

CHAPTER I

Introduction

A. Research Background

Turkey is known as one of the fastest growing countries in today's era. Named an emerging market by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Turkey joins China and India as newly industrialized countries in the world.¹ Its rapid economic growth results in higher standards of living which practically improves the lives of its citizens. One of the strengths that has brought Turkish economy at its best is the successful strategy for the movement of labour from low to higher-productivity sectors which requires high quality of human capital. This was achieved mainly through education and training which remains a major constraint on growth and innovation in Turkey.² Thus, education has been since put as a approach key to increase economic growth.

The economic growth is not a new term in Turkey, since it has been promoted since the modernization era following its proclamation as a Republic in 1923 to succeed the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The founder and first president of the new republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, immediately made reforms to convert the religion-based old system to become a secular modern nation-state. Ataturk's reforms viewed

¹ IMF, World Economic Outlook, April 2011.

² OECD, The OECD Innovation Strategy, 2010.

secularization and westernization as important elements to modernize Turkey, which comprise political, social, legal, educational and economic aspects. Regarding to reforms in education system, he aimed to prepare citizens for roles in public life through increasing public literacy. Ataturk, who saw religion as an obstacle to modernity that held Turkey back, closed religious schools and banned the wearing of religious symbols such as headscarves and turbans, which he considered to be the symbols of backwardness.

Through a number of changes, education in Turkey has gradually improved over decades despite the country's political and economic turbulence. The 1990s was the era that took turn in much of the country's education system when Turkish politics was driven by military leadership. Following the 1997 post-modern coup, the military imposed a law to extend compulsory education to an uninterrupted eight years from previously five years of school. Besides aiming to keep the students longer in school, as it was expected to boost Turkey's education, the military sought to prevent the young generation from attending religious schools in fear of the comeback of Islamic influence.

The education system continued with only minor changes until in 2012, the parliament passed a school bill which comprised set of reforms regarding education system policies. The reform formally noted as Law No. 6298, popularly known by the name 'the 4+4+4 reform' or 'the triple

four-year compulsory education from eight years to

twelve years of school. The previously uninterrupted eight years system imposed by the military in 1997 was also replaced by the new system that divides those twelve years into three tiers consisting four years in each tier. Therefore, it is called the 4+4+4 reforms. Moreover, the reforms also introduced the re-establishment of religious vocational schools and elective courses on religion, as well as elective courses on native languages in minority Turkey such as Kurdish and Abkhazian.

These policies eventually sparked debates between the country's main political streams, secularists and religious conservatives. It drew criticisms mostly from the secular side, accusing the reform as a hidden agenda for pushing Islamic values to young Turks, which may spread conservatism instead of sciences that are seen crucial to more modern Turkey. They went on to considering the reform aims to remold the education system imposed by the military in return to their 1997 command in installing education devoid of religion. The conservatives, on the other hand, have felt the need to the rights of receiving religious education as an important factor to determine democracy that has been strongly promoted by Turkish government through the years.

The bill of the 4+4+4 reform was proposed by the ruling *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP or AK Parti – English: *Justice and Development Party*). It was passed by AKP deputies with supports from two other parties' deputies, and opposed by the main opposition of CHP (Republican People's Party) and several NGOs during parliamentary hearing. AKP was

established in 2001 by former members of various political parties and a number of new politicians. Among the founders are Turkish current Prime Minister and President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Abdullah Gul. AKP, often depicted in the media as an Islamic party or an Islamist, refuses to be labeled so and identifies itself as a conservative democratic party. However, it does not deny its close affiliation with Islam with many of its members admitting their religiosity including Erdogan himself. The party came to power in 2002 and has been ruling ever since by winning three elections consecutively.

The AKP aims by 2023, at the Centennial of the Republic, to reach 100% literacy rate for people under 50, enable all young population to have at least high school education and give a chance to all those who would like to have a higher education. It dreams and works for having more than 200 universities, resolving all bureaucratic hurdles preventing the establishment of private universities, and boosting the R&D budget to the levels of developed countries, as well as to turn the role of the Higher Education Council to be a coordinator rather than governor in the new constituent.³

Despite the controversies surrounding the 4+4+4 reforms, the AKP has proved to succeed in improving education in Turkey for the last ten years under its leadership. During that period, Turkey has increased enrollment rates and the average years of schooling from pre-school to

higher education. The gender discrepancy over female enrollment in school has been minimized. In terms of quality improvement, Turkey has managed to control the average number of attendees in class, and added technological infrastructure in schools. Financially, Turkey has increased the spending budget on education. PISA and TIMSS have also noted that Turkey has been thorough an impressive progress this last decade, showed in the results of 2009 PISA performance. The situation has been different compared to the record in early 2000s that showed rather lower percentage in each area.

It should be noted that despite several significant improvements made from the development plans and agendas set by the AKP, many problems remain persist. The party was unable to make additional reforms with regard to the education system's decentralization, increased private sector contributions, and the restructuring of the Council of Higher Education. Regional discrepancy over education quality continues, indicating failure to provide high quality education to all citizens. The average scores of Turkish students' PISA performance and education spending are also considerably low among the OECD and EU countries.

The 4+4+4 policy reform is either to serve the purpose for the betterment of Turkey's education system or is only motivated by some political and religious incentives. However, it is certain that AKP had played an important role in this policy making. It cannot be denied that the reason of their action has given big influence in shaping the policy and

today's education system in Turkey which is socially and politically very interesting phenomenon to observe.

B. Research Question

The reserach is trying to answer the following question: "Why did Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP) propose the bill of 4+4+4 reforms on education system in Turkey?"

C. Theoretical Framework

C.1. Role Theory

To start explaining the reason of an action, it must be first understood the role of a party in its nature.

"Role is a character assigned or assumed <had to take on the role of both father and mother>; a socially expected behavior pattern usually determined by an individual's status in a particular society; a function or part performed especially in a particular operation or process <played a major role in the negotiations>."⁴

Role is a behavior expected from an actor by holding certain positions. When an individual holds a particular position in society, he is expected to be doing the nature of that position. Therefore, role theory confirms that 'political behavior is a behavior in performing political role'. It assumes most of political behavior is an effect of the expectations set in

⁴Merriam Webster Dictionary on the Web, <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/role>>, consulted 3 September 2013.

society to a position currently taken by a political actor. The importance of personality and attitude are surely important to affect the decision they take, however, role theorists argue what matters the most is that the decisions are made when they are holding particular role.

According to John Walke, role theory has two useful abilities for political analysis: to show that a political actor behave accordingly as approved by the public and to describe institutions in behavioral context. Institution in this term means an inter-related set of roles that is used to organize and coordinate behavior in accomplishing goals.

A role is created from the expectations which come from two kinds of sources: first, expectation of other people towards a political actor. The people must have their ideas and perspectives of the shoulds and shouldn'ts a political actor might do, and theirs tend to influence the behavior of actor who currently holds a certain position. In other words, it comes from the expectation of other people towards position holder with the perspective of the latter towards that expectation. Second kind of source is what some people call as a learning process. Political actors have their own ideas of what rights and wrongs their role should take, as well as they are influenced by the expectations of other people, so they try to consider their behavior regarding the concerns above. It is possible they

might as well accomodate and implement the aspirations taken from those two. Here is the way political actors learn to interpret their role.⁵

Political party holds an important and crucial role in a modern and democratic politics, as it functions not only to represent people's voice and an instrument to articulate political demands, but also as the only form of organization capable to establish government cabinet. In order to understand and figure out the role of a political party, we must acknowledge the function of it in its nature, as mentioned below:

1. Aggregating and articulating needs and problems as identified by members and supporters.
2. Socialising and educating voters and citizens in the functioning of the political and electoral system and the generation of general political values.
3. Balancing opposing demands and converting them into general policies.
4. Activating and mobilising citizens into participating in political decisions and transforming their opinions into viable policy options.
5. Channeling public opinion from citizens to government.⁶

⁵M. Mas'oed, *Studi Hubungan Internasional: Tingkat Analisis dan Teorisasi*, PAU-SS-UGM, Yogyakarta, 1989, pp. 44-48.

⁶ D. Thabo, 'Roles and Definition of Political Parties', *Pachodo*, 29 April 2011, <<http://pachodo.org/latest-news-articles/pachodo-english-articles/2078-roles-and-definition-of->

C.2. The Political System Concept of Gabriel Almond

Almond's analysis is a combination of Easton's conception of authoritative allocation of values, Weber's definition of state in terms of legitimacy and Parson's view of the function of the political system as a subsystem in society.⁷ The functions of input consist of political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, and political communication; while the functions of output include decision-making process, policy implementation, and policy monitoring.

All those functions of input and output are put together and classified into the first level of political system, which consists of:

1. **Interest articulation** - expressing demands and supports to the government.⁸
2. **Interest aggregation** - "a process/activity by which the demands of individuals or groups combined into policy programs. In the case of democratic system, two parties compete to gain support for their alternative policy programs.

⁷N. Jayapalan, *Comprehensive Modern Political Analysis*, Atlantic, New Delhi, 2002, p. 104.

⁸K. Janda, 'Interest Aggregation and Articulation' in G. T. Kurian (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Political Science*, CQ Press, Washington, DC, 2011. Available on

Main goal of political parties: mobilization of support for policies and candidates.⁹

3. **Decision-making process** – the conversion of bill to be passed in a form of policy based on the demands and supports as well as other surrounding influence of intrasocietal and extrasocietal.
4. **Policy implementation** - the need of administration action for policy implementation to the public.
5. **Policy monitoring** –the monitoring of law implementation among the citizens by special institution; monitoring activities includes observation and settlement of disputes in policy making and implementation.¹⁰

D. Hypothesis

Based on the background and theoretical framework that has been explained above, the tentative answer is AKP proposed the bill of the 4+4+4 reform because it functions to articulate interests within the decision making process of a new law, in which AKP expressed the demands of Turkish citizens for their rights to be given equal opportunities in education.

⁹C. Swimelar, 'Interest Aggregation and Political Parties', *Prezi*, 1 November 2012, <<http://prezi.com/wdgfxmttjnnr/interest-aggregation-and-political-parties/>>, consulted 4 September 2013.

¹⁰S. Basri, 'Pengertian Sistem Politik David Easton dan Gabriel Almond', <http://www.20111111.com/2009/03/11/pengertian-sistem-politik-david.html>, consulted 5

E. Purpose of Research

The purpose of writing the undergraduate thesis titled, “The Interest of the AKP in Proposing the 4+4+4 Reforms Bill on Education System in Turkey” are, as follows:

1. Describing the education system in Turkey and its remaining problem prior the 4+4+4 reforms law.
2. Understanding the background of AKP as a political party and its functions within society.
3. Interpreting the 4+4+4 reforms bill and the effects it would bring for Turkey in the future.
4. Determining and revealing the reason behind AKP’s proposal of the 4+4+4 reforms bill on education in Turkey.
5. Completing one of the terms and conditions required in obtaining undergraduate degree in Political Science.

F. Research Method

The research apply the unobstructive research method. “Unobstructive research is the methods of studying social behaviour without affecting it. Such methods can be qualitative or quantitative”(Babbie 2009). The writer utilizes the content analysis type of unobstructive research. The analysis of this thesis will be elaborated through relevant data from several

literature resources available: book, newspaper, magazine, journal and reliable web pages on the internet.

G. Scope of Research

The thesis is focused on the interest of the AKP as a political party and its involvement in the decision making process of the 4+4+4 reforms on education system in Turkey, as an attempt to find the reason of AKP's action in proposing the 4+4+4 reforms bill on education in Turkey. To avoid the research being expanded, the writer limits the timeline of research into only during the era of Prime Minister Erdogan administration to the latest development of issue by the time this thesis is written. However, the writer may be adding research regarding to some influential phenomenon that has affected recent event.

H. System of Writing

Chapter I consists of a brief explanation of the whole paper and includes the background and the main problem. It contains the theoretical framework which is used to explain the problems of the research and the hypothesis of the research question. Moreover, it explains the objective, range of research, method of writing and system of the research..

Chapter II discusses the history of education system in Turkey and the education structure prior to the education reform in 2012. It also

identifies the remaining problems in Turkey's education system as well as introduces the 4+4+4 reform bill.

Chapter III describes the profile of Justice and Development Party. The writer will start by explaining the history of Justice and and later on specifically elaborate its vision, mission, objectives and programmes in education.

Chapter IV discusses the decision making process of the 4+4+4 reforms bill to be made into a new law on education, in which AKP was involved in articulating interests. It will also examine the expectations of public towards the new law and benefits for Turkey by the time the law being implemented.

Chapter V summarizes the evaluation of the 4+4+4 reform bill.