

THE EFFECT OF PEOPLE EDUCATION CENTERS' LITERACY COURSES  
ON WOMEN'S LIVES

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## Thesis Abstract

Özlem Yazlık, “The Effect of People Education Centers’ Literacy Courses on Women’s lives”

This theses aims to explore the effect of People’s Education Centers’ (PEC) literacy courses on women’s lives through an exploration of their perceptions of the changes that happened in their lives as a result of their participation in the course. For this case study method was used and semi-structured interviews were carried out with seven women participants who completed Level 1 Literacy courses offered by Kağıthane/Gültepe PEC.

Women’s accounts of the changes that occurred as a result of their participation in the course revealed that after the course all participants were able to travel, read and write to carry on their tasks without having to rely on others. All women in the study felt themselves more self-confident as a result of attending the course. As for changes in the relations in their families women in the study who had been working outside the house for a long time felt that they always had a certain say in the decisions taken in the family. After the course all women in the study started to put themselves as role models for other illiterate women in their family or community.

The analysis of the interviews suggested that women in the study challenged economic constraints, patriarchal power structures and dominant gender roles in order to attend and continue the literacy course so that they could have an increasing sense of independence and self-reliance in their lives. They all wanted to keep or increase the sense of independence they had in their lives.

## Tez Özeti

### Özlem Yazlık, “Halk Eğitim Merkezleri Okuma Yazma Kurslarının Kadınların Hayatına Etkisi”

Bu tez Halk Eğitim Merkezleri okuma yazma kurslarının kadınların hayatına etkisini onların kursa katılım sonucunda hayatlarında gerçekleşen değişiklikleri algılayışlarını araştırarak ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bunun için durum (örnek olay) çalışması yöntemi kullanılmış ve Kağıthane/Gültepe Halk Eğitim Merkezi’nin sunduğu birinci kademe okuma yazma kursunu tamamlamış yedi kadınla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır.

Kadınların kursa katılım sonucu hayatlarında meydana gelen değişiklikler hakkında anlattıkları ders sonrasında tüm katılımcıların başkalarından yardım istemek zorunda kalmadan seyahat edebildiklerini ve okuma yazma gerektiren işlerini halledebildiklerini ortaya koydu. Kursa katılım sonucu araştırmaya katılan tüm kadınların kendilerine güvenleri artmıştı. Aile içindeki ilişkilerde değişiklikler konusunda ise uzun süredir ev dışında çalışma hayatı olan kadınlar ailede alınan kararlarda zaten belirli bir söz hakları olduğunu düşünüyordu. Kurstan sonra araştırmaya katılan tüm kadınlar kendilerini ailelerindeki ve çevrelerindeki diğer okuma yazma bilmeyen kadınlara örnek göstermeye başlamışlardı.

Araştırmaya katılan kadınlar hayatlarında artan bir özgürlük ve kendine yeterlik kazanabilmek amacıyla kursa katılmak ve devam etmek için mali zorluklar, ataerkil güç yapıları ve baskın toplumsal cinsiyet rolleriyle mücadele etmişlerdi. Hepsinde elde ettikleri bağımsızlığı korumak veya arttırmak istiyordu.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Everyone has a fundamental right to literacy in order to realize herself/himself in the world. At the same time literacy is seen as the basis of personal power, leading to positive changes in the lives of individuals as situated in their particular socio-economic circumstances. Furthermore, increases in female literacy tend to be linked to lower rates of infant mortality and maternal mortality in childbirth, improved children's health, smaller families, lower rates of early marriages, higher school-enrolment rates among girls, and increased self-confidence and self-esteem (UNESCO, 2004b).

In 2004 there were nearly eight hundred million illiterate adults in the world, representing 18% of the adult population; women constituted 64% of world's illiterate (UNESCO, 2004a). As for illiteracy rates in Turkey, although significant gains have been achieved in terms of women's schooling and literacy rates since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, TUIK (2006) statistics showed that 11.9% of adults, as of fifteen years old, in Turkey were illiterate in 2006, with 4% illiteracy among men and 19.6% illiteracy among women. Thus, along with many other countries, adult literacy education in general and literacy education for women in particular continue to be one of the major issues on the adult education agenda in Turkey. Furthermore, when it is considered from a gender perspective literacy courses for women are seen as part of the struggle against gender-based

discrimination and unjust socio-economic realities women experience (Van der Westen, 1994).

In Turkey the Ministry of National Education (MONE) is the main provider of adult literacy courses. Although there are a number of non-governmental institutions who conduct adult literacy classes with their own programmes and curricula, MONE is the official body that awards literacy certificates and checks the quality of these programmes. Nohl and Sayılan (2004) noted that in 2002 the number of participants (189,494) in the Level 1 Literacy Courses at People Education Centers (PEC), which includes the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy, was fourteen times bigger than the total number of participants (14,516) in other programmes undertaken by non-governmental organizations.

PECs, as the biggest providers of adult education courses in Turkey, attract the biggest number of literacy participants as well. In the educational year 2005-2006, women constituted 43% of the participants in vocational courses, 69% of those in literacy courses, and 53% of those in social and cultural courses (TUIK, 2005).

However, although PECs play such a big role in providing literacy courses for women, there are as yet no studies that investigated the effect of PEC literacy courses on women's lives at the level of individuals living in their particular socio-economic and political contexts. The only study that assessed the effect of participation in PEC courses on women's lives chose only research participants from courses in handicrafts, machine embroidery, cutting and sewing, embroidery, furnishing, painting, mother-child education, knitting, accounting, fashion design, fashion styling (Başer Kalkan, 1996). This study revealed that participation in the courses resulted in positive changes in women's self-perception, relations with the family,



and organization of time. Participation in the courses did not however seem to have affected traditional gender roles internalized by women.

Another study that explored the impact of literacy courses on women's personal and social development, carried out by Durgunoğlu (2000), evaluated not PEC literacy courses but the Functional Literacy Programme of the Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı (AÇEV) (Mother Child Education Foundation) and documented changes in the cognitive outcomes of the course as well as personal changes. The study revealed that women felt increased self-confidence and a sense of independence as a result of their attending of the course.

This study accordingly aims to explore the effect of People Education Centers' literacy courses on women's lives by exploring their perceptions of the changes that took place in their lives as a result of their participation in the course. The study takes life histories of participants as a unit of analysis since it is considered important to situate participants' perceptions of the effects of the course on their lives within their biographies and particular socio-economic contexts. It especially looks into the relationships between women's accounts of their life histories, concerning both their current socio-economic position, conditions and biographies, and their perceptions of the changes in their lives as a result of their participation in the PEC literacy courses. Relating women's accounts of their lives to their perceptions of the changes that occurred as a result of their participation in the course is considered important because Personal Narratives Group (1989), Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) and Goodson and Sikes (2001) noted that since life histories located people's accounts of their lives in particular socio-historical contexts they revealed the dialectic between unique life experiences of people and the wider worlds of power relations and meaning. Thus life history had a potential to validate people's voices

and experiences through its attempt to explore people's understandings of their lives from their own voices.

### Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study aims to explore the effect of PEC literacy courses on women's lives through an exploration of their perceptions of the changes that took place in their lives as a result of their participation in the course, taking life histories of women as a unit of analysis. The main purpose of the study is:

1. to explore the effect of participation in PEC literacy courses on women's lives from their own perspectives.

In order to do this the study will look into the relationship between women's accounts of their current and earlier lives and their perceptions of changes in their lives that occurred as a result of their participation in the course.

The study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the expectations of the participants in attending the course?
2. What are the problems they experience during the course?
3. How do they describe their communication with other participants in the course?
4. What do the participants think are the effects of the course on their lives?
  - What are they able to do after the course that they could not do before?
  - How did the participants' self-perceptions change through their participation in the course?

- What are the changes in their relations in the family?
  - What are the changes in their relations in the community?
  - What relationship do their life histories have to their perceptions of the effect of the course on their lives as a result of their participation in the course?
5. What are the participating women's understandings of women's status and conditions in Turkey?

### Significance of the Study

Trying to understand accounts of personal lives embedded in particular social, economic and political contexts and the ways people talk about their lives are important. This attempt has a potential to reveal the dialectic between unique life experiences and wider power structures. Life opportunities of women in Turkey are restricted in different ways as a result of their life conditions, socio-economic positions and dominant patriarchal forces. Yet, women are also known to negotiate these restrictions with the authority figures and power structures in their lives in order to gain an increased control over their life choices.

Literacy is considered potentially empowering for women at personal and social levels. Yet very few studies have investigated the effects of any literacy education programmes on the situation of participants with regard to their self-perceptions, their relations in the family and community, and existing power relations based on gender. Specifically, participants' perceptions of the effect of PEC literacy courses on their lives were not investigated before. Women constitute a bigger portion of participants in basic literacy courses in Turkey, and literacy classes

are considered to have a big potential to create self-empowering changes in their lives at personal and social levels. Thus this study will relate the women's perceptions of the changes in their lives that occurred as a result of their participation in PEC literacy courses to their accounts of their life conditions, socio-economic status and biographies

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This part aims to explore key concepts in adult literacy education and women's education and literacy in Turkey. It first discusses major approaches to adult literacy education and women's literacy. It then discusses women's formal education, adult education activities and adult literacy programmes in Turkey with a focus on women participants in these programmes.

#### Adult Literacy Education

I will here first discuss major approaches to adult literacy education and secondly the feminization of literacy and problems associated with literacy programmes for women. I aim to discuss major issues related with literacy education and literacy programmes for women in order to situate women's literacy education in Turkey within this broader framework.

#### Major Approaches to Adult Literacy Education

Literacy as a concept has various meanings, and definitions of literacy have both explicit and implicit views of its functions and uses, influencing the goals, strategies, methodologies and learning materials of literacy programmes. In the earlier documentation of the 1950s, UNESCO's definition of literacy involved the basic skills of reading and writing with no further qualification, stating that "a literate

person is one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his or her everyday life” (UNESCO, 2004b). In the 1970s, a functional definition of literacy was adopted which defined a functionally literate person as “one who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for the effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community’s development” (UNESCO, 2004b). Yet, in the 1960s and 1970s, with his work with the illiterate peasants in Brazil and Chile, Paulo Freire rejected the notion of literacy as mechanistic teaching of reading and writing (Freire, 1972). He theorized literacy practices as radical cultural actions for social change, that would that give voice to the oppressed to read their word and world in an effort to change it.

The most recent definitions of literacy involve diverse functions of literacy, pointing to the multiplicity of literacy with a focus on individual needs. Levine (1986) defined functional literacy as “the possession of, or access to, the competences and information required to accomplish transactions entailing reading and writing in which an individual wishes – or is compelled – to engage” (p.43). In discussing the philosophy of a functional literacy programme targeting women in Turkey, Durgunoğlu, Öney, and Kuşçul (2003) emphasized that this particular functional literacy programme defined functionality in even broader terms, taking into account the effect of literacy on personal empowerment through increased self-confidence, a sense of independence and aspirations for the future. The definition provided by UNESCO in 2003 stated that “Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling

individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society” (UNESCO, 2004b).

Major approaches to adult literacy campaigns and programmes incorporated the goals and uses of literacy mentioned in the attempts to define literacy above. Adult literacy campaigns and programmes were identified to have three primary approaches: 1) traditional literacy which regarded literacy as the learning of reading, writing and numeracy skills; 2) functional literacy which saw literacy as a means of socio-economic development that focused on functional skills so as to improve living conditions of learners, increase their earnings and enhance their production capacities; and 3) the empowering and liberating approach that aimed at social and political empowerment through which people would realize imposed power relations in their lives and undertake actions to change them for more just realities (UNESCO, 2004b; Agnaou, 2004).

Oğuzkan (1981) noted that traditional literacy programmes focused on the teaching of reading, writing and basic numeracy as an end in itself, without taking account of the life conditions and needs of participants. These programmes were thus characterized by high drop-out rates and participants who forgot the literacy skills they gained in the programmes. Oğuzkan observed that traditional literacy campaigns were considered as a quick means of reaching illiterate masses and tended to be more successful as a part of a powerful political or social reform movement, an example of which would be the case of Millet Mektepleri (People’s Schools) in the early years of the Republic of Turkey.

As for functional literacy, Oğuzkan (1981) noted that this approach to literacy regarded it as linked to social and economic development. Functional literacy campaigns used different materials which rested upon the needs and interests of

different groups and incorporated vocational, agricultural and health issues in the programme content, which was seen as the positive aspect of the functional approach. Yet, acknowledging the management problems, high rates of truancy and the use of traditional methods in functional literacy programmes, Oğuzkan suggested that research for effective literacy methods be an on-going process.

As for the liberating approach to literacy, which considered the acquisition of literacy synonymous with the development of a critical consciousness of one's social condition and position and the capacity to challenge them, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy has influenced a wide range of people from various fields who are committed to radical educational and social change. Before discussing Freire's work with illiterate people in Brazil and Chile, it is important to discuss the underlying assumptions and major concepts in his critical pedagogy.

Freire's critical pedagogy was marked by his commitment to visions of social justice and transformation. The underlying assumptions of his pedagogy were oppression, consciousness and historical change. Freire had a genuine faith in the capacity of human beings to become active knowers and critical questioners of their reality in the struggle to transform it. Freire developed his pedagogy within a concept of *praxis*, a unity of knowledge and action.

In his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire offered a systematic elaboration of his concept of critical pedagogy, the notion of *praxis* and the practices to actualize it. In this book he perceived education as an action to help with the transformation of the oppressive structures. In Freirean thought education was a social action that could liberate people, helping them become critically conscious of their reality and their capacity to change it, lest it *domesticate* them. The whole educational activity was political since it had implications that manifested



itself in a wide array of practices, such as the teacher-student relationship, the content that was chosen and left out, the interests it served, the objectives it fulfilled, and who decided them and benefited from them.

Freire thought traditional education, for which he used the metaphor “the banking concept of education”, *domesticated* the student (p. 72). The banking concept of education referred to situations in which teachers filled the empty minds of the students with official information as experts who knew everything. In this education, the learner was not an equal subject in the knowing process but an object of assistance to be filled with the official knowledge on the agenda of the teacher. This one-way transmission of knowledge inhibited a dialogue between the learners and teacher through which they could explore what they could learn from each other and try to understand themselves and their world by a mutual inquiry into it. *The banking concept of education* made students silent recipients of knowledge, denying them opportunities to question existing knowledge and to attempt to transform social structures. It was an effective tool for the oppressor to hinder the prospect of action for liberation, perpetuating their privileged positions of power in the dominant social structures.

Freire developed his critical pedagogy to challenge and replace traditional educational theory. He developed a “problem-posing” concept of education that asked critical questions and encouraged students to ask their own questions about their conditions, which were perceived as challenging problems to act on in the attempt for liberation from the oppressive elements in their reality (p.79). The task of the critical educator was to help students read their oppression, providing them an arena to critically understand their reality and their transformative power to recreate this reality in a more humane and just way in an act of transformative dialogue.

Freire's work with illiterate peasants in Brazil and Chile was fundamental to the development of his concept of critical pedagogy. He theorized literacy practices as radical cultural actions that would give voice to the oppressed to read their word and world in order to attempt to change it. In *Cultural Action for Freedom* (1972) he said: "( ...) The human word is more than vocabulary- it is word- and – action. The cognitive dimensions of literacy must include the relationship of men with their world" (p.29). Thus he rejected the notion that literacy was mechanistic teaching of reading and writing. Becoming literate meant reflecting upon the reality from which the words were derived. In this reality, people were seen as possessors and creators of culture that was manifested in every day speech, relations, behaviour, and work. Since Freire thought reading the words was more than a process of decoding the signs, his critical pedagogy challenged literacy educators to become immersed in the everyday lives of people to discover "generative words and themes" which were derived from their familiar conditions (Freire, 1974, p.96).

In *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974) Freire offered a systematic elaboration of the process and aim of his literacy campaigns. In Freirean pedagogy generative words and themes were "codified" into visual representations of people's real situations. *Decodification* was the term he used to refer to the analysis of generative words and themes by the teachers and students through a critical dialogue between equal subjects in the learning process. The phases of the critical literacy process included as its first phase the process in which literacy educators got immersed in the daily lives of people to discover recurring words and themes to be used in the literacy programme. The team of researchers studied people's everyday reality and common vocabulary through having informal conversations with them, observing their culture and listening to their daily language. In the second phase the

literacy team selected generative words in accordance with the criteria of phonemic richness, phonetic difficulty, and the importance of the words within the learner's social, political and cultural reality. Fifteen words were seen as enough to generate all other words in Portuguese. In the third phase generative themes were *codified* into drawings of familiar scenes, and presented with the generative words according to their phonemic difficulty. Each drawing represented a challenging aspect in the learner's reality to be recognized, discussed and acted upon collectively. Discussion of the codifications, through the exchange of experiences and contextual information, lead to a critical consciousness of the challenging circumstances at the same time learners started to read and write.

Teachers developed reading and writing activities by using the key words the learners named while discussing the themes. In the fourth phase the learners elaborated on the agenda generating related themes and words. In the fifth phase the learners broke down multisyllabic words and recombined the syllables to generate new words through the use of *discovery cards* (p. 53). For example when studying the generative word "favela" (slum), firstly the learners and their teacher discussed the challenging conditions related with the word- "housing, education, food, clothing in a slum"- seeing it as a problem situation to be acted upon (p. 82). Then the semantic links and the syllables of the word were studied to generate new words and critical debates related with these words. Thus, reading the word lead to a critical consciousness that enabled the learner to read the world.

Freire's literacy work in Brazil became very successful.<sup>1</sup> These literacy campaigns aimed to create citizens who could question their unjust reality, the

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<sup>1</sup> Around 25,000 cultural circles were established all around Brazil. In cultural circles people were generally able to create words on the first day of the literacy program. In each circle around 25 people became capable of reading, writing, and analyzing political and daily issues critically in a period of six weeks to two months (Freire, 1974).

manipulations of the mass media, and the propaganda of dominant political structures and take action to transform the dominant reality. The literacy campaigns were underpinned by a commitment to the critique of domination and social change. Thus the military government of Brazil stopped Freire's critical pedagogy and literacy practices in March 1960 since they were seen as potentially subversive.

Freire's literacy methods were however taken up by adult literacy educators to deal with illiteracy in both developing and developed societies. Critics of non-Freirian functional approaches such as Macedo (1997) and Lankshear (1993) argued that instrumentalist/functionalist literacy practices prevalent in both the First and Third world reduced Freire's dialogical method to a form of specialism, which only demanded that people cope with the most minimal procedures in contemporary society to respond to the world as it was. Thus in these literacy campaigns people could not form links between the words they read and their world to enable them to challenge the structures and material conditions of oppression, which was the underlying commitment of Freire's understanding of literacy.

In Turkey, Kirazoğlu (2003) evaluated the first literacy campaign in the history of the Republic of Turkey in 1928 and the second one in 1981 after the 1980 military coup from a Freirian point of view. He noted that the first campaign attracted more participants since it was implemented with more rigour. Yet he pointed out that both campaigns did not use Freirian approaches; they therefore failed to reduce illiteracy to an important extent since they did not take participants's needs and expectations into consideration.

Further critics (de Castell, Luke, & MacLennan, 1986; Levine, 1986) pointed out that "functional" became the new buzzword in literacy education, considering it an essential component of every adult literacy programme. They noted that the

standards of ability set up as targets by many functional literacy programmes were adequate to deal with a very limited range of printed materials, i.e. signs, letters, labels, application forms, whose function was to make people fit into their world as it was with no critical reflection on it so as to attempt to make it more just and humane.

Participation in the social process entails not only sufficient functional literacy to operate effectively *within* existing social and economic systems, but also the ability to make “second order” rational and informed judgments concerning the desirability of the social systems themselves. “Functional literacy” has, therefore, to embrace not merely knowledge of rules and the ability to follow rules, but also the capacity to think, reason, and judge beyond the existing social rules (de Castell, et al. , 1986, p.11).

The ability to reflect on existing social rules and challenge them is particularly important to discuss literacy from a gender perspective. Imposed gender roles and discriminatory social rules of the patriarchal systems determine the life conditions and position of many women in the world. A lot of women are denied the right to literacy and education due to discriminatory practices and traditional gender roles. If literacy education adopts a vision of critical consciousness and social change, it has a big potential to provide space for women to reflect upon unjust realities in their lives, including discriminatory practices and traditional gender roles that limit their life choices. Thus, I will next discuss the illiteracy among women and literacy education for women so as to discuss their major characteristics.

### Women’s Literacy

According to the UNESCO literacy assessment carried out in 2004, there were nearly 800 million illiterate adults in the world, representing 18% of the adult population, compared with about 12% in Turkey; women constituted 64% of world’s illiterate,

compared with about 84% in Turkey (UNESCO, 2004a). Female illiteracy is mostly prevalent in the developing countries, especially in the countries of South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and the Maghreb (Aagnaou, 2004). Thus, women's literacy has been a major goal for many developing countries due to recognition that increases in female literacy are correlated with lower rates of infant mortality and maternal mortality in childbirth, better children's health, longer intervals between pregnancies, lower rates of early marriages, higher school-enrolment rates among girls, and increased self-confidence and awareness of creative abilities which would help women recognize dominant power structures in their lives and their potential to challenge them (Chlebowska, 1990; UNESCO, 2004b).

Aagnaou (2004) noted that socio-economic underdevelopment was considered as the cause of adult illiteracy among men and women, particularly in developing countries. She pointed out that since women experienced further marginalization due to cultural and traditional practices such as parents' opposition, gender roles, multiple social roles as mothers and workers, and heavy demand of family life, they had higher rates of illiteracy, which was called as "feminization of illiteracy" (p.45).

In her discussion of the significance of literacy and literacy education for women, Van der Westen (1994) noted that the high rates of female illiteracy could be considered both from a developmental and from a gender perspective. She noted that when considered from a developmental perspective, literacy and further educational opportunities for women went together with an improvement of living conditions, i.e. nutrition, health, and lower infant mortality. Yet from a gender perspective the high rates of female illiteracy were regarded "as a consequence of unequal power relations and the struggle against illiteracy among women implies the struggle against discrimination on the grounds of gender" (p.262). Thus, Van der Westen suggested

that literacy education for women aim at equality and liberation of women, taking into consideration the specific socio-economic and political contexts in which women's lives were situated and being supplemented with the learning skills that women needed to improve their particular life conditions and situations.

In their description and evaluation of the literacy campaigns for women in developing countries a number of critics (Stromquist, 1992; Kamphoefner, 1996; Agnaou, 2004) found literacy programmes for women in these countries, e.g. Latin American countries, Egypt, and Morocco, far from satisfying women's practical and strategic needs with methods and content that reproduced and reinforced dominant social representations of women. They noted that female literacy programmes should rest upon the needs of women in their particular circumstances and be accompanied by social and economic measures that tackled social exclusion and poverty with a vision of "a different social ordering, one in which poor women have overcome ideologies and social representations of men as powerful and assertive and women as their abnegating, self-effacing companions" (Stromquist, 1992, p. 29).

It is vital to situate illiteracy and literacy education for women within the broader social, economic and social context since women's life choices and opportunities for education are prescribed by the particular realities of their lives. Thus after this brief look at the feminisation of illiteracy and problems associated with women's literacy programmes, the following discussion will be on women's education in Turkey in order to provide a broader framework of women's education in Turkey in order to focus on women's literacy education in Turkey within this framework. This discussion will point to the ways through which women's life choices and education are hindered by economic conditions, patriarchal values and traditional gender roles discriminating against women.

## Women's Education in Turkey

Within women's education in Turkey, women's formal education in Turkey will first be discussed, looking at basic indicators and studies that revealed problematic discriminatory and patriarchal schooling processes and teaching material. Secondly, adult education for women in Turkey will be discussed, considering adult education sites that are potentially important sites for both social change, and educational spaces where women could make up for the opportunities they were denied earlier in their lives. Then literacy education programmes for women in Turkey will be discussed. This part as a whole aims to situate women's literacy education in Turkey within the wider framework of women's education. This part aims to discuss the ways through which patriarchal and economic dynamics impede women's opportunities for education which can potentially help them develop an increasing sense of independence and self-sufficiency.

### Women's Formal Education in Turkey

With the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 women in Turkey were granted social, political and educational rights which were considered as key agents in the modernisation efforts of the new nation-state. Within these rights for women, one can mention compulsory five-year primary-school education, a Civil Code that introduced monogamy in 1926, equal rights in terms of marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance, and property ownership, the right to vote at the local level in



1930 and at the national level in 1934, and job opportunities (Kandiyoti, 1987; Arat, 1998a; İlkaracan 1998).

On the other hand, the reforms of the Turkish Republic were criticized for keeping patriarchal norms intact, for being marked by a perception of women as mothers of the nation and symbols of the modernization rather than as individuals going through a liberating process, and the failure to reach out to a large number of women in rural Turkey (Gök, 2007; Kandiyoti, 1987; Berktaş, 1998; Arat, 1998a, 1998b; Durakbaş, 1998a, 1998b; Kadioğlu, 1998).

A number of critics (Arat, 1998a; Gök, 1999; Göğüş Tan, 2007) noted that women's education in Turkey did not perceive education as a liberating practice that could challenge power relations between men and women, resulting in qualitative and quantitative changes in women's education being far from improving women's status in a significant way. Thus, in order to explore different aspects of women's education in Turkey, it is found useful to start with some basic indicators pointing to the state of women's and girls' compulsory education in Turkey.

Women's literacy rates in Turkey are still far behind men although a great increase in literacy rates has been achieved for both men and women since the establishment of the Republic. In 2006, 11.9% of adults in Turkey were illiterate, with 4% illiteracy rate among men and 19.6% illiteracy rate among women (TUIK, 2006).

The enrolment ratios in 2004 indicated that women lagged behind men at all levels of formal education. Pre-school education, for which gender-sensitive data is not available, suffers from low enrolment rates, with a 12.5% enrolment rate in the 2003-2004 education year (SPO, 2003). In 2004, 90.2% of the female and 93.6% of the male student population at the eight-year compulsory primary education age level

attended mandatory 8-year schools. Following the compulsory education level, 42.2% of females and 50.2% of males in this age group attended secondary schools. As for tertiary level education, 12 % of females and 14.2% of males attended higher level schools (GDSPW, 2004).

Gender disparity particularly shows itself in the low percentage of girls in general secondary education and vocational and technical secondary education. In the 2006-2007 education year the percentage of girls in general secondary education was 46%, whereas it was 39% in vocational and technical secondary education (MONE, 2006).

In order to discuss the possibilities and problems of vocational and technical secondary education in Turkey further it is important to look at the findings of the study of Akhun, Bircan, Bülbül, Konak, and Senemoğlu (2000). This study aimed to assess the educational processes at the vocational and technical secondary schools and to depict the socio-economic profile of female students in these schools as well as the mechanisms that influenced their job prospects. The study discovered that whilst vocational and technical education schools were expected to prepare their students for vocational careers, these schools in Turkey aimed instead to prepare their students for both higher education and for vocations, with no educational and vocational consultation for students during the whole schooling process. Thus, it was noted that female students who chose Vocational and Technical Secondary Schools did not have clear goals for their academic and vocational careers.

The study is significant since it drew attention to the fact that the teachers at these schools, as well as employers, displayed a tendency to either fully agree or agree with the statements that perceived women's roles as placed in the domestic sphere and promoted gender discrimination in access to work on the grounds of

differences among men and women in terms of bodily features. In contrast, the majority of students were reported to be strongly against gender discrimination in access to jobs and some were reported to have asked for guidance services that encourage girls to take up traditionally male-dominated jobs.

Exploring the possibilities and problems in women's education and development in Turkey, it was noted that economic conditions coupled with patriarchal values in the family and traditional gender roles discriminating against women hindered girls and women's enrolment and retention rates (TUSİAD, 2000; Göğüş Tan, 2007). Noting that gender disparity was not limited to access and retention, a number of critics (Gök, 1995, 2007; Göğüş Tan, 2007) emphasized the role of educational microcultures, curricula, the socialization process, and teaching and management practices in reinforcing and reproducing dominant sex-role stereotypes and traditional sexual division of labour.

A number of critics (Gök, 1995; Gümüsoğlu, 1998; Irzık, 2005; Uğur Tanrıöver, 2005) looked into the gender discrimination and gender roles in textbooks to explore the discriminatory practices in them. These critics noted that the content and portrayal of women in textbooks confined women's roles to the domestic sphere which were considered as "natural, normal and fixed", and when women had jobs they were imagined to have jobs with lower prestige and wages that could be declared suitable for women's perceived inherent nurturing abilities (Irzık, 2005, p.29). Uğur Tanrıöver (2005) pointed to the importance of the role of family and social context in the production and reproduction of discriminatory sexual patterns since she thought discriminatory mechanisms were not confined to textbooks and formal education. This word of caution by Uğur Tanrıöver also points to the importance of exploring women's non-formal / adult education in Turkey.

This brief look at compulsory education for women in Turkey, displaying as it does women's and girls' grave problems with regard to access, retention and discriminatory mechanisms in formal schooling, makes it useful to explore nonformal/adult education activities for women. Adult education activities have a big potential to act as sites of social change by offering women the education and skills they could not get during their formal schooling years and which could lead to personal as well as economic empowerment. The next part will therefore discuss adult education activities for women in Turkey.

### Adult Education Activities for Women in Turkey

Adult learning and education take place in a myriad of different settings under different names which tend to be used interchangeably. Foley (2004) pointed out that adult education and learning could take the form of organized and structured activities in formal and non-formal education institutions as well as informal and incidental learning that took place in everyday life. He thus considered adult learning and education “a fragmenting, diversifying and expanding” field (Foley, 2004, p. 4).

Non-formal or adult education activities for women in Turkey are undertaken by governmental institutions, private institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). TUSİAD (2000) pointed to the diversity and big number of adult education activities in Turkey after the 1990s with programmes organized by various NGOs as well as the General Directorate on the Status and Problems of Women (KSSGM), Women Studies Departments of various universities, and Multipurpose Community Centers (ÇATOMs) targeting the women in Eastern and South-eastern Turkey. Nevertheless, People Education Centers, the main public body responsible for adult education in the Ministry of Education, undertake the majority

of adult education programmes in Turkey. Besides PECs, there are other institutions in the Ministry of Education that are responsible for adult education. These are Center for Vocational Education, Practical Art Schools for Girls, Maturation Institutes, and Technical Education Centers for Adults (MONE, 2004).

Table 1. Number of Adult Education Institutions in the Ministry of Education and Their Participants

Institution/Center Type	Number of Institutions	Number of Participants
Halk Eğitimi Merkezi (People Education Center)	924	1,312,618
Meslekî Eğitim Merkezi (Center of Vocational Education)	351	309,962
Pratik Kız Sanat Okulu (Practical Art School For Girls )	364	73,656
(Olgunlaşma Enstitüsü Maturation Institute )	12	1,515
Yetişkinler Teknik Eğitim Merkezi (Technical Education Center for Adults)	12	443

(MONE Statistics, 2004)

As the table above shows, People's Education Centers are the major providers of formal adult education activities in Turkey. In the 2005-2006 education year they attracted 1,674, 358 participants. Women constituted 43% of the participants in vocational courses, 69% of those in literacy courses, and 53% of those in social and cultural courses (TUIK, 2005).

In exploring the problems of adult education activities adult education activities at PECs, Okçabol (1999, 2005) criticized them for being poorly staffed and equipped, with the great majority of courses for women being in subjects such as tailoring and embroidery that reflected women's perceived primary roles as wives and homemakers. Okçabol pointed out that these activities were not publicized adequately and were generally carried out on weekdays and within working hours,

rendering them even less attractive. He also noted that formal adult education institutions were far from being spaces where adults could define problems in their particular socio-economic contexts and seek solutions for them.

Regarding People Education Centers' capacity for acting as sites of social change, Keser's study, which analyzed the decision-making processes in 12 PECs in Istanbul, revealed that socio-economic characteristics of the neighbourhoods in which the PECs were located influenced the course variety and content to a great extent (Keser, 2005). She observed that PECs near a university or near touristic areas offered computer and foreign language classes, whereas in conservative neighbourhoods sewing and embroidery classes dominated the curriculum. All the centers in her study, except for four centers in downtown Istanbul, were major attraction places for women and young girls. Thus, whilst she found it important that PECs responded to the needs of their participants, Keser emphasized that PECs should become "the heart of social change in the neighbourhoods instead of adapting completely to the characteristics of their surroundings" (p. 120).

Concerning the reasons for non-participation in formal adult education activities in Turkey, Çankaya (2005) and Kirazoğlu (1996) pointed to low self-esteem, fear and hesitation regarding the environment, and familial responsibilities among women, who also had lower formal educational attainment. Çankaya's study revealed that migrants in Istanbul, who constituted nearly half of the urban population, tended to live in close-knit communities comprised of residents coming from the same region. Çankaya noted that these communities acted as "an informal control mechanism especially on women to prevent any change in their life style and make sure that they function in defined roles as a mother and caregiver" (p. 77). Thus, both Çankaya and Kirazoğlu pointed to the importance of taking women's socio-

economic and educational background into consideration in designing courses for them and asked for courses aiming at consciousness-raising that could challenge power relations between men and women.

As for the effect of participation in PEC activities on women's lives, the study of Başer Kalkan (1996) is important to discuss. In her study Başer Kalkan aimed to assess how participation affected women's lives through structured interviews with forty two married women with children. The participants in her study attended courses in handicrafts, machine embroidery, cutting and sewing, embroidery, furnishing, painting, mother-child education, knitting, accounting, fashion design, and fashion styling. She concluded that participation in the courses had positive effects on women's lives in terms of their self-perceptions, relations with the family, the husband's attitude toward their participation in the course, and the way they spent their time. Yet, participation in the courses didn't seem to challenge traditional gender roles that were internalized by women to a great extent. This study revealed the overall positive impact of participation in PECs at the level of individuals in their social contexts.

Literacy is considered to have a big potential to result in significant changes at the level of individuals living in their particular socio-economic contexts. Literacy education can help people not only read and write in order to handle everyday tasks on their own but also have an increasing sense of self-confidence and personal empowerment. In Turkey PECs are biggest providers of adult education activities and women participants constitute a big part of the participants in PEC literacy courses. PECs as adult education spaces have a potential to act as places where people are facilitated to realize challenging aspects of their particular settings and their potential to change these. My project thus aims to explore women's perceptions

of the effect of PEC literacy courses on their lives, which was not investigated before. Thus in the next part I will discuss adult literacy programmes in Turkey, focusing on women participants in these programmes.

### Adult Literacy Programmes and Women Literacy Participants in Turkey

According to TUIK (2006) statistics, in 2006 11.9% of adults in Turkey were illiterate, with 4% rate of illiteracy among men and 19.6% rate of illiteracy among women. Illiteracy in general and female illiteracy in particular is thus still a big problem in Turkey (TUSİAD, 2000). Nohl and Sayılan (2004) noted that there were big differences in illiteracy rates not only between men and women but also between rural and urban populations, the rich and the poor, and the Eastern and Western parts of Turkey. As Oğuzkan (1981) noted, illiteracy seemed to be a symptom of social and economic deprivation along with poverty, nutrition, health, population increase, and production issues.

Table 2. Adult Literacy Rate in Turkey between 2001 and 2006

Adult literacy rate (%)	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total	86,3	87,5	88,3	87,4	88,1	88,1
Male	94,5	95,3	95,7	95,3	96,0	96,0
Female	78,2	79,9	81,1	79,6	80,3	80,4

(TUIK statistics, 2006)

There have been significant gains in literacy in Turkey since the establishment of the Republic. Currently, there are governmental and non-governmental organizations conducting adult literacy programmes for still-illiterate people in all parts of Turkey.



Nohl and Sayılan (2004) stated that there are four major adult literacy programmes in Turkey:

1. Literacy Courses of MONE taught at People's Education Centers, which involves a Level 1 literacy course for illiterate people and Level 2 course for literate participants which covers the subjects taught in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades of Elementary Schools.
2. Functional Adult Literacy Courses (İYOP, İşlevsel Yetişkin Okuryazarlığı Programı) of the Mother and Child Education Foundation (Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı), which uses decoding instructions making use of the systematic correspondence between symbols and sounds in Turkish. The programme focuses on the functional uses of literacy and life experiences of women.
3. Simplified Reading and Writing Education (Kolaylaştırılmış Okuma Yazma Eğitimi Programı, KOYE) of the Rotary Club focuses on task-based learning and teaching of literacy.
4. Literacy Programmes of the Association in Support of Contemporary Living (Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği) focuses on the teaching of literacy to modernize women's lives.

Nohl and Sayılan (2004) noted that in 2002 the number of participants (189,494) in the 1. Level Literacy Courses at PEC's was fourteen times bigger than the number participants in İYOP and KOYE (14,516). In order to discuss studies that analyzed different aspects of the literacy courses at PEC's, which attracts the biggest number of participants in general and women participants in particular, one could mention the studies by Nohl and Saylan (2004) and Bülbül (1991). These studies aimed to make a descriptive analysis of the literacy programme of MONE, identifying major problems and bringing suggestions to them.

Nohl and Sayılan (2004) noted that Level 1 Literacy courses of MONE aimed to teach basic literacy, numeracy and civic education that emphasized the duties of a good citizen rather than teaching people their human rights and ways of using these rights. Their analysis of the instructional materials and methods revealed that in these courses literacy was reduced to a technical skill taught with a behaviourist approach. Nohl and Sayılan (2004) recommended that instructional materials, which were based upon elementary school subjects, should be re-designed so as to take the needs and life experiences of adult learners into consideration. They also criticized the materials for reinforcing traditional gender roles of women and asked for in-service training on the principles of adult education for elementary school teachers teaching these courses.

The outcomes of the study of Bülbül (1991) indicated that literacy courses of MONE should depend on the needs and expectations of participants. Bülbül also found it important to study the reasons for drop-out and truancy in these courses. Bülbül's study revealed that only one third of the participants in his study were able to study at home and therefore recommended instructional methods that minimized the amount of homework. He suggested that literacy teachers at PECS attend in-service training on the principles of adult education and promote student participation and experience-sharing in class. Bülbül's study made a special reference to women since some married and unmarried women in his study stated that their family members were against their participation in the course. Thus, he found it crucial to explore the reasons of opposition from family members and ways to tackle it.

These two studies are important to understand the problems and potential of the philosophical approach, the methods, the content and the teachers of literacy courses

at PEC's. Another study in the field of adult literacy at PECs in Turkey was by Güngör (2006) which adapted the Education Participation Scale (EPS) into the Turkish setting, thus providing practitioners and researchers in Turkey with a reliable tool to investigate PEC level II literacy participants' motivational orientations. There are however no studies that investigated the effect of PEC literacy courses at the level of individuals situated in their particular social, economic, political contexts.

The only study that looked at the impact of a literacy course at the individual level through the use of interviews was a study of the functional literacy programme of AÇEV by Durgunoğlu et al. (2003). They noted of the Functional Literacy Programme (FLP) of AÇEV aimed to show its participants that literacy practices were necessary tools to deal with everyday life situations, with units involving themes and applications that were based upon a theme, e.g. reading price tags and finding the right bus. Durgunoğlu, et al. (2003) emphasized that FLP defined functionality in a way that took into account the effect of literacy on personal empowerment.

The study that investigated the effect of FLP evaluated both cognitive outcomes of the programme and the social development of the participants that occurred as a result of participation in the FLP (Durgunoğlu, 2000). The accounts of women in this study revealed that women who participated in the FLP of AÇEV gained self-confidence and a sense of independence, being able to go out of the house and do things important to function in daily life without having to depend on others. This was considered as the biggest impact of FLP in the form of "small steps towards independence given the patriarchal cultural and economic realities described by our participants" (p. 52).

Although it provided important perspectives regarding the effect of the functional literacy programme of AÇEV on the lives of women participants in their socio-cultural contexts, this was only one aspect of Durgunoğlu's 2000 study. What's more, the effect of literacy courses of PECs on women's lives was not studied before. Thus, my project will explore the effect of literacy courses of PEC's on women's lives by taking their accounts of the changes in their lives that took place as a result of their participation in the literacy courses and their life histories as central to its analysis. The next chapter will discuss the use of qualitative inquiry and case studies in my study with a focus on the life histories of women.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This study, which tries to understand women's perspectives of the effect of PEC literacy courses on their lives from their own voices, found qualitative inquiry useful for the research questions it aimed to answer. It used case study method. In this part research method and process will be discussed, describing sampling, research instrument, data collection and analysis procedures.

#### Research Method and Process

This study employed a qualitative inquiry since it aimed to explore the effect of participation in PEC literacy courses on women's lives from women's own perspectives. The study used a case study approach, acknowledging case studies' sensitivity to the real life context of research participants and capacity to produce a holistic and in-depth account of a phenomenon which "offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences" (Merriam, 1998, p.41).

In this study convenience sampling was used to select research participants. Although convenience sampling was used, a number of limitations were employed to choose information-rich cases. The limitations were that the participants had to be women who completed Level 1 literacy course which was offered by Kağıthane/Gültepe People Education Center. The researcher chose Kağıthane/Gültepe People Education Center because it was thought that the social and economic circumstances of the neighbourhood had a potential to provide information-rich cases, with women

who could be expected to attend literacy courses in order to challenge social and economic restrictions in their lives, so as order to create wider life opportunities for themselves.

Thus four of the seven participants in this sample were women who were attending Level 2 literacy course and one woman was attending tailoring course at the Gültepe PEC at the time of the interview. The researcher got to know these women by visiting all the classes in the PEC and describing the aim of the research and the motivations behind it to the course participants. Thus among the course participants five women who had completed Level 1 literacy course at the Gültepe PEC were included in the research sample. The researcher got to know the other two women who were not attending courses at the PEC at the time of the interview by means of information she obtained from participants in other courses. When the researcher explained the goal of the research to the participants in different courses she was informed that they personally knew two women who had completed Level 1 literacy course offered by Gültepe PEC. Thus the researched phoned these two participants, explained the motivations behind the research and upon their agreement to participate in the study she visited their houses to have interviews with them.

The researcher had partially structured interviews with seven participants, thus having the freedom to change the order of the questions and add new questions if necessary (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Interview questions were prepared with the help of the study of Durgunoğlu (2000) and were all based on the research questions of the current study. The researcher had a pilot interview with one participant in late November and added questions in order to help women discuss their ideas on women's common problems in Turkey and solutions to these problems. All seven interviews were carried out in the month of December 2007. Three of the interviews

were carried out at the Kağıthane/Gültepe PEC, three of them took place in the houses of the participants and one of them was carried out at a cafe near the participant's workplace upon their request. The average interview took one and a half hours.

Because this project seeks to relate the participants' perceived changes in their lives to their life histories, in the interviews participants were first asked to talk about their lives, starting from their childhood. Then they were asked questions about their participation in the course, their perceptions of the effect of the course on their lives and their opinions on women's conditions and position in Turkey. Thus during the interviews and data analysis, the researcher paid attention to the ways people talked about their lives, the pitch of their voices, and other non-verbal cues in an effort to understand why they might have talked about themselves the way they did.

The researcher was aware of the fact that inviting people to talk about their lives and asking them questions on different aspects of their personal lives required a trusting relation and rapport with the research participants. Thus the researcher observed the classes in which the participants attended, if they still attended a course at the PEC at the same time of the interview, in order to spend as much time as possible with them and build rapport with them. The researcher attended the classes of five women during the month of November and December 2008. She attended the classes of four Level 2 literacy course participants every weekend during these two months, whilst she attended the tailoring course twice during the month of December. In the case of two participants who were not attending any course at the PEC at the time of the interview, the researcher first talked about the aim of the research with them on the phone. The researcher had a chat with the participants and with her family members if they were in the house with them before the interview.

The researcher tape recorded the interviews with the informed consent of the participant and fully transcribed the interviews. The interviews were content analyzed so as to identify recurring themes and core meanings (Patton, 2002). The researcher found that after interviewing four women, major recurring categories and themes started to emerge. Each interview was taken as an individual case, with within case and cross case analyses (Merriam 1998). In the content analysis of the interviews recurring themes were listed. The interview texts were given codes, and in each text statements directly related with the themes were quoted. Quotes were used for the case of each participant for with-in case analysis and they were grouped under three thematic categories that emerged during the data collection and analysis process for cross-case analysis.



## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the findings part, first the case of each participant will be described, focusing on her family background, schooling experiences, growing up as a girl, and how they learned about the literacy course. This will help situate the effects of the literacy on their lives in their biographies and particular socio-economic contexts. Secondly, the themes that emerged from the interviews are going to be discussed. The recurring themes were classified into three categories which emerged during data collection and analysis. These categories are “How the participants started and continued the course”, “The effects of the courses on their lives”, and “Opinions on Women’s Status and Conditions in Turkey”.

#### Participants

Participants in this study were seven women who had completed Level 1 Literacy Course offered by Gültepe/Kağıthane People’s Education Center. The ages of the participants ranged from twenty-one to forty-six. Four of seven women in the sample were married and three of the married women had children. Six of seven women in my sample were born either in South-eastern or Eastern Turkey: four women were born in Bitlis, one in Siirt, and one in Diyarbakır. The only woman who was born in a different part of Turkey came from Boyabat, Sinop, in the Black Sea Region. All of the women in the sample had moved to Istanbul along with their families or husbands after marriage. Five women had to leave their villages in South-eastern and

Eastern Turkey due to armed conflict between PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan-Kurdistan Workers Party - which is defined as a terrorist organisation by the Turkish government) and Turkish Security forces.<sup>2</sup>

Six of seven women in the sample were working outside the house. Five of them, who had all had to leave their villages due to armed conflict, had started to work in textile workshops at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Six of the seven women in my sample described their income as middle-range whereas one woman described her income level as below middle-range because her husband and she did not have a house of their own. Five of the seven women lived in the houses that belonged either to their parents or to themselves with their husbands. They felt themselves better off since they did not have to pay rent for their apartments which they thought cost at least one person's salary.

Six of the seven women were bilingual. Four of them were of Kurdish origin while the other two were of Arabic origin. All of these women but one had learned Turkish after they moved from their villages to the places where Turkish was spoken by the majority of people. Only one had learned Turkish at school since she attended elementary school for two years back in her village in Bitlis. Her schooling was sporadic due to the war in her village. So she had lost her literacy skills to a great extent after she was taken from the school.

There were two other women in the sample who had lost their literacy skills. One was taken away from school while she was in the second grade and the other

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<sup>2</sup> Taşpınar (2005) noted that by the summer of 1996 an estimated 3000 villages and hamlets in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia were evacuated and more than 2 million people were displaced. Kramer (2000) stated that during the Turkish military action against the PKK, especially after 1992, more than 3000 villages and hamlets were evacuated, most of which were destroyed, and 400,000 people were displaced. Nachmani (2003) noted that since the state of emergency proclaimed in 1987 in Diyarbakir, Şırnak, Elazığ, Van, Batman, Şırnak, in 10 years, over 1,500 villages were destroyed; an estimated 3,478 residential areas were evacuated where an estimated 401,328 people lived. Nachmani estimated that in general because of the war with PKK or harsh economic conditions around 4 million people left their villages.

one had gone to a literacy course when she was seventeen. Yet she found the course too short and lost her literacy skills after the course. The case of each woman is described below, focusing on their family backgrounds, growing up as a girl, schooling and how they got to attend the literacy course.

### Fadime

Fadime is forty six years old. She was born in 1961 in Boyabat, Sinop. Her family moved to Istanbul when she was six and she started school in Istanbul. His father took her away from school when she was in the second grade. She does not understand until this day why her father took her away from school. Her father's story was that one day he visited her at the school when she was playing with her friends in the break and he heard a boy say to Fadime: "Look at that girl with big tits".

We were playing with my friends –boys and girls- in the garden. My father came but I did not know about it. One boy supposedly said: "Look at the girl with big tits". I asked that boy about it later on but he denied it. Supposedly my father heard that and went to the principle to cancel my registration at the school. The boy denied having said that and I did not hear whether he said that or not. But that was what my father said. (...) And my breasts were quite developed then. After all, I was not like I am now.

Fadime had one sister and one brother. They both finished high school. She was very upset that she could not go to school as a child: "Both my siblings finished high school. Unfortunately I could not achieve something good." Her mother started to work as a cleaning lady after they moved to Istanbul. Her father got a job at a pharmacy firm. After she was taken away from school, Fadime took care of her younger siblings at home and did the housework when her mother was at work. She became a home-maker and carer of her younger siblings as a girl. She was married

off to her uncle's son when she was seventeen, which meant she would go on in her homemaker and caretaker role: "My husband is my uncle's son. I wish I had never met him. He is a relative. It is too bad to marry a relative. Don't mention that to anybody though. My father wanted that, my mother wanted that, and I sort of wanted that." By the time she got married her parents had built a four-story apartment building in Istanbul and they gave one of the flats to Fadime and her husband for which she was very grateful. Her parents lived in one of the flats in the same apartment building and rented out the other two.

Fadime had two sons one, of whom was a 24-year-old computer technician. He had a job he liked and lived with her parents. The other son was 18 and went to a religious school (medrese) to become an imam about which she did not want to talk. Fadime was quite suspicious of my intention to talk to her in the beginning since her husband had strictly warned her to not talk about her private life with other people. After my attending her tailoring class and our lengthy chat she was relieved and ready to talk with me. I had the impression that her son's affiliation with the medrese was the main reason why she was not very enthusiastic about talking with me in the beginning. I decided not to press the issue since it was not crucial for my research purpose and it would make her even more suspicious of talking with me.

Fadime had never had paid-work experience. She saw all her years as an illiterate person as "lost opportunities" because she thought if she had been literate she could have got a job with social security. She articulated this as follows: "I couldn't go anywhere because the kids were small. Actually if I had found a job with social security, meaning if I had been literate, I would have got a job with social security... When I think about it, I realize I missed a lot of opportunities in the past."

Fadime was very upset that she could not go to school as a child and in her married life her husband discouraged her from going to the literacy course. After long years of illiteracy, last year she decided that she had had enough of being dependent on others for simple things such as dialling a phone number or reading a bus sign and enrolled herself in the course and completed it successfully, ignoring her husband's and sons' objections and ridicule. At the time of the interview, she was attending a tailoring course at Gültepe People's Education Center.

### Leyla

Leyla is twenty one years old. She was born in 1986 in Siirt and had two sisters and three brothers. Since her father passed away when she was very little, her mother found it very difficult to look after all her children and sent Leyla to live at her uncle's in Mersin when she was five. Her mother tongue was Arabic and she learned Turkish after she moved to Mersin. Leyla's family moved to Istanbul in 1998 when Leyla was twelve because her village was destroyed in the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish army in South-eastern Turkey. So Leyla quit living at her uncle's in Mersin and moved to Istanbul with her family.

Leyla had never gone to school as a child. All her other siblings finished the 5th grade: "(Among my siblings) only I did not go to school. When we moved here my mother decided to send me to school. But I had passed the age to start grade school. They did not take me. Since they did not take me, we gave up." After they moved to Istanbul, Leyla and her sisters started to work in textile workshops, while her brothers took up jobs as construction workers. Her mother did not work after they moved to Istanbul. She had worked as a farmhand in her village. Leyla got married

three years ago when she was eighteen. She met her husband, who was of Iranian origin, through his sister with whom she worked. The two decided to marry and they had a seven-month old son at the time of the interview.

As a girl Leyla had to work to be able to cope with harsh economic conditions in Istanbul with her family. Leyla had always wanted to learn to read and write but did not know where to go to gain literacy skills. Last year she heard of the classes from the school-age daughter of her neighbour and went to the classes with the encouragement of her husband. Although she gained literacy skills she could not attend the final exam and get the literacy certificate since she had familial problems at the time. So she wanted to take the exam again and get the literacy certificate in order to go to vocational training courses once her baby son grew up a bit.

### Pınar

Pınar is twenty three years old. She was born in 1983 in Bitlis. She is of Kurdish origin. She had three sisters and four brothers. Her family moved to Mersin when she was little because of armed conflict in their village. She started to learn Turkish in Mersin as a little girl. She could not speak Kurdish fluently although she understood it well.

In 1991, when Pınar was eight, the family moved to Istanbul since their uncle thought they would be better off in Istanbul. Her mother started to work as a cleaning lady and her father opened a small grocery store. Her mother stopped working as she got older and as her children took up jobs, being able to support themselves. Pınar and her older sister Ayşe were the elder girls of the family. Ayşe went to school in

Bitlis until the third grade, whilst Pınar never went to school due to her eldest uncle's objection:

I never went to school. My elder sister went until the third grade. And that was in Bitlis. I wanted to go to school very much. My father wanted to send me a lot too but since my uncle was a bit backward-minded, they did not send us to school. The uncle's decisions were more influential in our family since he was the eldest uncle. You know, why would girls get education, anyway? They did not send us to school.

One younger sister, who was eighteen at the time of the interview, quit high school and the other younger sister finished university, majoring in accounting. Three boys in the family finished fifth grade. The other brother was taking distant education courses to get a secondary school degree.

Pınar's older sister Ayşe and her older brother were both married. The remaining six siblings and parents lived in the same flat. Pınar got engaged last spring after dating her boyfriend for three years. She had met her fiancée through a colleague. She was planning to move to Ankara after her wedding in January 2008. As girls Pınar and Ayşe had started to work at early ages. Pınar and Ayşe supported each other in order to learn to read on their own. They could not get support from their siblings who went to school, and could not achieve much on their own. In 2000 they learned about the literacy classes from Ayşe's employer and decided to attend literacy classes to realize their dream.

Pınar had started working in textile workshops at the age of thirteen. She worked as a secretary in a construction company and attended the second-level literacy course at Gültepe People's Education Center together with her sister Ayşe at the time of the interview. This course covered the subjects taught in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades.

## Ayşe

Ayşe was Pınar's older sister. She is twenty six years old, born in 1981 in Bitlis. She had gone to school until third grade there, but had to quit her education after they moved to Mersin first and then to Istanbul: "I quit school in the third grade (...) The school was open two days of the week; and was closed the rest of the week. Terrorists would come take away our teachers. Now there is no such village. It was reduced to dirt."

Ayşe had learned Turkish at school and improved it further after the family moved to Mersin. She spoke and understood Kurdish very well. She expressed that financial difficulties coupled with her uncle's negative influence were responsible for the exclusion of the two sisters from school. She had been working since she was thirteen. She worked at a tailor's first and then started to work in textile workshops.

The uncles said: "Girls should not be sent to school. What would they do with education? They would write letters to their boyfriends, they would be more aware of things, and we couldn't control them then" (...) I've been working since I was a child. I supported my family. My father was going to send me to school but since my uncle took everything he had from him, we were in financial difficulty. That was also because we were eight siblings. Two of my brothers worked but only as apprentices.

Ayşe got married three months ago with her boyfriend whom she dated for eight years. She thought that getting married at the age of twenty six was an achievement in itself and a sign of being cultured since her uncle's daughters were married off when they were thirteen or fourteen: "I married at the age of twenty six. My uncle's daughters married when they were thirteen or fourteen. That is a difference between us. I think culture is very important."

She lived in a flat and in the same apartment building her husband's other relatives lived on the other floors. Where she lived was very close to her parents'



apartment. Ayşe had always wanted to go to school as a child. So when her employer saw how interested she was in reading she helped her enroll in the literacy course.: “(...)My boss would read newspapers. I would look at what she read over her shoulder. After she left, I would look at the sections she read and say: “A, B, C”. Since she noticed my interest, she enrolled us in the literacy course.”

At the time of the interview, Ayşe worked in her husband’s real estate office. She aimed to continue her education after the second-level literacy course she was attending and get a better job.

### Didem

Didem is twenty three years old. She was born in 1984 in Bitlis. She is of Kurdish origin and she learned Turkish when her family moved to İstanbul in 1995 since their village was evacuated. She had 6 sisters and 3 brothers. She lived with her parents and her two other single sisters and one single brother. In their apartment building, there were two other flats where her two elder brothers lived with their families.

Among her sisters only one went to school, for two years. Two of her three brothers finished 5<sup>th</sup> grade and another finished 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Didem did not go to school as a child:

One of my sisters went to school, only for two years. After that my brother did not allow her to go to school since the school was far away. Since it snowed a lot in the winters in my village the way to the school felt longer. Actually perhaps it does not have to do with that. They thought it was not necessary to send girls to school.

Didem’s parents and all her siblings worked as farmers back in their village. After they moved to İstanbul, her brothers and father started to run a vegetable stall in Hisarüstü local fruit and vegetable market. Her mother quit working. Didem and her

sisters started to do piece-rated home-based work when they first moved to Istanbul in 1995. Since 1996, age twelve, Didem had been working in textile workshops. As a girl child she saw herself far behind her peers who went to school since she had to work and thus could not go to school. In 1998 she heard about the literacy classes from a colleague and immediately enrolled in the course since she always wanted to learn to read and write and get formal education. At the time of the interview she was attending second grade in the Open High School and wanted to continue her education further.

### Aslı

Aslı is forty one years old, born in Bitlis in 1966. She had two sisters and five brothers and they all had finished 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Aslı was never sent to school since her parents sent her to live at her brother's in a village in Ağrı at school age. Her brother was an imam in the village. Aslı's mother tongue is Arabic. She learned Turkish when she went to live at her brother's in Ağrı. As a girl she felt that her actions and mobility were very restricted in the village where she lived at her brother's. Her parents married her off in 1983. She moved to Istanbul with her husband the same year.

I was born and raised in Bitlis. I was born in 1966. What's more, they sent me to live at my brother's in Ağrı. He was an imam there. Since they sent me there they did not send me to school. Then, this became something that had a great impact on my life. And then I became a young woman. You cannot write what you want. You cannot go where you want to. I married at the age of seventeen. I did not know my husband. It was an arranged marriage. I came to Istanbul at the age of seventeen.

Aslı had two sons, age eighteen and age twenty, and a daughter, age fourteen. One of her sons was doing his army service and the other one was in the last year of high

school. Her daughter was an 8<sup>th</sup> grader. Aslı lived in an apartment building where only the family members of her husband lived. On the other floors her in-laws and her brother in-laws lived with their families. Aslı had been working since she moved to Istanbul in 1983. First she did piece-rated home-based work and then she started to design clothing patterns, arrange business deals with textile factories, buy materials for the designs and find women to do the work at home. She was the main breadwinner in her family.

Aslı had attended a literacy course in 1983 in Bitlis. She convinced her parents to let her attend the course and they agreed since the course was single-sex and she agreed to wear a burka to go out of the house to the course: “I wanted (to go to the literacy course). And in those years, in 1983, it was compulsory. It was one of the first People's Education Centers opened in the villages, as far as I know. Actually they summoned my mother to the course. Because my mother was sick I begged to go instead of her. I wore a burka and went to the course.”

The course was part of a national literacy campaign but Aslı could not learn basic skills of reading and writing very well since the course lasted only forty days. So although she could recognize the letters and read some words, she was not fluent in reading and could not write: “I went to the literacy course first in 1983 but it hardly took forty days. They taught us only that much in the village (...) They ended the course just when we were starting to write.” Thus she attended the literacy course of the People's Education Center in 2000 since she wanted to be able to write as a mode of self expression. At the time of the interview, Aslı was attending the second-level literacy course in order to be able to get a driving licence with the diploma she would get from the PEC. She thought the course was very good since it helped her improve her literacy and numeracy skills.

## Ganime

Ganime is 22 years old. She was born in Diyarbakir in 1985. Her family moved to Batman in 1992 since their village burned down in the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish Army. They went to Manisa as seasonal agriculture workers in 1996. They went back and forth between Manisa and Batman until 1998 when they moved to İstanbul. Ganime was a Kurd and learned Turkish after she moved to İstanbul in 1998. She had three sisters and four brothers. She never went to school since she was the eldest girl. Elder brothers had to quit their education after a few years of schooling, but younger siblings were attending higher grades in İstanbul:

I did not have the opportunity to go to school in my village. I came here, learned about this opportunity and decided to take it. My younger siblings go to school. One is in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, one is in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and another one is in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. They are all here. My brother could not go to school in the village either. He went to school for two years in Batman. He is the eldest. I am the second eldest. They did not send me to school because girls are not sent to school anyway, you know. Younger ones have better opportunities.

Before moving to İstanbul, as a girl Ganime worked as an unpaid family worker in farming back in her village. She worked as a farmhand and took care of her younger siblings. In İstanbul Ganime lived with her seven siblings, her elder brother's wife, and her parents in the same flat. At the age of thirteen she started to work in textile workshops and at the time of the interview was a maintenance person in charge of the kitchen of an architectural company.

Ganime went to the literacy course in 2005 after she heard of it from her sister who was in school. She had always wanted to be literate, pointing out that lacking literacy skills was like "lacking an arm and a leg". At the time of the interview she was attending the second-level literacy course since she wanted to

continue her education. She wanted to support her sisters to continue their education with the money she earned:

(...) My aunt's husband is angry with my father since he sends his daughters to schools. I said: "Girls should go to school. I couldn't go to school, I want my sisters to go to school." I am trying to work, after all. "I'll work and send them to school", I said. Are they going to be lawyers when they go to school? I even heard that. Why would you not send the girls to school? What will happen then? They'll marry, have husbands and remain ignorant? They'll get Oppressed.

### Themes

Discussion themes were grouped under three thematic categories. Under the category "How the participants started and continued the course", courses' lack of publicity, participants' expectations in attending the course, reactions they received upon attending the course, their communication with the other participants in the literacy course, and their lack of time and private space to engage in literacy-related study and activities at their homes will be discussed.

The category "The effects of the course on participants' lives" will involve the discussion of the new capabilities women acquired as a result of attending the course, the changes in their perceptions of themselves, and the changes in their relations in their family and community. Under the category "Opinions on Women's Status and Conditions in Turkey", women's opinions on common problems of women in Turkey, ways to improve women's lives, and their aspirations for their futures will be discussed.

### How the participants started and continued the literacy course

This part discusses participants's expectations in attending the literacy course, their ways of learning about the literacy course, reactions they received when they announced their decision to attend the course, their communication with other participants in the literacy course, and time and private space constraints that hinder their efforts to engage in literacy-related activities in their houses.

#### Courses lack publicity

All the participants in the sample were denied the basic right to education as children. They talked about how having to migrate from their villages, economic constraints and gender roles imposed on them hindered them from having access to education. As adults they felt the lack of basic education in their lives acutely; and had a strong wish to go to a literacy course. For four of them this meant a start to continue their formal education. Yet again, as adults participants they were excluded from the advantages of government-funded adult education activities until most of them accidentally heard of the courses they had always wanted to go.

The ways through which women in my study got to learn about the PEC literacy course revealed that courses lacked publicity. None of the women talked about learning about the course by means of a publicity method, i.e. banners, ads on TV, *muhtars* (local administrators of neighbourhoods) getting in touch with people about illiteracy issues or PEC teachers' distributing leaflets, articulated by PEC administrators to be a common method they use.

Two of the women in the study learned about the literacy course because they lived very close to the center. The remaining five women heard about the courses from the others: from their employers, younger siblings, or neighbours who went to school and heard about the literacy courses PEC offered in their school buildings. They all said they would have gone to the courses earlier if they had known about them. Leyla had heard about the course from her neighbour's daughter. She explained her wish to gain literacy skills and her lack of information to find a way to be literate as follows: "For instance I wanted to learn how to read and write a lot. But I didn't know where to learn it, where to go. When Merve (her neighbour's daughter) told me that something like that had started in their school I immediately went without losing any time."

Thus all the participants thought it was important that literacy programmes be well-publicized, and the factors that hinder people's participation in literacy programmes were tackled. Ganime put this opinion as follows: "It is great that they offered a literacy course. Yet some people come, while some others cannot. As I told you, they have to find solutions to people's problems. They have to reach them somehow."

### Expectations

The expectation all women in the sample shared in attending the literacy course was to get rid of the dependency on others to read and write so as to carry out the tasks they wanted to, both more functional tasks such as filling out a form or reading a bus sign and more mentally- engaging tasks such as reading a book and satisfying their

curiosity for information by reading the subtitles on TV. Ganime put this common expectation as follows:

(I went to the course) in order to learn something, at least in order to be able to read what I see and write what I want. That was the reason why I went to the course. For example, you see some piece of news on the newspaper; you can see the picture, but you cannot read it, you cannot understand it. You wonder what is written beneath the picture. Sometimes I would ask my sister to read stuff to me, like a novel I like. I would listen to her read the novel. That was hard to make her read to me, but she would do it since I wanted. I would ask my sisters to write down phone numbers for me. Now I can write that on my own.

This common expectation of not having to rely on others to carry out tasks involving reading and writing was similar to the expectations of women who attended AÇEV's Functional Literacy Programme. Durgunoğlu (2000) noted that participants in AÇEV's FLP articulated their common expectation from the course as "being independent, not having to rely on others, comfortably taking care of their tasks" (p. 34) by reading and writing on their own.

Apart from the common expectation of not having to rely on others to read and write in order to carry out the tasks they wanted to, some women in the sample had more specific expectations in mind. These specific expectations ranged from continuing formal education by using literacy education as a first step, being able to take vocational training courses once they had the literacy certificate and being able to use writing as a mode of self-expression.

Three women in the sample saw the literacy course as a starting point for formal education from which they were deprived of as children. One of these three women, Ayşe, talked about how much she wanted to go to school as a child: "I always wanted to go to school (...) I never envied other people's boyfriends, clothes or other actions. I only envied children who went to school. You know, they would take their school bags and go to school. I would ask myself why I was not going to



school and I would get tears in my eyes (...)" Hatice articulated her determination to continue her education: "I wanted to go to school a lot. Honestly I still want that. (...) My friends, people around me are all educated people. When I couldn't read and do stuff, I would get angry with myself. If I can complete this course successfully, I will go to open elementary school and get elementary school diploma." Didem articulated her effort to catch up with people who had the opportunity to get education as children as follows:

People at my age wrote, read and studied their lessons. I wanted something like that but it never came true. What I had to do in my life was very different. I felt I was too far away from what I wanted. I considered myself far behind them. Among other people I felt like they knew that I was illiterate. I thought: 'I am too far away from this. How can I catch up? How can I do that?'

For Leyla, the specific expectation was to be able to attend vocational trainings by means of the literacy certificate she would receive from the course. She wanted to qualify as a stylist by attending the vocational training course at the PEC which requires a literacy certificate: "I thought it would be nice if I attended the course. At least, I could go get my diploma, get a job and then I could work as I wanted."

Aslı explained that her main expectation in attending the literacy course at the PEC was to be able to write as a mode of self-expression. She had attended a literacy course in 1983 in her village in Bitlis when she was seventeen years old. Yet she was able to read only a little bit and could not write since the course was too short and she could not attend any follow-up activities after the course. Thus she attended the literacy course at the People's Education Center in 2000.

You also get angry with your husband after you get married. I said to myself: "I wish I could read and write, write as I wanted so that I could express the things I did not tell other people in written words." I always thought so. That was why I went to the literacy course for the second time. I always dreamed of that and said that: "I wish I knew."

The only woman whose specific expectation was not fulfilled was Leyla. Leyla wanted to attend vocational trainings with the literacy certificate. She attended the literacy course last year and learned to read and write. Yet she could not get the certificate because she could not attend the examination at the end of the course due to familial problems. She could not follow up new courses and examination dates since she gave birth to her baby a few months after the course. Leyla had a seven-month old baby at the time of the interview. All her time was divided between her work in the textile workshop and his baby. She aimed to take the exam and attend vocational trainings once her baby was a little bit older.

#### Reactions they received

When the participants in the study declared their decision to attend the literacy course the reactions they received from family members living under the same roof, relatives in their extended family, neighbours, colleagues and friends were mostly negative, ranging from indifference, resistance, disheartening remarks to ridicule. Only two women in the study, Ganime and Leyla, had received support from both their family and neighbours when they started the literacy course. Their extended family had not interfered in their decision to attend the course in any way. Leyla talked about her husband's and her friends' support as follows: "I received encouraging reactions. Everybody was trying to help. They were saying: "We would be very happy if we can help with anything." (... ) My husband was helping me in my literacy efforts too. He was trying to help as best as he could."

The two sisters Ayşe and Pinar had the support of their parents when their elder uncle resisted their decision to attend the literacy course. Ayşe recalled the tension in the family at that time:

My mother got very happy (...) The extended family put a lot of pressure on my father. Why are you sending the girl to the school and stuff like that. My father said: "This is none of your business. I've listened to you up until now and the result is that my daughter remained ignorant, but she is the best ignorant ever. An ignorant person cannot read something but now she can. You are harming me. You don't want my family to go forward. Your own daughter goes to high school. What are you trying to do? You tell me not to send my daughter to school but your daughter goes to school. Which Allah says this is right? In which book is this written?" Since that day we have neither talked with nor visited my uncles (...)

The strong will of two sisters to get education seemed to shatter feudal relations in their father's family. The sisters' determination and strong will enabled their father to grow out of the influence of his elder brother to not send girls to school. Thus taking sides with his daughters, he cut ties with his elder brother, seeing his patriarchal use of power to hinder his girls' education destructive of a better future for them. The lives of these two sisters, who had to leave their villages due to war and start working in textile workshops at the age of thirteen, were marked by multiple layers of economic and social inequalities. Yet, against all odds, they had always supported each other in their efforts to get education and fuelled an unprecedented change in the patriarchal power relations in their family, which was very moving and promising in itself.

Ayşe, the elder sister, also recalled disheartening remarks by her boyfriend at the time, and how she blew his comments off: "My boyfriend at the time, the guy I broke up with, our next-door neighbour, he would say to me: "What are you going to do at school at this age?" And I told him: "I'll read and be more aware of things you wouldn't like me to; you consider it that way, see?" I don't see it that way. I want to improve myself and achieve something better."

Aslı and Didem were faced with the indifference of her family members in their nuclear family and in their extended family, which neither approved nor disapproved of their decision to attend the literacy course. Aslı explained the indifference of her husband, her children and relatives as follows:

I wanted to come to the course myself. My husband doesn't say anything about it. I want it myself. I am trying to do something with my own will(...) If I had listened to my relatives I would neither come to the literacy course nor to this course (...) My children sometimes make fun of me, but they sometimes say "Well done." You never know. They really make fun of me somehow. Like "What would you do with education after this age?"

Didem recalled the indifference of her parents and extended family members when she started the literacy course: "My family don't intervene (in such decisions of mine). They wouldn't ask what I am doing. If there had been such a thing, such a care, they would have sent us to school as children (...) My relatives didn't say: "OK, what you are doing is good." Yet they didn't say: "No, this is wrong." either (...)"

Fadime's case seemed like the most difficult one since she had to deal with the resistance and ridicule of her husband and disheartening remarks of her sons and neighbours. Seeing her determination to go to the literacy course, her husband even used threatening remarks, pointing to the possibility that she might not be successful in the course.

The neighbours said: "What is the point? Don't go. You would get tired of it and give up in two days."(...) My sons said: "What would you do with literacy after this point in your life? Just go on whatever you have been doing, what is the point (in attending the literacy course)?" I told them: "Why would I not need it? Why do I have to ask help from you for everything?" For instance I couldn't even dial a phone number. I couldn't make a phone call. I had to ask my sons (...)My husband said: "You woman, you go to that course, then at least get the university diploma too since you go there" (...) "If you cannot succeed in the course, we'll see what will happen." he said. Since I was very determined I decided to go to the course even if I got sick. I came to the course even in the cold of the winter. I always hurried in order not to be late.

Fadime attended and finished the literacy course against all odds and got her certificate. At the time of the interview she was attending the tailoring course which was something her husband was not happy with, but he could not resist her decision since she was very determined about going out of the house to do something that involved making use of her new skills.

### Communication with other participants in the course

When the participants were invited to talk about their communication with other participants in the literacy course only two of the participants, Ayşe and Ganime, explained that they had made friends with other participants and exchanged life experiences with them. They had made friends with one particular person in the course and had exchanged their life stories and aspirations with them. Their friendship with other participants gave them increased willingness and motivation to continue their efforts:

Ayşe:

The oldest participant was 85 years old. I would call her Aunty. That aunty had improved herself a lot and she was so smart that I envied her. I liked talking with that woman. We would talk about what we did at school, what we did in our free time. That aunty's husband died when he was fifty. She has always been alone in her life. She would say: "I would like to write a letter to my son when he goes to the army. Why would I not write it myself?" She had come to the school only to be able to write a letter. How nice that is. Pınar (her younger sister) would say: "Look, that old lady comes to school." I would say to her: "Keep silent. Look, one can learn at any age. Now that we see this we need to try harder and achieve what we want in life." (...)

Ganime recalled how they encouraged each other to continue their education with her friend in the course: "I didn't know a lot of people in the class anyway. But I had one friend, and we would talk about stuff, like we would continue our education

since we made all the effort to come to the course. “This is not that difficult, actually. We can go on.” we would tell each other.”

When they were asked about the content of the discussions in class, none of the participants mentioned that the course content and discussions in the learning process involved their lived experiences. They articulated what they did in class as follows: Ayşe: “ We learned about A, B, C.” Leyla: “In the lesson, we talked about the lesson.” Ganime: “We just studied our lessons and then we took breaks.”

The participants’ accounts of their communication with other participants and the discussions in class suggested that the course content and the discussions did not involve their concrete life experiences. The accounts of the participants suggested that the courses they attended failed in forming a community of learners with similar experiences and aspirations, encouraging discussion and critical reflection on their common problems and solutions to them. None of the participants in my study had kept in touch with other participants after the course.

Basing education on learners’ concrete experiences was noted as one of the major characteristics of critical pedagogies along with a vision of education for social change and an emphasis on consciousness (Weiner, 1994). Freire’s literacy campaigns in Brazil, underpinned by characteristics of critical pedagogies, were a major breakthrough in the conceptualization and practice of literacy education. In these literacy campaigns words and themes used were taken from participants’ everyday situations; through a transformative dialogue the exchange of experiences and contextual information were encouraged, which lead to a critical consciousness of the challenging realities in their lives while learning to read and write (Freire, 1974). Freire’s literacy campaigns became very successful and thus stopped by the military government in Brazil since they were considered potentially subversive. If

one came to terms with the fact that socially transformative goals were ruled out in PEC's model of education, the use of lived experiences in the teaching and learning process would still be vital: it is pedagogically more engaging for the learners and has a big potential to make the learning process more meaningful and interesting for them.

#### Lack of time and private space to engage in literacy-related activities

Six of the seven participants in the study mentioned lack of time as an obstacle to engaging in literacy-related activities in their houses. Aslı explained how housework and the travelling her job required ate up all her time:

For example when I go to Eminonu, I make sure that I have a book with me, I certainly read that on the way. Generally I don't have any time for that when I am at home. I come home and I start housework and cooking. Then my children and husband come. I cannot find any opportunity to study. Preparing dinner and then doing the dishes, I run out of time. I always have a book with me on the way to somewhere (...)

Three of these six participants also mentioned lack of private space to engage in mentally engaging activities. Ganime talked about the difficulties of living in a crowded house and sharing her room with her three sisters:

Actually, I want to go on with my education in the future. I want to get a better status in life with education but I don't have any time for my studies. It's crowded (at home). I start studying and kids come. We also have visitors coming. We girls stay in the same room. We have four rooms in the house. One room belongs to my brother and his bride, one belongs to the boys, one to the girls, and the other room belongs to my parents.

### The effects of the course on participants' lives

In this part participants' accounts of the things they started to do as a result of attending the course but they were not able to do before, changes in their perceptions of themselves, and changes in their relations in their families and communities are discussed.

#### New Capabilities

When they were invited to talk about the things they were not able to do before the course but they started doing after the course, all participants mentioned being able to travel without having to rely on others, being able to read bus signs and being able to write, i.e. to fill in legal or job-related documents on their own or to write as a mode of self-expression. The study carried out with the participants in AÇEV's Functional Literacy Programme also revealed that not having to rely on other people to travel and to read and write was a change reported by all participants (Durgunoğlu, 2000).

Leyla:

(Before the literacy course) I could not dare go to places, but now I do. After all, there are signs everywhere and you read them and go (...) For example, someone would demand something written from me. I couldn't provide that. I felt embarrassed and upset that I couldn't do that. There would be written documents related with insurance at my workplace. They would ask me to fill in that and I couldn't do it. Since you cannot do it you feel embarrassed, you feel weird and say to yourself: "I cannot do this." After learning (to write), you say: "Sure, give it to me and let me write what you want."

Ganime:

I would get on the wrong vehicle. I would go to places with the worry that I would get lost. I would go to places with a friend; I couldn't go alone. Now I can go everywhere I want to. (...) For example you go somewhere and you



would need to write something such as “I was handed over such and such goods”; I couldn’t do that in the past. I would ask help from the people around. Once I was at a legal office. I needed to get a document from there. I couldn’t write down my address. I asked someone else to write it for me. She asked me “Why?”, and I said I couldn’t write. She asked me why my family didn’t send me to school. I said: “They just didn’t”. She told me to go to school since I was still young. I said: “Yes, I’ll go.”

Ayşe:

For example when I got on the bus, I wouldn’t know where to go. There are signs on them. Now I know them all. Beşiktaş, Eminönü, Topkapı, Gülhane, Çeliktepe, I can read them all. In the past I would ask women: “Does this bus go to that place? I don’t know which bus goes there.” (...) I always liked to express life in words. I would write stories. I keep a diary. (...)

Pinar:

Now if I need to go to say Beşiktaş, I get on the vehicle that goes to Beşiktaş. But in the past I asked the driver when I wanted to go to Beşiktaş. I wanted to learn a lot since the other person could as well say: “You are a young person. Can’t you read?” I felt myself inferior in that sense. (...) Now if the need arises, I write stuff, file it and give it to the person who wants it.

Didem:

It was like seeing things but not being able to read them in the past, but then being able to read them. Now when I get on the bus I look at the written signs. Writings always attract my attention. It is like wanting to read everything I see. In the past we would ask. You cannot understand (what is written) anyway and then since you are nervous you cannot understand people’s explanations. It is so different to know yourself. Now it’s easier to ask what you don’t know. (...) For example now I can keep files at work. I can record information. But such a thing was impossible in the past.

Aslı:

When you went somewhere you would be nervous since someone might ask you to write something. You would have to have someone with you. So now I have more confidence in myself when I go somewhere. In the past I would take one of my children. You would go to a bank or a hospital. They would give you a paper to fill, you couldn’t fill it in. I always took either my son or my daughter with me. Thank God, I go to places on my own now.

As for Fadime who participated in the literacy course despite her sons’ and husband’s opposition and ridicule, the new skills she obtained as a result of her participation in the course meant travelling without having to rely on someone and

being able to use numbers and writing in order to sew: “If I want to go to Levent, for example, I just get on the bus and go without having to ask anyone. I didn’t know the numbers earlier. Now I write down centimeters, measurements and sew.”

Other written materials participants mentioned as being able to read after the course were street signs, price tags, bus signs, subtitles on TV programmes, subtitles in the movies, books, newspapers, and numbers. Three of the participants, Ganime, Pınar, and Ayşe, explained that reading newspapers and books had been part of their daily life after the literacy course. Ganime put this as follows: “For example now I read newspapers whenever I can find them. I read books. I like reading very much. For a while just after learning to read, I would go to my room every night and read. My father and mother would say: “Look, she started again.”

### Increased self-confidence

When women talked about their being able to travel, read and write without having to rely on others after the course, their words rang out loud, the pitch of their sounds increased and their faces lightened up with excitement and pride. Their accounts of how they perceived themselves after the literacy course revealed their increased self-confidence. Some of them worded the change in their perception of themselves as “increased self-confidence” whereas one participant, Didem, put it both as “increased self-confidence” and as “being able to show the confidence which was already in herself before attending the course”. Didem put the change in her perception of herself as a result of participation in the course as follows:

I can go into certain social environments more easily now. More self-confidence. I feel like I can go somewhere I have never been before. I have that feeling. Perhaps before being able to read I felt that lacking in myself but I was aware that it wasn’t my fault. I still had self-confidence, a confidence

inside of me. But it was hard to show it. Now I can reflect that to the outside world more easily. I had the same confidence then but to what extent I can show it has changed.

When the other six participants talked about how their perceptions of themselves changed after the course, they answered in the following words. Leyla talked about being more relaxed and opening up: “Of course it (the way I perceived myself after the course) changed. I feel like I have opened up, which feels very good.” Ganimé saw her literacy skills as a very close friend: “You feel a certain confidence in yourself. It is a good thing. You can do things on your own. After all, literacy becomes your friend. I think it’s your closest friend. You know stuff, you can learn things by reading and researching.” Pınar said that she felt more capable of getting things done which made her feel more relaxed and confident: “Of course it (the way I perceived myself after the course) changed. I feel more relaxed. When I want to do something, I can do it without asking people; I can get things done. In that sense my perception changed.” Fadime was very happy that she did not listen to her husband and attended the course:

Now that I can get on a vehicle and go wherever I want to. One feels better when she socializes. You feel more relaxed. I got very happy that I went to the course. Really so happy. I said to myself: “I’m glad I didn’t listen to my husband and went to the course.” If I had listened to him, maybe he would have never let me go.

Ayşe put her sense of increased self-confidence as follows:

In the past I thought I couldn’t talk with educated people, I didn’t have the confidence. But now I have the courage to do that. For example my mother would go to Tuzla, (after my learning to read) she couldn’t go there alone anymore. She would say: “My daughter knows. She can take me to places.” I had created that confidence in my mother. She realized that I had self-confidence.

Aşlı also felt a stronger self-confidence in herself as a result of her participation in the literacy course:

You go to the bank or to the hospital. They give you a paper to fill in. You cannot fill it in. I would always take my son or daughter with me. Thank God, now I can go to places on my own. My confidence is stronger. I have more confidence in myself. How could it (attending the literacy course) not change the person? Anything can change in someone's life.

### Changes in relations in the family and community

Six of the seven women in my sample had jobs outside the house and five of them had been working since they were around thirteen. Gaining income and getting outside the house for their jobs seemed to give them a say in taking decisions for themselves and in the decisions taken in the family. Thus when they talked about the change in their relations with their family members after the literacy course, these six women answered in ways that suggested that they had already had a certain decision-making power and voice in the decisions taken within the family before the course.

Didem talked about how she defended her decisions and version of right against her family as follows: "I was always like this in the household. I've always had this side to me. Actually I've been a bit rebellious and harsh. I had my own rights. Whatever they did, I would argue with them for two hours if necessary and convince them. (...) I think that having different opinions led to these arguments. (...)” Asli saw herself as the person who did household chores and took decisions concerning them since she was the main breadwinner: "Since I work, generally I am the one who spends for the family (...) I provide for everything. My husband works too. He works as a private chauffeur but (...) I am responsible for all the decisions in the house.”

There was only one woman in my sample who did not work outside the house and thus had no economic power. Attending the literacy course seemed to make more impact on her familial relations. Fadime had attended the literacy course

although her husband resisted her decision and made fun of her efforts. After the course she attended last year, at the time of the interview she was attending the tailoring course, again against her husband's will: "My husband didn't allow me before (to go the literacy course). He tried a lot to talk me out of it but he couldn't succeed. Now he says you defeat me in everything. I make resolutions to not to listen to you but you make yourself listened to and you make me do what you want even if I don't want to."

The accounts of six women in my sample who had paid employment suggest that they had already had a voice in the decisions taken in the family before attending the literacy course. Yet, after the course five of them explained that they started to see themselves as role models for other illiterate women in their family. They took an active role to teach literacy to their mothers at home since their mothers had health problems or had to take up caretaker roles in the house. Some of them tried to convince male relatives who were against sending their sisters or wives to the literacy courses.

Didem:

My mother knows A, B, C. Yet she finds it difficult to put them together and read the word. I hope I'll send her to the literacy course. I want that a lot. I've been trying to teach her at home. We tried that a couple of times. But she needs to go (to a literacy course). One cannot learn (to read and write) at home. My mother takes care of my father. My father is very sick these days. If the conditions were more appropriate she would go to the course.

Ganime:

My aunt has a daughter. Her brother came to our course (literacy course) last semester. I asked my niece to come to the course as well. She is such a timid girl. She looks very sad and she is quite introverted. She can get time off from her job on the weekends and come. I think her brother doesn't let her go to the course. (...) I tell other women as well: "Why don't you go to the literacy course?". My mother as well. She never went to school either. I tell her to go to the course too. I was going to take her to our first level literacy course. But she couldn't come since my brother was too young. Hopefully she'll come next year. (...) I convinced my mother. Now I have to talk with my nephew

and say to him: “You are going to the course yourself. Why don’t you let your sister go to the course then?”

Ganime had a busy political agenda by which she worked towards increased opportunities for other women in her nuclear family, extended family, and her community. She had already convinced her mother to go to the literacy course and was trying to inform and convince, if necessary, other illiterate women she knew. In addition to the advocacy work she carried out among illiterate women she knew personally, she confronted and aimed to overcome the patriarchal male power in her extended family that prevented women from getting education. Her next step for this purpose was to confront her nephew to convince him to send his sister to the literacy course, revealing Ganime’s potentially transformative actions to help other women have increased opportunities and control over their lives.

Three of the five women also mentioned informing other illiterate women at their work places or in their communities about the courses. In some cases the women they guided did then attend the courses, but in other cases they did not go to the courses due to resistance and lack of support from the males in the family. These three women in my sample thought women had to use their self-agency and have self-confidence to act against the restrictions imposed on them. Ayşe put this point as follows: “Those women usually say, their fathers say: What would they do at school? Why would they do at school at this age? It is a bit because of their family. Yet if one has the will, she can resist her family and get education and get a better status in life.”

Two other women in my sample, who did not mention putting themselves as a role model for other women in their family, were trying to guide and advise other women in their community. They said they could not succeed since they thought these women were indifferent to the issue of literacy. They thought women who were

not motivated to become literate would try to gain literacy skills under two conditions. One condition was that they would want to be literate when they needed literacy skills in order to get a job. The other condition was when their children would humiliate them because of their lack of literacy skills or else support them to gain literacy skills.

Aslı:

I can only be an example to them. I tell them not to miss out on things; anything may happen in one's life. This may be necessary for a job or for something else, I warn them. I have told that to so many people. I see that they are between twenty and twenty-five years old. They are newly married. They are illiterate. They don't have children. I get angry with them. I am older than they are. I have a lot of problems. I work, do the housework and run around to learn something. Of course, I tell this to them. They say: "What would we do with literacy?" Their husbands bring money and they have comfortable lives. I talk with them, put myself as an example but they aren't convinced. Maybe in the future, their children will humiliate them. But some children support their parents. My children make fun of me but there are some children who warn their mothers: "Mom, why don't you go to school? Go and learn." Then those women'll need literacy too.

#### Opinions on Women's Status and Conditions in Turkey

In this part participants' opinions on women's common problems in Turkey, their suggestions for the solution of these problems, and their aspirations for their futures will be discussed. This is important to explore their understandings of power relations, social roles imposed on them and inequalities in their particular contexts and their ways to struggle against them.

### Common problems of women in Turkey

Four women in the sample considered women's being deprived of education and economic independence, which lead to dependence on men and violence by men in the family, as a common problem of women in Turkey.

Pınar:

I think unemployment is the common problem. Many women suffer from this and they get beaten up by their husbands. I am so much against this. I think there shouldn't be any unemployment. I would like women to have work experiences. I think women can take care of themselves on their own. I would like it to be so. (...) Education is vital. Yet going to school is not compulsory to get a diploma anymore. It isn't like it used to be anymore. They can get a diploma from a lot of places. So I think education is vital and there shouldn't be any battering and unemployment.

For the other three women in my sample patriarchal social roles and practices imposed on women posed a common problem for women in Turkey.

Didem:

Seeing women as further behind. Men are always one step forward. For example families favour boys over girls when they send their children to school. And the reason may be the idea that women will already get married, look after the children and stay at home while men will work all their lives. But that is wrong. (...) That may be stemming from a very old idea. Very very old. When we think back, God forbid, people even debated whether women were human beings or not. We know that girl children were buried alive. Perhaps that is the reason. Many people still couldn't get over this: the idea that men are always superior. It isn't known by us why they think so. Actually when you think about what a woman can do. (...)

### How to improve women's lives in Turkey

The ways women suggested to improve women's lives in Turkey carried the marks of their particular socio-economic contexts and life experiences. Three married women in the sample focused on the importance of economic power for women in the improvement of women's lives. One of them, Leyla, was happy that her husband



shared the housework with her and supported her to continue her education. She observed that many women suffered from a double work burden since their husbands did not help them with the housework. Leyla emphasized that women had to work a lot and try to get by in the grave economic conditions they experienced. She found education important since it would give women better employment and earning opportunities.

Leyla:

There are problems about work, everyone says: “We would like to stay at home or we would like to have better workplaces.” For example you work but cannot earn what you deserve or you come across bad people at work. There are so many things in the textile industry. You work long hours. Most women are married and they find it hard. They cannot work but then they cannot get by without working. My husband helps me with everything. Sure, men should help. But a majority of men don’t have that way of thinking except for my husband. (...) Women’ll work. What else can they do? They’ll work, cut down on expenses and try to make ends meet. (...) When you get training you get the jobs you want. When you get the jobs you want you get a better salary. When you get a better salary you become better off financially.

The two other married women thought economic independence of women was important so that they would not have to stay in abusive marriages. They thought social support systems were important to help women lead an independent life.

Aslı:

For example if a woman doesn’t work she would be dependent on her husband for money. Then you would have to be silent. So I would like all women to work. It really makes a difference. About this, I wish all women had salaries in order for them not to be dependent on anybody. Actually one salary would be enough only for the rent of a flat. If the government helped women they wouldn’t stay in marriages that they don’t want. They would never do such a thing. They would leave without even looking behind. I think they would. I wish it happened, but unfortunately there is no such thing. If such a thing happened, no one would stay with a bad husband. Also take that into account, that when you don’t have your own house you would have to rent a place of your own. You endure it (an unhappy marriage and bad husband) also for that reason.

Fadime:

For example if you work and have social security you would do what you want to. I missed a lot of opportunities. I was illiterate. I had young children.

If they had a job with social security women wouldn't be dependant on anybody. If she weren't happy with her husband or with the relatives she would take her children and leave. If only the government helped women.

The other four women thought economic power and education were vital to improve women's lives in Turkey. Yet they considered education and paid employment not as an end in itself, emphasising the significance of women using their agency to realize and act against dominant realities in their live. Didem found it vital that women realized that they had the capacity to achieve whatever they wanted in their lives: "It has to do with education. In general it has to do with education but actually it has to do with awareness. To get rid of the thought that men can do everything. To make use of opportunities. To get rid of the idea that one should stay behind because she is a woman and to move forward." Pinar found women's solidarity and women's trust in their own agency important to improve women's lives: "(...) I think women can do everything if they get together. If there would be solidarity among women, a togetherness among them, they can do anything. The woman herself is the limit. A woman can do anything if she wants to."

#### Aspirations for their future

All the women in my sample wanted to keep or increase the sense independence they had by going on working outside the house, by continuing their education or by having a house of their own. Two of the married women with grown-up children in my sample imagined their future together with their children's. When asked to imagine their future only for themselves, Aslı saw herself going on her life as a working woman since working outside the house made her feel good.

Ash:

I would like my children to go on with their education. I want them to get education. I would like them to have a future, at least a future. I feel good as long as I work but I don't know what would happen tomorrow. I think I will go on working. I would take up another job even if I quit this one. You feel more confidence in your self when you work. You don't have to be financially dependant on your husband at least. You buy for yourself, provide for yourself (...)

The other married woman who did not work outside the house, Fadime, wanted to go on getting outside the house to attend the courses.

Fadime:

I tell my elder son to get married quickly. I would like to have grandchildren. I would like his bride to go to the tailoring course; I would like her to have a close relationship with me. I wouldn't be against her going to the tailoring course, for example. I hope my son'll marry a working girl so that I would look after their baby. I would keep coming to these courses. My husband wouldn't want it but it is no problem. When I want to do something I do it. I also would like to go on going to the literacy course.

Four other women in my sample wanted to continue their education, either by attending vocational courses or open high school and university classes

Ayse: "I believe that I'll be in a better status in the future. University, high school and secondary schools, may God permit. But even if I cannot succeed I'll be determined about it. I get stressed because I couldn't get an education and I could fail the course I'm attending now but if you aren't determined you can't get anywhere. (...)"

One woman in my sample wanted to have a house of her own. Yet she was aware that her family and people she knew expected her to get married at some point. Since this vision of her future bothered her, she preferred not to think about it.

Didem:

It actually is very simple. I imagine my future being on my own. I have always wanted to have a house of my own. It would belong only to me. Without anyone else. Apart from that, in terms of work, my sister and I would like to set up a business. We always think about it, talk about it, but we

cannot get to start it. Actually I cannot think of the long-term future. Whether I like it or not I am expected to get married. Of course I am not very close to that yet. As your age advances people start to give you odd looks, like she is getting too old to marry. You start to think about it too whether you like it or not. But it is a matter of luck that you would come across someone you like. I cannot think further into the future, actually. I don't want to think of it. You never know. It's a weird feeling.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the effect of PEC literacy courses on women's lives through an exploration of their perceptions of the changes that took place in their lives as a result of their participation in the course, taking women's life histories as central to its analysis. The purpose for this study was :

1. to explore the effect of participation in PEC literacy courses on women's lives from their own perspectives.

For this, it looked into the relationship between women's accounts of their current and earlier lives and their perceptions of changes in their lives that occurred as a result of their participation in the course.

The study used case study method. The researcher had partially structured interviews with seven participants who had completed the first level literacy course offered by Kağıthane/Gültepe People's Education Center. The researcher had one interview with each participant. The interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed. They were content-analyzed in order to identify recurring themes and core meanings (Patton, 2002)

All of the women in the study had migrated to Istanbul from other cities in Anatolia, six of whom were born in either South-eastern or Eastern Turkey. Their ages ranged from twenty-one to forty-six. Four of the seven women in the sample were married and three of the married women had children. Six of the seven women were bilingual. The mother tongue of four participants was Kurdish, while the mother tongue of two participants was Arabic. Five women had to leave their

villages due to armed conflict. Harsh economic realities had forced these five women to start working in the textile workshops at the age of thirteen. Only one woman in my sample did not work outside the house. All the women in the sample had busy and demanding lives, working long hours in textile workshops and acting as homemakers and caretakers in their houses.

Only two women in the sample received support both from their family and from their neighbours when they declared their decision to go to the literacy course. The remaining five women confronted indifference, resistance or ridicule of at least one of the following groups of people: their family members they lived under the same roof, relatives in their extended family, neighbours, colleagues and friends.

Two women in the sample knew about the course since they lived close to the centre. Yet five of seven women suffered from the course's lack of publicity. They had always wanted to learn to read and write, but did not know how to access the courses. When they heard of the course from their colleagues, employers, or neighbours they immediately enrolled.

Women's accounts of how they participated in and continued the course revealed that they overcame great obstacles to start and then to persist in completing the literacy course. They had been denied the basic education as children. Coupled with grave economic difficulties, patriarchal power structures in their families and dominant gender roles prevalent in the society had prevented the women in the sample from getting education in their childhood and adulthood. The public support systems were not there for them when they needed them as children and adults. They were not informed of the adult education activities that could compensate for the education of which they were deprived as children.

Yet women in the present study did not consider themselves victims of the inequalities and deprivations they experienced. But they did challenge material constraints and dominant gender roles in order to have an increasing sense of independence and self-reliance in their lives. For example, Asli was working full-time and providing for the whole family. Her extended family did not approve of her decision to go to the literacy course. Her husband was indifferent to her efforts and her children were sometimes making fun of her efforts. At the time of the interview one of her sons was doing his military service in Şırnak, an area where there was armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish security forces, and another son was getting prepared for the University Entrance Exam. Despite all her personal worries, lack of support from her loved ones, and economic difficulties she had attended and completed level 1 literacy course and attending level 2 literacy course at the time of the interview.

The common expectation all women in the sample had in attending the literacy course was to be self-reliant in reading and writing so as to carry out their tasks on their own, both more functional tasks such as filling out form and more mentally engaging tasks such as reading a book. Other expectations articulated by the participants were continuing formal education, being able to take vocational training courses once they had the literacy certificate and being able to write as a mode of self-expression.

Participants's accounts of the course itself suggested that the course content and the discussions in class did not make use of their lived experiences. Not basing education on the lived experiences of the learners suggested that courses did not have a vision of education underpinned by a commitment to the development of a critical consciousness of the inequalities and the inherent capacity of human beings to

challenge them; these are the underlying characteristics of Freire's critical pedagogy by which he developed literacy programmes that helped people read their world at the same time they began to read and write (Freire, 1974). Even if these socially transformative goals are left out by the model of education employed in the courses, the use and exchange of lived experiences in the teaching and learning process should however be considered vital because it creates a more meaningful and familiar learning environment for the participants. Thus the courses did not seem to create a community of learners with similar challenges and aspirations. Only two participants explained that they made friends with other participants. They made friends with only one person in their class and thought that exchanging life experiences and opinions about the course with them made them realize that they were not alone in their efforts. They explained that this gave them increased motivation to continue their education.

When invited to discuss the changes in their lives that occurred as a result of their participation in the course, all participants mentioned being able to travel without having to rely on others, being able to read bus signs, and being able to write, i.e to fill in legal documents on their own or to write as a mode of self-expression. The participants also explained that they started to read street signs, price tags, bus signs, subtitles on TV programmes, subtitles in the movies, books, newspapers, and numbers after the course. Three of the participants had become habitual readers, reading newspapers or books on a daily basis.

Women's accounts of their perception of themselves after attending the course revealed that they all felt themselves more self-confident. As for the change in relations with their family members, six women who had been working outside the house for a long time felt that they always had a certain say in the decisions taken in



the family. Attending the course seemed to make the biggest impact for Fadime who had never worked outside the house. Resisting her husband and sons to attend the literacy course was the start of a more independent life for her. She felt she had more say in the family after attending the course.

All the women were seeing themselves as role models for other illiterate women in their family or community. Some were informing them about the courses, trying to convince them if they seemed reluctant, whilst others were challenging male family members who resisted women's participation in the course.

All women in the sample were well aware of the challenges they themselves experienced and other women in Turkey experienced due to male dominated power structures, dominant gender roles and economic inequalities. When they were invited to discuss women's common problems in Turkey four women in my sample talked in more concrete terms. They regarded women's being deprived of education and economic independence, which leads to dependence on men and violence by men in the family, as the common problem of women in Turkey. The other three women in my sample articulated their opinions at a more conceptual level. They explained that they saw patriarchal social roles and practices imposed on women as the common problem of women in Turkey.

Women in the sample suggested that economic independence, social support systems, and education were vital to improve women's lives. Having experienced grave economic difficulties in their lives, women in the study considered it vital to equip themselves with skills and knowledge that could help them survive in the harsh economic realities of their lives. Some of them explained that education and paid employment were not sufficient as ends in themselves. They emphasized the significance of women's agency to reflect and act upon dominant realities in their

lives. Women's aspirations for themselves suggested that all women wanted to keep or increase the sense independence they had, by going on working outside the house, by continuing their education or by having a house of their own. That the women in the sample had a thorough conceptualization of the patriarchal power structures, dominant gender roles, and economic inequalities was very moving and promising for a vision of the future where women and men in Turkey enjoy equal power, opportunities and control over their life choices.

This study was carried out with women participants who completed level 1 literacy courses offered by one particular People Education Center's. It aimed to explore women's perceptions of the changes that happened in their lives as a result of their participation of the course. Looking into the cognitive and linguistic changes PEC literacy courses create is also important as well comparing the effect of the course on men's and women's lives.

Six of the seven participants in the sample were bilingual. Four of them were of Kurdish origin and two of them were of Arabic origin. The effect of having a mother tongue different than Turkish and coming from families where this language was spoken among family members might have had an effect on the learning process in the course. Yet my study did not aim to explore this aspect, which remains to be explored.

Six of the seven women in the sample of this study were continuing their education. That they were very determined to get further education and gain new skills and knowledge might have accentuated the positive effect of the course on their lives. Thus it seems important to explore the effect of the course on women who took level 1 Literacy Course of PECs but did not continue their education in order to understand the dynamics that hinder these women from pursuing their education.

It seems crucial to explore further the meaning of participation in education activities and the aspiration to continue education as women situated in a web of patriarchal power structures and socio-economic difficulties. Also vital is research on how to re-conceptualize the philosophy of education embraced by People Education Centers so as to help them employ socially transformative models of education so that they can base their education on participants' concrete experiences and help them realize the challenging aspects of their lives and their potential to confront them. It is also important to research ways to re-structure the administration of PECS so as to make them more accessible, visible, and democratic-minded.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Interview Questions

##### Life history

1. Can you tell me about your life starting from your childhood?

- birth date, birthplace, number and gender of siblings
- economic situation during childhood, when and why they came to Istanbul
- any formal schooling
- marital status;
- who does her current family consist of? Her house, lives close to the relatives, in the same house or apartment building with them?
- unpaid/paid work experience
- number, age and gender of children and if applicable, grandchildren; how they decided on the number of children to have
- present economic situation

##### Effect of the course on her life

2. How did you decide to participate in the course?

- expectations, reactions of the family, friends, neighbours

3. Do you remember your first day in the course? What did you feel then? What did you feel when you went back home from the course on your first day?

- Feelings, fear and hesitance regarding the environment , increased motivation to learn, hope, confidence

4. How would you describe your communication with other women in the course?
  - any contribution of her communication with other women, learning from other women, women's solidarity
5. Has anything changed in your life after you attended this course? Please give concrete examples for major changes.
  - the status of the participant at home (relationships with family members, change in housework, decision-making at home), changes in daily routine (reading, going somewhere by yourself etc), changes in free time activities
6. What are the things that you wanted to but couldn't do before attending the course?
7. Which of your life conditions have you started to perceive as problems through this course?
8. Did your opinions of yourself change since you've attended this course?
9. What can a literate person do?
10. How do you envision your future?
11. (If she feels positive changes in her life as a result of her participation in the course) What do you think can be done for other women to experience similar positive changes in their lives? Who can do what?

#### Opinions on Women's Conditions and Position in Turkey

12. What do you think are the common problems of women in Turkey?
  - similarities/ differences
13. What are the reasons of these problems?
  - economic freedom, concept of women as housewives, gender stereotyping in labour market

14. It is a common view that women and men are different and so women should stay at home and take care of their family. What do you think about this?
- gender division of labour, women's unpaid work, decision making/ gender stereotyping in the labour market/ perception of men as breadwinners
15. It is a common view in Turkey that women are silent because they know less or have nothing to say. What do you think about this?
16. Speaking from your experience how do you think people's attitudes towards women change when they begin to earn money?
- decision making, voice/ earning as much as or more than the husband/ the impact of income on relationships
17. Some say women living in Eastern and South-eastern Turkey have graver economic and social problems. What do you think about it?
- urban/ rural/ economic development/ poverty/ policing and control of women's behavior and mobility in small communities
18. How do you think women's lives would improve in Turkey?

## Görüşme Soruları

### Hayat Tarihi

1. Çocukluğunuzdan başlayarak hayatınızdan bahseder misiniz bana?
  - Doğum tarihi, doğum yeri, kardeş sayısı ve cinsiyeti
  - Çocukluğunda ekonomik durumu. Ne zaman ve neden İstanbul'a taşındı?
  - Hiç okula gitti mi?
  - Medeni durum
  - Şu andaki ailesinden kaç kişi, kimler var? Oturduğu ev, akrabalara yakın, aynı apartmanda, mahallede?
  - Ücretsiz/ücretli iş deneyimi
  - Kaç çocuğu var? Yaşları, cinsiyetleri. Torun?
  - Şu andaki ekonomik durumunu nasıl tanımlıyor?
- Kursun Hayatına Etkisi
2. Buradaki okuma yazma kursuna katılmaya nasıl karar verdiniz?
  - Beklentiler, ailenin –komşuların-arkadaşların- tepkisi?
3. Kurstaki ilk gününüzü hatırlıyor musunuz? O zaman neler hissetmiştiniz? Kurstan eve dönünce neler hissetmiştiniz?
  - a. Duygular, yeni ortamdan korkma ve çekinme, öğrenme için hevesin artması, umut, güven
4. Okuma yazma kursundaki diğer kadınlara iletişiminizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
  - İletişimin ona kattıkları, diğer kadınlardan öğrenme, kadın dayanışması, derste konuşulanlar
5. Pekii okuma yazma kursuna katıldıktan sonra hayatınızda değişen bir şey oldu mu? Olduysa örneklerle anlatır mısınız lütfen?
  - Ailede konum (aile üyeleriyle ilişkiler, ev içinde değişim, ailede kararların verilmesi), günlük rutinde değişimler (okuma, kendi başına bir yerlere gitme), boş zaman aktivitelerinde değişiklik
6. Kursu katılmadan önce yapmak isteyip de yapamadığınız ama kursa katıldıktan sonra artık yapabildiğiniz neler var?
7. Kursu katıldıktan sonra daha önce hayatınızda sorun olarak görmediğiniz neleri sorun olarak görmeye başladınız?
8. Kursu katıldıktan sonra kendiniz hakkınızdaki görüşleriniz değişti mi?

9. Sizce okur yazar kime denir? Bir okur yazar neler yapabilir?
10. Geleceğinizi nasıl hayal ediyorsunuz?
11. Sizce diğer kadınların da sizin yaşadığınıza benzer olumlu değişiklikler yaşaması için siz ne yapabilirsiniz? Pekii kim ne yapabilir bu konu hakkında? Türkiye'deki kadınların durumları ve konumları üzerine fikirleri
12. Sizce Türkiye'deki kadınların ortak sorunları neler?
  - Benzerlikler/ farklılıklar
13. Kadınların hayatlarındaki bu sorunlar neden kaynaklanıyor?
  - ekonomik özgürlük, kadınları ev kadını olarak gören anlayış, iş piyasalarındaki toplumsal cinsiyetçi ayırım ve tektipleştirme
14. Şöyle yaygın bir kanı var: Kadınlar ve erkekler farklıdır, bu yüzden kadınlar dışarıda bir işte çalışmaktansa evde oturmalı ve ailelerinin bakımıyla ilgilenmeli. Bu konuda siz ne düşünüyorsunuz?
  - cinsiyetçi iş bölümü, kadının ücreti ödenmeyen emeği, karar verme/ aileyi geçindiren erkektir anlayışı
15. Türkiye'de şöyle bir yaygın fikir daha var: Kadınlar sessiz çünkü daha az şey biliyorlar veya söyleyecek bir şeyleri yok. Bu konuda ne düşünüyorsunuz?
16. Deneyimlerinize dayanarak konuşursanız sizce kadınlar para kazanmaya başlayınca insanların kadınlara olan tavırları nasıl değişiyor?
  - karar verme, ses, eşler, eşle aynı miktar veya daha çok kazanma/ ekonomik durumun ilişkilere etkisi
17. Kimilerine göre Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da yaşayan kadınların daha ağır ekonomik ve sosyal sorunları var. Siz bu konuda ne düşünüyorsunuz?
  - kırsal/ şehir/ ekonomik gelişme/ fakirlik/ küçük topluluklarda kadının sorgulayıcı gözler altında yaşaması
18. Sizce Türkiye'deki kadınların hayatı nasıl daha iyiye gider?
  - ekonomik bağımsızlık/ kadınların kendi girişimleri/ STK'lar, devletin girişimleri, eğitimin rolü/ kanunlardaki değişimler

## Appendix B

### Original Turkish Text of the Quotations from the Interviews in Chapter 4 “Findings and Discussion”

Fadime:

Ya biz şimdi sınıfta arkadaşlarla kızlar erkekler oynuyorduk bahçede. Babam da gelmiş haberim yok. Erkek çocuğu ne demiş, herhalde, çocuğa sordum inkar etti. “Aaa koca memeli kız” diyesi güya, babam da onu duyusu, babam şak diye müdüre çıktı, sildirdi, anında. Çocuk inkar etti demedim diye ama ben duymadım öyle deyip demediğini. Ama babam öyle dedi yani. (...) Benim de göğüslerim maaşallah. Böyle değildim ki önceden.

Fadime: “Kardeşlerimin ikisi de liseyi okudular. Maalesef ben bir baltaya sap olamadım.”

Fadime: “Eşim amcamın oğlu. Ay tanışmaz olsaydım. Sorma valla akraba, kimseye bahsetme. Akrabaya gittim. İstemem, akraba çok kötü. Babam istedi, annem istedi, ben istedim işte. Yengemle amcam oluyor. Amcamın oğlu.”

Fadime: “Çocuklar küçük diye bir yere gidemedim. Aslında sigortalı bir yer bulsaydım, yani okur yazar olmuş olsaydım girerdim sigortalı bir yere mesela...

Zaten düşünüyorum, keşke diyorum çok fırsatlar kaçtı elimden zamanında.”

Leyla: “(Kardeşlerim arasında okula) Bir tek ben gitmemişim. Buraya geldikten sonra annemler yazdırmaya karar vermişlerdi. Yaş tabii ilerlemişti. Almıyorlardı. Almayınca biz de bıraktık.”

Pınar:

Ben hiç okula gitmedim. Ablam üçe kadar gitti. O da Bitlis’te gitmiş. Ben gitmeyi çok istedim. Babam da çok göndermek istiyordu ama amcamdan dolayı kaynaklandı. Biraz geri kafalı birisi olduğu için göndermediler. Amca, en büyük amca olduğu için sözleri daha çok geçen birisiydi. İşte biliyorsunuz: “Kız çocukları okur mu?” Göndermediler.

Ayşe: “Üçten terktim. (...) Okul iki gün açıktı üç gün açık değildi. Teröristler geliyordu, öğretmenlerimizi alıyordu. Şimdi öyle bir köy yok. Artık o köy toprak oldu.”

Ayşe:

Amcalar dedi işte: “Kız okula gönderilmez. Okuyup da ne yapacak? Aman sevgilisine mektup yazacak. Aman gözü açılacak. Hani biz buna laflarımızı geçiremiyoruz.” (...) Çocukluğumdan beri ben çalışıyorum. Aileme destek oldum. Benim babam okula gönderecekti. Amcam elinden herşeyi aldığı için biraz da maddi durumumuz da iyi değildi. Çünkü sekiz kardestik. İki abim çalışıyordu ama çırak olarak çalışıyordu bir yerde.

Ayşe: “Yirmi altı yaşında evlendim. Benim amcamın kızları on üç, on dört yaşında evlendi. Bu aramızda fark. Yani, kültür çok önemli bence.”

Ayşe: “(...) Patronum gazete okurdu. Ben meraklı meraklı arkadan temizlik yaparken bakardım nereyi okuyor diye. Ben de o gittikten sonra onun okuduğu yerlere hep bakardım. “A, B, C” derdim. O da görüyor ya benim ilgili olduğumu. O yüzden o patronum bizi yazdırdı.”

Didem: “(Kız kardeşlerimin) Bir tanesi okudu. O da iki sene okudu. Ondan sonra okul uzak diye abim izin vermemiş. Kışları çok kar yağdığı için yol uzak oluyor. Onunla ilgili değil belki de. Kız çocukları zaten gerek yok diyip (...)”

Aslı:

Ben Bitlis’te doğdum, orada büyüdüm. 66’liyim. Artı ben okul çağında, şeye gönderdiler beni. Abimin yanına Ağrı’ya, hocalık yapıyordu. Oraya gönderdikleri için okula göndermediler beni. Ondan sonra bu benim hayatımı çok etkileyen birşey oldu. Ondan sonra genç kız oldum. İsteddiğini yazamıyorsun. İstedğin gibi bir yere gidemiyorsun. On yedi yaşında ben evlendim. Tanımadan, görücü usulüyle. İstanbul’a geldim on yedi yaşındayken.

Aslı: “Ben istedim. Bir de mecburi oldu o yıllarda, 83’te. Köylerde ilk açılan şeyler vardı, işte bu halk eğitimler benim bildiğim kadar o sene başladı. Aslında annemi çağırdılar kursa. Annem hasta olunca yalvardım ben gideyim yerine diye. Çarşaf giydim gittim kursa.”

Aslı: “83’te okuma yazmaya gittim ilk ama kırk gün bile değildi. Köyde o kadar gösterdiler (...) Tam yazmaya geçiyorsun, okul bitiyor, kapatıyorlar.”

Ganime:

Köydeyken okula gitme şansım olmadı. Buraya geldim. Bu fırsat çıktı karşıma. Değerlendireyim dedim. Benden küçükler okuyor. Birisi lise üçe, birisi lise ikiye, bir tanesi orta ikiye gidiyor. Hepsi burada. Benim abim de okuyamadı köyde. İki sene okudu Batman’da. En büyük. Ben en büyükten bir ufak. Beni okutmadılar. İşte kızlar okutulmaz. Küçüklerin fırsatları iyi.

Ganime:

(...) İşte benim halamin eşi benim babam kızları okutuyor diye (babama kızıyor). Ben de dedim: “Kızlar okusunlar, ben okumadım onlar okusunlar.” Ben çalışmaya çalışıyorum sonuçta. “Ben çalışıp onları okutucam.” dedim. Okutuyorsun da ne olacak, avukat mı olacak? Bunu duydum yani. Sonuçta niye okutmuyorsun ki? Evlenip kocaya gidecek cahil cahil mi kalacak? Ezilecek sonuçta.

Leyla: “Mesela ben çok istiyordum okuma yazmayı. Ama bilmiyordum nerede öğreneceğim, nereye gideceğim. Tabii Merve (komşusunun kızı) söyleyince bizim okulumuzda başladı diye ben hiç vakit kaybetmeden hemen gittim.”

Ganime: “Okuma yazma kursu bence iyi oldu. Böyle bir kampanya yaptılar. Ama yine kimi geliyor kimi gelemiyor. Çok insan gelemiyor. İşte dedim ya bir çare yapmalılar insanlara. Bir şekilde ulaşmaları lazım.”

Ganime:

Birşeyler öğrenmek amacıyla. Gördüğüm bir şeyi okuyabiliyim en azından, işime gelen şeyi yazabileyim diye. O amaçla gittim. Gazetede bir haber görüyorsun. Tamam resmini görüyorsun ama okuyamıyorsun, anlamıyorsun. Acaba altında ne yazıyor merak ediyorsun. Bazen kardeşime okutuyordum mesela. Çok beğendiğim bir roman kitabı olurdu. Dinlerdim. Yine zor okuturdum ama okuturdum isteyince ben. Telefonu filan kızlara yazdırırdım. Şimdi kendim yazabiliyorum.

Ayşe: “Benim sadece okuma hevesim vardı (...) Bende o şöyle giyinmiş, işte erkek arkadaş, o şöyle yapmış, öyle bir özentim yok. Benim sadece okula giden çocuklara özentim vardı. Hani çantalarını alırlardı kollarına giderlerdi ya okula. Ben de derdim ben niye gitmiyorum. Hep gözlerim dolardı (...)”



Hatice: “Ben okumayı çok istiyordum. Okumayı açıkçası halen bile istiyorum. (...)

Benim arkadaşlarım, benim çevremdeki insanlar hep okumuş insanlar. Ben okuyamadığım zaman, yapamadığım zaman kendime kızıyordum. Şimdi zaten bu kursu da bitirirsem açık ilk öğretime gidicem, ilköğretim diploması alıcam.”

Didem:

Benim yaşlarımdakiler yazı yazıyor, okuyor, derslerine çalışıyor. Öyle birşeyler istiyordum. Ama olmuyordu. Benim gidip de yaptığım şeyler. Çok uzaktım. Çok geride kendimi görüyordum. İnsanların içinde sanki okuma yazmayı bilmediğimi biliyorlarmış gibi hissediyordum. Bundan çok uzağım. Nasıl yetişebilirim? Nasıl yapabilirim?

Leyla: “Katılınca işte güzel olur diyordum. En azından giderim diplomamı alırım, elime bir mesleğim olur, ondan sonra rahat rahat çalışırım.”

Aslı:

Sonra evlendikten sonra eşine sinirleniyorsun. Keşke diyordum kendime okuma yazmayı bilseydim de, istediğim gibi yazabilseydim de başkalarına söylemediklerimi bir kağıda dökebilsem. Hep söylerdim böyle. O yüzden ben zaten ikinci defa geldim burada kursa. Bunu her zaman hayal ederdim ve söylerdim. Keşke diyordum bilseydim.

Leyla: “(Aldığım tepkiler) Güzel oldu. Herkes yardımcı olmaya çalışıyordu.

“Elimizden gelen birşey varsa gelin yardımcı olalım.” diyorlardı. (...) Eşim de sağolsun yardımcı oluyordu okuma yazma şeyinde. O da bildiği kadarıyla yardımcı olmaya çalışıyordu.”

Ayşe:

Annem çok sevindi (...) Aileden babama bayağı baskı yaptılar. İşte kızı niye gönderiyorsun okula bilmem ne. Babam dedi ki: “Sizi ilgilendirmez. Bugüne kadar sizi dinledim de ne oldu? Kızım cahim kaldı. Ama kızım cahilin önde gideni. Cahile belki birşey verdiğinde okuyamaz ama o artık okuyabiliyor. Siz bana zarar veriyorsunuz. Benim ailemin iyi bir yere gelmesini istemiyorsunuz. Ama senin kızın liseye gidiyor. Sen ne yapmaya çalışıyorsun.” dedi babam kardeşine. ‘Kızını okutma diyorsun bana senin kızın liseye gidiyor. Bu hangi Allah, hangi kitapta yazıyor?’ dedi. O gün bu gündür amcalarımla hiç konuşmayız, görüşmeyiz (...)

Ayşe: “Erkek arkadaşım, ayırdığım çocuk, kapı komşumuz. O bana çok dedi: “Bu yaşta okula gidip ne yapacaksın?” Ben de dedim ki: “Okuyucam, benim gözüm açılacak, hani siz oyle düşünüyorsunuz ya?” derdim. Ben öyle görmüyorum. Ben kendimi geliştirip bir yere getirmek istiyorum.”

Aslı:

Hep kendim istedim. Eşim karışmıyor, git, gitme birşey demiyor. Kendim istiyorum. Kendim isteyerek birşeyler yapmaya çalışıyorum. (...) Akrabalarım kalsa ne okuma yazma ne bu kursa gelirdim. (...) Çocuklar bazen dalga geçiyorlar. Bazen aferin diyorlar. Belli olmuyor. Vallahi bazen çok dalga geciyorlar. Aman ne yapacaksın bu yaştan sonra? Hep böyle yani.

Didem: “(Ailem) karışmazlar. Yani sorup da, sen ne yaptın ne ettin? Zaten öyle

birşey olsaydı çocukluğumuzda bizi okuturlardı. Hani ilgi olmuş olsaydı (...)

Akrabalar pek “Hayır, iyi değil.” de demediler; “İyi yapıyorsun.” da demediler (...)”

Fadime:

Komşular dedi: “Ne gerek var? Gitme. Aman sıkılırsın, iki gün sonra vaz geçersin bu işten.” (...) Oğullarım: “Aman anne işin ne bu saatten sonra? Otur oturduğun yerde, ne işin var, ne gerek var.” “Oğlum niye gerek olmasın?” dedim. “Herşeyi size mi sormak zorundayım?” Mesela telefonu bile çeviremiyordum. Arayamıyordum. Onlara soruyordum. Oğlum şunu ara. (...) Eşim dedi: “Kadın gidiyorsun, hiç olmazsa üniversite diplomasını da al öyle gel (...) Eşim dedi ki: “Ya dedi başaramazsan ben sana o zaman sorucam.” Bi kere kafaya taktım ya dedim ki ne olursa olsun hasta da olsam gidicem kursa. Kışın bile geldim valla soğuklarda. Koştura koştura geldim geç kalmayayım diye.

Ayşe:

(Sınıftakilerin) En büyüğü seksen beş yaşındaydı. Teyze derdim ben. Ama teyze de kendini o kadar geliştirmiş, o kadar akıllıydı ki ben ona imreniyordum. Ben o kadınla sohbet etmeyi daha çok severdim. Okulda ne yaptığımızı, boş zamanlarımızda ne yaptığımızdan bahsederdik. Teyzenin eşi elli yaşında ölmüş. Hep yalnız kalmış hayatta. Diyor ki: “Kızım bir oğlum askere gidiyor, bir mektup yazabileyim.” Hep aciz kalmak istemiyor. Bir kadını ya da çocuğu çağırmak istemiyor sürekli. “Niye kendim yazamayayım?” diyordu. Sırf onun için, mektup yazmak için kadın geldi okula. Ne kadar güzel bir şey. Pınar (küçük kız kardeşi) derdi: “Baksana yaşlı kadın geliyor.” Derdim: “Sus, olsun. Bak öğrenmenin yaşı yokmuş. Bunları görüyoruz ya hayata daha sıkı sarılmamız lazım.” diyordum (...)

Ganime: “Zaten fazla insan tanıımıyordum. Ama bir tane arkadaşım vardı, öyle konuşuyorduk. Mesela işte “Devam edicez, buraya kadar geldik. Zor değilmiş, devam edebiliriz.” diye konuşurduk.”

Ayşe: “A,B,C,’leri öğreniyorduk.”

Leyla: “Derste dersten konusuluyordu.”

Ganime: “Yani normal ders görüyorduk çıkıyorduk. Tenefüs yapıyorduk.”

Aslı: “Mesela Eminönü’ne gidiyorum yanıma bir kitap alıyorum, muhakkak gidene kadar kitabı okurum. Evde genelde fırsatım hiç olmuyor. Yani geliyorum, ya evin işi yemektir girişiyorum. Çocuklar, eşim geliyor. Fırsatım hiç olmuyor. Sofra, bulaşık zaman bitiyor. Genelde kitap alırım yanıma, hep yollarda. (...)”

Ganime: “Aslında okumak istiyorum gelecekte. Bir yerlere gelmek istiyorum okuyarak ama. Fazla derslere zaman ayıramıyorum. Kalabalık. Ders çalışıyorum işte çocuklar gelip gidiyor. Gelen gidenler oluyor. Kızlarla kalıyoruz. Dört odamız var işte. Bir oda gelinle abimin. Bir oda erkeklerin. Bir oda kızların. Bir oda anneyle babanın.”

Leyla:

O zaman (okuma yazma kursuna gitmeden önce) cesaret edemezdim hiç bir yere gitmeye. Şimdi ama cesaret ediyorum. Sonuçta her yerde tabelalar var okuyabiliyorsun gidebiliyorsun (...) Mesela birisi yazılı birşey istiyordu. Ona veremiyordum. İnsan veremiyorum diye utanıyordu, üzülyordu. İş yerinde mesela yazılı şeyler oluyor. Sigorta şeyleri oluyor. Getiriyorlar şunu yazın diye. İnsan yapamayınca utanıyor, bilmiyorum diyor, bir tuhaf oluyorsun. (Gülümseyerek ve ses tonu yükselerek) Tabii öğrendikten sonra “Buyurun tabii getirin, yazalım.” diyorsun.

Ganime:

Yanlış arabaya biniyordum. Mesela bir yere gidicem korkarak giderdim. Kaybolmiyim birşey mi olur? Yanımda arkadaşımınla giderdim. Tek başıma gitmezdim, gidemezdin. Şimdi her yere gidebiliyorum. (...) Mesela bir yere gidiyorsun. Birşey yazman gerekiyor, “Şunu teslim aldım.” mesela, önceden yapamıyordum. Ordaki insanlardan yardım istiyorum. Gene yardım ediyorlardı sağolsun. Hatta başıma böyle birşey geldi. Noterdeyim. Birşey

almam lazım. Adres filan yazamıyorum. “Siz yazar mısınız?” dedim? “Niye?” dedi. Ben dedim yazamıyorum. “Ailen seni niye okula göndermiyor?” dedi. “Göndermemişler.” dedim ben de. “İşte daha gençsin git.” dedi. Sonra dedim ben de gidicem başlıycam.

Ayşe:

Mesela bir otobüse bindiğim zaman nereye gitceğimi bilmiyordum. Üstünde yazılar yazıyor ya. Şimdi ne desen bilicem. Beşiktaş mı Eminönü mü Topkapı mı Gultepe mi Çeliktepe mi, hepsini okuyabiliyorum. Önce bayanlara sorardım: “Bu otobüs buradan mı geçiyor? Hangi otobüs geçiyor ben bilmiyorum.” derdim. (...) Hayatı biraz daha kelimelere dökmeyi severdim ben. Hep hikaye yazardım. Günlük yazarım. (...)

Pınar:

Şimdi mesela Beşiktaş’a gitmem gerekiyorsa bakıyorum Beşiktaş arabası binip gidebiliyorum. Ama önceden Beşiktaş’a gitmek istediğim zaman şoföre soruyordum. Yani bir genç insansın, karşı taraf senin okuma yazman yok mu diyebilir diye ben öğrenicem diye çok direttim. O açıdan kendimi ezik hissediyordum (...) Şimdi işte bir şey gerekse yazıp, dosyalayıp verebiliyorum.

Didem:

Yani bir yere giderken bir şeyleri görüp okuyamamak ondan sonra okuyabilmek. Yani otobüse binerken artık gözlerim arıyor şurda ne yazıyor. Yazılar hep dikkatimi çeker. Her gördüğümü okumak istemek. Sorardık. Zaten anlamıyorsun sorunca da sana söylediğini de daha heyecanlısın yine anlayamıyorsun. Kendini bilmek çok daha farklı. Şimdi bilmediğin bir şeyi sormak daha basit oluyor. (...) Mesela bir iş yerinde defter tutabilirim artık. Orayla ilgili bilgileri bir yere geçirebilirim. Önceden öyle birşey olamazdı.

Aslı:

Bir yere gittiğin zaman korkuyla, birşey yazdıracaklar sana, yanında illa bir kişi olması lazım. O yüzden şimdi daha çok kendime güveniyorum bir yere gittiğim zaman. Daha önce muhakkak bir çocuk alırdım yanıma. Bir şey oluyor. Bir bankaya gidiyorsun ya da ne bileyim hastaneye gidiyorsun. Bir kağıt veriyorlar sana: “Bunu doldur.” Dolduramıyorsun. Muhakkak birisini alıyordum, ya kızı alıyordum ya oğlanı alıyordum. Ama şimdi Allah’a çok şükür kendim gidiyorum.

Fadime: “Mesela Levent’e gideceksem kimseye sormadan binip gidiyorum misal.

Numaraları hiç bilmiyordum. Santimleri yazıyorum, ölçüleri yazıyorum da dikmiş dikiyorum şimdi.”

Ganime: “Şimdi mesela sabahları gazete okuyorum buldukça. Kitap okurum. Çok kitap okumayı severim. Bir ara okumayı öğrendikten sonra her akşam kendimi odama kapatıp kitap okurdum. Annem babam: “Hah bu yine başlamış.” derdi.”

Didem:

Bazı ortamlara daha rahat girebilirim. Daha kendine güven. Gitmediğim bir yere gidebilirim düşüncesi var. O his var. Bazı yerlerde okumadan önce, okumayı bilmeden önce kendimde eksik görsem de bunun benim kabahatim olmadığına farkındaydım belki de. Yine kendimde güven vardı, içimde bir güven. Ama dışa göstermek zor oluyordu. Şimdi biraz daha kolay dışa yansıtabilirim bunu. O zamanlar güven aynıydı ama dışa yansıtmada değişti.

Leyla: “Tabii değişti. Mesela ne bileyim insan açılıyor, güzel oluyor.”

Ganime: “ Tabii kendine güven geliyor böyle. Ne bileyim güzel birşey. Tek başına birşey yapabiliyorsun. Sonuçta okuma yazma insanın bir arkadaşı oluyor. Bence en yakın arkadaşın o. Biliyorsun birşeyler, kendin öğrenebiliyorsun araştırarak okuyarak.”

Pınar: “Değişti tabii. (...) Okuyabiliyorum, kendimi rahat hissediyorum. Birşey yapmak istediğim zaman insanlara sormadan yapabiliyorum, becerebiliyorum. O açıdan bakışlarım değişti tabii ki.”

Fadime : “Artık binip gidiyorum istediğim yere. İnsan toplum içine girdiği zaman daha iyi oluyor. Rahat oluyorsun. Kursu gittiğime mutlu oldum. Gerçekten çok mutlu oldum. Dedim ki: “İyi ki eşimi dinlemedim, gitmişim.” Ona kalsa belki de hiç izin vermezdi.”

Ayşe

Daha önce diyordum okumuş insanlarla konuşamam ben, cesaretim yok. Ama şimdi cesaretim var. (Okuma yazma öğrendikten sonra ) Benim annem Tuzla’ya giderdi, annem artık bensiz gidemezdi. Annem artık derdi: “Kızım biliyor, kızım artık beni götürüp getirebiliyor.” O güveni vermişim ben anneme. Annem de o güveni gerçekten fark ediyordu.

Aslı

Bir bankaya gidiyorsun ya da ne bileyim hastaneye gidiyorsun. Bir kağıt veriyorlar sana, bunu doldur. Dolduramıyorsun. Muhakkak birisini alıyordum, ya kızı alıyordum ya oğlanı alıyordum. Ama şimdi Allah’a çok şükür kendim gidiyorum. Güvenim daha sağlam. Kendime daha çok güveniyorum. Tabii ki insanı değiştirmez mi? İnsanın hayatında herşey değişir.

Didem: “ Evde hep öyleydin ben. Bilmiyorum ben kendimi bildim bileli hep vardı.

Aslında biraz da zorba birisiydim. Hep bak bu doğrudur, bu böyle olacak diye

şeylerim vardı. Onlar ne kadar şey yapsa da ben iki saat çene döker ikna ederdim (...)

Farklı düşüncelere sahiptik belki de bu konuşmalara sebep olan (...)

Aslı: “Ben çalıştığım için genelde ben harcıyorum, yani genelde ben (...) Herşeyi ben karşılıyorum. Eşim de çalışıyor. Özel soförlük yapıyor ama. (...) Evdeki tüm herşey benden soruluyor.”

Fadime: “Eşim daha önce müsaade etmedi (okuma yazma kursuna gitmeme). Yok efendim şöyle böyle, vazgeçireyim diye çok uğraşı da başaramadı. Şimdi diyor: “Sen beni yeniyorsun her konuda. Sözüünü dinlemiycem diyorum, dinletiyorsun, zorla da olsa yaptırıyorsun bana.” diyor.”

Didem:

Annem de A, B, C’yi biliyor ama bir araya gelip de bir kelimeyi okuması zor oluyor. Diyorum yani inşallah onu da göndericem. Ben istiyorum. Burda ben öğretmeye çalışıyorum. Birkaç kere denedik. Gitmesi lazım. Gitmeden öğrenilmiyor evde. Annem babamla ilgileniyor. Benim babam hasta bu ara. Yani öyle rahat bir ortam oluştursa yapar yani.

Ganime:

Halamın kızı var. Onun abisi bizim kursa geliyordu geçen dönem. Ben ona diyordum, “Sen de gel”. Çok da mahsun bir kız. Çok üzgün görünür, kendi içine kapanık bir kız. “Niye gelmiyorsun?” diyordum. Hafta sonu işten izin al gel, sonuçta. Abisi izin vermiyor sanırım. (...) Hatta ben diğer kadınları görüyorum, söylüyorum. Niye gitmiyorsun? Annem de mesela. Annem de okumamış. “Anne sen de gel.” diyorum. Bizim kursa birinci kademeye getircektim, kardeşim küçük diye gelemedi. İnşallah seneye gelecek. (...) Annemi ikna ettim işte. Halamın oğluyla konuşmam lazım işte. Onunla konuşcam. Sen gidiyorsun. Kardeşine niye izin vermiyorsun?

Ayşe: “Genellikle o kadınlar şey diyor: ya babası diyor ki: “Okulda ne işi var, bu yaşta okuyacak mı? Ne işi var?” Biraz ailededen de kaynaklanıyor. İstek varsa insan ailesine karşı da gelebilir, okuyabilir, bir yere de gelebilir.”

Aslı:

Ben ancak örnek verebilirim. Ben geri kalmayın, okuyun, insanın başına herşey gelebilir, iş için gerekir, başka şeyler için gerekir, tabii ki uyarıyorum. Kaç kişiye söylüyorum böyle. Bakıyorum onlar yirmi, yirmi beş yaşlarında. Yeni evlenmişler. Okuma yazmaları yok. Çocukları yok. O halde ben çok kızıyorum. Nasıl oturabiliyorsunuz? Nasıl içiniz rahat ediyor? Mesela bak ben bu yaşa geldim. O kadar sorun yaşıyorum. Hem çalışıyorum, hem ev işi, bir de ben koşturuyorum birşeyler öğrenmeye çalışıyorum. Tabii ki ben söylüyorum. Amaan ne yapcaz diyorlar. (...) Kocaları eve para getiriyor. Rahatları yerinde. Benim tanıdığım okuma yazma bilmeyen, okula gitmek istemeyecek böyle üç dört kişi var. Söylüyorum kendimi örnek gösteriyorum ama yok diyorlar. Belki ileride çocukları olunca çocukları hor görecektir. Gerçi bazı çocuklar da annelerine destek veriyorlar. Benim çocuklarım dalga geçiyorlar ama bazı çocuklar da var ki annelerini uyarıyor. Anne sen niye okula gitmiyorsun? Anne git, öğren. O zaman onlar da ihtiyaç duyacak.

Pınar:

Ortak sorunlar yani işsizlik diye düşünüyorum. Çoğu kadınlarımız mağdur kalıyor ve kocalarından dayak yiyor. Ben bir kere ona çok karşıyım. Bence işsizlik olmaması gerekiyor diye düşünüyorum. Kadınlarımızın da iş tecrübelerinin olmasını isterim. Kendilerine bakabilecek durumda olabileceklerini düşünüyorum. Öyle olmasını isterim. (...) Eğitim durumu şart. Tabii ki her konuda şart. İlla okula gidip diploma almak şart değil. Yani artık eskisi gibi değil. Her yerden diploma alma şansları var. Onun için bence eğitim şart ve dayak ve işsizlik olmasın.

Didem:

Daha geride görmek. Erkekler bir adım her zaman daha fazla. Ailelerin okumaya gelince erkeği daha da okutmaya çalışmak. Nedeni de şu: işte bayan nasılsa evlenecek, çocuğa bakacak, evde olacak. Erkek ömür boyu çalışacak düşüncesi olabilir. Ama yanlış. (...) Çok eski bir düşünceden olabilir. Çok çok eski. Hep bayanların çok eskisine gidersek, töbe töbe, bayanların insan mı değil mi diye düşünüldüğü olmuştur. Kız çocuklarının diri diri toprağa gömüldüğünü biliyoruz. Belki de ondan. Çoğu insan hala bunu aşamadı: işte bir erkek her zaman daha üstündür görüşleri. Niye öyle düşünüyorlar tam olarak da bilmiş değiliz. Aslında bir bayanın neler yapabileceğini düşünsen (...)

Leyla:

Ya işle ilgili, herkes diyor: “Çalışmasak evimizde otursak veyahut da işyerleri güzel olsa.” Mesela iş yerine gidip çalışıyorsun çalıştığının hakkını alamıyorsun veya iyi insanlar çıkmıyor karşına. Çok değişiyor tekstilde. Uzun saat çalışma var. Bir çoğu bayan da evli olan kişiler. Zor geliyor tabii onlara. Çalışamıyorlar. Çalışmayınca da olmuyor bu sefer. Yani benim eşim yardım ediyor herşeyde bana. Erkeklerin tabii ki de yardım etmeleri lazım. Bir çoğu böyle düşünmüyor kendi eşim hariç. (...) (Kadınlar) Çalışacaklar mecburen ne yapsınlar, çabalayacaklar. Ekonomiden, yaptıklarından kısıtlıycaklar. İdare edecekler. (...) Tabii eğitime gidiyorsun, istediğin meslekler oluyor. İstedğin mesleğe girince tabii daha bir yüksek maaş alıyorsun. Yüksek bir maaş alınca da biraz kendini toparlamış oluyorsun, daha bir rahat oluyorsun.

Aslı:

Mesela kadın çalışmadığı zaman muhakkak eşinin eline bakar. Her şeye susmak zorunda kalıyorsun. O yüzden tüm kadınlar çalışsın diyorum. Hakkaten çok değişiyor. Bu konuda kadınlara maaş bağlansa kimseye muhtaç olmaması için. Ne kocasına ne kendi ailesine muhtaç olmaması aslında çok iyi olur. Aslında bir maaş ancak kiraya yetiyor. Devletin yardımı olsa kadınlara bence kadınlar istemediği evlilikte kalmazlar. Hiç kalmazlar. Hiç arkalarına bile bakmadan giderler. Bence giderler. Tabii ki keşke öyle birşey olsa, ama maalesef olmadığı için. Bence kimse durmaz o zaman, kötü kocanın yanında hiç kimse durmaz. Mesela şöyle de düşünün, kendi evin olmadığı zaman kiraya çıkmak zorundasın. Onun için de katlanıyorsun (istemediğin evliliğe).

Fadime: “Bir işte çalışsan sigortan olsa istediğini yaparsın. Çok fırsatlar kaçtı benim elimden. Okuma yazmam yoktu işte. Çocuklar vardı. Bir sigortalı iş olsa kadınlar da kimseye muhtaç olmaz. Kocasını, akrabaları, bakar olmuyorsa alır çocuklarını gider. İşte devlet de yardım etse kadınlara.”

Didem: “Okumakla ilgili. Tabii genel olarak okumakla ilgili ama kendini bilmek. Herşeyi erkeklerin yapabileceği düşüncesini atmak. Fırsatları iyi değerlendirmek. Ben bayanım geride durayım düşüncesini atıp da kendini öne atmak.”

Pınar: “(...) Kadınlar birlik olursa bence herşeyi yapabilirler. Kadın dayanışması olursa, kadın birliği olursa herşeyi yapabilirler. Kadının kendisinde biter. Kadın isterse herşeyi yapabilir.”



Aslı:

Çocuklarımın okuması. Okusunlar. Geleceği, en azından bir geleceği olsun istiyorum. Çalıştıkça iyi hissediyorum ama yarın öbür gün de ne olur onu da bilmiyorum. Ben çalıştıkça herhalde çalışırım. Bu işi de bırakırsam yine de çalışırım. Çalıştığın zaman daha çok güvenin oluyor. Eşinin eline bakmıyorsun en azından. Her şeyini alıyorsun, karşılıyorsun (...)

Fadime:

Büyük oğlana çabuk evlen diyorum. Torunum tosunum olsun. Ben isterim ki gelinim dikişe gitsin, mesela ben isterim o bana yanaşsin. Ben karşı çıkmam, dikişe gelsin, keşke diyorum çalışan kızla evlense de bebeğine ben baksam. Kendim de gelirim artık hep kurslara. Eşim istemez ama. Olsun. Ben kafaya taktım mı yaparım. Okuma yazmaya devam etsem diyorum.

Ayşe: “Gelecekte çok iyi yerlere geleceğime inanıyorum. Üniversite, lise ortaokul inşallah. Allah’ın izniyle. Ama başaramasam da bunun üstünde durucam. Yani böyle okuyamadım, kaldım, hani stress yapıyorum ama bu işin üzerinde durmadığın zaman bir insan da hiç bir zaman bir yere gelemmez. (...)”

Didem:

Çok basit diyebiliriz. Geleceğimi kendi başıma hayal ediyorum. Kendime ait bir evim olsun isterim hep. Kendime ait sadece. Hiç kimse olmadan. Onun dışında iş olarak kardeşimle birlikte bir iş kurmak istiyoruz. Hep düşünüyoruz, konuşuyoruz ama bir türlü başlayamıyoruz. Aslında gelecek olarak tam uzun vadeli bir şeyler düşünemiyorum. İster istemez önünde bir evlilik bekleniyor. Tabii ki buna çok yakın olmasam da. Yaş gidince insanlar böyle bir bakıyor artık. Bunun yaşı da geçti. Sen de ister istemez düşünmeye başlıyorsun ama o da kısmet, senin istediğin gibi birisi senin karşına çıkacak. Fazla ileriye düşünemiyorum aslında. Düşünmek de istemiyorum. Hiç bilemezsin yani. Çok garip birşey o.