Alienation in Education[*]

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the alienation problem experiencing by high school students in education. In this study, it is aimed to identify the reflections of alienation in the field of education, reasons bringing about student's alienation and reflections of alienation in students. The indicators of student's alienation in education are discovered as meaninglessness, weakness, breaking the rules and social disharmony. The views of students are enquired so as to understand the reflections of traces of these negative emotion and attitudes which are appeared as indicators of alienation in students' school perception, educational activities, school rules, and student's relations with school administrators and teachers. The qualitative method was used in order to understand more comprehensively the reflection of alienation in students. Thus a focus group study of 10-12 students and semi-structured interview technique with 20 students was employed for achieving detailed and inclusive information in two High Schools in Ankara in 2009-2010 School Year. The students experience alienation in education according to results achieved by this study. The students experience an emotion of meaningless, which were identified as the indicator of alienation to school, lessons, contents of lessons and school activities.

Keywords: Alienation, alienation in education.

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Introduction

Notwithstanding the fact that its immanent meaning had been elicited by Marx, the alienation notion was heretofore defined referring to diverse perspectives. Its lexical meaning, for instance, is 'conceiving the products of human activities, under certain historical conditions, in such a way that is independent from the individual or that is essentially different from its authentic existence.' Other lexical sources provide generalizations such as extreme disengagement from one's own product, and eventual loss of will to live as a result thereof.

The psychological definitions of alienation refer to such states that the individual "does not experience himself as the centre of his world, as the creator of his own acts - but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys," (Fromm, 2006, p.116) and sustains a passive involvement in the flow of life. Even though the aforementioned definitions seem to introduce a similar notion of alienation as defined by Marx, they fail to suggest more than an implication thereof.

The phenomenon of alienation existed throughout the human history, with the term itself originated from the *alliosis* in Ancient Greek and *alienatio* in Latin as derived therefrom. Historically speaking, social alienation was first recognized in theological context. In the Old Testament, the practices of idolatry paves the way for the individual to verge on worshipping on its own creation, by which one is distanced from its own power and becomes objectified, as such. Thus, it can be said that the phenomenon of alienation has begun with the creation of idols (Tolan, 1996, p.283). On the other hand, in philosophical context, the term was first used by Hegel to emphasize the estrangement of human life -not grasped by the *Absolute Geist*- from nature. Here, in order to see how Marx developed the alienation notion it is necessary to provide an overview of the justifications of his predecessors, namely Hegel and Feuerbach, of their relevant argumentation regarding the alienation notion.

G. W. Friedrich Hegel, while introducing an interpretation of the history of humanity, attempted to define the history of alienation of human beings in line with his philosophical approach. Even though the alienation term first appeared, albeit occasionally in his articles under the title of *Positivity*, the first philosophical use thereof is found in the "Phenomenology of Spirit" (1807). Hegelian philosophy is based on the interpretation of the history of humanity. To Hegel, the true actor of this process is the *Absolute Geist*. In Hegel's doctrine, *Absolute Geist* is not static, but it is the one that can develop itself. The *Absolute Geist* first fictionalizes a world that excludes it. Nevertheless, the *Absolute Geist* subsequently realizes that such a world is a product of itself. Therefore, the *Absolute Geist* is both inside and outside of this world. This world exists only in its action and the result thereof. At the beginning of such formation, the *Absolute Geist* did not recognize that it estranged or alienated oneself. Eventually, the *Absolute Geist* conceives that the world is not outside of itself. Thus the alienation in Hegel surfaces at the moment, when the aforementioned lack of comprehension is understood. So, how will men escape from alienation in Hegelian philosophy? The answer thereto is that the alienation will come to an end, when one attains adequate elf-consciousness and understands that one's environment and culture

stems from the *Absolute Geist*. Therefore freedom lies in said understanding and that as a matter of fact the purpose of the flow of history is to attain freedom (Ergil, 1980, p.33).

In other respect, Feuerbach, while considering that the idea of Hegel that *man* may be self-alienated is important, does not accept the explanation thereby that "nature is a self-alienated form of Absolute Geist." Feuerbach thinks Hegelian philosophy is theological, in which the reality is upside down. Therefore, Feuerbach interprets the alienation notion by reversing the system as introduced by Hegel.

Unlike Hegel, the 'Absolute Spirit,' or God, in Feuerbach's philosophy appears as an indication of the alienation of man. Therefore in Feuerbach's definition, again unlike Hegel, "man is not a self-alienated God, but God is self-alienated man. (…) God is merely man's essence abstracted, absolutized and estranged from man. Thus man is alienated from himself when he creates, and puts above himself, an imagined alien higher being and bows before him as a slave" (Bottomore, 2001, p.623). Therefore man becomes alienated by creating the "God," putting him above oneself, and descending to a submissive position. In this case, man sublimes an entity other than his own existence and submits oneself to Him. In fact, it as if God created men, despite the contrary, i.e. it is men, who created the God. In Hegelian philosophy, men must have attained adequate self-consciousness and understood that one's environment and culture stemmed from the *Absolute Geist* in order for de-alienation. Feuerbach, on the other hand, believes that men must mobilize his "essential qualities," i.e. a) will, b) reason, and c) heart in order for de-alienation. These three attributes are amongst the purposes of development of men. Men will liberate from being merely a slave to God and de-alienate, if embody these three important qualities and believe in its own power (Tolan, 1996, p.28).

As it was occasionally emphasized in aforementioned philosophical views, alienation in one sense is that the individual distances from his own nature and falls under influence of powers other than oneself. In this case, Marx, unlike the other thinkers also considered the historical process and the social structure, in which the individual lives, while describing the alienation. Marx, with an impressive perspective, explained how the factors, which influence men beyond its own powers, degraded the position of the individual from being a "subject" to an "object," by associating the foregoing with the use of labour force.

> "Marx agreed with Feuerbach's criticism of religious alienation, but he stressed that religious alienation is only one among the many forms of human self-alienation." Alienation cannot be explained by one single rationale. "There are many forms in which man alienates the products of his activity from himself and makes of them a separate, independent and powerful world of objects to which he is related as a slave, powerless and dependent. thereof. However, he not only alienates his own products from himself, he also alienates himself from the very activity through which these products are produced, from the nature in which he lives and from other men" (Bottomore, 2001, p.623).

The works and philosophy of Marx was, in his period, and has been, heretofore, a centre of attraction for many thinkers who tried to understand, explain, or interpret thereof. Without a doubt this endeavour continues today.

Erich Fromm was one of the important thinkers who tried to understand and interpret especially the alienation notion in Marx. To Fromm "the process of alienation is expressed in work and in the division of labour" in the works of Marx. "Work is for him the active relatedness of man to nature, the creation of a new world, including the creation of man himself." Alienation starts "as (…) the division of labour develop, labour loses its character of being an expression of man's powers; labour and its products assume an existence separate from man, his will and his planning." (Fromm, 2004, s. 83). When alienation of man is considered, self-alienation or alienation of man from his human 'essence' or 'nature', from his humanity must be taken into account. The key question of alienation problematic in Marx is from-which, and in-which the man is alienated. For Marx, what distinguishes man from other living creatures and decides their '*species-being*,' is his labour, in other words man is a working species.

While defining man, Marx emphasizes that man is a species that creates his world and himself, only by his labour. Man first work to satisfy his natural human needs. In such working process man develops certain instruments. While struggling with nature, not only does man satisfy his needs, but also the very objects created by him lead to new needs. Therefore the man, at the same time, becomes the creator and a product of his own product. In Marx's words:

> The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things. Labour produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a commodity – and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general (Marx, 2000, p.75).

As one can understand from above quoted words of Marx, the phenomenon of alienation is develops not only as a result of production, but it also emerges during the production process. Therefore man is also estranged from the labour itself. The fact that the labour estranges man, where basically it should have constituted the '*species-being*' of man, is in direct proportion to the loss of the self in workers. Given that the activity of worker is *forced labour*, he cannot recognize himself as an active species, with the distinctive attribute of his '*species-being*,' therefore he actualizes its *self*, while being forced to find it through the attributes shared with other species (Kızıltan, 1986, pp.19-21). Marx clarifies the phenomenon as follows:

> As a result, therefore, man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal (Marx, 1976).

Thereupon one can conclude that the alienation emerges during the process, in which the man related with the world. If man cannot see oneself a creative power in said orientation and influence stage, and the world remains always estranged, then the man is alienated, in the last instance. Marx expresses this situation as follows:

> "So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that the more objects the worker produces the less he can possess and the more he falls under the sway of his product, capital. All these consequences are implied in the statement that the worker is related to the product of labour as to an alien object. For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. (…) The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the more the worker lacks objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien" (Marx, 2000, p.76).

Both Hegel and Feuerbach asserted that de-alienation was possible, and brought forward certain ideas for the purpose thereof. Naturally, Marx, who discussed alienation in a more profound and social context compared to the foregoing, also had the hope and belief for de-alienation of man. To Marx, man is a natural species as a part of nature. However, he can transcend the nature. Man aims conscious supervision of nature via productive act or labour process upon cooperation with his own species. Marx believes that man may not only change the nature, but also social relations and human nature at will, without resorting to the idea of Absolute Spirit as with Hegel. To Marx, alienation must be sought within the special conditions of objectification. Objectification is a dialectical interaction established via the productive action process between man and nature. Man is not only created in its production, but also in the socioeconomic conditions and institutions of his production, which also involves the labour process. Marx suggested that man lost control over his own evolution throughout the history. Therefore, eventually, man dwelling inside the communities that adopted capitalist economy approach, experience the phenomenon of alienation at the peak point (Ergil, 1980, p.37).

In accordance therewith, Marx asserts with respect to de-alienation: "This "alienation" (to use a term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers) can, of course, only be abolished given two practical premises. For it to become an "intolerable" power, i.e. a power against which men make a revolution, it must necessarily have rendered the great mass of humanity "propertyless," and produced, at the same time, the contradiction of an existing world of wealth and culture, both of which conditions presuppose a great increase in productive power, a high degree of its development" (Marx, 1976, p.63) Therefore, after reviewed and explained each aspect of the process of alienation, Marx underlined that de-alienation would be possible via 'propertylessness.' Thinkers subsequent to Marx that dealt with alienation either agreed Marxist alienation theory and made additional extensions or disregarded his statements that were incorporated with social structure, labour, and production, and focussed only on the individual-based assessments.

The Historical Process of Education

It is necessary to overview the historical path of education, since the subject of this study is alienation in education. In fact the history of education is as old as the history of humanity. It is not possible to say precisely, when and how it gets started. We are only acknowledged about the educational activities held after the invention of writing. Moreover, this information is limited to the history of ancient civilizations. There is a few, if not none, information regarding thousands of years before the invention of writing. Education is a complex social process. We generally think education as intended for children and youth. In fact, education is over-determined by the social and economic structure under which an individual lives, and by the philosophical view and attitudes of the society (Binbaşıoğlu, 1982, p.2).

Education, or *terbiye* in Ottoman language, is also perceived as the whole set of activities of developing mental, physical, emotional, social skills, and attitudes in line with desired direction or bringing in new talents, attitudes, and knowledge as oriented with certain goals in order to 'edify' the individuals (Akyüz, 1985). Koçer (1971, p.3) suggests that education of children in primitive societies was intended for practical and utilitarian purposes rather than for the purposes of 'edification.' Naturally in the said time periods, the single purpose of life was to survive and sustain the existence of human, which is weak against the nature, under natural conditions. Therefore, it was only the parents, who undertook education of children. Education was not subject to institutionalization yet. A review of general definitions of education suggest that, although education should have been taken as a process of development from inside to outside since the ancient periods, there is a counter tendency to construct the same from outside to inside based on the purpose of forming the child. Three interrelated concepts of 'upbringing,' 'developing,' and 'raising' were incorporated in the essence of education. Therefore, education is considered a process in which the latent powers surface. The expectation of all educational institutions is to have mental and physical development reach out to the highest level via education. Thus, education definitions are based on forming and steering. In the classical education approach, the purpose was to raise good human beings and it was sought to dictate the socially-accepted good and affirmative patterns and values to children. This in general means to form and shape children and youth. In such an education, it is not possible to speak of the original characteristics of human spirit (Foulquie, 1994, p.133).

As evidenced in the definitions, the contents of education take a shape under the conditions of the relevant period. The 'edification' as provided in said definitions, was reflected in the education content by historically incorporating into the socioeconomic structure of the society. For instance, while the education was organized in the First Age in accordance with the needs of the children, during the Middle Age the education was church or religion based. With 19th century, subsequent to the industrial revolution, the education program and contents were tailored to upbringing individuals that were compliant with market conditions. In capitalist system, education took another form; i.e. free, compulsory, and egalitarian, to provide all with the same form of 'edification.' For the purpose thereof, the compulsory education was first introduced in Prussia

in 1819 in order to educate a) soldiers loyal to the army, b) obedient workers for mine ores, c) civil servants to be subject to governments to the fullest extent, d) officers working under industrial entities, and finally e) citizens, who will think in harmony in critical subjects and problems (Hern, 2008, p.74).

The main function of education should be that of a guide, which paves the way for individuals can understand and interpret oneself, society, and life, and add value thereto. On the contrary, however, in the current practices students remain as a constituent, who are not considered individuals, and their will pertaining to what to learn, and how to learn is disregarded. In the capitalist system, the main purpose of education is to raise individuals who bear and sustain the state ideology and values as shaped by the economic structure, besides training labour force to satisfy the needs of the said economic structure. It is the main objective underlying such practices as not involving students into curriculums and during the conduct of courses, and application thereof in an over-determinative approach without conferring to students, and finally rendering them inactive at school. Here there is a very important issue that must be pointed: one should recognize that not only the form of capital, but also the types of control and logic are incorporated into the education by means of the curriculum tailored to the purpose thereof. With regard to the reproduction of class relations in economic and cultural terms, the education on the one hand makes use of the school's function as a state ideological apparatus and thus produces subjects possessing 'suitable' tendencies and values thus would satisfy the needs of the social division of labour, and on the other, ensures reproduction with regard to social form thanks to the complex network relations of schools in the production of certain types of knowledge required by an unequal society. Schools have been transformed into serious elements in the process of creating and re-creating an active dominant culture. Furthermore, having been assigned to such a mission, schools also assume the function of contributing in the ideological hegemony of dominant groups by teaching their values, tendencies, and cultures. This is because of the fact that different types of schools contribute in the legitimatization of new knowledge, new classes, and social strata (Apple, 2006, p.74). Therefore since the curriculums and text books are determined by the state and prepared independent from the students, the latter cannot feel themselves akin to a process in which they were not involved.

Thus, students feel themselves alienated in a predetermined and framed education approach, and their connection to school transforms into an artificial bond. As with Marx, speaking of workers, who put their lives into the object; but now their lives no longer belong to them but to the object, the students feel themselves as separated from all activities within their educational experience. Therefore, the endeavour for education and the educational experience does not belong to students, but is an independent power that exists outside them, independently, and that it becomes a power on their own confronting. Therefore the life projected by the students in the education emerges as something alien and hostile to them. If we are to completely understand how ideologies are reproduced via schools and how the same operate at schools, it is necessary to review what is practiced in the reference frame of daily experiences at school and how alienation in education surfaces.

The Effect of School on Alienation in Education

Today's schools and understanding of education resemble the most advanced institutions of the production system. It is possible to say that skills necessary for conducting a profession fell to one's share are taught at schools However, the education provided at schools are not limited thereto. Apart from professional knowledge and skills, such ideologically reconstructed values as ethics, conscience, respect, and compassion etc., as the constituents of the class dominance, were taught at schools in order to educate people in compliance with the rules of the order. In other words, the educational institutions not only serve as the venues of labour force training, but they are also where the state ideology is reproduced by upbringing individuals, who adopt the rules of the current order. Throughout this education process such problems as lack of self-respect and self-confidence, stress, psychological breakdown, irregularity, cultural devastation, individual inactivity, deteriorated health, and introversion are prevalent in the personality of humans, who were suppressed by such mechanisms as routine production practice, supervision, administrative structure, and bureaucratic structure. This understanding of education does not include motivational elements towards development and innovation. The educational activities are held as a monotonous job, in a setting where an administrator is assigned for each person. As with a factory worker, who alienated from the product of his own labour, both the educators and students are alienated from the "education activities." This situation renders meaningless the educational activities of the student, namely learning, studying, research, and curiosity. Human beings are assessed with their practices, and the most importantly they define and improve themselves, and eventually can gain one's self-confidence thereby. In today's educational system, the students consider the practices during the conduct of educational activities unpleasant and only compulsorily done repetitions. The self-respect, self-confidence, and individual preferences of the student tend to diminish. As a result of this, alienation of student intensifies (Mahmutoğulları, 1993, p.41–42).

School, as its *raison d'être*, works as an institution assigned to the task of conveying the past social accumulation to people. During the continuation of this, it connects the past to the future by unavoidably transferring the ideological reference frame of the current social structure to the students. Therefore, since the 19th Century, education as carried out by state has become almost an imperative. Education, understanding of education, and the mode of its operation are completely founded on such a basis. "School is the most conventional and fundamental part of educational setting as a compulsory space, which brings together the other sources of input of education, including buildings, gardens, teachers, students, tools, equipment, and hardware" (Gümüş *et al.*, 2004, p. 44). Therefore, the role of the school phenomenon must be taken into utmost consideration when investigating education and alienation in education. School leads to alienation by estranging individuals from the cultural structure of the society and the world they live in, and from the knowledge of everyday life and in lieu thereof helps with assimilation of values provided by the school via the state. Leading the individual to an obvious standardization, the school, instead of helping the students with perceiving the world of knowledge that would assist the individual to continue one's life, with correct understanding of one's environment, and with understanding nature as a part of itself, estranges the students from the

foregoing thus inducing alienation. (Yapıcı, 2004, p.6). Continuing their existence in accordance therewith, the schools try to standardize the lives of students in a global extent by diminishing their self-confidence. Having been bombarded with specific and extensive information, the students educated at school, are assigned to deliver said information, which they had to carry after being forcefully subjected to as such, to the other party in any way whatsoever necessary (Hern, 2008, p.135). The educational system is established in such a way that the students, like robots, would speak what is pre-recorded, whenever they are asked to do so.

The Effect of Curriculum on Alienation in Education

Given that curriculums as education and training programs reflect the *zeitgeist* of their relevant historical period, today they are rather peculiar to the nation-state model. Today's curriculum is both the ideological and cultural, and scientific instrument of the self-reproduction of nation-state via education at all levels of values and knowledge. Each nation-state embodies itself within and by means of the curriculum. Curriculums for the state are to an extent an educational template as an apparatus of "official supervision." Text books as written in line with the said predetermined structure reproduce the defined "legitimate standard" (İnal, 2007, p.164). The state tends to guarantee and sustain the whole set of ideological values in its possession, via curriculums and schools formed in accordance with an understanding of education, the content and format of which were both designated before. The current curriculum has been planned so as to ensure the continuance of the ideology of the state. In support of this view Inal says, "The hidden curriculum is the curriculum, which defines in detail, what is left incomplete or vague in the open curriculum, which strengthens the socialization into dominant political system or culture, and which tries to crystallize the type of students in stricter patterns" (2007, p.164). Therefore education is not merely limited to serving the purposes of innocent information, happiness, and goodness, but it is also an activity for transferring knowledge and values, the reference frame of which is drawn in a certain context. For instance such elements of the code of conduct as buttoning up one's jacket before teachers, raising hands to get permission to speak, entering the school building in a military discipline and format, calling the teachers Sir, or Madam, believing in that studying is something holy, not being able to enter teacher's room without knocking the door first, being obliged to scream out each and every day the national anthem and the oath, showing unconditional respect to teachers, and not making noise out in the corridors at the schools in Turkey are not openly included in the curriculum (2008, İnal, p. 134). These rules can be considered in the context of the hidden curriculum.

The Effect of Teacher – Student Relationship on Alienation in Education

The assessment of the phenomenon of alienation in education renders another dimension, which is indicative of the alienation of students, i.e. teacher - student relations, along with education, school, and course contents. This is because of the fact that teachers cannot go beyond the role casted for them within the prevailing understanding of education. The institutionalized school structure and understanding of education includes Ministry of Education, at the centre, and

administrative staff in each school comprised of directors and vice-directors. Teachers are subordinated to these administrative strata. Therefore, teachers cannot be free from authoritarian and hierarchical impacts, and accordingly their relation to students is mostly painful and far from being flexible.

An analysis of teacher – student relation in class suggest that the role of teachers, who is engaged with ensuring discipline in class, is basically limited to the position of silencing and telling, and that of students is all about keeping quiet and listening to the teacher. Therefore, in many cases the "lecturing" cannot go beyond the frame, in which teachers and students merely assume the positions of teller and listener, respectively. This relation is composed of teachers as teller subjects and objectified students as patient listeners. Freire describes the foregoing feeling of alienation in "Pedagogy of Oppressed" that students are considered *bank accounts* that should remain open to deposits made by the teacher. He explains the *un*-libertarian teacher – student relation in the scope *banking education* analogy as follows; "(a) the teacher teaches and the students are taught; (b) the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; (c) the teacher thinks and the students are thought about; (d) the teacher talks and the students listen—meekly; (e) the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined; (…) (i) the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students; and (j) the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects" (2006, p.48-50). In this case student is led to a position in which the one is inactive, alienated, and objectified, away from participation.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy to remind that teachers are also degraded to the position of an object against their administrative superiors. In such a lecturing setting, teachers might tend to make lengthy statements in a subject matter, which is completely strange to the individual experiences and attributes of students. For the students, the concepts as used by the teacher during lecturing may become far beyond the experiences of students, empty, alienated, and alienating words. In this case, students and teachers would both be distanced from the course content, and fail to associate with the teaching-learning activity. This is followed by an avoidable self-alienation and alienation from the teaching-learning activity. On the other hand, the teachers have already been deprived of the act of reasoning. Here, the process in which the teacher objectifies the students also distances the teacher from self-actualization, and that teachers cannot represent with their teacher identity. The teachers' act of reasoning can only find its true quality, when the students really think. In true understanding of teaching, neither the teachers think for students, not they can impose their thoughts to students. There is only a place for mutual exchange of views, ideas, and knowledge.

Alienation in Education according to Student's Views

The findings of a postgraduate thesis, namely "Alienation Problem in High School Students: Two General High School Examples from Yenimahalle County, Ankara," (2010) provides important insight into the problem of alienation in education. The survey questions were prepared so as find out the situations, which are indicative of the prominent features of alienation, namely powerlessness,

meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement as Seeman put it (Seeman, 1959, p.783-791).

The results of the survey suggest that students express the feeling of alienation as experienced in each and every action during their stay at the school setting. For instance, the meanings they have attributed to school were limited to following statements: "School is not enjoyable, something that stands for university;" "It is where the future is guaranteed;" "Now this information is of no use, but I believe in the future it will;" "Where I will need this knowledge that I learned here? All are relevant to university entrance exam;" "School is an imperative to succeed in something." These statements show for these students school is not described as 'somewhere' that contributes in their self-development and in conceiving the life and the world, but a place one should 'attend to' for the sake of their future. It is an undisputable reality that to people, schools facilitate the dissemination of technical and business-based information. And for students learning such information is crucial to reach the goal of moving up the career ladder for better jobs, by making use of the skills and expertise gained through learning, as an investment. The fact that the students consider school a place where their future is guaranteed is a proof of how the school has been instrumentalised. Furthermore a certain part of students expressed quite negative emotions regarding the school: "I don't want to come here because of some teachers. One comes here for friends, girlfriends. (…) Strict teachers repel me;" "There is no social activity. One tolerates here because of companionship and the sphere of friends;" "I am bored, suffering from headache;" "I come to school because it is compulsory, not because I like it. (…) I am dissatisfied with this type of education. It's boring;" "I feel depressed, when I happen to remember the school;" "Some mornings it feels like torture to come here;" "The school belongs to no one else, but the state. It's not the property of the director, the security. Teachers should not behave us as if we are animals;" "Why we are coming here for five days? I come here for the courses I like. I have come to the limit of accepted number of absences. I am bored now;" "I've been demoralised, it's boring here;" "Same things do not excite me." These reactive statements by students show that they consider the school an unlovable, boring, and oppressive place that has to be attended for imperative reasons. Here, having been defined in the relevant discourse of students as a place that is non-aligned with students, where they have to spent time involuntarily, which does not make any sense with regard to their current learning needs, the image of school is a setting exterior the students, non-compliant with their expectations, and away from the place where their selves.

Homework as intended for developing "responsibility" in students and "strengthening" their knowledge occupies a prominent place in school activities. Yet in the eye of the students the homework is almost functionless. One of the most significant views of students on homework is as follows:

> When there is a lot of homework, I feel drowned. My eyes get tired while working on computer. I feel depressed staring at that small display. When I fail to do my homework, I feel remorse. When it finishes, you forget it the next week; it is spontaneous.

In support of above statement that described homework resorting to such expressions as depressing and boring, another student says:

> I do my homework, and sometimes I don't. Occasionally I delay. I don't think it is that useful. It is helpful when the subject matter evokes my curiosity. But if it is something that does not attract my interest it is not that useful.

Students emphasize that homework activity is not important for them and that homework make no sense other than for grades. Therefore, they consider homework meaningless on the grounds that it is a compulsory activity and it usually does not contribute in learning. Homework that excludes the students and fails to function as a tool through which the students may express and develop themselves, leads to feeling of alienation in students.

In Turkey, Transition from Primary Education to Secondary Education (exam titled as TEOG) at the end of primary education and competitive exams of Transition to Higher Education Examination (*or* YGS) and Undergraduate Placement Examination (*or* LYS) at the end of the secondary education, are the central exams that clamp down the students. Students study really hard to qualify for a better type of school in the next level of education or to be accepted by university. These examinations could inflict deep wounds in the psychology and development of the students. The views by high school students on YGS/LYS examinations once again include statements of *meaninglessness*. In accordance therewith, the students think, "LGS (Exams for Transition to High School) is nonsense, it creates stress;", "I am afraid of failing the exam. I can do nothing, if I fail. Now, it also hinders things that I can do;", "School prepares us for the university, where it should prepare us for the life. I want to go to cinema, but I can't. It is as it's not the centre of my life, but I am the centre of university;" "If we fail, our life is devastated. There is no social life after that;", "It is the source of annoyance. You want to go out, but can't; you want to go to cinema, but can't. Everything is founded on this;" "They play on the psychology of people. Some take pills to increase concentration. They have become to this because of the system. Families lead the children to depression;" "It adds stress. I feel as if I have horse blinders on. I feel that if I am not to enter through the gates of university, I will become nothing."

In Turkey, the course contents cannot go beyond the frame as drawn by the Ministry of National Education (*or* MEB). The courses and contents thereof, which are prepared in line with the ideological and economic concerns of the state, seem to be far from contributing in the interests, development, and general culture of students. Therefore students fail to make a direct connection between course contents and their selves, and experience the emotion of *meaninglessness*. Complaining that the course contents are not up-to-date, a student expresses his views as follows:

> If teachers refer to more up-to-date subjects when lecturing, this will attract more interest. I am interested in the daily life. I like geography because it is more up-to-date. Literature courses are all the same. I like geography very much. Religion lesson is exemplified with current issues, so I can remember the subject. I get bored in other lessons. Nobody minds sociology. A strange teacher, he cannot make himself listened to in the classroom. Perhaps it is because everybody speaks. I am interested in philosophy. Not previously, but now, I like it more and more because

of the teacher's contribution. We are assigned to chemistry class. But this is nonsense. It is not useful for me. Nobody felt the necessity to ask our opinion.

Similarly another student expresses his confusion about where and how in his life the course contents would be of any use: "I hate mathematics, geometry courses. I try to like it but I cannot understand the purpose of those equations. Addition and subtraction is necessary in certain aspects of our lives, but I don't know, where we will use equations and logarithm." The other students' views about courses and course contents are as follows: "History tells us very old times. There is nothing up-to-date. I wonder, what happened on September 12th. What I learned in the lessons will be useful only at university;" "Courses prepare us for the university I find it nonsense to learn only for that reason;" "When I ask people in my family, 'am I going to calculate the tangent and cotangent values, when I buy triangle cheese, where am I going use it in my life,' they reply, 'you have to learn it if you want to go to university.' Such lessons as philosophy and language teaching are strict. Teachers say, 'I lecture and my job finishes there.' They should also contribute in our personality;" "I think it is not useful at all. Where I will use trigonometry, while cooking;" "If I am to run a café as a high school graduate, what will be the use of physics and chemistry." Another significant indicator emerging from the discourse of the students is that they try to convince themselves that they need to learn the contents of the courses that do not attract their interest in order to pass the YGS/LYS examinations. In Turkey, passing YGS/LGS has become the sole purpose of the high school education. The educational system in Turkey is neither student-, not teacher-based, despite what it is said. In Turkey, the educational system was transformed into an examination-based system. The TEOG in the primary education and YGS/LYS in the secondary education placed the examination at the core of the school life. Now, all the educational system, including but not limited to the course contents, test books, inspection, assessment and evaluation, courses, working programme, student activities, family life etc., are planned and programmed in accordance with the examinations. Therefore, education seems to have set aside its fundamental function of developing the emotional and mental life of individual and preparing the individual to the society in terms of humane attributes, and have assumed the role of eliminating the individuals and educating people in compliance with the business market. Because of the fact that the educational system is planned and actualized by the ministry of education, which was established under command of the state, there is an understanding of education, the reference frame of which has been predetermined, and the contents of which is delimitated. Therefore the state tends to ensure its ideological frame via course contents and curriculums produced in the educational system. This system excludes the participation and preferences of the students, by which the students are in a sense 'desubjectified,' and transformed into objects that is to be shaped. The lessons learned and homework done by students has to be in line with the requirements of the educational system, but not with the will and curiosity of the students. Students are like the workers, who are alienated from their own labour, as Marx stated.

Another important symptom of the alienation of students in education is the moment they feel themselves powerless against the power. In the school life, teachers and school administrators, as the main operators of the education and teaching programs, and the students are in constant communication. However this

communication is far from being realized among equals. In the schools, which assume the function of preserving and sustaining the state ideology, a hierarchical organization is used in the school administration structure, in the purpose thereof. As soon as one gets into the school garden, the hierarchy among the students, teachers, and school administrators leaps to the eye. Sometimes, teachers and school administrators appear as the elements of fear and oppression over the students. This leads to the fact that students feel themselves powerless and passive at school. There are many moments, in which students feel themselves incapable or inefficient as expressed in their dialogues to school administrators and teachers. This is evident in the examples given by the students from their lives. For instance a student expresses his powerlessness as follows:

> The director is funny. He quite behaves us as we are individuals. He greets us, if we greet him. But one of the vice-directors is a quite stern man. He had a friend (stick) made of oak, named 'haydar.' Students are afraid of him. (…) In general teachers are good, but there are boring and strict teachers too. They raise their voices. My hands used to tremble in 9th grade because of fear.

Furthermore, an important event in proof of violence and pressure at school is narrated by a student as follows: "I have a blue shirt. The vice-director asked me to take it off. He hit my stomach. I went downstairs and told it to the director. I said, 'Your teacher does not have the right to hit me.' The teacher that hit me said evasively: 'It didn't happen that way.' After I realized that I was fallen into an unjust position, I started to behave nervously. I said again 'you don't have the right to hit me.'" Narrative by another student who was exposed to violence at school is a significant indicator of how powerless do the students feel in such occasions:

> Sometimes I feel myself ineffective. I am afraid of disciplinary punishment, that's why. (…) I remain silent in case of warnings regarding clothing and speaking aloud, because I might be subjected to disciplinary punishment. It was on Tuesday, the teacher told me, 'I guess you want to get a beating, I'll bring you to downstairs.' I said, 'There is no place for beating at school. Who's going to beat me?' I was beaten once and felt very bad, I will never have myself beaten again. 3 or 4 weeks ago the vice-director has beaten me for absence. It is none of their business. Then he said, 'Now it's time to wish happy holiday' and had me kiss his hand. (…) I felt like a donkey. I said, "I like to be beaten? No way…' I was staring at him and he understood. (…) Teachers are threatening with bringing to downstairs. It feels bad to be beaten at this age.

Besides violence, another statement in evidence of the fact that students feel incapable, ineffective, and powerless when expressing themselves in front to the teachers and school administrators is as follows: "Sometimes I feel ineffective. The vice-director singled out me in the crowd. He called someone idiot and I went upstairs. He was still grouching about me. I said 'how dare you can say that.' Nothing has changed. Teachers are always right, and we are always wrong." Another student stated his opinion about the school director with the following interesting words: "I am good with all administrators. I am only bad with the director. It seems he does not like his job. I think he will like it. He has a good job. He is obsessed with my ring. After all he is the most senior guy here, and is my competitor. As a matter of fact I feel myself stronger beside such people. (…) What he will de other than being nice with us, play with the plasma TV at his room?" Another student, who said she felt ineffective in each situation, described

her hatred against the school as follows: "They are always powerful. Although I don't put on make-up, they say 'your cheeks are red, wipe it out.' I feel demoralised. I want to kill them but I cannot do anything. The make me feel strange to the school." It is seen that the interviewed students cannot express themselves comfortably to the teachers and administrators under the hierarchical organization structure of the school and sometimes they cannot defend their rights. Therefore the students rather accept the pressure on them, and consider it natural. The students do not think that they have any power to change this situation. The students, experiencing powerlessness, distance the school life, teachers, and administrators from themselves and 'othernize' them, by which they are distanced from the official rules and expectations of the school.

Another indication of alienation in education is *normlessness*. School considered an institution has rules of its own. Having been applied in general at school and during the class, these rules are in general as follows in the words of the students: Coming to school on time, entering the class on time, dress code, lining up at school garden before entering the classroom, listening to teacher silently in the classroom, not standing up, not bringing food to classrooms from cafeteria, not smoking, and not putting on make-up etc. However, one cannot claim that these rules are considered meaningful by the students. It is because of the fact that these rules, the use of which is questionable, are frequently violated by the students. The statements of the students suggest that they obey these rules because they are obliged to, but not because they need them at all. For instance the students point out the fact that these rules do not meet the needs: "No rule is indispensable. OK, you cannot come to school 'perkily,' but such restrictions have no purpose;" "Why teachers are obsessed with my hair or beard;" "Classroom rules are illogical, you cannot sit down like an idol. We need at least be comfortable;" "I think we might eat at class. They restrict it. Sometimes we need to urinate, but we are not allowed." Thus, many students show *normlessness* against such rules that don't make any sense to them. Students iterated that they don't obey the rules: "The school has many rules, but no one cares, only a few. Out of 10, only two or three persons obey the rules. It means they are not pressing us sufficiently;" "They tell us to 'keep silent and behave'. I don't want such a life. I am not going to tell my children that I was going from school to home, and home to school. I am not going to tell my children 'how hard I was studying';" "There must be rules. This is a school. But I also wear on canvas trousers."

Conclusion

Looking at the history of institutional education, we can see that education has been shaped by the method of manufacturing and the effect of social structuring that has been shaped by it. Changes in the method of manufacturing and education brought on by industrial revolution has had an important role in training the work force which capitalism requires in every stage of manufacturing, distribution and consumption. Financial structuring based solely on profits takes people out of their natural life relationship and forces them to increase their contribution to capital saving process. This process that objectifies individuals, in which they act according to directions and instructions, alienates individuals to whatever job they have. As this alienation occurs, individuals lose their identities, desires, tendencies and personal creations in order to do what the authority requires from them. This

can be seen on a worker's form in a factory as well as a student's form in a school. As we can see from the statements of the students in our study, the central unit decides on education planning, its contents, how it will be applied, and where it will occur. Students are kept out of the decision making and application process in an effort to turn them into an object who "only takes what is given and does what is asked from him." We can see that the goal of it is to train a work force that does not question, does not think and does not demand. The conclusion of the opinions of two "General High School" students in 2010 is that students are alienated to education, school, school experience and the education process. Breaking students free of this "alienation" to education would surely require a structural and radical change. This change shall be through an education which has humans and nature at its core. This matter requires not modest solutions but a radical, deep seated approach to education.

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