



# ***GENDER, EDUCATION AND MOTHER TONGUE***

*M. ŐERİF DERİNCİ*

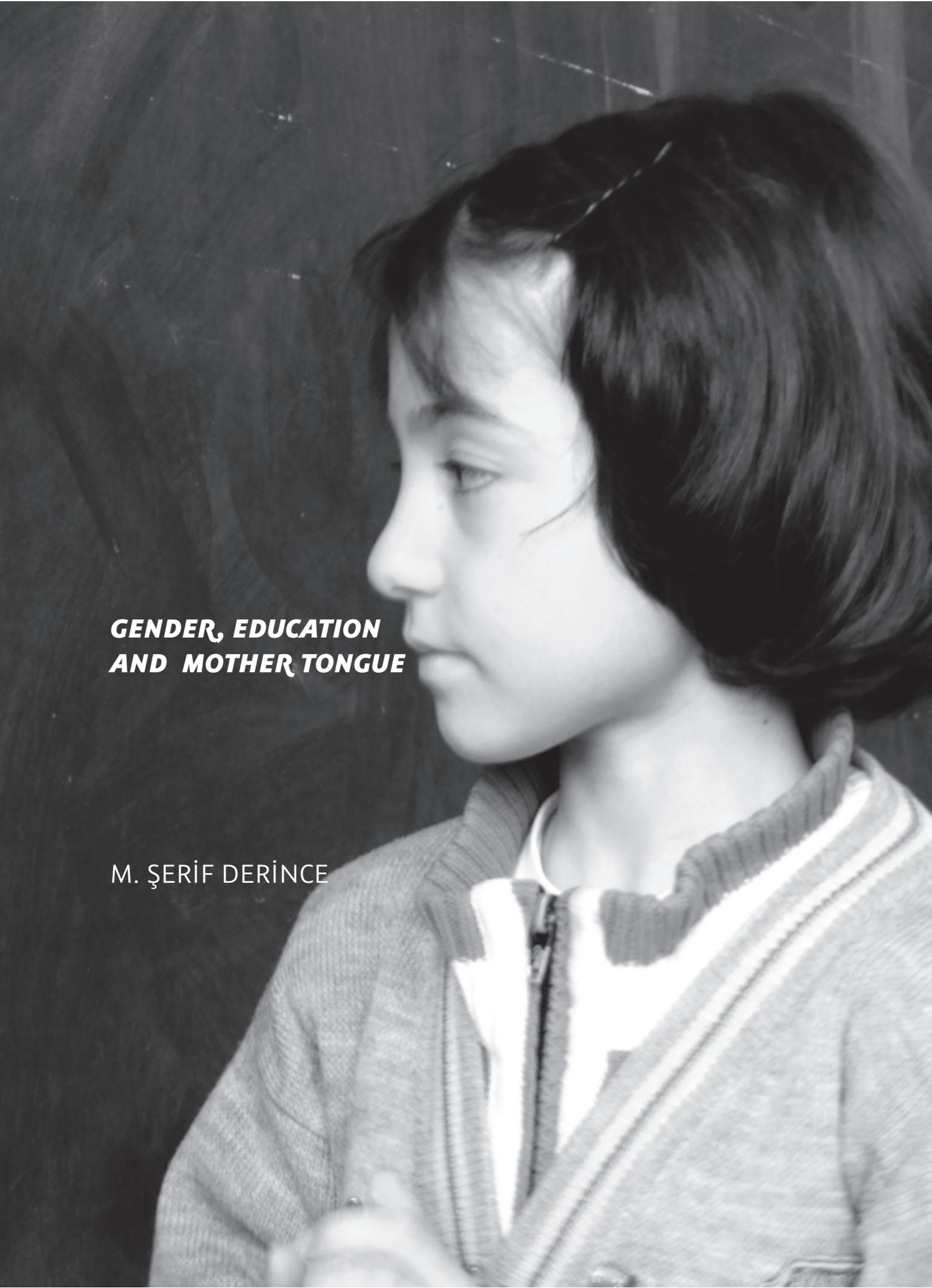
***MOTHER TONGUE FIRST ANALYSIS REPORTS***

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M. ŐERİF DERİNCE

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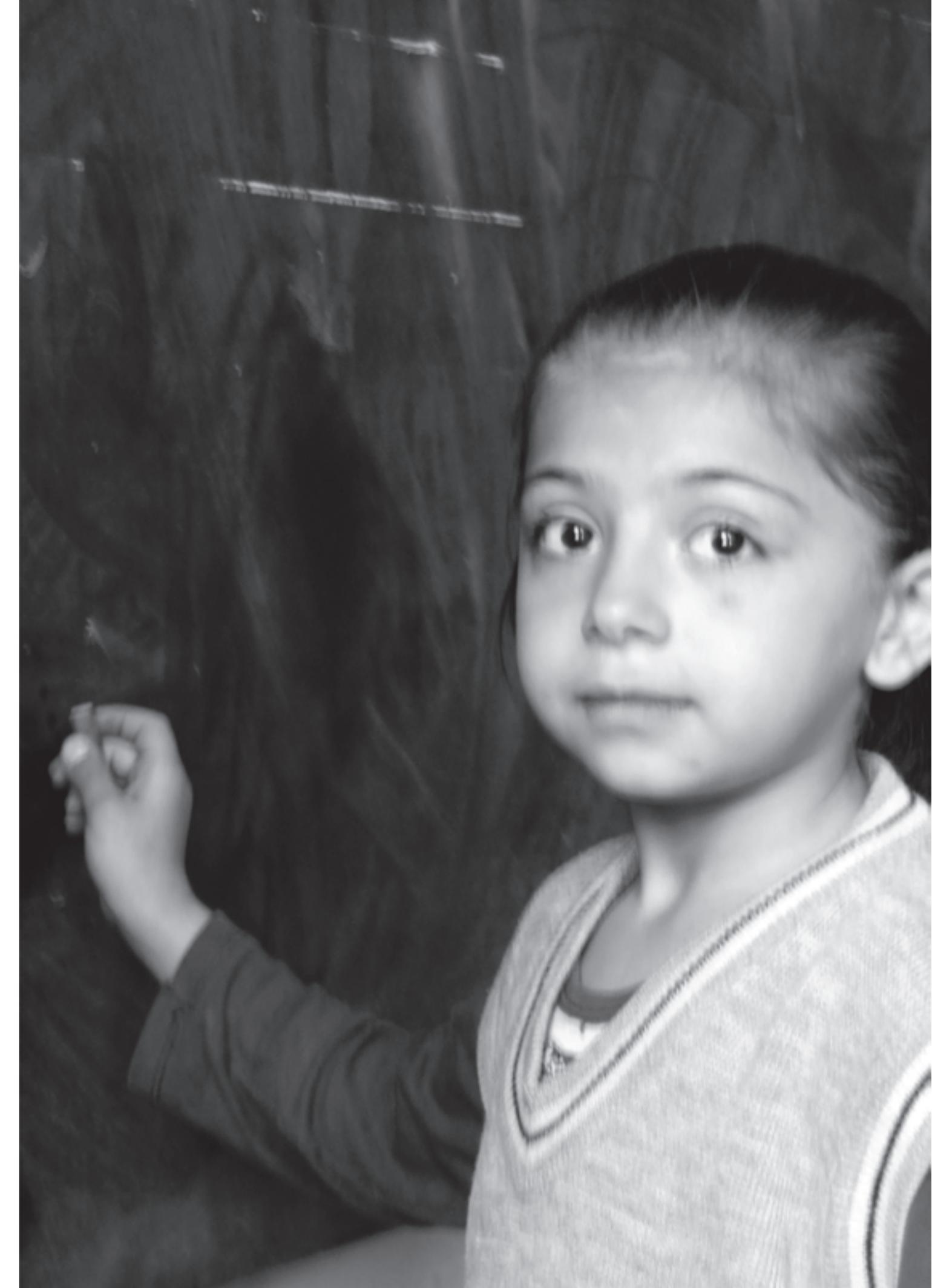
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***GENDER, EDUCATION AND MOTHER TONGUE***



## Introduction

In a report entitled “Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching” prepared for UNESCO, Carol Benson states that language, and especially the language used for educational instruction, constitutes one of the main mechanisms in the continuous reproduction of inequality. According to this report, in communities that are subject to the type of inequality where language is a factor in reproducing inequalities, girls and women whose mother tongue is different from the medium of instruction are subject to more severe discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Stromquist says that even in regions where a relative degree of gender equality is achieved in education, a significant amount of inequality exists from the point of view of different ethnic groups and the poor who live in these regions.<sup>2</sup> As indicated by this research, in many parts of the world people in the lowest socioeconomic strata generally belong to minority ethnic groups and their mother tongue language that is different from the dominant language spoken in that region or country. Moreover, the ethnic groups that these people are members of are generally unable to benefit equally from the social, political, medical and educational opportunities provided by the state, which is founded on the dominant community’s criteria. Although many different methods of exclusion exist, one of the most prominent strategies used to marginalize groups is to institute policies banning the use of the communities’ mother tongues. Since the social, political and economic environment does not permit multilingualism and since the language of the environment is dominated by the language of the dominant group, many people who do not speak the dominant language are unable to make their presence felt in such environments. Even in cases where people do speak the language of the dominant group, they generally speak it with a different accent and may still therefore be subject to discrimination and exclusion. For a variety of reasons, in terms of using the dominant language in their social, political and economic lives, women have even less opportunities than men.<sup>3</sup>

*Girls and women whose mother tongue is different from the medium of instruction are subject to more severe discrimination.*

The observations and experiences recounted by teachers who participated in the teacher workshops organized by the Diyarbakır Institute for Political and Social Research (DISA) organized in 2011 indicated that the effect of official language policies on Kurdish students varies according to students’ gender. The first of these workshops took place on May 7, 2011 in Diyarbakır, with the participation of Kurdish teachers working in Diyarbakır, as well as teachers working in cities such as Şırnak, Bingöl, Hakkari, Van, Urfa and Batman; the second was realized from July 4-5, 2011, again in Diyarbakır but this time with the participation of teachers working in parts of cities like Ankara, Istanbul, Mersin and Izmir where Kurds have immigrated for various political and economic reasons. The issues covered in these workshops consisted of the linguistic, psychological, political and social factors that determine the scholastic and educational experiences of Kurdish

students. The schooling of girls formed one of the issues brought up within this framework. Teachers participating in the workshops stated that girls and boys whose mother tongue is Kurdish are affected in different ways by monolingual education policies in Turkish. Most teachers said that girls are less able to attend school than boys, that they are quieter in the classroom, and that, in the long term, girls forget their mother tongue faster.

These observations indicate that when we reflect on the education of Kurdish girls in Turkey and the inequalities that they encounter, we should take into consideration the issue of mother tongue and of official language policies as well. Efforts in this area are of great importance in terms of understanding the educational experiences and needs of Kurdish children, especially girls. As stated by Benson, understanding the experiences that discriminated communities are facing constitutes one of the main steps towards demanding and developing an educational system that will be to the advantage of the communities that experience discrimination. Unless this is done, suggestions and changes generally do nothing more than result in more inequality and the reproduction of standards that only elite groups are able to meet.<sup>4</sup>

*When we reflect on the education of Kurdish girls in Turkey and the inequalities that they encounter, we should take into consideration the issue of mother tongue and of official language policies as well.*

From such a starting point outlined so far, the aims of this study can be listed as follows:

- to discuss the issue of gender inequality in education in terms of male dominated nation-state policies and international non-governmental organizations' campaign practices;
- to critically examine the discourses and practices of Turkish campaigns that advocate for the schooling of girls;
- to reflect on the points of overlap between gender inequality and mother tongue language practices;
- to discuss Kurdish girls' linguistic practices in the first glance without drawing strong conclusions and making generalizations.

In order to achieve these aims, this report first explains the links between gender, education and mother tongue in terms of nation-state policies. Then it provides a brief overview of different approaches to gender and education. Subsequently, it examines campaigns and projects pertaining to gender and education carried out in Turkey. Finally, this report evaluates the situation from a Kurdish perspective and makes a number of recommendations.

This report advocates that the implementation of a gender-conscious, mother tongue-based multilingual education is key to achieving an all-inclusive educational system and eliminating gender-based inequalities and discrimination.

## Gender Inequality in Education

Education is considered one of the main tools for the consolidation and reproduction of states' official ideology and the indoctrination of this ideology into the community. In other words, it is one of the state's most important tools for reproducing itself. Power relations that exist within society and determine the state's character reflect indirectly on the education system. Therefore, although they may vary from country to country, education systems under state control continue to harbor elements that instill ideals that embody inequality, gender discrimination, nationalism, racism and marginalization.

Education is of especially decisive influence in the reproduction of gender inequality. This is related not only to inequality of boys' and girls' access to education, but also to the influence educational curricula and school cultures on the reproduction and consolidation of gender roles.

If we set aside the wealthy countries of the Northern hemisphere, in many countries of the world girls do not have an equal opportunity to access education. At this point, illiteracy is mainly a women's issue. This is partially due to fact that boys attend school at higher rates than girls and compounded by the fact that a significant percentage of girls who begin school are forced to drop out and are therefore unable to their education. When we take into consideration the decisive role of education on determining the improvement of socioeconomic standards, inequality of access to education for girls and women can be said to cause poverty. Furthermore, it is transmitted intergenerationally.

The dimensions of the issue of gender inequality in education are not limited solely to unequal access to education. As mentioned above, the content of curricula and school culture also play important roles in the reproduction of gender inequality. There are many studies that have shown that school curricula contain stereotypes about gender, and these curricula play a key role in the shaping societies' ideal gender roles and thus contribute to the preservation of gender hierarchies and inequality rather than questioning them.<sup>5</sup> As emphasized by Feyziye Sayılan, education systems are continuing to play a key role in the reproduction of dominant stereotypes, judgments, and values based on gender discrimination through the information provided at school and the cultural climate present within schools.<sup>6</sup> Stereotypes related to gender roles are clearly reflected in textbooks. Both in written texts and in visual materials women are presented within the context of their household and motherhood roles and are portrayed as passive, whereas men are represented outside their homes and as active participants in society.

For example, according to a study carried out by Eğitim-Sen [Education and Science Workers' Union] on social studies textbooks for use in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, boys are presented as independent and active, while girls as passive

*The content of curricula and school culture also plays important roles in the reproduction of gender inequality.*

and dependent. Men are shown working in managerial or supervisory positions, whereas women are represented as mothers and wives, and working women are presented in professions like teaching and nursing, which are considered a continuation of the role of motherhood. Girls are generally depicted at school, at home, or in the immediate surroundings and in the company of their mothers or of other women, while boys are depicted outside of the home and mainly with their fathers or other men.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in a content analysis on 6th grade Turkish textbooks, Lütfi Kırbaçoğlu Kılıç and Bircan Eyüp established that textbooks take a traditional approach to gender. Within textbooks, men are more visible than women, men are presented as employed in a wider range of professions than women, and that women are generally represented through their role in the family. In terms of household duties, women are represented at home, while men are represented as providing for the family by working outside the home. In gender roles related to personalities, women are depicted as weak and passive, while men are depicted as strong individuals equipped with common sense.<sup>8</sup>

*Teachers in Turkey are not aware of gender discrimination, that they do not question it or show any particular interest in the subject, and that they have internalized traditional gender roles.*

Another study carried out by Eğitim-Sen on textbooks of Turkish Literature, Language and Narration points to another dimension of gender inequality in text books: the invisibility of women. In this study of 821 literary texts included in literature textbooks, only 24 were by female authors.<sup>9</sup>

UNICEF Turkey conducted another study on Turkish education on this issue.<sup>10</sup> According to this study, although Turkey has acceded to a number of international treaties that aim to achieve gender sensitivity in education, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) “no work has been carried out to eliminate gender roles in educational curricula, in education/learning materials, and/or in textbooks.” Citing research that shows that the necessary awareness has not yet been created within teacher training programs and that gender roles are being continuously recreated,<sup>11</sup> the study states that teachers in Turkey are not aware of gender discrimination, that they do not question it or show any particular interest in the subject, and that they have internalized traditional gender roles.

A nationalist and militaristic state intensifies the type of inequalities mentioned above. The identification of men with the military, protecting the country from “foreign enemies,” and of women with the country that needs to be protected against “foreign enemies” results in the consolidation of gender roles prescribed by nationalist and militaristic ideology for men and women. A nationalist state’s affect on education is not limited to gender issues. As this report will explore, in nationalist state projects the education of women has always been considered a “national issue” and continues to be considered as such.

### **Nation-State Building and the Education of Women in Nationalist Projects**

Nira Yuval-Davis, known for her research on the relationship between nationalism

and gender, states that to observe the place that gender relations occupy in nationalist projects, it is necessary to examine the nation-state building processes.<sup>12</sup> For Yuval-Davis, in the nation-state building processes women occupy the role of biological reproducers of the nation and are seen as guardians of “culture.” Women are assigned the duty of transmitting a nationalist culture to future generations. Women must build a “nest” in a way that is specified by their culture; in other words, they are seen as reproducers of culture in nation-state building.<sup>13</sup> As they are assigned the role of cultural and biological reproducers of the nation, women are identified mainly with the “nest” and their status within the home is given prominence. Especially in modernizing nation-state building projects, women are also charged with the duty of reflecting the modernity and civilization of the nation. In a modernizing, secular nation-state building processes taking place in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, this duty has results in the introduction of a number of egalitarian legal regulations and in placing special emphasis on women’s education and on their visibility in the public sphere. There is no doubt that legal reform and the importance placed on women’s education arose from the needs of a nationalist building project rather than from the ideal of benefiting women or of gender equality, and hence the consequences of such reforms did not serve to substantially increase gender equality. The efforts made in Turkey during the Republic’s early years that advocated for women’s education and for women to be included in the professional world can also be evaluated within this context.

The expectation that women reflect the nation’s modernity is not the only reason behind the importance placed on the education of women in nationalist nation-state building projects. Great importance has been attached to the education of women in parallel to the role that education plays in the nation building process. Educational curricula have been prepared and included in the education system with the aim of ensuring that men and women internalize the roles and duties required by the nationalist project. Within nation-state building processes, which endeavor to define national identity on the basis of a single ethnic nucleus, education is assigned another function as well: assimilation. Assimilation aims to merge the plurality that society presents in terms of languages, cultures and ethnicities within a single national identity. Policies of assimilation via education have accompanied cultural and linguistic standardization policies implemented via legal and demographic tools. In textbooks and school curricula nations are generally depicted as homogenous people who speak the same language and share the same religious beliefs (in addition to being combative and masculine).

Turkey has undergone a process very similar to the one described above. Legal, cultural and political practices that aim to create a “single language,” a “single culture” and a “single nation” have been accompanied by a “national” education program that disregards all ethnicities other than the Turkish ethnic group and all languages and cultures other than the Turkish language and culture. The Turkish “national” education program, imbued with nationalist and militaristic

***While “national” cultures depict men as active subjects and assign them leadership roles in society, they depict women as passive subjects whose role in the nation is that of domestic caretaker, emotional vessel and private being.***

elements, has also been shaped as a gendered education system. As mentioned at the beginning of this study, girls and women, the poor, and communities whose languages are not officially recognized by the state are among those who are most affected by these policies.<sup>14</sup> Thus, from these groups' point of view, there appears to be a significant link between language and gender inequality. As previously mentioned, while "national" cultures depict men as active subjects and assign them leadership roles in society, they depict women as passive subjects whose role in the nation is that of domestic caretaker, emotional vessel and private being.

### **Nation-States and Internationally Supported Campaigns**

As discussed above, the education of women and girls and the content of educational materials are part of a nation-state building process which endeavors to create a homogenous identity. Despite the nation-building process having started several decades ago, the education of women and girls continues to be a "national" issue for the state. Furthermore, due to global capitalism wanting to include women in the workforce as cheap labor, the education of women and girls has now become an issue for both national and international organizations.

Current globalization movements and changing social conditions require that women be assigned new roles in economic and social relations. Thus, the education provided to both boys and girls by nation-states has changed. Through the organization of campaigns such as Education for All, the inclusion of girls in education has been emphasized and attempts have been made to provide women with education through means such as literacy courses. Although such campaigns do result in a relative rise in the schooling rate of girls (especially in certain regions), they have neither problematized the power relations that constitute an obstacle to women's and girls' right to obtain education nor produced a change in the gendered character of the official systems of education. Therefore, these programs have produced a relative increase in girls' schooling rates, but they have not resulted in systemic change that would sufficiently empower girls to change their situation. Some of these campaigns have actually resulted in the continuation of homogenizing policies because they have ignored how girls and boys from different socio-economic levels or different religious and ethnic communities are affected by these policies.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, it is clear that it would be misleading to reach any conclusions regarding gender and mother tongue education simply on the basis of evidence such as schooling rates without taking into consideration that power relations based on ethnic and class differences and other types of social inequality that reproduce educational inequalities. When states and international non-governmental organizations reduce educational data on girls and boys to statistics and ignore other types of analyses, it creates a type of "gender blindness" and prevents the critical questioning of state policies on issues such as educational institutions, gendered dimensions of power, and division of labor.<sup>16</sup>

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On the other hand, the fact that women are considered carriers of national culture and to transmit it to the next generations does not mean that they become the only target of assimilationist nation-states endeavoring to create a single, unitary national identity. Especially linguistic minorities who show resistance to nation-states' projects to create linguistically homogeneous societies are seen as assigning women the sole responsibility to protect their language and positioning women as guardians of their mother tongue. In this situation, women are expected to not to learn the language of the dominant group and to use only their mother tongue. However, the only way for women to benefit from educational opportunities in such environments is to learn the dominant language. This situation sometimes results in a tension within communities that show resistance to nationalist programs, because women within the resistant community are expected to transmit the community's mother tongue to the next generations, but they also must survive within the dominant system, which necessitates that women learn and use its language.

### **Gender and Mother Tongue**

In many countries around the world, there are socio-economic and cultural obstacles to girls' right to obtain formal education. These obstacles are not limited to hindering girls' access to education. Girls who are able to begin school and receive their primary education sometimes encounter significant problems in the further stages of their schooling. Although many studies have been conducted on these obstacles and many academic publications have dealt with this issue, the issue of mother tongue-based education has not been given sufficient emphasis. Although most studies based on statistical data demonstrate that girls are less able than boys to benefit from education, these studies generally cite causes such as family attitudes, cultural and religious tenets, and poverty as responsible for women not obtaining an education at the same rate as men. Few studies have been conducted that examine the overlap among factors related to language and gender in educational environments. The previously mentioned *Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching*,<sup>17</sup> prepared by Carol Benson for UNESCO, constitutes a rare exception in this field. In her paper, written to overcome this shortcoming, Benson demonstrates that in communities whose mother tongue is different from the language of instruction, girls are subject to more inequality and discrimination. According to the conclusions that Benson compiled from a number of studies, among children who have to attend school where the language of education is different from their mother tongue, it is more difficult for girls to develop linguistic competence in the language used at school because they spend the majority of their time outside of school at home doing household chores. Moreover, some studies show that boys are generally permitted to talk in classroom activities and girls are generally not encouraged to speak.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, girls are generally less exposed than boys to the dominant language and they are not able to learn the dominant language well enough to follow along in classes. According to the studies cited by Benson, in mother

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tongue-based bilingual schools, girls attend school more regularly, are known as successful students, and obtain higher scores on academic achievement tests. Furthermore, cases of students failing class or dropping out are encountered much less often among students that attend mother tongue-based bilingual schools. According to Benson's findings, mother tongue-based bilingual education significantly increases girls' access to educational opportunities and the impact these opportunities have on their lives.

There are field work-based research in the international literature which shows parallelism to what Benson writes and similar to the situation of Kurdish girls in Turkey. For example, according to a research conducted on the educational experiences of girls belonging to ethnic minorities in Vietnam who do not speak Vietnamese,<sup>19</sup> girls state they like school, but that because they cannot understand Vietnamese, which is the only language used in education, they are not able to learn the information presented in lessons and they therefore do not want to continue attending school. Furthermore, the study also reports that many students experience serious pronunciation problems in the dominant language and find it difficult to understand the most fundamental concepts; and that teachers, who do not speak the students' language, feel helpless and are not able to help these students. On the other hand, the dominant public opinion in Vietnam believes that the Vietnamese educational system does not teach Vietnamese well enough to aid students' academic development and suggests more teaching of the dominant language, Vietnamese, instead of bringing the students' mother tongues in education. The study shows that one of the main reasons why girls do not have competence in the dominant language is that they are not given opportunities to utilize their language skills outside of school. Furthermore, because these minority cultures see boys as needing to learn Vietnamese in order to obtain a job, boys are encouraged to attend school. Vietnamese culture and the minority cultures in Vietnam do not encourage girls to work outside the homes. The fact that Vietnamese is also the language of Vietnam's economy confers privilege on it as a language and identity. Consequently girls from minority communities are disadvantaged twice over.

On the one hand, some families want their daughters to learn their mother tongue, but also believe that it is necessary for them to learn Vietnamese. Families therefore request that teachers use both their mother tongue and Vietnamese in the education of the children and show great respect to the teachers who speak their mother tongue in addition to Vietnamese.

In Vietnam, where many minority groups suffer extreme poverty, there is a major conflict between cultural expectations and needs on the one hand and economic and political conditions on the other. This state of affairs results in severe inequality for girls whose mother tongue is different from the language of education and economic life. According to researchers, the dominant discourse in education erroneously problematizes the fact that girls from minority groups

***The dominant discourse in education erroneously problematizes the fact that girls from minority groups do not speak Vietnamese well, and rather than seeking a solution through a multilingual curriculum, it emphasizes that Vietnamese needs to be taught at an earlier age and that thus a pre-school curricula needs to be developed and instituted.***

do not speak Vietnamese well, and rather than seeking a solution through a multilingual curriculum, it emphasizes that Vietnamese needs to be taught at an earlier age and that thus a pre-school curricula needs to be developed and instituted. On the other hand, other research asserts that in order to bring about a radical improvement in the circumstances of girls, curricula needs to be based in their mother tongues that also includes Vietnamese language classes.

The Vietnamese Constitution states that all communities have the right to use their mother tongue in education and to learn a second language. However, neither policies nor practices in schools reflect this principle.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, in addition to the language barrier, minority communities state that the official educational curriculum does not respond to their cultural, economic and gender-based needs. Thus, according to many students and parents, education in Vietnam is of no use to them other than helping them to become literate and learn basic math skills.

Although no studies based on gender and mother tongue-based education have been conducted in Turkey, studies carried out on the educational experience of Kurdish children, without taking into consideration gender differences and debates taking place in a number of platforms provide clues on the existing situation in Turkey which is comparable to the situation in Vietnam.<sup>21</sup> This report tries to examine this situation in more detail. However, it first examines some theoretical approaches used frequently in the literature regarding the solution to gender inequality in education to see whether such approaches are reflected in the Turkish case.

### **Theoretical Approaches to Gender Inequality in Education**

Within the literature on gender and education, there are many debates and a variety of approaches, ranging from modernists to radical feminists to poststructuralists and postcolonial theories. Among these theoretical approaches, there are three that bring depth to debates regarding the campaigns held in Turkey, the discourses advocated for, and the schooling of Kurdish girls: the modernist/liberal approach, the poststructuralist/postmodern approach, and the postcolonial approach.<sup>22</sup> These approaches are outlined briefly below and their assumptions concerning education and gender are noted.

Some of the main concepts frequently referred in the modernist literature concerning gender and education are equality of opportunity, meritocracy and universal rights. This approach advocates for the equality of opportunity among girls and boys, women and men. Behind this approach lies the assumption that through certain evolutionary processes, communities change from primitivism to complexity and that these processes contain certain types of universal knowledge and relations. The duty of education, in parallel to that of families, the legal system and other state organizations, is to accelerate these processes and

***Modernist approach assumed that communities and people were homogeneous and thus wittingly or unwittingly contributed to the invisibility of said people and to assimilationist policies.***

to ensure that ideals thought to be universal are transmitted from generation to generation. In doing so, it is asserted that equality of opportunity needs to be provided to all and that in order to reach certain educational levels it is necessary to emphasize certain skills and competences. Thus, the knowledge regarding such subjects as literacy, mathematics, science, and social sciences is universal across communities and cultures. The state's first duty is to ensure productivity and justice in educational processes and every citizen should be equal before the law. According to those who advocate for this approach, students' level of success should depend on meritocratic ideals which attribute academic development to the individuals' own efforts, although this belief is not always explicitly expressed. Thus, the achievement of equality for students of different social groups is advocated without regard to their social class, ethnicity, race or gender. Accordingly, students from the said minority communities should be able to achieve the same educational level as students who are from the dominant community in society.

***Mimicry consists of copying and reproducing language, culture, behavior and thought forms in ways that are very similar, though not identical, to those of the colonizers.***

From such a departure point in the 1970s, international non-governmental organizations realized that some groups are more disadvantaged than the others by looking at the statistics. Such an approach was brought to the public attention only in 1990s in Turkey. The statistics showed meant that women and minority communities constitute the most important of these disadvantageous groups. Following this, a variety of campaigns were organized for women and minority communities with the support of international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. These campaigns frequently emphasized "the benefits of schooling of girls." Accordingly, girls who attend school were supposed to earn higher wages, be of major benefit to the country's economy, and raise smaller, healthier, and better educated families. Through this process, women were also supposed to be empowered. Examples of such discourse can be seen in a number of campaigns.<sup>23</sup>

According to poststructuralist/postmodern approaches, modernist approach assumed that communities and people were homogeneous and thus wittingly or unwittingly contributed to the invisibility of said people and to assimilationist policies. Alternatively, postmodern/ poststructuralist approaches preferred highlighting such concepts as diversity, identity, power, knowledge analysis, and subjectivity. The poststructuralist approach drew strength from the development of feminist critiques, uncovering of gendered policies and practices in schools, the struggle of Black community in the USA for citizenship rights and also postcolonial people's demands for rights.<sup>24</sup> In these cases, the category of "diversity" has made it possible to establish that the dominant definition of citizenship is built on the concept of the "white Western man." The term "diversity" has therefore played an important role in the deciphering of the discrimination and inequality that women, Black community and postcolonial communities are subject to, as it has revealed that the construction of such identities does not reflect the reality of inter-community and intra-community experiences, and that while some identities are empowered, others are rendered invisible.

Different from the modernist and poststructuralist approaches, the postcolonial approach focuses on the physical, psychological, academic and cultural influences that colonies have exercised on both the colonialists and the colonized and then subjects this influence to a critical view. This approach examines not only postcolonial influences but also colonialist discourses and practices that remain present today. Postcolonial approaches to educational inequality attribute equality to the consequences of colonialism and focus on decreasing inequality by elucidating the roles individuals and communities can play in shaping more egalitarian global or local relations and movements. The postcolonial approach in education examines how educational curricula, textbooks, teacher training programs, educational discourses and practices reproduce inequality and hierarchies, including those that are gender-based. From this point of view, it is possible to talk about points common to both the postcolonial and poststructuralist approaches. The most prominent difference, however, consists of the critical stance that the postcolonial approach takes towards Western-centric discourses, which are present in some of the poststructuralist discourses as well.

The concept of mimicry, brought to literature by Homi Bhabha, a postcolonial theorist, is an important tool of analysis in order to understand the effects that colonialism has on the colonized.<sup>25</sup> In its simplest form, mimicry is “the desire to be the other.” According to Bhabha, under the influence of colonialism, mimicry consists of copying and reproducing language, culture, behavior and thought forms in ways that are very similar, though not identical, to those of the colonizers. However, according to Bhabha this mimicry contains both repetition and diversity; in other words, when certain forms are repeated, they emerge with some differences. By causing significant transformations, mimicry accelerates assimilation in the spreading of colonialist influence and in pre-colonialist situations. The most obvious example of this can be seen in the transformation of linguistic habits in favor of the dominant language and the disappearance of mother tongue/s in said individuals or communities.

***It covered the Kurdish provinces where—in terms of language usage—Kurdish is spoken more widely than Turkish.***

### **Approaches to Girls’ Schooling in Turkey**

In Turkey the issue of gender inequality in education is mainly considered in the context of abolishing illiteracy among girls and increasing the rate of schooling among girls at all levels of education, beginning with primary education. The social class dimension of gender inequality in education and its relationship with the power relations in society is generally not taken into consideration in the public or academic discussions. Especially at the primary school level, most of the studies conducted on gender provide statistical information on subjects like literacy rates, school attendance, academic success and post-school employment possibilities. Such statistics tell us that girls and women are at a disadvantage in comparison to boys and state that there is an inequality.<sup>26</sup> But since the socio-economic and political factors behind the inequality in question are disregarded, there is no intention to abolish these factors. Thus, it is not possible to prepare

or realize programs to achieve numerical targets such as “100% schooling in primary education,” a target that is supposed to encourage programs that ensure 100% of children in Turkey receive a primary school education. In fact, the consecutive Turkish governments do not have a comprehensive plan to fulfill their commitment to the international treaties on education signed to abolish gender inequality in education. Campaigns like “Baba beni okula gönder” [Dad, send me to school], “Haydi Kızlar Okula” [Come On Girls, Let’s Go To School] and “Kardelenler” [Snowdrops], carried out by governmental and non-governmental organizations and financed partly by international funds, are presented as ways to fulfill such targets. Such campaigns, which generally employ modernist, liberal and at times colonial arguments, deserve to be analyzed apart from this study. However, people and organizations that adopt an egalitarian, gender-sensitive, and democratic approach to increasing school enrollment that is independent of the above campaigns or that views these campaigns in a critical manner are only occasionally able to share their perspectives.

***The aim of ensuring that Kurdish children (and girls in particular attend school), is not to help Kurdish children improve their communities, but rather to encourage Kurdish children to be ashamed of their past and reject it.***

In the next section, this report will examine some of these campaigns and critical approaches. But before this examination, this research should clarify that since the foundation of the republic, the education of girls whose mother tongue is not Turkish has always been given special emphasis, especially in the implementation of the homogeneous national identity building process, or, in other words, as part of assimilation policies.<sup>27</sup> It is also necessary to specify that the campaigns examined below target girls in the Kurdish region and the other regions where mother tongues other than Turkish are widely spoken.

### **Come On Girls, Let’s Go To School, but to Which School?**

Known as Haydi Kızlar Okula, or Come On Girls, Let’s Go To School, is one of the most prominent campaigns, utilizing mainly modernist ideas, encouraging parents to send their daughters to school in Turkey. It is important to examine the Come On Girls, Let’s Go To School campaign in detail since it has received significant support both from public funds and from non-governmental organizations in Turkey and abroad.

The campaign was carried out through a collaboration between the Turkish Ministry of National Education and UNICEF, with the following pledge: *to achieve 100% schooling among elementary-aged girls (6-14 years of age) who have been excluded from the education system, have dropped out of school or are not attending school regularly, and to achieve gender equality in education.*<sup>28</sup> The campaign, which received the support of many local non-governmental organizations as well, has been widely featured in the mainstream media. An extensive visual and written promotional campaign was organized and teacher handbooks, promotional posters, guidebooks, promotional films and logos were prepared employing funds from UNICEF and resources from the Ministry of National Education.

It is quite clear that Kurdish girls are the main target of this campaign. The campaign was first launched in 2003 in Van, with the endorsement of Hüseyin Çelik, then Minister of National Education. Initially it covered the Kurdish provinces where—in terms of language usage—Kurdish is spoken more widely than Turkish.<sup>29</sup> The second stage of the campaign, with a few exceptions, was conducted in Kurdish provinces where there is significant linguistic and cultural diversity, but where the Kurdish population still constitutes the majority, as well as in Western provinces that receive high numbers of Kurdish migrants.<sup>30</sup> The view that the campaign targets Kurdish girls is supported by the fact that all the girls and the women in the photographs used on the campaign's written and visual media, as well as in the websites of the campaign's components, are Kurdish.<sup>31</sup> The choice of Kurdish girls as targets is understandable for many reasons; but as this report demonstrates below, it cannot be said that these reasons exclusively aim to empower either girls in particular or Kurds in general.

One of the issues most emphasized throughout the campaign was that schooling of girls is more related to the society than schooling of boys. For example, the following statement by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, cited on the campaign's website, is self-explanatory:

*While the education of boys is of concern only to the boys themselves, the education of girls is of concern to their family, too. When children grow, they receive their education from their mothers. The education of women is important in terms of the education they will provide in future to their children.<sup>32</sup>*

It is clear from this example that transmitting the familial culture, shaped mainly by the state's ideology, to girls through education is seen as a necessity, and that girls are therefore assigned the role of transmitting it. And since girls are charged with very important roles concerning the future of society, it is of critical importance that they are educated in line with the dominant ideologies. Girls who are not exposed to the state's official education are classified as children who are not sent to school by underdeveloped, ignorant fathers with a tribal mentality and thus it is emphasized that these children need to be "saved" by the state and "reintegrated into society." However, if girls are "saved" by the state, they are positioned as guardians who will maintain the state's masculine mentality, rather than individuals who will shape social perspectives. This role is in fact exactly the same as the role assigned by the new state to women when the republic was first founded.<sup>33</sup> As Nükhet Sirman states, the foundations of this approach were first laid in the early years of the republic.<sup>34</sup> This approach does not necessarily imply the inclusion of girls and women in political power and therefore in the sphere of citizenship. Moreover, the fact that schools are perceived as places where girls' personal experiences are rendered completely insignificant and where their community's culture's transmission is interrupted has also been disregarded.<sup>35</sup>

Another point that needs to be emphasized is that in campaigns like Come on Girls,

***Studies discussing girls' poor school attendance in relation to that of boys' school attendance through statistics gathered by state planning agencies have reached conclusions solely on the basis of these statistics, without consulting the girls who are unable or choose not to attend school, or their families, and have thus contributed to the spread of an orientalist and colonial perception within the academy.***

Let's Go to School, increasing girls' intellectual capacity and abolishing differences in the level of educational achievements is continuously emphasized, thus creating an image of attempting to rescue the girls from being "underdeveloped." This approach in fact conceals the fact that girls are "kept from development" as a result of gendered social and educational structures generally produced and continuously reproduced by the state itself. However, as also stated by Elif Ekin Akşit, it should not be forgotten that these "provincial little girls" are not passive mountain flowers that need to be "adapted to the contemporary world," but individuals worthy of respect with their own pasts and their own social and historical knowledge.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, it has been emphasized that if girls attend school for longer periods, they will be able to express themselves freely and fully realize their potential. For example, the below passage from the teachers' handbook prepared within the scope of this campaign is self-explanatory:

*Thousands of girls in this country do not attend school or are not able to do so. In other words, thousands of girls are deprived of the right to develop themselves and their surroundings, to discover new worlds, to build a future, to fulfill their dreams and stand on their own feet...<sup>37</sup>*

***Even if the idea of equality of opportunity is legitimate, it is clear that the results of these campaigns are not equal.***

However, when we think of how gendered, discriminatory and –racist especially in terms of Kurdish children, schools are, it should be said that the aim of campaigns like Come on Girls, Let's Go to School is to take control of Kurdish social and cultural spheres, where the state's ideology is currently not dominant. Thus, the aim of ensuring that Kurdish children (and girls in particular attend school), is not to help Kurdish children improve their communities, but rather to encourage Kurdish children to be ashamed of their past and reject it. In fact, studies have shown that Kurdish children who attend school are embarrassed to be Kurdish, that they perceive the Kurdish language as a burden that they need to rid themselves of, that they are embarrassed of their families, and that they consider themselves to be "underdeveloped" as a people.<sup>38</sup>

These campaigns have also resulted in presenting Kurdish fathers who do not send their children to school as "men with a tribal mentality who exploit their children." Almost all media coverage emphasizes that cultural characteristics and family structure are the primary reasons why girls are not sent to school. Furthermore, in almost all the campaign's photographs, Kurdish people, and fathers in particular, are prominent. Such images have perpetuated a culturally orientalist discourse while invisibilizing the educational, linguistic and cultural barriers the state produces that hinder Kurdish girls' school attendance. The mainstream academic world in Turkey and abroad has allowed these orientalist approaches to continue, allowing the state to escape culpability for its actions by employing a number of statistics and indicators that support the state's perception. Studies discussing girls' poor school attendance in relation to that of boys' school

attendance through statistics gathered by state planning agencies have reached conclusions solely on the basis of these statistics, without consulting the girls who are unable or choose not to attend school, or their families, and have thus contributed to the spread of an orientalist and colonial perception within the academy.<sup>39</sup> However, there are some studies which indicate that Kurdish parents endeavor to send their children to school in spite of all the discrimination they experience and the inequality they are subject to at school, and that most believe that education constitutes a significant way to escape the poverty they suffer in their community.<sup>40</sup>

### **Schooling of Girls and Mother Tongue**

As stated before, the target audience of campaigns like Come on Girls, Let's Go to School is Kurdish girls, but the reason for targeting Kurdish girls is not only because Kurdish girls have low school registration and attendance rates. Such campaigns enunciate the reasons why Kurdish girls do not attend school as follows:

*Issues arising from their families' low socio-economic and educational levels, the shortage of schools and private teaching institutions, difficulties arising from mobile education, the lack of emphasis on the education of girls and women within the traditional family structure.<sup>41</sup>*

Some or all of the reasons cited may be considered as legitimate reasons why girls are not able to attend school, but the fact that the language of instruction in schools and the children's mother tongue are different constitutes a significant factor contributing to children's inability to begin school or to having to drop out shortly after having begun attending school. Reports completely disregard this issue.<sup>42</sup> According to a statistical study carried out by the Population Studies Institute at Hacettepe University,<sup>43</sup> school registration and attendance rates are lowest for children in general and for girls in particular in Kurdish cities where Kurdish is spoken mostly. In parallel to the conclusions reached by studies conducted in many countries, some of the studies carried out in Turkey<sup>44</sup> indicate that the current lack of overlap between the language of instruction and the students' mother tongue constitutes a significant factor in school attendance rates among Kurdish students. Thus, it is clear that the following statements taken from the official campaign website do not reflect the truth:

*The education of girls means to ensure access to quality education for all children who are deprived of the right to education, with special emphasis on girls. This requires not only an increase in the number of educational opportunities for girls, but also the systematic abolition of all obstacles that prevent girls from attending school and achieving success at school.<sup>45</sup>*

When campaigns like Come on Girls, Let's Go to School are organized, it is not

***The overlap between inequality and the lack of access to mother tongue based education for many underprivileged communities has still not been given the academic and political interest it deserves.***

a coincidence that the mother tongue issue is consciously disregarded, for when the state aims for Kurdish girls to attend school, teaching them Turkish is among the main roles that the state assigns education. The primary reason for this is, as stated by a number of Kurdish institutions and in the Kurdish media when such campaigns were first launched,<sup>46</sup> to teach Kurdish girls Turkish and ensure that Turkish--not Kurdish--becomes the first language of the future generations. In other words, these campaigns aim to ensure linguistic and cultural assimilation.<sup>47</sup> That is why Kurdish girls, who for many years have been systematically excluded from education by the state, have been exhorted more than others in these campaigns. Furthermore, during these campaigns families that had not previously sent their children to school were persuaded to do so through financial support and, in some cases, through threats. In the same vein, girls were awarded more scholarships than boys. There may be some who believe that actions of this sort are meant to ensure equality and that these campaigns are conducted in good faith. But in spite of the very frequent use of the concept of “equality of opportunity” throughout these campaigns, the failure to problematize the language of education indicates that language-based discrimination in the education system is disregarded and that these actions and scholarships are not independent of the dominant state’s approach. Moreover, even if the idea of equality of opportunity is legitimate, it is clear that the results of these campaigns are not equal.

Apart from the Come on Girls, Let’s Go to School campaign, it is possible to observe similar approaches in reports prepared by some other national or international non-governmental agencies. For example, the report entitled İkinci Kadın Devrimi: Feminizm, İslam ve Türkiye Demokrasisinin Olgunlaşması [The Second Women’s Revolution: Feminism, Islam and the Maturity of Democracy in Turkey],<sup>48</sup> by the European Stability Initiative, states that as of 2001 women have reached a quite advanced status in Turkey and provides statistical data as support for their claim. This data is drawn from fields such as law (legal amendments) and the access of girls to education. Nevertheless, the report states that Turkey is still well behind other countries and occupies 105th place among 115 countries in terms of gender differences. The report recommends that, in order to overcome this situation, society should aim to increase opportunities for girls from rural areas to attend school. But the report did not explicitly define the “rural areas” where girls are not able to register or attend school as the Kurdish region and it did not refer to the fact that schooling rates are affected by linguistic, economic, and political inequality. This situation does not arise because the organization in question perceives Turkey as an ethnically and linguistically homogeneous country. In fact, in the section entitled Van Kadınları [The Women of Van], the report emphasizes honor killings and states that it is a phenomenon widespread among Kurds. Through such actions, this organization and others like it thus ignore the multiple forms of violence employed by the state and produce a colonialist discourse that is further developed by implicitly stating that violence

***Theories and research methods can play an important role both in raising awareness concerning the educational experiences of Kurdish students, particularly girls, through making connections with the power relations as well as strengthening the campaigns on this issue.***

is inherent to Kurdish culture. Thus, it is clear that those who prepared these reports adopted a colonialist discourse without attempting to understand the experiences of Kurds in general and Kurdish women and girls in particular.

Another report focusing on the same issue is *Eğitimde ve Toplumsal Katılımda Cinsiyet Eşitliğinin Sağlanması* [The Achievement of Gender Equality in Education and Community Involvement Project], prepared jointly by Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı (Mother and Child Education Foundation, AÇEV), Kadın Adayları Destekleme ve Eğitim Derneği (Association for the Support of Women Candidates, KADER) and Eğitim Reformu Girişimi (Education Reform Initiative, ERG).<sup>49</sup> This report states that its aim is to develop a community-centered model to reduce gender inequality in primary education; to reduce the number of illiterate women and to increase the participation of women in decision-making mechanisms in the private and public sphere. Furthermore, it desires to contribute to the development of local and national policies aiming to achieve gender equality in education. Many activities, such as informational seminars for parents and the community, opportunities for community discussions, literacy programs for adults, and citizenship training seminars were organized throughout the campaign and a large number of people in the community participated. These activities constitute significant developments in terms of recognizing education and gender inequality in Turkey as serious issues. Moreover, unlike many previous campaigns, this project's website contained information concerning the main social and economic reasons behind inequality. Similarly, it is significant that in this report the presence of a strong central government and the lack of the mother tongue language education were cited among the reasons for Kurdish girls not attending school. Furthermore, other reports, which do not point out the need for mother tongue-based multilingual education, consider mother-tongue based education a problem and conclude that "it is necessary to start support programs for students who do not speak Turkish"<sup>50</sup> without making it whether these "support programs" mean that education in Kurdish would be provided or whether they would merely constitute additional education in Turkish. This campaign also proposed abolishing textbooks that portray situations of gender inequality as acceptable. Unfortunately, it remains unclear to what extent, if any, such recommendations will be implemented, or if they would also take into account socio-cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the effect that such activities have on the communities in question and what meanings members of the minority community attach to such proposals has not yet been examined.

Some of the criticism brought in the literature mentioned above utilizes modernist, liberal and colonial approaches that, as mentioned, are frequently employed in campaigns and academic studies on gender in education are influential in Turkey. Such studies can, in some ways, contribute to raising awareness about gender-based problems and help in overcoming gender inequality. For instance, recent criticism of these campaigns' visual materials and of textbooks in Turkey has gained

*In some ways, contribute to raising awareness about gender-based problems and help in overcoming gender inequality.*

a small amount of influence and now more care is exercised in the preparation of such materials. But, ultimately, the overlap between inequality and the lack of access to mother tongue based education for many underprivileged communities has still not been given the academic and political interest it deserves.

On the other hand, some other works have also been conducted with a more critical view on how gender functions in relation to mother tongue language issues in the context of education. One such debate can be seen in Elif Ekin Akşit's article entitled "Anadilde Eğitim ve Kadınlar" [Education in the Mother Tongue and Women].<sup>52</sup> Akşit investigates how the nationalist ideology constructed gender roles and examines women's role in public education. Akşit claims that it is important that women continue to dream of alternatives independently of those roles and says that the resistance and independent thoughts generated by women can be a force that no policy maker could ever foresee. The author states that if the parties opposed to mother tongue-based education would take the knowledge of women into consideration in their policy making, not only women, but also each and every individual, would be liberated.

***Whether they are educated or not, men are more able to achieve bilingualism at least to an extent, whereas women generally become monolingual in Turkish if they are educated and monolingual in Kurdish if they did not participate in public education.***

Eğitim-Sen [Education and Science Workers' Union] is also among the organizations that display a critical approach in its research on debates regarding gender in the context of education. Eğitim-Sen organizes a variety of campaigns in the field of education. These campaigns include providing seminars on issues of gender in education and preparing reports that endeavor to establish a "commission on equality" within the Ministry of National Education; advocating to include compulsory courses on "gender" in the undergraduate programs of education faculties; lobbying to include the subject of "gender" in the ministry's in-service training programs; working to purge textbooks and materials at all levels and in all curriculums of gendered references and to include courses and subjects on gender at all levels of education; working to develop support and policies that provide incentives for girls and women to benefit from their education; working to create scholarship opportunities for girls and working to open childcare centers in areas with a high concentration of schools.<sup>53</sup>

Taking into consideration these proposals and developing policies and practices that are in parallel with these proposals will play an important role in decreasing gender inequality, both in the context of education and within the wider society. But Eğitim-Sen's research on gender issues does not yet take into account variables addressing mother tongue language issues. While it is obvious that Eğitim-Sen strives for the use of different mother tongues in education in Turkey, one reason they have not addressed this subject in their demands is likely that there is not yet a sufficient number of empirical studies in this field and debates of this kind have not yet gained sufficient prominence.

Looking at the research discussed above and in similar studies, it is clear that the modernist and liberal approaches constitute the basis of many organizations' and

individuals' research. It is also possible to see some critical research benefitting from the analytic tools of the poststructuralist literature referring to identity and subjectivity. However, we can also see that debates on how gender functions in Turkey in the context of education do not sufficiently incorporate postcolonial criticism. This is likely due to the fact that Turkish academia has been, to a large extent, apoliticalized, and that postcolonial literature is not well-known in Turkey. Furthermore, many of the main theoretical texts in the field of postcolonial studies have not yet been translated into Turkish or Kurdish.<sup>54</sup> However, some rare examples of such arguments can be found in Kurdish newspapers and magazines as well as public demonstrations.<sup>55</sup> Yet, in the future academic studies employing poststructuralist and postcolonial theories and research methods can play an important role both in raising awareness concerning the educational experiences of Kurdish students, particularly girls, through making connections with the power relations as well as strengthening the campaigns on this issue.

The discussions above have focused on discourses employed by different approaches to schooling of girls, especially Kurdish girls. Yet, it is crucial to examine how these discourses affect Kurdish girls, analyze how they shape their linguistic experiences in order to prevent invisibilization of Kurdish girls' educational and linguistic experiences as opposed to the prevalent studies under the influence of the dominant discourses. There is not any research examining this issue following such a methodological and theoretical line. However, examining the observations below without making rigorous generalizations can be considered a step in addressing such concerns.

### **Kurdish and Gender**

Many Kurdish children are not able to attend school for a number of reasons, principally because of poverty and the discriminatory structure of the education system, but also because of the lack of schools and teachers, the presence of violence and harassment in the school environment, and their families' indifference. When, due to poverty, Kurdish families are faced with the choice of which of their children to send to school, they generally choose to send their male children. In some cases, Kurdish girls are not sent to school due to perceived religious constraints. And sometimes, even if girls are sent to elementary school, they are not permitted to further their education by attending high school or university, either because of the schools' educational policies or because of pressure from their families. Based on the discussions from the case study of Vietnam mentioned before and observations from the teacher workshops organized by DISA, even when girls are able to attend school and further their education it is clear that girls are still disadvantaged due to the fact that the language of instruction is not their mother tongue. In regions where Kurdish is the language used predominantly within families and for social relations, girls have fewer opportunities than boys in learning Turkish before beginning school. Although it is not possible yet to discuss this issue on the basis of comprehensive

***People who have been subject to discrimination abandon the characteristics of minority communities that are the subject of the discrimination and to begin "mimic" the forms of behavior and thoughts of the dominant community.***

empirical data, it would not be erroneous or unfounded to say that the gender roles assigned to girls and boys in society play an important role in perpetuating this situation.

Carrying out the field research for the study entitled *Scar of Tongue*,<sup>56</sup> we, as DISA, encountered a situation that was similar to many of the observations described above. As part of that research, researchers identified and conducted interviews with Kurdish students, Kurdish teachers who can speak Kurdish, teachers who did not speak Kurdish but taught Kurdish students, and parents. We conducted interviews with thirteen students who attended universities and were able to speak Kurdish, only one was a woman. Among the interviews with Kurdish teachers, there were only two women. Also the criteria for selecting parents with whom to conduct interviews was that they should not be able to speak Turkish, yet we realized that all of the fathers spoke at least some Turkish, while the mothers were only able to speak Kurdish. Although we endeavored to achieve a balanced gender distribution in the groups, the situation did not allow for this to happen. Thus, the researchers concluded that whether they are educated or not, men are more able to achieve bilingualism at least to an extent, whereas women generally become monolingual in Turkish if they are educated and monolingual in Kurdish if they did not participate in public education. In other words, men are bilingual because of their education, profession, and public sphere participation. But from the perspective of women, these situations constitute significantly different variables. Thus, it is crucial to examine why such a situation occurs.

***The fact that, in respect to Kurdish boys, girls become estranged from Kurdish faster and embrace Turkish faster can be linked to two main reasons: external imposition and internal pressure.***

Although it would be erroneous to make sweeping generalizations solely on the basis of such observations without first conducting a comprehensive empirical study, the existing situation presents clues as to why and how among Kurdish children who can attend school and are able to further their education, girls tend to stop speaking Kurdish, whereas boys seem to be more successful in preserving their mother tongue. On the other hand, according to the observations of teachers who attended the teacher workshops, among those not attending to school, Kurdish girls and women are better able to preserve their language skills in Kurdish while men generally become bilingual. When we consider this situation in conjunction with the debate on “mimicry,” referred to in the section of approaches, we can reach the conclusion that these first observations may not be completely erroneous. As stated also by Homi Bhabha, over time, people who have been subject to discrimination abandon the characteristics of minority communities that are the subject of the discrimination and to begin to “mimic” the forms of behavior and thoughts of the dominant community. This includes forgetting ones mother tongue and speaking the dominant language only or mostly. At this point, one may legitimately question why it is girls in particular who adopt this “mimicry.” Of course boys, too, aspire to be a part of the dominant culture and thus forget their mother tongue. One cannot therefore say that the act “mimicry” is limited only to girls. But the fact that girls are affected more deeply by this situation arises from gender roles, which is a prominent aspect of language use as discussed above.

The fact that, in respect to Kurdish boys, girls become estranged from Kurdish faster and embrace Turkish faster can be linked to two main reasons: external imposition and internal pressure.

External impositions include the dominant monolingual policies and practices in Turkey, the school experiences that cannot be considered independently from these policies and practices, and representations in the media and their influence. While the dominant ideology whispers that two or more languages may not be used simultaneously and that there is only space for one language--in other words, it imposes monolingualism as a rule<sup>57</sup> --it also promises individuals a legitimate place in the public sphere only if they learn Turkish. Thus, through this mechanism and through the influence of mainstream television programs, Kurdish girls may aspire to attend school, abandoning their mother tongues as soon as possible, and embrace Turkish as their only way out. Moreover, after they begin school, as a result of a variety of factors they may conform more readily to the lessons than boys, they may believe that they must be successful, and they may develop an idea that in order to be successful, they need to assimilate into the education system as soon as possible.

On the other hand, internal pressure can be explained as the discrimination within the family favoring boys and dependency upon men. This pressure, which should not be considered as independent from the dominant state policies and from patriarchy, has severely restricted the physical areas within which girls can move freely, and as a result girls find themselves disadvantaged in comparison to boys. Thus, however egalitarian, authoritarian, and discriminatory educational activities may be, they still constitute a way for many girls to escape the pressure brought by their families and surroundings. Therefore, manipulating this kind of a pressure, external imposition argues that Kurdishness is responsible for this cycle and that it is limited to Kurds only; and points to fathers' responsibility for these situations and sends the message to girls that the only way to escape their circumstances is to become educated and learn Turkish. In this sense, it is extremely noteworthy that the names of campaigns such as Father Send Me to School and the others evoke this mentality.

External imposition and internal pressure are experienced particularly strongly among girls and women who have migrated or have been forcefully displaced. The fact that Turkish is the only language of communication in the communities they find themselves in results in further ostracization at school, in work places, and in social life that arises because they are Kurdish speakers. The study entitled *Ne Değişti?* [What Has Changed?] by Handan Çağlayan, Şemsa Özar and Ayşe Tepe Doğan, is an important study that presents concrete examples of this situation. The authors state that "women and girls who are subjected to forced displacement experience gender discrimination, as well as discrimination based on region, ethnic origin and language/accent."<sup>58</sup> Empirical data indicates that, apart from the social and legal obstacles present to using Kurdish in the public sphere, and

***Kurdish girls may aspire to attend school, abandoning their mother tongues as soon as possible, and embrace Turkish as their only way out.***

difficult living conditions, such as domestic violence and dependence on men, women and girls endeavor to learn the language of the place they migrate to with the expectation of minimizing the ostracization and discrimination that they experience.<sup>59</sup> For women and girls, learning Turkish opens up opportunities such as getting out of home, lessening patriarchal supervision, establishing relations with the external world independently from men, and working and earning an income.<sup>60</sup> The research data shows that through all these processes, Kurdish is gradually being replaced by Turkish as the spoken language and that a shift in language usage is taking place between generations.

Due to all these factors, some Kurdish girls who can attend school are subject to linguistic and cultural assimilation, resulting in forgetting their mother tongue in a short span of time and their endeavoring to speak Turkish without an accent. On the other hand, those who are not that “successful,” end up having to drop out from school because they are not able to learn Turkish quickly enough to follow the curriculum and other reasons. In that case, they are also not able to offer resistance to the various types of discrimination and violence that they are subject to at school and/or they do not receive sufficient support from their families. Although boys who go to school are subject to similar discrimination arising from the education system and are negatively affected by the environment of violence, fewer boys forget Kurdish and they are subject to less pressure when they speak Turkish. For example, boys are not typically pressured to speak Turkish without an accent.

There is no doubt that all of the factors mentioned above also bring about language loss on the part of Kurdish and result in the failure to transmit Kurdish to future generations, as well as assigning gender-based roles to women in relation to this issue. In an attempt to prevent language loss, some Kurdish circles advocate that only women can transmit the language to the future generations, and that if they learn Turkish this will not happen. Thus, they find the solution in not sending the girls to school. However, as mentioned before, this approach is related to women being assigned the role of guard of ethnic, national and racial differences in nationalist projects. In other words, as a response to the dominant discourse’s attempted assimilation, the new discourse tends to instrumentalize girls and women in yet another way rather than producing a struggle and critical arguments based on the perspectives, demands and needs of women.

Consequently external imposition and internal pressure can result in Kurdish girls developing a state of mind where they believe that the best way to avoid the discrimination that they are subjected to and to be accepted by society is to stop speaking Kurdish. As a result, a rapid loss of mother tongue might occur, especially among girls. In brief, we can say that gender, which cross cuts with phenomena such as poverty, discrimination in the education system, and domestic situations, is a significant variable in the existing inequalities.

***The goal of realizing an educational system and way of life that is based on mother tongue-based and aims for multilingualism would signify a vital step forward in terms of preventing the discrimination and ostracization that arises from the overlap between gender and linguistic differences in a nationalistic culture.***

### **Mother Tongue-Based Multilingualism to Prevent Gender Discrimination**

The goal of realizing an educational system and way of life that is based on mother tongue-based and aims for multilingualism would signify a vital step forward in terms of preventing the discrimination and ostracization that arises from the overlap between gender and linguistic differences in a nationalistic culture. Looking at many examples, Carol Benson suggests that it is possible to realize such a system.<sup>61</sup> To start with, girls attend school more when they are able to understand the language of instruction. Such a recommendation is supported by the previously discussed example of Vietnam. It is also observed that when the language spoken at home is used as the language of instruction in education, a greater proportion of parents become actively involved in their children's education and they want their children to pursue an education. When the opposite takes place, families are both unwilling to send their children to school and even if they do send them to school, the families do not have the opportunity to contribute to the children's education because they are excluded from it by language barriers. According to a number of studies, girls pursue their education for a longer period of time in schools where their mother tongue is used and where multilingual education is provided. In such cases, girls not only become literate, but they also draw significant benefits from the educational process and are able to achieve success in many other fields. This in turn enables them to be enthusiastic about attending school and allows their families support their educational advancement. Moreover, communities whose mother tongue is used in education believe that their children are less at risk of being harassed at school and therefore do not worry about sending their children to school. The fact that the children will be educated by teachers who speak the children's mother tongue and the probability that the teachers may belong to the population of the region or minority in question results in parents trusting the teachers. Moreover, when the children's mother tongue is used in education, teachers treat girls more equally in classroom activities. When education is provided only in the dominant language, teachers let boys speak more because it is boys who generally learn the language of instruction the fastest in the early stages of education. When the mother tongue language is used as the language of instruction, girls can express themselves better and teachers will not discriminate against girls on the basis of their language characteristics, so girls have the opportunity to participate more in the classroom. Moreover, as observed in many countries, the use of the mother tongue language in education encourages women to become teachers. This may cause girls to look to their female teachers as role models and to be more enthusiastic about attending school. A multilingual education and society would thus prevent women from being subject to linguistic discrimination and ostracization, as found in the previously mentioned study, Ne Değişti?. If anything, being multilingual results in significant advantages for women. Finally, a new discourse would be produced as an alternative to the dominant nation-state's assimilationist policies that would challenge the instrumentalization of

***A multilingual education and society would thus prevent women from being subject to linguistic discrimination and ostracization.***

women as the carriers of language, culture and ethnic “essence.” It would thus be possible to adopt an approach that considers Kurdish girls as subjects rather than the objects of a political project, as subjects who have a say over their lives and bodies, as women who wish to go to school, acquire a profession, work outside home, have the freedom to learn languages but who also might wish – or sometimes do not wish – to preserve and learn their mother tongue.

### **Suggestions in lieu of a Conclusion**

This study aimed at discussing the issue of gender inequality in education and mother tongue. We examined the relevant aspects of nation-state policies and international campaign practices. We thus demonstrated that nation-state projects instrumentalize women and that international campaigns generally emphasize concepts like equality of opportunity via modernist-liberal approaches, but that they do not problematize the inequality that girls from minority groups in particular are subject to in schools. We thus examined the discourses and practices of a number of campaigns conducted in Turkey and found that those who advocate for the schooling of girls do not generally view the subject from the perspective of girls, but rather aim for the assimilation of Kurds and utilize girls to achieve their ends using a variety of modernist and colonialist approaches. Then we endeavored to discuss the overlap between gender inequality and the use or lack of use of the mother tongue. Finally, we brought into question some non-conclusive observations on the linguistic experiences of Kurdish girls.

*Modernist-liberal and colonialist approaches should be deciphered and abandoned.*

This report asserts, on the basis of information gathered at teacher workshops and the concept of “mimicry,” that girls may forget Kurdish more rapidly than boys and that this may arise as a result of external imposition and internal pressure. As a consequence of these discussions, this report states that because of the overlap between gender inequality and mother tongue issue in the educational environment, girls may encounter significant discrimination and that a mother tongue-based multilingual education system that is conscious of gender-based concerns will play an important role in the abolishing of such discrimination.

Keeping in mind all of the above, this report makes some suggestions:

**Extensive studies should be conducted examining the overlap of gender and the use of mother tongue:** The multivariate situation including gender and mother tongue should be taken into consideration during local, national, and international campaigns and studies to be conducted.

**A gender-conscious, mother tongue-based multilingual education model should be adopted:** The development and implementation of a mother tongue-based multilingual education model in Turkey can result in significant differences in terms of abolishing the discrimination and inequality present up until now. A mother tongue-based multilingual education system has the potential to

significantly reduce the discrimination in question and to prevent the imposition of monolingualism. It may also open up new perspectives towards gender roles.

**Critical, theoretical, and methodological approaches should be employed in studies on these issues:** Rather than the technical approach of “factors preventing the education of girls” and “solutions,” which is the technique generally employed by current studies and campaigns in Turkey, critical and analytical methods based on poststructuralist and postcolonial approaches should be adopted, which would enable comprehensive and empirical analyses. One way of doing this would be not to consider Kurdish children in general and girls in particular as a single, homogeneous group, but to consider them as different from each other and diverse. In other words, studies should not disregard their multiple identities. Moreover, these differences and contrasts should be considered within the appropriate social and historical contexts.

**Modernist-liberal and colonialist approaches should be deciphered and abandoned:** The implementation of modernist-liberal and at times colonialist approaches that emerged/are advocated for in places like Western Europe and North America, where individualism is at the forefront, in Turkey and in the Kurdish region results in erroneous evaluations and demands when applied to Turkey and the Kurdish region. An individual may have the right to do something, but she may not have enough power to benefit from this right; conferring someone a right does not mean empowering her. Therefore, it is clear that even when Kurdish is used and a multilingual education is implemented, demands that are not based on or do not take into consideration gender differences may result in unequal outcomes. Thus, society should not only demand multilingual education on the basis of “equality of opportunity” and but rather should pay attention to differences in its population, placing emphasis on equal results.

1 Benson, Carol (2005), *Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching*. UNESCO, Bangkok.

2 Stromquist, Nelly P (2001), “What Poverty Does to Girls’ Education: The Intersection of Class, Gender and Policy in Latin America”, in *Education, Globalization, and Social Change*, Hugh Lauder, Phillip Brown, Jo-Anne Dillabough, and A. H. Halsey, eds. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

3 Corson, David (1993), *Language, Minority Education and Gender: Linking Social Justice and Power*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon.

4 Benson, Carol (2005), *Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching*. UNESCO, Bangkok.

5 Marshall, Harriet and Madeleine Arnot (2007), “Globalizing the School Curriculum: Gender, EFA and Global Citizenship Education”, *Gender Education & Equality in a Global Context: Conceptual Frameworks and Policy Perspectives*, Shailaja Fennell and Madeleine Arnot, eds. Routledge, London, pp. 165-180.

6 Sayılan, Fevziye (2012), *Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Eğitim [Gender and Education]*, Dipnot Yayınları, Ankara. p. 14.

7 Eğitim-Sen Merkez Kadın Sekreterliği (2009), *Hayat Bilgisi Ders Kitaplarında Toplumsal Cinsiyet Araştırması [Study on Gender in Social Studies Text Books]*, Eğitim Sen Yayınları, Ankara.

8 Kılıç, Lütfi Kırbasoğlu and Eyüp, Bircan (2011), “İlköğretim Türkçe Ders Kitaplarında Ortaya Çıkan Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerine Üzerine Bir İnceleme” [A Study on Gender Roles Emerging from Primary Education Turkish Text Books], *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Issue 6, No. 2.

9 Eğitim Sen (2010), *Ortaöğretimde Okutulan Türk Edebiyatı, Dil ve Anlatım Ders Kitaplarında Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği Araştırması* [A Study on Gender Equality in Turkish Literature, Language and Narration Text Books Used in Secondary Education], Eğitim Sen Yayınları, Ankara.

10 See [http://www.unicef.org/turkey/gr/\\_ge21jb.html](http://www.unicef.org/turkey/gr/_ge21jb.html)

11 The following constitute examples for studies in this area: Gök, Fatma, (1993), "Türkiye'de Eğitim ve Kadınlar" [Women and Education in Turkey ], Kadın Bakış Açısından 1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın [Women in Turkey in the 1980s from the Point of View of Women] İletişim Yayınevi, İstanbul, Gök, Fatma, Şirin Tekeli,; and Rifat Okçabol (1999), Öğretmen Profili Araştırma Raporu [Research Report on Teacher Profiles], Eğitim Sen, İstanbul; and also Türkoğlu, Hülya (1999), Kadın Öğretmenler ve Sendikal Katılım: Eğitim Sen Örneği [Women Teachers and Participation in Unions: the Example of the Education and Science Workers' Union], Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, unpublished MA thesis.

12 Yuval-Davis, Nira (2010), *Cinsiyet ve Millet* [Gender and Nation], (3rd edition), trans, Aysin Bektaş, İletişim Yayınevi, İstanbul.

13 Ibid, p. 214.

14 Corson, David (1993), *Language, Minority Education and Gender: Linking Social Justice and Power*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon.

15 For example, in a study on the determinants of school registration and attendance rates of girls and boys in Turkey, Aysit Tansel states that there are significant differences between the West and the East of Turkey and that girls are at a particular disadvantage in the East. However, the fact that most children in the East are either Kurdish or Arab, that their mother tongue is Kurdish or Arabic, that language is one of the main determinants of their school experiences, and that this determinant may play an important role in school enrollment and attendance has been consciously ignored. See: Tansel, Aysit (2002), "Determinants of School Attainment of Boys and Girls in Turkey: Individual, Household and Community Factors". *Economics of Education Review*, Issue 21, 5. pp. 455-470. In another study Ayşe Gündüz-Hoşgör and Jeroen Smits discuss the role of language in the socioeconomic development of Arab and Kurdish women and reached the conclusion that the women in question need to learn Turkish and that not knowing Turkish results in significant delays and underperformance in education. However, in the study the Kurdish and Arab women in question are not consulted on the reasons why they did not learn Turkish, thus, the discourse such studies employ are colonialist and serves assimilationist policies. See: Gündüz-Hoşgör, Ayşe and Jeroen Smits (2003), "Linguistic Capital: Language as a Socio-economic Resource Among Ethnic Women in Turkey, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Issue 26, p.829-853.

16 Aikman, Sheila and Unterhalter, Elaine (2005), *Beyond Access: Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender Equality in Education*, Oxfam GB, Oxford.

17 Benson, Carol (2005), *Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching*, UNESCO, Bangkok.

18 O'Gara, Chloe and Kendall, Nancy (1996), *Beyond Enrollment: A Handbook for Improving Girls' Experiences in Primary Classrooms*, Creative Associates International, Washington DC.

19 Dejaeghere, Joan and Miske, Shirley J. (2009), "Limits of and Possibilities for Equality: An Analysis of Discourse and Practices of Gendered Relations, Ethnic Traditions, and Poverty Among Non-Majority Ethnic Girls in Vietnam", *International Perspectives on Education and Society*, Issue 10. pp. 145-183.

20 Recently a bilingual education program has begun to be implemented in some schools in Vietnam with the support of UNICEF.

21 In the previously mentioned teacher workshops organized by DISA, a number of observations were made on the similarity between the situation in Vietnam and the experiences of Kurdish girls in Turkey.

22 There is no doubt that all these theoretical approaches display a number of significant variations in themselves. In other words, the theoretical approaches examined here are quite heterogeneous in nature, but for the purpose of this study, their common points of them have been taken into consideration.

23 Campaigns utilizing this discourse will be examined in later in this report.

24 Lauder, Hugh; Brown, Phillip; Dillabough, Jo-Anne and Halsey, A.H. (2006), *Education, Globalization, and Social Change*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. p. 14.

25 Bhabha, K. Homi. (1994). *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, New York. pp. 85-92.

26 Tan, Mine, (2000), *Eğitimde Kadın Erkek Eşitliği ve Türkiye Gerçeği, Kadın Erkek Eşitliğine Doğru Yürüyüş ve Eğitim, Çalışma Yaşamı ve Siyaset* [Gender Equality in Education and the Reality of Turkey, Progress Towards Gender Equality and Education, Working Life and Politics], TUSİAD Yayınları, İstanbul; Otaran, Nur (2003), *Eğitimin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Açısından İncelenmesi* [A Gender Review in Education], Türkiye 2003, UNICEF, Ankara.

27 For sources on approaches and practices concerning the education of girls whose mother tongue is not Turkish, from the foundation of the Republic onwards, see Avar, Sıdıka (2009), *Dağ Çiçeklerim* [My Mountain Flowers], Ulusal Eğitim Derneği Yayınları, İzmir; Yeşil, Sevim (2003), *Unfolding Republican Patriarchy: The Case of Young Kurdish Women at the Girls Vocational*

Boarding School in Elazığ. Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi, unpublished MA thesis; Akşit, Elif Ekin (2005), *Kızların Sessizliği* [The Silence of Girls], İletişim Yayınevi, İstanbul.

28 <http://haydikizlarokula.meb.gov.tr/amac.php>

29 Ağrı, Batman, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkâri, Muş, Urfa, Siirt, Şırnak and Van.

30 Adana, Adıyaman, Ankara, Ardahan, Aydın, Bingöl, Edirne, Elazığ, Erzincan, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Iğdır, İstanbul, İzmir, Maraş, Kars, Kilis, Manisa, Mardin, Mersin, Niğde, Osmaniye and Tokat.

31 For some of the photographs in question, see [http://www.unicef.org/turkey/pdf/\\_ge21.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/turkey/pdf/_ge21.pdf); <http://www.kenthaber.com/Resimler/2005/03/23/11.jpg>; <http://www.diyarbakirproje.gov.tr/images/sodes/45.jpg>; [http://www.vidivodo.com/228922/haydi-kizlar-okula\\_-heidi](http://www.vidivodo.com/228922/haydi-kizlar-okula_-heidi);

32 <http://haydikizlarokula.meb.gov.tr/amac.php>

33 Yeşil, Sevim (2003), *Unfolding Republican Patriarchy: The Case of Young Kurdish Women at the Girls Vocational Boarding School in Elazığ*. Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi, unpublished MA thesis; and also Kandiyoti, Deniz (1991), "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and Nation", *Journal of International Studies*, Issue 20. pp. 429-443.

34 Sirman, Nükhet (1989), "Feminism in Turkey: A Short History", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Issue 3. pp. 1-34.

35 Akşit, Elif Ekin (2009a), "Haydi Kızlar Okula: Kızların Eğitimi, Kadınların Bilgisi" [Come on Girls, Let's Go To School: the Education of Girls, the Knowledge of Women], *Birikim*, Issue 114. pp. 7-26

36 Akşit, Elif Ekin (2009a), "Haydi Kızlar Okula: Kızların Eğitimi, Kadınların Bilgisi" [Come on Girls, Let's Go To School: the Education of Girls, the Knowledge of Women], *Birikim*, Issue 114. p. 22.

37 <http://haydikizlarokula.meb.gov.tr/files/ogretmenelkitabi.pdf>

38 Coşkun, Vahap, Derince, Şerif and Uçarlar, Nesrin (2010), *Scar of Tongue: Consequences of the Ban on the Use of Mother Tongue in Education and Experiences of Kurdish Students in Turkey*, DISA, Diyarbakır.

39 For an example, see Bruce H. Rankin and A. Aytaç, "Gender Inequality in Schooling: The Case of Turkey," *Sociology of Education*, 79 (2006): pp. 25-43.

40 Coşkun, Vahap, Derince, Şerif and Uçarlar, Nesrin (2010), *Scar of Tongue: Consequences of the Ban on the Use of Mother Tongue in Education and Experiences of Kurdish Students in Turkey*, DISA, Diyarbakır.

41 <http://haydikizlarokula.meb.gov.tr/files/ogretmenelkitabi.pdf>

42 Benson, Carol (2005), *Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching*, UNESCO, Bangkok.

43 Hacettepe Üniversitesi Nüfus Etütleri Enstitüsü (2003). *Türkiye Nüfus ve Sağlık Araştırması* [Population and Health Research in Turkey], Ankara.

44 Coşkun, Vahap, Derince, Şerif and Uçarlar, Nesrin (2010), *Scar of Tongue: Consequences of the Ban on the Use of Mother Tongue in Education and Experiences of Kurdish Students in Turkey*, DISA, Diyarbakır.

45 <http://haydikizlarokula.meb.gov.tr/organizasyon.php>

46 Gülçipek Günel Tekin, "Türkiye'nin Asimilasyon Politikaları" [Turkey's Assimilation Policies] – IV. <http://www.beroj.com/h.asp?k=3332&z=t>; Yüksel Genç, "Kadınla Kürtlüğün İslah Planı" [The Plan to Rehabilitate the Kurds Through Women] <http://gunlukgazetesi.net/haber.asp?haberid=46739>

47 It cannot be said that all the non-governmental organizations that take part in these campaigns or support them always have the same aims. While some take a critical view of the fact that these girls' mother tongue is Kurdish and make suggestions to improve the situation through including Kurdish into education, others do not view the mismatch between the children's mother tongue and the language of instruction as an issue. In order to better understand this situation, it would be safer to examine more carefully the work carried out by and the discourses used by these organizations.

48 ESI, European Stability Initiative (2007), *İkinci Kadın Devrimi: Feminizm, İslam ve Türkiye Demokrasininin Olgunlaşması* [The Second Women's Revolution: Feminism, Islam and the Maturity of Democracy in Turkey], Report.

49 For the project website, see <http://www.kizlaricinegitim.net/page.aspx?nm=ProjeHakkinda>

50 [http://www.kizlaricinegitim.net/uploads/diyarbakir\\_sorun\\_ve\\_cozum.pdf](http://www.kizlaricinegitim.net/uploads/diyarbakir_sorun_ve_cozum.pdf)

51 For example, Diyarbakır, Urfa, Mardin and Istanbul are listed as cities where the project takes place. The first three are cities inhabited mainly by Kurds and to a lower extent by Arabs. Istanbul, on the other hand, is the city that the highest number of oppressed identities has migrated to.

52 Akşit, Elif Ekin (2009b), "Anadilde Eğitim ve Kadınlar" [Education in the Mother Tongue and Women], *Fe Dergi*, Issue 1. pp. 30-38.

53 Eğitim-Sen Merkez Kadın Sekreterliği (2009), *Hayat Bilgisi Ders Kitaplarında Toplumsal Cinsiyet Araştırması* [Study on Gender in Social Studies Text Books], Eğitim Sen Yayınları, Ankara.

54 Post Kolonyal Düşünce Özel Sayısı [Special Issue on Postcolonial Thought], edited by Ebru Yetişkin for the *Toplumbilim* journal, may be considered as a significant step to rectify this shortcoming. See Yetişkin, Ebru (2010), "Postkolonyal Düşünce Özel Sayısı" [Special Issue on Postcolonial Thought], *Toplumbilim*, Issue 25.

55 For example it should be said that a number of articles published in the *Qijika Reş* journal, which on the whole adopts an anarchist approach and is published in Kurdish, frequently refer to postcolonial theories. "Kimliğin Mülteci Yankısı" [The Refugee Echo of Identity] and "Kurgulanan Biopolitik Beden" [The Construction of a Biopolitical Body] by Engin Sustam, published in the first issue of the journal, constitute good examples. In his partly academic, partly experimental article entitled "Kızım Emma Sarya'ya Mektup" [Letter to my Daughter Emma Sarya], Sami Görendağ examines the colonial understanding in Turkey's education system, the effects of being deprived of one's mother tongue, and gender discrimination within the framework of postcolonial discourses. "Postlar arası Bir Okuma: Eğitim ve Ötekilik" [A Reading between the 'Posts': Education and the Other], by M. Bülent Işık, examines the field of education, occasionally employing poststructuralist analyses. "Dağırkerî, netewe-dewlet û politikayên zimani" [Occupation, the nation state and language policies], written by Cuma Çiçek and published in issue 10 of the *Zend* journal, does not discuss the gender dimension, but frequently employs postcolonial criticism when debating the harm done to languages by colonial ideologies and practices.

56 Coşkun, Vahap, Derince, Şerif and Uçarlar, Nesrin (2010), *Scar of Tongue: Consequences of the Ban on the Use of Mother Tongue in Education and Experiences of Kurdish Students in Turkey*, DISA, Diyarbakır.

57 For a comprehensive analysis on this subject, see Bhatia, Tej K. and Ritchie, William C. (2006), *The Handbook of Bilingualism*. Blackwell, Oxford. In fact, this construct by itself indicates how effective the dominant discourse is. In the majority of the world contexts, daily life takes place within multilingual interactions. For example, most children in India learn at least a few languages before they even begin school. Similarly, many children in Mardin grow up hearing Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish and Syriac. But like the military or political hegemony, the widespread Western-centric approach that dominates the academy and the production of knowledge has made the rest of the academy adopt monolingualism as norm.

58 Çağlayan, Handan; Doğan, Ayşe Tepe and Özar, Şemsa (2011), *Ne Değişti?: Kürt Kadınların Zorunlu Göç Deneyimi* [What Has Changed: Kurdish Women's Forced Migration Experience]. Ayizi Yayınları, İstanbul.

59 Ibid. p. 121.

60 Ibid. p. 123

61 Benson, Carol (2005), *Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching*, UNESCO, Bangkok.

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This report suggests that when we reflect on the education of Kurdish girls in Turkey and the inequalities that they encounter, we should take into consideration the issue of mother tongue and of official language policies as well. Efforts in this area are of great importance in terms of understanding the educational experiences and needs of Kurdish children, especially girls. As shown by the research, understanding the experiences that discriminated communities are facing constitutes one of the main steps towards demanding and developing an educational system that will be to the advantage of the communities that experience discrimination. Unless this is done, suggestions and changes generally do nothing more than result in more inequality and the reproduction of standards that only elite groups are able to meet.

From such a starting point, this report first explains the links between gender, education and mother tongue in terms of nation-state policies. Then it provides a brief overview of different approaches to gender and education. Subsequently, it examines campaigns and projects pertaining to gender and education carried out in Turkey. Finally, this report evaluates the situation from a Kurdish perspective and makes a number of recommendations.

This report advocates that the implementation of a gender-conscious, mother tongue-based multilingual education is key to achieving an all-inclusive educational system and eliminating gender-based inequalities and discrimination.