

A Comparative Analysis of Teacher Perspectives on K-12 Education Systems in Turkey and Abroad

Dr. Sinem Arslan Dönmez

Independent Researcher, Antalya, Turkey

Abstract

This study comparatively investigates teachers' perspectives on the K-12 education systems in Turkey and abroad. Adopting a qualitative case study design, semi-structured interviews with 30 teachers in Turkey were conducted. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants with diverse nationalities, subjects, school levels, and teaching experience. Findings highlight perceived differences between K-12 education in Turkey and abroad. Firstly, participants emphasized the Turkish education system as exam-oriented, encouraging rote learning and hindering the development of critical 21st century skills, in contrast to emphasis on life skills in foreign systems. Secondly, participants focused on the lack of effective career guidance for students, which often leads to misaligned career paths in contrast to more personalized career guidance abroad. Thirdly, educational policy in Turkey was perceived as highly centralized, limiting local adaptability and teacher autonomy. In contrast, decentralized systems abroad were seen to offer greater flexibility and responsiveness to local needs. Furthermore, classroom practices in Turkey were described as predominantly teacher-centered and authoritarian in contrast to student-centered approaches enhancing active participation and learner autonomy abroad. Also, participants highlighted the emphasis on individual academic achievement in Turkey in contrast to emphasis on social responsibility and community engagement abroad. Finally, the lack of competency among educational leaders and policymakers in Turkey was identified as a concern affecting both administrative and instructional processes. These findings emphasize the need for a more balanced and student-centered approach in K-12 education in Turkey, accompanied by enhanced guidance systems and leadership development, in alignment with global educational needs.

Keywords

Educational policy, comparative education, teacher perspectives, qualitative research.