



## **Transformation of Education in the Neoliberal Era**

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### **Abstract**

When making improvements in education, developing solutions to educational problems, and designing more equal and fair learning environments, it is important to understand the phenomenon of globalization, the policies implemented in relation to it, and their effects. This review study discusses the effects of neoliberal education policies on curricula, standardized tests, and the teaching profession. This study is based on the idea that neoliberalism influences education not through a single mechanism, but through interconnected processes such as marketization, privatization, standardization, accountability, and performance-based governance. Drawing on relevant theoretical and empirical literature, the article examines how these processes influence what schools are expected to teach, how student achievement is measured, and how teachers' professional roles are redefined. While the review is situated within global debates on neoliberal education reform, selected examples from Türkiye, the United States, and international assessment contexts are used to illustrate how these transformations become visible in different educational settings. The review method was used, and the relevant literature was examined in line with the purpose of the study. Ideas and claims were brought together and discussed in light of the reviewed studies. In this context, the study first presents a general overview of global education and then discusses global trends in curricula. The following section addresses what standardized tests actually measure and how these tests can be viewed from a different perspective. Finally, in light of these discussions, the transformation of the teaching profession is examined and presented from a critical perspective. This study aims to offer policymakers, practitioners and researchers a perspective for achieving a more inclusive educational environment.

**Keywords:** transformation of education, neoliberal policies, teaching profession, standardized tests, curriculum

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## **Introduction**

Globalization affects many areas of human life and manifests itself more concretely in the field of education with each passing day. Neoliberal policies appear to promote privatization, marketization, and standardization in education through different instruments. The content of curricula, intensive information loading, standardized tests, the transformation of textbooks, and the standardization of teacher performance under the name of accountability can be considered among the reflections of the globalization process in the field of education. In order to understand these reflections more clearly, it is first necessary to clarify what is meant by neoliberalism in this study.

Following Harvey (2005), neoliberalism can be defined and understood as a political-economic project that seeks to organize social life around market principles, private property rights, and individual entrepreneurial freedoms. In this view, the state does not simply withdraw from public life; rather, it actively creates and maintains the institutional conditions through which market-oriented relations can expand. In education, this logic becomes visible through a set of connected policy mechanisms. As Ball (2016) argues, neoliberal educational reform operates through marketization, management, and performance technologies that reshape educational institutions and professional subjectivities.

Under neoliberalism, education is constructed as valuable if it can be measured in test scores, rankings, efficiency, school performance and teaching quality. This produces a chain of policy effects. First, the curriculum is organised around skills, competencies and labour market expectations that are occurring at a global level. Second standardized tests are used to measure achievement of students and compare schools, teachers and education systems. Third teachers' professional roles are redefined via accountability so that the nature of their work will be made more visible, measurable and comparable. Therefore, those three should not be treated as separate matters but can rather be understood as part of the same overall neoliberal reform of education system. The logic of neoliberal governance creates a demand for measurability; this demand reinforces standardized testing and performance-based accountability, which in turn reshapes how teachers' work is monitored and how the teaching role is understood.

This broader discussion is also closely related to the economization of education. Spring (2015) argues that the economization of education has shifted the purpose of schooling toward economic growth, productivity, and the production of labour-market skills, thereby allowing economic priorities to shape what schools are expected to teach and achieve. This study discusses the effects of neoliberal education policies on curricula, standardized tests, and the teaching profession at the global level; examples selected from the context of Türkiye, the United States, and selected international assessment discussions are used to show the national-level reflections of this transformation. The methodological approach of this study is based on a conceptual review. Rather than presenting original empirical data, the study synthesizes relevant theoretical discussions and previous research on neoliberal education policies, globalization, curriculum reform, standardized tests, accountability, and the transformation of the teaching profession.

## **An Overview of Global Education**

In the field of education, the language of neoliberal discourses intensified by globalization generally includes concepts such as quality, effectiveness, parental choice, school improvement, accountability, entrepreneurship, and adaptation to economic conditions, all of which are presented as aiming to ensure equality. This, in turn, reshapes expectations from education systems. When these discourses and the expectations shaped accordingly are examined one by one, each of them in fact promises a better education system. However, when this reform logic is examined as a whole, and when its mechanisms of influence and effects are taken into consideration, it remains open to discussion whether it reproduces equality or inequality. The distance between the promises and the outcomes of reforms brings the human capital approach to the centre of this discussion.

Although the concept of human capital, which regards human beings as capital, has received criticism, it has strengthened alongside the concept of social capital, which has been widely used since the 1980s, and has come to be accepted to some extent by all components of education. In the

economic and social conditions after 1980, when neoliberalism came to manage all kinds of perceptions, it is natural that human beings have largely been seen, through education, as capital that should be invested in (Demirer, 2014, p. 3). Investment in this capital is possible by taking control of the education sector, and the simplest way to do this is to privatize education. For instance, Akkari and Demirtaş (2022) show that private schooling in Türkiye expanded substantially from the 2000s, particularly after 2010, and link this growth to state policies, incentives from international organizations, changing middle-class parental preferences, and difficulties in ensuring quality public education.

In market-oriented education reforms, some companies and policy actors tend to reduce the budgets of public schools, evaluate instruction through standardized tests, and reduce structural problems in education to teacher and student performance (Dean, 2014). With their strong emphasis on standardization and centralized examination policies, market-oriented education reforms can create a structure that produces distrust for teachers and families, suppresses creative teaching, limits imagination-based curricula, and evaluates students through standardized performance indicators. Values such as trust, imagination, creativity, critical teaching, and respect for learning may remain in the background in the face of the pursuit of profit and efficiency (Giroux, 2013).

When we look at the field of education, we see that the process of neoliberalization has been realized, on the one hand, through privatization, marketization, commercialization, commodification, public-private partnerships, and flexible and precarious work, and, on the other hand, through the redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of the state, the market, civil society organizations, and families in relation to education (Çimen, 2013, p. 10). Today, middle-class families are faced with many contradictions. Even if it strains them, they show that they have begun to make choices in this direction because the search for a private school has turned into a cultural tendency, not providing this for the child creates the perception of being a bad parent, and they think that the rights to be obtained expand when money is paid (Sabırlı, 2013). The tendency of middle-class families to create a good child is at least as influential as state policies in shaping today's educational portrait (Çimen, 2013).

As can be seen, neoliberal policies have significantly transformed perceptions and priorities in the field of education. The transformation experienced after 1980 has progressed together with discourses such as the quality of teachers, the role of unions, the success of public schools, the presentation of private schools as a solution, and the establishment of accountability through standardized multiple-choice tests (Dean, 2014). Both the arrangements made in curricula and the increased number of tests are based on this discourse. Although the aim is often expressed as increasing student achievement, this process can produce outcomes that reproduce inequalities and support the workforce profile needed by capital. de Saxe, Bucknovitz, and Mahoney-Mosedale (2020) argue that, in the United States, education reforms framed in the language of equity and social justice may in practice delegitimize and deprofessionalize educators while supporting privatization-oriented reform agendas. In this context, one of the issues that needs to be examined is curricula.

### **Curricula and Neoliberal Trends**

While the changes occurring in the social sphere through globalization force education and curricula to change, it is aimed that society will change and develop through curricula in line with national and international values, qualities, and competencies. In particular, the needs, interests, expectations, and problems of individuals and society, which constitute the target group of curricula, should be examined within the framework of needs analysis and reflected in curricula. In the process of designing and developing curricula, in addition to the qualities that will enable individuals to have the basic knowledge, skills, and competencies required by today's information society and globalization, understandings and values such as adopting and developing the social and cultural values of society, respect for human rights and differences, tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and solidarity should be taken into consideration (Özdemir, 2011, p. 85).

Curricula that primarily aim to raise individuals who know the globalizing world and can find a place for themselves in this world should also aim to raise individuals who can think critically, access information through different means and use the information they access, and have an

international culture and knowledge base. To achieve these goals, it becomes inevitable to reorganize the content component of curricula according to global values. However, while the content is being organized, elements belonging to the national cultures, historical accumulations, and local values of countries should not be ignored. While students get to know the world and various cultures on the one hand, they should also be able to integrate their own cultural values with universal values on the other. In this context, greater care is required especially when designing curricula for courses with a focus on history, art, and culture (Öztekin, 2010).

On the other hand, the theory and practice of the matter are not very consistent. While ideal curricula and their characteristics in a globalizing world are revealed by many studies, policy makers and market-oriented actors can intervene in curricula in various ways. In its conventional form, instruction at school is mostly limited to transferring a body of information to students and having them memorize it. The curriculum does not contain content that develops students' thinking and problem-solving abilities. The greatest mental activity of a student whose thinking ability has not developed will consist of recalling the information stored, but not knowing how and where to use this information (Özden, 2002, p. 18-19). Au's (2007) qualitative metasynthesis of 49 studies identifies a similar pattern: the primary effect of high-stakes testing is the narrowing of curricular content to tested subjects, the fragmentation of subject knowledge into test-related pieces, and an increased use of teacher-centered pedagogies.

Since the 2004-2005 academic year, a comprehensive curriculum change has been implemented at primary and secondary education levels in Türkiye. In the Primary Education Grades 1-5 Curricula Introduction Handbook prepared by the Board of Education, the reasons for this change included aims such as increasing quality and equality in education, developing individual and national values together with global values, moving curricula away from information overload and memorization, creating content more appropriate to students' age and developmental levels, strengthening the harmony between the experiences intended to be gained at school and real life, and supporting competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, decision making, cooperation, and communication (Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı [TTKB], 2005, p. 14-15). However, Koşar-Altınyelken and Akkaymak (2012) caution that the same reform package also carried neoliberal elements into the Turkish curriculum through its emphasis on individual competencies, entrepreneurship, and the preparation of students for a globally competitive environment.

One of the prominent problems in the planning and implementation of the new curriculum is that the curriculum was designed without being sufficiently associated with the basic components of education. There are also doubts about the effectiveness of the in-service training conducted to prepare teachers for the new curriculum. In addition, it is widely accepted that the school and classroom environments in which the new curriculum would be implemented were not sufficiently ready. The curriculum was put into practice before the results of the pilot implementation were sufficiently analyzed (SETA, 2009). In addition, it is open to discussion in line with which values and purposes the elements emphasized in the curriculum, such as entrepreneurship, sensitivity to the economy, and global competition, are interpreted. Moreover, while the new curriculum aimed to reduce information overload, the link between the examination system and information overload was not sufficiently taken into account. Therefore, curriculum changes should be evaluated not only through pedagogical justifications, but also together with broader policy orientations, accountability mechanisms, and discourses of global competition. In a study of teachers' experiences under neoliberal conditions in Türkiye, Yıldırım-Taştı and Engin (2024) show that the washback effects of high-stakes examinations contributed to deskilling and self-alienation, as teachers were increasingly pushed to prioritize measurable performance and test preparation over broader educational aims.

In his criticism of education reforms in the United States in general, Giroux (2013) stated that the new reforms are based on a commitment to a suppressive pedagogy grounded in memorization, conformity, passivity, and centralized examinations. In this context, each subject is taught in isolation and transmitted as sterile pieces of information without shared meaning or context. It cannot be said that the conditions in Türkiye are completely different in this respect. Excessive information loading and the examination race have detached students from their context and made them passive. The aim

of raising “active citizens” that the Ministry of National Education seeks to provide through the Social Studies course contradicts the relevant examples in textbooks. With these examples, an approach aimed at raising “passive citizens” rather than “active citizens” is displayed (İpek, 2011).

Strengthening the connection between curricula and life is not an issue specific only to Türkiye, but one of the fundamental educational issues discussed globally. International examinations such as PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS open up for discussion not only whether students have learned the basic information given at school, but also whether they can use this information in different contexts. The reliability, cultural appropriateness, and effects of these examinations on education systems can also be discussed; nevertheless, they provide a comparative view of student performance, inequalities, and the development of basic skills. Current international and national examination data show that education systems cannot be evaluated only within the binary of success or failure. While PISA 2022 results reveal that Türkiye remained below the OECD average in mathematics, reading, and science, TIMSS 2023 results present a more positive outlook especially in some areas. In contrast, the low average number of correct answers in basic mathematics and science tests in the YKS 2025 data keeps discussions about the relationship between the examination-oriented system and basic academic skills current.

**Table 1**

*Selected Indicators Related to Examination Data*

<b>Examination</b>	<b>Selected indicator</b>
<b>PISA 2022</b>	In Türkiye, the proportion of students reaching at least Level 2 is 61% in mathematics, 71% in reading, and 75% in science. OECD averages are 69%, 74%, and 76%, respectively.
<b>TIMSS 2023</b>	In 4th grade science, Türkiye ranked 4th among 58 countries with 570 points and 2nd among OECD countries. In 4th grade mathematics, it ranked 8th among 58 countries with 553 points.
<b>YKS 2025</b>	The average number of correct answers among final-year secondary school students was 6.648/40 in TYT basic mathematics, 4.606/20 in TYT science, and 6.859/40 in AYT mathematics.

Sources: OECD (2023), MEB (2024), and ÖSYM (2025).

One of the prominent approaches in current curriculum discussions is STEM. This approach, which aims to integrate the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, carries the potential to develop students’ skills such as scientific thinking, problem solving, creativity, and cooperation on the one hand, while it is also associated with discussions about the restructuring of curricula in line with the expectations of the global economy, technology production, and the labor market on the other. Carter (2017), in an analysis of STEM policy discourse in Australia, demonstrates that STEM is often treated not as an educational objective in its own right, but as a means of developing a competitive workforce on a global scale, an approach that prioritizes economic benefits over broader human development objectives. Various initiatives have been launched in many countries, including Türkiye, to develop students’ STEM knowledge, skills, and competencies. For example, in the United States, the “Educate to Innovate” campaign came to the agenda to increase students’ interest in STEM fields (Obama, 2009). In Türkiye, TÜSİAD has also included publications that associate STEM with discussions of the knowledge economy and the workforce (Dinçer, 2014). The study by Şahin, Ayar, and Adıgüzel (2014) shows that after-school activities with STEM content have the potential to support independent and collaborative scientific research and to develop 21st-century skills. However, STEM should be considered not only as a pedagogical innovation, but also in the context of associating curricula with discourses of economic competition and human capital. Chesky and Goldstein (2018) argue that dominant STEM narratives aimed at increasing girls’ participation generally leave STEM itself largely unquestioned and position girls as the ones who must adapt to STEM, rather than examining how STEM education could be redesigned to align with more

inclusive and equitable goals. Therefore, the main issue is not whether STEM should be included in curricula, but how this approach can be implemented in a balanced and inclusive way without excluding students with different interests, abilities, and learning needs.

As can be seen, curricula detached from life, inconsistent changes, and the complex indicators of student performance that emerge in international or national examinations make visible different dimensions of the effects of neoliberal policies on curricula. Examinations, which cannot be considered independently of curricula, constitute another educational problem.

### **What do standardized tests measure?**

From past to present, standardized tests have been considered a way to measure and evaluate the education our children receive as well as the effectiveness of teachers and schools. The problematic or reductionist interpretation of standardized test results can be used to label schools as unsuccessful and to encourage their replacement with for-profit schools (Dean, 2014). Au (2022) argues that high-stakes standardised tests are not impartial assessment tools; on the contrary, these tests function as part of a system that reproduces and standardises inequalities. At one time, educational achievement was expressed as understanding nature, feeling freedom, gaining strength from nature and the freedom it gives to human beings, and realizing one's own power and using it in harmony with nature for human development. Today, however, educational achievement is defined from the primary school years onward by the number of tests solved, the scores obtained in dozens of examinations, the prestige of the high school attended, and the job opportunities that the university gained will provide. Parents, in turn, tend to compare and compete their children through these criteria (Demirer, 2014, p. 2). Along with increasing anxiety and risk, families turn into customers who are responsible for rationally evaluating the options offered to them in the market, become more competitive by trying to differentiate their children from others, and put their individual plans into operation within the education system (Çimen, 2013, p. 12).

In this system, it is clear that children's ability to distinguish between an apple tree and an orange tree or between a dove and an owl is not a source of pride for parents. In this system, students are offered, under the name of education, a constantly more difficult competitive environment that contributes almost nothing to them. As a result, students go through the process in a way that is alienated from the essence of education. Considering that students from all socio-economic levels take the same examination, success measured as obtaining high scores in examinations, attending a good high school, or gaining admission to university is determined not by personal talent and skill but by the economic means of the family. Research has consistently shown that performance on standardized tests is associated with students' socioeconomic backgrounds. Building on this critique, Au (2022) argues that standardized tests hide broader social, cultural, and economic inequalities by presenting test scores as evidence of individual achievement. In today's education system, where education is reduced to examinations, the information to be deposited in students' minds is the information of examinations, and it is sufficient for it to remain there until they pass the examinations for them to be considered successful (Demirer, 2014, p. 4). This has gone beyond Freire's banking model of education (Freire, 2013, p. 55), becoming an order in which knowledge is reduced only to examination knowledge.

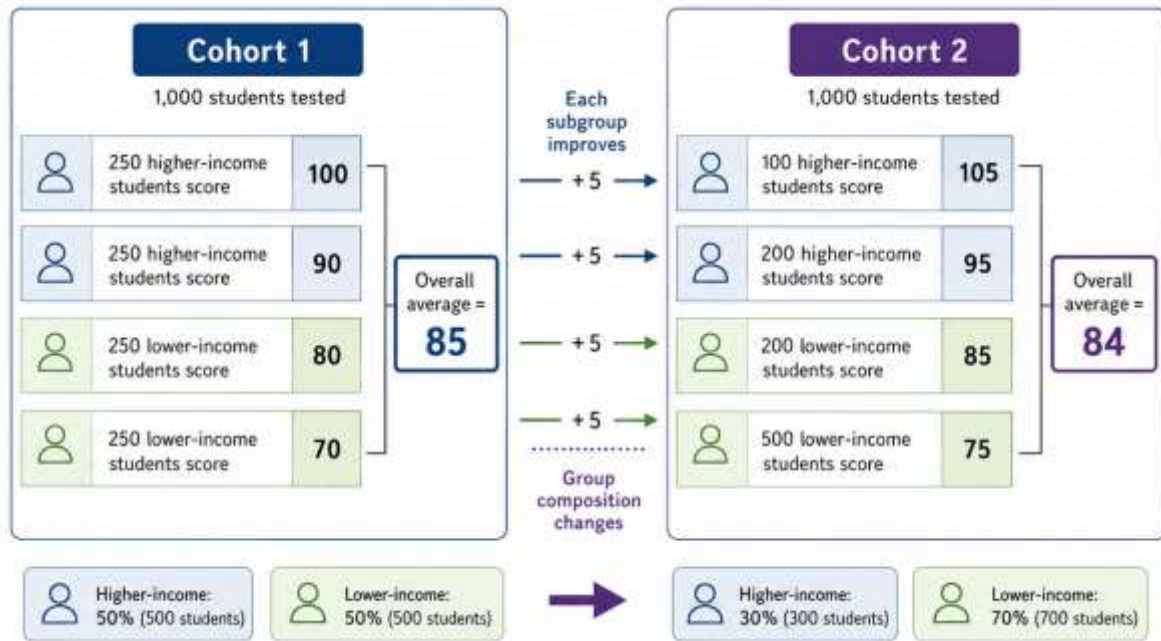
Without much questioning of what standardized tests measure and what they do not measure, students are thrown into a race and confined to a passive character within the system. Giroux (2013) argues that standardized tests are in fact purposeful tests. According to him, policies such as reducing the budget allocated to public schools, devaluing the teacher, and reducing success to test results eliminate or narrow the educational opportunities necessary for poor young people to learn, and then use the resulting outcomes as evidence for transforming public schools into private enterprises (Giroux, 2013). Standardized tests are examinations that should be viewed with suspicion both in this respect and because they detach students from the process.

Dean (2014) states that standardized test results can be interpreted out of context in discourses concerning the failure of public schools. According to McClellan (1994), who conveys the Sandia Report findings on which this discussion is based, the decline in SAT scores is related not only to a

direct decline in school quality, but also to a change in the profile of students taking the test. The Sandia researchers stated that while the proportion of students from the highest achievement groups among test takers decreased, the proportion of students from lower achievement groups increased; nevertheless, performance in many indicators followed a stable or slightly improving trend (Carson et al., 1993; McClellan, 1994). This situation is important in showing that interpreting standardized test averages out of context may produce problematic results for education policies. An example of the visual explanation of this discussion is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*An Example of the Effect of Changes in the Test-Taking Student Profile on Average Scores*



Source: Adapted from Dean (2014), McClellan (1994) and Carson et al. (1993).

As seen in Figure 1, all subgroup scores increase, but the overall average decreases because the composition of the tested group changes. This illustrates how aggregate test results can misrepresent school performance when population shifts are ignored.

Standardized examinations, no matter how student-centered the curriculum is, may reproduce existing inequalities when interpreted without considering students' socioeconomic backgrounds and educational opportunities. Current national examination data also open up for discussion the limitations of achievement measured by examinations. According to the 2025-YKS results announced by ÖSYM, the average number of correct answers of final-year secondary school students in the TYT basic mathematics test was 6.648/40, while the average in the TYT science test was 4.606/20. The average for the AYT mathematics test was announced as 6.859/40 (ÖSYM, 2025). As shown in Figure 1, when the composition of the group of students taking the exam and their unequal access to educational opportunities are disregarded, average test scores can lead to misleading interpretations. Therefore, low average scores on national exams should not be interpreted as the failure of individual students or teachers; rather, they should be considered in conjunction with broader contextual factors such as socioeconomic background, access to quality education, and opportunities for exam preparation. Furthermore, the existence of examination-oriented assessment reinforces the existence of institutions such as private schools, private tutoring centers, private lessons, and study centers, while at the same time widening the gap between individuals who can and cannot access them. Under conditions in which education is reduced to examination success, the entire educational process extending to university ultimately serves to eliminate all meanings other than acquiring a profession and finding a job. This is what the dominant ideology, and therefore students and even, to a certain

extent through impositions, educators, understand from education. Because education is evaluated through its market equivalent, in other words, its exchange value (Demirer, 2014, p. 3). Similarly, Spring (2015) argues that the economization of education has made economic growth and increased productivity the primary goals of school education, and that education policies are increasingly evaluated in terms of their costs and economic benefits. On the other hand, failure in standardized tests is reduced solely to the failure of the student or the teacher, and this disrupts healthy education and instruction. Indeed, as a result of these and similar practices, the teaching profession has undergone a major transformation over the last 30 years.

### **The transformation of the teaching profession**

The teaching profession is not limited to the technical delivery of curriculum content. It involves professional autonomy, teacher agency, and the capacity to make pedagogical judgments in response to students' needs and classroom contexts. In this sense, teacher professionalism depends on individual skills as well as on autonomy and professional space teachers have to make decisions, exercise judgment, and respond to students' needs. In the neoliberal order that has expanded its sphere of dominance from 1980 to the present, schools are also expected to compete with one another in a manner similar to companies, and in this direction, educational institutions, like companies, need to be auditable. The determination of teacher competencies and the attempt to create inspectable performance indicators concerning teachers are products of this perspective (Connell, 2009). Ball (2016) defines performativity as a neoliberal governance technology in which teachers are increasingly evaluated through metrics, targets, benchmarks, exams, charts, and inspections; this process limits professional practice to elements that can be quantified, compared, and presented as progress. The teacher is seen as a tool within the system, competencies and performance criteria are determined in favour of the system, and on the other hand, the teacher is confined to the classroom and is not allowed to contribute to plans or curricula. The system's view of the teacher has also transformed society's view of the teacher.

In Türkiye, major transformations have taken place over the years in the teacher education system and in perceptions of teachers. Addressing this transformation process of the teaching profession, Yıldız (2013, p. 44) identified four periods regarding the teaching profession and its perception. These can be listed as follows:

- The emergence of the modern teacher: From the religious function to the state's teacher.
- The modernizing teacher of the republic.
- The progressive teacher of the people or the revolutionary teacher.
- The teacher as a test-preparation technician.

Under today's conditions, the teacher has also been detached from their context and has been almost restricted to the role of an educational technician. Teachers' own perceptions also show that the current position of the teacher is associated with a number of negative concepts. In a study that attempted to identify perceptions of teachers in the past and today through metaphors, the metaphors presented by teachers and reflecting the difference between the past and today were grouped under three themes: loss of prestige and devaluation, decrease in social responsibilities, technicization and increasing culture of control, and impoverishment (Yıldız & Ünlü, 2014). These findings actually concretely reveal the social transformation of the teaching profession. This situation is not only a reality of Türkiye. Dean (2014) claims that after 1980 in the United States, respect for teachers decreased and the profession underwent a major transformation. Similarly, de Saxe et al. (2020), through a cross-sectional analysis of neoliberal education reform in the United States, demonstrate that privatization and reform discourses, by reducing teaching to a technical and routine function, can undermine educators' legitimacy and weaken the professional quality of the profession, particularly in contexts already shaped by structural inequalities.

Today, when what we understand from education has been reduced to tests, questions, examinations, and scores, failure is seen as the teacher's own responsibility, and the teacher is regarded as an employee who raises students in accordance with externally determined goals. In

parallel with this understanding, the teacher is (Yıldız, 2013, p. 48-49): A robot whose reflexivity has been taken away and for whom what to do and how to do it have been determined, the mechanical transmitter of examination knowledge that has a large surface area but no depth, together with increasing centralized examinations, an employee whose value is measured by the number of questions solved by their students, a company employee whose autonomy has been seized and whose professional practices are measured through accountability mechanisms such as professional standards, performance indicators, and efficiency, a new victim of irregular and precarious working conditions because they remain unemployed for a long time after graduation, a technician whose social obligations have been curtailed, whose prestige has been eroded, and who has been confined to the classroom, a teacher whose labour is underestimated and devalued through the sanctification of educational technologies.

All these items clearly summarize the point reached by the teaching profession in the neoliberal system. Holloway and Brass (2018) highlight a fundamental contradiction in accountability reforms: while teachers are expected to take responsibility for student achievement outcomes, their professional knowledge and judgment are increasingly shaped by external standards, performance metrics, and accountability mechanisms. Another point that should be emphasized under this heading is the process of the formation of false consciousness. According to Çelik (2014) false consciousness can be summarized as making incorrect inferences due to an inability to think contextually about the causes and consequences of events and phenomena. Although false consciousness is not correct, it offers a coherent explanation, and its persuasive power should not be underestimated. One of the areas in which false consciousness is most frequently put into operation is education. It can be said that a process of false consciousness formation regarding the causes of low student achievement is also observed in Türkiye. On this issue, among teachers, an approach that declares the victim guilty and reduces failure to student deficiency is dominant. Failure has been individualized and reduced to student action. However, in an education system where competition and rivalry are fundamental values, seeing failure as a personal problem and concealing the processes and dynamics behind it is false consciousness. The spread of false consciousness among teachers regarding student failure parallels the policies and practices that instrumentalize the teacher-student relationship and lead to the devaluation of the teaching profession (Çelik, 2014, p. 9-12).

## **Conclusion**

One of the concrete areas of influence of neoliberal policies is the field of education. The fact that human beings are part of the production of economic value both as producers and consumers, and that the educational process is both a tool for shaping the individual and a public service carried out with certain financial resources, places education within the field of interest of market-oriented actors. In this process, market-oriented actors and state mechanisms influence individuals by controlling curricula. Individuals detached from life, hours spent at school desks, and examinations taken in a competitive race cause students to become alienated from themselves. The student may fall into the position of a passive object loaded with examination knowledge, similar to Freire's (2013) critique of the banking model of education. Yet changes made in curricula are carried out with discourses of placing the student at the center. A curriculum that will respond to needs should be contemporary and independent and should offer individuals the opportunity to establish a connection between daily life and what is learned.

Standardized examinations, which have become associated with privatization and marketization processes, can be used as tools that evaluate both students and teachers through narrow performance indicators. The interpretation of standardized test scores often results in statistical errors or conclusions detached from context. A reality such as socio-economic level is abstracted from evaluations. Yet it is thought that everyone is treated equally and fairly by taking the same examination. In this system, which is neither equal nor fair, the teacher is also seen as the main person responsible for student success or failure. The major transformation in perceptions of the teaching profession in recent years has basically been shaped by this perspective. Evaluating the teacher as an employee within a factory-like, productivity-oriented school system is contrary to the essence of education. When evaluating a phenomenon such as education, all these dynamics should be taken into

account, and changes should be placed on solid foundations. Education policies, curricula, assessment, and teacher quality should be designed in a way that does not reduce them to narrow indicators of economic efficiency or measurable performance. Schools and teachers should create pedagogical environments where test preparation does not become the sole guiding principle of teaching and learning. Future studies should examine how teachers, students, and families experience, negotiate, or resist neoliberal education policies in different national and institutional contexts. Comparative and qualitative research can provide a deeper understanding of how curriculum reforms, standardized tests, privatization, and accountability mechanisms shape educational inequalities and teachers' professional identity.

### **Disclosure Statements**

#### **Contribution rate statement of the researchers:**

The author is the sole contributor to this study.

#### **Conflict of interest statement:**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

#### **CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement**

**Burcu ALTUN:** Conceptualization, writing, review & editing.

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#### **Ethical Declaration and Committee Approval**

In this research, the principles of scientific research and publication ethics were followed.