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Correctional Education in Turkey: A Historical Overview from Past to Present and Evaluation of Current Practices

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ABSTRACT

Prison education is covered within the scope of adult education for the reasons such as content, program, and target group. Incarcerated people, on the other hand, are one of the disadvantaged groups among adult learners that have been increasingly studied in recent years. The present research aims to analyze the current correctional education in Turkey with reference to practices in the past and to discuss the challenges in the implementation process through descriptive analysis. According to the results of the paper, the number of inmates who participate in the first and second-degree courses is fewer than the total population of illiterate prisoners and literate prisoners who have no primary school diploma. Moreover, the study reveals that it is an exemplary activity that the prisoners acquire a profession with vocational training while they are employed within the correctional settings. However, they have difficulty finding jobs after they are released. In addition, according to the findings of the study, prisoners are generally satisfied with the religious education activities going on inside the prisons. Nevertheless, there is a need to regulate the prison population in Turkey in order to make the inmates equally benefit from the educational, cultural, and recreational activities. Finally, it is significant to disseminate technology-enriched education programs to eliminate the challenges that arise in the implementation of educational activities particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Incarcerated adults, correctional education, Turkey, practice, literacy education, vocational training

Trkiye'deki Hapishane Eđitimi Uygulamaları: Gemiřten Gnmze Tarihsel Bir Bakıř ve Gncel Uygulamaların Deđerlendirilmesi

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İerik, program ve hedef kitle gibi nedenlerle cezaevi eđitimi yetiřkin eđitimi faaliyetleri kapsamında deđerlendirilmektedir. te yandan, yetiřkin đrenen evreni iinde dezavantajlı topluluklardan biri olarak kabul edilen mahkmlar ise, zerinde giderek daha fazla arařtırma yapılan bir grup olarak dikkat ekmektedir. Bu arařtırma, Trkiye'deki hapishane eđitiminin gemiřten gnmze sregelen uygulamalarını analiz etmeyi ve hlihazırdaki uygulama srelerinde karřılařılan zorluklarını betimsel analiz yoluyla tartıřmayı amalamaktadır. Arařtırmanın sonularına gre, birinci ve ikinci derece okuma yazma kurslarına katılan mahpus sayısı, hapishanelerde ikame etmekte olan ve okuma yazma bilmeyen veya okuma yazma bilip ilkokul diploması olmayan toplam mahpus sayısına gre daha azdır. Ayrıca, mahpusların cezaevinde hem mesleki eđitim faaliyetlerine katılıp hem de sigortalı olarak alıřtırılmaları tm dnya iin rnek bir faaliyettir. Ancak, bu mahkmlar tahliye edildikten sonra iř bulmakta zorluk yařamaktadır. te yandan, hapishane iinde devam eden dini eđitim faaliyetlerinden mahkmların genel olarak memnun olduđu bulgusuna ulařılmıřtır. Ancak, mahkmların eđitim, kltr ve kaliteli boř zaman geirme etkinliklerinden eřit Őekilde yararlanabilmeleri iin Trkiye'deki cezaevlerinin poplasyonunun iyileřtirilmesine ihtiya vardır. Son olarak, zellikle COVID-19 salgınından sonra eđitim faaliyetlerinin uygulanmasında ortaya ıkan sorunların ortadan kaldırılması iin teknoloji ile zenginleřtirilmiř eđitim programlarının yaygınlařtırılması nemlidir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yetiřkin mahkmlar, hapishane eđitimi, Trkiye, uygulamalar, okuma-yazma eđitimi, mesleki eđitim

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1 | INTRODUCTION

In order to analyze the concept of imprisonment and prison training activities in Turkey, it is needed to go back the Ottoman Empire Period. The first imprisonment in the Ottoman Empire was Germiyanoğlu Yakup Bey's incarceration by the fourth Ottoman Emperor, Yıldırım Bayezid, for political reasons in the early 1390s (Özçelik, 2011). Apart from a few such political events, imprisonment was not a common practice in the Ottoman Empire owing to the fact that Islamic (or ecclesiastics) law was applied in jurisdiction system. According to Islamic law, tortures on the criminals' body (such as execution, cutting arms or/and legs, crucifixion, castration) and property penalties (such as fine, seizure of some of the assets of criminals in regard to the crime committed) were performed (Doğan, 2015). However, the most common penalties imposed on criminals during this period were rowing penalty, fettering and confinement in a fortress (Adak, 2006; Öztürk, 2005). In the Ottoman Empire, the judges, who were called "Kadı", generally chose to rehabilitate the prisoners by employing them for the purposes of supporting their families, providing their own livelihood and helping them forget the difficulties of imprisonment (Öztürk, 2014). In the Ottoman Empire, as Islam was at the center of life and the entire education system was shaped around the mosques, religious and worldly education was carried out together, and worldly side of education was based on acquiring a profession (Akyüz, 1993). Therefore, it is not surprising that vocational training was also practiced in prisons as a form of correctional education spontaneously (Oral & Atamer, 2005). These practices continued until the first Criminal Code in Ottoman Empire enacted in 1858 during the Abdulhamid Period. This law was a part of the Westernization moves that emerged as a result of the pressure exerted by European countries especially for the protection of minorities across the country. For the coming decades, the most prominent development was a project emerged in 1911 titled as the 'Prison Improvement Project', it was envisaged that prisoners would spend time and rehabilitate not only with vocational training but also with arts, music and different educational activities. However, the government could not allocate funds for these activities since it did not have enough budget (Gönen, 2005). The project would not have inured anyhow since Ottoman Empire went to the Balkan Wars and First World War.

CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION IN TURKEY

A number of revolutions were started with the proclamation of The Republic of Turkey in 1923. In this regard, one of the first reforms was the transfer of prison administration from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Justice in 1929. As the next step in 1930, in the Law on the Administration of Prisons and Detention Houses; it was stated that "workshops" would be built inside the prisons. Thus, the prisoners, who were forced to work in different sites and under heavy conditions, started to work with daily insurance in the workshops built within the penal institutions. By building the workshops inside the correctional institutions, prisoners were also granted to acquire a profession and get their working insurance (Demirbaş, 2005). Even if the workshops opened in prisons, the report of the inspection conducted across the country in 1931 revealed that the living conditions in prisons were far below the standards (Gölcüklü, 1966). Therefore, it is not possible to talk about a programmed educational activity in prisons at the time.

A new code, which was connected with the Belgian Penal Execution Code of 1902, was issued in 1941. Thus, rather than making a penal code from scratch, the law of another country was adapted (General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses [GDP& DH], Chronology of Prisons in Turkey, 2019). Formal regulation of educational activities in prisons was in the August 1941 issue of the Official Gazette for the first time in history. A "training service" and the allocation of teachers was declared. According to the regulation, teachers were responsible for literacy and numeracy courses and the devotional growth of inmates. Besides, it was regulated to found new ateliers in correctional institutions and assign new workshop managers who were in charge of the vocational trainings and laboring of prisoners. Furthermore, teachers and managers were held responsible for the prisoners who were in prison for more than 3 years and were still illiterate or who didn't learn any craftworks enough to make their own living after released from the prison respectively. In addition, reports were requested on prisoners' progress in their education or craftworks and on their

learning difficulties. Moreover, in order to determine whether all educational activities reached their goals or not, written and oral exams were held by a commission under the administration of the prison warden every June. One of the articles in the law was that the well-behaving prisoners who officially proved that they were highly educated could help teachers in all these educational processes. In addition to basic education courses, seminars and conferences were planned to conduct in order to improve the spirit of patriotism of inmates and a copy of each conference was kept for future (The Official Gazette, 1941).

Although the Ministry of Justice requested the appointment of preachers in prisons from the Presidency of Religious Affairs in 1959, this request did not materialize due to the low number of preachers across the country (Özdemir, 2002). It was in 1974 that preachers started to be employed in penal institutions to improve the spirituality of prisoners. With the military coup in 1980, thousands of people were imprisoned and the military government started to rule the country. During this period, not only religion courses, but also general cultural courses such as Literature, History, Citizenship, Sociology, Psychology, Music, and Art were also made compulsory for prisoners (The Official Gazette, 1983). The aim was to provide primary, secondary, and high school graduation courses for prisoners and to help adaptation for their re-entry to the society. However, all of these compulsory courses except for Religious Culture and Morality, were abolished in 1991. The employment of preachers in prisons continued for the purposes of increasing the spiritual lives of prisoners, conducting one-to-one interviews like a spiritual support psychologist and helping to practice religious knowledge in daily life (Özdemir, 2002).

THE LATEST CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION CODE IN PROGRESS

In Turkey, all training activities are carried out centrally and single-handedly by the "Training and Correctional Department" which operates under Turkish General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, Ministry of Justice. This department is divided into several offices such as adult correctional education, juvenile correctional education, office for vulnerable groups, educational strategies, procedures of courses and examinations, social and spiritual activities office. These offices decide all trainings, educational and correctional activities. The Ministry of Justice issued the latest circular titled as "Educational and Correctional Procedures of Juvenile and Adult Convicts and Detainees" on 27th July, 2007. On the basis of Article 42 of the Turkish Constitution (as "*No one can be deprived of education and training*"), the following two articles were briefly included in the education principles section (GDP&DH, Educational and Correctional Procedures of Juvenile and Adult Convicts and Detainees, 2007):

1. The necessity and benefit of education and correctional activities for the physical and spiritual development of convicts and detainees have been recognized worldwide. These activities are the most effective means of correction, as well as the best system of living that fits the discipline and order required by the regime of the institution.

2. The expected outcomes of educational activities are as follows: To ensure that convicts and detainees adopt the right behavior, attitudes and habits, to gain moral values that will prevent them from committing crime again, to facilitate their re-entry to the society after their release and to make them patient, resilient and cool-headed against external events and provocations.

As stated by Turkish General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses (GDP&DH, Education Service Activities, 2020) data, educational opportunities and activities are literacy courses, distance learning tests, application of national tests, religious education, vocational trainings and social, cultural and sports activities inside the prisons. As in formal school education system, correctional practices are carried out within annual syllabus and are divided into semesters. In the last week of the current semester, program of the next academic year is announced to all authorities. One copy is hung on the notice boards as all prisoners should see. However, not all prisoners are welcomed to all educational activities. Who can attend, under what conditions and the rules to be followed during the trainings are announced to the prisoners on notice boards. On the official website of the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses (GDP& DH, Education

Service Activities, 2020), it is claimed that the penal institutions work as schools, education centers, rehabilitation and recruiting centers. Whether these goals are achieved or not is analyzed below.

2 | METHOD

The present paper is a qualitative study which points the correctional education practices in Turkey with references to past and analyze the challenges during their application processes. Furthermore, possible solutions to some of the problems are presented as well. Document analysis was used to collect data by analyzing records and documents such as official reports, books, articles and statistics. As Bowen (2009) stated, these documents can be in printed or electronic forms. Therefore, document analysis technique includes scanning, finding resources, and reading, taking notes, inferring, developing and evaluating empirical data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The author of this paper searched resources such as signed proceedings, minutes, decrees, statistics, books, articles, etc. which are about prison education from past to present in Turkey. Descriptive analysis method was used during data processing and presentation. Descriptive analysis is an approach in which the collected data is summarized and interpreted according to research questions or predefined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). All things considered, due to the limited international research on prison and correctional adult education in Turkey, this study will add to the body of knowledge both on national and international correctional education.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In this present study, educational activities in adult correctional institutions were examined and researched. Juvenile delinquency and education of juvenile offenders is a different field of study. Therefore, there is no data or findings available on juvenile penitentiary settings and educational procedures within these institutions.

THE TARGET GROUP OF CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION IN TURKEY

As of December 2019, there were officially 281605 prisoners in 355 Turkish correctional institutions across the country (TurkStat, 2020). Since November 2019, the impact of the COVID-19 in correctional institutions has been inevitable and unpreventable (Kinner, Young, Snow, Southalan, Lopez-Acuña, Ferreira-Borges, & O'Moore, 2020; Saloner, Parish, Ward, DiLaura, & Dolovich, 2020; Williams, Ahalt, Cloud, Augustine, Rorvig, Sears, & Walter, 2020). Although various recommendations have been made to prevent the spread of the virus, most of them didn't work out and the prison population has been reduced with indemnity acts by governments. Even though the exact number is unknown, Turkey released the highest proportion of prisoners in Europe with the number of more than 110000 (Council of Europe, 2020).

Table 1. Educational Status of Incarcerated People between the Years of 2015-2019

Educational Status	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Illiterate	1455	1579	2048	1820	2027
Literate but not graduated from a school	11217	13012	11998	11774	10514
Primary school	38619	43854	41755	43875	41843
Primary Education	50205	57979	78162	98140	55152
Junior high school and vocational school at junior high school level	18560	22289	24961	36880	84925
High school and vocational school at high school level	36623	40026	45508	57857	63940
Higher education	6396	8098	9857	13914	20653
Unknown	5651	424	1941	2629	2551
Total	168726	187730	215761	266889	281605

TurkStat, Prison Statistics, 2020

In order to get a better picture of the educational levels of target group in correctional settings, Table 1 is included with the most current official data of incarcerated people. It seems that there is an increase in the number of all prisoners, except for those with 'literate' status. Especially among high school and higher school graduates, this increase is quite high compared to other categories.

Table 2. Prison Population by Gender and Nationality between the Years of 2015 and 2019

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Male	1707544	192354	222444	254426	280114
Female	6508	8373	9896	10416	11432
Turkish	173440	196285	225994	256264	281544
Foreigner	3822	4442	6346	8578	10002

TurkStat, Prison Statistics, 2020

Table 2 contains data which shows the number of prisoners in terms of gender and nationality. It seems that the increase in the rate of all prisoners in the 5 years, from 2015 to 2019, is reflected in the number of female prisoners and foreign prisoners. It may be possible that the increase in the refugee population in recent years in Turkey has affected the prison population of the foreigners as well.

RESEARCH ETHICS

Since the data in the present paper is reached from the database which is available to all researchers at both national and international levels, it does not require an ethics committee approval report.

3 | FINDINGS: EDUCATIONAL & CORRECTIONAL PRACTICES

FIRST & SECOND LEVEL LITERACY & NUMERACY COURSES

In the Circular of "Educational and Correctional Procedures of Juvenile and Adult Convicts and Detainees" (GDP& DH, Educational and Correctional Procedures of Juvenile and Adult Convicts and Detainees, 2007), it is emphasized that for the prisoners under the age of 65, it is compulsory to provide 1st level literacy course for illiterate prisoners and 2nd level literacy course for prisoners who have no primary school diploma. Although at least 10 participants is a prerequisite for opening other courses, it is considered sufficient to have only 1 prisoner participant for the 1st level literacy course and 5 for the second level. According to the latest official data, the number of prisoners attending 1st and 2nd level courses was 10 762 in 2016 (GDP& DH, Annual Activity Report, 2017). Compared to the official data at the end of 2016 in Table 1, this number shows that 4298 of illiterate or literate prisoners without any diplomas didn't or couldn't attend these compulsory courses. In the document of "Education in Prison" by the Council of Europe (1990) it was stated that "*Basic Education and literacy work are prioritized and all prisoners are given, wherever possible, equal access to education.*"(p.1). Thus, reaching all those who need basic education is a priority. It seems that the prisoners who need to attend the first and second-degree literacy courses couldn't enroll in these courses and it can be perceived a challenge in practice in Turkish correctional institutions. It is significant to find different alternatives to increase prisoners' participation. For instance, in a study conducted in New Zealand, literacy courses were organized for prisoners via virtual reality and it was concluded that prisoners' participation increased (McLauchlan & Farley, 2019). In another example, instead of traditional basic prison education practices, social literacy programs were implemented and it was observed that adult prisoners participated more in such new implementations (Ioannidou, Kiourti, & Christofidou, 2019).

Moreover, according to 2019 data, the total number of teachers working in prisons is 619 (GDP& DH, Staff Status, 2020). Thus, on average, there is 1 teacher for every 20 prisoners who are illiterate or non-graduates of primary school. Although it is known that the majority of teachers are employed for primary school level courses, there is no official information on teachers' branches. The first and second degree literacy education is implemented under the agreement with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The materials and educational programs are supported by MoNE and even when the correctional institutions do

not have enough number of teachers, MoNE also provides teachers. The first degree literacy courses are 90 hours in total whereas the second degree courses are 180 hours. Those who are successful in the exams which are held at the end of each stage are certificated, by doing this, they are given opportunity to go on to the next level of education. There are a few studies on whether prisoners are satisfied with the educational practices provided in prisons. For instance, in Şen's (2016) research, it was revealed that the prisoners who attended the literacy courses perceived prisons as the educational institution. However, in their study, Balaban and Özen (2015) concluded that prisoners found the educational practices inadequate.

On the other hand, according to Institute for Crimes and Justice Policy Research (2016) data, 2.2% of the population in Turkish prisons are foreign prisoners. However; as reported by Directorate General of Migration Management, Ministry of Interior (2021), the number of refugees in Turkey has a population of 3 650 496 (%4.39 of the total population) and as it was illustrated in Table 2, it means that the number of foreign prisoners should be expected higher in the following years, but there seems no current or future official program or plan for literacy or language teaching courses for this target group.

OPEN SCHOOLS& UNIVERSITIES

Distance-open secondary school practices are carried out for those who have successfully completed their 2nd level literacy education in prisons, or who have completed primary education but have not been able to continue or complete their secondary education. Moreover, open high school opportunity is available for those who have a secondary school or equivalent diploma and those who have not completed high school education (GDP& DH, Educational and Correctional Procedures of Juvenile and Adult Convicts and Detainees, 2007). According to the Annual Activity Report of GDP& DH (2017), the number of prisoners benefiting from open secondary school was 6643 and prisoners attending open high school was 20058. However, there is no data on whether these prisoners consistently continued their education and / or how many of them graduated successfully.

In accordance with the protocol signed between the Ministry of Justice and Anadolu University Open Education Faculty, prisoners who get enough points in the national university entrance exam become entitled to register to the previously listed departments with "the distance education model". These are vocational schools such as Occupational Health and Safety, Accounting and Tax Practices, Medical Documentation and Secretariat; or bachelor degrees such as Sociology, Economics, Business Administration, Finance, and History. In 2016, the number of prisoners benefiting from the activities of open university was 6567 (GDP& DH, Annual Activity Report, 2017).

Relatives of prisoners are responsible for registration procedures for open education. In the cases of unavailability of relatives, the prison directorate undertake the procedures of registration (GDP& DH, Educational and Correctional Procedures of Juvenile and Adult Convicts and Detainees, 2007). Because all the school books from primary to high school are distributed free of charge by government, free books are distributed after registration in open secondary and high school. However, prisoner students purchase their own books for each academic semester in the open university process.

Apart from religious education and literacy courses, correctional institutions in Turkey do not have any educational activities inside. It seems a challenge in the implementation process since in many countries, including the United States, which has the world's largest prison population, post-secondary or college education is provided within prisons (Castro, Hunter, Hardison, & Johnson-Ojeda, 2018; Davis& Tolbert, 2019; Strait& Eaton, 2017). According to the results of a meta-analysis study conducted by Ellison, Szifris, Horan and Fox (2017), which was on 28 research papers, prison education had a positive effect on lowering the recidivism rates among incarcerated people. In other words, there is an inverse correlation between the increase of prison education within the correctional settings and the rate of recidivism after inmates re-enter the society.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In Turkey, although the regulations of 1943 emphasized the importance of religious education for prisoners, after 1981, Religious Culture and Morality course was introduced and a curriculum consisting of 74 modules was applied along with culture lessons such as Turkish and History (Çınar, 2016). Following the protocols established with the Presidency of Religious Affairs, it was decided to assign preachers to the prisons and pay them for each course over 12 hours. With another protocol signed in 2011, it was aimed to go beyond guiding prisoners to perform their religious practices and helping them to re-enter the society by offering moral development and guidance through religion (Altıntaş, 2019). Therefore, one of the most important branches of correctional activities has become religious education. In this respect, it was determined to give lectures and religious conversations twice a week, to conduct conferences on religion and moral integrity at least once a month, and to teach “Quran in Arabic Alphabet” (Çınar, 2016).

Table 3. The First Week Subject Sample of the Religious Culture and Morality Course Applied within the Prisons

Days	Subjects
Monday	The concept of religion and the main religions in the world
Tuesday	General information about religions
Wednesday	Muslims and Ahlul Bayt
Thursday	Principles of faith

The Directorate of Religious Affairs, *Penal Institutions Religious Services Directory*, 2012:136

The courses whose sample subjects are listed in Table 3 are held as six lesson hours of 40 minutes each. Prison preachers are responsible for the courses that are conducted in the cells within the prisons. As of December 2019, the number of prison preachers was 2790 (Directorate of Religious Affairs, Strategy Development Directorate, 2020). There are many national and international studies on whether spiritual services and practices of preachers in prisons have any effect on the correction of inmates. For instance, according to the results of Dağcı's research study (2020), which was based on 40 papers conducted between 1987 and 2018 in Turkey, religious services in prisons increase the feelings of regret among incarcerated people and have positive effects on their attitudes. Likewise, the international studies conducted by Vasylenko (2020), Baker and Reyes (2020), Talik and Skowroński (2018) reveal that religious education in prisons has positive outcomes for both prisoners and their families and the community they re-enter.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Sports activities are recreation activities carried out in prisons, and it is the prison teachers' and deputy wards' responsibility to conduct them (GDP&DH, Educational and Correctional Procedures of Juvenile and Adult Convicts and Detainees Education Circular, 2007). In order to carry out sports activities more regularly, a protocol has been signed with the Ministry of Sports and it is undertaken that, if necessary, both professional and material supplies such as trainers and sports equipment would be provided. However, in The Grand National Assembly Human Rights Commission Report (2019), it was stated that since the prisons were far above the capacity, the recreation activities were carried out sequentially, and prisoners were divided into groups of 10. Thus, the frequency of prisoners' participation in sports activities is low. However, international studies show that prisoners' participation in sports activities in the prison settings provides benefits such as coping with stress and feeling good (Buckaloo, Krug, & Nelson, 2009; De Vita, Donini, & Iovino, 2019; Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015). In addition, exercising has mentally positive effect on prisoners (Meek & Lewis, 2014), as it is good for their physical health (Vaiciulis, Kavaliauskas, & Radisauskas, 2011). Likewise, The results of the national study conducted by Üney and Erim (2019) in Turkey, revealed that there was a statistically significant and positive difference among prisoners doing exercise in terms of physical, verbal and indirect aggression variables compared to those who did not do any sports.

WORKSHOPS, VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL TRAININGS

According to the data of The Grand National Assembly Parliamentary Human Rights Commission, (2018) Turkey has 297 workshops in the correctional facilities. There are 172 different vocations such as production of cotton goods, leather, furniture, decorative items, and husbandry.

Table 4. The Number of Prisoners Working in the Workshops within the Prisons between the Years of 2018 and 2020

	2018	2019	2020
Number of Prisoners	59150	60767	53818

General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, Workshops Activity Report, 2021: 24

Table 4 illustrates that the number of prisoners working in the prison workshops decreased by 11.44% in 2020 compared to 2019. The condition is an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated in GDP& DH Workshops Activity Report (2021), workshops operate like a large state-owned enterprise with a revenue of 2.5 billion Turkish Liras (around 410 million US dollars). Pursuant to Article 29/1 of the Law on the Execution of Criminal and Security Measures No. 5275, prisoners are obliged to work in workshops if they do not have any health problems. Depending on their experience, prisoners are paid between 14 TL (around 2 USD) to 17.5 TL per day. However, according to the results of the studies in the field in Turkey it seems that prisoners who participate in production while they are in prisons have a much lower chance of being employed and have difficulties being employed outside compared to other people after they re-enter the society (Engin, 2012; Koçak & Altun, 2010; Saruç, 2018; Savaş & Eryalçın, 2020). The results of the study conducted with the national data in the USA have similarities to those in Turkey. Accordingly, the unemployment rate of former prisoners in the US is quite high compared to the unemployment rate in the general population across the country (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). In another study conducted in Kenya, it was concluded that the rate of recidivism is high (around %60) and it was underlined that there was not enough data to show whether vocational training in prisons is effective on prisoners (Mbatha, Kerre, Ferej, & Kitaininge, 2019).

AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Following the COVID-19 virus, which started to spread all over the world towards the end of 2019, various measures were taken in prisons all over the world. Due to overcapacity in prisons in 59% of the world countries (Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research, 2020), with alternatives such as amnesties, early and temporary release, the prison population has been reduced. In this context, Turkey (%35), Cyprus (%16), and Slovenia (%16) were the top three countries with the most prisoner-release rate in Europe (Council of Europe, 2020). Despite the relief in prison population, it was stated that there were disruptions in educational activities in correctional institutions in Turkey (Civil Society in the Penal System Association, 2021; Esen, 2020). This situation is not unique to Turkey and disruptions in prison education has been experienced in other countries as well (Craggs- Mersinoglu, 2020; Stanistreet, 2020). The solution to this problem seems to be digitalization and distance education (Craggs- Mersinoglu, 2020).

On the other hand, vocational training programs in Turkish prisons have contributed to the fight against the COVID-19 across the country. After the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been some changes in working plans in prison ateliers and workshops in Turkey. Accordingly, the focus was on the production of goods such as masks, overalls, surgical gowns, disinfectants and cologne that are included in the fight against the COVID-19. These products were distributed in places where needed throughout the country, especially in health institutions (GDP&DH, Announcements, 2020).

4 | DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the European Prison Education Association (2017), prison education is “*formal, informal and non-formal education provided for all persons who are under the supervision of the judiciary, whether sentenced or awaiting trial, and whether serving a sentence in prison or in the community.*”(p.1). Therefore, even though

individuals are deprived of their liberty, their right to access education continues. Prison education in Turkey is protected by laws as well considering the constitutional rights of education of all citizens, including the incarcerated people (GDP& DH, Educational and Correctional Procedures of Juvenile and Adult Convicts and Detainees, 2007).

Correctional education in Turkey is carried out single-handedly from a center and the ongoing practices can be grouped under six subheadings. These are literacy courses, distance learning tests (at secondary, high school and university levels), application of national tests inside the prisons (such as national university entrance test, higher education test etc.), religion education (cooperation with the Presidency of Religious Affairs), vocational and technical trainings, social, cultural and sports activities (GDP& DH, Education Service Activities, 2020).

According to the results of the study, the number of inmates who attend the first and second degree literacy courses is low compared to the total number of prisoners who are illiterate or literate without any diplomas. There are variety of practices such as using virtual reality (McLauchlan & Farley, 2019) or social literacy (Ioannidou, Kiourti, & Christofidou, 2019) in correctional institutions of different countries around the world in order to increase and encourage the participation of inmates in the first and second degree literacy courses. Different methods can be tried in Turkish correctional settings as well in order to increase the curiosity, self-perception and inner motivation of incarcerated adults.

Inside the Turkish prisons, there are no ongoing educational activities or practices other than literacy and religious courses. However, it has been revealed that giving high school and college courses inside prisons reduces the rate of recidivism (Ellison et al, 2017). It is likely that such an application may be an alternative to reduce the recidivism rate in Turkey as well. Moreover, sports activities are among important recreation activities for adults to spend quality time. Therefore, it is important to encourage sports activities among prisoners as well since doing sports has a positive effect on incarcerated people emotionally, mentally, and physically (Buckaloo, Krug, & Nelson, 2009; De Vita, Donini, & Iovino, 2019; Gallant, Sherry, & Nicholson, 2015; Meek& Lewis, 2014; Üney& Erim, 2019; Vaiciulis, Kavaliauskas, & Radisauskas, 2011).

It is not a common practice to set up workshops or ateliers inside prison and employ prisoners with their daily insurance coverage as in workplaces outside the prisons. Therefore, workshops and ateliers in Turkish prisons stand out as an example with their capacity and product quality. However, after prisoners are released, they have difficulties in finding jobs in areas where they pursue the professions they acquired in prison settings (Engin, 2012; Koçak & Altun, 2010; Saruç, 2018; Savaş & Eryalçın, 2020). Thus, the recruitment of former prisoners can be supported through different projects or support programs.

Especially after the COVID-19, creating alternatives to traditional face-to-face education practices has become a necessity in formal, informal and non-formal learning environments (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2020). Undoubtedly, one of these educational settings is prisons. Notably, improving the correctional institutions with technological innovations and expanding prisoners' right to access information can help to overcome the challenges in practice.

STATEMENTS OF PUBLICATION ETHICS

I hereby declare that the present research has no unethical problem and I observe research and publication ethics.

RESEARCHERS' CONTRIBUTION RATE

This paper was prepared by one author.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This study has no conflict of interest.

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