Chapter 19

Turkey’s Basic Education Policies for Syrian Refugees Under Temporary Protection

Kenan İli
Hacettepe University, Turkey

ABSTRACT

Migration and asylum are common historical facts in our geography. Therefore, Turkey faces one of the greatest migration movements of its history. The number of asylum seekers exceeding the estimates, uncertainty of the asylum period and a greatly uncertain process necessitate attaching great importance to education dimension of the problem. The problem of Syrian asylum seekers whose official number is approaching 3 million as of February 2017 creates extraordinary conditions for Turkey. The effect of this situation is reflected in the decisions taken in the field of education. In this context, Turkey started educational campaign by taking important decisions on the education for Syrian neighbors who have strong cultural ties with Turkey and take refuge in her in the face of tragedy they suffered. The primary goal of this study is to evaluate Turkey’s policies and practices for Syrian students within the scope of temporary protection.

INTRODUCTION

Over the centuries, people have been forced to leave their homes because of persecution, violence and armed conflicts. It is also a known fact that in many parts of the world, governments, armies or insurgent movements resort to the method of forcing communities to move in order to achieve their political and military goals. The asylum fact and refugee concept that emerged as a result of the forced migration and the oppressive environment we mentioned above and with the effect of the social and political events, have gained important dimensions in the 20th century along with being a very old problem. The wars and conflicts that take place in many parts of the world cause millions of people to leave their countries and the refugee and asylum-seeker problem has been growing steadily, especially in the geographies where crises are experienced (Ereş, 2015).

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Turkey has faced the fact of immigration since the foundation of the republic. Especially in recent years, the impact of this phenomenon has been observed in economic, social and psychological dimensions. Immigrant children are highly influenced by the immigration process and results. The problems of refugee families such as employment, education, health, housing, socialization and security reflect to their children. Children are badly affected by the phenomenon of immigration. Education plays an important role in the life of refugee child in his new country. In addition to the problems of adaptation to the countries where refugee children migrate, education is the most important problem (Rumbaut, 1997).

As of April 2011, the situation with the asylum seekers from Syria has taken a very different dimension, and this number has reached to 2,896,633 people since 2011 according to the data of February 2017 issued by the Directorate General of Migration Administration (DGMA). Along with the “open door policy”, Turkey, which provides “temporary protection” to Syrians, neighboring country citizens, has become “the first country with the most refugee population in the world” (GIJM, 2017) (see Figure 1).

Education of Temporarily Protected Refugees

As the civil war in Syria enters its sixth year, Turkey has been deeply affected by the increasing number of asylum seekers in the face of long-lasting migration wave. The policies followed for the education of Syrian children were firstly tried to be developed on the assumption that Syrians would return soon. When it is thought that the war in the region will not end soon, it remains uncertain how many more refugee migrations may be from Syria or Iraq in 2017. Turkey is currently hosting about 3 million Syrian refugees more than half of whom are children. In this respect, Turkey is not only trying to meet the humanitarian needs of refugees, but also it is increasing the resistance of the displaced population and providing access to the labor market by delivering health and education opportunities (https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=10341).

Figure 1. Syrians within the scope of temporary protection by years
Source: DGMA, 2017
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