHS. Although the school tuition at BHS was lower than the elite private schools, enrolment at those schools required a certain amount of education expenditure. This finding indicates that the transformation policy decision did not reach its intended goal which was to eliminate educational inequalities caused by the existence of *dershanes* (Berberoğlu & Tansel, 2014; Education Reform Initiative, 2018; Gök, 2010; Tansel, 2013b; Tansel & Bircan, 2005).

Lastly, despite the positive vibes this vision triggered, the new conceptualization of quality education measured by test scores underestimates the critical role of school facilities on students (Edmonds, 1979; Scheerens, 1992). Accordingly, none of the cases in our study did have the physical and social environment that we can call a school. This raises two critical issues: one is that the students at BHS got an education at apartment-like schools that lacked academic and social facilities, yet had all the facilities to aid preparation for the UEE. Second is that BHS, which met even the minimum standards regulated by the MoNE, continues to operate as private schools altering our conceptualization of places we call schools. What is more critical is that as our findings indicate, most school facilities will continue to be present only on official documents while such facilities are either not satisfactory or are absent in the actual school environment.

Conclusion

As a concluding remark, we argue that education privatization and high-stakes tests have changed the way we define schools. Shadow education has shown itself in the light through BHS which we named shadow schools. Contrary to the poor quality indicators at BHS derived from the exam-focused practices, an illusion was created among the public regarding the so-called quality education at BHS based on lower teacher-student ratio, more individualized attention, and the graduates' UEE test scores. In this regard, we conclude that educating students through exam-focused teaching techniques at those poor-quality schools indeed creates another form of inequality in education while legitimizing education privatization and high-stakes testing under the benign mask of standardized test scores and does not help to achieve educational equity. Put differently, the competitive education system directed the students to enroll in so-called schools while widening the equality gap between social classes. This creates another barrier in front of the education for all act, which manifests, "Equality is rarely a positive value in market-like systems and indeed the consequences of privatization in education is almost inevitably the development of differentiation between and stratification of schools making the achievement of common schooling almost impossible." (Ball & Youdell, 2008, p. 16). Lastly, the approach to education at BHS neglects the personal, psychological, and social development of students. The schooling activities and the school facilities prioritize educating the students as test machines who are far from exploring themselves introducing the term "shadow schooling" into the literature.

Suggestions

While making conclusions, we are aware that the findings we situate in this article reflect the schooling processes at the selected research sites; however, this study might initiate further studies to best capture the impact of education privatization and high-stakes testing on classroom pedagogies in different school types. We also note that understanding the impact of educational privatization and high-stakes testing requires a context-specific examination. Those specific cases together help us to portray a holistic picture of how our classroom pedagogies are controlled by external and mostly invisible authorities rather than autonomous teachers, as well as, how our students are subordinated by test-taking skills. While doing so, we must beware of educational arms races that make educators, policy-makers, and parents so obsessed with international and national standardized tests that neglect context-specific differences across countries, regions, and even schools. We mark that those test scores should demand accurate interpretation. Before making assertions regarding the better performance of private schools than public schools, we should carefully analyze the contexts in which we make generalizations.

Also, we have suggestions for further research. As explained above, BHS functioned until the end of the 2018-2019 school year. Onwards, the ones that met the private school standards continue their activities as private schools. Examination of the educational processes and practices at those schools is critical to understanding this new model of schools in the Turkish education system. This might enable teachers who work at schools that were transformed from BHS to reconsider their instructional decisions to focus on national curricula in their classes. In order to achieve this, teachers who work at those schools should be supported by the school owners and the MoNE. In-service training should be given to empower those teachers with the curriculum implementation knowledge and skills. This will not only help to unitize the curriculum implementation across different school types but also empower teacher autonomy in the classroom. On the other hand, school owners might take the initiative to create a school environment that fosters students' whole development rather than developing test-taking skills. In this regard, the owners should secure quality education by offering must and elective courses as they are officially documented; ensuring the effective use of school facilities such as laboratories; and monitoring teachers' curricular and exam-based activities. Notwithstanding, it is important to note that the school owners might also need the support of the MoNE; therefore, the school owners, and the principals, should also be trained by the MoNE in regard to the organization and management of the schooling processes. Lastly, at the policy level, our findings reveal that top-down policies inhibit the effective implementation of the envisaged changes. For this reason, educational decisions should be taken with the participation of all stakeholders. Furthermore, ensuring educational equality at the policy level is not a taken-for-granted attempt. The first step should be unitizing the education approach and quality at all school types. In a country where the socioeconomic background of the families and regional differences are the key determinants of student success at school and nationwide exams, future policies should consider minimizing the impact of in-school and out-of-school inequalities.

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APPENDIX A

Table. School Facilities at BHSs.

Physical Facilities	Cases				
	Case 1	**Case 2**	**Case 3**	**Case 4**	**Case 5**
Garden	✓	**X**	**X**	✓	**X**
Security guard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Atatürk's corner	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Information desk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guests' hall	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science laboratory	The room is in the basement. There are unused materials in the room. Recitation hours are run in this room.	The room is empty and not in use.	The room is used as a study hall.	The room is empty, it is not in use.	The room is used as a study hall.
Study hall	The laboratory is used as a study hall.	The classrooms function as study halls after the formal class hours end.	There are two big study halls: one is labeled as Music and Visual Arts room, and the other as a laboratory.	Classrooms are used as study halls after the formal class hours end.	There are two study halls: one is labeled as a laboratory. The other is very small
Library	It is not used. There are only a few test books on the bookshelf.	It is used as a classroom.	There is not any room labeled as a library.	There is not any room labeled as a library.	It is used as a classroom.
Indoor sports hall	Students have their lunch in this room.	It is used as a place where students and teachers have their lunch.	The school contracted a fitness center near the school.	There is a game of table soccer and table tennis in the room.	There is not any room labeled as an indoor sports hall.

Visual arts/Music room	There is a Visual Arts room in which a few drawing materials and a guitar in the room.	The room is not used; it is locked up.	It is used as a study hall.	There is not any room labeled as Visual Arts room.	It is used as a classroom.
Cafeteria/Canteen	There is a canteen in the basement in which homemade food is served.	There are two canteens in the school. Besides, the school contracted a catering company to serve lunch for teachers and students.	There is a canteen in the school. Homemade chicken and meatballs, as well as fast food and drinks, are served.	There is a big canteen on the top floor. Homemade chicken and meatballs, as well as fast food and drinks, are served. Besides, a fixed menu is offered every day.	There is a big canteen on the top floor. Homemade chicken and meatballs, as well as fast food and drinks, are served. Besides, a fixed menu is offered every day.
Terrace	-	-	-	There is a large terrace on the top floor. It is used during springs and summers.	There is a terrace on the top floor. It is used during springs and summers.

APPENDIX B

Table. Data Sources

Case	Interviews		Observations
Case 1	Students	9th grader, $S1_1$, $S1_2$	Classes:
		11th grader, $S1_3$	Biology (9th grade)
		12th graders, $S1_4$, $S1_5$, $S1_6$, $S1_7$, $S1_8$, $S1_9$, $S1_{10}$, $S1_{11}$, $S1_{12}$	Chemistry (12th grade)
			Geography (10th grade)
	Teachers	Visual Arts, $T1_1$	History (11th grade)
		History, $T1_2$	Mathematics (11th grade)
		Mathematics, $T1_3$	Mathematics (12th grade)
	Principal	P1	Physics (10th grade)
	School Counselor	C1	Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (10th grade)
			Turkish Language and Literature (12th grade)
			Visual Arts (9th grade)
			Other:
			breaks
			lunchtime
			cafeteria
			teachers' room
			the garden (front garden and backyard)
			counselor's office
			Chemistry exam
			Recitation hours

Case 2	Students	10th grader, $S2_1$	Classes:
		11th grader, $S2_2$	Biology (12th grade)
		12th grader, $S2_3$, $S2_4$, $S2_5$	Geography (12th grade)
	Teachers	Geography, $T2_1$	History (11th grade)
		Mathematics, $T2_2$	Geometry (12th grade)
	Principal	P2	Geometry (12th grade)
	School Counselor	C2	Mathematics (12th grade)
			Mathematics (11h grade)
			Physics (11th grade)
			Other:
			breaks
			lunchtime
			cafeteria
			teachers' room
			counselor's office
			recitation hours
			Practice test
Case 3	Students	10th grader, $S3_1$, $S3_2$	Classes:
		11th grader, $S3_3$, $S3_4$	Biology (10th grade - recitation hour)
		12th grader, $S3_5$, $S3_6$, $S3_7$, $S3_8$	Chemistry (11th grade - recitation
	Teachers	Biology, $T3_1$	hour)
		Physics, $T3_2$, $T3_3$	Philosophy (12th grade)
		Turkish Language and Literature, $T3_4$,	Other:
		$T3_5$	breaks
		Mathematics, $T3_6$	lunchtime
		History, $T3_7$	cafeteria
		Head of the Literature teachers, $T3_8$	teachers' room
	Principal	P3	counselor's office
	School Counselor	-	recitation hours
			extra study hours
			24th November - Teachers' Day

Case 4	Students	9th grader, $S4_1$, $S4_2$ 10th grader, $S4_3$, $S4_4$ 11th grader, $S4_5$, $S4_6$ 12th grader, $S4_7$, $S4_8$	Classes: Geometry (12th grade) Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (11th grade) Philosophy (12th grade) Physics (11th grade) English (9th grade) English (10th grade) Chemistry (12th grade) Mathematics (10th grade) Counseling hour (12th grade) Visual arts (11th grade) History (11th grade) Other: breaks lunchtime cafeteria teachers' room counselor's office recitation hours Parent meeting
	Teachers	History, $T4_1$ Physics, $T4_2$ Visual Arts, $T4_3$	
	Principal	P4	
	School Counselor	-	
	Parents	10th grade: $V1_{10}$, $V2_{10}$, $V3_{10}$, $V4_{10}$, $V5_{10}$, $V6_{10}$, $V7_{10}$, $V8_{10}$, $V9_{10}$ 11th grade (A): $V1_{11A}$, $V2_{11A}$, $V3_{11A}$, $V4_{11A}$, $V5_{11A}$, $V6_{11A}$, $V7_{11A}$ 11th grade (B): $V1_{11B}$, $V2_{11B}$, $V3_{11B}$, $V4_{11B}$, $V5_{11B}$, $V6_{11B}$, $V7_{11B}$ 12th grade (A): $V1_{12A}$, $V2_{12A}$, $V3_{12A}$, $V4_{12A}$, $V5_{12A}$, $V6_{12A}$, $V7_{12A}$ 12th grade (B): $V1_{12B}$, $V2_{12B}$, $V3_{12B}$, $V4_{12B}$, $V5_{12B}$, $V6_{12B}$, $V7_{12B}$, $V8_{12B}$	