

# APPROACHES ON THE RELATION BETWEEN TELEVISION AND EDUCATION FROM PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING TO PRIVATE BROADCASTING IN TURKEY

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**Abstract:** The educational role of television has been one of the most discussed issues in almost every period, both for its technical development and dissemination and the quality of the programs. This study investigates the establishment of the relationship between television and education in Turkey, its definition and changes. The change in approach toward the educational role of television from the early years of television broadcasting to the first half of the 1990s, when multi-channel private broadcasting began, is analysed based on a comparative analysis. This change is attempted to be contextualized within broader social, economic, and political developments that shaped the educational role assigned to television.

**Keywords:** Television, education, culture, development, TRT

## 1 Introduction

The idea that television may be used as an educational tool has been voiced since this technique was taking shape in Western developed countries. Thoughts regarding this role became prominent, particularly during the second half of the 1940s. Efforts to use the radio effectively as an educational tool since the early years played an important role in establishing the relationship between television and education. Additionally, the model of public service broadcasting has also been effective in establishing this connection.<sup>1</sup> This “cultural-pedagogic” logic emphasised the social-cultural characteristics of broadcasting over its commercial aspect.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, the topic of education through television has been extensively debated in the United States and Europe, particularly from the 1950s to the 1980s. Throughout this process, experiences on the use of television for educational purposes have varied.<sup>3</sup> It is possible to state that these experiences, particularly the modernization approach that dominated the same period, were significant in spreading the idea that television could be utilised as an educational tool throughout the world, from developed countries.<sup>4</sup> This approach laid the groundwork for television’s establishment and dissemination, particularly in developing countries. Although television was an expensive technology, investing in this field was considered far less expensive than other investments required

to close the education gap. Thus, educational attempts with television have emerged in different forms worldwide, from developed countries to underdeveloped countries.<sup>5</sup>

International program trade that began to be prominent in the field of television broadcasting in the 1970s, combined with the weak structure of television broadcasting in developing countries, initiated a process in which the role of this educational and cultural development tool was questioned.<sup>6</sup> These developments, more broadly, have raised doubts about the success of communication tools in terms of development and progress. It has been argued that this dominant commercial structure is incapable of providing the communication environment required for education.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in addition to the dominance of western entertainment programs, a period in which imported education programs were questioned culturally began in developing countries.<sup>8</sup>

All of these advances have revealed that television has major technical, economic, and cultural limits, which constrains the educational success of this tool. Despite these limits, Mowlana and Wilson credited development planners with a key role in promoting and maintaining television as an educational tool.<sup>9</sup> These limitations can be observed regarding television's establishment, dissemination, and development in Turkey. Additionally, it is also noteworthy that development planners were instrumental in establishing television as an educational tool from the 1960s to the 1980s in Turkey. In this regard, it is not coincidental that television's educational role rapidly declined during the 1980s, as the tendency toward globalisation and liberalisation expanded rather than the understanding of planning.

The advent of new technology such as satellite broadcasting and the rise of global neoliberal policies in the 1980s were critical in bringing about this fundamental change.<sup>10</sup> The idea that there is a single centre in television broadcasting and, consequently, in the international circulation of programs has also changed during this process. Developments in local television industries also brought about the reconsideration of television from a different perspective. The commercial broadcasting model came to the fore in the broadcasting sector, which was liberalised in Europe. This entertainment mentality has begun to appear more frequently in the broadcast stream of public service broadcasters.<sup>11</sup> This tendency has led to the educational role and quality of television gradually falling into the background.

Within the context of these developments, it is possible to trace the evolution of the relationship between television and education in Turkey through several themes. The first is the technical establishment and dissemination of television; the second is the quality and development of television program production; and the third is a shift in the structure of television broadcasting as a result of more fundamental social, economic, and political changes. Based on these fundamental points, it is possible to analyse how television's educational role is shaped and transformed. As of the late 1950s, steps were taken to establish television on the basis of the emphasis on the educational and developmental role of communication tools. As of 1968, when television broadcasts began, it was clear that the emphasis on education was prominent in line with this understanding in the plans and efforts to disseminate this tool throughout the country. While this approach lasted until the 1980s, particularly in the latter half of the decade, a process arose in which television began to be handled on a private broadcasting basis. Television's educational role was likewise addressed in this setting to the extent that it facilitated this shift. MoNE, universities (particularly the Faculty of Open Education), and TRT itself continued to produce television programs aimed at both formal and non-formal education. TRT, which maintained the broadcasting monopoly until the 1990s, mediated television's use in education, both in and out of the school.<sup>12</sup>

In this context, this study focuses on the evolution of television's relationship with education in Turkey and its transformation as a result of the introduction of private channels, particularly in the 1990s. It is crucial to investigate how television's educational role has been defined since the early years, as well as the understanding of programs that have been shaped in this context and how this understanding has evolved over time. In this study, a comparative analysis of the television-education relationship that appeared between the early years of television broadcasting and the first half of the 1990s, when multichannel broadcasting began, is conducted through TRT's educational programs. The TRT Program Magazine, reports on the relation between television and education prepared by TRT, and TRT's Annual Reports are the main data sources of the study. Moreover, official documents such as development plans for the periods addressed are utilised to analyse how the educational role of television

was defined. Newspaper archives are also utilised to understand what kind of public debate arose around educational programs broadcast on television in these periods.

As a result of the research, it was determined that television has been assigned an educational role since its early years and this role is inextricably linked to developmental and modernist approaches and efforts. It can be said that the basis of this approach is the role of spreading the official ideology and educating the public culturally and politically that has been attributed to radio since the 1930s. Accordingly, the idea that effective public education can be achieved through radio and television, apart from the examples in Western countries, is related to governments' view that they can "change the social structure by making some changes in superstructure institutions."<sup>13</sup> Based on this idea, efforts have been made to educate the public through radio and television in almost each period. In the 1960s, development and modernization process which accelerated on the basis of urbanisation and industrialization strengthened this understanding.

However, particularly during the 1970s, the difficulties encountered during the institutionalisation process of TRT, as well as restrictions in the technical development and dissemination of television, posed significant challenges in fully realising television's educational role. After 1980, when the planning approach in developmental mentality was abandoned in favour of global neoliberal policies, television broadcasting began to be discussed from a new perspective. Particularly in this setting, where preparations for the transition to multi-channel private broadcasting began, the relationship between television and education was reemphasized in a way that will facilitate this transformation. For example, it has begun to be emphasised that technical developments such as the establishment of new channels will further increase the educational opportunities through television. However, the radical changes that dominated market relations and consumption culture in the social and cultural spheres shifted the focus of television content toward popular entertainment rather than educational programs. In this period, the new lifestyle based on the consumption culture and individualization, which started to become widespread rapidly, began to find an intense place in all media content from the press to cinema and television.<sup>14</sup> This became evident on television especially with the establishment of private channels in the 1990s. Television broadcasts began to be handled in terms of entertainment and popular content and based on competitive relations rather than educational and cultural content. In this new broadcasting era television series, reality shows and magazine programs have come to the forefront on television screens, while educational programs have remained in the background and thoughts on the educational role of television have been less stated.

## **2 Establishment and Development of Television as an Educational Tool in Turkey**

The first regular and official television broadcasts in Turkey were started by TRT on January 31, 1968. TRT, which was established in 1964 to maintain and develop radio and television broadcasting, was also charged with the responsibility of utilising and disseminating these educational tools. Broadcasting that contributes to "educational, instructive, culture, and education" as defined in TRT Establishment Law No. 359 has been one of the most fundamental pillars of this role. Adoption of a public service broadcasting model by TRT provided a fundamental basis for the educational programs. In 1960s, when new needs and targets emerged due to dynamics such as industrialization and urbanisation, transportation and communication opportunities began to increase,<sup>15</sup> the need for increasing both formal and non-formal education opportunities became more clear. Thus, the idea of using television for educational purposes arose long before a station was founded and was recognized by legislative laws. This role assigned to television also served as a foundation for the aim of its importation, and dissemination throughout the country. The assertion that television was one of the most effective tools for public education was supported by developments in the world. The emphasis placed on education through television in Europe and America, as well as the fact that television has evolved into a vital medium for education, were frequently referenced by the newspapers.<sup>16</sup>



Video 1. The First TV announcement in Turkey: January 31, 1968.

Television has been regarded as one of the most fundamental methods for closing the education gap and reaching large segments of the population that lack access to education opportunities fast and effectively. The role and influence of communication instruments such as radio and television on education in development plans reflect the need for improvement the education opportunities. The educational roles imposed on the mass media since the 1930s have played a significant role in this. Considering that public education as one of the most fundamental ways of achieving social and cultural transformation for progress and modernization from the very beginning provided the basis for these tools to be handled with a similar approach in the following years as well.<sup>17</sup> The positioning of education as “one of the most effective tools” for development as of the First Five-Year Development Plan,<sup>18</sup> and the emphasising on its “place and importance in modernization” for a society that is undergoing radical transformation<sup>19</sup> reveals this approach.

Throughout the Second Plan period (1968–1972), the goals of spreading television broadcasts throughout the country were supported by the emphasis on television’s “utilization as an educational tool.”<sup>20</sup> The emphasis on the need for a significant educational mobilisation in terms of literacy education, non-formal education, and training programs in the Second Five-Year Plan brought out the consideration of making appropriate use of out-of-school education opportunities. The emphasis on the importance of comprehensive and non-formal education at various levels and stages in terms of development, highlighted the necessity of utilising a tool such as television to rapidly and effectively overcome limited educational opportunities.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, it is mentioned that the increased rate of mass media utilisation in the country contributes to the acceleration of modernization and development activities in the Second Plan.<sup>22</sup> This approach reflects a modernising belief to the relationship between development, education, and mass media during this period. And it is apparent that over the same period, this developmentalist modernist approach was recognized in TRT.<sup>23</sup>

It is thought that television, which is expected to overcome the limitations of radio, will play a more active role in education in this period.<sup>24</sup> However, the goals and efforts to successfully use mass media for the purpose of education revealed the insufficiency of technological tools in the field of broadcasting during this period. The limited coverage,

programming structure, and receivers of radios and televisions have revealed a picture that is incompatible with the high expectations from these tools. Furthermore, as Oskay points out, one of the main reasons that successful educational programming could not be carried out is an excessive expectation from these resources and the misunderstanding that they can replace schools and teachers, rather than proper utilisation of radio and television in education.<sup>25</sup>

### 3 Educational Broadcasting from Radio to Television with the Collaboration of TRT and MoNE

However, initiatives to employ mass media for educational purposes began long before television in Turkey. Radio, cinema, and other means of communication were all actively utilised in this regard. In the 1930s particularly, the increase in the state's interest in mass media, especially radio, strengthened the belief that these tools would play an active role in spreading the official ideology, and supporting transition and adaptation of the public to the contemporary world.<sup>26</sup> This belief continued in later periods as well. In terms of radio, the 1940s was a period when producing educational programs gained prominence. Since this date, programs aimed at the rural areas, women, and children began to be produced.<sup>27</sup> These programs were produced on the basis of a non-formal education approach rather than formal education.

In the 1960s, "school programs" for formal education were incorporated into these broadcasts. Especially since April 1963, the educational broadcasts aired by Ankara Provincial Radio in cooperation with the MoNE have been an important step. *Ocakbaşı* prepared for the village, *School on the Radio* and *Summer School* to convey primary school information, and *Radio Class* programs for secondary education were the first examples of these.<sup>28</sup> Thus, both MoNE and TRT started to take important steps in preparing education programs. The concept of educational broadcasting, which was shaped based on these programs, was later adapted to television. Thus, 1968 marked the start of educational broadcasts on television. The fact that these pioneering educational broadcasts, which broadcast live for 15 minutes every 15 days, are primarily produced by the Ministry of National Education's Film-Radio and Television Center strengthens this finding.<sup>29</sup> As Cevat Geray stated, this unit of the MoNE, which started operating as of 1951, evolved into a production centre of educational programs for radio and television.<sup>30</sup>

Apart from the fact that television is a costly investment that requires significant technical infrastructure and programming knowledge, television broadcasts remained restricted for a time during this period due to political tensions around TRT.<sup>31</sup> Until the early 1970s, it was broadcast three days a week for three hours a day (Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays between 19.28 and 22.45), with a limited broadcasting area of only Ankara province. Television was given more prominence following the 12 March 1971 Turkish Military Memorandum, and as a result of the investments made, it entered a period of rapid development and expansion during the 1970s. Efforts to expand the educational use of television and to make this tool accessible to all became prominent on this basis. The development and distribution of education through television have been frequently emphasised, both in terms of TRT's fundamental values and purposes and, more broadly, in terms of the country's development and progress objectives. During this period of low literacy rates, the idea that television would play a significant role in the increasing of literacy forefront. "... Literacy mobilization with TV can quickly fill in the gaps of the past. And classrooms can be opened on the TV screen in every corner of the country... Television will be able to operate as a school and teacher in every region and village."<sup>32</sup> As a matter of fact, this emphasis supports the above-mentioned finding that while these tools have serious limitations, there were excessive expectations from these tools regarding education.

Despite the technical limitations and unplanned attitude,<sup>33</sup> it is noteworthy that educational programs have occupied a prominent position in the television stream as of its early years. For instance, in Ankara Television's first year (1969), educational programs featured programs such as *Public School* (developed in collaboration with Hacettepe University), *German Language Lesson*, *French Language Lesson*, *English Language Lesson*, *Traffic Education in Schools*, *Science and Technology in Our Daily Lives*, *Guidance and Mental Health*, and *Nutrition*.<sup>34</sup> In addition to the

limited broadcast times, the scarcity of broadcast programs, and the inadequacy of program production capacity, the fact that the content produced by the Film-Radio and Television Center of the Ministry of National Education to be a good resource for television broadcasts played a fundamental role in the predominance of educational programs in the television stream.<sup>35</sup> Thus, it is apparent that the MoNE, rather than TRT, played a dominant role in education through communication instruments during the first period. The early 1970s, on the other hand, marked the beginning of a period during which TRT attempted to change this situation by developing an institutional framework for educational programs.

#### 4 TRT and “School Television” Broadcasts in the 1970s

In the 1970s, TRT tried to develop educational television broadcasting especially for formal education with *School Television* broadcasts, and on the other hand, tried to fulfil its role of realising a more general public education with non-formal education programs for rural and urban life. Although TRT’s television broadcasts began at 19:30 in these years, educational programs were also broadcast in the morning. In this way, the *School Television* or *School Broadcasting* had been a fundamental broadcasting segment in which interaction between television and education was evident, particularly in the first half of the 1970s.<sup>36</sup> These programs broadcast were produced in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education and Film-Radio and Television Center. While these programs were first developed for primary school students, they were later expanded to include secondary and high school students.<sup>37</sup> The fact that these broadcasts took place in the morning, with some broadcasting live, relates to the goal of producing programs for watching in schools and directly supporting formal education.<sup>38</sup> In this context, it’s worth noting that TRT, MoNE, and Ankara Municipality collectively distributed 50 television sets to villages, schools, and public education centers.<sup>39</sup> Although television investment expanded in the early half of the 1970s, television continued to operate technically within a constrained area and structure. Furthermore, the high cost of television sets was a serious obstacle to its broad adoption. As a result, efforts to disseminate television in schools during these early years remained quite limited.



Figure 1. An image from the programs prepared for the *School TV*.<sup>40</sup>

When the TRT Program Magazine of the 1970s is reviewed, it is observed that as of 1974, the *School Television* broadcasts were carried four days a week between 10:30 and 11:30, increasing the broadcast days and duration. It is also significant in this regard as reruns of these programs began to air between 15:00 and 16:00. This is a reflection of the increase of television's technological capacity and broadcast times. By 1975, television coverage had expanded to 28% of the country and 55% of the population. The increase in coverage area in densely populated cities proves that television had become available to a wider population segment. While the number of broadcast days was extended to seven per week, the number of broadcast hours was significantly increased.<sup>41</sup> *The School Television Project's* airing of programs for primary, secondary, and high schools shows the efforts to expand educational broadcasts to span all levels of formal education. All of these developments established a strong relationship between television and education in the 1970s.<sup>42</sup>

While TRT's attempts to support formal education continued in the 1970s, it also began to identify and create a corporate television programming strategy for non-formal education. These initiatives were supported by the idea that TRT should focus on public education rather than formal education and plan its programs accordingly.<sup>43</sup> The continuing attempt in TRT's Program Planning and Annual Reports for establishing formal and non-formal education categories reflected the conditions of the time and efforts to determine TRT's priority role in schools.<sup>44</sup> Thus, while the Second Five-Year Plan highlights a literacy mobilization within the context of non-formal education, the Third Plan highlights the importance and necessity of vocational training based on developments in industrialization.<sup>45</sup> The fact that TRT recognized 1973 as a starting year for adult education is also noteworthy in this regard.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1970s, while rural life and agricultural production still maintain their importance, the pace of urbanisation and industrialization increased significantly and urban life started to be turned into one of the most basic features of social life in Turkey.<sup>47</sup> This has been reflected in TRT's efforts to develop educational programs for both the rural and urban life. TRT's goal of making programs that are "to provide the adaptation of slum area audience to city life..." is also understandable from this perspective.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the fact that television is technically possible to watch, particularly in big cities, makes this goal more meaningful. The understanding of culturally and politically educate the people through radio and television persisted during the TRT period, as seen by these definitions and emphases. Radio and television education was still being considered in conjunction with the ideas of speeding up modernization and achieving social-cultural progress by educating the public on the basis of developmental goals. The reflections of this cultural elitist attitude are seen across the social and cultural encounters and contradictions that are evident through the urbanisation process, which gradually increased between 1950 and 1980, becomes obvious.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, criticisms that TRT could not fulfil its role of protecting and developing culture were the most basic arguments that occurred throughout the second half of the 1970s, based on the belief that television broadcasts induce cultural degeneration and corruption because of popularisation of its content.

The fact that views regarding the need to reshape television's educational content would become apparent in this context, particularly in the late 1970s, is closely related to these transformations. In this context, the emphasis on developing an education mentality suitable for the social structure that had been radically transformed on the basis of developments such as industrialization and urbanisation was evident in the Fourth Five-Year Development Plan Education Specialization Commission Report published in 1977.<sup>50</sup> Similar considerations were also expressed in the early 1980s. According to Geray, limiting TRT's education programs to encourage the rural people to farming in a period of accelerating urbanization was also contrary to development plans. Therefore, programs should be planned to comply with existing changes.<sup>51</sup> However, despite the continued belief on the educational role of television, the 1970s was a period that television broadcasting began to be considered on the basis of popularisation. The fact that serials and entertainment programs started to become popular in the second half of the 1970s played a fundamental role in this development.

Although TRT extended its education programs with the broadcasts of the Non-formal Higher Education Institution (YAYKUR),<sup>52</sup> the rise of criticism that television neglects its educational role during this period is understandable from this perspective. Moreover, the lack of a planned and research-based strategy for these television programs sparked debates over their qualifications.<sup>53</sup> The fact that television began to be handled more and more through popular content during this period when domestic and foreign dramas began to take centre stage in television broadcasts was the most fundamental development that heightened these concerns. These discussions emphasised that focusing on the concept of entertainment puts television's essential role in the background. According to Aziz, there is a decrease in the educational broadcast hours of television. Because the rate of educational broadcasts declines as broadcast hours increase, popular content reduces the interest toward education programs.<sup>54</sup> Thus, "...television broadcasts are filled with foreign-produced television dramas or films..."<sup>55</sup> The fact that educational and cultural broadcasts ranked first with 26% in 1973<sup>56</sup> dropped to 14% in 1978, and TV dramas and films ranked first with a roughly 23% share supports this transformation.<sup>57</sup>

The increase in the number and variety of television programs broadcast, as well as the proportion of films, television series, and other sports, music, and entertainment programs in the broadcast stream, can be explained by the fact that the broadcasting mentality began to take shape within the dominant framework of the international television industry. This related to the fact that television broadcasting is shaped in a foreign-dependent structure in almost every aspect.<sup>58</sup> For example, dramas were the most important and popular content in Western television broadcasts as of the 1950s.<sup>59</sup> The popularity of these popular products in Turkey throughout the 1970s is closely linked to the development process of television in the country and the dominant functioning of the international television industry. This is evidenced by the fact that foreign serials and films accounted for a larger share of the broadcast stream in 1977 than domestic productions.<sup>60</sup> Within this framework, we can claim that the popularity of popular content is beginning to overshadow television's educational mission, even if there is no shortage of educational content in the broadcast stream. In this perspective, it is not coincidental that television is increasingly viewed as an entertainment medium rather than an educational one. Additionally, one could argue that the continued importance placed on utilising radio and television for education in the late 1970s contributed to these concerns.

## **5 Liberalisation Tendency and Educational Programs in Television Broadcasting from the 1980s to 1990s**

The decline in education programs on television was a trend that began in the late 1970s when the planned developmental approach fell into the background and was replaced with global neoliberal policies. The 1980 military coup in Turkey and the subsequent Turgut Özal's governments period were instrumental in bringing about this transformation and establishing neoliberal free-market policies. When the consumption culture was added to these developments in the socio-cultural context of the 1980s, a process became apparent in which the emphasis shifted away from educational and cultural goals of television to technical access and multichannel transformation, and popular content spread to almost all media from the press to cinema and television.<sup>61</sup> The wide coverage of the new lifestyle which was based on consumption culture in popular contents played an important role in the acceptance and spread of this new cultural structure.<sup>62</sup>

It is evident that television's educational role was emphasised much more when innovative technical advances were made and efforts to reform the field of broadcasting were launched. During this time, with the establishment of a second channel, the transition to colour television, and the establishment of private channels through the elimination of the public monopoly were all being pursued, television's educational role re-emerged to assist these transformations. Thus, the 1980s was a time of increased technical and commercial interest in television. While the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan for the period 1985–1989 emphasised the use of satellite technology to provide

multi-channel television broadcasts, it is more comprehensible to note that this development will also be employed for educational purposes.<sup>63</sup> It is worth noting that the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan places a similar emphasis on the maintenance of the interaction between education and television as support for transformations.<sup>64</sup> In this period, the news that the MoNE will also establish private channels is related to this transformation. One may argue that the MoNE's initiative supports the idea that the termination of the public monopoly and the transition to multi-channel private broadcasting will provide new educational opportunities. In this context, the news that TRT and the MoNE are collaborating to establish an educational television network with a total of five channels is apparent, the first of which is scheduled to begin operating at the end of 1988.<sup>65</sup>

News about this topic continued into the early 1990s when private television networks began airing without a legal basis. As a result, it is planned to restructure the MoNE's Film, Radio, and Television Education Center as a joint-stock corporation to establish a channel under the Ministry's management exclusively devoted to educational programs. It is reported that the MoNE's desire to establish its own television network stems from TRT's decision to decrease the hours of its *School Television* program due to insufficient efficiency.<sup>66</sup> In this news, it is noteworthy that TRT reduced the duration of its educational broadcasts. However, this is actually related to the fact that TRT is experiencing competition rather than inefficiency in its broadcasts and that it is growing increasingly aware of the importance to plan its broadcast schedule in light of these competitive relationships. News of these projects began to circulate in 1994 as well. This time, the news about the MoNE launching a two-channel educational television network dominated the headlines. MoNE states that “[w]e are producing broadcasts in every field of education, from pre-school to non-formal. Until now, we have been constrained in our ability to broadcast radio and television due to weak infrastructure and dependence on TRT. However, we believe that we will disseminate this with Türksat.”<sup>67</sup> The emphasis on satellite technology for educational television facilities is especially important since it reflects Mowlana and Wilson's late 1980s approach to this subject. Educational opportunities are also considered when evaluating new technologies. The mention in the same statement that the MoNE would no longer be reliant on TRT for educational broadcasts is significant since it indicates that for the first time, educational television or broadcasting began to be reviewed independently of TRT. This approach is more fundamentally related to the demise of the perception that TRT was solely responsible for radio and television broadcasting in the 1980s. The main orientation of broadcasting, as Kejanlioğlu said, has been commercialization from this period. This transformation also reflected in TRT, and TRT has almost turned into a “semi-private” broadcaster.<sup>68</sup>

## 5.1 Educational Programs on Television in the 1980s

When all of these developments are considered, it is worth noting that when education programs on television as of the early 1980s are reviewed, efforts to promote literacy and non-formal education activities took centre stage. During the same period, open university programs for weekend university education and exam broadcast courses were also broadcasted. The *TV School* program, developed in collaboration with the MoNE and aired in 1981, aimed to increase the literacy rate. At the end of 1981, it was planned to broadcast 55 programs on literacy courses prepared by the MoNE on TRT.<sup>69</sup>



Video 2. Adult literacy education was provided to adults in 1981 through the television program *TV School*.

As of January 1982, literacy programs continued to be broadcast under the title of *TV School*.<sup>70</sup> The MoNE conducted a survey about this program and accordingly started the preparation of a second program.<sup>71</sup> On January 3, 1983, a new broadcast began under the same name. This program, which aired five days a week between 19.25 and 19.55, was also intended to promote literacy.<sup>72</sup>



Video 3. A news video on literacy programs that was broadcasted by TRT.

In 1986, MoNE announced that the model of the education with television would be applied in national education and that television sets would be installed in all schools. It stated that this model, which is based on the British system, will be reviewed and implemented.<sup>73</sup> This initiative, however, could not be realised. The MoNE desired to broadcast *TV School* in order to broadcast certain high school senior class courses on television in the early 1990s. The program was delayed due to a lack of television sets in schools and a difficulty to reach an agreement with TRT on the program's broadcasting hours.<sup>74</sup> Criticisms of the TV School program, which began airing in November 1989, came swiftly. There were criticisms that TV School broadcasts were not accessible to all students due to technical difficulties and a shortage of television equipment in schools, and that the program material was insufficient.<sup>75</sup> All of these developments indicate that educational activities involving television face significant technical and content challenges in practically every period.

## **5.2 Establishment of Private Channels: The Relationship between Television and Education in a Competitive Environment**

Until the 1990s, education programs produced by TRT and the MoNE were a critical component of keeping television on the educational agenda. Although there were occasional criticisms of TRT's popularisation efforts, the primary discussion framework remained focused on TRT's public responsibilities, which included educating the public, contributing to the development of culture, and supporting development. However, the multi-channel private broadcasting environment, which began in 1990 with the introduction of the first private channel,<sup>76</sup> created a platform for public discussion on television's technical progress and content from a totally different perspective. As was the case with other media content of the period, entertainment-oriented program genres dominated television content. In this new broadcasting environment, where reality shows, foreign dramas and films, talk shows, and other entertainment-oriented program types soon established a foothold on all channels, programs began to be judged on the basis of competitive relationships.<sup>77</sup> According to Çaplı, channels flooded the public with entertainment throughout this time period.<sup>78</sup>

Although TRT placed a strong emphasis on education when it established TV3 in October 1989 and TV4 in July 1990,<sup>79</sup> education and television discussions faded into the background due to the broadcasting industry's market-based general orientation. The fact that TRT did not have the technical capacity to meet the content of newly established channels also played a major role in this. The rapid transformation and growing number of channels coincided with a period when the content problem became increasingly apparent, both on TRT and on private channels. Hence, a structure that further increased the external dependency of broadcasting was formed. Within this framework, the new course of broadcasting was defined by the attempt to fill broadcast times with low-cost, entertainment-oriented foreign products. This situation has also occurred in TRT and the contents produced by the private sector and foreign organisations have started to take up a large place in TRT broadcasts.<sup>80</sup>

To govern this unregulated private broadcasting environment, Article 31 of Law No. 3984 on the Establishment and Broadcasting of Radio and Television (RTÜK), which took effect in April 1994, mandated that private channels carry a specific quantity of educational and cultural content. However, this law more fundamentally provided the groundwork for commercial broadcasting.<sup>81</sup> Within this context, private channels violated this regulation, competing to fill their broadcasts with popular content with high ratings. Private channels failed to meet educational and cultural role of broadcasting, and educational program rate remained at 1% in some channels.<sup>82</sup> This indicates how the mentality of broadcasting shifted dramatically and begun to be addressed from a new perspective in 1990s.

## 6 Conclusion

Since the emergence of television, the educational role of this medium has been one of the most controversial social and cultural issues. In this framework, an attempt has been made to form a broadcasting mentality. Depending on the broadcasting model adopted, various approaches and practices regarding television's educational role have arisen. Within this context, television's educational role and activities have evolved under the influence of the countries' social conditions and broadcasting policies. The idea that communication instruments are critical for the development of societies and cultures has been essential in highlighting the educational value ascribed to television, particularly in developing countries.

In light of the experiences in radio broadcasting in Turkey, television has been credited with playing a critical role in educating people and therefore facilitating modernization, development and progress. This role has been emphasised throughout the process of television's establishment, dissemination throughout the country, and subsequent development on the basis of new technologies. TRT's public service broadcasting model also laid the groundwork for television to be primarily handled over educational and cultural aspects. The MoNE's emphasis on radio and television for educational purposes has resulted in an active role in TRT's educational broadcasts. Thus, until the 1990s, when TRT held a monopoly, the MoNE's initiatives in television education were also decisive.

The 1990s, when private channels were established, revealed that the educational role of television was inextricably linked to much more fundamental social and cultural transformations. In the contemporary socio-cultural climate, where prevailing patterns of consumer culture are rapidly adopted as a result of global neoliberal policies, television has been repositioned as a place of entertainment rather than education and culture.

## Notes

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