

Erdogan’s “New” Educational Movement: Another Battle Field Against the Gülen Movement

Mehmet Evrim Altin, International University of Applied Sciences, Germany

The European Conference on Education 2021
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The private education sector plays a significant role in the Turkish education system, which is based on central exams to attend the higher schools and universities and the sector has grown rapidly in the last four decades, in which the Gülen movement achieved significant success in this sector (Vicini, 2020). Therefore, the Erdogan regime created a new educational concept under the Maarif foundation and fights against the movement through this concept. The purpose of this paper is to examine the Erdogan administration’s efforts in the educational field, how it fights against the Gülen movement and the educational concept of the Maarif foundation. A qualitative research design is used to study this issue. Semi-structured expert interviews are conducted with managers of the Gülen inspired schools and experts on the movement from three continents, such as Europe, Africa and America. The results show that the complete Gülen movement is labelled as a Terrorist organization, its reputation was damaged and, consequently, these educational institutions were closed in Turkey. In addition, the Erdogan regime used different methods against the Gülen inspired schools outside of Turkey and offered new colleges that were managed by the Maarif Foundation in Turkey. These new schools call themselves “Turkish Schools”, have STEM based curriculum which are taught in English by Turkish teachers from Turkey and focus on expanding the Turkish language and culture outside of Turkey. How several countries reacted to this offer and current developments are focused on this paper.

Keywords: Expert Interview, Gülen Movement, Private Education, Qualitative Research Method, STEM Education

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

After the seventies, there were several social issues in Turkey like urban immigration, extreme left and right disputes, financial difficulties and political disorders, most of which were ended with a coup and helped two Islamic movements to flourish in Turkish society. One of them is Necmettin Erbakan's political Islam focused on the political realm like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or Khomeini in Iran and the current president Erdogan and his party continues this legacy. Erbakan's political Islamic movement, so called "*Milli Görüş Hareketi*" (National Outlook Movement, MGH) increased the number of its votes during the decades mainly because of the authoritarian-centralist political system, which was trying to impose secularization from above, without being aware of it, has produced its antithesis through the segments it had excluded (Ergil, 2012, p. 318). In addition to that, Tittensor (2014, p. 51) mentions that:

the rise of Islam in the political sphere is due to the failure of the center-right and center-left parties, in so far as they have been unable to put forward decent economic policies and are perceived as corrupt, thereby creating a vacuum into which the religious parties have fortuitously walked.

The second important Islamic movement is founded by Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish Islamic scholar, who based his movement mainly on the educational activities and later on several institutions in media, finance and charity organizations. According to Findley, mainly because of the social projects of the movement, in comparison to Khomeini or other political Islamists like Necmettin Erbakan in Turkey (Findley, 2010, p. 389), Gülen is considered to be a social Islamic scholar and also a follower of Said Nursi (Findley, 2010, p. 384), who is distanced himself from politics (Turam, 2007, p. 135). In addition to the philosophical differences between these two movements, another crucial difference between these movements is that, after the Soviet Dissolution, Gülen expanded his activities first to Central Asia and then later on to the whole world and to become an international movement, but Erbakan's movement, later Erdogan continues his legacy, movement stays local and limits itself in Turkey.

Despite the mentioned differences and minor conflicts between these two movements, the major fight started in December 2013, in which Gülen affiliated media organizations published Erdogan and his ministers' corruption scandals and sons of these ministers were arrested because of being part of the corruption. According to Erdogan this is a soft coup against him which was organized by the movement and he waged a war against Gülen and his movement (Arango, 2013). Initially, Asya Bank and several media organizations affiliated with the movement in Turkey were forfeited by the government and later on, after the failed coup attempt in 2016, Erdogan used his political power and banned the movement in Turkey. Since then more than a hundred thousand people have either been arrested or lost their jobs mainly because of their affiliation with the movement (Amnesty International, 2018b). However, according to Alam (2018, p. 287), on an international level Erdogan's narrative is not reliable and, with the exception of several countries, the Gülen movement is still active worldwide. Therefore, Erdogan founded his international educational movement under the Maarif Foundation to destroy the movement outside the Turkey. In this paper, the conflict between Erdogan and Gülen, how the Erdogan regime fights against the movement out of Turkey and educational concept of the Maarif Foundation is described in detail.

To achieve mentioned goal, in addition to content analysis, a qualitative research method was selected in the field study to understand this controversial subject (Babbie, 2004). One of the main reasons for this choice are the research questions which are based on "how" questions.

The initial goal of the researcher in his PhD was to analyze the Gülen inspired schools in April 2016. However, in July 2016, three months later, the failed coup attempt took place in Turkey and, mainly because of the importance of the event, Erdogan's political and educational activities against the movement took an important place in his study as another aspect of the dilemma.

In the data collection part, only the "expert interview" method is available because of the several reasons depending on the controversial structure of the subject. However, expert interview fits very well to this research that help the researcher to collect high quality data. Participants of this study could be categorized into four groups, which is shown in the table below:

Participant's Code	Participant's Position	Participant's Occupation	Interview Language
USAM1	School Manager (Group1)	Director	Turkish
USAM2	School Manager (Group1)	Computer Engineer - Teacher	Turkish
USAM3	School Manager (Group1)	Teacher	Turkish
EUM1	School Manager (Group1)	Director	Turkish
EUM2	School Manager (Group1)	Teacher	Turkish
EUM3	School Manager (Group1)	Teacher	Turkish
AM1	School Manager (Group1)	Teacher	English
AM2	School Manager (Group1)	Teacher	Turkish
AM3	School Manager (Group1)	Teacher	Turkish
EX1	Follower (Group 2)	Journalist – Writer	Turkish
EX2	Follower (Group 2)	Imam	Turkish
EX3	Follower (Group 2)	Project Manager	Turkish
EX4	Positive-Neutral (Group 3)	Assistant Professor	German
EX5	Positive-Neutral (Group 3)	Writer	German
EX6	Positive-Neutral (Group 3)	Professor	German
EX7	Detractor (Group 4)	Assistant Professor	German
EX8	Detractor (Group 4)	Political Scientist	German
EX9	Detractor (Group 4)	Assistant Professor	Turkish

Table 1: Participants of the Field Study

As it is easy to see in the table, in total, there were 18 structured expert interviews from which enables the comparison of different thoughts and understandings and also the comparison of the theory and the practice. The researcher visited nine Gülen inspired countries in the U.S.,

Europe and Africa (3 schools in each) and conducted countless number of talks and discussions with teachers, parents and students of these schools. The main reason for choosing these three regions depends on the structure of the Gülen inspired schools. During the preparation part of the field study, it was seen that, at the international level the GIS are founded and expanded in developing countries or in the developed countries. The schools in undeveloped countries were either closed after the failed coup attempt, mainly because of the pressure of administration of Turkey, or were in a bad, insecure condition, which is why the researcher preferred to visit to the mentioned regions.

All data was collected by face-to-face semi-structured interviews, which are recorded and transcribed so that the detailed analyses can be easily carried out (Merriam, 2009). Mainly because of the actual situation of the movement, the researcher of the study decided to anonymize all the participants' names and institutions and used codes above. To achieve high-quality data during the interviews, all interviews are conducted in the mother tongue of the participants. Participants' mother tongues are German, English, and Turkish in this study (See table above). In the data analysis part, Maxqda program was used because of its special features and availability and Gläser and Laudel's (2009, p. 203) procedures were followed. Besides, the researcher of the study practiced five general criteria for qualitative researchers, which Mayring (2002) explained in his book, such as procedural documentation, rule structured construction, argumentative interpretation assurance, proximity to the object and communicative validity. Conducting the field study in the mentioned three continents and only one data collection method is available for the research are several important limitations of the study.

Results

One of the core points of the PhD study of the researcher¹ are the effects of the failed coup attempt on Gülen Inspired Schools. The researcher of the study suddenly found himself in the middle of a conflict on the one hand and , on the other hand, he explored a new foundation, the so-called Maarif (means Education in Ottoman Turkish) Foundation, founded and supported by the Erdogan regime and the Turkish government. This conflict is stimulating during the field study, mainly because of the timing of the research, which is immediately after the failed coup attempt and almost all participants talk about this issue during the field study. Consequently, two important results of the failed coup were found in the field study.

Initially, why such a conflict happened and why these two Islamic movements fight each other are important questions to focus on. Mainly because of mentioned different approaches to Islam above, Erbakans' political approach and Gülen's social approach, these two leaders never came together and they were active in different realms of the society. According to Turam (2007, p.136), this is mainly because Erbakan did not accept the secular structure of the Turkish state and tried to change it politically which is why his political parties were closed several times, however unlike him, Gülen did not confront this structure and prefers to collaborate and cooperate with secular parts of the society. According to Alam (2019, p. 122), this is also one of the major difference between Nursi and Gülen, too. In general, Gülen is seen as a follower of Nursi and the Gülen movement uses Said Nursi's master Work "Risale-I Nur" in their teachings (Findley, 2010, p. 384), however, as Vicini (2020, p.155) mentioned in his earlier published book that unlike other Nur Movements, Gülen's books and talks are used as a core source in Gülen movement, too. Therefore, in some cases, like collaborating with secular state,

¹ Altin, M.E. (2020). Internationalization through Localization: Gülen Inspired Schools, PhD Dissertation on Faculty of Philosophy of Heinrich Heine University of Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf: HHU Universität Publikation Server

Gülen goes his own way and does not follow Nursi's legacy. Similarly, Erdogan also refused to follow Erbakans' legacy after being selected a president in 2002 and cooperated with the secular forces, the army in this case, during his first two terms (Turam, 2007, p.137 and 138). His meeting with Colonel Yasar Büyükanit, the head of the army in 2007 is still an enigma today (Sayın, 2019) but unlike the presidency of Erbakan, the army did not cause so much trouble for Erdogan legislation, which demonstrated the importance of the meeting of Erdogan with the head of the Army Colonel Büyükanit. As a consequence, the two biggest Islamic movements and secular forces of the country suddenly stopped fighting with each other and started working together in the country, which caused financial stability and rapid growth in the first two terms of the Erdogan regime till 2010.

However, the alliance between these forces is broken down when heavy military guns were found in a hidden secret location outside of military regions and later on, several generals were arrested because of preparing a coup against the Erdogan regime, which is known as *Ergenekon* trials in Turkey (Pahl, 2019, p. 342). In general, all left oriented parties, also secularists of the country and some foreign scholars like Tee (2016, p. 167) blamed Gülen for how he dealt the event and suggested that this was a conspiracy organized by infiltrated followers of the Gülen movement inside the military. The second important event happened from 17-25 December, 2013, when security forces under the command of arrested sons of three Ministers of the Erdogan regime, several businessmen and governors of several districts in Istanbul and some other places in Turkey. The accusations were corruption, money laundering and misuse of state power to their own profit and after several days it was also clear that the Erdogan family was also involved this scandal. Interestingly, like in the Ergenekon trials, Erdogan also claimed that it is a conspiracy against his selected government that was organized by Gülen followers who infiltrated the Justice department and police departments of the country (Arango, 2013). Despite the fact that the major actor of this event, Reza Zarrab, a businessmen from Iran, was arrested in the U.S. and confessed to all these accusations in front of a U.S. court in 2018 (Hermann, 2017), these accusations were not investigated in Turkey. Instead, through cooperating with secular forces again, especially with the colonel Hulusi Akar, who became the Minister of Defence later, Erdogan waged a political war against the movement. Especially after the failed coup attempt in 2016, the Erdogan regime declared the movement as a Terrorist organization under the name of FETO (Fethullah terror organization), in which his attack became brutal against the movement and his followers.

Immediately after the event, all the Gülen affiliated institutions were closed in Turkey. In Turkey alone, 2,213 private schools and private (tutorial) courses, 1,005 dormitories and boarding houses and 22 Universities and affiliated hospitals were forfeited because of their affiliation with the movement (Gümüş, 2019, p. 50). Similarly, depending on the Amnesty International Report (2018a), 180 media outlets and 1300 associations and foundations were closed and hundreds of thousands of people, including judges, journalists, academics...etc are arrested or dismissed from their jobs because of being a member of a terrorist organization. Even the Ex8, who is one of the detractors of the movement in Germany explained this tragedy as follows:

"So that's really beastly what he does. So even the dictator in Chili has not arrested and expelled so many people as Erdogan, so he's got nearly a hundred and fifty thousand people stuck there like many families and the whole numbers together, that's maybe half a million people suffering and affected." (Ex8)

Therefore, Keneş (2020) described this situation as "Genocide" in his book and according to him, this type of pressure on the masses is clearly contradicting with the Convention on the

Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and International Criminal Court (Keneş, 2020, p. 17). He first quotes the second Article of the convention to demonstrate his point such as:

Any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, such as:

- (a) Killing members of the Group
- (b) Causing seriously bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in Part
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

And then giving exact concrete examples where all these five acts were committed by Erdogan regime in his book (Keneş, 2020, p. 85-121). Besides, Keneş also quoted from Gregory H. Stanton, the president of the Genocide Watch, that the Erdogan regime conducted nine steps out of ten steps of Genocide in Turkey (Keneş, 2020, p. 123). According to Stanton Classification, Symbolisation, Discrimination, Dehumanisation, Organisation, Polarization, Preparation, Persecution, Extermination and Denial are the ten steps through genocide and Keneş demonstrated with examples that except Extermination, all other steps were conducted by Erdogan regime against the movement in Turkey (Keneş, 2020, p. 155). Keneş warns the other countries to be aware of the situation and mentioned that the Extermination step is also on the way, which is depending on Erdogan's political plans (Keneş, 2020, p. 151). Whether it will be an issue in the future or not, but it is clear that the aim of Erdogan regime and his secular partners is to destroy the movement in all realms.

The second crucial result of the study is dependent on the effects of the event at an international level. As it was mentioned above, the major problem for the Erdogan regime is the international structure of the movement. In his speech to the United Nations in 2018, he warned all other countries to be aware of the schools of the movement and suggested that the students of these schools will organize similar coups in these countries against their legislators and after achieving the power, they will leave the management of these countries to the movement (Hürriyet, 2018). However, according to Alam (2019, p. 287), unlike Erdogan's expectations his coup narrative is not reliable at an international level. Supporting this approach, in the field study all participants, even the detractors like Ex7, Ex8 and Ex9, suggested the event was organized by Erdogan, like the Reichstag fire in 1933 in which the Nazi Party used the fire as a pretext to claim that communists were plotting against the German government, which made the fire pivotal in the establishment of Nazi Germany.

"Unfortunately, a very painful comparison, but it's true, Fethullah Gülen supporters in Turkey experienced the same events that the Jews in Germany had experienced before. They want to sell their homes at that time, because they need to go, let we say one million marks costs the house, but they get 100 thousand instead. Because people know that, they have to go to survive" (Ex9)

Two of the main reasons behind this comparison are that, interestingly both Hitler and Erdogan, described these events, the Reichstag fire and failed coup attempt, as a "Gift of God" (Timur, 2016) and used these events to attack their opponents, communists in Germany and Gülen followers in Turkey. Therefore, the regime prefers to use different methods outside of Turkey.

In this context the Maarif (Education) Foundation, which was founded just before the coup attempt on 17 June, 2016 with law number 6721 according to Turkish law, plays an important role in Turkish context (Maarif, 2020). Initially, unlike “Eğitim”, which is mostly used in daily language today to refer to education, the founders prefer to use “Maarif” which is an old word used in Ottoman era, and mostly used in conservative parts of the Turkish society today. Besides as it is published in the law, the foundation was supported by the Ministry of Education with one million Turkish Lira in 2016 for the foundation costs (Maarif, 2020) and in the last three years the same Ministry supported 155 Million Lira to the same foundation (Schoene, 2020). It was also mentioned in the same law that the foundation will contact educational activities with the approval of the Ministry of Education in Turkey. Depending on these statements, it is clear that this foundation was founded and supported by Erdogan regime. The other important emphasized point in the website of the foundation is the international and global activities of the foundation. The foundation has 346 educational institutions in 42 countries of the world and the president of the Board of Trustees of the foundation Prof. Birol Akgün, who is a very close academic to Erdogans’ party, also described the reason behind this foundation as follows:

Maarif Foundation was constituted in such a global political atmosphere. As stated in our law of establishment, our mission is to provide formal and informal educational services on the basis of the common values and heritages of humanity; to raise virtuous “good people” who will serve for the hope of peace, justice and development and combine the knowledge and experience of the Turkish community with universal values. (Maarif, 2020)

Of course the question that comes to mind is why did Erdogan found such an “independent” international education foundation, just before the failed coup attempt?

According to Ex9, one of the very well-known detractors of the Gülen movement in Germany, one of the answers will be the repetition of the Gülen Inspired Schools in their host countries. As it was mentioned above, since the corruption scandals of the Erdogan government in December 2013, the Erdogan regime pressures foreign countries, however the internationalization of the Movement started after the nineties and it already has more than 20 years experience in different parts of the world. Therefore, most of these countries profited from these schools and refused to close them.

"See, Macedonia or Albania have refused to close those schools. Turkey has made a lot of pressure, both very small poor countries, countries that are under pressure from Turkey. Two million inhabitants in Macedonia, three million in Albanian, education is very low and poor, both said they are not closing the schools. In Macedonia, there are schools of the Gülen community called Yahya Kemal schools. I don't know the name in Albania² but they said that they have made a great contribution to our education system." (Ex9)

To solve this problem, the Erdogan regime offers these type of developing countries to transfer Gülen Inspired Schools to the Maarif foundation and promised to conduct the same quality education under their control. Such an attack will decrease the power of the movement and also helps the Erdogan regime to be active in different parts of the world. Consequently, depending on the Turkish news (Sabah, 2019), several countries like Pakistan accepted this offer and 83

² It is called „Mehmet Akif Colleges“ in Albania (Mercan, 2019, p. 313)

educational institutions and 11 dorms are taken from the movement and transferred to the Maarif foundation.

The other side of the coin is the Turkish societies approach to this conflict. As it was mentioned above, especially in the first two terms of the Erdogan regime, his conservative party, the Gülen movement and the secular state met in the same ground and cooperated and collaborated with each other (Turam, p. 137). In this period, between 2002 to 2010, the Gülen movement found chances to present their successful students out of Turkey to the society in well-presented contests so called “Turkish Olympiads”, where these students perform Turkish songs and poems in different parts of Turkey (Volm, 2018, p. 161). The event occurred in the biggest football stadiums and the several TV channels broadcast the event live in their streams. Therefore, Gülen Inspired Schools are called “Turkish Schools” in the Turkish society that was known as expanding Turkish language and culture to the whole world (Volm, 2018, p. 161). However, depending on the participants of the study, as a consequence of the failed coup attempt, Erdogan labelled the movement as a Terrorist organization and by this way he has succeeded to isolate the Gülen movement from the Turkish society and as an crucial effect of this, the GISs left their Turkish identity outside of Turkey. Ex3 explained this issue as follows:

"I think that the coup changed our school profile. Because the GIS schools were mostly known as 'Turkish schools' and I think that this understanding changed, and this Turkish identity was left. I think it was the biggest impact of the coup Attempt." (Ex3)

Indeed, before the failed coup attempt, the movement already changed the name of the contest and presented it as “International Festival of Language and Cultrue – IFLC” in which the dominant role of the Turkish was removed and the other languages and cultures are also presented, but the event and political pressure accelerated this transformation.

In this point, Erdogan saws the opportunity and this gap and he presented the Maarif Schools as a the new “Turkish Schools” to the Turkish society that promote Turkish language and culture to the world. This point is highlighted as “To carry out comprehensive educational activities throughout the world based on the common values of humanity and Anatolian tradition of wisdom” in the Mission part of the foundation in a close manner, but it is clear to see that in the publications of the foundation that teaching Turkish to foreigners program (*Türkçenin Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğretimi Programı*) takes a crucial activity of the foundation (Maarif, 2020). In this way, Erdogan gains the support of the especially nationalist part of the society and tries to decrease the power of the movement outside of Turkey.

Inarticulately, it is difficult to find out any specific educational concept of the Maarif schools rather than emphasizing good quality education and combining friendly relations between Turkey and the host countries. Actually, because of the mentioned two reasons, such as breaking cooperation between the Gülen Movement and host countries by transforming GISs to Maarif foundation schools, and taking the support of the Turkish society by promoting Turkish language and culture worldwide, the Maarif foundation and their educational activities are part of Erdogan’s political war against the movement. Therefore, it is very difficult to analyze these schools from educational sciences perspectives. Besides, neither the Foundation itself, nor the Turkish media give detailed information about how this foundation works, how the staff in these schools are hired or attended to these jobs and what are the features of their educational concept in these schools. (See webpage of the Foundation: www.turkiyemaarif.org)

Some other activities of the Erdogan regime also supported this point. As a concrete example, on 28 July, 2018, the manager of the GISs in Mongolia, Veysel Akcay, who has been living for 24 years in Mongolia, was kidnapped by the Turkish secret service spies (Reuters, 2018). He was brought to the International Airport of Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. However, his wife and other eyewitnesses informed the police and important authorities of the government through social media. The plane which had been sent by the Turkish government to take him back to Turkey was not allowed to leave the airport and he was rescued that day by police officers. A similar attempt was successful in Moldavia (Reuters, 2018). On 6 September, 2018, Turkish secret service agents kidnapped seven Turkish teachers who were working at GISs in Moldavia and brought them to Turkey against their will (Stockholm Center of Freedom, 2018). 24 similar kidnapping activities were also reported in the other parts of the world against the Gülen followers (Schoene, 2020). However, in developed countries like in the U.S. or Europe, where the Turkish Secret service could not conduct such kind of illegal attempts easily, the Erdogan regime uses different strategies to fight against Gülen Inspired Schools. As a concrete example, on the one hand Erdogan tries to open schools to compete against the movement and expand its influence like in Germany (Schoene, 2020) (Köhne, 2020), on the other hand the regime hires Amsterdam Law Company (Amsterdam, 2019) or pays 530,000 € to Mike Flynn, advisor of the Ex-US President Trump, for lobbying activities against the movement in the U.S. (Grimaldi, Nissenbaum & Coker, 2017). USAM1 mentioned an event, which he had experienced during the application for a new charter school in their state and explained how this company works against the movement in the US.

"The board there decided to discuss it (the application) and I joined that meeting. The state of the Republic of Turkey has directly held a lawyer company called Amsterdam here, just because they have tried against the schools. [...] These guys came to this rally, they wanted to have a word, they were given the right to speak, they came with several of our old parents and with several people from Turkish minority there and they said negative things about us to the board. But there are board members who are constantly asking, what is the relationship between your stories and this school?" (USAM1)

Mainly because of the poor argumentation of the Amsterdam Law company, that application was approved by the board according to the participant of the study. In addition to mentioned events, Turkish consulates also refuse to work on passports of teachers or management of the Gülen followers' and thus force them to immigrate when their passports expire.

Conclusion

Consequently, from an educational perspective, the Maarif foundation and their schools do not have a special educational concept, except promoting Turkish culture and language outside of Turkey and increasing Erdogan's influence in foreign countries. That is why the foundation has two types of publications such as teaching Turkish to foreigners program books, and nine bulletins of the foundation where social and political cooperation between Turkey and these foreign countries through these schools are emphasized in detail. Indeed, the aim of the foundation does not have any educational aspect; instead it is part of Erdogan's political attack against the Gülen movement and their schools outside of Turkey. (Köhne, 2020) The goals in this strategy are on the one hand breaking the collaboration between Gülen Inspired Schools and host countries, which is part of political war of Erdogan against the movement. On the other hand, it is an internationalization activity of the Erdogan administration that targeted the Turkish societies support, especially conservatives and nationalists in Turkey. Therefore, despite the huge financial support of the Turkish government, on the poorly designed webpage

of the foundation in three languages such as Turkish, English and French, there is no detailed information about the Foundation, their staff, educational concept or vision. Similarly, in Turkish media, the news about the foundation only consists of where and when the foundation takes the control of a Gülen Inspired School in country X or Y.

In contrast, in German media it is highlighted that the German politicians and administrators are very suspicious about the foundation and even though they allow the foundation to found a school in Germany, under German laws of course, they are afraid that such a kind of school will increase the adaptation problems of Turkish minority to Germany (Köhne, 2020) (Schoene, 2020). Therefore, it seems that local states resist against such an activity and, despite the pressure of the Erdogan regime, the foundation could not found a school in Germany until today. Besides, in the long term, it is difficult to predict the future of the foundation, because its consistency depends on the current Erdogan administration. It is not clear if the foundation will be supported again by the state if the political order in Turkey changes in the future. From these aspects, it is clear that the Maarif foundation and educational activities of the movement have a political meaning, rather than educational, and they have to be more researched by political and educational scientists together.

Acknowledgment

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Professor Dr. Heiner BARZ and Prof. Dr. Ursula BOOS-NÜNNING for their guidance, advice, criticism, encouragement and insight throughout the research. They have made a great contribution to this study and also to my academic progress. I also want to thank all other participants who contributed to this research with their experience and thoughts. Besides, thanks to Mrs. Jessica HARMELING for her technical support in the English language.

In addition, I am also thankful to *Institut für Internationale Kommunikation e.V. (IIK)* and *Heine Research Academies (HeRA)* because of their financial support.

I would also like to thank my dear wife Esra ALTIN and my daughter Ayşe, my son Ibrahim Ethem and of course my parents, Ibrahim ALTIN and Vesile ALTIN, in addition to them, I could not ignore my mother-in-law Gülay ÖZBEK and father-in-law Fikret ÖZBEK for their great support.

References

- Alam, A. (2019). *For the Sake of Allah, The Origin, Development and discourse of the Gülen Movement*, Clifton NJ, USA: Blue Dome Press, pp. 283-289.
- Altin, M.E. (2020). *Internationalization through Localization: Gülen Inspired Schools, PhD Dissertation on Faculty of Philosophy of Heinrich Heine University of Düsseldorf*, Düsseldorf: HHU Universität Publikation Server
- Amnesty International. (2018a). Purged Beyond Return? No Remedy For Turkey's Dismissed Public Sector Workers. *Amnesty International Ltd*, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London, WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom.
- Amnesty International. (2018b). Weathering the Storm Defending Human Rights in Turkey's Climate of Fear. *Amnesty International Ltd*, Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street, London, WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom.
- Amsterdam & Partners LLP. (2019, April 2). *Web Page of Amsterdam & Partners LLP*. Retrieved from 05.04.2019 - www.amsterdamandpartners.com, Available: <https://www.amsterdamandpartners.com/engagements/turkey/>
- Arango, T. (2013, December 25). Corruption Scandal Is Edging Near Turkish Premier. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from 27.01.2020 - www.nytimes.com, Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/26/world/europe/turkish-cabinet-members-resign.html>
- Babbie, E. (2004). *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA, USA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Ergil, D. (2012). *Fethullah Gülen and the Gülen Movement in 100 Questions*, New York : Blue Dome Press, pp. 318-320.
- Findley, C. V. (2010). *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism and Modernity*. London, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 384-390.
- Grimaldi, J.V., Nissenbaum, D. & Coker, M. (2017, March 24). *Ex-CIA Director:Mike Flynn band Turkish Officials Discussed Removal of Erdogan Foe from U.S*. Retrieved from 04.04.2019 - www.wsj.com, Available: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ex-cia-director-mike-flynn-and-turkish-officials-discussed-removal-of-erdogan-foe-from-u-s-1490380426>
- Gläser, J., & Laudel, G. (2009). *Experteninterviews und qualitative Inhaltanalyse*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp. 203-205.
- Gümüş, I. (2019). *The rise of the Palace State, Turkey under the State of Emergency*, Frankfurt: Main Donau Verlag, pp. 49-54.

- Hermann, R. (2017, 2 December). Mit Wissens Erdogan. *Frankfurter Allgemein Zeitung*. Retrieved from 27.01.2021 – www.faz.net, Available: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/prozess-um-erdogans-illegale-iran-geschaefte-15319858.html>
- Hürriyet. (2018, September 25). *Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'dan Birleşmiş Milletler'de kritik mesajlar*. Retrieved from 05.04.2019 - www.hurriyet.com.tr, Available: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/son-dakika-cumhurbaskani-erdogandan-birlesmis-milletlerde-kritik-mesajlar-40967742>
- Keneş, B. (2020). *A Genocide in the Making? Erdogan regime's Crackdown on the Gülen Movement*, New Jersey: Blue Dome Press, pp. 123-160.
- Köhne, G. (2020, 28 March). Erdogan's Kampfansage an Gülen Schulen. *Deutschlandfunk*. Retrieved from 27.01.2021 – www.deutschlandfunk.de, Available: https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/tuerkische-schulen-in-deutschland-erdogans-kampfansage-an.724.de.html?dram:article_id=473526
- Maarif Foundation. (2021). *Webpage of Turkish Maarif Foundation*. Retrieved from 25.01.2021 - www.turkiyemaarif.org, Available: <https://turkiyemaarif.org/>
- Mayring, P. (2002). Gütekriterien Qualitativer Forschung. *Einführung in die Qualitative Sozialforschung*, Weinheim und Basel: Beltz Verlag, pp. 140-149.
- Mercan, F. (2019). Giriş. *M. Fethullah Gülen Allah Yolunda Bir Ömür*, Canada: Süreyya Yayinlari.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative Research, a guide to design and implementation*, San Francisco: Josey Bass.
- Pahl, J. (2019). *Fethullah Gülen, a Life of Hizmet*, New Jersey: Blue Dome Press, pp. 339-359.
- Reuters. (2018, July 28). *Turkish teacher kidnapped in Mongolia freed after authorities ground flight*. Retrieved from 04.04.2019 - www.reuters.com, Available: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mongolia-kidnapping-turkey/turkish-teacher-kidnapped-in-mongolia-freed-after-authorities-ground-flight-idUSKBN1KI03N>
- Sayın, A. (2019, 21 November). Yaşar Büyükanıt: ‚E Muhtıra‘ Dolmabahçe Görüşmesi ve Şemdinli Olayıyla Tartışılan Eski Genelkurmay Başkanı. *BBC*. Retrieved from 27.01.2021 – www.bbc.com, Available: <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-50494175>
- Schoene, S. (2020, 21 January). Worum es der Turkei bei den Deutschen Schulen wirklich geht. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Retrieved from 27.01.2021 – www.sueddeutsche.de, Available: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/bildung/tuerkei-schulen-deutschland-guelen-1.4759187>

- Stockholm Center of Freedom. (2018, October 13). *PACE calls on Moldova to restore rule of law after abduction of 7 Turkish teachers*. Retrieved March 27, 2019, from 04.05.2019 - www.stockholmcf.org, Available: <https://stockholmcf.org/pace-calls-on-moldova-to-restore-rule-of-law-after-abduction-of-7-turkish-teachers/>
- Tee, C. (2016). *The Gülen Movement in Turkey, the Politics of Islam and Modernity*, London and New York: I.B.Tauris, pp. 167-169.
- Timur, S. (2016, October 3). *Turkey Detains Brother of Fethullah Gulen, Cleric Accused of Plotting Coup*. Retrieved from 05.04.2019 - www.nytimes.com, Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/04/world/europe/turkey-fethullah-gulen-brother.html>
- Tittensor, D. (2014). *The House of Services: The Gülen Movement and Islam's Third Way*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 50-55.
- Turam, B. (2007). *Between Islam and the State, The Politics of Engagement*, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, pp. 135- 150.
- Vicini, F. (2020). *Reading Islam, Life and Politics of brotherhood in Modern Turkey*, Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, pp. 132-168 .

Contact email: mehmet-evrim.altin@iu.org