

# INTERNATIONALIZATION THROUGH LOCALIZATION: GÜLEN INSPIRED SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

### INTERNATIONALIZATION THROUGH LOCALIZATION: GÜLEN INSPIRED SCHOOLS

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Internationalization is one of the most important subjects in different sectors today. A lot of national educational movements attempt to open international markets by opening branches or working on cooperation. The Gülen Movement is one of these movements, which has successfully internationalized their schools and, thus has become an international educational movement in the last three decades, like Waldorf and Montessori movements. The purpose of this study is to examine the internationalization of the Gülen Inspired Schools. A qualitative research design is used to study this issue. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with managers of the Gülen inspired schools from three continents and experts on the movement. Initially, the educational philosophy, school concept and the pedagogy of the Gülen movement was examined on the field study. Following, internationalization strategies, founding and the success of the Gülen inspired schools in different regions of the world is researched. At the end, the effects of the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016 on Gülen inspired schools, their current situation and the future of these schools is discussed with the participants of this study. The results show, the unique educational model of the Gülen inspired schools; how these schools deal with cultural and language differences in international environments; how they challenge political pressure on educational institutions of the movement; and quality and financial issues of these educational institutions in different regions.

**Keywords:** Gülen Inspired Schools, School Concept of Gülen Inspired Schools, Internationalization, Localization, Failed Coup Attempt

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party (In Turkish Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi)
AMI	Association Montessori International
AMS	Association Montessori Schweiz
BSN	Bediüzzaman Said Nursi
CIE	Cambridge International Education (Curriculum)
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
CAQDAS	Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software
DMG	Deutsche Montessori Gesellschaft
FETÖ	Fethullah Terror Organisation (Fethullah Terör Örgütü in Turkish)
FG	Fethullah Gülen
HE	Higher Education
HM	Hizmet Movement
IASWECE	International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GICs	Gülen inspired charter schools
GIPs	Gülen inspired private schools
GISs	Gülen inspired schools (In general)
GM	Gülen Movement
NRW	North Rhein Westphalia, State in Germany
PDR	Psychological Counseling and Guidance (In Turkish Psikolojik Danışmanlık ve Rehberlik)
PLC	Professional Learning Community
RN	Resale-i Nur (Treatise of Light)
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (Curriculum)
US	United States
USA	United States of America

## Chapter 1 Introduction

In this section, the purpose of the study, the statement of the problem, the conceptual framework, method of the study, and the significance of the research are discussed.

### Overview

Muhammed Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish thinker, preacher, teacher, and writer is accepted as one of the important characters of Turkey in the 21st century. He wrote more than seventy publications such as books, articles...etc. and conducted thousands of speeches based on religion, Islam and social sciences in the last 52 years (Mercan & Kardaş, 2018, p. 45). He is also the founder of the so-called “Gülen movement”, which is a civil society movement that arose in the late 1960s in Turkey, initially composed of a loose network of individuals who were inspired by him (Ebaugh & Koç, 2007, p. 540). Today, according to uncertain statistics, more than five to eight million people support his ideas and the followers of the movement are active in different fields such as education, media, business world, helping foundations, and interfaith and intercultural dialogue organizations (Ebaugh & Koç, 2007, p. 540).

Among these different fields, it is clear to say that the core activity of the movement is education.

This part could be seen as a vast network of tutoring centers, elementary and secondary schools, math and science academies, colleges and universities that spread from a single institution in Izmir in 1968 to roughly 1200 schools in 180 different countries by 2016 (Pahl, 2019, p. 17).

These numbers decreased after the coup attempt because of the pressure on the movement, although the movement is still very active, especially in developed countries like the USA, western Europe and some other important developing sustainable countries other parts of the world today. Dohrn (2014, p. 233) defines these schools as "Gülen-inspired schools"(GISs), because of the unique structure of the schools which is independent from Gülen’s control or contribution. Each school is independent and belongs to a local foundation created by people in that region who are inspired by Gülen’s teachings. Due to the varying status and importance of these different type of educational institutions such as dormitories, university preparation courses, language courses...etc., it is necessary to focus on the schools which were founded by the Gülen followers.

As it will be explained later, Gülen was appointed as director and teacher of Kestanepazari dormitory in 1966 in Izmir, one of the major cities in the west of Turkey (Mercan

& Kardaş, 2018, p. 28). Later on, his works in this dormitory grew and transformed it to a private college, which was accepted as the first foundation of the Gülen inspired schools. This school model became very famous in a very short time period and expanded to the whole of Turkey in the early 1980s. This expansion continued and the followers of the movement founded many schools in different parts of the world in the last three decades. However, despite the fifty-year history of the Gülen inspired schools, the education model of the movement of these schools and the differences between GISs and other traditional or private schools have not been researched deeply before the study. Therefore, there is huge discussion about the schools and their education model. From an educational sciences perspective, whether Gülen's education model could be counted as a progressive education model, and if yes, what kind of progression do Gülen inspired schools present to the educational sciences was targeted and researched in this research initially.

Besides, on the one hand, it is understandable to explain the expansion of the Movement until the 1990s because of its national structure. Like the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. in the 1960s, the Gülen movement was focused on Turkey's important social problems and suggested long-term solutions through educational institutions and other social activities such as conferences, dialogue events, business circles, and helping foundations. Turkey's political problems and violence between different political groups increased and expanded the movement's reputation in the eyes of the Turkish society. In this way, the strategies of the movement flourished in Turkey. Social and political support, realistic projects, and the followers' extra effort allowed the movement to expand to all regions of Turkey in two decades.

On the contrary, it is difficult to understand the expansion of a local movement to the whole world after the 1990s. After the collapse of the USSR, the Gülen Movement founded its first educational structures in the central Asian countries like Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, and Tajikistan, among others. After 2000, the Gülen movement founded different educational institutions all over the world from the Far East to the U.S. The transformation of a national movement to a multinational actor is an interesting task to study. Park (2007, p. 46) highlighted this subject as follows:

Yet its roots are quintessentially Turkish, located in Turkey's historical baggage, its domestic political circumstances, and in a version of Islam, that arguably has more currency in Turkey than elsewhere. This rich 'Turkishness' endows this globally-engaged movement with a paradoxical and sometimes quixotic character.

As a second purpose of this research, internationalization of the Gülen movement is studied and empirical research is done to understand the global success factors of the movement

in its educational institutions. Such a study constitutes a good example for other national companies or national actors who attempt to be global player in the international markets, especially in the education and service sector.

In addition to the two points mentioned above, the current situation and the future of the movement has become a stimulating subject today. Especially after the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, the current Erdogan administration presented the movement as a terror organization and closed all Gülen inspired institutions in Turkey. In addition, more than hundreds of thousands of the followers in Turkey were fired, put under arrest or banned from leaving the country because they were accused of being a member of terror organization. Besides, the regime conducted different type of attacks against the movement and its' schools outside of Turkey too. Such a political disorder and pressure on the movement makes the subject very popular today. The movement's and Gülen inspired schools' reaction to this political pressure, their current situation and future of the movement and their educational institutions are also researched in this paper.

### Research Question

The research question of the study initially is: **“What kind of education model represents Gülen inspired schools worldwide?”** However, in addition to this point, it is also important to answer or examine the question: **“How have Gülen inspired schools, which were dominantly national till the 1990s, been founded and expanded in different countries and in different cultures all over the world?”**, which became the second research question of the study. In addition to the above-mentioned two questions, the failed coup attempt in July 2016 and the political pressure on the movement after the attempt, which happened during the research, also adds another perspective to the research. Such an event had a great impact on the Gülen inspired schools, which was observed by the researcher during the field study. That is why the question: **“How were the Gülen inspired schools in different parts of the world affected by the failed coup attempt?”** is also added to the research as a third research question. Related to these main questions are following sub-questions, which were also researched by the researcher of the study: Is the education model of the Gülen inspired schools a new trend in progressive education movements or not? If yes, what kind of progressive educational understanding have Gülen inspired schools contributed to the educational sciences? How can a national movement transform its educational institutions to integrate different cultures and different educational systems? How do the followers of the movement cooperate with the local

people? What are the contributions of these schools to the local or global environment? How are Gülen inspired schools challenged by the political pressure in Turkey?

### Conceptual Framework

Merriam (2009, p. 66) mentions that the conceptual framework is the base, skeleton, or structure of the research. Maxwell (2005, p. 33) gives a more detailed definition and explains that the conceptual framework is the system of concepts, assumptions, beliefs, and theories that support the research. Every research has a conceptual framework, and this shows the researchers' perception about the challenge, explains Anfara and Mertz (2006, p. xvii).

Because of the mentioned research questions of the study, the researcher decided to analyze Gülen inspired schools (GISs) in different countries from five different perspectives, which compose the conceptual framework of the research. These frameworks are school concept of Gülen inspired schools which differentiates them from other traditional schools, teachers and the recruitment process of teachers in the GISs, curriculum and teaching/pedagogy in GISs, due to local contributions and local activities of these schools and the effects of the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016 on the movement, especially from a financial perspective.

#### **a. School Concept of the Gülen Movement**

One of the most important questions posed by both society and experts about the Gülen inspired schools is as follows: "What's the difference between traditional schools and GISs?" or "Does Gülen's educational school concept belong to progressive education concepts like that of Steiner or Montessori or not?". This is mainly because, in comparison to Montessori and Waldorf schools, Gülen inspired schools are more traditional schools and it is difficult to notice the difference between GISs and other schools. Therefore, in this study, the first conceptual framework is to compare GISs in different regions with each other and to attempt to discover the similarities and differences in their educational activities and to answer the above-mentioned questions.

#### **b. Teachers and Recruitment Process of the schools**

One of the remarkable philosophical aspects of the movement in education are the "role models". According to Gülen, everybody can teach but only a few can educate (Williams, 2007, p. 587) (Woodhall, 2005, p. 7). Thus, it is very important for a teacher to be a role model in front of their class. Vicini (2007, p. 440) gives more details about this issue:

For my interlocutors, being a teacher is a real mission to accomplish in the movement. They spend all their time performing this task, continuously looking for something more to do. They do everything they can to be busy and they are very active. If they are not

teaching, they are very concerned about learning more in order to perfect themselves and to have more knowledge to pass on to their students.

However, unlike the Montessori model, Gülen inspired schools do not require any specific education for recruitment and theoretically every candidate who graduated as a teacher from any university could work in Gülen inspired schools. Besides, it is also not required from the candidates to have a knowledge about Gülen, his movement or its philosophy. Therefore, in this part, teachers of the schools in different regions, the recruitment process of the schools and how the movement realizes its philosophy with these cadres who do not have knowledge about the movement from Turkey are analyzed.

#### **c. Curriculum and teaching/pedagogy in the schools**

Gülen studied the old, traditional schools, so called *Medreses* and *Takyas* in Erzurum in the far east of Turkey.

The madrasas lack the flexibility, vision, and ability to break with past, enact change, and offer the type of educational formation that is needed today. The Sufi-oriented *takyas*, which traditionally had fostered the development of spiritual values, have lost their dynamism and, as Gülen puts it, "console themselves with virtues and wonders of the saints who had lived in previous centuries." (Michel, 2003, p. 117)

Gülen personally acknowledged these issues and, instead of continuing these institutions, he advised his followers to establish modern schools, so called colleges, which could fulfill the needs of the society and prepare new generations for the future. He also recommended to survey the educational technologies, which have significantly improved in the last three decades. The curriculum in the Gülen inspired schools and how modern education is practiced in different parts of the world is another stimulating point, which is analyzed in this part.

#### **d. Local activities of the schools**

During the field research, it was observed that localization is an important strategy in the movements of the internationalization process. Therefore, the local impact of the schools is another interesting perspective to analyze. The movement founded many schools in many different countries and the relationship between these schools and the homeland country mainly depends on the contribution of the schools in their regions.

The success of local projects is measured first at a local level and later collated at a higher level to allow for strategic management of the movement's activities. Particular projects do not invariably succeed but activists learn from their experiences and success is more common than failure (Woodhall, 2005, p. 10).

In this paper, how the Gülen inspired schools outside of Turkey adapted their identity to their local environment and how they internationalized their schools to Europe, Africa and America are examined. In addition to this point, their local projects are considered according to their region and the contribution of these projects to the homeland is also analyzed.

#### **e. Coup Attempt in Turkey in 2016 and its effects on GIS**

The failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016 had a crucial role on the movement and its schools. After this tragic event, where more than 200 people died, the movement is accused of being the organizer of this event by the current Erdogan regime and he declared the movement as a Terror Organization to the whole world. As a result of this event, all Gülen related institutions, schools, dormitories, companies, media organizations...etc., were banned in Turkey, more than hundreds of thousands of people were fired or placed under arrest because of their affiliation to the movement and, in addition, the current administration uses all its resources to put pressure on the movement out of Turkey.

Despite the political pressure, the activities of the movement, especially in educational field, keeps continuing outside of Turkey. However, because of the consequences of the pressure on society, the movement and its schools outside of Turkey have been affected by the consequences of the event. During the field study, how Gülen inspired schools outside of Turkey have been affected by this situation is analyzed and the current situation, two years after the coup attempt, of the schools were observed.

#### **Method of the Study**

To answer the mentioned research questions through the conceptual framework of the study, the researcher of the study prefers to conduct qualitative research in the field study. The main reason behind this selection is the structure of the research questions which are based on “How” questions. Besides, the researcher of the study targeted to explain the unknown parts of the Gülen inspired schools, like their education model or internationalization strategy. Therefore, it would be better to conduct a qualitative research method based on exploring the new aspects of the research subject.

As a research design, the expert interview method is used. The researched subjects, education model of the GISs, internationalization strategies of the GISs and the effects of the political pressure on GISs out of Turkey requires deep knowledge about the movement and its current situation, especially after the failed coup attempt. Therefore, instead of other methods, the researcher conducted interviews with the experts of the subject and collected data through these interviews.



To achieve reliable data, the researcher of the subject selected different types of experts in the sampling part. The first group consists of three school managers from Europe, three school managers from the U.S. and three school managers from Africa. On the other hand, the second group consists of three experts from the followers, three experts from the academics who have an objective approach to the movement and three experts who criticize the movement. The first group gave the researcher data from the practice and the second group gave data from the theory of the researched subjects.

At the end of the field study, collected data is analyzed by a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). F5 program is used to transcribe the interviews and Maxqda program is used to analyze these interviews. To have a better understanding about the methodology of this field research, all these steps are explained in detail in chapter 3.2, method of this study.

### Scientific Researches about the Movement

Gülen himself and the Movement are very well known subjects in Turkey since the 1980s and therefore, different types of research about the subject were first conducted in Turkey. However, the subject became of global topic through the internationalization of the movement towards the end of the 1990s. Mainly because of the mentioned research subjects, like the internationalization of the movement, early researches which were conducted before 2000 about the Movement were not considered in this study, except Gülen's own works. However, there were many national and international research published after the 2000s. As an example, Agai wrote his PhD about the movement and published his book "*Zwischen Netzwerk und Diskurs*" (Between Network and Discourse) in 2008. This was one of the first empirical studies which analyzed the movement's religious perspective. The other international empirical study, which has analyzed the movement from a sociological perspective, was conducted by Ebaugh, the so-called "The Gülen Movement" in 2010. She analyzed in her study how the movement motivates people to donate to movement activities. In addition to these empirical studies, there were also different type of books published about the movement. As an example, Boos-Nünning, Bultmann and Ucar published "*Die Gülen Bewegung*" (The Gülen Movement) in 2011, in which the movement was analyzed from different perspectives. On the other hand, Hendrick published his book "Gülen" in 2013 and Eißler published his report in 2015. Both of these books criticize Gülen and his movement from different perspectives. Besides, there were a lot of conferences and seminars conducted about the movement, like "Muslim Word in Transition: Contributions of Gülen Movement". In addition to these sources, there are many



different type of articles published about Gülen and his movement around the world. Volm (2018, p. 25) gives detailed information about these publications in his dissertation. However, mainly because of the timing of his research in 2015, he covers only publications which were published before the failed coup attempt in 2016.

On the other hand, the Gülen Movement became a worldwide famous subject after the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016. The movement has been accused as an organizer of the failed coup attempt and there is massive pressure against the movement and its followers both in and out of Turkey. (See chapter 3.3.4) Therefore, this failed coup attempt could be counted as the most important corner stones in the Gülen movements history and in this context, especially the publications which were published after the failed coup attempt, are much more up to date and crucial in comparison to previous publications, especially for this study. As an example, Leitner's dissertation, titled "*Religion und Zivilgesellschaft in Deutschland*" (Religion and Civil society in Germany) about one of the oldest and most important monthly journals of the movement, the Fountain (*Sızıntı* in Turkish) in 2017, Volm's dissertation "*Die Gülen-Bewegung im Spiegel von Selbstdarstellung und Fremdrezeption*" (The Gülen Movement in the Mirror of self-representation and External Reception) in 2018, Mercan's Biography "*Fethullah Gülen, Allah Yolunda bir Ömür*" (Fethullah Gülen, A Life in the Way of Allah) in 2019, Pahl's biography "Fethullah Gülen, a Life of Hizmet" in 2019 and Alam's book "For the Sake of Allah" in 2019 are some of the latest books published directly about the movement. Besides, there are also some other publications like Barz's "*Islam und Bildung*" (Islam and Education) in 2018 or "*Handbuch Bildungsreform und Reformpädagogik*" (Handbook Educational Reform and Progressive Education) in 2018, which do not directly target the Gülen Movement, however they include articles about the current situation of the movement. As an example, Gerrens's article "*Interreligiöser Dialog in der Kritik*" (The Critiques about the Interreligious Dialog) in 2018 or Geier and Frank's two articles on their empirical study about the movement, such as "*Schulreform als Selbsthilfe Deutsch-Türkische Schulen*" (Educational Reform as Self Help German-Turkish Schools) in 2018 and "*Die Bildungsinitiativen der Gülen-Bewegung in Deutschland*" (Educational Initiatives of the Gülen Movement in Germany) in 2018 are some of the important articles used in this paper. In addition to these sources, different columns from different newspapers about the movement and Turkey, like Bultmann's four columns in European Journalism Observatory, were also used during the research.

Mainly because of the actuality of the research subjects, the researcher of the study prefers to use the latest publications, especially ones which were published after the failed coup

attempt, primarily in this research. That is why some sources were often used and others were rarely mentioned in this work. However, previous publications were not dismissed and the data there was considered and compared with the new sources during the study.

### Significance of the Study

As it is easy to understand from the titles of the mentioned publications above, most of the studies directly targeted the movement, its sociological, religious or political structure. Therefore, according to Geier and Frank (2018a, p. 302), from the educational sciences perspective, the movement's educational activities and educational model was dismissed and there is a research gap about the educational concept of the movement. Mazukatow's Master Thesis about the Gülen inspired school in Berlin 2012 (This thesis is translated to English and used in an article with Adam J. in 2017. The new version is used in this study.), Kaufmann's Master Thesis about the Gülen inspired school in Zürich and only one part of Onur's dissertation about the Gülen inspired school in Cologne in 2010 were three of the empirical studies about the movement's schools. Besides, Thies wrote a book about the Gülen inspired schools in Germany, called "*Wir sind Teil Dieser Gesellschaft*" (We are Part of this Society) in 2013, which is limited to Gülen inspired schools in Germany and difficult to count as a scientific resource. Like these studies in Germany, there are also articles published worldwide about Gülen inspired schools and their activities in Nigeria from Aydin in 2013 or in Pakistan from Naqvi and Ibrar in 2013 etc...

It is clear to see that all these articles are based on a specific local environment and most of them were published before the failed coup attempt in July 2016. Because of this situation, in this paper the education model of the Gülen inspired schools in an international level is targeted and analyzed during the field study, which could help many other educational scientists, especially the ones who are specialized in progressive education. In this way, the researcher of the study targeted to fulfill the research gap about the subject and tries to give more detailed data for the further research.

Besides, one of the other goals of this research is to analyze how the movement transformed its identity, according to the changes in the last three decades and the internationalization process of the Gülen inspired schools during the same time period. Especially the effects of modern technology during internationalization is analyzed in this research. Additionally, the results of this study give social scientists who are working on internationalization concrete data and experiences of the movement which could lead to delving deeper in different aspects of the internationalization.

In addition to the mentioned points, this study is one of the earliest empirical studies about the movement which was conducted after the coup attempt in Turkey in 2016. This could enable social scientists who are interested in the Gülen Movement to find detailed information about the current situation of the movement, two years after the failed coup attempt, and the impact of the coup attempt on the movement's history, and their activities in three different regions of the world after the coup attempt. These political and social scientists could use these results for their further studies, or they could conduct similar studies in other continents of the world to check if the findings of this research are also accurate for the other Gülen inspired schools in other parts of the world.

The last but not the least important point of this study is its approach to such a controversial subject. Not just in the media, but also in academic discussions, there are both too positive or too negative approaches about Gülen, the movement and also GISs. However, the aim of this study is neither promoting GISs nor criticizing them from different perspectives, instead researching the worldwide school concept of the Gülen movement, their international expansion and the current situation after the failed coup attempt are the goals of this paper as it was explained in detail above. Despite this approach, the researcher of the study did not ignore these debates about the subject and spends significant amount of place, almost fifty pages, for these critiques in chapter 2.1.4. In this part, the researcher of the study separates himself from these discussions and just highlight these critiques, with both pro and contra arguments from academic sources. Mainly because of the focus of this research, the most important critiques against the GISs are listed in detail, but critiques against Gülen and the movement are also not neglected. These critiques, which are closely related the topic of the research, against Gülen and the movement are also analyzed without damaging the coherency of the research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The core points of this research such as Gülen movement's contribution to the educational sciences, their specific school concept, their internationalization strategy and the effects of the failed coup attempt in July 2016 are stimulating important subjects today. Just as an example, internationalization is a crucial issue for many companies and movements today. Different internationalization strategies have been developed and funds have been reserved for this purpose. In the education field, the internationalization of the Waldorf movement and the Montessori movement were good examples for various other national educational institutions in the last century. However, globalization and digitalization have made huge changes in our daily life today and, thus, how the Gülen movement has used these changes and opened branches worldwide in the last four decades is a very important subject today. Therefore, to have a better understanding about these issues, initially in this part, the Gülen movement is deeply analyzed from different perspectives, especially for the readers who are not familiar with this topic. In addition to that, at the end of the chapter, several important terms like globalization, internationalization, localization and globalization are briefly analyzed from the educational sciences perspective, and among these terms, why the Gülen movement uses internationalization and localization during their international expansion will be highlighted in this chapter.

### 2.1 Gülen Movement

Muhammed Fethullah Gülen (born in 1938), is a Turkish-Islamic scholar, thinker, writer, poet, and activist. He is known as *Hodjaeffendi* (Master Teacher) and he is the founder of the Gülen Movement or so called *Hizmet* (Service) Movement. *Hizmet* is a Turkish term with Arabic roots that means “service” (Pahl, 2019, p. 11) and in the life of Gülen, *hizmet* points to the way spiritual power translates into practical action: into peacebuilding through discernible and consistent practices (Pahl, 2019, p. 21). Vicini (2007, p. 431) sees Gülen as one of the most famous and influential “renewalists” in Islamic movements of contemporary Turkey and Dohrn (2014, p. 233) indicates the Gülen Movement (GM) as one of the most dynamic religiously inspired movements in the world today. Gülen's vision and strategies were practiced by his followers and thousands of different kinds of educational institutions around the world have been founded by the GM. Today, according to unofficial statistics, there are more than 3,000

schools or similar educational institutions<sup>1</sup> founded by the Gülen movement. Especially after the failed coup attempt in July 2016, Fethullah Gülen and his movement have become very popular and discussed all around the world. Initially in this part, his life and works, Gülen's educational understanding and how his followers practiced his vision is summarized, especially for the readers who are not familiar with the subject. Later on, critiques against Gülen and his movement are analyzed deeply.

### 2.1.1 Life and Works of Fethullah Gülen

Fethullah Gülen (FG) was born in 1938 in Korucuk, a town in the *Pasinler* district of Erzurum, located in the eastern part of Turkey. Erzurum is one of the biggest cities in the eastern part of Turkey and it has played a crucial role in Turkish history. The province has the distinction of defending Islam against the Russians, (Shia) Iranians, Armenians, and Greek Orthodox Christians through much of modern history (Alam, 2019, p. 110). The Turkish War of Independence also started in this city with the First Nationalist Congress (*Erzurum Kongresi*), which was organized by Mustafa Kemal in August 1919. Therefore, the province is known as a religiously pious region even today. Such an environment had a deep effect on Gülen's childhood (Gülay, 2007, p. 40). In addition to this point, Gülen was also born into a religiously important family in that district. Şükrü Pascha, who was a great-uncle of Gülen, was a high-ranking commander in the Ottoman army and defended Edirne, the previous capital city of the Ottoman Empire, for more than six months in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) (Pahl, 2019, p. 60). Gülen also started his first assignment in the same city after a half decade. His father Ramiz Gülen was the *imam* (hodja) of the village and his mother Refia Gülen was a housewife. Both his father and his mother were secretly teaching Qur'an to the boys and girls of the village (Alam, 2019, p.107). They were also Gülen's first teachers and he started learning about Arabic, Islam and Hadith, the words of the prophet Muhammed from his father, and the Qur'an from his mother (Tittensor, 2014, p. 70) (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 31) (Barton, 2005, p. 22) (Pahl, 2019, p. 22). Alam (2019, p. 108) described Gülen's childhood as follows:

Gülen was recognized as a "Special child" – all members of the family were respectful and loving to him. They used to wait for Gülen to join the family dinner and did not eat food without him [...] At the age of fourteen, Gülen started giving speeches in the village

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<sup>1</sup> The exact number of Gülen inspired educational institutions is not known because of different reasons which are explained in chapter 2.1.3 and 4.3. During the field study and internet research, some websites were found which listed these institutions, however the lists are unreliable and not current. As a concrete example, the Private Sera Schule in Switzerland, which was closed after the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, was still listed in these websites as a Gülen inspired school in Zurich, Switzerland. Therefore, these sources are not used in this study.

on Islam, the Prophet's life and the Companions and expected others to call him "Hodja".

In his **childhood**, he experienced the pressure of the state on society. Turkey declared itself a republic in 1923 and the Republican People's Party, called *CHP - Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, governed Turkey from 1925 to 1950 in a single party regime which was characterized by its self-styled secularism (Akyol, 2007, p. 24). The founder of the Party, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was the head of the party and also the founder of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923, who established this new republic based on westernization and practiced important reforms. According to Tittensor (2014, p. 55) there was to be no room for religion among the new republic's six principles, which came to be known as *Kemalism*: nationalism, populism, secularism, statism, republicanism and reformism. This new regime was very sensitive about his reforms and, unlike other secular examples in Europe and America, the party forced the community to transform to its own identity by eliminating religion from the public sphere (Akyol, 2007, p. 24). Between 1924 and his death in 1938, Atatürk imposed (and that fact is important) a broad program of reform known as "Laicism" (Pahl, 2019, p. 8) through banning the Arabic alphabet and closing the traditional Ottoman schools, which were based on the Islamic education system (Gerrens, 2018, p. 79). Tittensor (2014, p. 55) suggested that Atatürk waged a war on Islam and these were two of the several reforms which were practiced to eliminate religion from Turkish society. Alam (2019, p. 118) describes effects of these Reforms on the Turkish society and the new Republic as follows:

Where the Kemalist experience differs from past regimes and many present Muslim nation states lies in two discursive fields: the interpretation of nationalism and secularism. This led to a far greater degree of control over religious organizations, Turkification of Islam including the banning of calling *adhan* in Arabic (1932-1950) and *Hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, imposition of western dress codes, discrimination against Muslims in public opportunity structures.

As a consequence of these reforms and the state pressure, the religion (Islam) became a "Symbol of backwardness" – which led to the transformation of Islam into the "internal enemy" of the Kemalist secular nation state (Alam, 2019, p. 118). Such an authoritarian pressure of the Republic split the state and society in the early years of the Republic by repressing, alienating and marginalizing social parts that resisted the secular design of the Republic. Mainly because of these legislations, Gülen attended just three years of normal state primary school in his village (Mercan & Kardaş, 2018, p. 24) and hesitated to continue to study at secular state schools. As an example young Fethullah, since the age of 4, has spent hours every day in prayer



- the second of the five pillars of Islam (Pahl, 2019, p. 6) and because of his ardor to religious sciences, he leaved his village *Korucuk* and despite these pressures attended *Madrassa von Kursunlu Camii*, a traditional Ottoman school, in his region (Erzurum), which was secretly run then, and he received a traditional Ottoman education (Hermansen, 2005, p. 9) (Mehmeti, 2012, p. 100) (Eldridge, 2007, p. 526). During his adolescence, he attended the lectures of Muhammed Lutfi for five years, who was a very famous scholar in this region. (Alam, 2019, p.108) Muhammed Lutfi, also called Alvarli Efe, had a deep knowledge and understanding about Islam and Sufi (Maigre, 2014, p. 35). This could be easily seen in his poems and writings. Gülen often uses these poems in his own speeches and specifies him as a good example to his followers in his works.

The second person who had a great impact on Fethullah Gülen is the founder and the leader of the Risale-i Nur movement, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (BSN) (Maigre, 2014, p. 35) (Kaufmann, 2014, p. 7). Fethullah Gülen never met him personally but he had chance to get to know the followers of BSN in his adolescence and with their influence, he analyzed the Bediüzzaman works of the so-called Risale-i Nur (Treatise of Light) deeply.

“He took everything from Risale-i Nur. He is implementing ideas of Nursi” asserts Kırkıncı (One of Gülen’s friend from Madrasa). However, he also acknowledges that over the years, “Gülen has enriched and expanded the interpretation of Risale-i Nur.” Reflecting upon some of his personal qualities, Kırkıncı said that Gülen has four special attributes: “good memory, persuasive capacity, power of speech and habitual reader of Islamic texts, especially reading of the Sahabas’ lives. (Lives of the Prophet’s Companions) (Alam, 2019, p. 111)

Mainly because of the importance of the subject, this part will be explained in detail in the next chapters.

One of the remarkable changes in Gülen’s childhood was the end of Kemalist one-party regime in 1950. As a consequence of U.S. military aid, which was in total nearly 2.5 billion dollars from 1948 to 1968, the U.S. government demanded that, Turkey end the one-party regime and conduct democratic elections (Findley, 2010, p. 309). As a result of the first democratic elections in Turkey in 1950, the ruling party (CHP) lost the elections and the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti* in Turkish) came to power. Adnan Menderes, who is the leader of the party, removed the pressure on the society and alleviated the Kemalist reforms, especially about religion, during his administration. In such a political environment, Gülen started his career in Edirne in the northwest of Turkey.

After his childhood in and around Erzurum, Gülen received a position as an Imam in Edirne, one of the biggest cities in the northwest of Turkey. The **Edirne period** plays an important role in Gülen's life, which shaped him a lot in his twenties. Alam (2019, p. 113) highlighted the contrast between Erzurum and Edirne and mentioned this issue as follows:

[...] While living in the secularized and westernized public culture of Edirne he was able to experience the moral and ethical decline of Islam and the Turkish nation which he would have escaped while living in the socially conservative Islamic milieu of Erzurum.

Subsequently, at the beginning of the 1950s, he took the exams of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and was officially awarded the imam degree (Hodja degree). He first attended Edirne Uc Serefeli Mosque, which is close to the western border of Turkey, in 1953. Initially he was merely a Hodja there but after his military service, he became a religious teacher there too (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 31). During his time at Edirne, which roughly lasted took five years, Fethullah Gülen read western literature and philosophers and improved his knowledge about the modern sciences and philosophy. Fethullah Gülen did not have many followers in that region and mostly spent his time on delving deeper in his mystic development and analyzing western literature. Şimşek (2013, p. 23) explains the result of his education in his works as follows:

“When we look at Master teacher's (Hodjaefendi's) interviews, oral and written works, we can see that he is familiar with the works of Eastern thinkers Mevlana, Sâdî, Hâfız, Molla Câmî, Ferdowsi, Enverî (Anwar); the works of significant Western personalities like Shakespeare, Balzac, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Zola, Goethe, Camus, Sartre; as well as Bernard Russell, Pushkin, Tolstoy and other world-famous author's works. He refers to a wide range of references from Bacon's Logic to Russell's Relative Logic, also he viewed/studied well-known authors of Western Culture and Thought like Pascal, Hegel, Dante and others.”

The most important and also tragic event during Gülen's residence in Edirne was the military coup on 27 May, 1960. This was the first military coup in Turkish history and it was organized by 39 low-ranking commanders against the current Democrat Party administration (Findley, 2010, p. 311). Unlike the other coups, these low-ranking commanders founded a secret organization in the military, the so-called National Unity Committee (*Milli Birlik Komitesi* in Turkish) and arrested high-ranking commanders, the Prime Minister of Turkey (Adnan Menderes), his Ministers and important Democrat Party members of that day.



According to Findley five thousand officers, including arrested high-ranking commanders, some other high officers in the military and all possible candidates who were against the intervention, were quickly forced to retire and the Menderes administration (almost 500 people) was sent to Yassiada, an island in Aegean Sea for a trial (Findley, 2010, p. 311). The accusations against his administration could be categorized into three groups: violating the 1924 constitution, especially through governing against the secular principals of the Turkish Republic; violating the Kemalist Reforms; and corruption (Aydemir, 1989, p. 456). According to one of the important biographers of the early republic, Aydemir (1897-1976), who was also imprisoned because of his Marxist leftist thoughts, Menderes and his administration were imprisoned, isolated from the each other and the outside world, pressured and mentally tortured (like staying in a small room which was lit 24 hours a day with a guard) during the trials (Aydemir, 1989, p.462). As a result, 15 high officers of the Democrat Party were sentenced to death, however three of these execution sentences of the Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, the Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan and the Foreign Minister Fatih Rüstü Zorlu were carried out on 16 and 17 September 1961 and the other officers received different types of sentences (Aydemir, 1989, p. 462). As a left-wing writer, Aydemir did not place any value on the Yassiada process and questioned why Menderes and the others were not given a proper trial and tortured instead (Aydemir, 1989, p. 462). The answer of this question is a discussion for political scientists, however for the conservative right-wing, it was understood as a Kemalist revenge after losing power in the last decade, and also an obvious intimidation for the future. In this political context, mainly because of his young age and the small neglectable community around him in his Edirne period, Gülen was not affected directly by the military coup in 1960. However, it was also a tragedy for Gülen who conducted his military service under the shadow of this military junta in November 1961 in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey (Pahl, 2019, p. 63). He witnessed in his young age (23 at that time), how harsh and dangerous the Kemalists State and bureaucracy could be towards the different understandings and thoughts during the military coup. Therefore, Military Coup in 1960 has a crucial meaning for Gülen and also for the movement.

The other important point about his Edirne life was his close friendship with Yaşar Tunagür Hodja, who was the Imam of the Edirne Selimiye Camii, the largest mosque in Edirne. Later on, Yaşar Tunagür became the vice president of the Directorate of Religious Affairs of Turkey. He played an important role in Fethullah Gülen's life, because he used his power to transfer Gülen from Edirne to Izmir, Turkey's third largest city, on the Aegean coast (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 31).

In the middle of the 1960s, Fethullah Gülen started his second assignment in **Izmir**, which is the third biggest city on the west coast of Turkey. The city of Izmir – the former Greek city of Smyrna - has long been among the most cosmopolitan trading centers on the Aegean Sea (Pahl, 2019, p. 81). In 1966, he was appointed to a position at the Kestanpazari Qur’anic School as well (Barton, 2005, p. 24). This was where the movement officially started. One of the remarkable activities of Gülen were his **speeches (Vaaz in Turkish)** in Izmir, which were held in front of hundreds of listeners. These speeches were intended to motivate faithful Muslims to participate successfully in the secular education system. In his speeches, Gülen targeted the social problems of the society at that time and highlighted solutions through education and social engagement. Ebaugh and Koç (2007, p. 542) quoted from Cetin and summarized the content and the solutions that he mentioned in his speeches as follows:

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s in mosques, town squares, public conferences, and anywhere people would listen, Gülen advocated first for the establishment of dormitories where students could live and study together under the tutelage of sincere, dedicated teachers. The next step would be sponsoring college-preparatory courses that would enhance students’ chances to attend university. Finally, Gülen promoted the establishment of secular, private schools that would offer state of the art education, thus preparing students for the annual university entrance exams.

According Alam (2019, p. 127), another noticeable feature of Gülen’s speeches was that he used to weep while delivering sermons on the Prophet’s life or lives of the Companions and on many an occasion he also moved the people attending to emotion and weeping. Such an emotional call awakens the awareness of the listeners and motivates them to take part in the activities of the movement. Hundreds of participants joined these ceremonies and the Mosques he spoke in were full during his speeches.

The question in this point is why Gülen was so successful in Izmir instead of Edirne. Both cities are on the West coast and they are very cosmopolitan in comparison to conservative Erzurum, they are very mixed and more liberal. To answer this question, it is important to understand the sociological change in Turkish society at that time. According to Findley (2010, p. 327), the Marshall Plan helped the industrialization of young Turkey and as a consequence of this, between 1960 and 1979, while the share of national income derived from agriculture fell from 38 percent to 21 percent, the share derived from industry rose from 16 percent to 21 percent, and the contribution of the service sector rose from 43 to 49 percent. Mainly because of such a change in economy, there was a huge immigration from rural areas to industrialized

cities, especially to Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa and Adana (Tittensor, 2014, p. 60). The urban percentage of Turkey's population rose from 25 in 1950, to 32 in 1960, 39 in 1970 and 44 percent in 1980 (Findley, 2010, p. 331). In this point, especially from a sociological perspective, two important terms became very important in Turkey: "White Turks" and "Black Turks". White Turks represent the Turks who have lived in the cities since the Republic was founded and they have in general left-wing political views. The distinct characteristic of the White Turks is the majority of them are well educated and most of them have crucial roles in the State and bureaucracy. Besides, most of them internalized the Kemalists Reforms and they have distanced themselves from religion. On the other hand, "Black Turks" represents the Turks who immigrated the cities in early sixties and seventies because of the financial difficulties. The majority of the Black Turks are religious people who distanced themselves from Kemalists Reforms and the majority of them are neither well educated nor as financially stable as White Turks. Alam (2019, p. 143) explained these two types of division in Turkish society as follows:

The migration into urban areas also made the class differentiation/inequality between Black Turks (Anatolia) and White Turks (non-Anatolian, Westernized, State Elites) more visible. The Anatolian Muslim migrants faced the daunting task of integrating themselves with state values [...] They were left with nothing but suffering from an increasing alienation, hopelessness, anxiety, confusion, direction lessness and without any clue how to cope with rapid changes.

Gülen addressed these problems in his speeches and gave hope to the new residents of the cities. A religious preacher in his young age with a vision and self-confidence fascinated especially Black Turk crowds. However, despite the fact that the majority of the participants at his speeches were Black Turks, Gülen never limited himself to Black Turks and visited the White Turks in their shops, offices or even tea centers. As a concrete example, the first school foundation was founded by a supporter of Gülen, called Nefi Akyazili, who was also member of the Atatürk's left party (Mercan, 2019, p. 98). In this way Gülen also tries to combine these two types of sociological groups under the educational activities. Later on, he also connected with the other minorities of Turkey and expanded his influence to the different parts of the society. As a concrete example, Turam (2007, p. 84) gives several prominent Jewish businesspeople who have supported the movement and its schools.

At the beginning, it was addressing totally the religious, pious groups, the mosque-goers. As for the place it has arrived now, it is addressing all people without distinction

of race, language, and religion. (Ergil, 2012, p. 153)

However, Gülen was not alone in addressing the answers to these problems. Leftist and communist thoughts spreaded through Turkish society and a “communist revolution” was presented as the only solution to the financial inequality and other problems of the society. Especially, as a consequence of urbanization, the industrial labor force grew in the 1960s from 250,000 to 2 million (Findley, 2010, p. 334) and such an increase in the Workers class empowered the left movements in the 1960s. As a consequence, according to Findley (2010, p. 313-316):

Leftist movements were not the only ones, but they were the first and the most vigorous in the 1960s. The influence of Marxist thought, which became widely available in Turkey for the first time in the freer climate created by the 1961 constitution, played a critical part in this flowering on the left[...]Early 1971 witnessed Turkey’s first politically motivated bank robbery, the abduction of U.S. military personnel, and the indefinite closure of Istanbul University. Elements of the radical left believed that revolution might come through a power seizure by a “radical junta.”

On the other hand, to a respond such development, radical right-wing groups also organized and founded “commando” training camps against the revolution. (Findley, 2010, p. 315) It was a time when you were either a communist or anti-communist and Gülen, as a devout Muslim, was naturally inclined to the second group (Pahl, 2019, p. 65). However, he saw how dangerous this separation could be, positioned himself against any kind of anarchy and tried to keep the tension down in the society. His efforts were limited around Izmir and failed to success at that time and for the second time in Turkey, the military intervened in the Turkish politics to end the political disorder. Findley (2019, p. 316) describes this intervention as follows:

When the military high command acted, on 12 March 1971, it suppressed its left-leaning subordinates and issued an ultimatum demanding the formation of a strong government that could end anarchy and carry out reforms “in a Kemalist spirit”; otherwise, the army would “exercise its constitutional duty” and take power directly.

Such an intervention caused a change of administration at that time and pressured the left groups. Despite Gülen’s anti-communist stand and efforts in the educational field, mainly because of his recognition, he was also arrested on May 3, 1971. Pahl (2019, p. 128) quoted from Harrington:

He was charged under Article 163 of the Turkey Criminal Code Law No.765, for what U.S. lawyer James Harrington calls the “rather broad and vague charge of ‘carrying out propaganda’ to undermine the secular Turkish State and replace it with a religious one.

These accusations failed to succeed during the trial and Gülen was released in November 1971 and continue to serve as a preacher in venues across the Aegean region (Pahl, 2019, p. 129). As a result of his effective speeches (*Vaaz*), Gülen gained a high reputation and popularity in and around Izmir from 1966 to 1980. He directed this support to found the educational institutions of the movement such as weekly discussions (*Sohbet* in Turkish), Light Houses (*Işık Evler* in Turkish), dormitories, university preparation courses and schools. Because of the importance of this subject, Gülen’s educational understanding (See chapter 2.1.2) and how the movement realized these understanding (See chapter 2.1.3) will be explained in the following chapters.

Gülen worked as an Imam and religious teacher in Izmir for the government till 1980 (Barton, 2005, p. 7). However, the effects of the military intervention were lost during the 70s and at the end of the seventies fights between left-wing and right-wing groups increased rapidly. Findley (2010, p. 320) described those days as follows:

In the late 1970s, the government’s ability to maintain law and order dwindled. The death toll from political violence rose from 231 in 1977 to 2,812 in the twelve months before the military intervened again in September 1980. This is to say nothing of the numbers of people who were injured or kidnapped, the loss of property, or the fear that confined people to their homes after dark. Ultimately, the violence did not remain confined between militants of left and right; ethnic, religious, and other differences also became engaged.

On 12 September 1980, the Turkish military successfully took control of the government, to end the chaos, depending on the intense fights between extreme right and left wings. In comparison, to the other two military interventions, the military coup in 1980 was one of the bloodiest interventions of the Turkish military. Yavuz (2013, p. 39) explained these practices as follows:

The regime of 1980-1983 persecuted anyone who had been involved with any socialist or social democratic organizations or party (which is not against the 1961 constitution) in the 1960s and the 1970s. Large numbers of intellectuals, students, artists, and

politicians who had been involved in leftist politics were imprisoned for long periods of time. Around 650,000 people were arrested; 1,683,000 cases were prepared; and 517 people were sentenced to death, although only 49 of the sentences were carried out.

Despite his religious position and anti-political stand, Gülen's name also appeared on the list of terrorists because of his position in society. Therefore, he left his position, went on a pilgrimage and withdrew into himself for nearly six years. The political disorder continued several more years but after the elections in 1983, the military started to leave the administration to the elected political parties and stability was achieved later on. Despite these changes, Gülen was under arrest in 1986 but after a long investigation process, he was found innocent and the charges against him were later dropped (Mercan & Kardaş, 2018, p. 31). This was the second time that Gülen was sent to trial because of Article 163 of the Turkey Criminal Code Law, which makes violating secular Kemalist principles of the Turkish Republic a crime.

After this verdict, Gülen returned to his imam position, but this time he was positioned in **Istanbul** as a religious expert and he started to conduct speeches in the most famous mosques in Istanbul for more than tens of thousands of people (Mercan & Kardaş, 2018, p. 33). In a Turkish context Istanbul represents whole Turkey. The city has more than 16 million residents from all over Turkey and it is the financial center of Turkey. That is why, during these years he was also invited as a guest speaker to the important mosques in different cities in Turkey too, which alleviates him to expand his understanding to all of Turkey. However, because of unknown reasons he ended these speeches in 1991. Mercan and Kardaş (2018, p. 33) were suspicious about this point and suggested that a possible terror attack, which could cause chaos in the society could be the reason for that. Volm (2018, p. 71) also mentioned that the radical Islamist terrorist organization, IBDA-C, had death threats against Gülen during that time. On the other hand, unlike the Izmir period, the core activity of Gülen in Istanbul (From 1966 to 1998) is not preaching, instead developing and expanding the educational institutions of the movement and founding media organizations. Actually, the first media attempt of the movement, which is a religion-science based monthly periodical *Sızıntı*, was founded during the Izmir period but other periodicals: Aksiyon (a weekly), Yeni Ümit (theological), Ekoloji (environmental), and The Fountain (translation of *Sızıntı* to English) were launched during the Istanbul period. Besides, especially Turkey's financial development under the Özal administration from 1983 to 1993 (Findley, 2010, p. 354) helped the movement to expand all over Turkey. Findley (2010, p. 387) describes this expansion as follows:



Between 1983 and 1997 (In Istanbul Period of Gülen), new possibilities opened.... Foundations created by Gülen's supporters contributed to the spread and decentralization of the movement[...]. The end of state monopoly on broadcasting prompted them to launch media ventures. They bought the newspaper Zaman (Time) in 1986, and made it into a large circulation newspaper... The movement branched out into the electronical media with Samanyolu TV (Milky Way) and Burc FM.

Mainly because of the importance of these activities, the content and the structure of these media organizations will be explained separately in chapter 2.1.3.2.

Another remarkable step of Gülen in his Istanbul life is the founding of civil society organizations in different fields. The law on charitable foundations (*Vakıf* in Turkish) had been revised in 1967 and the 1980s economic climate made it easier to take advantage of the law (Findley, 2010, p. 387). A remarkable foundation which was founded by the Gülen Movement in this period was the Journalists and Writers Foundation. On 29 June 1994, Gülen was selected as honorary chairperson of the Journalists and Writers Foundation and he returned to social life as an activist. Later on, the Turkish Teachers Foundation (*Türkiye Öğretmenler Derneği* in Turkish), The Light insurance (*Işık Sigorta* in Turkish), Asia Finance (*Asya Finans* in Turkish), Association for Solidarity in Business Life (*İs Hayati Dayanisma Derneği* in Turkish – ISHAD) and Time to Help (*Yardım Zamanı* in Turkish) are some of the civil society foundations which were founded by the movement during Gülen's residence in Istanbul (Findley, 2010, p. 388). Among these different type of foundations, the most important ones were selected and will be explained in detail in chapter 2.1.3.3.

After the Özal administration, a political crisis between the politicians and military rose at the end of the 90s in Turkey again. This time, the main reason for the tension between these two powers was the increase of the political Islam. Political disorder and the failure of the following administrations after Özal helped the political Islamic movement, so called “*Milli Görüş Hareketi*” (National Outlook Movement, MGH), which was led by Necmettin Erbakan, to increase the number of its votes. Actually, Erbakan entered the politics by founding the National Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi* in Turkish) in 1970s and this was the first Islamist Party in Turkish history. According to Ergil, the authoritarian-centralist political system, which was trying to impose secularization from above, without being aware of it, has produced its antithesis through the segments it had excluded (Ergil, 2012, p. 318) and political Islam, which was represented by first Erbakan and then Erdogan, is a remarkable example to this point. Later

on, because of the bans during the coups, Erbakan founded several other parties of the same right-wing conservative level (Findley, 2010, p. 315). According to Hendrick (2013, p. 17), the main reason behind the increase of Erbakan's movement is the reaction of the Turkish state which routinely closing MGH-affiliated political parties, and routinely jailing or politically barring MGH leaders from political participation. However, Tittensor (2014, p. 51) had a different approach to this issue;

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

One way or another, Erbakan's Prosperity Party (*Refah Partisi* in Turkish) won both Istanbul and Ankara in local elections in 1994 and later on he got 21.4 percent of the votes in general elections in 1996 (Tittensor, 2014, p. 47). By forming a coalition with another right-wing party, True-Path (*Doğru Yol*), Erbakan became the first Islamist Prime Minister of Turkey in 28 Juni 1996 (Pahl, 2019, p. 352). Erbakan's philosophy, like presenting the European Union as a "Christian Club" (Findley, 2010, p. 372), his strategies, like trying to found an Islamic alliance with the leader of Lybia, Muammar Qaddafi, (Findley, 2010, p. 357), and several meetings which were supporting Iran and the Palestinian movement Hamas (Findley, 2010, p. 357), pushed the military to intervene the politics again. On 28 February 1997, in what has been called a fourth "postmodern" coup or soft-coup, the National Security Committee (the military) presented the government eighteen "decisions" for enforcing laicism (Findley, 2010, p. 357). Even the Erbakan administration accepted these decisions, including a headscarf ban in higher education institutions, but he could not stand the pressures and resigned from his position later. In this context, despite the fact that there is no direct or indirect evidence to indicate that the Gülen Movement forged alliances with other Islamic political forces (Erbakan) or Islamic social forces (Various *Naqshbandi* groupings such as Zahid Kotku) (Alam, 2019, p. 132), Gülen was also the target of the military at that time. Ultimately, even his endorsement of the 1997 military crackdown that toppled Erbakan's coalition, did not prevent an attack on him in 1999 as a "reactionary" and an indictment against him as an enemy of laicism in 2000 (Findley, 2010, p. 387). In those days Gülen had experienced health problems and that is why then the current Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit (1925-2006) used his power and sent Gülen to the United States for medical care for cardiovascular health problems in 1999 (Mercan, 2019, p. 208). After surgery and a medical-care period, the doctors advised him not to return to Turkey because it



could affect his health negatively (Barton, 2005, p. 11). According to Findley (2010, p. 387), that attack forced him into exile in North America. After this point, he never visited Turkey again.

As a consequence of the mentioned points, since 1999, Fethullah Gülen has stayed in **Pennsylvania in the U.S.**, and continued his writings and activities from there. Alam (2019, p. 105) divided Gülen's life into two periods such as the Turkish Context (1960 – 1999) and the **American Context** (Post-1999). According to him, liberalism, universal discourse of human rights, democracy, interfaith dialogue and tolerance in Islamic terms became more important in Gülen's discourse in this post-1999 term (Alam, 2019, p.105). Gerrens (2018, p. 96) also supported this point and mentioned that Gülen's new publications are all based on democracy and human rights. Such an approach is open to discussion, because Gülen had already visited several times Germany, the United States, Italy and Australia before and it was not his first contact with the Western culture and understanding. However, the 9/11 attacks, especially the rapid developments of technology in the last two decades which have accelerated globalization, and mainly his health problems, have all led him to take distance from the Turkish Context and instead to focus on global issues during his residence in the U.S.. Findley also pointed to this point and mentioned that his exile paradoxically completed the globalization of his movement (Findley, 2010, p. 387).

However, such a change did not remove the political pressure on the movement in Turkey and in 1999, prosecutor Nuh Mete Yüksel from the Ankara State Security Court (*Ankara Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemesi* in Turkish) opened another trial against Gülen. The main accusation was establishing an illegal organization which has goals to change the secular structure of the State and instead to establish a religious state based on Islamic rules and conducting activities to the same purpose (Mercan, 2019, p. 215). By cooperating with the U.S. Justice departments, American Prosecutor Bruce Repetto questioned Gülen in the U.S. in 2001 (Mercan, 2019, p. 217) and Gülen defended himself against these accusations in the U.S. Such a trial continued to 2008 and for the third time in his life and by the majority of the judges, Gülen was found innocent in March 2008 (Mercan, 2019, p. 241). Later on the higher court (*Yargıtay Yüksek Ceza Genel Kurulu* in Turkish) also confirmed this decision in 2008 (Mercan, 2019, p. 242).

One of the most remarkable event in Gülen's life in the U.S. is of course the 9/11 attacks. Gülen showed his reaction to these terrorists' attacks by saying "a Muslim cannot be a terrorist

and a terrorist cannot be a Muslim” (Alam, 2019, p. 221) and he paid more attention to inter-religious and intercultural dialogue. Actually before these attacks, he motivated his supporters to create foundations which promoted “Tolerance and Dialogue” (Findley, 2010, p. 389) and as a result of this call, “Rumi Forum” was founded by the followers of the movement in 1999 in Washington DC (Pahl, 2019, p. 335). However, after the 9/11 attacks, the number and importance of these foundations increased significantly in the movement. As an example, Peace Islands Institute in New York or Foundation of Dialogue and Education (*Stiftung Dialog und Bildung*) in Germany are the same type of foundations targeting dialog and tolerance in their regions. These foundations organize dinners, seminars and several types of activities especially with the Christian and Jewish communities. Therefore, Alam (2019, p. 195) called these type of activities an “Interfaith Dialogue”. This important subject is also explained separately in chapter 2.1.3.3.

The other important activity organized by the movement in this period is the “International Festival of Language & Culture” (IFLC). Unlike science Olympiads, this is an international competition based on poetry, arts, music and culture. The event was first called “Turkish Olympiads”, and it was targeted to promote the Turkish language on an international level (Volm, 2018, p. 161) in which students from Gülen inspired schools competed with each other. However later, the name was changed to IFLC and opened to every candidate. Mostly this event is organized by Gülen Inspired Schools in different regions of the world and there are several important critiques pointed to this event. Due to this, content and the critiques of this event are explained separately in chapter 2.1.4.3.e in detail.

Despite all these developments, one of the important points observed in his life in the U.S. is that, he never leaves his residence for any purpose. He merely went to the hospital for several times for health control appointments and once because of a heart attack in 2002 (Merican, 2019, p. 222). For some reason, he has never visited any GIS in the U.S. or any of these Dialogue Institutes of the movement, instead he prefers to isolate himself out of the world. Such behavior and the reasons behind this behavior are discussed in chapter 2.1.4 (Critiques about the movement) and chapter in 4.3 in detail. However, despite his lifestyle since 1999, he was accused of being the organizer of the failed coup attempt in July 2016, which makes Fethullah Gülen and his movement one of the most discussed subjects in global media. As it was explained in the introduction part, the failed coup attempt and its effects on the GISs are an important part of this research and the subject will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

### 2.1.2 Gülen's Educational Concept

As it was mentioned above, Gülen was born and grew up in the early years of the Turkish Republic and he was challenged with many different types of difficulties in society. During that time, the Ottoman Empire had just collapsed, creating a huge depression, chaos and leaving the society to survive and rise from its own ashes. In such an era, as a religious preacher, thinker and intellectual, he tried to find solutions to the problems of the society and tried to direct it to a bright future. In this point, he analyzed the roots of the problems critically and built his philosophy based on two points. First of all, he showed the first five centuries after the prophet Muhammad as an example and called this era the “Golden Era of the Islamic Societies” (Agai, 2008, p. 212). In his speeches and written works, he explained the improvements of the early Muslims in detail and hoped to connect those improvements with modern times.

He<sup>2</sup> takes the matter back a little further and connects the history of the date when the gates begin to close on us in our scientific and intellectual lives to the fifth century<sup>3</sup>. Yes, from a public perspective, not only in the field of positive sciences, such as physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, but also in social sciences such as Islamic jurisprudence, hermeneutics, hadith or procedural jurisprudence, we revealed great improvement until the fifth century. [...] Something has happened after such a golden period, and after the fifth century, a period of serious stagnation in these scientific activities were entered. (Gülen M. F., 2011a, p. 149)<sup>4</sup>

In this way Gülen could give his followers hope and also encourage them to reconstruct what was done before. According to him, by following the same paths, the same results could be achieved today too, and the eastern societies could also contribute to modern sciences and culture, as they had before.

The second point that composes his philosophy is self-criticism and the confrontation of our own mistakes. Unlike many other reformists of Turkey at that time, like Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Gülen appeared to society as a humble person with a great respect to tradition and

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<sup>2</sup> Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, See chapter 2.1.1

<sup>3</sup> In this quote, Gülen is talking about the on Islamic calendar, which starts 622 After Christ. Therefore, he actually means the 12<sup>th</sup> Century according to the Sun Gregorian calendar.

<sup>4</sup> **In this chapter, all quotes from Gülen have been translated by the researcher of the study from Turkish to English. Instead of translating word to word, the aim is to translate the meaning without damaging the originality. In a few cases the researcher uses different translations from some other researchers and these quotes are mentioned within the footnotes.**

history. However, without losing his respect and without accusing anyone or any political view, he criticized the mistakes of the past and emphasized his reformist approach to the future.

The madrasas<sup>5</sup> and Darwish lodges<sup>6</sup> which educated thinking architects and soul workers in our past could not produce modern projects that would carry us to the future; they could not produce and were crushed under their own wreck. [...] Excuse me but, who can tell me all this time that these schools could give what was expected from them? (Gülen M. F., 1998a, p. 2)

In addition to our other achievements, why didn't our laboratories and research centers work in the past? Why some of the issues related to the sciences weren't be addressed earlier? (Gülen M. F., 2011a, p. 151)

It is easy to see from these critics that the educational mistakes played a crucial role in the collapse of the eastern communities. Therefore, "education" has a very important meaning for Gülen, and it has to be reconstructed and modernized, especially in Turkey and some other similar eastern societies today. He highlighted many times in his speeches and works its importance and mentioned that education is an all-encompassing lifelong process (Eldridge, 2007, p. 535).

In our schools, a modern curriculum depending on our traditional values, a solid training system, an army of faithful, devoted, well-educated and qualified teachers [...] Yes, all of these; it is such a powerful force that any nation holding this power, could not merely compete with Europe and America, could even challenge the whole world and take its place between super-powers. (Gülen M.F., 1990, p. 167)

This is why the Gülen Movement invests in education more than any other social movement in Turkey or in the Middle East. Actually, unlike many other intellectuals or reformers in Turkey, Gülen placed the educational activities in the center of the movement and declared educational mobilization in Turkey, which later expanded to the whole world. The target of this mobilization is against ignorance and the main goal is to educate intellectuals who could solve the problems of the society.

For this reason, from home to school, from tea centers to military barracks, the complete homeland is turned into a school and it is a necessity to start a cultural mobilization in the whole country. A general mobilization should be carried out against ignorance,

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<sup>5</sup> The name of the schools in Ottoman era

<sup>6</sup> Religious based sanctuaries

unintentionalism, imitation, unawareness of our national culture and a new approach to sciences has to be gained. (Gülen M. F., 1983, p. 103)

On the other hand, it will be a mistake to envision him just as an educational philosopher like Montessori or John Dewey. Unlike those, he tried to focus on all problems of the society and therefore, in addition to education, he and his followers conducted different types of activities in different fields. (See chapter 2.1.3) However, in this part we solely focus on the epistemology and pedagogy of Gülen's understanding or Gülen inspired schools and deliberate more about his educational philosophy or his approach to education, thus broadening and deepening it.

#### *2.1.2.1. Gülen's "College" Modell*

As it will be explained in the following chapters, the core activity of the Gülen movement is education and the followers of the movement have founded more than thousands of private schools and different type of educational institutions all over the world. Before focusing on these schools, initially it is better to analyze Gülen's approach to an ideal school and how he explained it in his works. According to Gülen, there are three main functions of such an ideal school. The first and the most important part is to support the positive sides of the students and to eliminate the negative parts.

The first duty of the school should be the protection and improvement of these good seeds that are sprinkled in the world of emotions and thoughts, and the removal of the bad seeds. It should be so: by this way the goodness and beauty that was growing in a child's subconscious for years could be protected and badness and evil seeds could not find any chance to develop. (Gülen M. F., 1999, p. 114)

In this first step, the school continues the education of their students which had already been started in the family. In addition to this function, after the first stage, the second role of an ideal school is to improve the identity of their students through the sciences and culture. However, Gülen has a unique approach in this point; in addition to teaching modern sciences and modern culture, an ideal school also provides their students with how to interiorize these sciences and culture out of the world with their own spirit and own understanding.

In the school, the sciences outside are attributed or combined to the self or soul of the student, and in this way, the human being transcends the solid and substance of the world and in a way reaches the limit of eternity. [...] The best science that will be given by the school consists of compounding or associating the inner wisdom with the natural events outside. (Gülen M. F., 1979a, p. 115)

To achieve this goal or to successfully finish this second step, the universe has to be analyzed in an ideal school and every type of science has to be taught in these places. Therefore, the ideal school is a laboratory where the whole existence is interpreted as a book, it is exhibited as a fair, and everything is analyzed in detail (Gülen M. F., 1997a, p. 96) and the goal of these ideal schools is to solve or explore the secrets of universe (Gülen M. F., 1982, p. 42). Michel (2003, p. 9) also highlighted this issue and pointed Gülen's perception about an ideal school as follows:

Gülen understands the school as a laboratory where students not only acquire information and skills, but where they can begin to ask questions about life, seek to understand the meaning of things, to begin to reflect on the particular contribution to life that they would like to make, and to understand life in this world in relation to the next. [...] It can also quickly open the way to unveiling the meaning of things and events, which leads one to wholeness of thought and contemplation.

The last, but not least important function, is to teach their students the methodology and how to conduct methodological work.

The school is the only institution that will teach them (students) methodical thinking and methodical study to groom and improve the good and beautiful things that the home germinates in their spirit. Methodical thinking, methodical work are important principles in terms of science and wisdom. Wisdom is the most important source of religion, morality and art, and it is the most vocal source of reasoning which opens the mind to inspirations (Gülen M. F., 1999, p. 115).

Gülen explained these three functions of an ideal school in detail in his speeches and works. However, in addition to these three basic functions of the educational institutions, he also draws attention to history and told his followers to learn from past experiences and avoid the same mistakes that were made before. As it is explained above, like Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Gülen thought that the retrogress of the Islamic world started with 12<sup>th</sup> Century (five centuries after the death of Prophet Muhammed) and the educational institutions, so called *Madrassa*, played a crucial role in this downfall. These institutions, most of them based on Islamic sciences, could not follow the transformation of the society during the time and lost their role in society (Vicini, 2007, p. 432). Gülen himself also visited this type of school in his childhood and in his later works he explains the mistakes of these institutes as follows:

The madrasa, on the one hand, closed the gates to natural sciences and on the other hand, the negative attitude towards the heart and soul horizon began. As a result, the madrasa and dervish lodges are broken apart; natural sciences, religious sciences and heart and

spiritual life are moving away from each other. But these are like three faces of a revelation. If you bring the three together, you will have ten beauties, and if you develop them in a complete manner, you will have one hundred beauties. (Gülen M. F., 2011a, p. 150)

These types of schools, *Madrasa*, were banned during the Turkish Republic and instead of these institutes the western model schools, so called *Okul* in Turkish, were founded in the Turkish Republic. Unlike *Madrasas*, which belonged to private foundations or associations, these new type schools belonged to the state and the state has the total control over these institutions. However, during this reform process, social factors and the differences between Eastern and Western societies were dismissed and the education system in Europe was merely imitated in Turkey. As a result, rather, by diminishing the role of religion and imitating the West, it created a gap in language and lifestyle between the Westernized elite and the ordinary people (Gülen M. F., 1997c, p. 51). Therefore, like the old-fashioned *Madrasas*, this new type of schools also could not fit with the society and, thus, it could not fulfill the needs of society and later lost importance. Vicini (2007, p. 434) analyzes Gülen's approach to this problem as follows:

When he criticises traditional forms of Islamic education for not having been able to adapt to modern conditions, Gülen expresses something more than a simple dissatisfaction with old methods of teaching. Instead he blames other Islamic scholars because they had not understood that the decline of Islam was not solely due to its incompatibility with modern forms of governance, but to the hegemony of Western-inspired secularist ideology.

At such a point, Gülen had a great impact on Turkey and reformed this system with private colleges. He initially analyzed both types of these educational institutions carefully and figured out the missing parts of these schools. Then he based his reform according to a combination of these systems and modernized it with the technological improvements and created his "college" model. In this model, he thinks the solution to society's moral decline could be in the promotion of a particular kind of education in which teaching secular subjects at the same time could instill in students' Islamic ethics and morals (Vicini, 2007, p. 434). This new type of education has a unique understanding which is the mixture of education, modernity and religion; in this way the movement differentiates itself from other religious groups or other educational institutions founded by the state. Such an approach is welcome in Turkish society and expanded rapidly to the whole country and later to the whole world. In practice, this "college" concept, which is defined and abbreviated as Gülen inspired schools (GISs) in this



paper, differentiates from the current schools in several aspects and this is one of the target points of this study. This point is explained in Results and Discussion parts of the paper below in detail; however, Gülen mentioned several features of these new colleges in his works which differentiates these schools from other schools theoretically. The first feature that a college has to carry is the international structure and competitive character. Therefore, he pointed to local and international contests as a goal and also mentioned that it will be a state policy.

It is very important that schools participate in science competitions and project competitions organized both in Turkey and abroad. [...] Especially when this issue is not considered as a state policy, for individuals and groups who love their country and nation and want to carry it to the future, it becomes an important element. If I believe that my request meant something to the administrators of the State (Turkey), I would request them, "Please make it a state policy!" I don't know, does such an approach give you an idea about the importance of the matter? (Gülen M. F.,2001a, p. 107)

The other feature is that the connection between these colleges and other institutions, especially mosques or sanctuaries in general. Because of the science-based structure of today's new type schools, the soul of the students could be dismissed in these institutions. Therefore, according to Gülen, every school or educational institution has to be fed by the sanctuary or a similar spiritual institution and not just the natural sciences, but also the metaphysic part of the human being has to be paid attention to in education.

If we could reach the future with generations whose brains are enlightened with natural sciences and whose hearts are covered by spiritual breezes, then their souls will be like lighthouses; even the smallest things that we did on that way will not be wasted or will not be lost! (Gülen M. F., 1984, p. 119)

The third feature is the modernization and technological hardware of the colleges. Gülen sees the improvements in technology and sciences and mentioned that these ideal schools have to be prepared with modern devices and the equipment required. According to him, modern technological developments have to be followed carefully and these developments have to be used in educational activities. On the other hand, he did not believe that scientific improvements could change the traditional student-teacher-school relationship. It does not matter how far the sciences improve, the best lesson is still inside the classroom and in front of a teacher.

A good lesson is the lesson learned in front of a teacher in the school. Such a course does not only give people something; it elevates her into the presence of the infinite



unknowns and gives her infinity. According to the students of this course, each event, is a canvas on the unseen spheres, and he also acts as the witness of the truth behind these levels. (Gülen M. F., 1979a, p. 116)

Building such an ideal education system is crucial for society and the reward of such a system are well educated generations who can deal with the problems of society and carry it to a bright future. He describes the aim of this type of school as follows: “The aim of this idealized school is to provide them with high qualifications and to bring them to the top of all nations in the spirit and soul and to show them the ways to build highly developed civilizations” (Gülen M. F., 1999, p. 115).

#### 2.1.2.2. *Teacher Role in Gülen’s Philosophy*

Education is the core activity of the Gülen movement and primarily Gülen and all other followers place a great importance on the schools and educational activities. He presents teaching as a holy duty (*Kutsi vazife*) and highlights that only people with a strong moral can adequately perform it (Vicini, 2007, p. 436). That’s why, he strongly criticizes today’s teacher typology who, due to the separation of job boundaries, just gives a lecture and goes home (Şimşek, 2013, p. 25). Educating people is the most sacred, but also the most difficult task in life. In addition to setting a good personal example, teachers should be patient enough to obtain the desired result (Gülen M. F., 2002, p. 75). Gülen glorifies the teaching mission with these words and mentions that teaching is a very important profession and it is an area of specialty to know what to teach, when to teach and how to teach (Gülen M. F., 1979a, p. 117) (Şimşek, 2013, p. 27). Teachers are very important in this point and Gülen ascribes the success of education to the dedication of the teacher (Şimşek, 2013, p. 26).

“The teacher is a holy master who, during their entire life - from birth till death - shapes the life. There is not another creature on earth equal to this superior seraphic being who guides his nation’s fate, enriches the spirit and character, instills eternity in his nation and to whom the angels condense.” (Gülen M. F., 1979b, p. 121) (Williams, 2007, p. 587)<sup>7</sup>

Such a formulation of a teacher as a “Holy Master” or mentioning teaching activity as a “Sacred Task” is not an exaggeration according to Gülen. Instead, he reasoned his approach to the roots of Islamic philosophy which shows each human being as a most honorable creature,

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<sup>7</sup> This quote from Gülen is translated by Williams and the researcher of the study used this translation.

created by god (*Esref-I Mahlukat*<sup>8</sup>). Therefore, teachers whose job is improving the abilities of human being, are honorable and their job is sacred. “A real teacher is a planter and protector of pure seeds. Taking care of strong and good ones as well as leading and guiding them during the life events is also his duty,” said Gülen (1997b, p. 73) about the role of the teachers. According to him (Gülen M. F., 1999, p. 115), it does not matter how good the pre-school education in the family was, the main role improving the potential of a student belonging to the teachers:

It can be said that it does not matter how good the first impression is, the first observations and the first instance of a child, it is the honorable school and it is the pure teachers that fully functionalize and develop the faculties of their student’s soul. Thanks to these architects, the child finds himself again, adjusts his way of thinking, integrates with the culture of his lineage and sails with high ideals.

He glorifies the teachers as artists who shape societies by shaping their members. According to Gülen all-important ancient civilizations were initially undeveloped societies who later found their teachers and developed from their hands:

The effect of the teacher on individuals is much higher than the effect of mother, father and society. In fact, he is the one, who knead mother, father, and even society. [...] Brahma was a teacher who emancipated in the hearts of his disciples with their sublime teachings. Buddha was also a model teacher with his clean emotions on the hard path to Nirvana. Confucius was a teacher of morality and Hormazd<sup>9</sup> was the teacher of eternity. Omar<sup>10</sup>, who came into being in the most sublime being, had become a teacher through his great masters. (Gülen M. F., 1979b, p. 121 and p. 124)

Therefore, Gülen suggested that the best way to serve humanity in a 'global village' is education and encouraged his followers to become teachers (Eldridge, 2007, p. 535).

Williams (2007, p. 587) quoted from Gülen who often mentioned in his writings that education is different from teaching. Most people can teach, but only a very few can educate. He also emphasizes that teachers play the most important role in raising the golden generation which could solve the current problems of the society and build a new future for humanity

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<sup>8</sup> Qur’an, Sürat at-Tin (5:95)

<sup>9</sup> There were several Hormazd in Sasanian history but in this quote, most probably he means the Hormazd I. (240-272 CE) who is the third king of Sasanian Empire.

<sup>10</sup> Omar or Umar ibn al-Chattab (584 – 644 CE), who is the second caliph after prophet Muhammed and famous as one of the most powerful and influential Muslim in history.

(Vicini, 2007, p. 436). According to Ergene this is the main difference that differentiates Gülen from other reformists. Unlike the other reformists who want to solve the problems of society through the changing or transforming intellectual and elite class, Gülen prefers to solve these problems from the bottom up (Ergene, 2005, p. 285). The most important role in this enlightenment belongs to the teachers who are educating new generations. This point also demonstrated why he puts great value on this occupation.

There is no doubt that in such a case (improvement of the society), the pioneers of this blessed duty will be the teachers. The teachers who consider the soul-body integrity; seeing and observing its place in the universe; exhilarated the hearts through the direction of creation and considering the universe and metaphysic world as the two faces of a revelation. What a lucky fortune! (Gülen M.F., 1983, p. 103)

Gülen describes the features of an ideal teacher in his different works and mentioned that a teacher is a guide, a model and an example for his students. According to Gülen, in all circumstances, teachers have to be highly qualified and take full responsibility. In addition, he states that each student can be more active in specific fields according to their personal characteristics and the teachers' duty is to involve the students using these specific characteristics (Şimşek, 2013, p. 27).

Obviously, teachers who are interested in the education and training of today's generations have to have the spirit of discovering and exploring. With their blessed feelings and thoughts, they could achieve their holy duties in a perfect manner like successful reformists (Gülen M. F., 1979b, p. 125).

Therefore, teachers should know the students very well, constantly observe them and quickly respond even to instantaneous deviations (Şimşek, 2013, p. 25).

In addition to such a close relationship with the students, Gülen also stresses that teachers should enrich the content of the programs, they should especially be aware of student achievements, and lead them to a higher level with their directing and guidance (Sevindi, 1997, p. 76). From this point of view, Gülen recommends teachers read, refresh and update their professional knowledge often and come to the class as a model with new experiences (Şimşek, 2013, p. 25). Vicini (2007, p. 440) supports this issue and mentioned that the teachers in the movement spend all their time performing this task, continuously looking for something more to do. If they are not teaching, they are very concerned about learning more in order to perfect themselves and to have more knowledge to pass on to their students (Vicini, 2007, p. 440).

In our opinion, the real teacher and the spiritual master is the lucky person who teaches the truth, who teaches how to think in a right manner, who exhilarates the souls, eliminates all the darkness and black holes that cut off his student's path, and let him reach out to the light horizons. [...] Dedicated to self-determination and education, following his apprentices step by step; they are filled with the excitement of raising them to humanity in every period of life; to show them the absolute truth with the names of sciences; [...] they were blessed teachers..! (Gülen M.F., 1983, p. 104)

In addition to professional standards of the educators, Vicini also highlighted the role model of the teachers (*Temsil*) in the movement. "*Temsil*" which means representing something and "*Teblig*" which means explaining something are both two important terms in Islamic tradition and the adaptation of these two is highly recommended by different scholars. However, mostly in the Gülen Movement, only the representative role of "*Temsil*" is highlighted and the explaining role of "*Teblig*" is ignored (Barton, 2005, p. 28). Gülen himself remarks on the importance of the representative role rather than speeches and argumentation and mentioned that deeds speak louder than words (Toguslu, 2007, p. 447). That is mainly because of the mentioned principles above and also because representing good deeds and values has a more permanent effect on students than just explaining them. One basic idea of Gülen's followers is that ethical values are not transmitted openly through persuasion and lessons but through providing good examples in daily conduct (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 35). Park (2007, p. 55) also supports this idea and mentioned that they do not directly propagate Islam, but rather emphasize virtues such as respect for elders, politeness, modesty, and hard work. In other words, they teach by example.

In this point teachers in the movement have a crucial role. Rather than preaching Islam, the teachers are expected to be good role models for the students and personify the values of Islam through their good deeds and moral conduct (Solberg, 2005, p. 6). They actively take different responsibilities in social life and contact with their students or people around them, often outside of school hours or after work, and during these informal relations with staff or sympathizers, character building is encouraged (Clement, 2007, p. 581). For example, during these informal relations, students have a chance to see the model living of their teachers or advisors, which covers a range of moral behavior such as restraint from smoking, drinking, or gambling, and are influenced by them personally (Clement, 2007, p. 581). According to Gülen, the teacher must be a model (*temsil*) for the student and assist their students in acquiring character (Vicini, 2007, p. 436). Mohamed (2007, p. 555) supports the same idea and mentioned

that teacher training is essential; not only in methodology, but also in nurturing the whole person. Teachers should lead by example, otherwise they cannot hope to reform others.

The last but not least important feature of a real teacher for Gülen is his or her ardor for learning and researching new subjects. A real teacher is permanently learning and researching in their daily life and they are always composing new information from these activities.

And, how many truth-lovers could you show to me? Lovers who could full fill the thirsty of generations to schools or books and gave a lesson of glory and virtue to their deformed souls. (Gülen M. F., 1980, p. 92)

In this respect, the only duty for us and all the educators is to awake the love of truth and knowledge, that we saw once in our ancestors, in our people, and once again to overcome them with the desire of research. (Gülen M. F., 2004, p. 63)

#### *2.1.2.3. Reformation in Current Curriculum*

A training and an education system with an undetermined target and ambition will erase generations, besides, without knowing what will be taught and how it will be taught or without knowing the method and the procedure in education, the things placed in the head and souls of young people will make them only a knowledge-taker (Gülen M. F., 1984, p. 117).

Therefore, for Gülen, in addition to school and teachers, the curriculum also has a crucial role in the education, and he mentioned this subject at different time in his works. He gave the current curriculum in Turkey as an example and mentioned that it is not sufficient, and it has to be reformed according to the needs of the society and modern developments. In his late works in 2011, he (Gülen M. F., 2011a, p. 153) criticized it firmly and mentioned that it has to be reformed from different perspectives:

Another issue that I consider important in the development of an elite and intellectual class that will be instrumental in the development and progress of our nation is the review of our curriculum; starting from primary and secondary schools to the academic career level universities. It is quite difficult for us to raise an intellectual class with the current curriculum. Yes, we must admit that no high schools are ready to prepare people for the elite class, nor are universities capable of raising qualified and well-educated people.

In this point Gülen reasoned that the several successes of the current education system are according to extra effort of some individuals, however in general the current education system of Turkey is not enough to educate elites for the future and asks for serious reforms in high schools, universities and research centers (Gülen M. F.,2011a, p. 153). On the one hand, this is a warning to the current administrators in the educational ministry of Turkey but on the other hand this is also advice or guidance to his followers in GISs. In his speeches and works, he pointed to different aspects in the educational field and his followers realized them in GISs or in other educational activities of the movement. He (Gülen) states that education should be purposeful, planned and programmed; and the programmes should include values of material and spiritual worlds, knowledge and skills and follow modernism with tradition (Şimşek, 2013, p. 22).

As a result of this cooperation between Gülen and his followers, which has been conducted for more than fifty years, the core structure of the curriculum in the movements schools were developed based on modern sciences. Since the Gülen schools have a scientific orientation, they make sure they are equipped with the best laboratories and computer rooms. They want the learners to excel in these areas; enhancing the scientific character of the school (Mohamed, 2007, p. 556). Mehmeti (2012, p. 102) supports this idea by giving Kosovo and Albania as an example and mentioned that the aim of Gülen Movement schools is to teach values and modern science and not religion per se, they quickly won the support of the government and the public. In addition to modern sciences, very good English education and small classes where the teachers have more interaction with the students are remarkable in the movement's schools. Aras and Caha (2000, p. 35) mentioned that the movement's schools are well equipped for the teaching of science, they tend to have very good English language departments and small classes.

The other important point that Gülen targeted to the administrators and also his followers is to join the international contests and compete with other educational institutions. This part is explained in detail about his ideal school perception above and it will become a main policy or educational keystone in GISs today. As an example, Mohamed (2007, p. 568) gives a Cape Town school in South Africa which achieved 23 Gold medals in Mathematics, Science, Computers and English in the Olympiad competitions and he mentioned that these achievements are not limited to South Africa, instead they are very common attitude of the movement's schools in different regions. However, according to Gülen, just these successes and achievements in these contests do not give an idea of the quality of an education system. Instead,

a much more important point rather than these successes is the expansion or spread of the high-quality education with a well-designed curriculum for all of the community.

At a school, you choose some special abilities and work with them day and night, and at the end of this study, you can get a plaque from the Olympics in different parts of the world. But this does not mean that the level of education and culture of your system or your country is high. However, if such successes can be achieved and disseminated, then you can say that the quality of education in your country or in your school is high. (Gülen M. F.,2011a, p. 153)

In addition to modern curriculum and the quality of the schools in transmitting knowledge and science, character building and teaching the universal moral values are one of the unique differences that is seen in the curriculum of the GISs. The proximity to the school, numbers in the class, and the moral ethos of the school also play a role in the decision to enroll the child (Mohamed, 2007, p. 568). Said (2006, p. 74) quoted from Gülen and explains this issue as follows:

A community's survival depends on idealism and good morals, as well as on reaching the necessary level in scientific and technological progress. For this reason, trades and crafts should be taught beginning at least in the elementary level. A good school is not a building where only theoretical information is given but an institution or a laboratory where students are prepared for life.

Şimşek (2013, p. 24) goes deeper in this issue and highlighted Gülen's criticism about the current educational system as follows:

Gülen (1998b, p. 88)<sup>11</sup> attributes the problem in education to rugged individualism, social desensitization and irresponsibility, to narrow interpretation of the knowledge/education in both religious and physical sciences, and to not being able to deepen in mind, reasoning, and thought.

According to him (Gülen), it is important that education be based on scientific bases, provide social benefits and make the lives of individuals meaningful. In this respect, Gülen defines education as “aimless” in many cases and determines the following:

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<sup>11</sup> This quote is translated by Şimşek and the researcher of the study uses his translation.



1. “the learning and teaching should be for understanding the true nature of human and the mysteries of universe” (Gülen M.,1997b) <sup>12</sup>
2. “the purpose of learning is enlightening the ways to perfection by using knowledge as a mentor and a guide for human beings” (Gülen M. F.,1979b)<sup>13</sup> (Şimşek, 2013, p. 24)

In this perspective, the movement's schools put ethic classes in their curriculum and, in addition to natural sciences, they also try to give these humanistic values to their students. How these classes work, and the content of these classes will be observed during the field study (See chapter 3.3.3.2), however in this point, it is important to highlight the goal of such courses. The main reason behind these courses is to realize Gülen's envision which is a world where people are deeply grounded in a moral and ethical tradition, where humility and service are highly valued and where reason, science and technology are fully utilized for the benefit of all (Eldridge, 2007, p. 526). Şimşek (2013, p. 26) quoted from Gülen:

“If we can provide the new generations' minds with the sciences of the age they live in, souls with the wind coming from beyond, spirits with the lantern of history and make them look to the future, believe me, none of our efforts sacrificed for this goal will go in vain!”

Related to this point, how the movement conducts religious education in their institutions is another interesting subject and will be observed and discussed with the participants of this paper in the field study. According to Williams (2007, p. 587), Fethullah Gülen is a modern thinker who rejected Islamic education and mentioned that he seeks conciliation between the empirical sciences, which are concerned with the material world, and *tarbiyyah*, which is the focus of the spiritual realms. Naqvi and Ibrar (2013, p. 99) go further and mentioned that the schools do not preach about Islam or Gülen's teachings and no special courses are offered based on his works. Barton (2005, p. 28) highlighted this issue and mentioned that even within Turkey, students' report that their teachers do not talk to them about Fethullah Gülen or the movement. Therefore, it's difficult to categorize the teaching of religion in Gülen inspired schools in this point. Solberg mentioned three ways of teaching religion which are teaching from religion, teaching about religion and simply teaching religion (Solberg, 2005, p. 1). According to these ways she said that there are four different religion teaching models such as the multi-denominationalist model, non-denominationalist model, single-

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<sup>12</sup> This quote is translated by Şimşek and the researcher of the study uses his translation.

<sup>13</sup> This quote is translated by Şimşek and the researcher of the study uses his translation.

denominationalist model and inter-denominationalist model (Solberg, 2005, p. 1). However, mainly because of the localization philosophy of the movement, which is explained in chapter 3.3.5, Gülen Inspired Schools in general do not fit any of these descriptions totally.

Therefore, in some Gülen inspired schools, religion is taught according to the multi-denominationalist model, such as in Bosnia. In the Gülen schools in Albania, the schools follow the non-denominationalist model; religion is not taught as a separate subject at all. In Turkey, the schools follow the single-denominationalist model, as do the state schools. In countries where the inter-denominationalist model is followed, I imagine that the Gülen schools in that country would also follow that model. (Solberg, 2005, p. 7)

Vicini (2007, p. 443) supports this idea and mentioned that in places linked to the movement's activities – from schools to dormitories, to administrative centers of foundations – no sign of Muslim faith is present. Rather, there we can see – at least in Turkey – Atatürk busts and Turkish scenes<sup>14</sup>. Barton (2005, p. 26) also highlighted the secular understanding of the movement and he mentioned that Australia is the only example where religious schools are accepted, and because of the pluralist education system there, the movement also provides religious education like some other Islamic schools in Australia. However, these are unique cases and in general, the majority of the Gülen schools follow the secular system in religious education and all of these school follow the local state's curriculum (Woodhall, 2005, p. 6) (Solberg, 2005, p. 8) (Mehmeti, 2012, p. 102) (Toguslu, 2007, p. 454) (Clement, 2007, p. 581).

Although religious education in the Gülen schools cannot be categorized within any of the four traditional models that I have outlined, I will argue that the schools' ethos can be understood as an ethos of multi-denominationalism. Rather than advocating one religion in particular, the schools place value on faith in itself. Fethullah Gülen regards both morality and identity as founded in religion. The managers of the schools are inspired by Gülen's thinking, the students are therefore encouraged to hold on to their faith, of whatever denomination they may be. (Solberg, 2005, p. 8)

The role of the religion classes in GIS's curriculum, the ethic or moral lectures and how they will be practiced in different regions, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.3.3.

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<sup>14</sup> There was a change in this point which was discussed in chapter 3.3.4 and 4.4

#### 2.1.2.4. *The Student Profile for Gülen*

In addition to mentioning the importance of the teaching activity, Gülen also highlighted the importance of learning and describes the ideal student's profile in his speeches too. According to him, being a student is a very valuable task and he recommends life-long learning to his followers. He (Gülen M. F., 2015, p. 131) asked them to stay students for their whole life and to devote their life to learning religious, social or natural sciences.

Therefore, man should make a serious effort to achieve religious sciences and positive sciences and should remain a student for the rest of his or her life. [...] Human beings will be treated as students, whether they demand social sciences or positive sciences, if he or she considers the wisdoms who are swayed from research to know God and at the same time to provide a solid mental balance. [...] In the statements of the Messenger of Allah<sup>15</sup>, Allah (God), facilitates the path to Heaven to anyone who desires knowledge (Müslim, Zikir, 38)<sup>16</sup>.

Therefore, according to Gülen, it is crucial to be a student, not just an advantage for our lives, but also for the goodness of life after. In addition to highlighting the importance and return of being a student, he also describes an ideal student profile in his speeches. One of the most important features or signs of being an ideal-student is the ardor to learning or researching new subjects and trying to produce new improvements in his identity. According to him (Gülen M. F., 2011d, p. 29) this kind of people began the development in the west and in this way technology and science improved in western communities:

The day has come, the desire to research, love to sciences, working enthusiasm; then the successes follows each other which exhilarates ambitions, the lashing of desires and the great rewarding of each success, this opened up the doors of all renewal to them, and for them the environment became genius; and then followed the invention of the steam engines, the weaving machines, printing machines and the research laboratories.

In his speeches he also gave specific concrete examples and showed his followers how to reach success in modern sciences. As an example in his different speeches, Gülen pictured Edison as a person who spent most of his time in the laboratory and that is why he forgot the way to his own home. On the other hand, he (Gülen) believes that most of the student failures

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<sup>15</sup> He means prophet Muhammad

<sup>16</sup> In this quote, Gülen quoted from Prophet Muhammed and gave the source of his quote as the famous scholar: Müslim, page 38. The same quote from Prophet Muhammed, mentioned by some other scholars like Tirmizi or Ebu Davud. Please look at also: Tirmizi, hudüd 3, birr 19, kiraat 3 and Ebu Davud, edeb 68

arise from the lack of courage, that is why he suggests teachers encourage them by motivating, praising, guiding, from time to time ignoring and, if necessary, using remedial corrections (Şimşek, 2013, p. 28). In addition to teacher's role, there is another side of the coin which is the state's and society's responsibility to help the students in their studies. According to Gülen (2011d, p. 29) successful student has to be supported, especially financially, and their successes have to be rewarded gently:

After a while the science reached the technology and computer age. Because the scholars of that day, their discoveries, inventions and scientific research was rewarded gently and by this way, they had the opportunity to flourish and develop everywhere. By this way every place has become a marvel of wonders with the feverish activities of great minds.

It is clear to see in this quote that both successful students and any success in scientific level has to be rewarded according to Gülen. The main reason behind this approach is the importance of concentration in scientific studies. He believed that having deep knowledge, working hard on one subject and a large awareness in any kind of sciences is dependent on the concentration in that field and without these abilities it is impossible to achieve any triumph in scientific success. Therefore, the core activity and only duty of such an ideal student is to focus on his or her studies and not to think other things like career, salary or money.

It is very difficult to do anything else for an ideal student who devotes himself to sciences. Some of the scholars, however, stated that even if they wore dresses from silk and their door was made of gold, they could still receive charity and alms. (Gülen M. F., 2015, p. 131)

Due to this point of view, Gülen always encourages entrepreneurs and wealthy people to take an active role in this point and instigates them to take an active role as a financier in educational activities (Şimşek, 2013, p. 28). According to Gülen, society has to play active role in this point and the successful students or researchers has to be supported by the society. That is why Ergene (2005, p. 308) pointed to him as the first intellectual in Turkey who mobilized the society and pointed its responsibility in education.

When it is important to demand science and the benefits that the scholars will provide to society are so big, society is obliged to do its utmost to take care of the students of science and to take care of them. [...] If this is not done, the nation also collapses and dissolves. As a matter of fact, with the break in this issue, there were cracks in our world

in the fifth century<sup>17</sup>; With the decline in the thirteen and fourteenth centuries<sup>18</sup>, a complete rupture and disintegration were observed. Since then, we have never been raised again. (Gülen M. F., 2015, p. 131)

At this point Gülen's call appreciated from society and many small and middle size companies supported the Gülen movement's educational activities for decades (Şimşek, 2013, p. 28). As a result of such support the movement founded many private colleges, most of them based on K-12 education, in and outside of Turkey. However, Gülen did not limit the education to pupils, instead he encouraged his followers to found universities and research centers too.

We are obliged to solve our national education problems and contribute to the cultural life of humanity by means of our culture and civilization. Meanwhile, the establishment of university and serious research centers is also very important. The scholars who will be employed here will re-interrogate everything that has been said until today in the name of science, and will interpret the science once more, if this cannot be done, we cannot get rid of dualism and imitation. (Gülen M. F.,2001b, p. 66)

However, in addition to such a general approach, he always advises students not to beg for anything and leave with their own honor. Especially in his speeches, he talked about his early life as a student and mentioned that he was so poor that he had never seen cheese and olives together for breakfast.<sup>19</sup> In addition, he also gave important scholars as an example and encouraged his followers to be like them.

In fact, some people like Einstein and Edison may have acted with curiosity, a desire for research and a love of science. These were the people who have gone without seeing the reward of their efforts. It is said that even the person who discovered the cinema starved to death in the gala night there. However, it is possible to say that in most cases the studies have been rewarded and not left unpaid. (Gülen M. F.,2011a, p. 155)

In this point the cooperation between students and society, which is a win-win relationship, is crucial. Such a well-organized and well-coordinated cooperation gives students the chance to deeply specialize in social and natural sciences and bring bright futures to the community. Gülen (2011d, p. 30) describes this cooperation as combination of environment, the love of knowledge, the determination of work and methodology in his works:

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<sup>17</sup> The fifth century in the Islamic calendar corresponds to the twelfth Century in the Gregorian calendar

<sup>18</sup> The thirteen and fourteenth century in the Islamic calendar corresponds to the twentieth and twenty-first century in the Gregorian calendar

<sup>19</sup> The most two important basic components of a Turkish breakfast are cheese and olives. With this quote he means that he could not even buy basic components to eat for breakfast, which is cheaper than lunch and dinner.

When the mediocre exhilarates the love of science, the enthusiasm of work, and the determination to work, sensitive hearts will feel it deeply and will evaluate and implement with certain disciplines. Then the new inspirations, new associations, new compositions, new essays will begin to process like a turning circle, which will follow the continuation of intellectual efforts and the fundamental dynamics of the systematic approach to the new uncovered doctrines with an exponential growing acceleration.

The other important feature of an ideal student is having moral values in addition to technical knowledge. Gülen described this type of people with a Sufi term called *Kamil Insan*, which means perfect human or true human. In this model, the moral and ethical part is represented as the inside or heart of a human being and the reason, science and technology part as the outside or brain of a human being (Hermansen, 2005, p. 14). According to Gülen, the goal of education is to create a perfect human by educating both the inside and the outside or both the heart and the brain of the students. Nursi compares this understanding to the wings of a bird and mentioned that the student soars in the skies of humanity with these two wings and seeks God's approval through service to others and has many things to offer (Said, 2006, p. 73).

In the words of Bediüzzaman, on the one hand, the learning of religion and religious sciences should not be neglected. He stated that the flourish of a student would only come about after the two<sup>20</sup> of them came together. When you exclude one of these, you leave the other without sleeves and wings. Yes, no sacrifice must be made of the religious sciences, which are the eclipse of the heart, nor should the natural sciences, which is the light of the mind, logic and reasoning be neglected. (Gülen M. F., 2015, p. 130)

Gülen also supposed that the true happiness of an individual depends on being a perfect human and being a perfect human depends on education. Mohamed (2007, p. 557) quoted from Gülen the following words about the subject:

Moreover, each person is a creature of feelings that cannot be satisfied by the mind, and a creature of spirit, through which we acquire our essential human identity. Each individual is all of these. When a man or a woman, around whom all systems and efforts revolve, is considered and evaluated as a creature with all these aspects, and when all our needs are fulfilled, we will reach true happiness. At this point, true human progress

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<sup>20</sup> Religious and natural sciences

and evolvment in relation to our essential being is only possible with education.

As it is seen in this quote, education also has a crucial role in becoming a perfect human and in achieving true happiness. This is mainly because, according to Gülen, during the education process, all students build a "second nature" and the goal of the human being is to purify their own nature and to create a second pure nature in their whole life. Said (2006, p. 71) quoted from Gülen and explains this issue as follows:

Our essential duty, as a creation that has come to this passing guesthouse with a pure nature, is to reach stability and clarity in thought, imagination and belief so that we can acquire a "second nature" and qualify to continue our life in "the next, much more elevated realms". In addition, we by performing our duties as servants, we must activate our hearts, spirits, and all our innate faculties. By embracing our inner and outer worlds, where innumerable mysteries and puzzles reside, we must comprehend the secret of existence and thus rise to the rank of true humanity.

That is why for Gülen, serving Allah means "raising the perfect youth who combines spirituality with intellectual training, reason with revelation, and mind with heart" (Solberg, 2005, p. 5). In this point it would be better to focus on the Gülen philosophy about ethical guidance, called *Akhlaq*. This is crucial for the development of an individual and according to Toguslu (2007, p. 446):

Derived from the Arabic words of *khuluq* which means to create, to shape and to give form; *Akhlaq*; corresponds to ethic, is a subject of *Ilm al-akhlaq*. *Akhlaq* embraces all of the details of human character and life. It describes not only the religious injunctions containing the beliefs, but also gives a map of social behavior Muslims adhere to. *Adab*, which the practical dimension of *Ilm al-Akhlaq*, is the base of morality, prescribes a way of living according to the Islamic rules of ethics involving every aspect of daily life.

To have a better understanding, as an example, altruism is one of the practices of *Akhlaq* and has an important role in the movement. Toguslu (2007, p. 448) explains altruism in the movement by associating it with devotion and the Prophets are given as examples of followers who devoted themselves to humanity. Another important practice of *Akhlaq* is self-criticism and being humble (*Tawaddu*). Gülen refers to his eminent master Muhammed Lutfi Efendi "everybody else is good but I am bad; everybody else is wheat, but I am chaff." To be modest and to have self-criticism are significant terms in Gülen's formulation of *adab*. In contrast,



Gülen is against nihilism and mentioned in his speeches that nihilism is a very weighty mental illness for many people, especially for students or scientists in the twentieth century (Toguslu, 2007, p. 450). Gülen mentioned that this type of people could not cooperate or work together with others and therefore they limit themselves in their capacities. When everyone sees the field in which they are working as sufficient, then the other aspects of the issues, the other approaches or the different angles will be ignored (Gülen M. F.,2011b, p. 167). Such a mistake will be a great obstacle for the scientists and on the way to scientific successes. For Gülen, another mental illness is bohemianism and it is also an important obstacle for young students or scientists. Such a life style demolishes the concentration of the students or scientists and does not let them go deep in their fields. Therefore, he highlighted the importance of modesty (*Haya*) as a proper characteristic for an ideal student and gave Prophet Muhammed as an example. In this point, he said that “the envoy of God<sup>21</sup> was more modest than a girl in his (Prophet Muhammed) cabin. When it saw a hateful thing, for him, we knew it according to his face”. Honesty is another significant value he highlighted. Gülen accepted Nursi’s approach who advised followers that "Whatever you say must be true, whatever judgement you give must be right, but you have no right to voice all that is true" (Nursi, 2011, p. 256). Gülen highlighted that the most known adjective of Prophet Muhammad is "*El-Emin*" which means the person who always tells the truth and warned his followers to this point.

Gülen (2011b, p. 167) paid great attention to these moral values and sometimes pictured how a student or a scientist without these values looks:

I've been talked about this subject on several occasions before, but I wanted to draw attention to the following points again: If the people engaged in sciences do not pass through self-purification, nurturing their spirit and clearing hearts from evil feelings, they cannot grasp the purpose, the spirit and the essence of the science and they cannot obtain the expected result from science. On the contrary, they try to express and explain themselves as their knowledge increases; they always think about their own profits and in their words, accents, even in their body language, they try to sell themselves.

Therefore, doing good deeds, acting generously, being charitable, having an altruistic character, self-control, self-discipline, virtue, wisdom, love, tolerance, politeness and responsibility, and restraining from ardor are crucial ethical principles of an ideal student for Gülen. As a conclusion, Toguslu (2007, p. 452) highlighted the life-styles of the followers and

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<sup>21</sup> Prophet Muhammed

explains their position as follows:

In the lives of the sympathizers, all acts generate a hedonist life. In the spaces like the schools, the houses, dormitories created by the movement, the hearts are emancipated so that no one talks about the hedonism, individualism and the fashionable life. Thus, the prohibition of alcohols and certain food falls under this logic. It is necessary to have a spirit and a holy, pure body away from the desires.

The last but not the least important point of being a student is the goal of studying or learning which is contributing or helping other people or serving their own environment through the sciences. Gülen always highlighted in all levels of the movement and to all followers, to be best in their occupations and contribute the society by solving its current problems. Vicini (2007, p. 439) explains this issue as follows:

Indeed, Gülen asks his followers to undertake the burden of moral responsibility for the problems of contemporary society. To be a “good Muslim” does not consist simply in a rationalistic accomplishment of a prescribed path. According to him, Islamic-oriented work must be a consequence of both rational thinking and an Islamic inner sense of ethics. This is why individuals have to feel responsible for work they have left undone.

Gülen called such a society, which is collected by these ideal or perfect humans, as *Altin Nesil*, means golden generation, and showed this vision to the followers (Vicini, 2007, p. 435). Hermansen (2005, p. 12) quoted Gülen and explained the identities of this Golden Generation as follows:

I have always dreamed of a generation with minds enlightened by positive science, with hearts purified by faith, who would be an example of virtue and who would burn with the desire to serve their nation and humanity, and who would live, not for themselves, but for others. Inspired by the verse and hadith I just mentioned, I called them the "*Altin Nesil*" (Golden Generation).

This concept has historical resonance with the Islamic idea of the "best generations" of early Muslims within the evolving discourse of *Altin Nesil* by calling them "back to roots" (Agai, 2008, p. 254). Hermansen (2005, p. 13) also pointed to this issue too:

While the term "Golden Generation" evokes the hadith that the early generations of Muslims were the best and a model for those who come later, in Gülen's thought this admiration of tradition persists along with an evocation of "hope" that a "new

generation" may restore and recover what has been lost, and perhaps even continue to evolve, at least in the sphere of scientific knowledge and accomplishment.

Behind this utopic understanding or approach, the main goal of Gülen is to create an intellectual elite class who could face the challenge of the difficulties of the modern times, help society to solve their problems and direct it to the right paths through to build its own civilization.

We call intellectual to the truth traveler who explores the subjects with depth of knowledge, examines it, knows it with all its aspects, and expresses this knowledge with courage and revealed it for the profit of society. [...] The development of an intellectual class in this sense is vitally important in the name of a nation and it is worth it. [...] After a long pause to expose an elite and intellectual class is very difficult and arduous for us. (Gülen M. F.,2011a, p. 148)

Therefore, he paid great attention to the students of today who could be the intellectuals of the future. On the other hand, after showing the importance of the subject, he pointed out the profits of having an elite class and motivates his followers in that direction.

But in spite of all these difficult and negative conditions, in order to reinstate our nation, to reinstate its spirit; we need people who know what it is necessary to know and who declare this knowledge without any confusion, roaring such as a loaded cloud, rumbling and raining, like torrential downpour, we need people with discharges. (Gülen M. F.,2011a, p. 148)

After analyzing Gülen's educational philosophy, it is also important to look at the practice and to see how the followers of the movement have realized his understanding today.

### 2.1.3 The Movement

The Gülen Movement, which is founded on Fethullah Gülen's ideas in the 1960s, is a social movement based on education, media, and different kind of civil activities. The movement has a unique structure and it is difficult to estimate the size of the movement because of this uniqueness. There is no official membership or joining ceremony to the movement but instead there is support and collective action from followers and sympathizer of the movement (Arslan, 2014, p. 6) (Hermansen, 2005, p. 5). Central is, therefore, the personal interest in the teachings and writings of Fethullah Gülen. There are no recording criteria either (Kaufmann, 2014, p. 32).

Due to this, the concrete number of the followers and institutions which are related to the Gülen Movement is unknown and varies per country. According to Fuller (2008, p. 56), the actual size is in the millions and it is agreed that it is the largest civil movement in the country (Turkey), an “apolitical communitarian movement”. Findley (2010, p. 389), however, estimated that the number of the members of the movement more than six million people worldwide. The connection of such big movement is often discussed by social scientists and it is mostly described as a network rather than a hierarchical organization. Solberg (2005, p. 4) highlighted this issue as follows:

The Gülen community is not a tightly controlled hierarchical organization, but rather a loose network of schools, study centers, foundations, companies, media organizations, and hospitals etc., some of which are closely affiliated with Gülen himself, and others who merely regard him as a source of inspiration.

According to Gülen, the *Jamaat* (Jamaat means community in English but today describes the Gülen movement in Turkish context) is a unity of individuals, sharing the same feeling, thoughts, ideals, aims and ideas and adjusting their life along this line of unity. Hermansen (2005, p. 8) describes Gülen's approach to the movement as follows:

For Gülen the *jamaat* is very important as it helps the individual to enhance the religious productivity through joint work. It helps to profit from the good deeds, which are achieved with others and helps to avoid individual mistakes on the worldly path to God.

He also quoted from Balçı, who divides the followers of the movement in to three groups such as active members, simple members, and sympathizers (Hermansen, 2005, p. 4). However, some other social scientists, like Uğur (2007, p. 155), divide it into two groups such as the followers and sympathizers. Both these followers and sympathizers come from all levels of the community, but the majority of the movement are either well-educated people with a higher-education degree like engineers, teachers, professors, doctors...etc. or business people. Mostly the followers of the movement are Turkish people, but the movement is open to everybody and there are other nationalities in different regions who follow and sympathize with the movement. "Non-Turkish managers and directors can be seen in the Hizmet Movement of Texas and other parts of the world, although this is not yet the case in Canada" said Aslan (2014, p. 6) in his article about the GM activities in Canada.

The relationship between the individuals and the movement is very crucial in the

movement. Team-work and competition along with cooperation and consultation among service-projects are encouraged, while competition between individuals is not (Arslan, 2014, p. 6). Uğur (2007, p. 156) described this issue as follows:

The idea of volunteering and committing one's time and money plays a key role in the activities of the group. The movement employs an inclusive language vis-à-vis other religious, ethnic and ideological groups and claims to promote the national interest of the host country. This has proven to be an important tool to appeal to the society at large and legitimate the movement's social projects in face of questions on the basis of secular and national commitment of the movement.

Some social scientists, like Aras and Caha (2000, p. 40), find the Gülen movement close to the Protestant Movement of the sixteen century because of some common values, such as disciplined work, efforts motivated by national-religious values, liberal market system, plurality, and altruism. Weber describes this movement as people motivated by the religious-spiritual values to get wealthy by being hardworking in his classic book: *The Protestant Ethics of Capitalism* (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 40). That is why the GM is described as 'Islamic Calvinists' for some social scientists (Akyol, 2007, p. 30). However, Barton (2005, p. 9) highlighted the development and activities of the GM and suggested that it is much more similar to the Puritanism movement.

In other respects, such as in the pioneering of quality education, the development of ethical banking and media enterprises, and in the encouragement of personal integrity and philanthropic generosity from businessmen whilst at the same time providing them with a network of mutual encouragement and support, Turkey's Gülen movement resembles the muscular Puritanism of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century America.

On the other hand, Pahl (2019, p. 15) debated this approach by suggesting that the Puritans were quite clearly a political movement. Gülen, in contrast, has consistently disavowed politics. For him, the Gülen Movement is much closer to the Quakers, officially the Society of Friends, in the U.S. In common with both Quakers and nineteenth-century Christian revivalists, Gülen has inspired people of *Hizmet* (he means followers of Gülen) to work to advance universal literacy as understood in spiritual and scientific terms (Pahl, 2019, p. 16).

Despite all these comparisons, Arslan (2014, p. 2) suggests that solely none of these movements describes the GM totally, instead the movement has some parts from different

thinkers of the West and also from the East in its own structure.

Gülen himself opposed their explanations and defends the movement as a self-explanatory phenomenon. On the other hand, Gülen has used “Provos” and “Situationist” terms, agreeing with Engel’s predictions of the future concerning the ideal society cycle, Kant’s social altruism, some of Sartre’s ideas, Pierre Bourdieu’s “habitus,” and the implicated social, cultural, capital and professional strata terms, by looking at their creative use of tactics and strategies in response to the actions of other political players. (Arslan, 2014, p. 2)

Hermansen (2005, p. 3), however, suggests that the movement is primarily based on Islamic, Sufi and Turkish traditions, which are mainly sourced by the East. Aras and Caha (2000, p. 32) also suggest that the movement itself has the values from traditional Islamic sources and Western philosophy.

To have a better understanding about the Gülen movement, it is also crucial to analyze the Risale-i Nur Movement and its founder Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1876 - 1960) first. Findley (2010, p. 384) suggested that there is a continuity between Nursi's and Gülen's movements in that each has adapted to new challenges. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (BSN) is one of the most important scholars from the beginning of the twentieth century. Findley (2010, p. 287) mentioned that Said Nursi's major works: a series of books collectively called Resale-i Nur (Treatise of Light or Letters of Light) had a great impact on Turkish society. Akyol (2007, p. 26) summarizes the content of the Risale-i Nur as a very elective and appropriate combination of the elements of the popular culture, mystical discourses, orthodox Islam, science and rationality. Fethullah Gülen never met Said Nursi in his life but during his adolescence he analyzed Risale-i Nur very carefully. Because of the deepness and unique understanding in these books, especially about religion and modernity, he took basic principles of his movement from the Treatise of Light and founded his movement based on these ideas. Both Risale-i Nur and Fethullah Gülen's own books and speeches are used by the followers as a main source from the beginning of the Gülen Movement.

One of the basic principles which is common in both the Nur movement and the Gülen movement is their position against politics. Turkish scholar Akyol (2007, p. 26) describes Nursi as a “very apolitical, other-worldly and loyal character,” the latter feature referring to his allegiance to Republican Turkey. From this point of view, he (Akyol, 2007, p. 26) has the following statement about Said Nursi:

In his thought, Nursi was closer to someone like C.S. Lewis — the Oxford professor who is widely regarded as one of the most important Christian apologists of the 20th century — than to Muslim contemporaries such as Hassan al-Banna, the founder of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. His enemies were not Zionism or Western imperialism but materialist philosophy and communist ideology, and he saw the Christian West as an ally against both.

The other common principle which is often highlighted in *Resale-i Nur* (Treatise of Light) is the relationship between religion and science. Maigre (2014, p. 35) mentioned that in *Risale-i Nur*, Said Nursi supported the idea that Islam was compatible with science, reason, and modernity. Unlike Marx or Darwin, he theorized that there is not a conflict between these two subjects, vice versa these two sources completing each other by fulfilling the needs of soul and brain. Mohamed (2007, p. 554) quoted from Kuru, who explains BSN's approach to this issue as follows:

He (Said Nursi) argues that science and technology cannot explain the meaning and the purpose of life, and they may be harmful for humankind if unjust and irresponsible people manipulate them. Science can neither provide true happiness nor replace the role of religion. Moreover, he emphasizes that the development of physics in the twentieth century shook positivist science.

Gülen also rejects this contrast between religion and science altogether. For him, religion and science must go hand in hand (Kaufmann, 2014, p. 18).

The third principle which is often mentioned in *Resale-i Nur* and Gülen's own books and speeches is the "Turkish Islam" model (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 30). This model is based on Sufi understanding and is open to other religions or philosophies which reject the idea that a clash between the "East" and "West" is either necessary or desirable and advocates the use of reason and in issues related to Islamic belief (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 31). On the other hand, both scholars dissociate from the old type of Brotherhood circles, so-called *Tariqat*, and create a new type of social movement. Unlike the old type *Tariqats*, this new type of movement is more active in social life and tries to take a place in all parts of the community. Barton (2005, p. 22) describes this issue as follows:

Both men rejected the idea of joining a *Tariqat*, saying that whilst they respected *Tariqat* such as the Naqshbandi but felt that the time for *Tariqat* had passed, and in both cases, it appears the consideration of possible political repression was not the prime reason for



taking this position. Nursi and Gülen instead rejected the traditional idea of following, much less becoming, a *sheikh*, or Sufi master, and argued instead that in the modern world educated Muslims should make the Qur'an and Sunnah their master.

Despite these basic principles and similarities between these two leaders and their movements, there are also some basic differences too. One of the most unique differences is the appearance of these two men. Unlike the other Hodjas, neither had a beard but BSN wore his own traditional Kurdish clothes during his life time. Especially during the old Said period (1876 to 1923) he always carried his own weapon with him too. On the other hand, Gülen wears modern suits and, unlike many other Hodjas, he is always chic and elegant. Beyond these differences in appearance, lies a deep different understanding of these two characters. According to Alam (2019, p. 122), Nursi rejected all offers of serving the Kemalist State and protesting their reforms by wearing his traditional clothes. However in his modern outlook, Gülen accepted and served the Kemalist State as he did not find the Kemalist state “threatening” to his Islamic belief, faith or the normative structure of Islam (Alam, 2019, p.123).

In addition to that point, Gülen mentioned that during his military service, he was responsible for the telecommunication service and he did not have any relation to guns or other weapons. However, Nursi and his students actively fought against Russians in the First World War and unlike Gülen, BSN had different roles in society. Gülen has spent his whole life preaching in Mosques, teaching religion to students and writing his works or speeches. Among the mentioned points above, the major difference between these two personalities is the focus point of their works. BSN mainly focus on faith, principals of faith and self-transformation of individuals. This is also an issue for Gülen but in comparison to Nursi, Gülen is more focused on the practice of Islam and how to interpret it in the society. Mercan and Kardaş (2018, p. 53) explain this point as follows: Unlike Nursi, Gülen not only treats the principles of faith, but also the five pillars of Islam, i.e. the worship, fasting, pilgrimage and almsgiving as well as ethical requirements of the "ideal or universal man"(*el-insan el-kamil*).

There are also some other differences concerning how to practice modern education and the role of religion in education. As an example, according to Alam (2019, p. 124), for Gülen, unlike Nursi, the central issue is not demonstrating complementarity or compability between Islam and modernity but “Representation of Islam” in the public domain. Such kind of differences, became very important later on and the traditional followers of BSN tried to limit Gülen from different aspects. According to Vicini (2007, p. 433) these differences led Gülen to leave the Nur Movement and found his own movement.

Even from the 1960s until the end of the 1970s Gülen took part in Nurcu initiatives. However, he soon realized that confining educational ideals to Islamic circles, the Nurcus would not have success in bringing Islam to shape society (Vicini, 2007, p. 433).

From these points of views, the Gülen movement is mostly shown as a non-political, social movement which is based on Fethullah Gülen's ideas and vision on education, pluralism, diversity, tolerance, acceptance, civil society, secularism, and democracy.

Fethullah Gülen's pluralistic, inclusivist and peacebuilding ideas have enabled the Gülen Movement to successfully turn its moral, spiritual, intellectual, financial and human resources into effective social capital and utilized this social capital in establishing educational institutions from primary school to university levels. (Esposito & Yılmaz, 2010, p. 97)

In this point Eldridge (2007, p. 528) highlighted a similar approach and mentioned that Gülen leaves all ideological concerns aside and proposes a model that is based on man being the basic element of all ideologies:

The Gülen movement is a rare development that brings the social and cultural components of the Islamic tradition face-to-face with modern values and encourages engagement in a positive interaction. It has produced a wide process of dialogue in educational, religious, and social arenas, throughout regions with different cultures and civilizations. [...]. The man or woman in this model is an altruistic person who has been created by God to inherit this world, who can put aside all his personal needs and desires in the name of divine love—love for mankind and all of existence.

Dohrn (2014, p. 241) mentioned that ignorance, poverty and disunity are seen as the three greatest enemies of humanity by Gülen and quoted him that to challenge against these enemies requires the establishment of educational institutions (ignorance), the enhancement of business relations and charitable work (poverty), and dialogue activities (disunity). Therefore as a bottom-up initiative (Esposito & Yılmaz, 2010, p. 97), the movement is active mainly in these three fields such as education (establishment of institutions from primary school to university level, attracting students of diverse backgrounds and also adult education activities), media (a wide range of products in print and audio-visual communication, from a mass circulation daily to TV and radio channels) and civil society organizations (foundations and associations to promote democratic participation, dialogue among various sections of the

society and charity organizations) (Küçükcan, 2012, p. 187) (Balcı, 2014, p. 72) (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 35).

### 2.1.3.1. *Educational Activities of the Movement*

As it is mentioned above, education has a very important meaning for Gülen, and it is the core activity of the movement. For Gülen, education is an all-encompassing lifelong process (Eldridge, 2007, p. 535). In general, there are three kinds of education activities that are practiced in the movement such as weekly organized talks, called *Sohbet*, educational activities in Lighthouses called *Işık evler* and teaching activities in institutions, such as schools, preparation courses, or universities.

Especially till the 1990s, Gülen's speeches, so called *Vaaz* in Turkish, to the community in the mosques had a crucial meaning for the movement. However, because of the huge number and variety of participants, Gülen could not touch personal problems or individual issues in these speeches. That is why, in addition to these speeches, he organized weekly meetings called *Sohbet*, mostly at night, with small groups in Izmir. Gülen also visited the local business people in their shops or work-places and created a friendship with these people. Later, these local people were invited to these talks according to their occupation, background, age...etc. These meetings usually took a place in private homes during leisure time. In a relaxed atmosphere tea was drunk and Gülen's teachings (Kaufmann, 2014, p. 47) and also his diagnoses were talked about. According to Alam (2019, p. 125),

Gülen diagnosed these problems as a “Lack of high ideals” to motivate the society and nation, a “lack of morals and ethics” to regulate individual conduct and cultivate the sense of responsibility and accountability, a “lack of hope”, a lack of proper guidance, particularly to the youth”

He highlighted his solutions to these type of problems as a social project to the residents of these *Sohbets* and discussed with them how to realize these thoughts. Later on, some of the participants of these discussions, who were called *Mütevelli* (Trustees), took more action and financially supported these ideas.

The *Mütevelli* is essentially a board of trustees or sponsors who have volunteered to take on more responsibility, whether overseeing more projects or donating more money than others. What is important is that the *Mütevelli* circle is open to anyone who

consistently carries out the responsibilities that he or she takes on (Ebaugh and Koç, 2007, p. 549).

These Trustees (*Mütevelli* in Turkish) compromise the financial basis of the movement and they were the ones who were conducting projects of the movement like founding a school or building a dormitory...etc.

At the beginning Gülen himself organized and conducted these talks, but later, because of the increase in the number of talks, another elder brothers or elder sisters took the role as an educator in each group; thus, varying the content of study sessions according to participants' needs, wishes, environment, previous knowledge and so forth. The content ranged from teaching and Qur'anic script and recitation to talks about various topics (Woodhall, 2005, p. 8). This methodology expanded with the growth of the movement and became a widespread adult education method all over the world. Woodhall (2005, p. 8) explains this issue as follows:

...These are relatively informal study groups of adults. [...] Participants commonly read the writings of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, contemporary exegeses of the Qur'an dealing with the problems of the 20<sup>th</sup> and now the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These are purely voluntary activities, provide an additional social function, and being peer-led are invariably free of charge. [...] The circles are far more extensive than the schools. In other words, everywhere where there are schools, there are also circles of adults and in many places where there are no schools of the movement, there are circles.

Kaufmann (2014, p. 27) sees these meetings as a very important activity in the movement and mentioned that the basis of the organizational form of the movement is the *sohbets* (Study circles). Dohrn (2014, p. 244) supported this approach and mentioned that this type of meetings are also established in the dormitories of the schools too.

Teaching moral values in this way was also practiced in meetings of smaller groups of about five to seven students, referred to as *çay saati* (tea time), which took place in the dormitory several times a week and which was guided by a *hizmet* teacher or *belletmen* (supervisors in dormitories). (Dohrn, 2014, p. 244)

The second method which was founded by Gülen himself is the **Lighthouses, called *Işık evler***. These are houses where four to six Gülen movement affiliated students live together to learn how to conduct everyday life in accordance with the ideals of Fethullah Gülen. (Dohrn, 2014, p. 246). Because of Gülen's unique understanding about science and modernity,

universities and the university students have had an important meaning for the movement since its beginning. The university students who lived these houses became *abi* (older brother) or *abla* (older sister) and took a role in interpreting the teachings of Gülen in different circles (Hermansen, 2005, p. 6). Dohrn (2014, p. 246) quoted from Hendrick who describes *ışık evler* as “at once student apartments, recruitment tools, and social conditioning facilities”. Especially during the first three decades of the movement, these flats were the center of the educational activities of the movement and most of the meetings were done in these houses. Hermansen (2005, p. 4) analyzed this subject in detail and quoted from Agai, who collects Gülen’s definitions and explanations of the Lighthouses as follows:

Gülen calls the *ışık evler* a tree, the seed of which was planted in the times of the Prophet Muhammad himself. He sees their roots within the Qur'an (24/36f) itself, thus giving the *jamaat*’s own form of organization the highest Islamic virtue. For Gülen the *ışık evleri* are the essence of Islamic education par excellence and are viewed to be the basis for the educational activities. This gives the teachers a high religious prestige.

Besides that, he (Hermansen) pointed that the House of Lights are mostly financially supported by the movement and by this way poor students from poor families could find a place to stay and continue their studies in these flats (Hermansen, 2005, p. 6). The connection between different *abis* (Older Brothers) in these flats also help the freshmen students in their studies in universities (Hermansen, 2005, p. 6). Hermansen (2005, p. 10) also highlighted the revival role (*Ihya*) in the society and she mentioned that these flats fulfill the lack of religious education in young generation, which was done before by *Madrasa*, *Takya* and *Zawiyas* (Old educational institutions of Ottoman Era). On the other hand, because of the informal structure and widespread expansion of these flats, the Lighthouses are discussed in society. Unlike schools or other institutions, these houses seem mysterious or secret for some social scientists and there are several discussions about them. This criticism and following discussions are examined in chapter 2.1.4 in detail.

The third educational method of the movement is **founding institutions like schools, university preparation courses, and universities** and conducting teaching activities in these institutions. This trend started with college-preparatory courses in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and in social sciences in the early seventies. In these courses, mostly high school students from different origins came and studied these sciences from university students and prepared themselves for the central exams which are required to gain entrance to

universities in Turkey. These courses grew and expanded after a while and became private schools, especially in the big cities of Turkey. Kaufmann (2014, p. 47) highlighted the decentralized structure of these institutions as follows:

A characteristic feature of all institutions is their decentralized, local structure. This also affects the financing of individual institutions. They are financially independent of each other. The aim of all institutions is to ensure self-financing in the medium term, in order to reduce dependence on donations.

Turgut Ozal, who became president after the military coup in 1980, had an important role during the foundation and development of the schools in and out of Turkey. He had a master's degree from the U.S. and, according to Findley (2010, p. 354), his visionary reforms and liberalization policy helped the new administration to cover the negative results of the coup in 1980. Ozal personally knew Gülen and his movement and during his administration till 1993, he supported the movement (Maigre, 2014, p. 35). During this liberalization and development period the movement started to found high schools, especially in large Turkish cities. Ebaugh and Koç (2007, p. 542) explained the growth of the movement in this period is as follows:

By 1982 the first two goals were realized with dormitories and college preparatory courses being offered in many cities throughout Turkey. In that same year, the first two private secondary high schools opened in Izmir and Istanbul, followed by another in Ankara. These projects were envisioned and financed by circles of local businessmen in each of the cities who set up educational trusts that supported the projects until they were able to raise their own revenues through school fees.

Vicini (2007, p. 434) also highlighted the role of Gülen as a religious authority to attract a wide number of people and capital in education activities and explained how these schools are founded from the beginning to today.

The resolution of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s was a very important milestone for the Gülen movement. After the USSR, the newly-born Central Asia Republics like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan opened their doors to the international markets. Most of these countries primordially have Turkish roots and they used to be Muslim countries before the USSR. During that time period, the Gülen movement opened schools and college-preparatory courses in almost every city in Turkey and had a wealth of experience in the educational sciences. The movement used this advantage and

opened schools, especially important cities of these central Asian countries. Like the schools in Turkey, these schools are supported by Turkish businessmen from different parts of Turkey and especially the teaching staff are sensitively selected from the schools in Turkey (Bernard, 2010, p. 67). Turgut Ozal visited these schools in 1993, just before his death and showed his support as a prime minister of Turkey. Park (2007, p. 59) explained the role of these schools and its contribution to Turkey as follows:

It stands to play a substantial role in the evolution of the Turkish world, in terms of its cultural unity, its modernity, and the role Islam assumes in the region. It has become part of Turkey's face abroad and an expression of Turkey's 'soft power' in particular. In this respect, it could offer to much of the Islamic world a more digestible and accessible 'model' for development and democratization than that usually associated with Turkey's ardently secular Republic.

The quantitative success in Central Asia allowed the movement to use the same expansion strategy in the Balkan region in the middle of the 1990s and in Africa in 2000s. Akyol (2007, p. 28) explains this expansion period in the last three decades as follows:

Soon the schools spread out to four corners of the world, ranging from South Africa to Mongolia, or from Australia to Denmark. Gülen's move to United States in late 90's also contributed to the globalism of the movement. And while the movement was hoping to help changing the world for the better with all these activities, they were also being changed by the world for the better: Their engagement with different cultures, and especially that of the West, helped Gülen's followers to develop a more liberal and cosmopolitan mind-set and discourse.

This subject will be discussed with the participants of the research during the interviews and the results of the study is analyzed in the last two chapters.

In addition to schools, in 1995, the first private university of the movement, Fatih University, was opened in Istanbul (Findley, 2010, p. 388). Later, almost 15 private universities opened in Turkey till 2016. After the coup attempt in July 2016, all of these educational institutions founded by the movement in Turkey were captured by the government and transferred to different organizations. (See chapter 3.3.4)



### 2.1.3.2. *Activities of the Movement on Media*

The second important field for the movement is media. The GM started its activities in this sector in 1979 by launching the movement's first journal, *Sızıntı*, a monthly magazine intended to demonstrate the compatibility of science and Islam, and religious morals and modern society (Barton, 2005, p. 25). In this journal scientific subjects regarding different social, natural, and religious sciences are presented with literature and poems. Gülen himself was one of the writers of the journal and published most of his works in this journal. In addition, there are some other journals which are published in specific fields also published by the movement. As an example are *Aksiyon* (Action), a weekly magazine focused on politics and economics, *Yeni Ümit* (New Hope), a monthly magazine focused on religion and theology, and *Ekoloji* (Ecology), a quarterly magazine focused on environmental issues. However, *Sızıntı* keeps its central role in the movement and that's why it was translated to English and German as "Fountain" or "die Fontäne" (Barton, 2005, p. 25), especially after Gülen moved to the U.S.

After the successes and experiences in these monthly magazines, the movement started to publish its first daily newspaper, called *Zaman*. This is the second attempt in the media field after the monthly journals. Like all the other newspapers, *Zaman* published news about daily social and political events from the eyes of the movement. Park (2007, p. 50) summarized the development of the movement in the eighties as follows:

The movement has itself promoted from Turkey's post-1980 economic, social and political liberalization, of course, which has created a space for its media, educational and social activities free from the control of the statist secular establishment. In this sense, we might argue that the movement is in large measure a byproduct of the impact of globalization on the wider evolution of Turkish politics and economic management.

Hendrick (2013, p. 185) quoted from Palmer and Robinson that, a Belgium external auditing firm produced a 2007 report that noted *Zaman* subscriptions as among the highest of any newspaper in Europe. Such a success, according to circulation point of view, leads the GM to publish the English version of the newspaper so called "Today's *Zaman*" (TZ). Hendrick (2013, p. 187-189) highlights his point of views about this version of paper as follows:

Unlike its counterparts, TZ was not intended for a Turkish readership. It was intended for a global readership, for foreign press, dignitaries and businesspeople in Turkey, and for anyone researching online about the Turkish current events, politics, arts, or

culture....By moving into the very small sector of English language journalism, the GM signified that its leaders were very well aware of the fact that there were only two competitors with whom to compete for foreign attention, Hürriyet Daily News and the notoriously low-quality New Anatolian.

The third milestone in media is the TV channels, like *Samanyolu TV* (Milk way TV), which was founded in January 1993. *Cihan* News Agency and several other channels for kids and for science and arts were founded after 2000. Eldridge (2007, p. 527) describes the extent of this movement as follows:

Fethullah Gülen's followers, (the Gülen Movement), control a television network, two radio channels, a daily newspaper with a Turkish circulation of 300,000, (At the end of the 2012, this number became 800,000) which is also published in 16 countries and is available on-line, a news agency, a number of specialized periodicals, an Islamic bank and an insurance company.

All these media organizations and institutions help the movement to announce its understanding and the philosophy to the community. The result of these activities was that the movement found a chance to meet with other parts of society and did not just limit itself within the conservative part of Turkey. Akyol (2007, p. 27) explains the result of these activities in science as follows:

Gülen had a vision that would take him and his followers to a point where no other Muslim community in Turkey even dreamed of. Instead of simply trying to create a limited living space for itself in public life, like many other Islamic groups do, Gülen movement decided to engage with society and create publications and institutions that would appeal to people from all walks of life.

Kaufmann (2014, p. 12) underlined this issue and mentioned that modernization and professionalization of the movement depending on such activities help them to reach different parts of society.

All these media organizations were silenced after publishing about the corruption scandals of the Erdogan administrations in 2014 and 2015. (See chapter 3.3.4) Today, the GM uses social media and web portals to announce its discourse to society and tries to found similar media organizations outside of Turkey. One of the crucial changes is the publication of the monthly scientific magazine *Çağlayan* (Waterfall), which is similar to *Sızıntı* (Fountain), and

was founded in 2017 in Germany. Gülen is a permanent author in these magazines and they are perceived as official magazines of the movement. It is clear to see by just looking at the transformation of the names of the journals, from Fountain to Waterfall, that Gülen expects a huge change and growth of the movement's structure and also in its expansion.

#### *2.1.3.3. Civil Society Organizations of the Movement*

After education and media, the movement started to found several types of civil society organizations in the early 1990s. The most important organization was called Journalists and Writers Foundation in Ankara, which was focused on interfaith and dialog activities. Alam (2019, p. 194) quoted from Ergene who mentioned that “The Dialogue Meetings” are an extension of Gülen's global educational activities. Alam (2019, p. 196) also stated that Gülen was not the first Muslim scholar who talked about interfaith dialogue and tolerance, additionally Muhammed Talibi (b.1921), C.M. Naim, Asghar Ali Engineer (1940-2013), Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (b.1925), Syed Zainal Abedin (1928-1993), Farid Esack (b.1958), Abdulaziz Sachedina and Tariq Ramadan (b.1962) are some of the other scholars who pointed out the importance of these activities. However there is a difference between Gülen and others such as:

Most of these Islamic scholarly writings have emerged out of a context of “minority Muslims” living in non-Muslim majority regions and countries such as Europe, the United States, India, and South Africa [...] On the contrary, Gülen's discourse of interfaith dialogue is rooted in its Turkish Muslim majoritarian context and thus relatively, if not completely, free of any political pragmatism; rather it flows from his ethical and moral re-reading of the universal message of Islam and is thoroughly grounded in a human-rights perspective. (Alam, 2019, p. 196-199)

In this context in Istanbul, Gülen was appointed as honorary chairman of this foundation and this foundation became famous especially with international and interreligious visits and cooperations. As an honorary chairman of the foundation, Gülen had met with leaders of other religions, including the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew I, and Israeli Sephardic Head Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron. In addition to that, Gülen also met the leaders of the Alevi community, a religious minority in Turkey, and announced interfaith and dialogue activities in and within different religions. Among the mentioned visits, the most important one was with the previous Pope Pope John Paul II, which was happened on 9 February, 1998. Gülen visited him at his Residence in the Vatican and suggested three cooperation activities with the Vatican such as:

- Student exchange between Vatican and Turkish Universities
- Founding three theological faculties (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) in Harran (a city in east Turkey) where students of Abrahamic religions can study side by side.
- Creating framework conditions to enable Abrahamic religious members to visit Jerusalem without visa requirements (Mercan & Kardaş, 2018, p. 42)

Another important activity of the foundation was Abant Meetings. The movement invited important people from different parts of society and discussed Turkey's topics in these annual meetings in Abant, a small district of Ankara. Its primary objective was to bring together people of influence to discuss their problems and to recognize their similarities (Hendrick, 2013, p. 201). Some of these topics were religion and the state or Islam, secularism, and democracy (Findley, 2010, p. 389). These activities were hardly criticized by the Sunni religious leaders and conservative politicians.

As it was explained in chapter 2.1.1, founding dialogue institutes in the important centers of the world was one of the most remarkable points in Gülen's life in America. These institutions are expansions of the Journalists and Writers Foundation out of Turkey and focus on interfaith and intercultural dialogue activities. Particularly, after the 9/11 attacks in the US, the movement established dialogue centers in different parts of the world, like Rumi Forum in Washington DC, Peace Islands Institute in New York or Forum Dialog in Berlin, and organized activities to contribute to world peace. As an example, it (Rumi Forum) regularly hosts luncheon speakers to discuss issues ranging from an "Obama Middle Eastern policy", to "The Kashmir Crisis in India/Pakistan", to "Islam, Sufism and Qur'anic Ethics", to "Oil Policy and the Middle East", to "U.S.-Kyrgyz Relations", to name only a few (Hendrick, 2013, p. 211). Park (2007, p. 56) surmised that these activities are undermining Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis. These are transnational activities, but they are global in their reach and potential impact. Barton (2005, p. 3) supported this idea and mentioned that the most consequential and enduring answer to Huntington will not come from his academic peers. Ultimately, it is progressive Islamic movements such as the Gülen (*hizmet Movement*) that have the greatest potential to prove Huntington wrong (Barton, 2005, p. 3). In this point, Alam (2019, p. 201) contrasts Gülen's approach to interfaith dialogue of Nursi's understanding and presents the interfaith dialogue activities of the Gülen movement as an importance difference between Gülen and Nursi:

In the Nursian framework, interfaith dialogue was essentially conceived as an

instrument to secure the unity of Muslims and Christians against atheism and secularism and one which will unleash the process leading of the transformation of Christianity into Islam. In contrast, Gülen is very much against the instrumentalization of faith or any other discourse, identity, or value for any objectives, whether political or non-political. Rather for him, the goal of interfaith dialogue is to retrieve “the fundamental essence and unity of (all) religions”.

As a consequence of this approach, Alam (2019, p. 201) likened Gülen to Gandhi instead of Nursi, and mentioned that they have a similar understanding on this subject. This is another important subject, the similarities and differences between Gülen and Nursi, which is out of the scope of this study.

In addition to dialog organizations, the movement founded financial organizations in the same era. These types of organizations mainly focused on the economic aspect of the movement. Gülay (2007, p. 44) describes the range of these institutions in Turkey as follows:

The Gülen community has spurred massive growth in the ‘Islamic’ economic sector, owning 203 of the 385 major Islamic corporations in Turkey. These companies are organized around the values of charity, ethical dealings, and Muslim solidarity, and are financed by Gülen affiliated banks and holding corporations. [...] Although not controlled directly by Gülen and his inner circle, these allied associations share the community’s world view and goals.

She gave Asya Finance Corporation, which was founded in 1996, as an example and mentioned that it has an over half a billion dollars in assets and invests exclusively in Gülen supported charities, schools and companies (Gülay, 2007, p. 44). However, Hendrick (2013, p. 241) debated on this issue and mentioned that the activities of the movement is not just for the Muslims or conservatives, as Gülay described, instead it is open to everyone.

His (Gülen’s) variation is not that of antagonism or reactionary fundamentalism. Quite the contrary, more than developing a parallel system of social services, and more than creating a niche market in an Islamic sub-economy, the GM constitutes an effort to provide services for everyone who can afford the price of high quality. (Hendrick, 2013, p. 241)

Mainly because of this approach, the movement expanded its activities in this field and

several other financial institutions followed Asya Finance. As an example, ISHAD (Business Life Cooperation Association), TUSKON (Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists in Turkey), MARIFED (Marmara Business Life Association Federation) and PASIAD (Association, for social and Economic Cooperation in Pacific Asia) were founded in and outside Turkey by the movement and its supporters. These institutions were businessmen organizations that organize several business meetings annually and helps its members to expand their business network. Regular workshops or educational activities also contribute to this goal. The Gülen group, by bringing the business activities of its members in line with the principles of religion, does not see any conflict between their economic activities and their faith (Ergil, 2012, p. 305). These civil organizations became the third field of the movement after education and media. All these institutions targeted different needs of society and enlarged the movements influence on the different parts of the society. Especially after 2000, these organizations started to use the networks of the movement in the international arena and to expand their activities.

Especially from the financial point of view, one of the most remarkable foundations of the movement is a charity organization called Kimse Yok Mu? (Is Anybody There?) in Turkey. Through the internalization of the movement, several similar charity foundations were also founded around the world. As an example “Time to Help” e.V foundation was founded in 2006 in Offenbach, Germany or the Respect Foundation in Nairobi in 2007. These foundations cooperate with each other and, like the other charity organizations, their goal is to help needy people in Africa or in another regions. Among these foundations, mainly because of the huge community support in Turkey, the biggest charity foundation was Kimse Yok Mu in Turkey.

Kimse Yok Mu contributed about 17.5 million dollars to 43 countries in Africa in 2013. Less than one-third was humanitarian assistance. Most of the aid went to development projects, health, education, water wells, and support for orphans. The principal recipients were Somalia (\$ 3.8 million), Kenya (\$ 2.8 million), Uganda (\$ 2 million), Ethiopia (\$ 1.9 million), Sudan (\$ 1.8 million), and Niger (\$1.7 million). (Pahl, 2019, p. 322)

Besides, Pahl (2019, p. 323) also mentioned that throughout the 2000s, the number of annual donors was consistently in the hundreds of thousands. After the failed coup attempt Kimse Yok Mu was closed and its donors faced with accusations of supporting a terror organization.

In addition to charity foundations, the Gülen movement is also active in health care

efforts. According to Ebaugh (2012, p.168), there were six Gülen inspired hospitals in Turkey like Sema Hospital in Istanbul or Bahar Hospital in Bursa. According to her field study in Istanbul and Bursa, she observed that this type of hospitals were fulfilling the needs of the Turkish health system. As an example, in some cases where health insurances only cover some of the expenses, like heart problems or intensive care costs, Gülen inspired hospitals cooperated with their sponsors and cover some expenses of needy people (Ebaugh, 2012, p. 168). According to Pahl (2019, p. 333), these health care efforts of the movement are not just limited to Turkey, in addition Kazakhstan, Indonesia and various African nations. He (Pahl, 2019, p. 333) gave a hospital in the capital city of Nigeria in Abuja as an example and mentioned that:

The movement opened Nizamiye Hospital in the capital city of Abuja in 2013. The hospital - among the most modern and well-equipped in Nigeria – offered full emergency, surgical, medical and laboratory services. The medical staff, largely doctors and nurses from Turkey, also made visits to the nearby Wassa Refugee Camp, to area orphanages, and to conflict areas in the northeast of Nigeria where medical care was rare.

Like all other Gülen related institutions, these hospitals were captured by the Turkish state after the failed coup attempt in Turkey, however in international context, Gülen inspired institutions, like Hospitals, charity organizations and finance organizations in other countries continues their activities. (See chapter 3.3.4)

From different aspects, some social scientists like Yavuz, Esposito and Barton, surmise that the movement deserves careful study not just because of the quality of Gülen’s ideas but also because it represents one of the few such progressive and inclusive mass-based civil society movements in the world today (Yavuz & Esposito, 2003) (Barton, 2005, p. 2). Following this brief explanation part, it is important to mention the critiques of the movement.

#### 2.1.4 Critiques of the Gülen Movement

In general, all religious movements or subjects associated with religion are perceived as controversial issues and bring suspicion and debates with them. Gülen and the movement, in particular, are also controversial subjects and there are both too positive and too negative approaches about the issue. Being aware of this issue, the researcher of the study tried to distinguish himself from the debates, tried to eliminate the conspiracy theories and just analyzed the most important criticism and contra arguments against these critiques in this part.



One of the most difficult parts of this study is finding current problems or missing parts in the movement and also the Gülen inspired schools and criticizing them from these perspectives. There are two main reasons behind this difficulty, such as Gülen's active position and current performance in the movement right now and the alarmed situation of the movement after the failed coup attempt. During the field study it was observed that Gülen is informed about all positive or negative publications regarding the movement and he has reacted to these publications through the media and his works. Besides, he gave many interviews to most important world media organizations, like CNN, die Zeit or CNBC after the coup attempt and he also wrote his thoughts about the event in his article which was published in *The New York Times*. In all these reactions, he answered the accusations and criticisms against the movement and stayed behind his movement. In addition to that, because of the pressure and unlawful actions of the Erdogan Regime, followers of the movement, especially important ones who are in charge of the movement's institutions, are alarmed and are also very watchful, especially of every kind of criticism against the movement, which is explained in detail in chapter 3.3.4. Because of these two reasons, the movement is very sensitive, especially after the failed coup attempt, regarding criticism and thus reacts immediately to these criticism.

However in different platforms, because of the rapid growth and international expansion of the Gülen movement and also the importance of Gülen's ideas, there is a lot of discussion about the movement from different perspectives. In this part the most important critiques from different sources are collected and different types of viewpoints towards these criticisms are highlighted. Mostly, these discussions are about the movement's unique structure and in some cases specifically about the educational institutions too. In addition to this, the decentralized structure of the movement has caused some criticism which is only valid in some regions of the world. Despite the variety of the criticisms, it is possible for this paper to distinguish them into three groups;

- a) Criticisms about the Gülen's personality
- b) Criticisms about the movement and its structure
- c) Criticisms about Gülen's educational philosophy and Gülen inspired schools

Because of the goal of this research, which is analyzing Gülen inspired schools from an educational sciences perspective, the first two type of criticisms are briefly explained at the beginning, but later, the third type of criticisms are analyzed in detailed below.

#### 2.1.4.1. Critiques about Gülen's Personality

As it was explained in the previous parts, Fethullah Gülen is an important personality, especially for Turkey. Therefore, his personality, his discourse and also the movement are one of the most discussed subjects in Turkey in the last three decades. Especially after the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, he took the attention of the world media and today he is also discussed about outside of Turkey as well. Because of the deepness of the subject and also the very complex personality of Gülen, which is not the target of this research, only several of the most important criticisms about him are highlighted here.

As a leader of a social movement, one of the most important concerns about Fethullah Gülen is whether he has **political goals** or not. Actually, this critique is the topic of political science, however because of its relation with the subject of this study, both pro and contra views about this type of critique are here highlighted briefly here. From the early times of the movement, one of the main criticisms about Gülen, is **that he has secret goals or a secret agenda** in the political sphere (Tittensor, 2014, p. 3). In Turkey, White Turks consisting of secularists and Kemalists (For more information about Kemalism and White Turks, see chapter 2.1.1), as well as some Western analysts, are convinced that Gülen and his followers have a hidden agenda to foster the emergence of a new Islamic political order (Balçı, 2014, p. 73). According to this understanding, Gülen is against the Kemalist and democratic regime in Turkey and tried to foster a revolution according to Islamic rules and transform the current government structure of Turkey in the future. Gürbüz (2007, p. 110) summarized these kinds of criticism as follows:

Fethullah Gülen is trying to infiltrate important state institutions like the judiciary, the police and the military. The purpose behind that is to prepare the ground for a seizure of state power. The struggle for the final takeover of the state has been going on for a long time and takes place in great secrecy. Fethullah Gülen's strategy is to pretend that he and his adherents fully favor Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the existing regime, while in reality he is preparing himself and his followers for an Islamist revolution.

Gürbüz (2007, p. 110) also continues his critique by highlighting Gülen's skills which help him to hide his purpose, which is the most disturbing part in this issue according to him (Gürbüz). Tittensor (2014, p. 2) pointed to this issue as well and mentioned that members are variously described as "deceivers" and "revolutionaries" who are waiting to first infiltrate and overthrow nations with their "Trojan Horse" institutions and then establish shari'a law. On the other hand, there are also academics who debated about this approach. As an example, Gerrens

(2018, p. 86) has a skeptical approach to this kind of criticism. The fact that Gülen could direct Turkish intelligence service, police and justice from the USA, like puppets, is a conspiracy theory that overestimates the possibilities of an old, ill man (Gerrens, 2018, p. 86). Besides, as it was explained in chapter 2.1.1, Gülen was sent to trial three times in his life with the same accusation (1970, 1986 and 1999) and in all these three trials it was decided that Gülen was innocent. The fear behind this type of criticism is mainly based on Gülen's residence in the U.S. and people who subscribe to this criticism believe that he will be the Ayatollah Khomeini of Turkey in the future. On the other hand, some social scientists, like Findley or Barton, debate about this issue and mention that there is huge difference between Fethullah Gülen and Ruhollah Khomeini. Barton (2005, p. 12) mentioned that, Gülen refutes such criticisms and describes the charges as fabrications by a "marginal but influential group that wields considerable power in political circles". Findley also has a similar approach. According to him, mainly because of this point, in comparison to Khomeini or other political Islamists like Necmettin Erbakan in Turkey, Gülen is considered to be a social Islamic scholar and also a follower of Said Nursi, who is distanced himself from politics (Findley, 2010, p. 389).

In addition to the mentioned critiques, it is also suggested by the White Turks that **Gülen and Erdogan were allied** and they both wanted to achieve the same goal: changing the secular Kemalist State to a religious Islamic state (Mercan, 2019, p. 15). However, mainly because of the conflicts of interests from political points of view, this alliance was ended and these two groups were fighting with each other (Mercan, 2019, p. 15), according to this type of critiques. Hendrick (2013, p. 25) explains this coalition accusation as follows:

The AKP (Ak Party, Erdogam's current party in the parliament)-GM coalition divides Turkey's passive revolution; the AKP leads the "political march" through Parliament, the presidency, and the state apparatus, while the GM carries out the "civilian march" through education, business, media, and public relations. Both groups, however, rely on each other to continue their project to cultivate a "conservative democratic" Turkey that unites a new elite in faith, nation, and material prosperity.

Another reason behind these critiques is the *Ergenekon and Sledgehammer* trials where both Gülen and Erdogan showed a democratic stand against the secular military and the State. In these trials some high level military officers were arrested and most of them were found guilty of preparing and participating in a coup against the democratic structure of Turkey (Pahl, 2019, p. 342). According to opponents of the movement, as a consequence of this coalition, Gülen used the economic growth, especially at the first term of the Erdogan administration from 2002 to 2007, to finance and expand its investments through corporations, private schools and

media outlets and Erdogan used the movements economic and human resources to decrease the inflation to below 10 percent for the first time in twenty-eight years (Turam, 2007, p. 149).

On the other hand according to some other scholars, despite this win-win process, there is a deep differences between Erdogan and Gülen. Erdogan is from a political Islam tradition and he is seen as a follower of Necmettin Erbakan. Therefore, as it is mentioned above, both characters have different world views and such an alliance is not realistic. As an example, Mercan (2019, p. 257) suggested that, Erdogan hates Gülen since becoming the Mayor of Istanbul and mentioned to his followers at that time that the Gülen movement has to be finished. To achieve his goal, first, he signed decisions of *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu* (National Security Committee) which was controlled by the Turkish military when he first became the president in 2004 (Mercan, 2019, p. 258). Why did not Erdogan strike against the Gülen Movement following these decisions in 2004 and instead wait more than a decade? According to Alam (2019, p. 278), there are two reasons:

- (a) Erdogan himself was not then powerful enough to contemplate such outrageously illegal actions; and
- (b) Erdogan discovered in *Hizmet* a helpful hand in projecting himself as a “democrat” and provided much needed bureaucratic support, which enabled him to survive the still-heavily Kemalist establishment.

Secondly in 2012, Erdogan called Gülen to come back to Turkey and to continue his activities in his homeland, which was a political trap according to Mercan, organized by Erdogan (Mercan, 2019, p. 266). At that time the situation in Turkey had changed and the two reasons that were mentioned above disappeared, mainly as a consequence of the *Ergenekon* and *Sledgehammer* trials. If Gülen accepted this call and came back to Turkey, then it will give Erdogan and his administration a chance to pressure him and force him to accept and also present Erdogan as an untouchable Islamic authority. Alam (2019, p. 229) also pointed out this point and mentioned the fight between Erdogan and Gülen is not because of political conflicts of interests, instead, Erdogan’s crackdown on the Hizmet Movement is linked to his ambition of securing his “unfettered Islamicist Sultanic rule” without any internal and external constrains. Gerrens (2018, p. 84) supported Alam’s point by giving several examples like Gülen’s critiques against the Erdogan administration in Israel, Gezi Protests and Erdogan’s corruption scandals. As it was explained in chapter 2.1.3.3, one of the remarkable points of the Gülen movement is dialogue activities with other religions, especially with Christians and Jews, and that is why Gülen always criticizes Erdogan because of his anti-Semitic discourse against Jews and Israel. This difference became clear on 27 May 2010, when six ships, which were

indirectly supported by the Erdogan regime (Mercan, 2019, p. 262), carrying humanitarian aid, like food or medical equipment, sailed from Turkey to the Gaza Strip of Palestine, without Israel's permission. The Israeli government perceived this as an attempt against their solidarity and sovereignty and reacted by stopping ships with their navies. In this accident, the so-called Mavi Marmara (the name of the biggest ship there) crisis, nine Turkish and one Turkish-American citizen died during the fights. The outcry in Turkey was considerable; diplomatic relations were suspended, and direct military confrontation loomed (Pahl, 2019, p. 345). President Erdogan and Foreign Minister Davutoglu blamed Israel strongly after the event. However, Gülen showed an opposing stand against the Erdogan administration and, despite the tragedy, the very critical situation and some of his follower's opposition, Gülen questioned the legality of the event and described it as a political confrontation, not humanitarian help (Pahl, 2019, p. 346). Mercan (2019, p. 262) also described the event as a political propaganda of Erdogan by showing several help organizations like "Kızılay", Turkey's state supported help organization, or "Kimse Yok Mu?" a Gülen affiliated help organization as an example which helped Palestine for many years through cooperating Israel authorities. In addition to this crisis, the Gezi Protest in June 2013 is also another example against the "alliance" critique. Gezi Park, which is a small green park in the middle of Istanbul, was targeted as the location for a new shopping mall project by some companies close to the Erdogan administration. Initially, a small group of protestors attempted to keep the green environment of the region but mainly because of the riot reaction of the police, these green protests turned to a political protest against the Erdogan administration and became famous all around Turkey. Thousands of protesters settled in the park and occupied it for more than a month. Erdogan humiliated the protestors and ridiculed them as "bandits" or "looters" (*çapulcu* in Turkish) and refused to negotiate with them (Pahl, 2019, p. 348). Again in this crisis, Gülen positioned himself against the Erdogan administration by supporting the protestors' rights to assemble, to speak their minds and to advocate for causes (Pahl, 2019, p. 348). Besides, Gülen also identified dialogue and negotiation as the only way to solve the conflict. Despite this approach, the Erdogan administration preferred to stop the protests through violence. Unfortunately during the fights between police and protestors, 11 protestors died, including a 14-year old boy named Berkin Elvan, and thousands of protestors were injured (Pahl, 2019, p. 348). Another example given by Gerrens, is Erdogan's corruption scandals in December 2013, this issue is explained in detail in the chapter 3.3.4. However, all these critiques and positioning in very important subjects makes the Erdogan administration uncomfortable towards Gülen and sees movement as an opponent to their Islamic Sultanic rule. Therefore, it is difficult to support or prove that Gülen

and Erdogan were allied by just looking their Islamic background or their common stand against the Ergenekon and Sledgehammer investigations.

On the other hand, not just White Turks are criticizing Gülen of having political goals, in addition, Black Turks, especially Erdogan voters, also criticize **Gülen of being a spy of the US or according to some of them either a “Zionist” or a pawn of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency** (Pahl, 2019, p.346). According to this understanding, the U.S. administration and Israel are not pleased with the economic and political growth and influence of Turkey, especially in the Middle East, and by cooperating and collaborating with Gülen, they organized the failed coup attempt in July 2016, which is against the solidarity of Turkey. (See chapter 3.3.4) Like White Turks, Black Turks also commonly mentioned that Gülen is a traitor whose goal is to take the control of Turkey and give it to an American and Israel coalition and that is why both of these powers are supporting the movement financially inside and outside of Turkey. However, by just looking at the visa problems that Gülen has experienced in the U.S. since 2001, it is clear to say that these accusations are just a conspiracy theory. According to Mercan (2019, p. 236), after Gülen’s medical care in the US, he applied for an American Visa I-360 as a Religious Worker in 2001. This type of visa is organized for special immigrants who have a specific occupation and Gülen’s application was accepted in 2002. Despite this acceptance, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) cancelled this Visa on 14 December 2006 without any reason and even Gülen’s lawyers did not get any explanation for this rejection (Mercan, 2019, p. 239) (Hendrick, 2013, p. 60). Therefore, Gülen’s lawyers first went to court and at the same time they applied for a Visa I-140, which is known as a visa for “Extra ordinary abilities” and Visa I-485, for permanent resident. Gülen’s lawyers’ application to the court for an I-360 visa was rejected in 2008 and also their application for an I-140 was also rejected by the USCIS (Hendrick, 2013, p. 60), according to the Report of the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) (Mercan, 2019, p. 243). In their report Gülen only fulfilled two conditions out of three. As a result of these decisions, Gülen’s lawyers applied for the US Federal Court and opened a trial against the USCIS (Hendrick, 2013, p. 60). Federal Judge Dalzell from Philadelphia found the USCIS guilty and forced them to accept Gülen’s application for an I-140 Visa in October 2018 (Hendrick, 2013, p. 62) and later, the USCIS was also required to pay the costs of Gülen’s legal expenses too (Mercan, 2019, p. 243). According to Mercan (2019, p. 236), there are several odd points during these processes, like canceling an existing visa without any reason or interviewing Gülen with some officers from Washington DC, and he suggested that this is mainly because, the U.S. administration was suspicious that Gülen was a spy who is working for the Turkish government and conducting their activities in



the US. On the other hand, according to Hendrick (2013, p. 60), the authorities of the USCIS were skeptical because of the unofficial relationship between Gülen and Gülen inspired schools. In one way or another, such a long, unusual, difficult process also demonstrated that Gülen is neither supported nor controlled by the US administration or Israel or some other Jewish association in the U.S.

The other type of criticism about Gülen is his approach to Islam. **Gülen's unique understanding of Islam** distinguishes the movement from the other Islamic groups and also makes Gülen a target to different varieties of criticism. This subject again is related with the Theological sciences and Agai (2008) highlighted the Islamic background of Gülen in his work in detail. Therefore, these types of critiques are explained in this study briefly and detailed analyses about this subject are left to the theologians. There are three type of criticisms which ensue at this point:

1. Gülen is accused of being radical Islamists who aim to transform Turkish society according to Islamic rules.
2. Gülen is accused of being reform Islamists, which is against the traditional understanding of Islam. As an example, Gülen is criticized for not wearing beard or for wearing modern suits instead of traditional religious clothes, unlike other Islam scholars.
3. Gülen is accused of being wrong Muslims or a faithless group, which applies unreligious methods like secular education under the name of Islam.

As it was explained above, the first type of understanding is mainly based on Gülen's loyalty to the original sources of Islam which is the Qur'an and *hadith* (sayings, actions, reactions about Prophet Muhammad and his companions). According to Volm (2018, p. 189), Gülen does not contribute to any reform in Islam and what he did all in his books was to reference the Qur'an, hadith and previous mainstream Muslim thinkers, especially Nursi. As it is easy to understand, according to these type of critics, Gülen is considered as just a follower of previous Muslim scholars who tries to transform the modern democratic Turkish society to a religious based theocratic state. Volm (2018, p. 188) summarizes this approach as follows:

The core effort is to turn back to their own, Muslim inheritance by separating themselves from European Values - In the case of Gülen represented through the establishment of European ideals in the course of the founding of Turkey. By highlighting the (re-)



Awakening - in divergence to reform – [...] that Islam should not be modernized per se but, on the contrary, that Muslims were reminded to return to the roots of Islam.

As a consequence of this understanding, especially Kemalists (Followers of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk) labelled Gülen as an “Obscurantist” or “Bigot” (*Gerici* or *Yobaz* in Turkish). On the other hand, there also scholars like Ergil or Gülay who suggest the opposite of this view. As an example, Ergil (2012, p. 19) emphasize that according to his observations on Gülen’s discourse and actions over an extended time a period, the obvious conclusion that he gets is that Gülen’s aim is to reconcile tradition with modernity, which distinguishes the Gülen Movement from its contemporaries (Ergil, 2012, p. 312). The question of how Gülen is reconciling tradition and modernity causes confusion and also discussion in this point. According to Gülay, Gülen is not against the European modernity which is based on economic development, democracy, freedom, pluralism, equality, civil society and the secular state but he has an approach different from that of other Kemalists, to modernity. She (Gülay, 2007, p. 59) describes Gülen’s practice of modernity as follows:

In a broad sense then, Gülen’s community arises to reject the Kemalist equation of modernization with Westernization. As the Kemalist revolution once tried to “Turkify” Islam and cultural identity, the Gülen community tries to Islamize modernity and national identity by promoting religious values and practices culled from Islam’s “golden age”.

To have a better understanding about Gülen’s Islam understanding and his approach to modernity, it is important to highlight two terms: “Reformist” and “Renewalist” (*Mujaddidi* in Arabic) in the case of Islam. Reform and also Reformists are known terms especially because of Martin Luther and his Protestant Reformation. However, in Islam, these two terms had a different meaning and are mostly used in a negative manner as it will be explained in the second and third type of critics. On the other hand, Renewalist is a new term quite unknown to non-Muslims. The root of this word “*Mujaddidi*” comes from “*Tajdid*” which means renewing or re-interpreting something and *Mujaddidi* (*Renewalist*) is the person who conducted this renewal. Especially in religious discourse, these terms, “*Mujaddidi*” and “*Tajdid*”, are very important and they have a broad meaning, especially in the case of Islam.

Tajdid, then, is the type of religion which directs the believer toward commitment to abstract symbols and to social action in the interest of social reform [...] However, this is not quite the same as the “Protestant Ethic”. Tajdid favors dynamic worldly activity,

but such activity is not directed to economic accumulation. Rather it is channeled in prescribed ways into religious devotion, control of emotion, pious good works, and the dynamic aggrandizement of the Muslim community or warfare to expand the realm of Islam. (Lapidus, 1997, p. 454)

As it is seen in the above description, both terms, Reformist and Renewalist, have similar meaning like transforming, changing or interpreting religion according to current time and current challenges. However the main difference between these two terms is that Renewalists stay loyal to both the Qur'an and Hadith and highlighting their interpretations by using these sources, but Reformists bring their own interpretations to the religion, independently from the origin of the religion. As an example, Seyran Ates in Germany is a Reformist who created her own mosque and preached there as a female Imam, which is not practiced during the prophet's time. On the other hand, unlike Islamic Reformists, Gülen comes from the Renewalist (*Mujaddidi*) tradition of Islam or what is called the Islamic tradition of *ijtihad and Tajdid* (Renewal) (Alam, 2019, p.79). Vicini (2007, p. 431) also showed Gülen as the head of the most famous and influent "Renewalist" Islamic movements of contemporary Turkey. As a concrete example to this point, especially as a consequence of industrialization and modernization in the West, almost all Islamic societies or states in the East try to imitate the same type of change in their identity to deal with the world (Toguslu, 2007, p. 451). However, European modernity, which is briefly described above, dismisses the spiritual part of humanity. That is why Gülen's renewal (*Tajdid*) in Islam is highlighting Sufism (*Tasawwuf* in Arabic), a stream of Islam which is focusing on the spiritual and mystic dimension of a human being (Alam, 2019, p.92). Therefore Gülen is not just accepting European modernity, but also contributing to it in different dimensions and broadening its meaning in our century. Concomitantly, not just Islam or European modernity, Gülen also renews Sufism, a mystical part of the religion, according to the time and the conditions of the day too. Tittensor (2014, p. 100) explained this point as follows:

Gülen's man of action (*aksiyon insanı* in Turkish), who abandons asceticism and its preoccupation with the inner spiritual quest to actively work and engage with society, is predicated on revised interpretations of two core principles of Sufism that are thoroughly intertwined: *khalwat* (seclusion) and *riyada* (austerity)...However, Gülen argues that the practice of seclusion has undergone change over the time, and that is no longer necessary to perform the forty-day periods of seclusion like those undertaken by the Prophet Abraham and the Prophet Muhammed.

Mainly because of the Renewalist approach of Gülen to Islam, Sufism and some of the traditions in the religion, mentioned above, the second and the third type of critics question Gülen's and his followers' faith and show them as a corrupted group in Islam. As a concrete example dialogue and interfaith activities of the movement with other religions, makes the movement target on the eyes of the other Islamist groups. "They (Gülen and his followers) are Christianizing the people by saying tolerance and Dialog" (Ergil, 2012, p. 86) were mentioned in different platforms. Likely, Tittensor (2014, p.107) also mentioned that the movement's modern approach to traditional dress and facial hair caused many to criticize Gülen and his followers and to declare that they have abandoned the *Sunna* (Prophet Muhammed's life style and advices). As it will be discussed in chapter 2.1.4.3 b, another example to this point is Gülen's approach to education of girls and his positioning on the headscarf debate in Turkey, made him target of this type of criticisms.

For the Islamist rivals of the Hizmet movement, Fethullah Gülen's initiatives are corrupt, if not evil. They have an apolitical agenda, they promote civil society, and they cooperate with secular Muslims and the West. Stated bluntly, they believe the movement enables the "enemies of Islam." They believe Gülen's moderate movement saps Islam of its fighting spirit and thus perpetuates the submission of the Muslim world to the West. The fundamentalist Turkish movement of Cemalettin Kaplan, for example, deems the Gülen movement insufficiently Islamic. (Balçı, 2014, p. 73)

Aliyev (2012, p. 100) supports Balçı's point of views by giving Azerbaijan as an example. Sunni Islamists in Azerbaijan have been especially critical of the Gülen movement. In Salafi-Wahhabi Internet forums, the Nurcu movement and Gülenists are typically attacked as being "people of innovation" and "wrong" Muslims. (Aliyev, 2012, p. 100). He also mentioned that the Wahhabi standards of "pure Islam," the movement's Sufi orientation, its increasingly "post-Islamist" appearance and integration into the secularized Azeri society are seen as especially egregious transgressions of Islam (Aliyev, 2012, p. 100). Çetin (2005, p. 36) has a unique approach to this type of criticism and mentioned that mainly the success of the GM has transformed the movement into a pressure group. That is why it is perceived as a threat to the dominating interests of the particularly privileged part of Turkish society. Barton (2005, p. 10) also supports this idea and mentioned that, in fact, Gülen is not so much advocating a different kind of Islam but rather an Islam that reaches more deeply into people's lives and transforms them to become not just better believers but better citizens.

The other important criticism against Gülen is about **the gender equality and his thoughts about the women in society**. This topic is also the subject of the sociology and just a few field studies have been conducted, like Curtis (2012) or Özdalga's (2003) research, about the issue. Therefore, this critique is out of scope of this research and needs more study but because of the importance of the subject, a general approach to this point are explained briefly here. In general, in these type of critiques, Gülen is accused of seeing women just as a "mother" for the reproduction of the new generations. As an example, Turam (2007, p. 125) represented Gülen's ideal family as women produce, nurture and mother, while men deal with wordly matters and earn money. One other type of criticism in this topic is that Gülen thinks that women do not equal to men, mainly because of physical weakness. As an example, Volm (2018, p. 293), who is strongly criticizing Gülen in this point, suggested that, according to Gülen's discourse, because of the mentioned physical weakness which is given by God, women could not take several roles, like leading positions in the society. However, Volm contradicts himself on the same point. Because, on the one hand, he defined Gülen as a traditional Muslim scholar who is loyal the Qur'an and *hadith* (Volm, 2018, p. 189), and on the other hand he also mentioned that women are therefore by no means inferiorly defined in Islam (Volm, 2018, p. 291). Instead, by giving examples of important female leaders from the Prophets time like Aisa, Hafsa and Sumeyya, Volm (2018, p. 291) highlighted that for a women, taking a leading position in society is possible and not against mainstream Islam understanding. Therefore, assuming Gülen as a scholar against gender equality or a scholar who is limiting women in the society for just several positions is unreasonable and against Gülen's mainstream Islam understanding.

Against this type of critiques, scholars who are mostly close to Gülen and his movement highlighted that the aim of Gülen is protecting women and also family in the society and therefore he is against a shallow or narrow understanding about gender equality. As an example Alam (2019, p. 255) also debated on this issue and mentioned that:

Gülen espouses a more inclusive understanding of equality. He, unlike many modern scholars, does not prescribe a mechanical, color-blind understanding of equality. The mechanical equality of the sexes is one thing; the equal treatment as well as treating equally of the sexes is another. Gülen tends to endorse the latter position.

Ergil (2012, p. 114) also pointed that, according to Gülen, the woman has the right to work both in- and outside of the home, (but), her load should not exceed her capacity and she

should not be over exhausted. As an example Ergil (2012, p. 122) gives heavy mining industry or heavy military trainings as an example and questioned should women go through these kind of jobs, just because of the gender equation. As a solution to this conflict, Gülen offers: to consider the religious rules during the time of Prophet Muhammad; look at how they were implemented then and apply the Qur'an and its rules to the circumstances of our time (Ergil, 2012, p. 124).

In addition to academic discussions of scholars from different perspectives, such a controversial subject is also discussed by politicians. As an example, in Germany, the left party in the Rhineland Palinate State of Germany wanted to start an investigation to prove that Gülen's approach to the subject is against the German constitution, however regarding to the Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungschutzreport in German) of the Baden-Württemberg State of Germany in 2014, the Federal Parliament of Rhineland-Palinate voted against such an investigation (Gerrens, 2018, p. 82).

Despite this issue, according to different observations about the Gülen movement, the women in the movement or the women's participation in social life and also in the movement activities is less than of the men. This is another type of criticism against the structure and identity of the Gülen movement and this point will be discussed detailedly in the following chapter.

In addition to the mentioned criticisms, Gülen is also the target of other criticism such as using his movement **to increase his own wealth**. Mainly because of Gülen's residence in the US since 1999, it is believed that the US supports the movement's activities financially. Gürbüz (2007, p. 110) explained this type of critics as follows:

Fethullah Gülen controls "*korkunç*" (gigantic in English) sums of money. How and where these resources are appropriated is unknown. Since he lives in the US, it is hinted that he is supported by this superpower (allegedly to undermine the interests of his native Turkey).

On the other hand, Ebaugh and Koç (2007, p. 543) debated on this issue and quoted from Aslandoğan and Çetin who are describing his financial situation of Gülen as follows:

Gülen was so poor that for a number of years he lived in a corner of a local mosque with barely enough space to lie down. In addition to never having any personal wealth, he

prayed for his relatives to remain poor so as not to raise any suspicions of gaining from his influence [...] Apart from encouraging people to donate money, Gülen has remained distanced from all financial involvements and instead has encouraged those who sponsor projects to oversee the use of their contributions. This stance has built trust and confidence in Gülen's honesty and integrity.

Alam (2019, p. 112) supported this point and quoted from Gülen's friends that he was never interested in the existential questions like job, house, or money and never accepted any kind of gift. Mercan and Kardaş (2018, p. 45) also supported this approach and mentioned that he lives to this day from the copyright income of his published 70 works and has donated his retirement pension as a state imam to needy relatives who had to provide for a disabled child. Pahl (2019, p. 301) also pointed out Gülen's role in financial structure of the movement as follows:

Such a system (He means the Movement) had the potential for abuse. The history of religions is filled with charismatic leaders who persuaded people to give up everything for some cause. But control over resources was never in Gülen's hands. He could not possibly have managed the vast range of enterprises that eventually developed.

One of the main confusion in this point is the relationship between Gülen and Gülen inspired institutions. Contrary to public opinion, the leader of the movement has nothing to do with this capital or any ownership associated with the movement (Turam, 2007, p. 69). This conflict, Gülen's position in the movement, is explained in chapter 4.3 in detail.

In addition to these main criticisms, there are also more other critiques regarding Gülen's personality and philosophy which are out of scope of this paper. In this point it is also important to highlight criticisms against the Movement and its structure too.

#### *2.1.4.2. Critiques about the Movement and its Structure*

Solely, the Gülen movement, or so-called Hizmet Movement, is also the target of different type of criticisms. As it was explained in preceding chapters, mainly because of the size and expansion of the movement, it is impossible to mention and discuss all these criticisms in this paper. However, especially for the readers who are not similar to this subject, the most important points will be highlighted below.

One of the main concerns about the movement is the **terror organization** accusation and being the organizer of the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016. Especially after the corruption scandal in December 2013, Erdogan and his political followers announced that this



was a political plot which was organized by the GM against the Erdogan administration (Arango, 2013). Erdogan labelled the movement as a terror organization and a secret network called "parallel structure" or "state within a state" which is secretly organizing itself inside the justice, military and police department. Later, on July 15, 2016, Erdogan claimed that the Gülen Movement and the US were responsible for the unsuccessful coup attempt in which more than 271 people died (Timur, 2016). Immediately after the attempt, all institutions related to the GM were closed and hundreds of thousands of people were either arrested or fired from their positions. Besides this, the Erdogan administration also asked their foreign colleagues to close the movement's schools in their respective countries and applied to the US administration for the deportation of Gülen from the US to Turkey. However, the US Justice Department rejected this application due to lack of evidence and information. Gülen was interviewed by different media organizations from all over the world after the coup attempt and was confronted with the type of criticism and accusations of Erdogan, who tried to show a relationship between Gülen and the coup attempt (Timur, 2016). However, Barz (2017, p. 31) debated on this issue and suggested the movement has expanded so far and it is possible that some Gülen followers were inside the operation, however it's unlikely to consider Gülen as the leader of the failed coup attempt in Turkey. Bultmann (2018b) supported Barz's approach to the subject by showing the statements of the Foreign Secretary of the United States (John Kerry), the Parliament of European Union and the head of the Secret Service of the Germany (Bruno Kahl). They all mentioned that Turkey did not show any evident proof that demonstrates the relationship between the failed coup attempt and the Gülen movement. This debated important subject and its effects on Gülen inspired schools is discussed with the participants of the field study and explained in detail in chapter 3.3.4 separately.

In addition to types of criticisms in the political sphere, there is a huge debate about the **movement's identity** at a social level. The GM has a unique structure which does not deserve any administration or registration and it differentiates itself from any other kind of social phenomena (Ghadbain, 2015b, p. 79). Tittensor (2014, p. 5) also suggested that the movement no longer conforms to the basic schema of classical social movement theory. He quoted from Asef Bayat, who tends to treat Islamists movements as "Highly homogenous and coherent social units" that are static rather than continuously revolving and mentioned that this is not the case for the Gülen movement (Tittensor, 2014, p. 5). Therefore, one of the most highlighted criticisms about the movement is that the GM is not transparent (Ghadbain, 2015a, p. 73) (Saul, 2011, p. 9) and it is difficult to understand the **decision-making** process and the position of Gülen in the movement. The network structure and local distribution of the movement make



the subject complicated as well. That is why some social scientists, like Şen (2015, p. 26), claim that the movement has an organizational structure and Gülen sits at the top of the hierarchy based on non-democratic decision making. Decision making is delivered top to bottom by elder brothers, which is unexpected, given the community's liberal attitudes and tolerance of differences (Hermansen, 2005, p. 7). According to this understanding, the movement has a monolith structure and the ranking between the elder brothers is very strict and there is no diversity among these elder brothers who control the governance of the movement (Hendrick, 2013, p. 111). However, Ergil (2012, p. 180) is against such kind of centralized structure, instead he pointed cooperation and engagement between the volunteers in different segments of the movement.

It is difficult to say that there is a rigidly centralized (authoritarian) structure in this volunteer cooperation, which relies on the material support of entrepreneurs and where many people from all segments of society have taken upon themselves various tasks. But, on the other hand, it would be incorrect to say that there are no certain arrangements, orientations, and planning – that is to say, that there is no structure. [...] There is a division of labor, flexible and transferable, along with personal responsibility, requiring experience and skills. (Ergil, 2012, p. 180)

Ebaugh and Koç (2007, p. 541) supported this point by showing the local structure of the movement. According to them, the fact that Gülen-inspired projects are always locally based and embedded in local circles of supporters locates authority and decision making within horizontal relationships rather than a vertical, bureaucratic structure. (Ebaugh and Koç, 2007, p. 541) Besides, according to Pahl (2019, 289), this type of understanding is contradicted by Gülen's own philosophy. Gülen mostly highlighted the importance of consultation in his works and speeches by using Arabic words such as *Istishare* or *Sura*. "*Istishare*", which is also used in Turkish, means consultation and "*Sura*" means asking someone's advice or getting the opinions of other people, especially people who have knowledge on that subject, before making a decision. There is a verse about consultation (*Sura*) in Qur'an (Qur'an 42/38) and that is why that chapter of the Qur'an (Chapter 42) is also called "*Sura*". As a consequence of this approach, according to Gülen, *Istishare* and *Sura* are an obligation for Muslims, just like other religious obligations. Pahl (2019, p. 289) who also had a chance to visit Gülen in the U.S., highlighted the importance of this issue for Gülen by giving his daily routine in the U.S. as an example:

When not praying or in individual supplication, when not teaching students, reading,

writing, editing, or watching TV (almost exclusively news), then, Fethullah Gülen in America was likely engaged in consultation. The type and frequency of the consultations varied from day-to-day [...] One day abis and ablas would come to seek his opinion about opening a school in the far east; another day Turkish businessman would ask questions for a new venture in Africa; and on a third day his health would not permit him to meet with anyone.

In this point, logically, it is observed that his followers of the movement also follow the same tradition in every level of the Movement activities. On the other hand in practice, this type of monolith structure approach also fails to explain the movement's success in different parts of the world with different kinds of projects. That is why Woodhall compares the movement to complex organizations where many different subcultures live together, and decision making relies on many discussions between these groups. She (Woodhall, 2005, p. 12) mentioned that such an approach also accounts satisfactorily for the adaptability and subsequent success of the movement's schools, universities, and other projects in widely varying cultures and locations across the world:

Considering the geographical extent and range of activities of Gülen's movement this view is clearly just as tenable as the first paradigm. It is more likely to be found among those who have worked for the movement in different locations or countries, on a variety of projects, and in different roles. As it allows a number of different kinds of 'belonging' and requires less narrow conformity, we expect to find this view more frequently among non-Turkish than Turkish members, among members of less formally constituted groups, like circles, and more among supporters than employees, for example.

As a result, unclear statistics about the members of the movement, number of the schools or the other type of institutions founded by the followers of the movement, demonstrated that the movement should not be envisaged as a centrally-organized body, instead it is loosely structured and decentralized (Park, 2007, p. 49).

Related with the mention point above, the other type of critiques against the movement is **perceiving Gülen as a "Holy Personality" or "Super Hero"**. According to this type of critiques, Gülen has the highest position on the movement and the followers of Gülen considers him as a holy person who very rarely makes a mistake, besides, they never criticizes him and understand all his thoughts as an order. Leitner (2017) gives several example in her dissertation which is about the German version the movement's oldest and most important monthly

magazine *Sızıntı*, so-called *Die Fontäne* in German. According to this research:

Fethullah Gülen is outlined by those responsible for this magazine (*Die Fontäne* in German or *Sızıntı* in Turkish) as a personality with "great spiritual charisma". The authors see him as a source of inspiration who is capable of initiating positive changes "all over the world". Numerous contributions document the fruits of his efforts. (Leitner, 2017, p. 128)

Alam (2019, p. 291) also pointed out this issue and mentioned that mainly because of this presentation, scholars especially from Europe are suspicious about the movement.

The international community, particularly Europe, in the light of Hitler, has become increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of individual-centered discourse and any loyalty[...]For Europe and the greater West, taking inspiration from individual philosophy and philosophers is one thing; being a slave of a particular idea or professing unflinching group loyalty to an individual –whether a political leader or spiritual guru – is another thing.

Such a fear is not groundless but it is exaggerated. As it will be explained in chapter 4.3, Gülen also prefers to call the movement as a “*Hizmet*” (Service) movement, instead of his name, which demonstrates that he did not like such kind of positioning. Mercan (2019, p.13) quoted from Prof. Lawrence Carter, head of the Martin Luther King center in Atlanta, that “there are so many schools were founded all over the world but you could not find his name in any of them. Besides you could not find any picture of him in his residence too”. Gülay (2007, p. 57) also supported this point by comparing Gülen with other traditional Sufi organizations.

Gülen upsets the traditional Sufi organizational paradigm by disestablishing the role of the master as a spiritual mediator between the disciple and God. Claiming no charismatic or formalized authority, he instead acts as an ‘inspirational leader,’ and religious reformer [...] Only the Qur’an legitimately can guide one’s spiritual activities, teaches Gülen, because it possesses infinite wisdom over a sheikh. Gülen’s distribution of interpretational authority among his followers democratizes paths to spiritual development and unravels arbitrary chains of religious authority.

Ergil (2012, p. 322) also supported Gülay’s point of view and mentioned that “crowd psychology” cannot have a dominant character in the movement, because in comparison to other *Jamaats* (Islamic religious groups), individual choice and the capacity to reason are two crucial differences of followers of Gülen. Besides, Ergil (2012, p. 57) highlighted self-

participation through consultation as an important character in the movement which explains why it continues to increase its members throughout the world and why it has become a movement that accommodates different sectors, unifying them around common sentiments and deeds. In addition to this point, due to Gülen's humility and modesty, he does not consider himself superior to anybody else (Ergil, 2012, p. 19). However, despite his stand and also European tendencies, his followers in all over the world are fascinated by him and they have great love and respect for his personality, which is one of the other important reason behind the growth and the expansion of the movement in the last five decades. Such an approach does not make them slaves of Gülen, but it could block them from thinking critically about the issue. Being aware of this situation, Gülen highlights the importance of self-criticism (See Chapter 2.1.2) and consultation in his works often.

Self-control goes with self-criticism (*muhasaba*) through which the sympathizer analyzes and observes his or her deeds, thoughts. He tries to obtain good manner which requires an intellectual effort to acquire moral values to distinguish the borders between good and bad, beneficial and harmful. (Toguslu, 2007, p. 454)

As an example, especially in his works after the failed coup attempt, self-criticism is one of the most mentioned subject in the new Magazine of the movement, so called *Çağlayan*. (Waterfall). In this journal in 2017 Gülen published two articles in November and December called "Confrontation with Ourselves and Self-criticism" (*Kendi Kendimizle Yüzleşme ve Muhasebe* in Turkish), five articles in the first half of 2018, from February to June, called "The Prophet Horizon in Confronting with Ourselves 1-5" (*Kendi Kendimizle Yüzleşmede Peygamber Ufku 1-5* in Turkish), four articles in the second half of 2018, from July to October, called "The First Ring Confronting with Ourselves 1-4" (*Nefisle Yüzleşmede İlk Halka 1-4* in Turkish) and five articles from November 2018 to March 2019 called "Deepened in Confronting themselves 1-5" (*Kendi Kendimizle yüzleşmede hale ile Hallenenler 1-5* in Turkish). In these articles Gülen motivates his followers to do more self-criticism and represents self-criticism as one of the corner stones of the movement to remove the obstacles against critical thinking. (See website of the magazine: [www.caglayandergisi.com](http://www.caglayandergisi.com)).

Besides these points, **transparency** and conspiracy are another important subjects in this type of criticism (Geier and Frank, 2018b, p.57). There are no records or any other documentation required to enter the movement and that is why Kaufmann mentioned that it is unclear how many people in Switzerland now belong to the Hizmet movement. There are no memberships, membership fees, annual meetings or the like within the Hizmet movement

(Kaufmann, 2014, p. 74). Because of such a network structure, it is difficult to understand the relationship between Gülen and his followers in the movement. Alam (2019, p. 226) debated on this issue and mentioned that being non-transparent does not mean that the Movement conducts its activities in an illegal way. As examples he gives institutions of the movement in Turkey which were investigated many times from the Turkish government, especially in the aftermath of the December 2013 corruption exposure government inspectors, and mentioned that none of them are penalized for any tax evasion or violation of any other rules or regulations. (Alam, 2019, p. 226). Adam and Mazukatow (2017, p. 1224) also debated on transparency issue by giving “place-making” in Germany as a contradiction against this type of critics. According to them:

Firstly, all of these events (Gülen Movements activities) were organized at prestigious sites. Reading the often-critical reports in the German media about the “non-transparency” or the “desire for isolation”, which allegedly characterize the activities of organizations belonging to the “Gülen movement”, one could expect such events to take place in rather hidden and secluded places in one of Berlin’s migrant neighborhoods. The opposite is true; the chosen places are centrally located, open for a (solvent) public, frequented by the established academic middle classes and dispose of a high reputation.

Surprisingly, Kaufmann (2014, p. 74) also supported this point and mentioned that the structure of the individual institutions, on the other hand, is transparent. The homepages of the individual institutions contain all the important information.

One of the other social concerns about the movement is whether it is a **secret sect** which expands its network through brain washing in their educational institutions or not (Gerrens, 2018, p. 80). In this understanding, Gülen is a wolf in sheep’s clothing and he tried to cover his missionary activities or some other secret goals by using education activities as a shield (Eißler, 2015, p. 143). Gerrens also highlighted that the movement is accused of being the “Representative of the Turkish Nationalism” which has the goal of ruling the world rule on behalf of Islam and because of this secret purpose the movement conducts its activities in a secret manner like the Scientology sect (Gerrens, 2018, p. 81). Hendrick (2013, p. 69) also suggested that, Opus Dei and the GM are strikingly similar in a number of ways.

On the other hand, against these accusations, Gerrens protested Eißler’s approach and mentioned that the Gülen movement does not carry any of the six characteristics of sects such as: holy leadership principle, truth monopoly, allergy to criticism, isolation, exploitation and

camouflage (Gerrens, 2018, p. 98). He only acknowledged that the sixth characteristic, camouflage, is an issue in Turkey, mainly because of the limited religious freedom in Turkey (Gerrens, 2018, p. 98). Besides, to support his point, Gerrens (2018, p. 81) gives the Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutzreport in German) of the State of Baden-Württemberg in Germany (Verfassungsschutz Bericht, 2014, p. 4) as a concrete example that fails to prove that the Gülen Movement is a secret sect. Kaufmann supported Gerrens on this issue and mentioned that, the examination of Gülen's teachings and writings is not a prerequisite for employment at the schools, tutoring centers, or the dialogue institute. Much more important is expertise and, above all personal commitment which is strongly encouraged. Besides, Gülen's teachings are not actively propagated in any of the investigated institutions (Kaufmann, 2014, p. 44). Barz (2017, p. 34) also targeted secret sect criticism and suggested that Gülen is shown as scapegoat and his followers are now being labeled as culprits not only by Turkish government agencies, but also in reports circulated by German media. He gave examples from Bultmann's book „Gut gefälscht“ of German institutions and explained that the quotes of Gülen are manipulated by the German media and published in an incorrect manner (Barz, 2017, p. 33). Hendrick also contradicted with himself in his sect accusation too. He did or could not explain how he spent a significant amount of time in one of the most important center of the movement in Istanbul, so called *Akademi*, (Hendrick, 2013, p. 28), visited different type of Gülen institutions in and out of Turkey (Hendrick, 2013, p. 29), and conducted fifty-five interviews and thousand hours of participant observation with different followers of the movement in different parts of the world (Hendrick, 2013, p. 30), if the movement is a secret sect similar to Opus Dei. The movement also reacted this type of critics in the same way and suppose that, all institutions of the movement like schools, media companies or dialog institutions, are formal structures and they are controlled and examined by the local authorities regularly for many years.

On the other hand, there are also informal structures of the movement which are not controlled by the local authorities. One of the important informal meetings (mostly weekly) so-called *Sohbets* and educational activities in student houses, so called **Lighthouses** (*ışık evler*) are the events and places where, according to the critiques, the secret sect activities of the movement are conducted. According to this form of criticism, the informal structure of the meetings (*Sohbets*) and Lighthouses, in particular, makes the movement mysterious in the eyes of society and some social scientists. According to Ghadbahn these places are closed to outside and secret mentioned activities of the movement are conducted in these meetings or in these



houses (Ghadbain, 2015b, p. 79). Turam (2007, p. 61) also describes these places as “Back Stages” of the movement, which are more private domestic and communal sites, in contrast to window sites. On the other hand, Agai, who conducted one of the earliest empirical research about the movement in 2000s, separated a chapter in his book about this issue and explained the issue in detail. According to him, the Lighthouses are small flats or apartments where four to six university students live together who orientate their lives together according to religious ideals and Gülen’s discourse (Agai, 2008, p. 301). Mainly because of the vast number of followers of the movement, there are many flats or apartments like this in all around the world. The lack of information about the houses and their informal structure, lead some people to criticize the movement and portray it as a secret sect which uses these kinds of flats **to brainwash** the residents in the name of Gülen and pressure the students to accept his teachings (Gürbüz, 2007, p. 110) (Hendrick, 2013, p. 110). However, Lighthouses have never been a secret subject or place in the movement. From the foundation of the movement, these houses have been the places where university students lived together during their studies and these houses are known by the local people too. Gülen also published an article in 1979 about these houses and explained the public the role of these houses on the society (Gülen M., 1979c). However, there is huge debate on the roles of these houses in the Movement. As an example, Hendrick (2013, p. 106) describes these houses as a “Recruitment Tool” for the movement and mentioned that young women and men affiliated with the GM socialized in the inner circle of the community (*Jamaat*) with its GM specific structure of the authority. Kaufmann (2014, p. 72), however, finds this description unreasonable and debates on this approach. He mentioned that every movement tries to expand its activities through its followers. Of course, the Hizmet supporters try to spread the writings and teachings of Gülen, but they are very subtle. The aim is to get new people interested in the teachings of Gülen through a personal example (Kaufmann, 2014, p. 72).

The last, but not the least important criticism about the movement in the social sphere is the **role of women in the movement**. According to this category of criticism, women are dismissed in the movement and they just have free room in their families. They are mostly perceived as mother and housewife (Turam, 2007, p. 125); even if they have studied at a university and there are few opportunities to get involved in a professional life (Volm, 2015, p. 104).

According to scholars who are close to Gülen or the movement, this approach is partly true but also partly exaggerated. As an example, Knowlton (2010) mentioned that this practice



is against Gülen's understanding about women. He (Knowlton, 2010) quoted from Gülen who mentioned that women are equal to men and could follow any career path and the practice today is against the principals of Islam:

Women can take on almost any role, they can be judge and head of state. It is important to note the nature of the woman and religious sensitivities. But the role of women is not limited to working at home and raising children. "The woman in Islam" is one of the topics that are treated negatively and most frequently in the West. The reason is that Muslims practice things that contradict the basic values of Islam.

Despite this approach, according to Volm, females of the movement do not appear at movement activities as much as the male participants in practice. The main reason behind this practice is that the male followers of the movement are limiting women to their homes as housewives and just appeal to them for educational attainment (Volm, 2018, p. 296). That is why, according to this type of criticism, there is a pressure against women inside the movement and it is requested of them to be a good mother in their families and all other career paths are banned. To prove his argument, Volm (2018, p. 301) gave female followers of the movement as an example and suggested that they are only allowed to take part of the educational and charitable activities of the movement. However, as it was explained in the previous chapters, the core activity of the movement is education and mainly because of the lack of human resources, the movement also expected from male followers who had different degrees to shift to the education field to fulfill the need in their institutions. As an example, the first manager participant in this study has an engineering degree but later he moved to the education field and worked in Gülen inspired charter schools as a mathematics teacher in the USA, mainly because of the need of the movement. (See Appendix A, USAM1). Alam (2019, p. 179-180) also pointed to this issue and mentioned that, according to Gülen, among many other different problems in Turkey, he is concerned about the small number of educators and lack of these educators for the future of Turkey. Actually, beyond this type of criticism, it was assumed that the movement has a patriarchal structure and even if a female follower has a desire to work apart from the intended mother role, she is excluded within the movement from the arena of power due to the patriarchal structure and religious legitimacy (Volm, 2018, p.302). On the other hand, Alam (2019, p. 259) is against this approach and gives Özdalga's empirical research, interviews with three Hizmet-linked women as an example and mentioned that despite the mooring of conservatism in the Movement there is room for self-reflection as well as for individual initiative and autonomy. According to him, there is a certain dominance of the

masculine voice in the present Hizmet Movement, but it has more to do with the overwhelming presence of men and their social background than it is the product of any design or planning (Alam, 2019, p. 260). Curtis (2012), who conducted an empirical, ethnographic study about the women in GM, also rejected the domestication of women in Hizmet.

Their (women in the Movement) narratives offer a unique “women in center” perspective rather than beginning from a “women at the margins” point of departure, and their modes of exchange seek to create new religious-cultural imageries rather than striving to reach established social ideals. GHM (Gülen-Hizmet Movement) women thereby reject somewhat both Kemalist feminism and its calls for prescribed forms of civic engagements, as well as traditional Turkish women ideals that stress women’s central place in the home. (Curtis, 2012, p. 121)

In addition to these two type of points of views, as a reaction of the movement to the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, it could be said that, today, the female followers of the movement are more encouraged to be active in the movement and also in society and they find more room in social life. According to Volm (2018, p. 304), such a change is mainly because of the external factors, but one way or another, it shows a progress on this issue. Besides, even though these attempts are low in number according to the range of the movement (Volm, 2018, p. 305), in comparison to other Islamic movements or eastern cultures, the movement has an improved developing situation about this issue. Such a change will lead to progress in the future of the movement and it is proof that the movement is aware of the criticism and tries to improve itself with several development strategies. However, is this progress or are these reforms changing the participation of women significantly inside the movement? Or could we talk about vertical interactions of the women inside the movement after the failed coup attempt? These are all stimulating questions which are out of scope of this study and have to be researched by scientists, especially sociology or political sciences.

Another subject related with this issue is the **segregation of sexes** in the movement. Volm suggested that there is a classic gender segregation against the female followers of the movement (Volm, 2018, p. 305). Alam (2019, p. 260) also finds the movement “conservative” in comparison to western understanding but he is does not agree that this conservatism leads to segregation:

As an ethical and moral discourse Hizmet tends to be relatively conservative in its social manifestation in comparison to Western liberalized sexual mores but this does not

amount to segregation of the sexes but rather interaction of the sexes with a respectable distance.

Besides there is also no evidence seen in empirical studies on female followers of the movement, like Curtis in 2012 or Özdalga in 2003, about this issue. Another point related with this issue, the **education of women** is another critical point against the movement, however, the main purpose of this study is to focus on educational activities of the GIS and that is why, criticism against the educational perspective of the movement is analyzed separately in the next chapter below. Therefore, education of the girls in the movement and how Gülen approaches this subject is also discussed in the next chapter.

#### *2.1.4.3. Critiques about the Gülen's Educational Philosophy and Gülen Inspired Schools*

As it was explained in the preceding chapters, the core activity of the Gülen Movement is education and there is great debate on this subject. In addition to critiques focused on Gülen's approach to education and science in theory, there is also criticism regarding the practice of this understanding in the GISs and in general Gülen inspired educational institutions. Mainly because of the subject of this paper, in addition to the overall approach to all type of critiques, especially critiques about the educational concepts of the Movement and Gülen inspired schools are analyzed deeply in this part. However, one more difficulty, professionalism in education, is also added in this part as a challenging point. As it was explained in the introduction part of chapter 2.1.4, the self development of the Gülen movement and the failed coup attempt were two main factors which forced the movement to react to the critiques and improve themselves by eliminating these points. In addition to these two, as it was explained in chapter 2.1.2 and 2.1.3, the core activity of the movement is education and since the beginning of the movement in the sixties, Gülen and his followers have been working in this field. As a consequence of this experience, they professionalized in the field of education and therefore it is more difficult to analyse the critiques in the education field.

Before digging deeply in these discussions, it would be better to categorize these criticisms and analyze them according to subjects. All criticisms could be categorized into five groups:

- a) Critiques against Gülen's approach to education and sciences
- b) Critiques against Gülen's approach to education of women in society

- c) Critiques about the missionary activities or indoctrination in GIS
- d) Critiques about the financial structure of the GISs
- e) Turkish Identity of the GISs

In this part both critiques and discussions against these critiques are highlighted below.

a) [Critiques against Gülen’s Approach to Education and Sciences](#)

As it was explained in detail in chapter 2.1.2, Gülen has a different approach to education and science. He both criticizes the scholars from the Islamic tradition from the East and also modern scholars from the West and represents a new understanding which is practiced in Gülen inspired educational institutions (Alam, 2019, p.167). In this point, mainly because of his religious personality, especially scholars from the West criticize him and his discourse. Before focusing on his educational discourse it is important to focus on critiques about his approach to sciences, which also shape his educational understanding.

The main concern about Gülen’s approach to modern sciences that he has **an Islamic worldview, in which scientific knowledge is valid only if it agrees with the teachings of the Qur’an**. (Kaufmann, 2014, p. 71). Mainly because of Gülen’s background, some scholars like Volm or Ghadbahn described this point as “Islamization of sciences” by the Gülen movement. (Ghadbahn,2015a, p. 63) (Volm, 2018, p. 314). Volm (2018, p. 314) also questioned this point as follows:

Not the Qur’an has to follow sciences, but the sciences has to follow the Qur’an. However, Gülen can not give a clear answer to the question why the scientific and technical achievements of the last centuries were made by non-Muslims.

This type of critiques demonstrate that either Gülen’s approach to sciences and technology is not analyzed deeply, or for some reasons, they are misinterpreted consciously. In none of in his works does Gülen relate success in modern sciences with a nation or a religion, instead he clearly pointed that the desire to research, love to sciences, working enthusiasm, the lashing of desires and the great rewarding of each success are shown to him as the main reason behind the scientific and technical achievements of the last century. (See chapter 2.1.2.4) Therefore, according to him, everybody, regardless their nation or confession can achieve successes in any sciences if he or she follows the mentioned steps above. Besides, Alam (2019, p. 124) mentioned that the “Islamization of sciences” is Nursi’s discourse and one of the main differences between Gülen and Nursi,

Nursi's Islamic discourse was, to a large extent, an attempt at "islamization of Science" in order to preserve Islam from the threat of positivism and therefore is not free of reactive and apologetic tendency [...] Gülen, on the other hand, though influenced by Nursi's ideas, builds an Islam-inspired social movement that values the role of science in human progress without "Islamizing science" and hence is non-reactive and non-apologetic.

It is assumed in this point that, Gülen is perceived as just a follower of Nursi and this misunderstanding misled these scholars in this type of critiques. Besides, because of the conflict between church and sciences in the Middle Ages and also mainly because of Gülen's background as a Muslim scholar, he is easily labeled by the same type of scholars as a scholar who is against modern sciences or a scholar who wants to give the control of the modern sciences to religious authorities. However, Gülen has never had such an intention, instead he just highlighted the never-ending development character of the sciences which is always changing;

Gülen acknowledges the contribution of science in human life but believes that scientific truth must be subjected to divine belief as the former is of transient value and keeps changing with every new experiment, while the latter is ultimate, permanent, and transcendental in nature. For this reason, scientific applications and investigations must be subjected to moral and ethical consideration. (Alam, 2019, p.182)

Therefore, it is important to analyze scientific results with different perspectives, before accepting it as a never changing absolute truth. Empirical studies also pointed this issue. As an example, according to Leitner (2017, p. 7), who was focused on official magazine of the movement the Fountain (*Sızıntı* in Turkish) in her dissertation, the goal of Gülen is not "islamization" instead, to demonstrate the "harmonization" between religion and science.

The authors of the magazine (*Sızıntı*) assume that the future realities of life are decisively influenced by science and religion. In this scenario, it is a matter of concern that science and religion would generally be perceived as opposites. Against this the authors write with verve [. . .] consequently the persons in charge of this journal not only strive to present possibilities of a "harmonization" of science and religion. At the same time, they sketch their media work as a contribution to the responsible participation of this society. (Leitner, 2017, p.175)

Park (2007, p. 50) also pointed that, Gülen sees no contradiction between Islam and modernity. Indeed, he insists on the desirability of Islam's embrace of science, reason, democratization, and tolerance.

Of course, one of the most important example in this discussion is the “**Theory of Evolution**” and Gülen's approach to this subject. According to Leitner (2017, p. 142), Gülen is against the current presentation of the evolution theory which interrelates “Darwinism” and “Materialism”. In this presentation, the theory explains the existence with just material reasons and chance, thus rejecting or concealing the metaphysic part of the existence. (Leitner, 2017, p.142). That is why, according to Leitner (2017), the stand of Gülen and the authors of the magazine are not an absolute rejection of the theory, instead some parts of theory like “adaptation” could be also true, under the knowledge of God.

Yılmaz (One of the authors of the magazine) argues that rejecting the idea of evolution would mean "that the knowledge and power of God are limited, which is against his Names like `the Absolute Knower` and `Almighty`." Religious people see the theory in this position as "adaptation as a given power from Divine Wisdom (He means God) to survive". The capacity for change would arise only "through the wisdom of God and not by chance". (Leitner, 2017, p. 142)

Empirical researches about Gülen inspired schools also supported this point. As an example, Kaufmann (2014, p. 77) observed that evolution theory is taught in Gülen schools in Switzerland and he mentioned that, according to his analysis, there is thus little substance in the mentioned criticism which is often brought into the field against the Hizmet movement, particularly in the media.

Related with this point, **Gülen is also criticized as being a scholar who believes that modern sciences lead people to atheism and blasphemy.** In this point, it is crucial to focus on two terms from Arabic which has an important role in Islamic tradition. One of them is “*bilim*” which could be translated as science and the other is “*ilim*” which could be translated as wisdom or knowledge. In Islamic discourse, *bilim* represents the natural sciences and *ilim* represents the social sciences and mostly religious sciences. If the history of Islam is analyzed, all type of sciences (both *bilim* and *ilim*) were taught together at the early centuries of Islam. However, later, especially at the end of the Ottoman Empire period, there is a specification in the educational system and schools like the so-called *Medreses* focused more on religious sciences (based on *ilim*) and secular schools called *Mektep*, which were founded according to modernization reforms (Tanzimat Reforms) just focused on natural sciences, *Bilim*. Like Nursi,

Gülen is also against such a division and mentioned in his works that both *ilim and bilim* are like two wings of a bird, without one of them a bird cannot fly (Findley, 2010, p. 384). Despite his clear stand, he was misinterpreted as a scholar who is against *bilim* and who advises his followers to solely focus on *ilim*. Volm (2018, p. 310) highlighted his point as follows:

According to Gülen's definition, *ilim* (Religious sciences) stands for the Entity of the religious sciences and are commonly considered positive by him and absolute sciences described; because they are the religion of Islam come from, their truth is not to question. In contrast *bilim* represents the western and modern sciences, which in turn only to produce "relative knowledge" that is not to praise God even occasionally compared with blasphemy (*Küfür* in Turkish).

Volm (2018, p. 311) also suggested that, according to Gülen, a person who solely focus on natural sciences (*bilim*) become a Frankenstein (*Frankensteinisierung* in Deutsch) and that is why the misuse of modern technology such as atomic bombs or nuclear weapons are seen in the human history. However, Volm did not mention that Gülen also suggests that a person who solely focused on the religious sciences become a bigot or fanatic too (Ergene, 2005, p. 235). In this point, it is clear to see that Volm mixed the traditional radical Islamic scholars understanding with Gülen's approach to sciences. Ergene debated on this issue and mentioned that, for Gülen, not just "science", but "religion" also could be very dangerous, if they are under the control of an ideology (Ergene, 2005, p. 236). That is why both scientific and religious institutions have to be independent according to Gülen (Ergene, 2005, p. 236). Besides, in addition to this independence, Findley (2010, p. 384) highlighted, Gülen is following Nursi's point of view and he is against separation of *bilim and ilim*. Instead of labelling one of them as good and the other is bad, he mentioned that both of them are main requirements for the future of the humanity. Michel (2003, p. 6) supported this approach and mentioned that Gülen's discourse in this point is the fusion of the religious and scientific knowledge together with morality and spirituality, to produce genuinely enlightened people with hearts illumined by religious sciences and spirituality, minds illumined with positive sciences. Alam (2019, p. 183) also debated on this issue, and mentioned that Gülen is never against modern natural sciences which are called *bilim*:

So Gülen actively encouraged Muslim students and young people to pursue science education in particular, in order to dispel the perception in the conservative section of the Muslim community that science education promotes atheism. In addition, his initial



emphasis on science education was also meant to reconnect Muslims with the scientific legacy of Islam, to make them aware of the central role that science is playing in making the world better, and to sensitize them to necessity to learn from the scientific and technological resources of the West, in order to develop Muslim societies.

The practice of the movement also supported Alam's point of view. Mainly because of this reason, instead of founding religious based schools, which are called in Turkey "*Imam Hatip Lisesi*", Gülen motivated his followers to found natural sciences based secular schools, called "*Fen Lisesi*" in Turkey, which are the STEM based high schools in Turkey. The same issue is also observed outside of Turkey too. Even though the authorities allow the foundation of religious based schools, like in Germany or in the USA, the movement prefers to found secular schools, based on natural sciences, like "Gymnasiums" in Germany. It is an unreasonable issue or even a paradox for a Muslim scholar who motivates his followers to found this type of schools, if he believes that modern sciences lead students' to atheism or blasphemy.

The same type of critiques also appears about the Gülen's educational understanding. According to this type of critiques, **Gülen's educational discourse is just based on expanding Islamic values through educational institutions**. According to Volm (2018, p. 323), that is why all GISs in the world are based on a full-day school concept. By this way, educators have more time with students to transfer these Islamic values. He highlighted the Turkish word "*Terbiye*" from Gülen's discourse, and accused the movement of "Islamization of secular education system" in their schools.

Because Gülen is aware of the "Indoctrination" role of education, it seems to be – he speaks instead of it, *terbiye* of a student, to be able to shape (*ona şekil vermek in Turkish*) – it can be assumed that the education commitment is not based on altruistic motives, instead self-interested (he means the interest of the movement) and religious intentions with regard to personality development and the students are being abused. (Volm, 2018, p. 321)

Beyond this approach, Volm (2018, p. 319) also quoted from Thies and suggested that the movement also conducted the same type of activities to the parents of their students. Through home visits or meetings organized with the parents of the schools, the followers of the movement try to expand Gülen's Islamic values and Muslim moral standards to the parents too.

On the other hand, such a kind of approach contradicts with the previous empirical researches, which demonstrated that the movement schools are based on a secular education system. As an example, Gerrens (2018, p. 80) gives Geier and Frank's empirical study about "sohbets" (Discussions) or the Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutzreport in German) of the State of Baden-Württemberg in Germany as an example and mentioned that such an approach to the GISs fails to prove the indoctrination accusations in GISs (Gerrens, 2018, p. 82). In the field study of this research, it is also observed that highlighting local values and serving the local environment is targeted by the schools, instead of promoting Islam or expanding its values (See chapter 3.3.5). Such confusion or discussion is also rooted because of Gülen's contribution to the modern education system. According to Alam (2019, p.167), neither "islamization" of sciences nor "islamization" of modern education is Gülen's goal, instead, Gülen's educational discourse in part is a critique of the Western educational system and attempts to address the de-humanizing consequences of Western modernity.

Gülen sees in the Western-modern educational system the development of high professionalism but without the culture of spirituality. Further, he detects violence and destruction in the positivist, materialist philosophy of life: "If allowed to run unchecked it will lead to nihilism and the survival of humanity will be at stake" (Alam, 2019, p.175)

As a result of this understanding, Gülen is paying attention to "Terbiye", in addition to professionalism, and advised teachers or educators to be a good role model to their student, with their high moral values. (See chapter 2.1.2.2) As a consequence of this understanding, GISs highlight great importance on the ethics classes and emphasize global human values in their education system in addition to high professionalism. Mainly because of the importance of the subject, this type of critiques regarding missionary activities and indoctrination in GISs are analyzed in detail below in 2.1.4.3 c separately.

#### b) Criticisms against Gülen's Approach to the Education of Women in Society.

In addition to the mentioned critiques about Gülen's approach to women and also the role of the women in the movement, the education of the girls is also another discussion issue. According to Özcan (2011, p. 68), in the activities and offerings of the Gülen Movement, the state of the education of the women is in the center. Especially scholars from the East highlighted this issue and mentioned that, the movement's practice regarding this issue is

against Islamic tradition. On the other hand, even some scholars from West applauded this issue while they also criticize the movement from another perspectives.

One of the core subjects in this point is **Gülen’s approach to the headscarf and the headscarf debate in Turkey in 1997**. As it was explained in chapter 2.1.1, Necmettin Erbakan, who is the founder of the political Islam in Turkey and leader of the Islamic Party (called *Refah Partisi* in Turkish), won the elections and he became the president by cooperating with another right-wing party in Juli 1996 (Pahl, 2019, p. 352). His radical Islamic discourse and unrealistic strategies caused a huge political fight between his legislation and the Turkish military, which was controlled by Kemalist high-ranking commanders (Findley, 2010, p. 357). On 28 February 1997, the Turkish military suggested some reforms to protect the secular Kemalist Turkish State to the Erbakan administration and intimidated him with the consequences of denying or neglecting to practice them (Pahl, 2019, p. 357). This political intervention of the military is called “Postmodern” Coup in Turkish history and these reforms are accepted and later practiced by the Erbakan administration (Pahl, 2019, p. 357). One of the most important of these reforms was banning girls from attending the higher education institutions when wearing a headscarf. According to the military, a headscarf has a political meaning, more than religious value, and it is against the secular Kemalist structure of the Turkish State (Ergil, 2012, p. 141). Ergil (2012, p. 139) summarizes militaries points of view as follows:

The religious people have a secret agenda and this agenda or aim sooner or later will cause the erosion of secular values, and it will end up by the establishment of a state based on religion. Therefore, the headscarf and the people wearing them should be excluded from the public sphere and should be deprived of the public services so that they could not grow up.

As a consequence of this understanding, female students who wore a headscarf were first warned to take off their headscarves and the ones who refused to do that were ex-matriculated from their universities. Thousands of female students protested the military and its reforms, some other female students joined the classes with a wig (Volm, 2018, p. 297) and the ones who could financially afford it went to study abroad. This ban polarized the society to an extreme social unrest (Alam, 2019, p. 96) at that time.

To ease the tension and against the polarization of the society, in the middle of these debates and disorder, Gülen highlighted two important terms of Islam such as “*Usul*” and “*Fürü*” (Volm, 2018, p. 298). *Usul* represents the theory part of the Islam and the core elements of Islamic understanding such as five pillars of Islam (Ergil, 2012, p. 75). On the other hand, *Fürü* represents the daily applications of Islam and in comparison to *Usul*, *Fürü* has a secondary

meaning from the religious perspective (Ergil, 2012, p. 75). In this differentiation, Gülen describes the headscarf issue as a *Fürü*, not fundamental to Islam (Ergil, 2012, p. 143), and highlighted that female students who give up wearing a headscarf do not become a heretic (Volm, 2018, p. 298) (Ergil, 2012, p. 14). Gülen's approach to the debate is even controversial to the followers of Gülen (Findley, 2010, p. 389).

As it is expected, religious movements and pious people criticize Gülen for being a wrong Muslim, even a heretic because of his attention to education. As an example, Volm (2018, p. 299) gave the Turkish writer Kadir Mısırlıoğlu who accused Gülen of being consciously rebellious to God in selected Islamic tradition or Turkish politician Haydar Baş who attacked and accused Gülen of acting against the Qur'an (Volm, 2018, p. 70). In this point, mainly because image and representation of religion is more important than content in Turkey (Alam, 2019, p.7), Gülen was misunderstood and that is why he was heavily criticized.

Though he did not issue a *fatwa* (Religious permission) on this issue, he advises Muslim girls to seek education opportunities even if the state prohibits the wearing of headscarf. He considers the issue of dressing and keeping a beard as "personal choice", for Islam does not impose a certain type of dressing nor is a beard an obligatory (*fard* in arabic) Muslim practice. (Alam, 2019, p. 96)

The ban was removed in 2008, however, such a debate showed Gülen's attention on girls education, which is significantly different than political Islam movements. However, according to Volm (2018, p. 300) the stand of Gülen in this debate is not because he is interested on girls' education, instead he has **tactical considerations and political constraints**. Besides, he (Volm) also questioned empirical studies, like Curtis's study on the female followers of the Gülen movement and suggested that participants of these studies were under the observation and pressure of *abis or ablas* (authorities of the movement), which is why these studies are not reliable (Volm, 2018, p. 300). As a consequence, the core point in his critique about the subject is that even the movement pays attention to the secular education of girls, he described it because of tactical and political reasons, and even though the education rate of the girls in the movement is higher than Turkey's average (Volm, 2018, p. 302), Gülen and his movement has a patriarchal structure which limited professional opportunities of the female followers in several fields like educational and charitable activities (Volm, 2018, p. 301).

As a contrast, Alam (2019, p. 257) has a very different approach to this type of critique and mentioned that women's participation to social life is an increasing trend in Turkey. According to him, statistics demonstrated that the ratio of female students in higher education institutions increased from 16.3 percent in 1930 to 41.9 percent in 2004 (Alam, 2019, p. 257).

That is why the current unequal distribution between the role of the male and female participants in the movement, and also in Turkish society, is neither because of the patriarchal structure of the movement, nor the limitations on female followers. Instead the educational activities of the movement contributed to this problem. Because, even though the role of the movement in this statistical increase was not researched, according to different scholars like Ergil (2012, p. 21) or Alam (2019, p. 257), parents of the Muslim girls felt more secure in sending their daughters to Gülen inspired educational institutions because they are considered morally up-right institutions, unlike other governmental and non-governmental educational institutions which have a positive contribution to the solution of the problem on the society. Ergil (2012, p. 320) also supported this issue and mentioned that:

The purpose of many parents in sending their children (not just girls) to Qur'anic courses, jamaat (Islamic groups) dorms, or schools is to prevent them falling into the hands of the centers of evil. To the extent that the state is unable to carry out this function, the jamaats gain in the same proportion to their effectiveness and diffusion.

Of course the lion's share in these different types of religious groups belongs to Gülen inspired educational institutions (Volm, 2018, p. 306) in Turkey. Similarly, Turam (2007, p. 63) pointed to several non-religious reasons which motivates conservative families to send their girls to GISs or other education institutions like high standards of safety, morality, cleanliness, the usage technology, the high quality of teaching and the availability of guidance. That is why Gülen inspired schools and other educational institutions contribution to this problem is unneglectable.

Besides, it is not just unreasonable but also impossible to educate thousands of girls first and then prohibit them from different type of occupations and force them to continue only in educational or charitable fields. Therefore, even though there is a dominance of the masculine in Turkey and also in the movement today, depending on mentioned statistics, it is easy to predict that over the years there will be change and the inequality will decrease in the future.

#### c) Criticisms about the Missionary Activities or Indoctrination in GISs

Because of its faith-based structure and with a very influential and charismatic religious leader like Gülen, who is without equal in contemporary Turkey, (Barton, 2005, p. 7) the movement arouses suspicions about **missionary activities** (Eißler, 2015, p. 144) and **indoctrination in their institutions** (Volm, 2018, p. 321). Saul (2011) quoted from Assistant Professor Hakan Yavuz who mentioned that “The main purpose right now is to show the positive side of Islam and to make Americans sympathize with Islam.” Tittensor (2014, p. 154) also compares the

movement with World Vision, a missionary organization based on evangelism, and mentioned that like World Vision it (the movement) kept to its core task, which is to gain adherents. Solberg (2005, p. 9) shares this idea and mentioned that in some schools, parents have suspicions because of the above-mentioned issues, however, she debates on this subject and mentioned that this fear is unfounded. Rather than attempting to convert students to Islam, teachers and managers generally attempt to reinforce the religion of the student, whatever that religion may be (Solberg, 2005, p. 9). Dohrn (2014, p. 245) also observed the same point in Tanzania and mentioned that she is reluctant to consider the GM's educational engagement in Tanzania as being solely missionary in intent and impact. Especially in the religiously mixed setting of GIS, *hizmet* teachers did not aim to convert Christian students to Islam. Balcı's research on the graduates of the movement supports this approach too. Balcı (2014, p. 80) explains the results of the research as follows:

Through discussions with dozens of graduates of Gülen schools in Central Asia, Europe, the United States, Japan and India, I have observed that they have tended to demonstrate a uniform set of characteristics. As a group, these people are well-educated and well-integrated in their society; they have good jobs and they are generally cosmopolitan in their outlook. Their religious attitudes and practices, however, are considerably diverse. Some of them pray regularly, while others never pray. Some of them drink alcohol. In this way, the movement's resemblance to the Jesuit movement really is striking.

Onur also mentioned that, in all schools, ethics is offered as an alternative to religious education. Islamic teaching is consciously abandoned and instead, ethics and character education based on humanistic values and a secular value is taught (Onur, 2010, p. 147). This confusing subject is asked to the participants of the field study and discussed in chapter 3.3.3.2 and chapter 4.2.

On the other hand, the movement's detractors suggested that the schools and their curricula is outwardly secular, which is utilizing *taqiyya* (hypocrisy) and that the schools are a front, where behind the scenes in informal classes (*gayri resmi* in Turkish) and in extracurricular activities, the followers of the movement conducted indoctrination and missionary activities (Tittensor, 2014, p. 83). To prove this approach, Turam shows "home visit" activities of the GISs as a concrete example. According to her, in these visits, the managers and the teachers of these schools monitor students in their family life and check that the home environment does not contradict the discipline in schools (Turam, 2007, p. 99).



Manager participants of this study did not regret these extracurricular activities during the interviews, however according to them, it is not about indoctrination or some other missionary goal. Instead they complained about the heavy workload of the current curriculum and mentioned that, even though they have a full-day school concept, they do not have enough time for: (1) focusing on deficiencies of weak students, (2) solving the private problems, which is an obstacle in front of the academic success, of students, and (3) preparing good students for the national and international contests and science Olympiads. (See chapter 3.3.1.2) Besides, they also mentioned that one of the factors behind their success is their close engagement with parents and their support. This controversial deep subject, the special features of GISs, is the target of this study and explained from different perspectives in chapter 3.3.1 in detail.

Related to this topic, the **decentralized structure of the movement** and the **positioning of Gülen inspired schools** also caused this kind of critiques. Unlike Montessori or Waldorf schools, Gülen inspired schools do not belong to a central association, like Association Montessori International or International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education. Besides, like previous studies, this study also demonstrated that there is no clear information about the Gülen or Gülen Movement on the website of the Gülen inspired schools. Even the school managers or founders of the schools do not regret their affiliation and inspiration about the Gülen Movement, it is not stated on the brochures or advertisements of the GISs. To this type of practice, **GISs are accused of being secretly connected to Gülen and they are hidden “political project” of Gülen**. Alam (2019, p. 224) highlighted such kind of criticism as follows:

The Movement’s critics –Kemalists, secularists, communists, and liberals- deeply suspected the Gülen Movement of a “hidden motive/agenda” to transform Turkey into an Islamic nation-state. Since “education” has emerged as the key identity of the Gülen Movement, can this be considered a site of counter-mobilization against the secular state, the secular elite and their lifestyle in Turkey?

On the other hand, this kind of criticism does not explain why the Movement founded schools in Africa or in the Far East. Besides, the structure and anti-democratic governance of the Turkish state is neglected in these type of critiques. According to Alam (2019, p.226), the non-transparent culture within the Hizmet Movement has been shaped by specific characteristics of the Turkish state, which has a long tradition of profiling, supervising, regulating, controlling, policing, and persecuting the members and institutions of civil society.



He pointed to the structure of the Kemalist Turkish state as follows:

Kemalist state authorities, principally the Constitutional Court, the State Security Court, the military, and the bureaucracy have notoriously misused the principles of laicism/secularism, the six principles of Kemalism and “State Security” to deal with non-Kemalist parties and individuals – whether Islamic (Sunni), ethnic (Kurdish, Alevi), or communists. This abuse often involved the imposition of bans on political organizations and illegal confinement of individuals for varying periods including life-bans on individuals’ political careers. (Alam, 2019, p. 123)

As a distinct example, according to Findley (2010, p. 352), within a year after the military coup in 1980, 43,000 people were under arrest, most of them were tortured and some of them executed just because of their political thoughts, even they did not conduct any illegal activity according to the 1961 constitution. Exactly the same type of unlawful tracking, arresting, judging and sentencing was also conducted for Gülen followers after the failed coup attempt in July 2016 (See chapter 3.3.4), which explains clearly why Gülen built his movement on decentral, independent and unchained institutions without using his name or the movements identity.

However, it is a mistake to consider such a kind of criticism only limited to Turkey. Instead, beyond these criticisms it is meant that the Movement conducted indoctrination in their schools and cultivates their future cadres from these schools. The pupils, as well as the employees, are motivated to live their lives strictly according to Islamic principles. Related to this point, one of the other main concern about these schools is that these schools, or in general educational institutions, are used by the movement as a **recruitment tool** (Hendrick, 2013, p. 110). For example, Kaufman (2014, p. 71) analyzes Swiss Media and summarizes the criticism as follows: The educational institutions of the Hizmet movements are used for the recruitment of new followers. Volm (2018, p.320) suggested that teacher teams in GISs played an important role in this point and questioned this issue as follows:

In Germany, teacher staff of the GISs are originally Germans who have a non-Muslim background. As an example Dialog-Gymnasium in Cologne has 70% of teachers from this type of non-Muslim background. In the USA, however, it is questioned why in charter schools of the Gülen Movement almost invariably Muslim teachers from Turkey are recruited when also enough US-American staff was available.

In contrast to such kind of critiques, according to Alam (2019, p.174), Gülen has a very deep and different approach to education. He (Alam) suggested that the primary objective of Gülen's educational discourse is to produce an action-oriented, ethical and moral being. Therefore, all GISs are structured according to secular understanding and instead of teaching one type of religion, local curriculum is accepted and targeted in these schools. (See chapter 3.3.3) Besides, education is perceived as "the most-noble Islamic value" (Alam, 2019, p. 172), serving humanity means serving God and education and also knowledge is required to serve humanity in the most effective manner, which in turn amounts to serving God (Alam, 2019, p. 182). Thus the core point of the movement is establishing educational institutions all over the world and as a consequence of this philosophy, conducting both learning and teaching activity is a religious duty for Gülen and his followers.

Previous empirical studies also demonstrates that, the main understanding of the teachers in Gülen inspired schools does not depend on recruiting new participants or indoctrination (Özdalga, 2003). Instead, according to Tittensor's field study, the movement just represents its philosophy or understanding through the *Temsil (Representation)* method (See chapter 2.1.2) in these institutions but never force or indoctrinate its understanding to their students.

Moreover, there was never a sense of compulsion, only a sense of indebtedness on account of the many generous acts of teachers. Ultimately, students never compelled to join the movement. Rather, they were simply offered a lifestyle - to be a twenty-first century, well-educated pious Muslim. Some chose to join, others like Nila (one of participant in his empirical study) decided that such a lifestyle was not for them. (Tittensor, 2014, p. 176)

Such an approach also failed to succeed in the field study of this research. Unlike Volm's misperception, according to the observations in the visited nine GISs in three continents (Europe, Africa and the USA), the majority of the teachers (almost 75%) consist of non-Turkish teachers who have little information about Gülen and his discourse (See chapter 3.3.2). Besides, the progressive education model of the GISs depends on the management of schools, not teachers (This part is also explained in chapter 4.1 in detail). On the other hand, as Tittensor explained above, it is also clear that there are graduates of these schools who later internalized Gülen's philosophy and join the movement activities, but labelling the schools as a recruitment tool or educational activities of the GISs as an indoctrination sessions, just depending on this

point, is unfair. Investigations like the Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution (Verfassungsschutzreport in German) of the German state of Baden-Württemberg in 2014 and some other American reports about Gülen inspired charter schools in the US also demonstrated the same point (Barz, 2017, p. 32).

#### d) Criticisms about the Financial Structure of the GISs

How the movement **attains financial sources to fund its international activities** and how they **mobilize followers to support** their institutions is another subject which raises much criticism and doubts about the movement (Ghadbahn,2015a, p. 73). According to Tittensor (2014, p. 155), the movement is not purely a philanthropic organization, but also a business empire, of which the schools form a significant part. Ebaugh solely focused on this subject in her research and tried to find out the answers of these questions in her book, “The Gülen Movement: a Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam”. This subject is again out of scope for this research but mainly because of the importance of the subject, this type of criticism and debate about this issue is explained from the schools’ perspective in this part.

The core point of criticism in this issue is to assume that **the movement and its schools are supported financially from foreign powers** and these powers use the movement to achieve their goals (Ghadbahn,2015a, p. 73). The assumption behind these critics is that the movement is tool of some other foreign powers. Ebaugh and Koç (2007, p. 539) mentioned that some people who raise this type of criticism believe that the movement is financed by Middle Eastern governments, and the others (most of them within Turkey) are suspicious that Western governments are financially backing the projects. As an example, Tittensor (2014, p. 79) suggested that the movement receives funding from the CIA as part of a conspiracy to re-Islamize Central Asia.

Aware of these criticisms, in a recent comment to a group of visiting followers, Fethullah Gülen indicated that greater financial transparency must become a priority for the movement (Ebaugh & Koc, 2007, p. 539). From the beginning of the movement, administrators of the movement have paid great attention to this issue which builds trust for the movement from society. Besides, the current financial trouble of the movement after the failed coup attempt, the closed schools in Europe and USA and the other schools which have felt the effects of the worldwide financial crisis also demonstrated that the movement was not financed by any other power, instead only by the community.

In this point it's crucial to understand Gülen's funding method in Gülen inspired schools. He does not want to increase the burden on the shoulder of the society or state and that is why he has based his model on a private education system in which the schools are self-financing with the tuitions. Due to this, in almost all cases, just at the beginning, the educational institutions are supported by a circle of businessmen till these institutes become self-funding (Mohamed, 2007, p. 564) (Ebaugh & Koc, 2007, p. 542) (Woodhall, 2005, p. 5). A school whose expenses are met by public donations will not be an alien concept to the community and will therefore pave the way for staff to be more efficient in their service to parents and society (Şimşek, 2013, p. 28). However, there are also exceptional cases like charter schools in the US or state-supported schools in Europe where the institutions are financed by governments. Like in all other activities, the "Localization" philosophy of the movement has a priority in this point (See chapter 4.5). In both stated-supported and non-state supported private schools, the amount of the students is crucial. State support to these schools is in the form of an amount of money for each student and thus, small schools could not survive because of insufficient state support. This system is practiced by the Movement in many developed countries, however in other developing and undeveloped countries, the system is built on private institutions in which the schools depend on the tuition fees. Only new schools require financial backing, usually from Turkish voluntary organizations made up of Turkish merchants (Mohamed, 2007, p. 564) but after a while it is expected of all schools or other educational institutions to finance themselves, especially after the failed coup attempt.

The schools are intended to become self-funding over time through the charging of admission fees but the details of this vary according to the school's location. The *hizmet* schools (GISs) within the larger Turkish cities tend to charge high, but competitive, fees and produce very high academic results. Schools in poorer districts of Turkey tend to charge considerably less but [are] also known for the high academic achievement of their students. (Barton, 2005, p. 28)

The educational expenses are used to run the schools and to cover the technological fees and other requirements of the schools. The good reputations of the schools have acquired for the quality of their technical education, their use of English as a language of instruction, and the high behavioral standards they set, have combined to ensure that places are at a premium (Park, 2007, p. 54). According to Vicini (2007, p. 436), this huge support of the community to the movement depends on Islamic tradition. *Himmet* (giving donations and protecting good work) and *ihlas* (seeking God's appreciation for every action) which generally refer to Islamic

traditional duties, define respectively people financing the movement and people acting according to the ethics prescribed by the movement. Ebaugh and Koç (2007, p. 543) quoted from Gülen and explained this issue as follows:

Of them, he says, “Those are our people who give and give. You could say they are addicted to giving. If you say, ‘not to give’ to them they will be sad and unhappy.” [...] (Once) a man could not give anything because he had very little. When Gülen was leaving the building, the man caught him on the stairs and handed him a set of keys and said, “These are the keys of my house. I don’t have anything to give other than that house, please take these keys.” Gülen gave back the keys and told him not to worry but to give when he had something to give.

Besides, as mentioned before, after a while most schools become self-financing with tuition fees (Ebaugh & Koc, 2007, p. 542), in some cases, the schools are partially supported by the state. In such cases the state provides the building, electricity, water, etc., and the trusts provide teaching, the teaching staff, and all educational materials and resources (Woodhall, 2005, p. 5). However, it was observed in the field study that all schools are independent institutions and do not have any financial connection with Gülen. (See chapter 3.3.4.2 and 4.5)

The charter schools which are coordinated by the movement in the US are unique examples where the state covers all the costs of these educational institutions. In this model, all entrepreneurs who fulfill the state requirements are financed by the government and they are assigned to transform these financial resources to educational actions. By using their experiences in the educational field, many entrepreneurs from the movement aimed to get these funds to run such schools. In general, there is a huge discussion about charter schools in the US because of the great state support behind these kinds of schools and the Movement is also criticized for **misusing these funds**. Saul (2011, p. 3) gave a school in Texas as an example and questioned whether, ultimately, the schools are using taxpayer dollars to benefit the Gülen Movement by giving business to Gülen followers, or through financial arrangements with local foundations that promote Gülen teachings and Turkish culture. However, Ebaugh and Koç (2007, p. 550) debate on this issue and found these discussions inaccurate because every school has its own independent accounting system and accountants who manage the budget and financial books who are all accountable to the local and state authorities, as well as to the trust’s sponsors. Criticisms regarding the financial structure of the Gülen inspired schools in different regions of the world and how these schools are affected financially after the failed coup attempt

is asked to participants of the study and analyzed in detail in chapter 3.3.4.2.

In addition to discussed point above, one of the most famous criticisms against the Gülen inspired schools is **elitism**. As it is mentioned above, most Gülen inspired schools are private schools with tuition fees. According to Volm (2018, p. 323),

Costs for a school year at a Gülen inspired full-day school in Central Asia should be about \$ 12,000 per student, in Thailand nearly \$ 6,000 and up to \$ 1,350 in Kenya, calculated on the average income of each country, (these schools are) less Institutions for the majority, instead as elite and restricted as possible.

Barton (2005, p. 28) mentioned that the similar situation was an issue in large cities of Turkey and Dohrn (2014, p. 242) also finds the fees of the schools high in Tanzania and pointed out this issue. According to Hendrick (2013, p. 241), the Gülen inspired schools offer quite high quality “services” but only to those who would be able to financially support it. Therefore successful applicants in Central Asia and elsewhere in the post-communist world are the children either of the wealthy or of government officials (Park, 2007, p. 54). However, Park has a different approach to this discussion. According to him (Park, 2007, p. 54), this is not because the GISs are elitist in that region, instead States spending on education has plummeted throughout Central Asia in particular, leading to school closures, a shortage of teachers, a degradation of the physical infrastructure, and widespread corruption surrounding school and college admissions and test results. Paradoxically, Volm (2018, p. 323) also mentioned that new students do not pay any tuition in their first year in GISs in Central Asia as a motivation. However, if all these students were from wealthy important families and if they could finance these schools without any financial difficulty, why these schools present such a discount is difficult to understand.

As a consequence of this issue, the movement is criticized as an elitist movement and it is assumed that the movement only educates wealthy people’s children to achieve more money and power in their regions. Therefore, Tittensor (2014, p.163), characterizes Gülen followers as “social entrepreneurs” which have profit-oriented professionals in their all institutions, including charity activities. However, as it was explained above, self-financing is a goal for these schools and in general they try to achieve this goal by increasing their quality and reputation (See chapter 4.1). At the end, according to Hendrick (2013, p. 151), profits made by the schools are re-invested to open new facilities, to expand to new grade levels, to build new campuses and so forth. Besides, the movement’s financial transparency policy forces the

followers of the movement to pay enormous attention to the rules of the economic markets. Because of this structure, especially in developing countries, the tuition fees are high and the majority of the students in these schools come from wealthy families. On the other hand Barton (2005, p. 28) debates on this issue and mentioned that schools in poorer districts of Turkey tended to charge considerably less but are also known for the high academic achievement of their students. Mohamed (2007, p. 564) has a different approach to this subject and mentioned that the schools may be regarded as elitist, but they are only academically elitist; for the norm is to be selective of admission on academic grounds. According to him, one of the factors of the success in the Movement's schools is sensitiveness in the admission process. Generally, children from affluent homes have higher aspirations and learning ability than children from poor families. This is because they have had more opportunities and not because of any innate superiority (Mohamed, 2007, p. 570). Mohammed (2007, p. 570) explains elitism in movements schools as follows:

As mentioned, elitism is a relative concept; a Gülen school in a poor area will be regarded as elitist, but not in an affluent area. Elitism is also relative to the cost of schooling; the less affordable the school the more elitist it is. For middle-class standards the Gülen School is not elitist; but for working class standards it is elitist. The Gülen School in Durban is located in an area that is affluent, but the school building is rather modest. The learners are mainly from the middle-class; but as pointed out above, this does not mean that it is a socially elite school, but only academically elite.

According to the field study of this research, the mentioned criticism of elitism, is partly true depending on the location. It was seen in this study, the movement has private schools with state support and also private schools without a state support (See chapter 3.3.4.2). Especially schools in Europe and charter schools in America are the private schools with state support and they are founded in regions where low-income families or minorities live. The number of this type schools is very high, and they are absolutely not elitist from a financial perspective (See table 7 in chapter 3.3.5.4). As a contrast, the movement has founded private schools with high tuition fees only in developing countries (See table 6 in chapter 3.3.5.3). Therefore, only Gülen inspired schools in developing or undeveloped countries could be perceived as elite schools. However, the reason behind this practice is not elitism, instead it is mainly because the movement does not have enough financial resources to realize its educational model. Supporting talented and academically successful students from poor families through



scholarships both inside and outside GISs is another practice that proves that these schools do not just targeted the children of the rich and important people.

The other criticism of the financial structure of the schools is that, GISs are used to give scholarships to poor students who achieve high scores in application tests. In addition, Gülen also encourages the wealthier people in the community to give scholarships to poor students and not to allow tuitions to become an obstacle for talented students (Şimşek, 2013, p. 28). According to some social scientists, like Volm (2015, p. 99) or Turam (2007, p. 82), **the Movement uses these scholarships to connect students to the movement**. Either students have to pay it back, which is very difficult for poor families, or they have to work for the Movement after they graduate. In this way the movement increases both its human resources and its power. The movement's reaction to this kind of criticism is that today different types of schools also offer similar scholarship options for needy students and they do not harbor such a goal at all. Besides, participants of the field study suggested that all these scholarships are free; the students who receive them do not have to pay back these scholarships.

This is a very important accusation against the GISs and regarding this discussion, therefore, the researcher of the study looked for victims who are hunted by the movement through these scholarships. During the internet research, one of the most famous books against Gülen and the schools was found, so called "HOCA EFENDININ (GÜLEN) oKULLARI" (Tittensor, 2014, p. 84). As it is clear to see in this title, the letter "o" is consciously in lower case, , because if that letter is silenced during the pronunciation, the title, which could be translated as "Gülen's Schools," become "Gülen's Slaves" (Turam, 2007, p. 79). This book was published at the end of the nineties by famous Kemalist civil society organizations, and contains interviews with two students of the Gülen movement (Ismail Özdemir and Serhat Özkan), who received scholarships from the movement, and their confessions about the movement (Tittensor, 2014, p. 85). Different type of accusations, like labelling the movement as radical Islamist or having a hidden agenda for Islamizing Turkish society were published in these book and these two students' statements are shown as a main resource of the book. However, neither of the boys attended the late-night television show on 27 February 1998, whose aim was to present the book to Turkish society after its publication. Instead, Ismail Özdemir called the program and blamed the publishers of the book, Gülseven Yaser and Haşmet Atahan, of manipulating his statements and also mentioned that the book contains some statements which they have never said before (Tittensor, 2014, p. 85). He described the television program as a "disgusting game on the stage" and accused the publishers of not keeping their promises like financing them to study abroad (Turam, 2007, p. 82). The publishers suggested that these

students are threatened by the movement and that is why they could not attend the program and denied their previous confessions through a phone call. Tittensor (2014, p. 85) described this attempt as a “fiasco” and because of these discussions and debates about the book (Volm, 2018, p. 69), the researcher of the study became suspicious and hesitated to use this book as a reference in this study.

In addition to the mentioned general critiques against the GISs all over the world, there are also local critiques based on GISs in one specific country. As an example, Gülen inspired schools in Turkey have been accused **of forging examination questions** over the last four decades, enabling students from Gülen inspired schools to get higher scores (Alam, 2019, p.283). This type of critiques are mainly targeted at GIS in Turkey, where the educational system is based on central exams. Even today, two important central exams such as the Entrance Exam to High Schools (*Liselere Giriş Sınavı* –LGS in Turkish) and the Entrance Exam to the Universities (*Öğrenci Seçme Sınavı* – ÖSS in Turkish) play a crucial role in the Turkish education system. According to this type of critiques, the followers of the Movement first infiltrated the institutes where these central examinations are prepared and later on serviced the exam questions to the GISs before the exams. By this way students of the GISs have a clear advantage against the other students and that is why students of GISs have a high success rates in these exams, which is an effective advertisement for the GISs too. It is very difficult to check whether these type of critiques true or not, but when the range of the movement considered, it is not impossible. According to Volm (2018, p. 306), there were almost 800 university preparation courses founded by Gülen in Turkey and one of them was Fırat Education Centers (*Fırat Eğitim Merkezi* in Turkish which is known as FEM) which had 60,000 students in 1998. Gülen inspired educational institutions were active in Turkey since 1966 and it was possible that some of the followers conducted this illegal forging activity with or without Gülen’s knowledge.

On the other hand, according to Hendrick (2013, p. 3), the success of the students of the GISs is not a new issue, instead from the foundation of these schools in 1980s, students who attended the GISs have a high success rate in central exams.

Throughout the 1980s, students at what are now most commonly referred to as Gülen Inspired Schools began to score noticeably higher than their counterparts on nationwide high school and university placement exams, and began to earn countywide recognition by winning national scholastic competitions with regularity. (Hendrick, 2013, p. 3)

Besides, this type of critiques does not explain how students of the GISs in Turkey became successful in international science Olympiads before they were closed. As an example

again Hendrick (2013, p. 137) gives two Gülen inspired Schools, *Yamanlar* in Izmir and *Fatih College* in Istanbul and explains that;

In the first ten months of 2008, *Yamanlar* students took home forty-five national and international medals in math and science, including a gold medal at the forty-seventh Annual International Physics Olympics in Hanoi... *Fatih College* in Istanbul (as well as students at numerous GM private high schools throughout Anatolia) spent the 1990s and 2000s continuously winning national and international science and math competitions and continued to send the majority of its graduating classes to university.

Michel (2003, p. 12) also observed the same type of success in GISs in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan and mentioned that it is not surprising that students of these schools have consistently scored high in university placement tests and produced champions in the International Knowledge Olympics in fields such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology (Michel, 2003, p. 9). From these points of views, it is impossible for the Gülen followers to do the same type of forging questions in central exams of the foreign countries or in high reputation international science competitions, which were organized by international committees. Related with this issue, during the field study of this research, it was observed that GISs in Africa and GISs in America published on their web pages that they were successful in preceding years central exams, like SAT exams in the U.S. (For more information look at Appendix B). From these points of views it could be said that GISs developed how to deal with multiple choice central exams in Turkey through decades and later on expanded this methodology, ability and knowledge to the other GISs in the world. In this way these schools could teach how to be successful in these kind of exams to their students. As another point, despite detailed investigations since 2014, and the state pressure to the movement, especially after the failed coup attempt in Turkey, the lack of evidence to such kind of critiques has failed to prove to these accusations.

Another location-related criticism is that Gülen inspired charter schools in America conduct illegal activities like **abusing the visa system** in the U.S. or **using school facilities and resources to improve and support movement activities** in the USA (Saul, 2011). The American law company Amsterdam & Partners LLP also pointed out this issue and sued the GICs in different states in the U.S. (Amsterdam & Partners LLP, 2019). Barz (2017, p. 32) debated on this issue and quoted from the Wall Street Journal that all of Amsterdam's accusations against the GICs are declined by the American Justice. However, this type of accusations are not just limited to Gülen inspired charter schools, instead different types of charter schools are also challenged with this type of criticisms. Besides, during the field study it was observed that the Erdogan regime, through cooperation with Amsterdam Law company,

uses this problem related to charter schools to conduct a smear campaign against the Movement. Because of the importance of the subject, this point is analyzed in detail in chapter 3.3.4.2.

#### e) Criticisms about the Turkish Identity of the GISs

The last but not least important type of criticism about the Gülen inspired schools is about its roots. As it was explained in chapter 2.1.1, this type of criticism is based on the **"Turkish" and "Muslim" identity** of Gülen and his followers in the GM. According to Woodhall (2005, p. 10):

The majority of members are Turkish and Muslims and so share a language, beliefs and religious and national rituals (though the latter vary from country to country); they are predominantly young (in their twenties and thirties for the most part); members acknowledge a particular leader.

Dohrn (2014, p. 235) gives Tanzania as an example and mentioned that on three campuses in urban Tanzania, Turkish is the dominant language, Turkish food and drinks are widely sold and consumed, Turkish dances and poems are performed, and buildings are equipped with Turkish furniture and pictures of Turkey. Tittensor (2014, p. 5), also quoted from Berna Turam, and classified the movement as a pan-Turkism or “neo-Ottomanism” in Central Asia and the Balkans. Clearly, this criticism focuses on whether there is a dominant culture or a character of the movement and if yes, whether this dominant culture and character has an effect on their educational activities like GIS or not (Specker, 2015, p. 90)?

Besides, one of the significant activities of the schools which is called the "International Festival of Languages and Cultures"(IFLC) also caused such kind of critiques. In this annual festival, participants from different parts of the world used to come Turkey and performed songs, poems and dances from their own culture and nationality. In the first festival in 2002, 40 countries joined the event with less than 80 students, however, in 2016 (before the coup attempt) the number of countries increased to 150 and almost four hundred students joined the event. The event in Turkey, which takes place every spring, was organized by a subsidiary of Kaynak Holding (Hendrick, 2013, p. 197), a Gülen affiliated business organization. According to Volm (2018, p. 343), through this type of events, the Gülen movement tries to promote Turkey and the Turkish culture to the whole world. According to him, Gülen has targeted “Cultural Empirialism” and he tried to expand his national, religious and social values to whole world (Volm, 2018, p.343).

This type of criticism about promoting the Turkish language and culture to the whole world was true especially in the early years of the event. In the initial years of this festival, it was called “Turkish Olympiads” and the main goal of the event is announced to promote Turkish culture outside of Turkey at that time. Later on, mainly because of the need or may be because of the critiques, the name and also the content changed and this competition transformed to an international festival. In this new transformed version, the other languages and cultures also became important in addition to Turkish. Besides, in this study it was observed that Turkish language courses were a common foreign language course in GISs outside of Turkey. Is this a strategy for cultural imperialism or expansion of national and religious values to the whole world? This criticism was analyzed in detail in the field study in different Gülen inspired schools in different regions of the world and explained in chapters 3.3.5 and 4.4 in detail. Shortly, it was seen on the field study that the main goal of the Gülen inspired schools is increasing the cultural diversity in their regions and internationalization through mixing their values with the local culture and values in their environment. Therefore, GISs out of Turkey clearly used to present their Turkish roots in their own environment. However, after the failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, which is an important cornerstone for the movement, there is a huge change in the national and cultural structure of the movement, which is explained in chapters 3.3.4 and 4.6 in detail. Briefly, the movement transformed its “national identity” to an “International Identity” and removed all signs related with Turkey or Turkishness. Today the schools in some countries like Germany or the US still continue to organize their festivals in their location by cooperating with some other countries, however in comparison to the one in Turkey, these are small and limited events. This transformation process of the movement in the last several years is also analyzed and discussed in this study in detail.

Related with this type of criticism, Onur (2010, p. 140) highlighted another point of criticism from German media which shows Gülen inspired schools **as a ghetto for immigrants** in Germany. He gave a German magazine *Spiegel Online* article (September 29, 2008) as an example which reported on a class of a private gymnasium with a German-Turkish carrier in Berlin as a nightmare because "comically a German student" is in the class and rest of the class is Turkish migrants (Onur, 2010, p. 140). Mainly because of the huge Turkish minority in Western Europe, the movement is criticized for just focusing on Turkish minorities in their regions and neglecting the other nationalities in their schools. Behind this criticism it is meant that the movement has a sole national identity and a national world view, which neglects other nations or other cultures. Kaufmann (2014, p. 54) debated on this issue by giving an example

of a GIS in Switzerland:

Nothing in the school, would lead to a Turkish background. There are no pictures of Fethullah Gülen, just as there is no religious instruction on the timetable. The curriculum came from the Züricher Volksschulamt (Zürich Education Ministry), which had already supervised the school twice. Moreover, it was forbidden to speak Turkish in the whole area.

Onur (2010, p. 141) questioned this criticism of the media by also giving French and English private schools which have a good reputation in Germany as examples. Boos-Nünning (2011, p. 208) also describes this type of criticism as “unconvincing” and suggested that the subject is much more complicated mainly because of the segregation in other German state schools. Besides, during the field study it was observed that the failed coup attempt had an important effect, which forced them to change their national identity, on the GISs in Europe. This controversial subject, the effects of the failed coup attempt and internationalization of the Gülen inspired school in Europe, are also discussed with the participants of the field study and explained in detail in chapter 3.3.4.2 and 3.3.5.1.

#### 2.1.5 Combination of Contrasts: Fethullah Gülen

It is easy to notice that the Gülen movement is a very active part of the social life in different parts of the world, but at the same time, despite their activities for society, the movement is the target of many different kinds of criticism. As a new social phenomenon with a clutter of information about the movement, it is difficult to understand the identity and the goal of the movement. Kaufmann (2014, p. 28) highlighted this issue as follows:

Despite this characterization, a precise definition of the Hizmet movement remains difficult. The question of whether the Hizmet movement can be described as a civilian initiative, a civil society movement, a religious-inspired education and business network, or a "power network" cannot be conclusively answered. What is certain, however, is that the movement elements from all three definitions combine in themselves.

Such confusion mainly depends on two unique characteristics of the movement. First of all, Gülen’s complex personality which combines the contrasts in his soul and thoughts, and the second is the dynamic and flexible structure of the movement. Most of his followers take him



as an example and therefore the combining of contrasts in their identities and this complex thinking makes the movement incomprehensible.

As an example, to this point, Volk (2015, p. 21) shows Fethullah Gülen as a traditional Islamic scholar whose philosophy is dependent on two main sources of Islam such as the Qur'an and the *hadith* (sayings, actions, reactions about Muhammad and his companions). Şimşek (2013, p. 23) supports this point too, but he also added that references to ancient Greek or Western personalities like Shakespeare, Balzac, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Zola, Goethe, Camus, Sartre; as well as Bernard Russell, Pushkin, and Tolstoy are mentioned in Fethullah Gülen's speeches. Such a combination of West and East does not only enrich his works and provide them with even more deepness, but also shows his supporters how to react in a modern world. This combination of contrast is also seen in practice. Gülen was seen as a very emotional personality, especially in his speeches to the community, but at the same time he is also reasonable and never let his emotions damage his logic.

Although Gülen is known in the Turkish vernacular as the "Weeping Hodja", the rationality is one step ahead of his emotions. His projects, from education to interreligious and intercultural dialogue, are sensible projects, which is why people gather around this doctrine (Merican & Kardaş, 2018, p. 69).

Besides, most of the observations demonstrate that Gülen himself, and also his students and his followers around him, are religious people who have a spiritual life depending on the Sufi understanding. However, unlike many other conservative Islamic groups, Gülen himself has visited the previous Pope and some Jewish and Alevi scholars in their offices and encourages his followers to conduct dialog activities with different religions and cultures around the world. After such a call, many Dialogue Centers related with the movement were founded by the followers of the movement in the last two decades, which is a very unique case in the Islamic world. (See chapter 2.1.3.3) From these different perspectives, it is difficult to categorize Gülen, and also his movement, as merely a conservative-traditional or just reformist-liberal. Instead, it is the combination of both, and it is an interesting example of a balance of contrasts.

In his writings and speeches, Gülen also calls attention to this issue. As an example, he gave one of the Prophet Muhammed's sentences: "Work in the world as if you will never die, work in the Hereafter as if you would die tomorrow" and advised his followers to work as much as possible in their occupations but at the same time, he also asked them to sleep less and pray at nights as much as possible too (Ergil, 2012, p. 23). Such a balance is difficult to build and varies from one individual to another. According to him, every individual has to combine these



types of differences in their soul and build his or her own balance or own identity by collecting different kind of beauties from different sources.

Like Gülen himself, the Gülen Movement also carries the same character: a combination of contrast. As it was discussed in the criticism part (Chapter 2.1.4), there are social scientists, like Ghadbahn (2015b, p. 79), who define the movement as a hierarchy or a secret sect but at the same time, in contrast to this approach, there are also social scientists who think that the Gülen movement is an open social network, like Ergil (2012, p. 21). Actually, the Gülen movement is a global network with local hierarchies which combines characters of both definitions. In every region followers and sympathizers of the movement have come together and have created several foundations and institutions. The degree of organizational structure and control varied a great deal from one region to another, and from one *abi* or *abla* (male or female followers of the movement) to another (Pahl, 2019, p. 308) and there is a hierarchy developed during the foundation process of these organizations in every region, according to active participation, loyalty and sacrifice of these activities of the followers. According to Ebaugh and Koç (2007, p. 541) the fact that Gülen-inspired projects are always locally based and embedded in local circles of supporters locates authority and decision making within horizontal relationships rather than a vertical, bureaucratic structure. But at the same time, all these different regions cooperate and collaborate with each other in a network and try to practice several projects and try to fulfill each other's needs. Technology and modern devices facilitate this connection and help the movement to expand their activities in different regions easily. In this way, both the movement and its followers combine global and local identities together in a body and try to balance these two issues in their philosophy and practice.

Gülen inspired schools also combine contrasts in their identities too. Dohrn (2014, p. 234) gives the schools in Tanzania as an example and mentioned that the motivation for founding and supporting these schools, however, is grounded in Islamic belief, and education is central to Gülen's thought and to the practice of his followers. On the other hand, she also mentioned in the same article that, different from other faith-based educational institutions, GISs like Feza Schools in Dar es Salaam do not explicitly promote Islam (Dohrn, 2014, p. 233). Like Dohrn, many other researches about the Gülen inspired schools demonstrate the same point all around the world. Almost all Gülen inspired schools are secular schools and only human ethics as a lecture is taught in GISs. (There are a few GISs who have Islam as a lecture in some Islamic countries because of the curriculum of the country, however, the majority of the schools are based on secular education.) None of these schools teach Gülen's philosophy or

any kind of Islam lecture in their current program (See chapter 3.3.3). However, with several methods like *Temsil* (representation), GIS or followers of the movement fill this gap. This part is discussed in following parts in detail; however, it is easy to notice that the movement combines secular education with religious identity.

The second important characteristic of the movement, which is not seen in any other groups, is that the movement is very flexible. According to change in time and place, the movement could easily adapt its identity to the natural environment. There is a basic understanding and philosophy of the movement, but this is not bound by static rules or traditions, like some other religious movements or some secret sects. Instead, Gülen and his followers are very flexible and humble in society. In this way, the movement can change its identity according to geographical changes or according to developments during the time and survive different kinds of difficulties easily.

For example, if the written works and speeches of Gülen are analyzed, it is easy to notice this dynamism. Gülen follows the changes and developments of Turkey and the world very sensitively and adapted or developed his works according to this change. Till the 1990s, he mainly focused on the problems of Turkey and showed education and democratization as a solution. But in the early 1990s he started to talk about globalization and dialog activities between different religions and cultures. In addition to change in time, the works of Gülen also change depending on the place. For example, his works in Turkey differ from his works in America. National figures were very dominant in his works in Turkey, but multicultural and multinational tendency is highlighted in his works in America.

Such change and dynamism are also valid for the movement. For example, national identity and the cultural belonging of the movement are two important subjects that change through time and place. Especially from the beginning of the movement till the 2000s, the movement had a national Turkish identity belonging to Anatolian culture and Islamic understanding. However, especially during the international expansion period after the 2000s, the movement met with different nationalities and cultures around the world and started to create a new identity and culture depending on the mixture of Turkish and other local identities and cultures around the world. (See chapter 4.4) Such a process accelerated after the failed coup attempt of July 2016 and; therefore, the Gülen movement in one country has many differences to an equivalent institution in another country today. In any circumstances, depending on the current situation and the problems and possibilities of the environment, the dynamic structure

of the movement let followers easily adapt their activities to this new area.

As a result, it is difficult to talk about general definitions about the movement, because of these two features of the combination of contrast and the very dynamic-flexible structure. Roughly, the Gülen Movement is defined as a social civil movement, based on Turkish, Islamic and Sufi understanding combined with modern sciences and liberal values of Western culture. The goal of the movement is to deal with the most common problems of society such as poverty, ignorance, social inequality and disunity through education activities, media, and civil society organizations like dialog centers or charity organizations. However, because of the depth and width of the subject and also because of the transformation process of the movement after the failed coup of July 2016 in Turkey, such a rough definition is a weak approach and does not purpose the issue anymore. Therefore, especially after the current changes of the movement, this new social phenomenon needs to be researched in detail by different social scientists from different fields again and new definitions have to be created to describe the movement today and especially for tomorrow.

## 2.2 Globalization, Internationalization, Localization and “Glocalization”

Especially after the end of the Cold War, financial and economic relations between countries worldwide increased and the economist Theodore Levitt described this change in global economics affecting production, consumption and investment with a new Term “**globalization**” (Spring, 2009, p. 2). Technical improvements in the last two decades, especially in the field of communication, have accelerated this issue and globalization became one of the most discussed subject all over the world. Despite the fact that there is no generally agreed on definition of globalization, we have seen that there has been an ever-increasing number of books and articles discussing how different aspects of globalization have affected the human history (Mok, 2000, p. 638). Välimaa (2004, p. 29) also quoted from Held and highlighted that there are three different approaches to the term, such as hyperglobalisers, sceptics and transformationalists. These different approaches, which are out of the scope of this study, make the term difficult to understand and complicated, however, Mok (2000, p.638) analyses different descriptions and described the term in general as follows:

Seeing globalization as very complicated and complex processes of economic transactions and worldwide telecommunications, sociologists generally believe that the impact of globalization is profound: restructuring the ways in which we live and creating a new hybridity of cultural styles and mixes. It is also argued that the impact of

globalization is related not only to economic restructuring but also to the cultural and ideological spheres.

Mainly because of the range of the effects of the globalization, there are many concerns against globalization that have also risen during the past decades. One of the main concern is that the national states lose their powers (Hornberg, 2010, p. 17) and even though they do not disappear, they become the sub-sets of societies. The term “societies” is meant to encompass something broader than a nation by including economic and political organizations, civil society and culture (Spring, 2009, p. 4). The meaning of “society” in this context is groups of peoples sharing similar characteristics who see themselves as connected across the national boundaries. Besides the term is mostly identified with ‘Americanization’ through the diffusion of American business, technology, language and culture (Välilmaa, 2004, p. 29). According to this understanding, there is a dominant American culture on the top and the other local cultures melt under this culture.

From an educational point of view, the European Commission’s document Teaching and Learning: On route to the Learning Society describes three basic causes of globalization: “The advent of the information society, scientific and technical civilization, and the globalization of the economy” (Spring, 2009, p. 3). Besides, especially about higher education, there was much research conducted, like Mok’s (2000) research, Reflecting Globalization Effects on Local Policy: Higher Education Reform in Taiwan. The core point of this research is how educational institutions in one part of the region is affected or reflected by globalization and different applications of globalization in different parts of the world.

Mainly because of the negative meaning or critiques against globalization, there is another explanation to the international expansion, cooperation and collaboration which is mentioned: “**internationalization**”. Välilmaa (2004, p. 29) suggests that this is the approach of scepticals towards globalization who means that the sceptical thesis maintains that instead of globalization we should be speaking about internationalization, the implication being that global interactions are predominantly taking place between national economies. Caruso and Tenorth (2002, p. 19) also stated this point and mentioned that these two terms, globalization and internationalization, have certain contrasts.

On the one hand, "internationalization" stands for a degree of reciprocity and interaction, and even suggests a formal equality of nations as a crucial condition for reception and transformation (not for the production) of cultural and social patterns. On the other hand, the view of the historical peculiarity of the nation as a category of

analysis and construction of the social is not particularly promoted. (Caruso & Tenorth, 2002, p. 19)

It is clear to see from this quote, that unlike globalization, all nations and cultures are equal and the same in internationalization, and there won't be any dominant culture or identity.

From an educational sciences perspective, internationalization is also very important from different points. One of the earliest definitions of internationalization from an educational perspective came from Jane Knight and Wit (1995). According to them (Knight and Wit, 1995, p. 15), internationalization is a process of integrating an international, intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institutions. Zymek (2002, p. 52) pointed out that the most important reforms in national educational institutions and higher education's depends on the consequences of international research and comparative studies on an international level. He gives expert changes, international publications and conferences as an example in this point. As a contrast to globalization, Zymbek (2002, p. 53) also mentioned that despite the influence of the international factors since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during these developments of the educational system of the nations, national attitudes were sensitively kept in educational systems.

In addition to national perspective, the **international mobility of the students and researchers** are another subjected related with globalization and internationalization. Actually, since medieval times, students and also scholars' travels different lands for educational and research goals, however according to Welch (2002, p. 293), during the twentieth century, the scale, with the volume of international student travel having increased enormously and an international student marked developed. Today, all important nations pay attention to this point and support their students who want to study abroad. Barwinska-Malajowicz (2011, p. 206) gives the European Union as an example:

The European Commission, moreover, elaborated seven initiatives, including **“Youth on the move”** which refers to improvement of outcomes and increase of attractiveness of European universities, as well as facilitating young people to enter the labor market and supporting entrepreneurship of young and educated specialists.

These efforts are mainly because of the consequences of internationalization. Goodhart (2017, p. 37) gives British universities as an example and mentioned that about 20 percent of students (13 percent of undergraduates, 38 percent of post-graduates) at British universities are from abroad and about 28 percent of the academics.

In this point, there is another understanding against globalization and internationalization which has increased in the recent years, called **“Localization”**. It is clear

to understand from this new term the importance of the local features and circumstances are increasing. This trend is not a contra-movement against globalization and internationalization, instead it is a contribution to them.

Regional processes, therefore, obtain a new significance, that depends on a global dimension – regions need to be noticed by the global system due to the place that they can be found in, with an example on significance of actions undertaken within the scope of the European integration process. (Barwinska-Malajowicz, 2011, p. 206)

Goodhart also pointed toward this issue by dividing modern British society into two groups such as “Anywhere” and “Somewhere” groups. The Anywhere group represents the people who internalized the global values and have less connection to their local environment (Goodhart, 2017, p. 23). However, the Somewhere group represents the ones who still are connected strictly with their local language, culture and standards (Goodhart, 2017, p. 24). According to him, despite the influence of globalization and internationalization, which increases the amount of Anywhere group in societies in the last two decades, today local values and local tendencies, which were represented by Somewhere group, increased rapidly. He (Goodhart, 2017, p. 38) gives British people as an example, in which 42 percent lives within five miles of where they lived when they were fourteen and 60 percent live within twenty miles and mentioned that is why the majority of the British people voted for Brexit (Goodhart, 2017, p. 218). Goodhart (2017, p. 218) also suggested that such a situation is not so different in other developed or developing countries. According to him, unlike Anywhere tendencies, Trump in the US, Putin in Russian and Erdogan in Turkey got the elections with the support of the Somewhere groups in their countries (Goodhart, 2017, p. 218). These political tendencies demonstrated the importance of localization and need more research, which is out of scope of this study.

In addition to localization, there is another term created by unifying globalization and localization, so called “**Glocalization**”. Such a term mainly refers the famous understanding such as “think global, act local”. Ross and Lou (2005, p. 229) define this term as follows:

Recently, theorists have employed this insight to create the neologism “glocalization,” sometimes defined as “global localization.” Glocalization implies a search beyond the contributions and the downsides of globalization in order to conceptualize a world of greater balance between the potentially empowering trends of global communication and the concrete challenges faced by local communities.

They give the Chinese higher education system as an example and mention that such a trend positively shaped the education in these institutions (Ross and Lou, 2005, p. 249).

According to this approach, Chinese universities follow the global trends and join the competition globally, but at the same time they are also focusing on their local problems under the lights of this global understanding.

From the descriptions above, according to the literature research and also observations of the researcher in the field study, in the following chapters the international expansion of the movement will be described and categorized. As a consequence of mentioned points, it is better to use the term “internationalization” while explaining the international expansion of the movement. This is mainly because, unlike globalization, there won’t be any dominant global culture or concept observed in the GISs, instead in every region the mixture of the local system with the movement’s own understanding rooted to Turkey. Besides, as a consequence of the failed coup attempt, the Turkishness in GISs decreased significantly in the previous years and more local values appeared in GISs in their regions today. (See chapter 4.4)

In addition to this point, it is also seen that “localization” also plays an important role during this international expansion process. Even the GIS schools have an international network and they are also practicing the “global thinking and local acting” method, it is difficult to talk about glocalization in their expansion, because as it will be explained in the following chapters, the local structure of the GISs is much more remarkable and dominant than their global common understanding. Especially in GISs, as it will be explained in chapter 4.1, there is a similar management understanding overall but the rest part of their education is very different because of the importance of the localization. That is why this point is explained as “internationalization through localization” instead of glocalization in this study. In chapter 3.3.5, the history of the international expansion of the movement is explained in detail and it is clear to see there why the definition above is used in this study.



## Chapter 3: Internationalization of GIS in the Empirical Review – Method, Sampling and Results of a Qualitative Study in Africa, Europe and the USA

In this part of the study, research subject, research method and research results are explained in detail.

### 3.1 Concretization of the Study

The Gülen Movement and Gülen inspired schools became popular especially after the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016. In addition to actuality of the subject today, the complexity of the subject has still kept its importance. To have an accurate approach to the subject from the educational sciences perspective, the Gülen inspired schools are targeted mainly in this field study and the movement is researched in a minor level. There are three points related to the Gülen inspired schools which was researched and analyzed in this study:

- Education model of the Gülen inspired schools
- Internationalization of the Gülen inspired schools in different regions through localization
- The effects of the coup attempt in Gülen inspired schools

#### 3.1.1 Education Model of the Gülen Inspired Schools

Since the beginning of the 20th century, an international renewal movement, which has found its way into the history books as a "Progressive education", attracted much attention (Barz, 2018, p.1). Anyone who spoke of Progressive Education has, since then, meant the new pedagogical concepts of the time and their successors and imitators, offshoots to the present day (Barz, 2018, p.4). Maria Montessori, Peter Petersen, Alexander S. Neill, John Dewey, Janus Korzack, Rudolf Steiner...etc are very famous important reformers who started progressive education in the last century.

Today, Barz shows Gülen as a new player in Progressive Education (Barz, 2018, p.3) and suggested that Gülen inspired schools, which was founded in 80's in Turkey, need to be more researched. Because despite the popularity of his movement and GIS, social science studies (about the Gülen inspired schools) are so far scarce commodity (Barz, 2018, p.3). Such

an approach is investigated empirically in this study and questioned whether Gülen inspired schools could be counted as a new progressive education model or not. Therefore, initially in this study, the researcher targeted to explain why Gülen inspired schools are different in comparison to other standard schools and if his educational concept belongs to Progressive Education, and what kind of contribution these schools make to the educational sciences are explained in detail. How different Gülen inspired schools in Europe, Africa and the USA realized Gülen's educational concept is also observed and how the experts see his educational model is discussed to answer the mentioned questions in the field study of this research.

### 3.1.2 Internationalization of the Gülen Inspired Schools Through Localization

According to Schrempp (2002, p. VII), bringing a product to international markets and competing on global markets (Instead of Domestic Market) is called internationalization which is undeniable the key to being able to seize of the opportunities presented by the future. Mainly because of the profits of opening international markets, and also with the improvements of the technology, internationalization and globalization became crucial subjects of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century in business and also in all sciences. Despite the close meanings of Internationalization and globalization, there are still important differences between them. Huang (2007, p. 3) highlighted several differences between these terms;

First Internationalization has been widely discussed since at least the 1960s, whereas globalization come into consideration mainly during the later part the 1980s. Second, globalization aims principally at establishing a single or universally acknowledged model, beyond countries and cultures, while internationalization emphasizes an exchange or communication between different countries and cultures. Third, internationalization occurs with the precondition that different countries and cultures exist, whereas globalization proceeds on the assumption that countries and cultures are of decreasing significance.

From this point of view, according to different articles about the Gülen Movement in different parts of the world, such as Arslan (2014), Aliyev (2012), Aydın (2013)...etc, the expansion of the Gülen inspired schools could not be described as globalization, instead, it is an internationalization process. (See chapter 3.3.5) Especially on the field study it was observed that, every school carries its locations culture and structure. According to Harry and Collings (2006, p. 139) this is a common practice of localization, which is defined by them as adapting practices to account for the host environment. That is why it could be said that the main strategy of the movement in this expansion period is localization.

Therefore, the second purpose of the research is to examine how the Gülen Movement had transformed their national identity to the international markets and expanded Gülen inspired schools to the different regions of the world. Why the movement prefers internationalization instead of globalization and how the localization strategy was practiced in different regions of the world is analyzed during the field study. The relationship between Gülen inspired schools in different countries or their global cooperation were also observed and subjected in this part of the study.

### 3.1.3 The Effects of the Coup attempt in Gülen Inspired Schools

According to Barz, all famous reformers in Progressive Education Movement have since lived through changeable histories; they were praised, they were banned, they became the target of critics, they were declared dead (Barz, 2018, p.1). Unfortunately Gülen also experienced the same kind of events. Especially during his residence in Turkey, mainly because of different kind of pressures, he had a serious health problems at the end of the 90's and that's why he moved to the U.S. for medical treatment. However as it was explained in 2.1.4, despite his residence in the U.S. since 1999, he was accused to be the leader of the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016. That's why, immediately after the failed coup attempt, all institutions related with the Gülen Movement were closed and more than hundreded thousands of Gülen followers were under arrested and accused as being a member of terror organization. Besides Erdogan administration uses different methods to stop the movement activities outside the Turkey (Bultmann, 2018a). (See chapter 3.3.4)

The third purpose of this study is to explain how the Gülen inspired schools reacted this pressure and how they changed after the political order in Turkey. There are also subquestions like whether is there difference according to destination of the schools or how will the schools live with this pressure in the future too. The researcher of the study observed different locations and analyzed these questions with the experts of the subject.

## 3.2 Method of the Study

To reach the targeted goals above, the researcher of the study conducted a field study in Europe, the USA and Africa. In this part, the method of this field study is explained in detail.

### 3.2.1 Research Design

In this study, the researcher studied social facts about the Gülen Movement and tried to give a meaning to the progressive education model and internationalization of the Gülen inspired

schools with regard to the conceptual framework of the study. To achieve this goal, the researcher of the study prefers a qualitative research method in the field study which is focused on understanding the social issues. Babbie (2004, p. 370) explains qualitative analysis as the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships. This is most typical of field research and historical research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 5) linked qualitative research as an activity that puts the researcher in the middle of the world. The qualitative researcher studies facts in their natural environment and comes to understand the facts or challenges' perceptions of these facts. Qualitative researchers do not think toward the future of the facts, instead focusing solely on the current situation and trying to understand the nature of the facts.

One of the main reasons for the choice of this method is the unique structure of the Gülen Movement and the lack of research about the Gülen inspired schools. The Gülen Movement is a new movement in comparison to the Waldorf and Montessori movements and that is why it is difficult to find secondary data and other scientific studies about the movement. In addition to this point, the movement itself took the attention of the media and community, mainly because of its huge size and also because of the political disorder in Turkey in 2016. However, the schools founded by the followers of the movement are neglected in general. Because of this lack of information and the lack of field research about the Gülen inspired schools, the basic target of this study is to research the schools of the movement and its educational features from different perspectives. Therefore, it is very important to choose a Qualitative Research Method which focuses on discovering social issues or dilemmas. In this way the researcher understands the new aspects of the GIS and contributes to educational sciences with this new knowledge.

The other reason for choosing the qualitative research method is the structure of the research questions which are based on a "how" question. Qualitative methods examine the *why* and *how* of decision making, not just *what*, *where*, *when*, or *who*, and have a strong basis in the field of sociology to understand the social facts. In addition to the main research questions, other probe questions belonging to this main research questions are all based on "how" kind of questions and the main purpose of the researcher is to understand these "how" questions. For this reason, as it was mentioned above, the qualitative research method is mainly used for the type of research questions which are based on "understanding" a foreign issue.

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, it is also difficult to use other social research methods in this study. The Gülen Movement has been known worldwide after the political disorder in Turkey in the summer of 2016 and there are not many hypotheses about the

movement and its schools, which is an obstacle for quantitative research, but by using a qualitative research method, as Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 425) defined in their description, it is possible to create new hypotheses for other researchers about the movement and its schools. Another point is that the main goal of this paper is not to generalize general conceptions, instead it is to explore the school concept and expansion of the movement. Therefore, qualitative research is appropriate for this study.

There are several types of data collection methods in Qualitative Research such as participant observation, case studies, focus groups, expert interviews...etc. In this study, mainly because of the complexity of the issue, the researcher of the study prefers to conduct expert interviews method during the data collection method. Why this type of method was selected and how the researcher applied it during the field study is explained in detail in the Sampling (Chapter 3.2.2) and Data Collection of the Research (Chapter 3.2.3) chapters below.

### 3.2.2 Sampling

As it was explained in Chapter 2.1.4, the Gülen Movement, and also Gülen inspired schools, are controversial subjects and there is a big discussion and debate on the subject. Besides, because of the specificity of the three research points of the study, (See chapter 3.1), it is difficult to find and collect appropriate data for the research. Therefore, the researcher prefers to use the "expert interview" method during the data collection. This is mainly because in comparison to other methods, expert interviews help the researcher to collect high quality data from the people who actively take part in the movement in the field and also from the people who have a deep experience and knowledge about the Movement. Therefore, it is worthwhile to conduct interviews with Gülen followers from different regions of the world, especially with the ones who are in charge of the managements of the schools and also experts who are studying this subject and ask them about their point of view on the research subjects.

Reaching the right people, who could give high quality and proper data, is one of the most challenging part of this research. Gläser and Laudel (2009, p. 117) mentioned that selection of the participants is the crucial part of the expert interviews and quoted from Gorden following questions, which could help researchers to find the proper participants:

1. Who has the relevant information?
2. Who is most likely to be able to provide accurate information?
3. Who is most willing to give information?
4. Who is available from the informants?

Mayring (2002, p. 146) also asks similar questions and shows the selection of the good participants as one of the important challenges in expert interviews. The researcher of the study based his search on the above-mentioned questions and looked for two prototype of participants such as managers or deputy managers of the Gülen inspired schools in different parts of the world and experts who have a high knowledge about the movement. There are different difficulties and challenges to reach these two types of participants and that is why the researcher of the study used different methods to find and conduct interviews with these two different participants.

First of all, as it was explained in the literature review part that (See Chapter 2.1.5), the Gülen Movement is a global network with local hierarchies which has more than 1,000 Gülen inspired schools around the world and today the movement is under political pressure from the Erdogan administration in and outside of Turkey. (See chapter 3.3.4) Therefore, all participants and followers of the movement are very sensitive and cautious after the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016. This was a great challenge for researchers who want to research this subject, because followers who are active in the movement hesitated to give information to foreigners. To bypass this difficulty and to reach the managers of the GISs who carry responsibility and have knowledge about the practices on the field, the snowball effect was used. With this approach to sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic, and then uses these to establish contacts with others (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 434). Despite some disadvantages of the snowball effect, like interviewing just one similar type of participants, it is necessary to use this method in the first group because of the mentioned political situation. Therefore, the researcher of the study followed this formulation and searched the active and effective Gülen followers in his region and first contacted with them. In these meetings, the researcher of the study convinced them about the security and neutrality of the research and asked them for help. These effective people accepted this request and, by accessing the network of the movement, connected to the other proper followers in three different regions of the world, such as America, Europe, and Africa and informed them about the research. Later on, the researcher of the study got the contact information of these connections and contacted them and asked them whether it is possible to conduct an interview with the managers or deputy managers of GIS in their region. By this way, during the field study of this research, nine GISs (3 in the U.S., 3 in Europe and 3 in Africa) in six different countries of the world were visited and interviews were conducted with the managers or deputy managers of these schools.

The main reason for choosing these three regions depends on the structure of the Gülen inspired schools. During the preparation part to the field study, it was seen that at the international level the GIS are founded and expanded mainly in developing countries or in the developed countries. The schools in undeveloped countries were either closed after the failed coup attempt, mainly because of the pressure of administration of Turkey, or were in a bad, insecure condition. (See chapter 3.3.4.2) Therefore, these two types of countries are targeted on the field study. Out of many different developing countries, two developing countries from Africa were selected intentionally. This is mainly because the cultural and linguistic difference between Turkey and these selected African countries are huge, and unlike the other developing countries, it is more difficult to integrate in these regions for Gülen followers. This uniqueness is very important for the study and for the selection of Africa. From the developed countries, Europe and the U.S. are selected because of different reasons. Especially in the west European countries, the Turkish minority is sizable and has an important place in the society, which is not a case for the other developed countries. That is why the movement's potential and sources are higher in comparison to other developed countries and because of this point, the movement uses different strategies to expand these regions. This difference makes Europe important for the researcher of the study. It is also easy for the researcher, mainly because of his residence, to visit different countries in Europe and check what are the differences and similarities between these different countries. The last choice is the United States because of the very wide expansion of the Gülen inspired schools. According to Saul (Saul, 2011), only in Texas, there are 33 charter schools which were managed by the Gülen Followers in 2011. This number is more than 100 today all over the US according to different estimations. Besides, in addition to charter schools, the movement also has private schools which are very different than charter schools. This is, having different type of schools in the same country, another reason which also makes the U.S. important in addition to wide expansion. Like in Europe, different states were visited in the U.S. and the GISs in three different states were selected for the study. As a result, such a selection in these three continents will not cover all types of GISs in all over the world and therefore the researcher of the study limited his study to these three regions.

Normally as a consequence of using snowball effect, just one type of data is collected in field research. Mainly because of the affiliation to the Gülen movement and also because of the same occupation, it was also expected that the researcher of the study also receives similar types of data from the manager participants of the research. However, it was seen on the data analysis part that it is not like as it was expected, instead in addition to similarities, there are also significant differences found in the data, which is mainly because, the participants in this



section are from very different parts of the world. As a concrete example there are more similarities in the first research question, which is focusing on the education model of the GISs, however in the second and the third research questions, which are focusing on internationalization and the effects of the coup attempt in their regions, the responses vary a lot depending on the region and the local culture. All these similarities and differences are paid attention to in the results part of the study and discussed in the last section.

The second prototype of the participants in the field study consists of the experts who have a deep knowledge about the movement. Most of these people published papers or wrote books about the movement and it is possible to reach their contact information through Internet research. Unlike the first group, this type of participants is easy to reach for the researcher of the study. However, the main challenge in this point is the residence of the researcher in Germany. The researcher of the study knows the experts in the German academic world and he could only stay for a limited time frame outside of Germany, mainly because of the financial limitations of the research. He used this time to visit the GIS in these regions and to conduct interviews with the managers of these schools. That is why in this point “availability” of the participants’ principle, which Gordon mentioned above, is paid attention to and 30 experts who live Germany were found through Internet research.

During this selection, the stand of the experts was paid attention too. To have an equal selection, ten experts who are followers of Gülen and active in the movement (insider), ten experts who are neutral-positive (but not insiders) in their approach to the movement and ten experts who are criticizing and positioning himself/herself skeptical towards the movement were selected. By this way, the researcher of the study targeted contacting different type of experts and conducting a neutral research about the topic. Through email, these 30 possible contacts were informed and asked for an interview. Nine experts, three experts in each group, out of 30, accepted to the request and after establishing a proper time, the interviews were conducted with them. However, there were also participants who responded with several excuses and denied joining the research. As an example, one female expert mentioned that she was on maternity leave or another male expert mentioned that he had previously studied the subject before, but he did not have enough information about the actual situation of the movement today. There were also participants who did not respond the invitation email. After a while (almost one month later) another reminder email was sent to them again and politely asked to join the study but unfortunately the researcher of the study could not contact them.

Such an elimination, from 30 possible experts to nine experts, does not have an important consequence for the research. Because this research requires knowledge about the

current situation of the movement and the excuses such as maternity leave or not researching the movement for a while are important obstacles for participants and a negative issue for the research. Even if it is not mentioned, it is also predicted that the other experts who do not respond to the invitation email have also similar important reasons for not participating in the research. Therefore, it could be said that the other participants who did not join the study could not contribute the research more than the participated ones and that is why such an elimination do not damage the results of the study.

In this point, one of the most remarkable differences between the first and the second prototype of participants is age in the field study. The first group of participants consisted of young people in their thirties or forties and only two managers were over fifty in the first prototype. This was the opposite in the second prototype consisting of expert participants. Four out of nine participants were already retired and the other two were close to retirement. Just three expert participants were young - in his or her thirties or forties. Five out of these nine experts were working or retired from a university as academic staff and the other four had different occupations, like journalist, project manager or Imam. More details about the profiles about these experts and participants managers are listed in Appendix A.

The second important difference between these two prototypes is the residence of the participants. The manager participants are living in different countries or at least in different states. However, the expert participants are all from Germany. As a consequence of this situation, the data collected from manager participants varies according to region to region. However, the data collected from experts are mainly focused on the movements and GISs activities in Germany. During analyzes part of the study it was seen that such a difference does not interfere with the first research question of the study: what is the education model or what is the educational school concept of the movement. The movement's unique educational model, which is explained in chapter 4.1, does not vary according to region. On the other hand, mainly because of this difference it was seen in the analysis part that the second research question: internationalization strategy of the GISs, and the third research question: how the GISs are affected by the failed coup attempt in Turkey, vary according to region to region. Because of this situation the researcher of the study compares experts' views, which are mainly mirroring the German case, with the manager views outside of Germany, and demonstrate and highlight the differences depending on the regions.

To collect high quality data, all data was collected by face-to-face semi-structured interviews in this research. Because of the participants' expertise and very busy schedules, the researcher of the study visited all participants in their offices for the interview. Only one

interview is conducted through skype because of the demanding schedule of the expert participant of the study. By this way, the researcher of the study had a chance to see the natural periphery of the participant and his or her daily work atmosphere. In the first prototype, school managers, the interviews were conducted in their offices. This way the researcher had a chance to see the schools and other people like students, teachers or other administrators of the schools. In the second prototype, it was either an office, if the expert still works, or sometimes it was their homes if they were already retired. In the field study, four office visits, four home visits and one skype interview was conducted with the experts of the research.

All participants, both managers of the schools and experts on the Gülen Movement, were informed per email regarding all information about the interview. One of the important points in this email is about recording part of the interview. Gläser and Laudel (2009, p. 157) mentioned that it is difficult to grasp the data if it was not recorded through the interview in expert interviews. They quoted from Thomas that it is very easy to conduct an interview if it is recorded: “I make it a practice to tape record and fully transcribe all interviews. I explain this honestly, I have great difficulty listening, writing and thinking all at the same time” (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 157). Merriam (2009, p. 105) also highlighted the same issue and mentioned that the best way to keep data is recording and transcribing it during the data analysis. Babbie (2013, p. 321) advised that it would be better not to lose time between recording and transcribing part of the interview because the searcher could forget some details or important information about the research. That is why all interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher during the field study. In addition to that all participants were also informed that the researcher will use this data only in the data analysis part of the research. As a result, in total 18 participants accepted the requirements of the interviews and consented to contribute to the research.

One of the most important rules in data collection in qualitative research is privacy. Since the most important ethical principle is that no harm should be done to participants in an investigation, researchers must examine all questions as to whether or not they can cause such harm (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 145). In addition to research questions, Babbie (2013, p.65) also mention that in qualitative research, the names of the participants and institutions need to be protected by nicknames or coded names. However, the researcher could use the original names if the participants give permission to the researcher. Because of these points and the actual situation of the movement, researcher of the study decided to anonymize all the participants’ names. Thus, all participants of the study are coded, and these codes are listed in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: The list of the participants and their anonymous labels*

Participants	Region	Participant's Position	Participant's Code
USA	USA	Manager	USAM1
	USA	Manager	USAM2
	USA	Manager	USAM3
Europa	E	Manager	EM1
	E	Manager	EM2
	E	Manager	EM3
Africa	A	Manager	AM1
	A	Manager	AM2
	A	Manager	AM3
Experts from the movement	E	Follower	Ex1
	E	Follower	Ex2
	E	Follower	Ex3
Neutral-Positive Experts	E	Assist. Prof.	Ex4
	E	Writer	Ex5
	E	Prof.	Ex6
Experts skeptical to the movement	E	Assist. Prof.	Ex7
	E	Expert	Ex8
	E	Assist. Prof.	Ex9

As it seen in this table, all participants who contributed to this research are divided into four groups according to participants position such as nine managers from different regions,

three experts who are followers of the movement (Insider), three experts who have a neutral-positive (Not insider) view about the issue and three experts who criticize the movement.

The first group is the managers of the Gülen movement who contribute to the research with their knowledge about practices in Gülen inspired schools.<sup>22</sup> The second group is members of the Gülen Movement as an insider who support the movement in their activities and who have enough experience and knowledge about the movement.<sup>23</sup> The third group is the scholars or journalists outside of the movement who are researching the subject and have a neutral-positive approach to the movement.<sup>24</sup> The last group consists of the experts who are suspicious and skeptical to the movement's activities and criticize the movement from different aspects.<sup>25</sup> This way enables the comparison of different thoughts and practices.

To achieve high-quality data during the interviews, all interviews are conducted in the mother tongue of the participants. Participants' mother tongues are German, English, and Turkish in this study.

*Table 2: The languages that were used during the interviews.*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Interview Language</b>
EM1	Turkish
EM2	Turkish
EM3	Turkish
AM1	English
AM2	Turkish
AM3	Turkish
USAM1	Turkish
USAM2	Turkish
USAM3	Turkish
Ex1	Turkish
Ex2	Turkish
Ex3	Turkish
Ex4	German
Ex5	German
Ex6	German
Ex7	German
Ex8	German
Ex9	Turkish

<sup>22</sup> In total nine male managers from Europe, Africa and America

<sup>23</sup> Two male and one female followers of the movement who has a deep knowledge about the movement

<sup>24</sup> Two male and one female scholar who has an objective view about the movement

<sup>25</sup> Two male and one female expert participants who are criticizing the movement

Later, German, and Turkish interviews were translated to English and then checked by an expert of English. Such translations could cause damage to the original text but because of the reliability and validity concerns both the original text and the translation was kept by the researcher.

### 3.2.3 Data Collection of the Research

Qualitative data can be defined by their form (non-numeric) and by the interactive and interpretative process in which they are created (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015, p. 129). There are several types of qualitative research methods which are used in social research, depending on their manner of data collection. Mostly, either observation or communication or a mixture of these two methods are used to collect data in qualitative research. For example, "narratives" are one of the qualitative research types which solely depends on observation. On the other hand, different kind of interviews like expert interviews, focus interviews, or problem-centered interviews are qualitative research methods depending on communication. There are also researchers who use a mixture of these methods to explain his or her research questions.

As it was reasoned in the sampling part, the expert interview method is more preferable for the field study of the research rather than other qualitative data collection methods. After choosing the data collection method, it is important to follow the rules of this method and practice it in the field in the right manner. First of all, it is important to understand the difference between a conversation and an interview. DeMarrais (2004) defines face-to-face interviews as a specific conversation between researcher and interviewer about a field, and questions regarding this field. Dexter (1970, p. 35) gives a much simpler definition and says that face-to-face interviews are conversations that are dependent on a specific goal between participants of the discussion. According to the targeted data, the types of interview questions change. Merriam (2009, p. 94) mentions that structured interviews are used in qualitative research to obtain the participants' demographic information such as age, gender, how many years of work experience they have, etc. At the beginning of the interviews, general information about the participant is needed which is why this method is shortly used at the beginning of the interviews. However, Merriam (2009, p. 95) defines semi-structured interviews as follows: "Semi-structured interviews consist of open-ended questions and describe participant's perception of the world with his or her own ideas". According to Gläser and Laudel (2009, p. 111), all expert interviews have to be promoted by semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the communication in this study is organized based on semi-structured interviews.

Because of these approaches, before starting the field study, two interview protocols with the semi-structured interview questions were prepared by the researcher with probe questions according to the conceptual framework of the study. The reason behind the preparation of two different type of interview protocols depends on the participant's prototypes. In the field study of research, there are two prototypes of participants who joined the study, such as managers of the GISs and experts who have knowledge about the movement. The first group, managers of the schools, are in charge of the management of the GISs and they have a practical knowledge about the movement. On the other hand, the second group consists of experts who have theoretical knowledge about the movement. This difference is paid attention to by the researcher during the preparation part and two type of semi-structured interviews were prepared. Mainly because of the conceptual framework of the study, the subjects discussed are similar in these two interview protocols, but as it was expected, the questions in the first interview protocol are based more on practice and in the second one it is based more on theory.

The most important part in these semi-structured is the **openness** of the questions. One of the big challenges of non-standard interviews is the openness of the question (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 131). This type of questions give the participant freedom and flexibility to express his or her ideas about the subject. Maximum openness means that the question exerts as little influence as possible on the content of the answer (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 131). Therefore, during the preparation of the interview protocols, maximum openness is targeted by the researcher and he was hesitant to intervene in the participants answers. As an example "*How do you present your school concept to the new parents?*"

Another basic rule for formulating questions in social research is the requirement of **neutrality**: questions should not be formulated to suggest a specific answer to the respondent (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 135). Because of such an approach, during the preparation of the interview questions, the researcher was hesitant to ask leading questions. Besides, during the interviews, the same questions were asked to all participants, which demonstrates that the questions were neutral enough and do not lead the participant to any specific answer. In addition to preparation, the same rule has to paid attention to during the participant collection and conducting the interviews. That is why the researcher of the study selected different type of experts about the movement (See table 1). As a result, during the interviews, the researcher keeps his neutrality and did not interfere with participants answers, just let them know that he had knowledge about the issue. As an example to this type of question is as follows: "*Especially after the coup attempt in Turkey, all schools were shut down in Turkey and Gülen schools*



*outside of Turkey have faced financial problems. Do you have any financial concerns about the future of Gülen schools in the world?”*

Gläser and Laudel (2009, p.139) quoted from Patton and describes this point as follows:

When phrasing questions in this way, I want to let the person I’m interviewing know that I have pretty much heard it all the bad things and the good things and so I’m not interested in something that is particularly sensational, particularly negative, or especially positive. I’m really only interested in what that person’s experience has been like.

In addition to openness and neutrality, the **clarity of the questions** is another point which is important in semi-structured interviews. Unclear questions create confusion and damage to the contribution of the participants during the interviews. Besides, multiple questions also cause confusion on the participants focus. In these type of questions mostly participant focus on one point and the other points are dismissed reluctantly. The researcher of the study paid attention to these crucial points during the preparation of the interview protocols.

The other type of questions were **confrontation questions** which were asked to the participants. In this type of questions the researcher tries to confront the participant and tries to provakate the participant to explain or highlight an unclear situation about the issue. As an example *“From the previous studies, we know that the Gülen movement is an Islamic movement, however Gülen inspired schools apply laicism and they do not have any religion class or merely a minor one with just a few hours a week. What’s the main reason behind this practice?”* or sometimes according to answer spontaneously, *“In this point, could we say that the Gülen inspired schools were conducting missionary activities in their regions?”*

Another type used in the interviews is the **future focused questions**, such as *“What’s your expectations about the future of the movement?”* or *“What do you think, how will the political disorder between the Turkish government and the movement be in the future?”* are some other questions to see what the participants perception about the future of the discussed issues is.

After the interview protocols are prepared, it needs to be sent to an explicit check (Gläser & Laudel, 2009, p. 149). That’s why these interview questions were sent to an expert on qualitative research method and interviewing. These questions were restructured according to the expert’s views and the last version of the questions were used in interviews. However, during the interviews additional questions could be asked by the researcher, depending on the

responses of the participants. Because of the uniqueness of these extra questions, they were not put on the protocol.

One of the most important aspects during the interviews is to follow the right steps. As an example, Gläser and Laudel (2009, p. 162) mentioned that it would be better to inform the participant about the details of the interview again at the beginning. That is why initially before the questions, the researcher of the study repeated several issues about the interview like privacy issues or recording parts, to be sure that the participant is still ready to join the study. Such an approach also relaxes the participants and they were more likely to join the study. In fact, it was observed during the interviews that all participants were confident and open to research. The main reason behind this behavior and readiness to cooperate is the snowball effect in the first prototype of participants and the residence of the participants in Germany in the second prototype of participants. As it was explained in the sampling part, participants in the first group, managers of the GISs, of the study were selected through the snowball effect and mainly because of this selection they trusted the researcher because of the connection with people who had an active role in the movement. In this way the researcher did not meet any difficulty on these interviews. The second prototype of participants, experts' group, were also relaxed and confident during the interviews, mainly because of their secure environment in Germany.

In addition to this point, the order of the questions also played a crucial role in the interviews. Before asking the main research questions, the researcher of the study asked some easy "ice breaking" questions like *"How long have you been manager of this school?"* or *"In which year do you have your first contact with the movement?"*. Such questions were easy to answer and help the researcher to build a close relationship between participants. After that the research questions were asked and in this part, it is important to ask related questions with each other. As an example, in the field study, the first Progressive Education model of the GIS is asked, then their internationalization strategy and at the end the effects of the failed coup attempt was discussed with the participants. What was their perception about the future of the movement and their schools were also asked at the end. After finishing the interview questions, the researcher of the study left free room to the participants and told them that, *"If you want to add something or some other points which I missed during the questions, please do not hesitate to highlight your opinions."* In this way, sometimes participants of the study contributed their different thoughts related with the study.

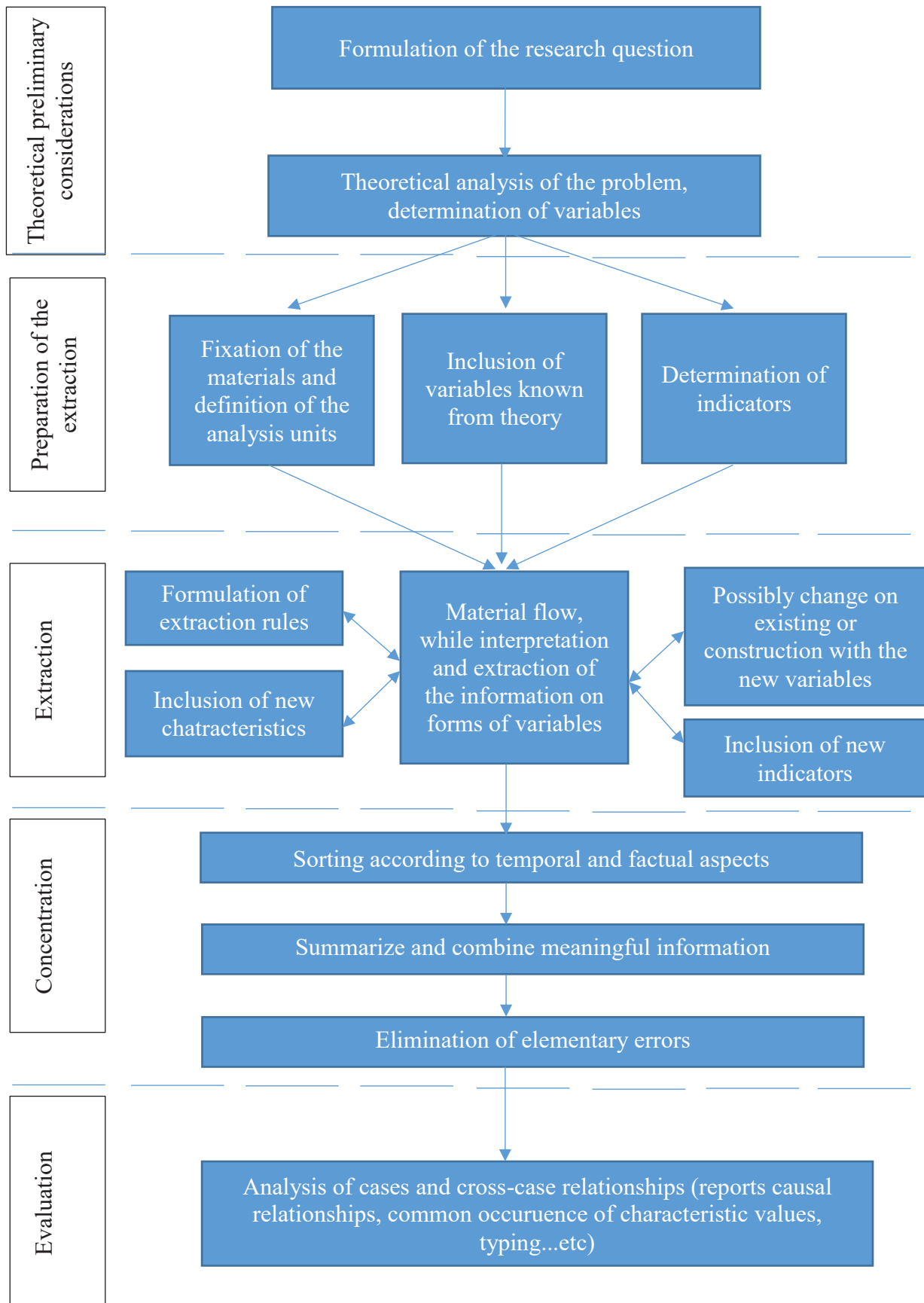
At the end of the interview, on the same day, the researcher wrote his observations about the interview, the participant and the environment in his research diary and on the following

days transcribed the interviews by himself. In this way he tried to avoid losing any detail about the interview.

#### 3.2.4 Data Analysis

There are several different approaches to data analysis in qualitative research. For example, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2015, p. 185) discussed seven types of data analysis such as content analysis, grounded analysis, visual analysis, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, argument analysis, narrative analysis, and computer aided analysis. However, Gläser and Laudel (2009, p. 203) mentioned that, the procedure of the qualitative data analysis is the same in these different types and they showed this procedure on the Figure 1 below:

**Figure 1: Procedure of the qualitative data analysis (Gläser and Laudel, 2009, p. 203)**



The researcher of the study pays attention to these procedures during the analysis part of the study followed the order as it was designed by Gläser and Laudel above. Therefore, initially on the analysis part, the research question is defined and current literature is reviewed, related with the research question according to the conceptual framework of the study, which are the progressive education model of the GISs, the internationalization of the GISs and effects of the failed coup attempt on GISs. After that, data was collected via interviews with the participants. Like Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 521) mentioned in their book, all interviews are recorded and transcribed so that the detailed analyzes can be easily carried out. These analyzes are concerned with uncovering the underlying structures of talk in interaction and as such with the achievement of order through interaction (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 521). That is why all interviews are recorded and transcribed on the field study. The collected data throughout interviews are summarized and interpreted according to the conceptual framework. All these interviews about the GISs are examined in regard to the concepts in the conceptual framework with multiple units of analysis. These units of analysis are managers of the schools in the field, experts who are from the movement, experts who criticize the movement and experts who have an objective view about the movement. After that, responses from three selected regions and the ideas of the experts who are pro and contra towards the movement are compared with each other. This type of method demonstrated the similarities and differences between different regions initially. It also shows the similarities and differences between practice and theory of the subject from different perspectives. At end of the research, this analysis will be discussed in the conclusion part.

To ensure effective data analysis, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was used. CAQDAS can do many, if not most, of the clerical tasks associated with the manual coding and retrieving of data easier and faster (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 541). Data analysis management consists of three steps: preparation, definition, and usage of the data. Such organization and management will contribute to the theory of the research. Because of these needed stages, one of the most used CAQDAS software, Maxqda, was selected and used in this paper because of its special features and its availability to the university. There are different features of this program for qualitative researchers; however, because of the design of the study and data analysis method of the paper, certain features were used. User-friendly parts of the software and, in particular, very useful tools such as categories and codes help the researcher to manage and analyze data in this study.

In this research, all interviews were first transcribed in F5 software program. Then, by using the Maxqda program, all these transcribed interviews were uploaded to the database of Maxqda. In the third step, all participants' answers were coded according to the content of the answer and prepared for use.

According to these codes, the conceptual framework of the study is restructured and organized. At the end, the researcher called upon different data per categories from managers in the field and participant experts. In the first structure unit, participants' institutions and their region are considered and classified. In the second unit expert views about the movement are considered and classified. In the third unit, the first unit and the second unit are compared with each other. For example, what are the approaches of the managers and experts in America regarding the diversity challenge? Is there a difference between charter schools or private schools of the movement about the diversity challenge? Are there similarities or differences between the three regions concerning the diversity challenge?

Another important point of attention on the analysis part is the international structure of the study. It needs to be recognized that the reality of comparing schools in different countries is a complex multidimensional issue (Goldstein, 2004, p. 328). As expected, these countries represent a wide range of education systems and models as well as diverse policies and practices that are relevant for them. Besides, teacher policies and learning opportunities are different around the world (OECD, 2017, p. 73). Depending on these issues, the researcher of the study used some methods of international comparative research to add extra dimensions to his study.

Researchers engaging in international comparative research face the same issues that any social science researcher has to address. The research methods to be adopted in any study obviously depend on a prior research perspective (evaluative, interpretative, investigative, critical, developmental, etc.); the aspect of education is the unit of analysis that is to be compared; and the data that are available. [...] In sum, the value of comparative education lies in helping us to fulfil the purposes of research to find out, explain, evaluate, critique, advocate and develop. (Adamson, 2012, p. 647)

Adamson (2012, p. 647) also highlighted that the right research method, either qualitative, quantitative or mixed research method has to be selected and during the research multiple layers caused by cultural influences have to be paid attention to during the study. To make the comparison meaningful in this research, the conducted interviews were analyzed in

the right manner. In the case of this study, the analysis is based on comparisons of the common practices or common features and also the differences of management of the GISs within and across countries. As an example, the management of a GIS in one country is compared to the management of other participating GISs in other countries, or the educational activities of a GIS in one state are compared to the other states, in the case of the United States. Similarities and differences depending on the regions were paid attention and discussed on the discussion part. The most important part in this study is comparing GISs to or against GISs. The geographical differences or the differences according to the economy or the environment of these countries were also recognized, however, the focus point of this study is the relation of these schools within their own environment and the relation of these schools to the Gülen movement. From this point of view, the point of comparison in this study is a relative rather than an absolute comparison, and that is why it is difficult to call this study a comparative study.

### 3.2.5 Research Criteria

In general, objectivity, reliability and validity are shown as the main research criteria in quantitative research methods. Merriam (2009, p. 200) mentions that reliability and validity is related to preparing a conceptual framework, data collection, data analysis, discussion, and introducing the results in all different types of qualitative researches. She also quoted from Firestone and mentions that reliability and validity in qualitative research depends on the persuasion of the reader on the logic and acceptability of the research results (Merriam, 2009, p. 200). However according to Mayring (2002, p. 141) both methods are not accurate for the qualitative research method. One reason that qualitative oriented research has to look for new quality criteria is that the classical criteria is often unsustainable. The researcher of the study practiced five general criteria for qualitative researchers which Mayring (2002, p. 140-149) explained in his book, such as:

**Procedural Documentation:** For quantitative research, it is usually sufficient to refer to the techniques and measuring instruments used because they are standardized. In qualitative oriented research, on the other hand, the approach is much more specific to the subject, and the methods are usually developed or differentiated specifically for this subject (Mayring, 2002, p. 145). For this reason, the researcher of the study documented all research parts in detail and wrote a diary which includes all these steps. All emails, pictures, recorded interviews, and the diary of the research are the documents of the followed strategy in this research. In this diary, the interviews and visits were explained in detail and all steps were noted. The researcher of



the study keeps this diary for himself, mainly because of the private data inside, and uses it during the field study. However, the most important parts from this diary about the participants and visited schools are anonymized and explained in Appendix A and Appendix B at the end of the research.

**Argumentative Interpretation Assurance:** Interpretations play a crucial role in qualitative approaches. The interpretation must be coherent; where breaks are, they must be explained (Mayring, 2002, p. 145). In the field study of the research, each participant brings a unique perspective to the study. The connection of these different approaches and similarities and differences in different point of views were interpreted by the researcher of the study. In this point neutrality is a very important issue which was targeted by the researcher. To achieve this neutrality, the researcher reasoned all his interpretations depending on the data which he has received from the participants.

**Rule Structured Construction:** Mayring quoted from Overmann and mentioned that even qualitative research must adhere to certain procedural rules and systematically process its material (Mayring, 2002, p. 146). To conduct the research in the right procedural rules, the researcher of the study visited Qualitative Research Design lecture before the field study and followed the procedures of the Expert Interview methods, which was explained by Gläser and Laudel (2009) during the field study and analysis part of the study.

**Proximity to the Object:** Instead of bringing test persons into the lab, the researcher tries to go into the "field", into the natural world of the researched subject. To what extent this succeeds is an important quality criterion (Mayring, 2002, p. 146). To achieve such a kind of quality criterion, the researcher of the study conducted all interviews at the office or home of the participant. Only one expert interview was conducted through skype connection because of the participant's busy schedule and change in his position. Therefore, in the field study, the researcher visited six different countries, observed nine different schools and the manager's offices in these schools to achieve this criterion. In addition to interviews, the researcher also conducted small talks between students, parents and also some other teachers of the schools in these different countries and also in different states, in the case of the USA. Besides, the researcher visited eight expert's offices or homes and observed their natural periphery in their daily life. The important observations in these visits were written in the research diary and also listed in Appendix A and Appendix B at the end of the research.

**Communicative Validity:** In conventional usage, validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Babbie, 2004, p. 143). However, specifically in qualitative research, the validity of the results

and the interpretations can also be checked by presenting them to the participants and discussing them with them (Mayring, 2002, p. 147). Mainly because of the wide range of the field study, according to amount of the participants and the international structure of the study, it is very difficult to come together again with the participants. This part is explained in detail in limitations part, however to bypass this problem, the results of the study were regularly discussed in collegial meetings and different types of interpretations were considered during the study.

In addition to Mayring's point of views, Gläser and Laudel (2009, p. 116) also highlighted several criteria about the qualitative researches. For example, according to them, the research questions have to include the following points:

**Scope:** In the interview, a sufficiently broad spectrum of problems must be addressed so that respondents have the greatest possible chance of reacting in an unanticipated way.

**Specificity:** The topics and questions raised in the interview should be treated in a specific way. The semi-structured interview questions must translate the insight into the context of the background of the respondents.

**Depth:** The interviewee should be supported in the representation of the affective, cognitive and value-related meaning of certain situations and in the presentation of his involvement.

**Personal context:** The personal and social context in which respondents' responses must be sufficient for the research subject and they have to be clearly recorded.

All these four mentioned points are also targeted during the preparation of interview protocols and sensitively applied during the field study. Depending on these two different quality criterion approaches, Mayring and Laudel & Gläser, it could be said that the researcher of the study tried to practice all necessary steps to conduct a high quality field research.

### 3.2.6 Limitations

Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 296) mention that describing the limitations of the research is one method that helps to demonstrate the truth of the data. The main responsibility of the researcher is to do his or her best during the research process. At the end of the study, it is better to tell the details of the research conditions to the reader. In this research, there were also some challenges faced by the researcher. These limitations concerned mainly the content of the subject and geographical difficulties.

The Gülen Movement is a new subject in comparison to other similar educational movements like the Waldorf Movement or the Montessori Movement. In addition to that, with

the globalization of the last three decades, the movement has expanded all over the world. These two issues enlarge the content of this research. First of all, there is not enough research particularly focused on school concept of the movement or internationalization of these schools and secondly it is too difficult to add all regions of the world where the Gülen Movement is active to this study. Therefore, the research is limited to only three regions: Europe, Africa and the US, and only Gülen schools are examined and other institutions like foundations, educational institutions, or other structures are dismissed in this study. However, being aware of this limitation, the researcher of the study analyzed previous studies like Agai's (2008) dissertation in the West European and Balkan countries, Michel's (2003) observations in Central Asia, Park's (2007) studies in Philippines, Aliyev's(2012) research about Azerbaijan, Arslan's (2014) research about Canada, Balçı's (2014) research about Central Asia and the Caucasus, Williams's (2007) research about Turkey and the UK , Mehmeti's (2012) research in Kosovo, Aydin's (2013) research in Nigeria, Naqvi and Ibrar's (2013) research in Pakistan, Mohamed's (2007) research in South Africa, Dohrn's (2014) observations in Tanzania or Clement's (2007) research in Turkmenistan and used their observations in this study. By this way the results of the field research is compared with these previous studies and similarities and differences are discussed in this research.

Additionally, only one method of data collection was used – conducting expert interviews. This is another limitation of the study. Unfortunately, the other research methods do not help to find the fitting data for the research question. In addition, to achieve high quality data, the interviews were conducted in the participants' native language such as Turkish, German, and English. Later, quotes from Turkish and German interviews were translated to English. Such a translation process is another limitation, but to achieve trustworthiness, only the English translation of these quotes are used in the dissertation.

In addition to mentioned issues, the other limitation on the sampling part of the study is that the majority of the participants consisted of male participants. As it was shown in the footnotes 22, 23, 24 and 25 in page 147 above, 15 participants were male and three participants were female in the research. There are several reasons because of this division and one of the main reasons behind this division depends on the structure of the movement. As it was mentioned in the chapter 2.1.4 and 4.6, the female followers have become active in the movement since the failed coup attempt in July 2016 and during the field study that occurred from 2017 to 2018, the majority of the managers of the Gülen inspired schools were still male. Therefore, all participants from the Gülen inspired schools were male in the research. Besides, it was seen on the internet research that the majority of the experts who studied movement or

participated in movement activities were also male. In addition to that, one female researcher excused herself because of her maternity leave. Despite all these negative factors, the researcher met three female expert participants in the field study. One of these experts is against the movement, the other has a neutral-positive view about the movement (Not insider) and the third one is very active on the movement (Insider). In this way, the researcher of the study tried to bypass this deficiency as much as possible.

The other limitation which was mentioned above was the residence location of the expert participants. Unfortunately, because of the financial and time limitations, the researcher of the study did have less time to spend outside of Germany. Therefore, the second prototype of the participants, experts of the movement, were selected in Germany. The consequences of this issue and how the researcher of the study dealt with this limitation are explained above in chapter 3.2.2.

Another similar limitation is avoiding to choose school managers from undeveloped countries. As it was explained before, mainly because of the political pressure of the Turkish government to the undeveloped countries, the GISs in these countries were either closed or in a bad, insecure condition. (See chapter 3.3.4) Therefore, the researcher of the study hesitated to travel to these countries and conducted his research in developing and developed countries.

Lastly, because of the structure of the study, the researcher visited different parts of the world instead of organizing Skype interviews with the participants who live in different locations. During the visits, the researcher had the chance to observe the schools and the atmosphere of the participants. This is an advantage, but it would take too much time to do and cost too much to do this in more places. On the other hand, Skype meetings could be sufficient in respect to time and expenses but in this method the researcher does not have the chance to make any observation about the participant and his or her work environment. Therefore, in this research only the face-to-face interview method is used, and the Skype method is avoided by the researcher. Only one interview, because of the participant's choice, was conducted through skype but the other interviews were conducted through face-to face-interviews in their local environment.

### 3.3 Results of the Study

The goal of this study is to understand the school concept of GISs worldwide, their expansion and adaptation to the world, and to demonstrate the affects of the failed coup attempt on these schools. As it was mentioned in previous parts, these subjects were not researched before and especially from educational sciences perspective it is very important to highlight what kind of educational concept do these schools have, how this movement has internationalized its

educational institutions and transformed its identity in the last four decades, and how they confronted the political pressure after the failed coup attempt which was researched in this study. Because of these research questions, which are "how" questions and targeted to understand the issue, the researcher of the study preferred to use the Qualitative Research Method and conducted a field study by collecting new data through interviews with the school managers in three continents, such as Europe, Africa and America, and also from experts who had a deep knowledge about the subject. One third of these experts are followers of the movement who have experience with the issue, the second third of these experts are the neutral researchers who are studying this subject out of the movement and the last one third of the participants are the experts who have raised criticism against the movement from different perspectives. By this way present-day data from different sources are collected and appropriate findings are targeted by the researcher. In summary, nine schools are visited, and 18 interviews are conducted by the researcher from September 2017 to October 2018.

Such a new data collection and field study is necessary for the study because one of the most important concerns of the researcher is to have proper data about the subject. This concern is mainly because the Gülen Movement is a new phenomenon in compare to Waldorf or Montessori movements in the educational sciences and there is a lack of scientific research about the issue. Besides, almost all of the previous research was done before the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, which is an important gap for the data. This coup attempt is a milestone for the movement and especially Gülen inspired schools started to transform their identity after this event (See chapter 3.3.4 and 4.4).

In this part, participants' views are analyzed by using MAXQDA software program. The data is analyzed according to the conceptual framework of this study which explains the Gülen inspired school's education model and presents how the movement's inspired schools have expanded in the last four decades.

### 3.3.1 Special Features of the Schools

One of the most difficult questions during the interviews is what makes the Gülen inspired schools different or what are the differences between Gülen inspired schools and the other schools in the same region. Almost all of the participants thought for a while and some of them supposed that there are not too many differences anymore today. Mainly because of the competition, other schools have also started to apply some unique parts of Gülen inspired schools in their system. For example, the manager of the third school in Europe explains this issue as follows:

"So, when we first opened this school, our mission was the concept of World Citizenship. So, you can live together with everyone. This is a very original concept in 2006, but in 2018 it's not original anymore. Because now the other educational units are talking about the same thing too. But in 2006 when we started the concept of world citizenship, it was very new and unique, and we had to constantly contemplate it, why it is needed." (EM3)

The other participant from another country in Europe also highlighted this issue and mentioned that when they were first founded in 2007, they were the first high school which was using a full-day concept in their region. At that time, other high schools in their region applied a half-day program in their education system. After conducting several investigations about this new whole day education concept, the educational authorities in that country decided to change other schools' programs from a half-day program to a whole-day program too. Similar discourses were observed during the interviews in other regions too. Therefore, according to the participants of the study, it is difficult to talk about huge differences between Gülen inspired schools and other schools today. However, during the interviews, some points were unwittingly highlighted from the participants which differentiate Gülen inspired schools from other schools. Besides, during the field research it was observed that all of these schools have tried to create new concepts and practice modern technologies which differentiate them from other schools. Therefore, especially during the field study, it was seen that there are still important differences between Gülen inspired schools and other schools. These differences played an important role during the internationalization process of the movement and it is crucial to understand these differences first.

#### *3.3.1.1 Unique Philosophy of the GIS*

Gülen's approach to education is very different and deep in comparison to standard education systems. In general, schools or other educational institutions feel that they are responsible to the state, the parents of their students and also to the society. However, Gülen (1979a) believe that education is a holy duty and that educators have to feel that they are responsible to God. Therefore, from the beginning, the movement is very sensitive and professional, especially regarding the education field. The first expert, who was the manager of the first Gülen inspired school in Izmir, Turkey, gave one of his conversations with Gülen as an example and told how the first school of the movement, which will later become a prototype for the other GISs in Turkey was founded, as follows:

"Akyazılı was the first school of the movement in Izmir and our rooms are close to Gülen. One day he said to me, "What are you doing at home when the children are uncovered in their bed over the winter?" I said that, they are Allah's present to us, and we are responsible, I cover them, I tried to keep them healthy, then I will keep them warm so that they are useful people. Then Gülen said to me that now we have entrusted these children from their parents, Allah will not ask their parents for the account of those children, Allah will ask us for their account. (EX1)

Ex1 also mentioned that he saw Gülen many times working at midnight at the dormitory or at this first founded school in Izmir and he (Gülen) asked them to do the same, otherwise they cannot account for Allah. Gülen himself also highlighted this approach many times in his speeches and books too. That is why Gülen inspired schools have built their education system according to this understanding and practice student-based teaching in their schools. Individual education and individual consulting are very important in this model. How the movement practices this individual education is explained in the next chapter but the main understanding behind this model is to believe that the school management, along with the teachers are responsible for these students to God and they believe that every student has special skills and their goal is to find and improve these skills during the educational process.

Of course, such an understanding above requires much work and altruism, which will be the second unique difference in the educational philosophy of the GISs. Gülen supposed that the educational staff have to just focus on their educational activities without paying any attention to salary, reward or any other expectation. Because of the importance of their duty, sole concentration on students is crucial. Participants of the field study also highlighted this issue:

"People who will contribute to this kind of model have to be raised. This is such a kind of model, people who can do something by adding something from themselves, giving their lives to it, and not thinking of a high salary." (EX2)

"I think that the first difference is the staff with no expectations, but they channel all their power, strength and abilities, and makes all kinds of sacrifices for the students to work for the future of the school." (USAM3)

This issue is also observed in the field study in all three regions. In general, teachers have an average or below average salary in comparison to other schools, but they have more work hours and the management demands extra activities after school hours too. The only way to work in such conditions is to have such an altruistic philosophy and therefore, Gülen placed



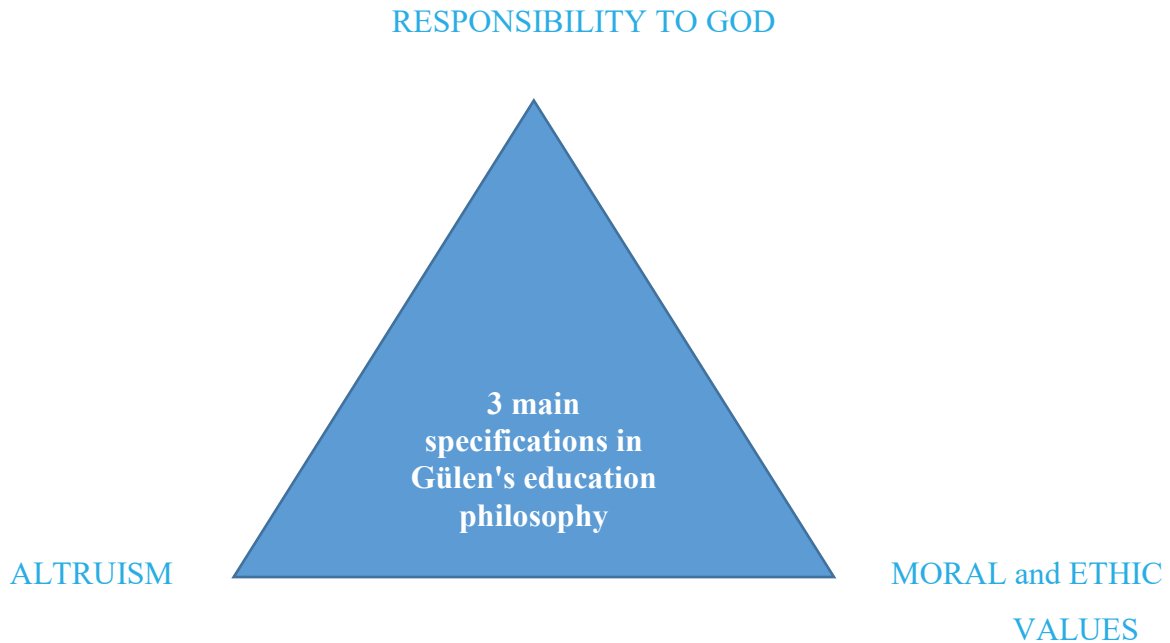
the great value of "altruism" on the movement and gave many examples in his speeches and books to highlight this issue.

Another important difference in the philosophy of the GIS is the understanding of "success". In normal schools, students who have good grades from the exams or who have high marks from central national or international exams are perceived as a successful student, thus the academic success is on the center of education. However, such an understanding is expanded in GISs and, in addition to academic success on their studies, high moral values and ethical understanding is also targeted in Gülen inspired schools. That is why students who have vices like gambling, smoking...etc. are not perceived as a successful student in GISs, even if they have good grades in their school reports.

"We call it a well-grounded education, so there is not only an academic aspect, it is networking or the children's sports club for example, communicating with other people, doing something to others, community service I mean, this is important for us and also for the college." (USAM2)

During the observations it was confirmed that all Gülen inspired schools have either "ethic classes" or similar classes like character education or world citizenship courses in which students learn international moral values and ethical understanding. These classes and "role model" practice, which will be explained in the following chapters, are unique practices to give high moral values in GISs. At this point, it is important to acknowledge that GISs have tried to teach ethical values and moral understanding in their educational system, without focusing any religion or nationality, instead only focusing on international common values.

*Figure 2: 3 Main Specification Points in the Gülen Education Philosophy*



These three main differences in the philosophy of GIS have caused a better, more individual, high level education in GISs. Ex1 supposed this point and mentioned that in the third year of the first school in Turkey, they got more than 800 applications. On the other hand, how the movement applied these three major differences with local teachers is another question asked during the interviews. EM3 mentioned that they found this approach strange and extreme at the beginning. However, during the last twenty years, both teachers, Turkish and also non-Turkish ones, and parents have gotten used to this approach and it has become a school tradition in Gülen inspired schools. Unwittingly, all manager participants mentioned the same issues during the interviews, and they highlighted that their approach to students differentiates them from the other schools.

The discussion in this point is not dependent on the philosophy, but instead the goal of the movement. Even the participants who are against the Movement applauded this kind of philosophy and appreciated this approach, but they mentioned that this is mainly because the goal of the movement, which is to teach conservative religious values and to try to cause a change from secular social concept to Islam based religious concept. Ex7 also highlighted the same issue as follows,

I see and also suspect that through these areas Gülen's basic ideas are passed on to the students. (Ex7)

However, all school managers debated on this issue and mentioned that their main goal is only to support students in their studies and try to motivate them to increase their grades. Ex2 also deliberates on this approach and summarizes the goal of these schools as follows,

"Now Gülen inspired schools, (thinks for a while) philosophically have three major problems in the world: poverty, disunity and ignorance. The movement both deals with ignorance and remedies poverty and represents worldwide peace. This is type of model targeted world peace through these three issues." (Ex2)

Many experts like Pahl, Dohrn, Ebaugh and Agai also supported this idea which was inherited from Bediüzzaman Said Nursi.

From Said Nursi, Gülen learned that three primary problems plagued the modern world: ignorance, disunity and poverty. Gülen then taught that this unholy trinity could be remedied through positive action to promote education, to engage dialogue and to generate wealth. (Pahl, 2019, p. 19)

In this approach, human beings have very different talents and skills and if these abilities are canalized to the goodness, they will serve it. Otherwise, all these capabilities are either demolished or used in the wrong direction. Therefore, it is essential to build this type of educational institutions and invest in the next generations. All manager participants also underlined this issue. Just as an example, AM2 mentioned that they just want to graduate students who love their country, their family and also other people. They want to graduate a generation who have respect and mercy for everyone, thus they are teaching these ethic classes in their schools.

### *3.3.1.2 Additional Educational Activities in and out of Class*

The three mentioned differences in philosophy have also affected the practice of GISs. One of the most significant differences in this point is the additional educational activities in the GISs. During the field study, it was observed that both in and out of class, there are several courses or programs organized to support and increase the academic success of the students. This point is also underlined by all participants of the field study. They mentioned that one of the most significant difference between GISs and other schools are additional educational activities in and out of class.

"There are many supportive measures, for example, if a child simply has weaknesses, the Gülen School provides a second teacher or tutoring so that the child gets included."  
(Ex5)

"It's not just at school hours, because for us, the school building is not a place which opens at eight o'clock in the morning till at four o'clock in the afternoon, and it's not just a building where math, physics, chemistry, etc. are taught." (EM2)

The first additional educational activity occurs during school hours. During the visits in three parts of the world, it was observed that all GISs practice a whole-day school model in their institutions. In this way students spend more time at the school and, in comparison to other students, they have more classes.

"For example, a normal public school starts at eight and ends at two, two-thirty. The other charter schools are usually so, some charter schools are late, but the common feature of our schools is that the school is going up to four-thirty or so. Yes, we have an all-day concept, so we give two math lessons, one morning and one afternoon. Science can be like that. So, we have chance to teach more subjects and to do more exercises because we have more time." (USAM1)

In some of these classes, which they call "study whole" in the US, students have a chance to study individually and do their homework by cooperating with their classmates and their teachers. Especially students who have family problems or do not have enough space/environment in his or her home could use these hours. In addition, students have a chance to ask questions when they need help and also to cooperate with their friends in these hours too.

Secondly, additional educational activities are the ones which are organized out of school hours. Based on the managers' responses on this subject, it could be said that there are three types of additional educational activities out of classes used in GISs such as:

- a. extra classes for the weak students,
  - b. coaching activities
  - c. national and international contests and school projects
- 
- a. [Extra Classes for the weak students](#)

In the first type of additional education activities, especially students who have low grades in some lessons are supported by additional classes after school hours or on Saturdays.

"While the schools actually have the supporting concept, I look at where the child uncouples and there I work with the child, yes. And on the same side I also look after the resources which also means that I do not just teach the child but really make sure that he or she got it. I'm not sure at all if all schools in the Gülen movement really do that, but this is the main understanding. So yes, I do not know the practice well." (Ex6)

As an example, EM1 mentioned that they have Saturday school from 10 am to 2 pm and it's free and open to all of their students. EM3 also supported this point and mentioned that they are also open on Saturdays and on some holidays too. The visited schools in Africa organizes weekly exams on Saturdays, which is unique in that country. These Saturday exams cover the lectures of that week and students get their results on Monday. This way they could see their level and work more on the points which they did not understand the week before. Schools in Africa organize this type of extra learning hours in their dormitories in the evenings.

USAM1 highlighted the background of the parents of the weak students who in general do not have any college or university degree and mentioned without this kind of supportive activities, it is impossible to achieve success for this type of students. It was observed in the U.S. that every school has a College Guidance department which finds out the students who need more help and by cooperating with the families of the students, they forward these students to after school courses or Saturday classes. In Europe and Africa, mainly class teachers do this duty. As a result, by using this way students, who are weak in their class, have found a chance to fill their gaps and study more in their subjects.

In all of these schools, either teachers or good students from higher classes help these weak students in these extra classes. This is also a unique application in GISs and this system is called *abi / abla* in Turkish and translated to English as the big brother / big sister system. AM1 described these students as follows,

"Normally these kinds of a students are high school students who are very good and then they can also pull the other students." (AM1)

These *abis* cooperate with the teachers of the school and also with the school management and in this way, an internal engagement is practiced in the GISs. The number of these older students varies according to need. AM3 also added that leadership and pedagogy are the important skills looked at while choosing the *abis* or *ablas*. Such a system is a win-win process for both students and GISs because both parties have advantages. AM2 describes the advantages of this system to the students as follows:

"The first, these students understand better if they teach the subject to another student, because when a person tells something, he or she will not forget it again. Second point, you give that child a responsibility, so you are preparing him or her for life." (AM2)

This system also decreases the workload of the teachers and the management in GISs, because when too many students demand this kind of help, it is impossible to find enough teachers for these additional courses. AM1 also highlighted that and mentioned that,

"Besides, because there are many other issues with teachers, they are busy, they have families, they have to go out and visit parents ...etc." (AM1)

As a result, the GISs offer extra additional courses and learning platforms either with teachers or older students who could also teach younger ones and try to help weak students to improve their weak subjects. In this way almost all of the graduates from the GISs could easily attend a four-year college or a similar institution.

#### b. Consulting or coaching Activities

The second type of educational activity is coaching or consulting outside of class. These kinds of activities are seriously conducted and followed by the management. Mostly, there are one or two people with an education and experience who are employed for this job and they report directly to the school manager. These people are called *Rehber* or "PDR"(which means psychological counselor in Turkish). Such a system is common in all of the GISs and this is one of the unique part of GISs:

"For example, we have a PDR (Psychological counselor and guidance) work in our school, and there is no such understanding in other schools. Maybe for the first time there is a PDR in this country who is working in a school." (AM2)

The people responsible for this duty cooperate with other teachers, especially class teachers, and conduct their mission. The main goal in these activities is to meet regularly with students outside of class and discuss their issues. In these coaching sections, class teachers meet with a group of students, mostly consisting of three or four students and talk about their grades and study methods every week or every two weeks. Students tell about their difficulties and try to find out solutions for these problems together with their teachers. They also decide on their goals together and conduct several strategies to increase their grades. The second goal of this kind of coaching activities is to find out personal problems or concerns of the students and help them to solve them before these issues shadows on their school success.

"For example, let's say that the child is late, so it's important to be on time and we have talked about it before, but you are late again. When the subject is mentioned a few times, the student slowly places it."(AM3)

If the class teacher faces a more serious psychological problems, then he or she forwards this student to the PDR and through this, he or she could get professional support in that case. The third duty of this person is to organize questionnaires or meetings with the students and to try to measure satisfaction and some other statistics about the school. This type of activities in the GISs are explained in the next chapters regarding quality. Such coaching activities are very unique and seriously practiced in GISs and that is why they are rewarded by their parents and some regional authorities:

"For our counseling and guidance, our school has got the best school award for the future in 2015, so called *Zukunftsschule*,<sup>26</sup> means the school of future." (EM1)

#### c. National and International Contests and school projects

The third type of educational activities are the different competitions in science or math and workshops under several science clubs. Mostly good students join this type of activity and they have the chance to improve their strengths. Participants mentioned that mostly other schools do not focus on good students because it is believed that they do not need it. However, Gülen inspired schools also applies several programs to these students too.

"In our school, we developed a student-based concept that not only improved the weak students but also strengthened the strong students too." (EM1)

"Actually, it is the only school in this country where students are exposed a numbers internship, projects, Olympiads and they do participate in national and international contests." (AM1)

Different kinds of projects are given as an example during the interviews. The major common point in these examples is to support good students and try to improve their skills in their strong fields. Throughout these examples it was observed that mostly schools in Africa focus on science competitions in their schools. AM3 mentioned that they participate in science competitions every year and they have gone to the U.S., Kenya and several other countries and

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<sup>26</sup> *Zukunftsschule* is the name of the network where the reference schools are selected according to their teaching and school development concepts. This network was founded in 2013 and selected schools are supported with appropriate framework conditions in their work on self-selected topics for the further development of their teaching and school concepts with like-minded schools in common networking.



got some medals from these competitions. During the Internet research after the interviews, following achievements are listed on the websites of the first visited school in Africa:

- International Environmental Project Olympiad (INESPO)
- International Young Investors Olympiad (IYIPO)
- International Mathematics Olympiad (IMO)
- International Informatics Project Competition (INFO)
- Pan-African Mathematics Olympiad (PAMO)
- International Festival Language & Culture (IFLC)

According to the same website, the school has been attending these competitions since 2013 and in this time period their students achieved three gold medals, nine silver medals and 18 bronze medals from these international competitions. Similar competitions and successes are listed also on the website of the third school visited in Africa, but such a list could not be found on the second school visited in Africa, which was an international school. From these results, it could be said that the first and the third school visited schools are focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, so-called STEM, and the second school focuses more on human sciences.

On the other hand, in Europe and America social projects or contests are also observed, in addition to natural sciences. The GISs cooperate with other local institutions and other schools in these activities and try to improve their students' skills in specific areas.

This type of additional activity is important because of two perspectives. First of all, there are students who are very talented but because of their background or their environment, they do not have chance to improve their abilities. For example, EM2 secondly gave parents of his schools as an example and for him, it is very difficult for their parents to send their children to private sport clubs or art courses because of their financial situation.

"If we take the branch that we are in, our parents have no possibilities for students because ninety percent of the socioeconomic status of our students is weak. They (parents) have neither financial potential for sports academy or music academy, nor the distance is a little high for them. We are trying to overcome it as a school, we have partnerships outside, and we are trying to organize with them. The next step is to direct these children there (these professional places)." (EM2)

The second important perspective in this type of activity is to show the school's quality and difference to the community. For example, the picture with ex-U.S. president Obama and

the students of the third GISs in the U.S. is easily seen in the school.<sup>27</sup> The manager of the school mentioned that two years ago their students attended a contest called "Future City" and their school project was rewarded as the second-best project in the whole USA. Therefore, they were invited to the White House and presented their project to President Obama during his administration time. Besides, it was seen on the website of the same school that, in addition to such national contests, the school is also active in international competitions like "International Sustainable World Energy Engineering Project Olympiad".

In all other visited GISs during the field study, many medals and prizes from different contests are located in most seen parts of the school. EM3 mentioned that the medals in his room are achieved because of their robotics projects. This will show the vision of the management and foster trust, especially to the parents. Therefore, management in the GISs take these activities very seriously and they follow this kind of contest or project in both local and global environments and try to join these activities as much as possible. After finding a suitable contest for their teachers and students, GIS post a teacher who has a deep knowledge about the subject, and group of students who have talent in this issue and prepare themselves for the contest. The GISs cover all the preparation and travel costs of their students and teachers in these contests.

"Despite our worse financial situation after the coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, we did not stop financing these activities [...] Volunteering, so my friends (teachers) come together for one or two hours a week for an extra workshop and to prepare students for these competitions."(EM1)

Supporting to this point, it was seen on the website of the first visited school in Europe, following competitions are listed:

- Big Challenge (English competition)
- Dechemax (chemistry, technology and biotechnology competition)
- Informatik Biber (computer sciences competition)
- Kanguru der Mathematik (mathematics competition)
- Pangea (mathematics Competition)

In addition to these two mentioned results, such as improving students' strengths and showing the quality of education, this kind of activities also prepares students for real life. Students learn to realize their dreams and also learn how to compete with each other.

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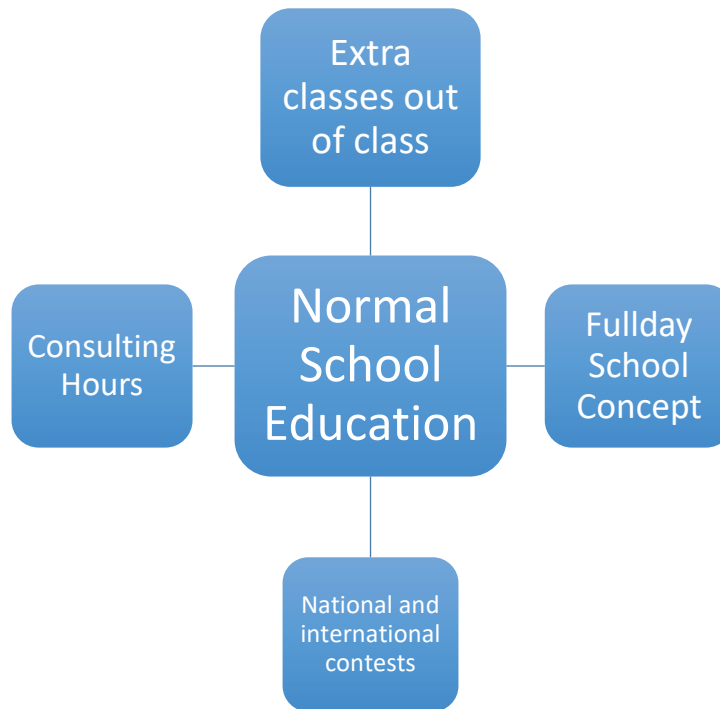
<sup>27</sup> See Appendix B, USA School 3

"This is where a teacher starts with project preparation. [...] Let's say it's a big contest, something like robotics, putting the will on the child, scheduled programming, timing, so it finishes in a certain amount of time. Of course, when doing these things, the child and the teacher is in the province, the teacher is spending a lot of time with the students together. To keep your word, doing business on time, being a professional, having a researcher spirit, seeing all of them actively, we do not tell them these, but they see them when we work together." (USAM2)

These three types of additional educational activities outside of class also decrease the distance between management, teachers and students. However, this type of activities also causes some criticism too. The GISs are accused of indoctrination or brainwashing in these activities. Especially school manager participants' debate on this issue and say that their goal is to use students' time more efficiently. According to them, school hours are not enough because of the wide range of the curriculum and this kind of activities are necessary for the students. That is why they only try to expand their education by cooperating with students and their parents after school hours. Schools in Africa have an advantage in this point because they have dormitories and students stay at nights in the school. Schools in Europe and America use afternoons and Saturdays or some other holidays to practice these activities.

All above mentioned additional educational activities could also practice in particular in other schools, but the difference in GISs is the attention and approach of the management to these activities. During the field study, all school manager participants mentioned that they have all these three types of activities outside of class and they are all organized by the management of the GISs. The figure below explains the difference between traditional teaching activities and how Gülen inspired schools cover these activities.

*Figure 3: Additional educational activities of GISs*



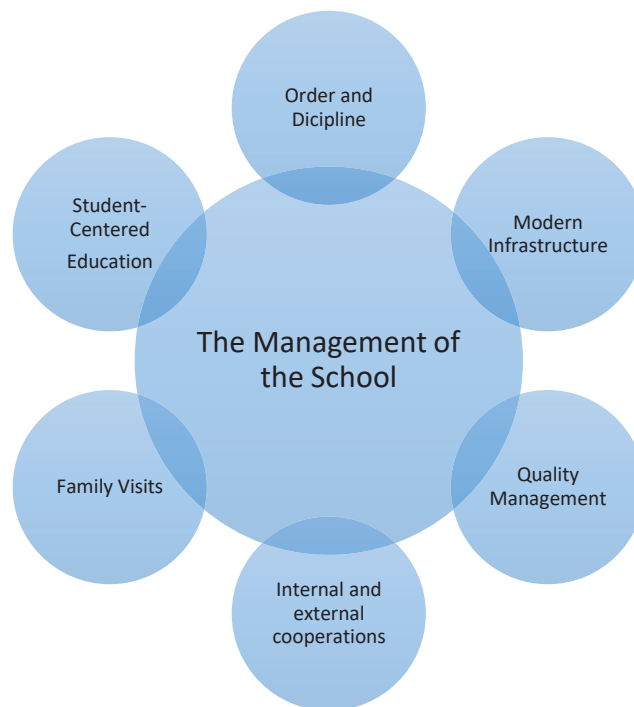
### 3.3.1.3 Management in GIS

"So, the normal schools and the Gülen schools are similar. The Gülen schools are even better. They use modern pedagogy, everything possible and modern technology." (Ex8) Said Expert 8, who criticizes the movement from different perspectives. All other participant experts also highlighted this issue and suggested that quality has a crucial role in Gülen inspired schools and that differentiates them from other schools in their region. There are several reasons behind this point. Ex1 mentioned that initially this is mainly because of the philosophy behind the education system which is based on individual teaching and individual learning. However, especially in the GISs outside of Turkey, the majority of the educational staff is local people who has less knowledge about the movement. Therefore, how to practice this philosophy in real life and how these schools have achieved a high-quality level and differentiate themselves from others needs more attention. During the interviews and visits, one of the most important points observed frequently in GISs regardless of their region is the similar management of the GISs.

During the field study, it was observed in all regions that the management of the GISs practice several common strategies or activities in their education systems. One of the most important observations in this type of management is the school manager's active role in all commercial, personal and pedagogical management of the school. It was observed that

participant managers play several roles in all these three management levels and by cooperating with their deputy managers, they try to develop these units. These practices are shown in the table below:

*Figure 4: Management's Role in Education of GISs*



One of the first impressions and observations about the visited schools in the field study is that they are very clean and well maintained. AM3 mentioned that students compare the school environment with outsiders and this type of differences amaze them. EM1 mentioned that one parent decided to send his son to their school just because WCs are much cleaner than other schools that he visited before. Besides, the other unique common point in the visited GISs in three continents is that they are well decorated with educational pictures and wise sentences from famous people like Albert Einstein or Bernard Shaw.

"There is a discipline and an order there. I believe a school cannot teach without order, without structure [...] Goals have to be set, and then there must be an orientation towards these goals, and the less disturbance there is, the better for the school[...] No graffiti, no hassle, very dear full-fledged schooling, the results of competitions are reported on the walls. [...] And that is very dearly presented in a Gülen school." (Ex 5)

Such order and distinction in the GISs are enriched with technological infrastructure like laboratories, libraries and technically well-decorated classrooms. The school that was

visited in Germany is a very good example of this point: it uses Waldner equipment<sup>28</sup> in its laboratories and smart boards in all their classes. Ex5, who researched the GISs in Germany, highlighted this point as a one of the most important differences between GISs and other schools in Germany.

"This is a very big difference to German schools where German state schools were often not in very good condition, because for the decades not enough has been invested in the German education system." (Ex5)

However, such a point is also observed in other countries. Also, in other visited GISs, it was observed that they are very well equipped with labs and technological equipment like smart boards in all classes. The schools in Africa are less modern in comparison to other GISs in Europe and America but in comparison to other state and private schools in Africa, they also have a much better infrastructure. AM2 mentioned that from the point of infrastructure, their school is either the second or the third best school in their country. He also mentioned that all classes have a smart board and air conditioning, which is very special in schools in Africa. Even in charter schools in the US, which have lower financial resources in comparison to other state schools or private schools, the management pays great attention to such facilities. In addition to paying attention to infrastructure, conducting this structure is another important point.

"But in our current school there is a lab and the laboratory is being used very intensely. We have minimum two experiments in every quarter, there is a report, the students are submitting this report on time, how to prepare and how to conduct an experiment by following the normal procedure...etc. The child was learning this. Although these public schools' budgets are very good, they have very serious problems in this issue." (USAM1)

Another important point in this part is quality management, which is a sensitive issue for the management of the GISs. Participant managers mentioned different methods to measure the quality in their schools. One of the most common subjects that was mentioned are the state investigations and regular checks of the educational Ministry. Like every school, GISs are also officially under the education ministry of their region and they are checked by the officers from the state regularly. In all these checks schools get several evaluations and certificates from the ministry. Participants of this research mentioned that they all get the best grades in their regions. For example, AM2 in Africa said that they got 93 points out of 100. Like him, USAM1

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<sup>28</sup> WALDNER Laboreinrichtungen GmbH & Co. KG, is one of the oldest companies which has been producing laboratories and lab equipment since for over 60 years. The company is in Wangen, Germany but it does business with schools and other educational institutions in all over the world. The company is shown as the best quality company in its field in different charts.



mentioned that GISs in the U.S. are all classified as 1<sup>st</sup> level school according to the state evaluations. One of the interesting discourses is mentioned by the EM2 in Europe:

"We had an inspection last week; we had an inspection before that in 2012. So, in the inspection about six years ago, both the inspection report before and the inspection report we received last week are an indication of the quality of our school. In other words, last week, four out of four were given at many points. This means that when they see you as a model school, they give you four notes. In 2012, all the schools in our city were inspected and one of the four schools that received a positive report from this big inspection was our school." (EM2)

On the other hand, it was observed during the interviews that the management of the GISs also conducts an additional internal quality management procedure. This could vary according to region, like the schools in Europe conducting by questionnaires with their students and teachers. EM3 mentioned that it is asked in these questionnaires at the beginning and at the end of the year, how students and teachers feel in the school. The management of the school evaluates these results sensitively and tries to establish an appropriate environment for both students and teachers.

There are also some other applications mentioned in different regions but as a common concept, the goal of the management in GISs is to improve quality through internal and external cooperation based on several scientific and academic projects which could improve the knowledge of the teachers and students of the school. As an example, it was observed in the field study that the management of the GISs cooperated with the other local schools or with local universities in their region or sometimes with universities in another country in several projects. Besides, Ex4 also highlighted that GISs cooperate and also compete with each other too. Especially the same type of GISs are cooperating with each other and using sources effectively. For example, Gülen inspired charter schools (GICS) in the U.S. have a cooperation and also competition with each other and private Gülen inspired schools (GIPS) in the U.S. have another network where they cooperate and compete with each other. Besides, there is also international networking in GISs. For example, during the field study, it was learned that the manager of the second school in U.S. is from Kenya. He mentioned that he was the manager of the GISs in Kenya and then he won the so-called "Green Card" lottery and received the chance to stay and work in the USA. He used his connections and the movements' network and found this position after he came to the USA.

The parent's perception about the school and their thoughts are also another variable which is important for the management of the school. Therefore, a unique practice which is

conducted by the school management is to visit parents in their homes or offices. This type of activity was mentioned by all of the manager participants in this research and the main goal is to keep the distance between school and family as small as possible. In such visits the school manager or some other deputy manager visits the family with one of the teachers of the student and talks about student's situation individually with the family. These visits have two main advantages. First of all, the school management has a chance to meet with the parents in a comfortable environment and they have chance to learn parents' thoughts or ideas about their education. The second advantage is the management, together with the teacher of the student, have chance to observe students' home environment and talk with the family individually about the student.

"In addition to our educational work, we offer "parents-system". For example, when a student comes to his or her home and the exact opposite of the educational activities that you do for your children is there, then you are having difficulty keeping track of your distance. We are trying to create a triangle if we can afford it. Our understanding of education has an understanding of school-student-parent triangulation. Now this is our understanding. We call it 'Home visits'." (EM1)

The first school manager in the U.S. mentioned that this system works efficiently especially for the students who have problems and do not want to cooperate with the teacher or with the school management. In these visits, the management and the teacher of the student convince the family about several points and get the support of the family. In this way the student has to give up resisting these essential points and starts to cooperate with his or her teacher in several steps which are required by the school, like joining additional courses on Saturday or attending the classes on time...etc.

"The education in GISs is not only limited with the lectures, like the other schools. They only offer lessons to lessons, but this is considered broader in GISs. They have the understanding of a Student-School-Parent triangle. They not only help the child, but also talk to their teachers, they are talking to their parents, they are interested in them, and they have a much wider understanding of education." (Ex3)

The last, but maybe the most important point in this issue, is the success of the students and also the success of the schools. To measure these two points, there are several criteria depending on the region. In some countries like Africa, there are central exams organized by the state and participant managers evaluate their success according to these exams. For example, AM3 mentioned that, there are four annual exams conducted in their country in the 4th, 6th, 8th and 10th school year of a student and the first degree in the 4th classes and third

degree in the 6th classes were from their school last year. He also added that they are always in the first ten in these exams in their country. All these exams are prepared by the state and therefore the results are objective to show the success of the students and also schools. The successful students in these exams are promoted by the school management. In some cases, this could vary according to school type. For example, the manager of the international school in Africa AM2, mentioned that their high school does not enter these exams because they are using a different curriculum. That is why they conduct their own exams by cooperating with the Cambridge International School system. In this system, students have to write several exams every three years, which is called check point, and get their grades. In addition to that the school management organizes several exams every year according to curriculum and try to prepare students for these check points.

In Europe, instead of central exams, there are some other variables to measure the student's levels like graduation projects or statistics about graduates.

"In the first two years of our school, we have achieved a remarkable success by having 100% abitur (High school certificate). This was published in headlines in some newspapers." (EM1)

He also added that they conduct an exam at the end of the year to show students their levels. On the other hand, EM2 gives their graduates success in university as an example of their students. According to statistics, the average number students from GISs who pass their first-year exams with failing any is higher than the average of the country.

In America both central exams and college acceptances are two main variables to show the success of the students.

"College Entries are important and there is a test called "Maptest" that is implemented nationwide. We're taking it with our students too. Both college acceptance and results of Maptest are important indicators for us." (USAM3)

"If I look at the schools that I have worked so far, we are graduating every year and so far, each of our graduates has been accepted at a four-year college. There is not even one exception." (USAM1)

In addition to these two variables, the quality of the universities where graduates attended are other criteria according to the managers of the GIS in USA.

"But if you look at the admissions, we received the level of very old high reputational schools, which have more than 100 years of history, from the college acceptance point of view. Now, of course, this is a good indicator and then we have students who went

to the best universities in America, including Harvard, including Duke, Brown, including Colombia.” (USAM2)

In addition to acceptance level in the admission process, the manager also mentioned that their previous students were successful in these traditional high quality universities by listing the scholarships that their students got and increasing the acceptance rate as an example.

We have students who receive millions of dollars as a scholarship. This country is very sensitive in this issue. For example, we send a student to a university, the following year we receive two or three more admissions from the same university. I mean, this outgoing student has drawn a successful graphic there, made "A" note on behalf of our school and made the next applications that makes it easier for us to accept." (USAM2)

All of these points are just one part of the truth and all together it will give the whole picture of the management in GISs. Such a sensitive management and focus also affects the teachers and parents and let the GISs become successful in their regions. For example according to USAM1, in Massachusetts in the US, there were three GIS charter schools in 2012 but during the visit in May 2018, he mentioned that with extensions it is more than 11. Several results are also observed in other GISs. Schools in Africa and some schools in Europe conducted exams during the admission process and the interest or attention of the community in these exams is very high. Other schools in Europe and charter schools in America use the lottery system and the same situation is also observed too.

"We were taking 50 students, for example, and if there were siblings, we would give them priority. I remember, for example, when I took the stadium in the gym, there are 500 applications and so on, and when you drop brothers or sisters, you have the chance to enter one to thirteen, one to seventeen. [...] There are 13-15 applications to accept one. I even remember that there were hundreds of applications in the seventh and eighth grades, but there is no free space, but we have to do that lottery because of the law. Because if any child leaves tomorrow, we will need that waiting list." (USAM1)

Teachers' educations and the unique activities of teachers in GISs are another subject related with the quality and success of the schools, but because of the wide perspective of the subject, this issue is analyzed solely in the following chapter. However, especially during the field study it was observed that one of the important factors behind the quality and success of the GISs is the active role of the management in the education, especially pedagogy, of the school. Building and also conducting a proper infrastructure for education, using high-technological quality management, internal and external networking with other educational institutions, close engagement with parents through family visits (Tokmak, 2011, p. 63) and

checking student's success are the most important common activities conducted by the management in GISs to achieve high quality and success (See chapter 4.1). The other important part of commercial and financial management in GISs is also analyzed solely in following chapters (See chapter 3.3.4.2 and 3.3.5).

### 3.3.2 Teachers and Recruitment Process of the Schools

As it was explained in chapter 2.1.2.2, Gülen shows teaching as a holy duty (*Kutsi vazife*) and highlighted that only people with a strong moral can adequately perform it (Vicini, 2007, p. 436). Woodhall quoted from Gülen who often mentioned in his writings that education is different from teaching; most people can teach, but only a very few can educate (Woodhall, 2005, p. 7). He also emphasized that teachers play the most important role to raise the golden generation<sup>29</sup> which could solve the current problems of the society and build a new future for humanity (Vicini, 2007, p. 436). Therefore it is crucial to pay attention to the teachers of the GISs, how they are recruited and the features that differentiates them from other teachers.

Because of the importance of the subject, Ex2 mentioned during the interviews that the movement paid great attention to teacher's education and they recommended and guided the cleverest and most talented youth in high schools to the pedagogy faculties for decades. As a result of this strategy, the movement raised thousands of teachers in Turkey and almost all of the cadres in Gülen inspired schools in Turkey consisted of the followers of the movement. During the expansion period especially after 90s, in small groups, these teachers from these schools moved to other countries and founded GISs outside of Turkey. However, mainly because of the lack of human resources in foreign countries, the movement cooperated with local people during this foundation process and filled this gap with the local people. During the field study, it was observed that, unlike the Gülen inspired schools in Turkey, where almost all the teachers were the followers from the movement, the majority of the teachers of the GISs outside of Turkey are local people who are not followers of the movement and even most of these people do not have any knowledge about the movement.

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<sup>29</sup> "Golden generation" is one of the most common terms that Gülen uses in his speeches and works. Behind this term he means or represents a new generation who are well-educated in sciences and also well-rounded in moral training. He describes this term as the marriage of mind and heart.

*Table 3: Turkish and non-Turkish Teacher Proportion in Visited GISs*

School	Percentage of Turkish Teachers	Percentage of Non-Turkish Teachers	Average <sup>30</sup>
E1	25	75	Europe
E2	22	88	25.7 %
E3	30	70	
A1	20	80	Africa
A2	28	72	24.3 %
A3	25	75	
US1	17.5	82,5	USA
US2	20	80	25.8%
US3	40	60	<b>25.3 %<sup>31</sup></b>

As it was seen from the table, an average 25.3% of the teachers in GISs are Turkish and most of these teachers are related to the Gülen movement. Geier and Frank (2018a, p. 309) also highlighted this issue by giving GISs in Germany as an example and mentioned that a large extent of the collegial body is apparently also made up of teachers who can neither be considered "Turkish" nor "Gülen followers". Park (2007, p. 55) also observed in Philippines that the majority of the teachers in GISs are local Philipino teachers. In this point, according to the field study, all the Turkish teachers in Africa and America are from Turkey, however the majority of the Turkish teachers in the GISs in Europe are the children or grandchildren of the Turkish immigrants who came to Europe during the sixties or seventies. Instead of sending teachers to Europe, the followers of the movement cooperated with the Turkish immigrants in Europe and realized their school projects with these people who accepted and internalized the movement's philosophy. These teachers were born and grew up in Europe and they both know Turkish and the local language. They are called "Germans, Belgians...etc. with an immigration background" and they also know both local and Turkish cultures. Because of the importance of the subject, this part will be analyzed in detail in chapter 3.3.5.1. However, despite this difference, depending on the roots of the Turkish teachers in GISs, all these teachers were perceived as Turkish teachers in this study. As a result, they are the ones who have both knowledge and acknowledgement about the movement whereas the others do not.

The question in this point is how the movement practices its educational philosophy with these 25% and differentiates itself from other schools? During the field study, it was

<sup>30</sup> The average percentage of the Turkish teachers in visited Gülen inspired schools in Africa, Europe and America during the field study.

<sup>31</sup> In this field study the average of the 9 visited GISs is 25.28% in total.

observed that the GISs are very selective, especially if the financial resources are enough, then they try to choose the best talents who could be a good role model to students and to their schools. That is why the recruiting process is crucial in GISs. Besides, the motivation of teachers and teacher education programs are several points which differentiates the GISs from other schools.

On the other hand, there is a lot of criticism about the movement and one of the criticisms about the schools are indoctrination and brainwashing in these places (See chapter 2.1.4.3 a and c). Of course, teachers of the Gülen schools are targeted in this criticism and they are the focus of this type of accusations. To prove such kind of criticism, Ex7 criticized the movement for not recruiting local teachers, instead they brought their own teachers from Turkey. He said that:

"These teachers make altruisms, you make a lot of social commitment but not in the USA for example, or in Africa from me, for example, not African teachers are hired but those from Turkey. So instead of giving places to the locals as teachers, there are also unemployed teachers exhibiting, but teachers are getting out of Turkey. If it's really about the job, if it is really about education, then it does not matter where does this teacher come from but somehow, it's important where the majority of the teachers are coming from." (Ex7)

However, as it was mentioned above in Table 3, this field study demonstrated that the majority of the teachers consist of local people in GISs outside of Turkey. Besides, it was seen during the field study that most of the Turkish teachers are teaching mathematics and natural sciences mainly because of the language barriers.

"And the biggest reason for this is that our Turkish friends who work here are generally mathematics and science teachers." (USAM1)

All these accusations and rumors about the GISs show that there is a huge prejudice and ignorance about the teachers of GISs. That is why the role of the teachers in the GISs was analyzed carefully during the field study and due to such reasons, this part plays a crucial role in this research.

### *3.3.2.1 Role Model of the Teachers and Altruism*

From different perspectives, the importance of teaching and the role of a teacher during the education is very important for Gülen. In his books and speeches, he explained this issue many times with different examples and motivates teachers who are working in schools. From his thoughts and also observations during the field study, it is seen that the major differences



between a teacher who is related to the Gülen Movement and a normal average teacher is being a role model in front of the students and altruism, especially in educational activities.

First of all, like all schools require, the first mission of the teachers in GISs are to follow the curriculum properly and teach it to his or her students. Teachers who have problems with this point could not continue their occupation, even they are related to the movement. However, one of the most important points or differences in GISs is the position of the teachers in the education system. According to Gülen, a teacher has to be a good example and role model to his or her students. Pahl (2019, p. 318) describes this term as follows:

Being a role model or model living meant, negatively - not drinking alcohol, not smoking, and not engaging in illicit sex. Positively, it meant having a strong work ethic, being competent in one's discipline and being prepared, and being available to students outside of the classroom for special projects and extra-curricular activities.

Therefore, unlike other schools, in addition to teaching academic curriculum, being a good example or role model is also demanded in GISs. All participants of the field research also underlined this issue.

"Our job is not easy, to grow millions of people. If you ask me a question: What is the most difficult job in your life? I would say to educate people. It is very difficult to train people. [...] Of course, one of the most effective things in people is being a model. So, our teacher is going out, they do not drink, no lies, no bad habits without rudeness, night and day dreaming, to be beneficial to this country." (EX1)

"They both narrate; they are trying to live (their values) themselves. Students see their deeds. On this account, students gradually change. The right and good morals make them change to become a better person." (AM3)

On the other hand, how the majority of the teachers, who have different kind of understanding, become a role model in GISs is also a question. The important point is that the movement has no compromise on this subject and therefore they try to build a compatibility or harmony between their local teachers. In this issue, the candidates who are not flexible in this point and who have nasty habits are eliminated during the recruiting process.

"I just talked about that we try to show goodness by living, not by telling. Therefore, the main thing about recruitment, we do not usually take the kind of teachers that would ruin children's behaviors, like the smoking habit of a teacher is not wanted. We are trying to get teachers who can be an example when the student looks at him or her". (USAM2)

In addition to being a role model, altruism is another point which is demanded from all teachers in GISs. There are a lot of additional activities offered in GISs and to organize this type of activities depends on the teacher's will and desire. During the field study, it was observed that especially Turkish teachers are ready and eager to participate in these additional activities more than other teachers. Besides, according to participants, teachers who are related to the movement are more active in several points, like spending more time with the students, doing more activities like picnics or family visits and contributing more effort and work in their teaching activities. The third school manager in Africa mentioned that they do not have to do that, and, in most cases, he does not demand this kind of extra work from them but just because of their mission and motivation the teachers who belong to the movement do much more than others.

"The reflection of being active in the movement is the extraordinary work of the people who know the movement. There is only this difference. Everyone is doing normal work, only people who have identified themselves in the movement are doing a little more. So, do extra work, doing projects with kids." (EM1)

This is mainly because of Gülen's speeches and books where these subjects are highlighted, and the Turkish teacher is nourished. This interest to teach and to help students, make them important and valuable in the eyes of the other people. Participants mentioned that despite their missing points like not knowing the culture or not using the language fluently, this kind of approach to their occupations make them loved from the others.

"Of course, there is a 100% difference. Unfortunately, our Turkish teachers do not know the laws because they are far from the culture, their language skills are weak, they are far away from the cultural and educational system of the place, do not know how to behave to a disabled child. They don't know anything related to some other unique courses here. But whatever it is, even all these excuses, they have been practicing a lot of self-sacrifice with extra vigor, especially during my first years of work, they have been very seriously loved by other teachers, students and also parents." (USAM1)

In addition to covering the missing parts of the Turkish teachers, this effort and extra work cause a love between students and with other colleges. Ex1 mentioned that this is a crucial point in teaching. According to him, just because of this love, the students in GISs do have more attention and respect for the teachers and their subjects. Without this kind of love students have less interest in the subjects taught. This leads them to be more successful in comparison to other students in other schools.

The question in this point is whether these Turkish teachers do missionary work to convert their students to Islam or not. Especially because of the secular structure of the GISs, such an accusation has not been made to the movement before. Other field studies, like Dohrn (2014, p. 233) also denied this issue. Just to be sure about that point, this question is also asked to the fourth expert who is also against the movement.

Interviewee: So, if you're really Turkish-born and also identify yourself with Gülen, I'd say the instructor does that, "*Murchit*"<sup>32</sup> (guiding or mentoring) role. So, give a little to the students in class or outside of class, and in the afternoon, to provide certain values, to submit certain moral, moral ethical values, so that the students take them over for themselves. (Ex7)

Interviewer: Can we say that is that a missionary?

Interviewee: No, I would not say it missionary, but just mission, so that their personal mission will bring to the students those values forward by living them up. So "*irshad* and *temsil*"<sup>33</sup>(guidance and representation), you know these two principles. (Ex7)

As Ex 7 mentioned, especially on the first years after the foundation of a GISs, being a role model and altruism appeared as two important differences between Turkish teachers and non-Turkish teachers in GISs. On the other hand, it was mentioned in the interviews that these differences have decreased and sometimes even disappeared today. After working many years together, both Turkish teachers and non-Turkish teachers have come close to each other. Turkish teachers fill their gaps with experience and others learn to become a role model or they also started to perform altruism during their educational activities. So, they create a common school culture where everybody comes together on a common ground in school environment.

"The difference between the two was much more, but now the differences are decreasing. [...] So, these two reasons may be, foreignization of Turkish teachers or Turkification of foreign teachers. As time goes by and it is understood from both sides. They approached each other with a little understanding on both sides." (EM3)

One of the main reasons behind this issue is the common activities. The school management demanded the same activities from both Turkish and non-Turkish teachers, and they are doing the same job. Therefore, during the years of work in GISs there is a mixed culture because of the interaction between these Turkish and non-Turkish local teachers. For example, being a class teacher or visiting the parents in their homes are asked of all teachers. This is also

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<sup>32</sup> This term is used for sheikh or religious leaders in the Sufi understanding. The interviewee uses this term consciously to show that the teachers in secular GISs have a religious mission.

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the answer to the question how the movement practices its own educational philosophy with local teachers. There is a huge adaptation and integration between Turkish and non-Turkish teachers and also between Turkish and non-Turkish managers and, due to this, during the time there is a mixture of Gülen Philosophy and local culture established in the GISs. Therefore, it was also observed during the visits that all GISs are different from each other because the local culture changes everywhere.

### *3.3.2.2 Recruiting Criteria's of GISs*

Unlike Waldorf and Montessori movements (Thayer-Bacon, 2011, p. 316) (Edwards, 2002, p. 3,4), the Gülen Movement does not have special teacher education programs in universities and as it is demonstrated above, most of the teachers of the GISs are local people, who have graduated from pedagogy faculties of their countries and do not have any experience or knowledge about the educational philosophy of the Gülen Movement. Therefore, recruiting these teachers and applying their own educational philosophy with these cadres are crucial in GISs. How to recruit a new teacher and also the factors which lead the managers not to hire a teacher is asked during the interviews. From the responses, there are several common factors and strategies seen in different regions, but there are also some differences observed during the field study too.

The most mentioned point during the recruitment process is the quality of the teacher.

"It's the quality or the qualification of the teacher that we are looking for in a candidate. Does he or she<sup>34</sup> know what he or she is doing first, a well-qualified person who knows the job or not? We are looking at this; it is very important." (EM3)

The same understanding and approach are observed in the other interviews with school managers too. They try to hire the most qualified teachers who could perform high quality teaching in their classes. How to decide whether a candidate is high quality or not is also depends on several points. For example, university background is an important criterion.

"The college GPA that graduates have is not so important, but wait, actually GPA is also important. If the guy made 3.9 GPA, you assume that this guy is a hardworking guy. I think he can do a lot of things without luring it. I saw that too, I saw that a man with low GPA, who did not do his job well, and that he did not pay attention to the paper works." (USAM1)

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<sup>34</sup> The word "O" in Turkish means "He" or "She", depends on the situation. Therefore, during the translation, this word is translated as "he or she" or sometimes "his or her"

On the other hand, to have good grades from the university is necessary but not enough. Almost all participants mentioned that, in addition to knowledge and hard work, the character of the teacher is also important. For instance, sometimes there are candidates who have high grades and a high knowledge in their fields but because of his or her silence and sometimes weak character, it is impossible for them to control a class and to transfer their knowledge to students. Therefore, the character of the teacher and how he or she presents a lecture is also important. Consequently, the majority of the participants mentioned that they are demanding a demo lecture from their candidates and one of the participants mentioned that this demo lecture is evaluated by the manager, two teachers and a parent. After that, the successful candidates are selected and start the job.

One of the other criteria that shows the quality is whether the candidate is skilled in teaching a subject or to be skilled in pedagogy. It was expected that the successful candidate can communicate with students.

"In other words, if he or she cannot keep a frequency with our students, we cannot take him or her. It's a very important that a teacher to be able to catch that frequency."  
(USAM3)

"You can come close to a student and get to know his problem. Because not only the intelligence, maybe a student has another problem and if you have these characteristics you could get this job." (AM1)

This point is also strongly related to the character. For example, suitable teachers have to be patient with their students during the lectures. Additionally, he or she should communicate and get along with them. This is why candidates or sometimes teachers who do not have these abilities are either not selected at the beginning, or if they are selected, change is expected from them. If this is not the case, the management asks them to leave. One of the other points demanded is to organize additional teaching activities mentioned in chapter 3.3.1.2 and to join the ritual events of the school, like teacher development programs (See chapter 3.3.2.4). Therefore, it is important for a good candidate to be enthusiastic and adopt the educational understanding of the movement. Especially in the USA, it is also expected that the teachers can contribute to the school outside of their field as well. For example, if a candidate has some skills like music, sport or arts in addition to his or her main field, they have more chance in comparison to others. GISs in the U.S. try to offer these kinds of courses to vary and differentiate their programs from other schools.

"Experience of a teacher" is one of the main subjects which differentiates according to region. All the managers from Africa mentioned that experience is an important criterion and

they pay attention to that point. However, especially GISs in America and two visited schools in Europe mentioned that it is not so important. This difference is mainly depending on the position of the school in their environment. For example, the GISs have a branch name and high reputation in Africa and therefore, many teachers want to work on these schools to show their quality.

"So, it has a few things. Mhm (thinking for a while) First of all, working in a successful school is very important for their careers. One day, tomorrow, it is important to add that I worked in GISs in the CVs." (AM2)

On the other hand, in Europe and in America most of these schools have limited budgets and limited potential in comparison to other schools. So instead of hiring a teacher with experience, which costs more, they prefer to hire young new graduates and try to educate them. USAM1 mentioned that it is not just a case for their school, instead the other charter schools are in the same situation.

"After 2-3 years, they usually go to public schools. The charter school system has turned into a teacher training center for American public schools." (Laugh) (USAM1)

As a result, "experience" is demanded in GISs but like university grades, it is not a necessity in the recruiting process and is rarely seen, especially in Europe and America. In this point, the financial resources and the prestige of the GISs in the local region play a crucial role and depending on these two issues managers of the schools select teachers for their schools.

In addition to these demanded criteria, there are also some factors which are not welcomed in candidates. For example, instability is an important elimination factor. Rather, the successful candidate has to be the part of the school community and candidates who have a tendency to isolate themselves from other teachers or the management will not be accepted.

"No matter how good the quality is, we are trying not to take teachers who want to move and act individually." (EM2)

One of the unique points for Africa is to speak English fluently and clearly. This is another factor which is very important in GISs in developing countries and the candidates who have problems in English are not chosen.

As it is seen above, recruitment process is very sensitive in GIS and professionalism and quality are the most-wanted skills from the candidates. Local differences can cause several different variations during recruitment but in general the managers try to hire the best, depending on their financial sources and capacity, teachers in their regions. These local teachers who are not a part of the movement cooperate with Turkish teachers, who are mostly followers

of the movement, and they create a school culture based on the mixture of these two philosophies.

### *3.3.2.3 Motivation Factors of the Teachers in GISs*

"When you enter the public school, you know you can retire from there if you do not do something wrong. You are in the circle and probably no one will bother you. We keep them under constant pressure, you will do these things, your child will be successful...etc." (USAM1)

Ex4 also has a similar approach for Europe and mentioned that the salary of a teacher in a GISs is either average or below average. Besides, because of the private structure of the GISs, the teachers of the movement in Europe could not be a state clerk, like their equivalents in state schools and thus, they have fewer rights. The question in this point is why does a teacher prefer to work at a GIS and also how do the schools find a good teacher who accepts these circumstances?

It was observed that this type of difficulties and their heavy workload would not be a problem for Turkish teachers who already accept the Gülen philosophy. "They have a mission" said Ex7 and, as it was mentioned in chapter 3.3.1.1, these Turkish teachers mostly hope to take rewards from God, especially in the afterlife. During the field study it was observed that just one Turkish teacher, who is also Gülen follower, left the school and found another job at a state school in the US. But it was also known that he had a conflict with the management which was not about salary or workload.

On the other hand, the motivation of the non-Turkish teachers who do not know Gülen and his philosophy depends on several variables. One of the most mentioned factors in all three regions is the size of the classes.

"So, there are practical reasons. The classes in the Gülen schools are smaller, you can work very well there." (Ex5)

AM1 also underlined this issue and mentioned that they have a maximum of 25 students in their classes, whereas the average in the whole country is 50. This point is also observed in this field study. The average teacher-student ratio is very low in the visited GISs, however, mainly because of the number of part-time and freelancer teachers in these schools, it is difficult to talk about a concrete teacher-student ratio scientifically. But, like Africa, Boos-Nünning (2011, p. 207) also pointed out that GISs in Germany have small classes in comparison to most of the other schools in Germany. Depending on these common approaches to the issue, it could



be said that the teachers of the GISs have fewer students in a class, in comparison to other teachers, which alleviates their jobs.

EM1 mentioned this is very important, especially for the language and social science fields. Reading homework and exams are difficult tasks in these fields, in comparison to mathematics and natural sciences, thus the number of the students are very important regarding this point. From this perspective, in comparison to other schools, teachers in these fields have one-third less workload in GISs said EM1. Besides, for a teacher who has ardor for his or her job, working with small groups makes much more sense and it is more enjoyable to practice his or her occupation. That is why the GISs, where they have more influence on students, are preferred. Another point, related with this issue, is the engagement in GISs.

"So, the student teacher relation is better and of course German teachers feel the great support that come from parents and also arises from the donations." (Ex5)

As a result, the environment in GISs is very well organized and lets a teacher do his or her job in ease. All managers mentioned that the teachers are motivated to participate with the school management and the management discusses important decisions with their teachers. Likewise, questionnaires about teacher satisfaction are regularly organized. This type of attention, along with a relaxed environment with many free rooms, make teachers happy. For example, EM1 mentioned that in addition to more room and facilities for their preparations they have a kitchen and fresh food is cooked for their team on a daily basis, which is unusual in other schools. These sorts of things motivate teachers and creates satisfaction in their situation.

In addition to these common factors, there are also some differences according to regions. For example, the movement's schools have a high reputation and their names have become a brand in developing countries like Africa or central Asia. Therefore, working in GISs shows the quality of the teacher and, despite the high workload, candidates compete to get a position in GISs.

"In other words, the teacher is looked at a little differently from other teachers in society. Teaching in GISs is always good, very knowledgeable, because pupils always look good, because success is due to successful pupils coming from the teacher." (AM3)

However, this is only the case in undeveloped and developing countries. In general, it could be said that the most important factor which was observed in the field study is that the satisfaction and pleasure of the teachers depends on their work environment. In all these three regions, it was observed that teachers of the GISs were happy to be there.

"What we often hear from our teachers is the air or atmosphere here, that positive atmosphere over here." (EM2)

The distance between teachers and the management and also with the parents is closer in comparison to other schools and unlike the other schools, GISs are mostly like a small community where the relationship between the individuals is high. For example, the birthdays of teachers are celebrated and when they or their students achieve a success, they are rewarded by the management. The opposite also happens, during the visits it was seen that teachers bought presents to a school manager and garnished his door because it was "Managers Day" in that country. Picnics and some trips with teachers are also regularly organized by the management. Therefore, teachers of GISs become a family member after a while and people feel secure and relax.

"So, teachers who are coming, they know that this is a branch, and people can see them, and they are comfortable with their life here. Because we are friendly, we play football together, we eat together, and you know what (thinks for a while) we call it, we do not have any discrimination. That I am a Christian or I am an African, I am a black, I am white, it does not matter, no, we are all brothers here and we do everything together here. These things here make them happy that we do everything together. Also, we give them some opportunities here." (AM1)

#### *3.3.2.4 Teacher Development Programs and Department Workshops*

Teacher development programs and increasing the quality of teachers are important subjects and, in every country, the ministry of education departments try to pay attention to this point. Because of that, the kind of occupational programs play a crucial role on the education of schools. AM3 also highlighted that the quality of the teachers and teachers' workshops in several fields increase their success in their region. However, despite the importance of the subject, similar programs are not practiced properly in other schools.

"It's not practiced in the other schools, unfortunately not. But it is in our school. Anyway, when the inspectors arrived last week, it was one of the subjects that they liked and highlighted in their report - that was the workshops of our teachers. In our four branches, teachers come together once a month in every field and conduct serious workshops about their field. [...] According to the inspectors, we hear from them that this type of programs is not practiced in other schools. [...] We are trying to fix our negative parts in these workshops with our teachers." (EM2)

During the field study, only two participants mentioned that other schools also conducted such activities, and this is mainly because of the competition between schools. On the other hand, other seven participants mean that these activities are stated in the law, but it

mainly depends on the manager of the school and in most cases, it is not practiced in other schools.

"Because there is such a necessity, but it is very important to us, we have to practice even if the others do not practice, because the teacher needs to develop himself a little from time to time. The solution is also with seminars. Such development seminars, about teaching materials, different seminars like classroom management, is refreshing the knowledge of our teachers."(AM3)

That is why teacher development programs, especially department workshops, are one of the most mentioned issue that differentiates the teachers in GISs. In addition to hiring high quality teachers, the management in GISs pay great attention to their development activities. All participants mentioned that their teachers do have the same duties, like all teachers have in other schools, however unlike other schools, they organize several development programs to increase the quality of their teachers and teachers have to participate in these programs.

"How we could improve our teachers better? Now we know that if the teachers improve their skills, this will affect the students and their education quality. We're sticking to that for some quality enhancement."(AM3)

The methodology and timing of these programs varies according to region. One of the most mentioned method is to invite experts and organize seminars for the teachers.

"Normally just before the school begins, we come together and prepare the school and we have seminars and we call [he means invite] people from the national commercial council and we call people from curriculum. They are coming here, we also call the people from the inspector office who are checking our schools and we call them here. Then they come and make seminars to refresh courses. Because after some time people can forget things. Every beginning of the year we have these workshops and people come from outside and refresh our knowledge. "(AM1)

In addition to seminars, the other most mentioned method is to organize workshops in several departments. In these workshops, for example biology teachers come together and share their experiences with each other, prepare learning documents, follow the current changes in their field and look for different books and sources. In all GISs, there are departments like mathematics, language departments, social sciences or natural sciences...etc. and they have weekly or monthly workshops. All these activities and results are reported to school managements. In small countries or close districts, several schools come together and conduct these activities together. Otherwise, each school solely organizes these events with their teachers.

"So, every Monday afternoon is the workshop day of our school. Every department comes together and discusses, what will they do in that week? (Short break) We work out together, what we do in the next month, what exams we will prepare for the exam period, what we will do about club activities...etc. Without this group work, the school would not have a plan." (AM2)

"Our PD (professional development) program assembled every month once a school day is a half day. We have network school and there are three schools in this network. We bring these teachers together and either we give them an expert to give education, or teachers come together and compare their curriculum or prepare tests." (USAM1)

Both teacher development programs and department workshops have a positive effect on education. One of the most important advantages is to follow the current changes and to adapt technological developments to their education system. This will improve the quality of education and in this way, teachers can refresh their knowledge with these new methods. In addition, teachers have a chance to learn from each other's experiences. This is very important especially for young colleagues. Every department has a director, mostly an old experienced teacher, and he or she could educate their young colleagues in their occupation.

"We are now a private school, so one of our strategies is to take young talented people and direct them under a more experienced person. Otherwise, if all teachers you have bring experience of more than 15 years, then you have to pay them higher. However, we are bringing young talented energetic people together and we direct them under an experienced old teacher. This will decrease the costs on the one hand and on the other hand, these new graduates know the world of our students better and it has a positive effect on our education."(USAM2)

Timing and routine of these programs change according to region. For example, school managers in Africa and also the second school in Europe mentioned that they start two weeks before school starts and prepare teaching materials monthly in their workshops. However, EM3 mentioned that they use Wednesday afternoons because there are not any classes at that time and every week teachers come and work together in their own field at that time. On the other hand, schools in the US start one to two weeks earlier and also end one to two weeks later in comparison to other schools and invest these times for teacher educational activities. As a result, school holidays and weekly or monthly meetings occurred in such programs. All these developments and achievements in these programs are reported to the management and then

school managements can also have the chance to check and, if it is necessary, to redevelop their educational concept or not.

### 3.3.3 Curriculum and Teaching/Pedagogy in the Schools

Curriculum and teaching in GISs are another subject which was analyzed in this field study. Three important points or differences are noticed by the researcher during the field study. These points are: teaching local curriculum, religion education and using modern technologies in education.

#### 3.3.3.1 Teaching local curriculum

One of the most important points in GISs is to use local curriculum in their regions. Unlike other progressive educational movements, GISs do not have a unique lecture or their own curriculum. Instead, they are accepting every region's curriculum in their schools but enrich these programs with their philosophy and additional teaching activities.

"Yes, above all, especially in the afternoon just special extra classes, with special programs but what is taught at the school, is exactly the same at other schools also [...] From a German standpoint, in the schools of the Gülen Movement, the curriculum which is designed by each federal state is followed."(Ex7)

"The curriculum of the school is already designed by the government. They are the ones who are making policy. What kind of product of their people should be and we have to (Laughing) adopt for it, just follow it. [...] You cannot take things out of the curriculum. You cannot change the curriculum and teachers have to obey them." (AM1)

America has a common curriculum, a curriculum all the states passed. Almost all states. We follow that curriculum. Of course, because we are a private school, the parents are expecting more than that. We have added arts, music, sports, elective courses, and some more advanced level courses in comparison to normal curriculum. (USAM3)

As it is easy to see from these three quotes, from three different continents, the "localization" strategy of the movement plays a crucial role in the curriculum issue. The movement leaves this issue to the educational ministry of each country and completely follows their decisions. Instead of creating a new curriculum, they focus on creating an ideal practice with the current curriculum which was designed by the government. To achieve this goal, they add some projects or motivate their students to attend some national and international contests.

The only exception is the second school in Africa, which is also the only school that uses "Cambridge Curriculum" instead of the local curriculum. This is mainly because this school is an international school. These kinds of schools teach world curriculum instead of local curriculum and are mostly designed for children of people like employees of consulates or international companies. They move a lot between different countries; therefore, these people's children have to change their schools many times.

"The local system implements the local curriculum, international schools apply the Cambridge curriculum, what is the difference? That is to say, the child who learns with the local system knows the history of the local country or learns the geography of the local environment. Here are the other lessons that are processed locally. But in the Cambridge system, the child learns the world's geography, learns the world history. There is a more global understanding of education, so the perspective is a bit different, the child is looking at the world from a broader perspective."(AM2)

However, this is a unique example and in general it would be better to say that the GISs all over the world are local schools using local curriculum. This is mainly because of the localization strategy of the movement and also fits the "avoiding contradiction" policy of the movement (See Chapter 4.3). Synergy and interaction with the other cultures are very important subjects for Gülen (2011c, p. 220) and he advises his followers, instead of joining controversial subjects, to become brothers and sisters with other local people and come together in common values with them. Therefore, the GISs just follow the local decisions from the curriculum point of view.

On the other hand, there could be some minor differences in GISs. For example, teaching "Turkish" as a foreign language is one of them. Ex7 also pointed out this issue and mentioned that the only difference in comparison to other schools is giving "Turkish" lectures in schools. As it was described in chapter 2.1.4.3 e, like some other social scientists, he criticizes the movement as being a national movement which bases its educational system on expanding Turkish Nationality or pan-Turkism:

"So spontaneously only the Turkish language lessons came to mind but otherwise not [...] Yes, also the promotion of Turkish, the Turkish language and so on, as it is about the people whose native language is not Turkish but still singing there in Turkish and reciting poetry in Turkish and so forth, that tips the balance for this moment of national pride for Turkey." (Ex7)

However, managers approach to this subject is quite differently than Ex7. According to them, learning a foreign language is also required by the state in their curriculum. For example,

USAMI said that every student has to take at least two years of world language courses as an elective course in the US. This is why, in addition to teaching other important foreign languages like French in Africa or Spanish in the USA, they are also teaching Turkish in their schools. Not only will this enrich their education in GISs but it is also easy to find teachers for these courses because of the roots of the movement. Besides, these language classes are mostly elective courses and only students who are interested in that language choose these lectures. Therefore, unlike the criticism, it is observed that, mostly for practical reasons, GISs teach Turkish as a foreign language in their schools. This subject, which is also related with the transformation of the movement from national identity to international identity, is discussed in chapter 4.4.

Graduates of the GISs also have to take national exams. Therefore, GISs use the local curriculum in their region like all other schools. However, by using different methods mentioned above, they have targeted educating their students better than others and trying to reach a high-quality education in their schools.

#### *3.3.3.2 Religious education and Ethics classes*

As it is known, Gülen himself is an Imam and the movement is shown as a religious movement by almost all social scientists. However, despite this character, the movement prefers to use a secular education system and tries to avoid giving religion classes in their institutions. Especially Ex8 criticizes the movement from this point of view and accuses that the movement of using conspiracies methods.

"Yes, that's conspiracy, so actually, they should. In our German secular system, religious education is a required course. And with those, that's totally avoided. I suppose they do not want to show which religion they belong to. Yes, they cannot give public religious courses in the sense of the Islam. For example, like they do in their Lighthouses, and your *Sohbet* programs (See chapter 2.1.3.1) etc. There they have to show what religion they have, and they do not want that. So that's why I think it's always mentioned as an argument for their liberality, on the contrary for me it's a moment of suspicion." (Ex8)

This point was sensitively observed during the field study and it was seen that, like choosing the curriculum, the local environment and circumstances in this environment defined the type of religion education in GISs.



*Table 4: Religion and Ethic Classes in Visited GISs*

School	Religion Class	Ethic or Character Education
E1	Islam Course	Ethic Course
E2	Islam, Catholic and evangelical courses	Ethic Course
E3	No	World Citizen Course
A1	No	Ethic Course
A2	No	Ethic Course
A3	Islam Course	Ethic Course
US1	No	Character Education
US2	No	Character Education
US3	No	Character Education

It is easy to see in this table that schools in the USA do not have any religion classes which is mainly because the state schools and most of the charter schools there do not have religion courses in their curriculums. This is why both charter and private GISs in the U.S. accept this local understanding and do not offer any religion class in their schools. On the other hand, in some regions like the second school in Europe or the third school in Africa, the religion course is an obligation in the curriculum of that country and because the different faiths of the students, the second school in Europe teaches three major religions such as Islam, Catholic and Evangelical courses in their institutions. This is also an issue in the first European country and also in the third African country, however in these countries, almost all of the students are Muslim. This is why these schools only teach Islam in their schools. Unlike these two different regions, the third school in Europe and the first school in Africa are free to put religion courses in their curriculum or not. Because of the variety of confessions of their students, they prefer to have ethic classes or similar courses which are for all students, instead of religion courses. From these different practices, it is easy to say that the "localization" strategy of the movement prevails in this point and the GISs have adapted to the practices and requirements of the local curriculums about religion classes in their institutions. This makes it difficult to say that the movement is conspiracy about religion education. On the other hand, Ex7 blames this point and suggested that, because of a marketing instrument, the movement practices this method.

That is, whether they are such a society that has concreted opposite to the majority society, that's why they would have to be pretty obscure. (Ex7)

However, it was observed that such a decision depends on several reasons. One of the most important reasons behind this point is the "avoiding conflicts" philosophy of the

movement.<sup>35</sup> As it was seen in the previous chapters, the movement has a professionalism in their schools and especially in teaching activities. Followers of the movement try to avoid all political and religious conflicts and solely focus on education in their institutions. Besides, especially with their Dialogue Centers, the movement has targeted having interaction and engagement between other cultures and nationalities. Therefore, it would be better for the GISs to teach ethic classes instead of religion classes. It is also easier for the followers because of the perceptions and prejudices of other people.

"So, on the GISs, which I have seen, there is no religious education, there are two things to say, the German Turks were wise in school foundation, it would have become much more difficult if the school founders had insisted on religious education. It was also a tactically correct measure to start in school without religious instruction." (Ex5)

The unique part of the GISs in this point is the existence of ethic education. The name of this course could vary according to region, for example it is called "Character Education" in the US or some other names in the other regions of the world. However, the content of the courses is almost the same, which is "human universal values" and all students have to take these courses.

"I mean, if you look at any religion, you see universal values, like honesty is good, compassion is good, love is good, sacrifice is good, is not it? Goodness is good, it's all there is. Love is good says all. There is no such thing as honesty is bad. So, this is the basis. Because of this point of view, it doesn't make sense to insist on teaching Islam or Christianity. When you teach these basic values, then you will teach all of them." (Ex2)

The manager of the third school also underlines the same issue and mentioned that they are teaching not to lie, to be honest, and to have respect for other people, especially their parents, to be compatible with their friends...etc., which is necessary to raise a good generation. Besides, in these courses or in another course in the GISs, the philosophy of Gülen is not taught. In all these three regions, neither a picture of Gülen nor any other sign related with the Gülen Movement was observed.

"So, there is no school, to my knowledge now (thinks for a while) in the school program, for example, on the ideas of the FG. Mhm [thinking for a while] they do not do that." (Ex4)

The movement tries to give solely "human universal values" in their ethic courses and tries to be neutral to all other philosophies. Ex7 debated the content of these lecture and

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<sup>35</sup> For more detail explanation see Chapter 4.3

supposed that the main goal is to convey conservative values. However, school managers were debating on this issue and mentioned that this is a necessity for their students. As an example, the manager of the second school in Europe gave a basic problem such as selfishness in a new generation and mentioned that they try to hinder this type of problems through this kind of lesson. He explained this issue as follows:

"Being selfish, egoistic, thinking of themselves is one of the greatest troubles in Europe. In other words, an egoist generation, a self-centered generation is growing up today in Europe. [...] We are trying to focus on this, not just on self-axial thinking, but also on other people. Then, to be useful to the country you are in, something that is not just a result-focused study, a broader thinking, a solution that you have found, or the shortest solution cannot be always be the right solution, like considering some other parameters while producing that solution." (EM2)

#### *3.3.3.3 Using modern technologies and new developments in schools*

One of the common features observed in visited GISs in all three different regions is the modern facilities of the schools. All nine schools have laboratories and they use modern technology like smart boards in their classrooms. In this way they are promoting research activities, especially in natural sciences, and self-learning in their schools. For example, the first school in Europe assigned one of their big rooms as a self-learning center.

"We want to leave the teacher-centered system and go to a student-centered education. We encourage personal learning; we have a library and a computer room designated as self-learning center. Students come on the weekend or on weekdays and they have the chance to prepare their lessons in this room." (EM1)

This understanding and approach to education also effects the teaching activities in GISs. As it was mentioned above, the current curriculum, which is designed by local authorities, is used in GISs, however, it could be traditional and does not necessarily cover the modern changes in the world. Therefore, the management of the GISs also try to follow modern developments and try to add some new classes to their structure. In this point initially it is observed that English as a language plays an important role in GISs.

"English is the main language. In schools, this is the premium language first or, above all, the first foreign language is English. Sometimes the language of instruction is English too. They teach all subjects in English." (Ex7)

Schools in Africa and America use English as a main language and majority of the classes, including natural sciences and mathematics, are taught in English. The third school

manager in Africa mentioned that, English has a special value in the community there and their parents are proud of their kids when they can speak English. That is why schools in Africa pay more attention to this point. Schools in Europe use the local language in all other lectures, but English is the first foreign language and the educational level in these classes is very high. In addition, all participants from Europe mentioned that they have a cooperation with schools or universities in England or the U.S. and they send their students regularly to one of those countries. Especially, the second school manager mentioned that they are trying to open one branch of an English school in their region. It is also observed that students and of course graduates, are fluent in English and could easily join international programs and follow scientific developments worldwide. French, Spanish, German, Turkish and some other local languages are the other foreign languages taught in the GISs.

One of the most important division between GISs in different regions is the core points of these schools. For example, it was observed especially in America that all private and charter GISs are based on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, so-called STEM. It was announced clearly on their websites and during the visits all participants highlighted this issue clearly. In this type of schools learning analytics has an important weight and students are educated seriously in the natural sciences. According to USAM1 all GISs in the USA are based on STEM, which is mainly because of the high demand on the American educational market. Therefore, because of the "localization" strategy of the movement, the followers of the movement targeted this gap during their internationalization process in the US and founded all their private and charter GISs based on STEM education. Teaching analytics and natural sciences is crucial in this type of schools.

On the other hand, such a demand is not a big case in Europe or in Africa and therefore the GISs vary according to their local environment. For example, two schools visited in Europe and two schools visited in Africa are STEM based schools and one school visited school in Europe and one school visited in Africa are language and human-sciences based. Especially in the capital cities like the first visited city of Africa or the second visited city in Europe, the movement both have STEM and language and human-sciences based schools together. From this point of view, it could be said that, like in the US, the type of the GISs in other parts of the world depends on the local environment and the needs of the educational market in that local environment.

The third important point is the technological improvements and modern technology that the GISs try to add their identity. For example, the third school in Europe mentioned that they have added software development courses in their curriculum. He mentioned that this is

not a course in other schools in their country and such a class would improve their students' innovative skills. He also underlined that they have reformist approach in comparison to other schools. Another different approach is observed in the second school in the US. In these new elective courses, students learn how to write IOS application on an Apple iPhone.

"For example, I give you two examples, one is our program called IOS application. The apps you see on the Apple phones, this program, the kids themselves write, with their teachers."(USAM2)

In addition to this type of new applications in technological classes, some regions also try to add some new courses in social sciences too. For example, the third school in the USA mentioned that they have a journalism course as an elective in their school and students who are interested in journalism could take these courses to learn this occupation. In these courses they invite important journalists to their schools and organize visits to newspapers to demonstrate the structure of this occupation to their students.

These applications have occurred mostly in regions where the local curriculum is flexible and not so broad, like the US or western European countries. For example, the manager of the third country in Europe said that they do not have a common state curriculum, but the state decides the framework of this curriculum and they can create their own curriculum inside this framework. However, there are also regions in this research, like Africa, where the local curriculum is rigid and so broad that the school managements do not have the chance to add or subtract anything to the practiced curriculum. In such regions the GISs try to cover this gap with additional educational activities, student clubs and other projects. (See chapter 3.3.1.2)

The main reason for these applications is to try to follow fast changes in the world to design the future of education in their schools. Especially schools in the USA are much more interested in this kind of applications. Unlike the other schools in Europe and Africa, it was observed in all three visited schools in the US that they have a College Counseling department which helps their graduates to find an appropriate college and also follows the requirement of these colleges, especially the most reputational ones like Harvard, Yale, Princeton...etc. They try to restructure their education according to these requirements.

"The most powerful aspect of the school is that the unit, so-called college counseling, it is very strong in preparation for the university. That unit determines the current needs, identifies the needs of the students, and they guide us. So, in the future it is useful for our school to move to the following areas. We have the ability to work faster than those other public schools that need to work in those areas." (USAM1)

One of the concrete examples to this point is given by the manager of the first school in America who said that:

"We have something different, a so-called senior thesis, we are a science school, we say to our students that they will write a thesis when they graduate because they will need it in their college. If it is possible, they have to do an experiment in the field of science, they have to explain this experiment in their thesis." (USAM1)

Such a thesis is a sign to the universities to demonstrate that the graduates of this school already have knowledge about the experiments and how to conduct and report them.

In addition to rebuilding the current curriculum according to modern changes and future requirements, the management of the GISs also use modern technologies in their management too. For example, the first school manager in the USA mentioned that they are using a Google innovation program in their management. He mentioned that they follow the criteria of this Google innovation program throughout their management and by using Java Script program, they collect the necessary data of their students during the whole year. Thousands of data is collected at the end of the year and the management uses this data in its educational activities. Another example is given by the first school manager who uses digitalization and its applications in the educational field. He gave the digital class book project in their school as an example. In this app, the teacher can click on information in the class book about a student, like he is late to class or something else and at the same time, school management and parents of the student see the same data on their smart phones. Of course, in this point, the management of the GISs needs teachers' cooperation and it is not so easy sometimes.

"Another important point is whether we are inquired based schools, or are we seriously researching. This is our goal with our teachers in our school right now. Okay, you're doing a job, do you think this job really increases quality or does it not increase it, and do you know how to do it yourself as a teacher? So, we are trying to place more of this in our culture." (EM3)

As a result, using modern facilities with technological equipment, creating an up-to-date curriculum by following the changes in the modern world and trying to apply this new technology in management and teaching activities are current issues about the curriculum in GISs. In this way they try to create an innovative, modern education system which will separate them from others. Especially competition for students or local demands pressure school managements to apply these types of new methods. In the field study, it was observed that some schools are flexible and more active in this point and others try to fulfil this gap with clubs. For example, in two different schools it was seen that "robotics" clubs are very popular and students

voluntarily worked in these clubs. College counselors play an important role in the USA and in the other GISs in Europe and Africa the management does this job by cooperating with local and global universities.

#### 3.3.4 Coup Attempt and Its Effects on Gülen Inspired Schools

The failed coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016 was a cornerstone event both for the movements and Turkey's history. One of the main advantages of this research is the timing of the study, which is conducted two years after the coup attempt. This enabled the researcher of the study to discuss the issue with both experts and manager participants and to analyze it objectively.

The political stance and ideology of the movement is one of the most important criticism points against the movement (See chapter 2.1.4). This part is outside the scope of this research subject and would require other field research focused solely on the political position of the movement. However, as a summary of this criticism, the movement is accused of conquering important departments of the government, like positions in the military and the police departments and then filling these places with their graduates (Seufert, 2015, p. 109). Based on this criticism, **Erdogan accused the movement** of organizing the failed coup attempt in Turkey through these leaked cadres in these departments (Bultmann, 2016). According to this understanding, on that day, a group of soldiers in the Turkish military tried to organize an unsuccessful coup attempt against President Erdogan and his administration in Turkey. During the fights between the military and citizens, 271 people lost their lives and because of the political disorder immediately after the event, the government declared a state of emergency for the whole country. On the same night, Erdogan claimed that this attempt was planned by the Gülen Movement and the US. According to Alam (2019, p.275), the Erdogan administration pointed to a follower of Gülen, Adil Öksüz, and Gülen's admission of meeting this person before the coup attempt as a proof and suggested that this coup was planned there. In addition, Erdogan also said that this was a present from God which helped them to fight against the Gülen Movement (Timur, 2016). In the following days and weeks, all of the institutions which had a connection with the Gülen Movement were closed. The Turkish government also demanded the extradition of Gülen from the United States (Timur, 2016). These events and the accusation of Erdogan had a huge impact on Turkish society. On the next day, crowds plundered some schools and other organizations related to the movement in different parts of Turkey.

**Gülen rejected these accusations** and answered them immediately. On the next day, 16 July 2016 and also on the following days, Gülen gave several interviews to different media



organizations from all over the world and refuted all accusations of Erdogan, who tried to show a relationship between Gülen and the failed coup attempt (Timur, 2016) (Finger, 2016). Gülen did not reject his meeting with Adil Öksüz, but such an admission cannot be proof, by any stretch of the imagination, of committing wrong (Alam, 2019, p. 275). Besides, he blamed all coups on antidemocratic movements both inside and outside of Turkey. As a solution, he (Gülen) demanded the setting up of an international commission to uncover the truth behind these developments and categorically stated that he will return to Turkey if such a commission finds he had even the slightest involvement in these incidents (Alam, 2019, p. 230). In one of his interviews on 29 September 2016, Gülen explained this issue as follows:

"First, I have also doubted about Erdogan's role behind this coup attempt. Right now, I am sure that it was known by him. One of Turkish officer leaked that Erdogan, the head of the secret intelligence service of Turkey and head of the Army came together in the head of Army before the event...This attempt gives Erdogan the chance to do whatever he wants, and he could easily arrest thousands of people from state, army, police and justice. Attorneys, businessmen, journalists and the wives of the members of the Movement are also arrested in a week. This must be prepared before." (Finger , 2016)<sup>36</sup>

During the field study, it was clearly mentioned in the interviews that **neither experts nor the manager participants** believe that the movement organized this attempt. One of the reasons behind this understanding is the type of this attempt, which is using power to take the political control of the country. Even the experts who are opposed to the movement also highlighted this issue. As an example, Expert 9, who was also a politician in Germany, highlighted this issue as follows:

"No, because the signature under this coup attempt in Turkey does not belong to FG. Because the organization is a long-term organization, the FG organization is not short-term. Not going to be overnight, they have a very important goal and therefore they are in the long run, they were going that way with the education."(Ex9)

The other participants also highlighted similar points in the interviews and suggested that this attempt was organized by the Erdogan regime to achieve his political goals against the movement.

Additionally, **according to literature research and research on media**, it was observed that, the movement has a very apolitical structure and distances itself from every kind

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<sup>36</sup> This quote was taken from the German Newspaper "Zeit" in 2 October, 2016. The journalist Evelyn Finger conducted this interview and the quote is translated from German to English by the researcher of this study.

of violence in its activities. (See chapter 2.1.1 and 2.1.4) Besides, the poor evidence from the Turkish government convinced no-one on an international level (Bultmann, 2017). As a concrete example, the key person of the coup attempt Adil Öksüz, according to the Erdogan administration, was arrested in the immediate aftermath of the coup, however disappeared intriguingly while under police control (Alam, 2019, p.275). According to Alam (2019, p.275), the possibility of Adil Öksüz working for the Erdogan regime cannot be ruled out, for he would not be the first former member of Hizmet to work for Erdogan. Besides, the Turkish government could not find and judge the cadre of Öksüz behind the coup attempt two years later. Instead, more than 130,000 people (See figure 6 below) are removed from their positions and almost 100,000 are arrested (See figure 5 below) for being a member of the Gülen Movement. However, neither prosecutors nor experts know how these people are selected or whether these people founded an illegal organization in their institutions or not. Therefore, neither Interpol nor American authorities accepted the demands of Erdogan's regime demands for the arrest and deportation of Gülen (Barz, 2017, p. 32).

As a result, such an important event had a huge impact on the movement and also in society. How this issue affected the movement, the Gülen inspired schools outside of Turkey, the impact of the failed coup attempt and pressure from the Erdogan regimes is asked to the participants. All participants mentioned that it was a shocking and unexpected issue which has had deep impacts on the society and the movement. These effects on the society and on the GISs are analyzed in this part.

#### *3.3.4.1 Effects of the coup attempt on Society*

Both inside and outside of Turkey, the failed coup attempt gained attention and almost all world media institutions reported on the event with details. Therefore, everybody had chance to learn something about the movement, however the major impact happened in Turkish society. In 2014, after the Gülen affiliated media organizations published Erdogan's corruption scandals, Erdogan himself declared a witch hunt against the movement (Yılmaz & Çetin, 2014)<sup>37</sup> and after the failed coup attempt in July 2016, the regime labelled the Gülen Movement as a "Terrorist Organization". In the following days and weeks after the coup attempt, more than a hundred thousand people were arrested or removed from their duties just because they have a relation with the GM and all institutions connected with the Gülen Movement were closed (Amnesty International, 2018a, p. 5). All these people were accused of being a member of the

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<sup>37</sup> In his speech Erdogan said that: "If the betrayers of this country are dismissed and appointed to another place, and it is called a witch hunt, yes we will do this witch hunt". (Translated from Turkish to English by the researcher of this study.)

Fethullah Gülen Terrorist organization<sup>38</sup> and acting on its behalf (Amnesty International, 2018a, p. 10). The current regime also confiscated the assets of the organizations who supported the movement (Amnesty International, 2018a, p. 4).

*Figure 5: Human Rights Violation after the Coup Attempt in Turkey (Amnesty International, 2018a, p. 4)*



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

Such pressure and illegal acts against the movement have two important results. First of all, by using the "state of emergency", an unlawful pressure is placed on the society causes a "Fear of the Kingdom" in the Turkish people. The followers of the movement in Turkey are isolated from the society and these people are introduced as a traitor or state enemy. In addition, everybody who was against these unlawful practices or criticizes the regime is also introduced

<sup>38</sup> There is a new term used after the called attempt called "FETÖ", which is acronym of the "Fethullah Gülen Terror Organization" in Turkish

as a collaborator and traitor to Turkey. This propaganda against the movement is conducted in advertisements, films, and even in primary school books. Such a huge campaign against the movement has consequences for the followers.

"But the structure of the Gülen followers has suffered severely, and I feel great concern about my friends, even though they are very brave, and my imagination is enough to understand what these worries are, because they all have close friends in Turkey, and I know I am also affected myself. I am on the wanted list of the Turkish secret services, yes, this is a sad situation that has been going on for a year and a half and you cannot see how there will be short-term changes." (Ex5)

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

The second result of the failed coup attempt in Turkey is the immigration of well-educated, highly talented people. This is mainly because more than 130,000 people were dismissed from their positions unlawfully and, thus, this had a huge financial impact on these families. Additionally, these people lost their hope for their future due to the isolation and exclusion from their society. Especially the followers of the Gülen Movement tried to leave the country and joined international activities of the Movement. On the other hand, the AKP<sup>39</sup> administration cancelled the passports of the members of the movement and banned them from leaving the country. The main goal of this is to stop this type of migration. Despite this unlawful action, the followers use different methods and try to escape from Turkey to west Europe, America or Canada.

"Yes, that is very exciting for Germany, we have (laughing) triggered immigration in this failed coup. For the first time, we have an elite immigration to Germany. Everybody who comes out of Turkey now comes from very interesting, very important jobs, it is sad for Turkey, but positive for Germany. In Germany, this is handled very discreetly, so, it the fact that here highly qualified people are pointed out, but the connection to Gülen movement is gladly avoided." (Ex5)

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<sup>39</sup> AKP is the acronym of the party of Erdogan which means "Justice and Development Party" in English

Figure 6: The Amount of the People Who Dismissed from Their Positions in the Public Sector of Turkey after the Failed Coup Attempt in 2016. (Amnesty International, 2018b, p. 11)



All these actions against the movement alarmed the followers of the Gülen Movement all over the world and they try to protect themselves, both through legal ways and social media. Especially outside of Turkey, the engagement of the followers in their countries increased and their relations with each other thickened. In addition, the immigrant wave of the followers of the movement will contribute to the international activities of the movement because most of these immigrants are successful, well-educated people in Turkey and are attending international activities of the movement in other countries. This is why it is possible that, like the Jewish immigrants did to the US after World War II, the immigrant followers of the Gülen movement will become successful in their new homes and will increase the power of the movement in their host countries in the future. Because of the unsustainable situation of Turkey, it is not expected that these immigrants will go back to Turkey, even if the political situation changes in the future. All of these people are already recorded as an enemy of the Turkish state and it is

not expected that this situation will change in the future. Besides, especially the early comers have already found a job and have started to do their businesses or conduct their profession in different institutions and thus, a major change is not expected in the future.

#### *3.3.4.2 Effects of the Coup Attempt in GISs*

The results or consequences of the failed coup attempt out of Turkey to the GISs differs according to region. Especially in undeveloped poor countries and regions where there is a large Turkish minority like Germany or other western European countries, this failed coup attempt had a greater effect than other regions. Like in Turkey, the Erdogan regime uses all diplomatic possibilities to close the GISs out of Turkey.

The most affected countries in these actions are the unsustainable poor countries or the countries which have an important relationship with Turkey, like Azerbaijan or other central Asian countries. According to Ex9, the schools in these countries are elite schools in their society which only educate the rich and important people's children of that country. Erdogan himself said that the movement's goal in these private schools is to take control of the political power of that country through these children in the future (Hürriyet, 2018). He also suggested that these children will organize coups in these countries against their fathers or legislators and after achieving the power, they will give the management of these countries to the movement (Hürriyet, 2018). As a result of such pressure, all the GISs were closed in these poor countries and some of other countries, like Saudi Arabia, extradited Turkish citizens, who are Gülen followers, in their countries by cooperating with the Turkish secret service.

"Turkey is pressing on certain countries and they have closed their schools there as well ... In Africa, in Jordan I believe ... So, the conflict in Turkey is spreading worldwide, so that is a phase of withdrawal from what we are experiencing right now." (Ex8)

"Effecting of course, because it is not possible to effect it. They are going to the African countries, especially non-democratic African countries, trying to close the schools by giving some opportunities or money to the administrators of poor countries. Or, in many places, things go well, but the movement does not open new ones, they cannot make buildings, they have problems, however they (Erdogan regime) cannot do anything in democratic countries." (Ex2)

Despite the political pressure, some of these countries refused to close the schools because of the contribution of these schools to their education system.



"See, Macedonia or Albania have refused to close those schools. Turkey has made a lot of pressure, both very small poor countries, countries that are under pressure from Turkey. Two million inhabitants in Macedonia, three million in Albanian, education is very low and poor, both said they are not closing the schools. In Macedonia, there are schools of the Gülen community called Yahya Kemal schools. I don't know the name in Albania<sup>40</sup>, but they said that they have made a great contribution to our education system." (Ex9)

However, in these types of countries, the Turkish secret service carried out several unlawful attempts which makes the issue more complicated. As an example, on 28 July 2018, the manager of the GISs in Mongolia, Veysel Akcay, was kidnapped by the secret service spies (Reuters, 2018). He has been living there for 24 years and on that day agents from the Turkish secret service kidnapped him and brought him to the International Airport of Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. However, his wife and other eyewitnesses informed the police and important authorities of the government through social media. The plane which had been sent by the Turkish government to take him back to Turkey was not allowed to leave the airport and he was rescued that day by police officers. Similar attempt was successful in Moldavia (Reuters, 2018). On 6 September 2018, Turkish secret service agents kidnapped seven Turkish teachers who were working at GISs in Moldavia and brought them to Turkey against their will (Stockholm Center of Freedom, 2018). They were arrested in Turkey and sent to jail. Besides, it is also published by many media organizations and also in social media that the Erdogan regime uses its power to close many schools in Africa by giving bribes to the authorities of these poor countries.

On the other hand, because of the issues mentioned above, the Erdogan regime could not find the support that they had been expecting on an international level in developed countries. Mainly because of this reason, according to the Wall Street Journal (24.03.2017), the Erdogan administration met with Mike Flynn, a former Trump advisor, and offered him 15 million dollars for kidnapping Gülen and giving him back to Turkey (Mercan, 2019, p. 277). It was also published that Flynn received 530,000 dollars from the Erdogan administration for their lobbying activities against the movement in the US (Wall Street Journal, 2017) (Mercan, 2019, p. 277). Despite these efforts, as Ex2 explained above, the Erdogan regime could not convince the developed countries and thus, the situation of the movement in developed countries or sustainable countries is not affected by the consequences of the failed coup attempt.

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<sup>40</sup> It is called „Mehmet Akif Colleges“ in Albania (Mercan, 2019, p. 313)



As a concrete example USAM1 mentioned that the Erdogan regime worked with the Amsterdam Law Office<sup>41</sup> to close the Gülen inspired schools in US. During the Internet research after the interview, it was seen on the website of this law company that the Republic of Turkey has retained the international law firm Amsterdam & Partners LLP (2019) to conduct a global investigation into the activities of the organization led by the Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen. It was also published on the website of this law office that the movement conducted unlawful acts and is a danger against the democracy of Turkey. They accused the schools of having allegedly engaged in systematic abuse of the American visa system (Amsterdam & Partners LLP, 2019). USAM1 mentioned an event which he had experienced during the application for a new charter school in their state and explained how this company works against the movement in the US.

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

According to USAM1, they could not answer these questions or showed any evidence to prove their accusations. He also mentioned despite all this negative propaganda, mainly because the lack of evidence, the board found the schools successful and decided to accept their application and allowed another charter school in Massachusetts, USA. Similarly, in all the other places in USA, the GISs were investigated several times because of the accusations of Amsterdam and Partners LLP, however these schools were neither closed nor sentenced to any penalty by the USA administrators (Barz, 2017, p.32).

Unlike the charter schools in the USA, in Europe the GISs faced different kind of difficulties after the coup attempt. Because of the political pressure and manipulations of the regime in the Turkish media against the movement, the support of the Turkish minority in Europe ended after the coup attempt. According to Ex6, the Turkish minority are divided into two parts, one part is those who already supports to Erdogan and his politics and the second part are people who are against the Erdogan regime. The first part is already convinced that the

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<sup>41</sup> The exact name of this organization is called "Amsterdam and Partners LLP". This office was founded by Robert Amsterdam, who is also the lawyer of some other famous dictators like Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand or Rupiah Banda in Zambia.

Gülen Movement is a terror organization who conducted to the failed coup attempt in July 2016. This group was provoked by the regime after the coup attempt and removed their children from GISs and tutoring institutions. Even in Germany there were attacks on to the movement's institutions by these people. Ex3, who works as a project manager in one of the educational foundations of the movement, explained this process as follows:

After the coup attempt, this place was stoned, the windows were broken, something was written on the walls, and we forwarded this situation to the police, but of course there was not much of a result, because it was done at night." (Ex3)

On the other hand, the second part who are against the Erdogan administration were pressured by the current regime in several ways. According to Ex9, who also opposes the movement, mentioned that the consulates played important role in this point:

"I mean, the consulates have dried them up. They called the parents to the consulate and they say why your child is still in a Gülen school, you have to take him from there. While entering Turkey at the border, it was said that either you are going to take your children from the GIS or you will have trouble here next time. The parents take their children from there (schools) because of fear."(Ex9)

"It hit more private tutoring centers and schools, where most of the students were Turkish and the children of families who were out of the Gülen Movement. Therefore, the student records melted, and some institutions closed. But it didn't affect us" (Ex3)

Because of the manipulation and repression in Western Europe, especially in Germany, where an important amount of the Turkish minority lives, the number of students decreased and Ex4 mentioned during the interviews that three Gülen inspired schools have been closed because of this financial crisis in Germany.<sup>42</sup>

In this point, it is crucial to understand the financial structure of the GISs. The OECD defines schools in to three groups such as, state schools, private schools with state support and private schools without state support. According to region, GISs are either in the second or in the third group. During the field study it was observed that the schools in Europe and the charter schools in the USA part of the second group and depending on the amount of their students, they are supported by the state. On the other hand, schools in developing or undeveloped

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<sup>42</sup> According to Internet research after the interview, the mentioned Gülen inspired schools and also another closed Gülen inspired school outside of Germany are listed below:

- Urselbach Gymnasium, Oberursel, Hessen Germany
- Carl-Friedrich-Gauss Schulen, Ludwisburg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
- Private Wirtschaftsschule Main-Bildung, Würzburg, Bayern, Germany
- Sera Schule, Zurich, Switzerland

countries, like Africa, and also private schools in the US (charter schools excluded) belong to the third group of private schools without state support. This group is financed by the students' tuitions.

*Table 5: Financial Structure of the GISs in Visited Countries*

School	Type of School	Art of Country
E1	Private School <b>with</b> State Support	Developed
E2	Private School <b>with</b> State Support	Developed
E3	Private School <b>with</b> State Support	Developed
A1	Private School <b>without</b> State Support	Developing
A2	Private School <b>without</b> State Support	Developing
A3	Private School <b>without</b> State Support	Developing
US1	Private School <b>with</b> State Support	Developed
US2	Private School <b>without</b> State Support	Developed
US3	Private School <b>without</b> State Support	Developed

In both the second and third group, the amount of the students in these schools are crucial for the management of the GISs, because in the third group students' tuitions are the main financial source of the school and in the second group the state support also depends on the amount of the students. Especially schools in Europe which belong to second group, private schools with state support, have been seriously affected after the failed coup attempt. The number of the students decreased rapidly, mainly because the Turkish minority especially in Germany and also in some other western European countries, took their students from these schools. That is why schools were confronted with financial crises in summer 2016.

"We had serious difficulties, more than hundreds of our students left the school, especially after the 15th of July 2016. We were shocked at first and had a great difficulty with our teachers. We had a record 568 registrations before the attempt and that comforted us. However, after than more than hundred students left which meant the employment of five full people." (EM1)

"We lost 25% of our students ... Of course, five hundred, normally we need to be over five hundred, now around 440." (EM3)

Such a decrease was a shock for the schools, especially in Europe. To face this problem, the GISs applied different kinds of financial precautions and tried to cut some of their projects. For example, EM1 mentioned that, instead of firing five personnel, they came together with

their staff and decreased other costs and also the work hours of staff and teachers. They also combined some classes. He also mentioned that despite the difficulties and pressure, they managed the crises and right now they do not have any financial concern about the future.

A similar situation was also experienced in private GISs in the USA. Unlike charter schools, the second and third schools which were visited during the field study belong to the third group which are private schools without state support and tuition fees are crucial for these schools. That is why, because of the financial crises after the failed coup attempt, one of the private schools in the US closed<sup>43</sup>. According to USAM2, after the failed coup attempt their international students from Turkey decreased rapidly and they had difficult times in summer 2016.

"Our international students are mostly from Turkey. They registered or renewed for next semester, but they encountered problems like they could not leave Turkey, or their parents were confronted with some problems due to the child studying here. Their family members and relatives live in Turkey or their father has the capital there, therefore an enormous portion of parents hesitated and decided not to send their children." (USAM2)

On the other hand, during the field study, it was also observed that the GISs in sustainable developing countries in Africa or some other parts of the world and charter schools in the USA had not been affected by the failed coup attempt in Turkey. This is mainly because the majority of the students are from local families who do not have any connection with Turkey. In Europe, also some GISs like the second observed school in the field study or according to Ex5, the GISs in Karlsruhe (Germany), were not affected because the low percentage of Turkish students. Such a situation become an example and an experience for the GISs and the participant managers like EM1, EM3, USAM2 and USAM3 all mentioned that their target group moved to local people in their regions.

As a result, the consequences of the failed coup attempt and how the current situation of the GISs today are very important subjects. During the visits it was observed that after two years, the impact of the issue is gone, especially in developed and sustainable places. All of the manager participants mentioned that they have minor financial problems, but they defined their financial situation as sustainable and did not think about any financial precautions. Also, in all visited regions, new projects and further expansion strategies were discussed, which also

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<sup>43</sup> This school is called Putnam Science Academy in Connecticut in the USA. The management of the school changed after the failed coup attempt and the followers of the Gülen movement are no more on charge.

demonstrates the financial stability of the GISs. However, the effects of this period still continue on society and it will take time till it ends.

"But I also know the information, for example, Mr. (Ercan) Karakoyun (President of the biggest Gülen inspired Dialog Foundation in Germany), told me now, the applications and the registrations have increased again. (thought for a while) I think the first shock is over now, but I believe that it still is problematic, the Erdogan followers in Germany and the Gülen followers, as I call them now [...] so I know families where the father does not speak with the son, the mother no longer with the aunt...etc., which of course damages the whole thing" (Ex4)

### 3.3.5 Internationalization through Localization

In the field study of the research, it was observed that the local environment plays a crucial role during the international expansion of the GISs. As an example, the majority of the teachers are from the local environment or the GISs use the local curriculum. In this chapter, the history of the international expansion of the GISs and how the movement used localization strategy in the visited three regions of the world will be explained in detail.

#### *3.3.5.1 International Expansion History of the Gülen Movement*

The disintegration of Soviet Union in 1990-91 and the independence of Central Asian Republics provided a golden opportunity for Gülen to expand his Hizmet work abroad (Alam, 2019, p. 136). In the field study Ex1 also highlighted this point and mentioned that internationalization process of the Gülen Movement started with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and he (Ex1) was one of the first followers who went to Azerbaijan after the resolution. Ebaugh and Koç (2007, 542) also pointed this issue and mentioned that like Ex1, Gülen convinced his other followers to go to other former Soviet regions in central Asia and they founded the first GISs outside of Turkey. According to Ex2, after 2000s, the movement founded schools in all other parts of the world with the same method. Active followers or some teachers and managers who had experience in Turkey were encouraged to move outside of Turkey and they were motivated the foundation of schools in countries other than Turkey. To achieve this goal these founders cooperated with local people and local administrations during the foundation process. As a result of this process, the movement founded different types of schools according to region by paying attention to the needs and regulations of that region. That is why, during the field study, it was observed that GISs in Africa, Europe and America differentiate from each other.

"And my impression is that the Gülen Movement has understood to work very country specific. [...] The schools, so I think that depending on the countries, you have specific concepts that can be easily combined with the name Gülen Schools or Hizmet Schools [...] What I find very remarkable, is that the Hizmet movement in Tanzania does not try to run the same education initiatives as in Germany or in America or Holland, yes. [...] It is actually floating in the national system and working on the lack of the national system. And that can be very different in Africa than in Germany." (Ex6)

There are some common values and practices which was mentioned in previous chapters, however many important points like teachers, curriculum and financial structure of GISs vary according to region. Therefore, localization is an important strategy and practice in Gülen inspired schools during internationalization and because of this reason, instead of carrying a common worldwide education model, the Gülen Movement has different education models depending on the region.

As a concrete example, one subject could be whether GISs are discipline centered or more focused on free involvement. Like many other points, this point differentiates according to region of the schools. During the field study, it was observed that the GISs in Africa are much more discipline based compared to schools in Europa and America. Students have to wear a uniform, there are several ceremonies before school starts and students get negative points if they do not pay attention to discipline rules in GISs in Africa. This is mainly because of the local educational tradition in Africa and GIS schools have adapted their identity to this tradition. However, in Europe and in America these practices are not a case, and more free involvement education was observed in these GISs. This also shows the flexible structure of the GISs which can adapt different regions easily. On the other hand, according to Ex5 even in the GIS in Europe, there is a discipline which does not limit or press students, just according to the education in the schools.

"I would say, there is a discipline there, yes there's a reason for discipline there, a basic chord of discipline but I would not say, I did not find it restrictive or distressing - the discipline and the truer mood, at the same time. This is my picture." (Ex5)

Another question in this point is "how" the movement practices localization during the internationalization process. It was observed that during the field study, local needs have an important role in this point. Like many other schools, the main goal of the GISs are to educate a new generation but in addition to this goal, especially the management of the schools want to do more for the community of that region and try to contribute by fulfilling the gaps in their region. That is why cooperation and dialog with the local people play important roles in GISs.

Because of this, it makes more sense to analyze three regions solely and see how the movement applies localization in Europe, Africa and America.

### *3.3.5.2 Localization in Europe: Internationalization through Minorities*

The expansion of the movement in Europe has a different history in comparison to other parts of the world. Especially after the Second World War, many young Turks immigrated to Western Europe to fulfill the human resources gap in Europe. During the last six decades, these people settled Europe and unlike in other parts of the world, there is a huge Turkish minority living in Western Europe today. More than four million Turks live in Germany, making the Turkish community the biggest minority there. Integration between the German majority and the Turkish minority is an important problem in German society and during the expansion process of GISs, the followers of the movement first focused on this problem, which was the first localization step in Europe. To contribute to this issue, initially followers of the movement focused on the education of this minority, which is very bad in compare to majority of the society (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 191). University and high school preparation courses were opened at the beginning and, after gaining enough experience in this field, more complex school projects were practiced by the movement. The main target group was the Turkish minority, and mainly because of this reason, the activities of the movement was supported by the Turkish minority in Western Europe (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 207). Another reason behind this cooperation is the perception of these people against the school system in their region. They, especially Muslim minorities in Germany, believe that their children are discriminated just because of their background, nationality or religion and these parents lost their trust to traditional educational institutions (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 210). Boos-Nünning (2011, p. 195) talks about “direct” and “indirect” discrimination and mentioned that this subject is still an ongoing debate in German scientific society. However, she also asserted that the German education system is orientated to students who live in a standard family, who speak German, who are Christian and at the end who have German citizenship. That is why mainly students who have immigration backgrounds have disadvantage in this educational system and according to some research based on student performance, like IGLU, in comparison to normal students, students who have an immigration background could be neglected or discriminated in the national education systems (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 199). In this point, Ex4 suggested that the most important contribution of the GISs in Germany is to create an education system without discrimination, which the German educational system has not been successful in.



“In compare to normal students, they (he means children with an immigration background) have significantly fewer academic degrees, you know that in the educational situation in Germany. Against this, they understand and started to offer well-initiative schools in this way, so to choose or to get a previously discriminated group into educational achievement, and that also seems to work well.” (Ex4)

"The schools have brought about the concept of promoting children, rather than the selection of children, which is based on a rather specific organization's concept of all-day education and their reform pedagogy, in which significantly more children attend the higher schools, than they otherwise would not have gotten. That is an uncanny performance." (Ex6)

As a result of this work, the movement established a small Turkish community in Europe who supports the movement financially and also by fulfilling the human resources gap of the movement in their educational institutions. For example, during the interviews, it was observed that all three school managers of the GISs are European citizens with Turkish immigration backgrounds. They are all young men in their mid-30s who were born in Europe and they have visited movement's schools or other educational institutions before. They have accepted and followed the common philosophy of the movement and practiced their special educational activities by adapting it in to their local environment. This is why these young cadres who know both European and Turkish culture, especially the movement's culture, played crucial role during the localization of the GISs in Europe.

As a result of this first step, focusing on Turkish minority, after two decades, the education model of the movement also gained attraction by the majority of the community in Western Europe too. According to Boos-Nünning (2011, p. 207), 90% of the students have an immigration background from Turkey in the 25 GISs in Germany in 2011. EM3 thought that it is very normal because the majority of the community does not know the model at the beginning but after years, they also have chance to get to know you and support you.

"This has nothing to do with the coup attempt that occurred in Turkey. We are Turk and already 100% of our students were Turk when we first opened (in 2007). 35% of them are Turk at the moment, after one or two years, this rate will be 10%." (EM3)

However, the failed coup attempt in Turkey triggered a break between the movement and the Turkish minority. The main reason behind this break is the effects of the propaganda and pressure of the Erdogan regime.

"But it is indisputable for me, that is extreme repression had come, that actually should not happen here (Germany). That is very clear. There have been significant repressions and these repressions have also resulted in parents deregistering their children (from schools or tutor centers). So, we have the first group out of conviction, and some that were blackmailed, yes, with strong repression, yes, instead of blackmailed maybe we could say, no, no they are clearly blackmailed after all. And the second is that but these repressions have not only been practiced over the parents, but also over funding."(Ex6)

As an example she mentioned that even some small entrepreneurs who has a shop or supermarket, was blackmailed and forced to stop his or her support to the movement. The majority of the Turkish minority in west Europe were influenced by it and broke their relationship with the movement. Even in some places, like Gelsenkirchen, Germany, a group of people attacked institutions of the movement and broke the windows and hung Turkish flags there. As a consequence, the schools, tutor centers and other movement institutions were confronted with huge financial problems for the movement in Western Europe. (See Chapter 3.3.4.2)

As a result of these events, the observed two schools in Europe lost one fourth of their students after the failed coup attempt and three schools in Germany and one school in Switzerland closed just because of financial problems.<sup>44</sup> That is why the GISs, especially after the failed coup attempt, gave up their first strategy, which was focusing on minorities, and today they are targeted more on the majority of the community in Western Europe and also on other non-Turkish minorities, which was the second localization step of the GISs in Europe.

"Before the coup, we were more interested in the Turks, but after the coup, people were more out of contact. This was the case with the older sisters, we became more familiar with the Germans, the majority of this society. [...] I do not think there is a voluntary change. As a result of the change in some conditions and needs in this direction, especially after the coup, I think such a development took place."(Ex3)

Especially the second school in Europe that was visited during the field study became good example of the other GISs where the majority of the students are not from the Turkish minority. Especially today, like this second visited school, all GISs are more focused on other minorities in Western Europe, including non-Muslim minorities and also locals without an

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<sup>44</sup> According to Internet research, the mentioned three Gülen inspired schools and also another closed Gülen inspired school outside of Germany are listed below:

- Urselbach Gymnasium, Oberursel, Hessen Germany
- Carl-Friedrich-Gauss Schulen, Ludwisburg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany
- Private Wirtschaftsschule Main-Bildung, Würzburg, Bayern, Germany
- Sera Schule, Zurich, Switzerland

immigration background is another target group of the schools. Because of this point, it is expected in the future the number of the non-Turkish students and also teachers will increase in the Gülen inspired schools in Europe.

The third important localization step of the GISs in Europe is the social projects of the schools, targeting social problems in Europe. Through this they try to contribute to their region and their community. Unlike schools in Africa and America, where these projects are mostly focused on science and math, schools in Europe focused more on social projects, arts and sport activities, in addition to science competitions. Several projects are mentioned as follows:

"For example, there is a project about citizenship, we do this together with the public authorities, and that's how a citizen in this city should be." (EM2)

"The project of "No violence" is one of them, the project of solving the conflicts without resorting to violence, the other is the "pass of the media", the sensitivity of social media project, all the students have to participate in these projects, privacy, personal data, insults and not to harass are the subject of that project." (EM3)

Like the other managers in Europe, EM1 gave the art contest which was organized by their city as an example to this point, where 170 schools joined.

"The aim of this project is to give children the ability to think creatively and imagine ... For example, we work together with other schools in "culture and arts week" and we are working together with them" (EM1)

These kinds of projects are crucial especially for the parents of these students, because most of these students come from low-income families and they do not have the resources to do it by themselves. EM1 and EM2 highlighted the same issue during the interviews and they mentioned that the majority of their parents belong to low-income families. According to EM2, they cooperate with other schools or private clubs and build partnerships. In this way their parents could send their kids to this kind of places even though they do not have enough financial resources. In addition to that, EM1 also underlined the same issue and mentioned that almost one third of their parents are unemployed and get support from the state. This effects their children's education and they have to find ways to solve this problem. Otherwise these students could not get a good degree or even if they have skills in such fields, they do not have a chance to flourish them and they will become a problem in their community in the future.

Mainly because of these contributions and the hard work of the schools, despite the lack of the support of the Turkish minority to the schools in the last two years, GISs in Europe are growing. The third school manager gave another school in their region, which had management

problems, as an example. Because of these problems, the state took the control of the school and transferred it to the school of the third manager and it will be another branch of theirs in other part of the city. Other school managers also talking about several future plans to expand their activities. It is also observed during this process that, in comparison to the winter semester 2016 and 2017, the student numbers in GISs in Europe are increasing just before the winter semester 2018.

*3.3.5.3 Localization in Africa: Academic Management of the Africans in GISs*

Africa and especially other developing countries around the world are the regions where the movement does not have neither state support nor community support. That is why during the foundation process, these schools are founded and financed by the followers in Turkey, which was not a case since 2016, and after a while it was expected from these schools to run their system solely with the student’s tuition fees. This is a unique and important point for GISs in Africa and in other developing countries and that affects or changes the localization process and, of course the internationalization process of the GISs. As a consequence of this situation, there are two main localization steps in these regions: achieving the financial stability or financial power, which has a priority role and the first step in all developing countries, and focusing major local issues, like segregation, nationalism or color deference between black and white people, especially in the case of Africa, are the second step in GISs.

During the field study, the schools observed in Africa accomplished this first process successfully and run their education activities without getting any support in or outside of the country. In these schools, tuition fees from students play a crucial role.

*Table 6: Annual tuition fees in three observed GISs in Africa*

School	State Support	Tuition	Scholarship	Average Africa 14%
A1	No	4000 \$	17%	
A2	No	8000 \$	10%	
A3	No	1900\$	15%	

It is easy to notice that the second school has the highest tuition fee, but this is mainly because this school is an international school and the majority of the students of this school are international students from different nationalities. However, the first school in the capital and the third school in another country are targeted to the local people and depending on the value of the land and region, the tuition fees vary. Of course, these numbers are high for an average

family in Africa and that is why the GISs are criticized as being elite schools in developing countries. (See chapter 2.1.4.3 d) However, to present the educational model of GISs with a high-quality education, laboratories and other facilities, these schools need financial resources. Unlike Europe or the USA, these schools do not have any financial support from the state in undeveloped or developing countries and that is why the only way to build such kind of model is by founding private schools with tuitions. On the other hand, after achieving financial stability, they also use this power to alleviate the poverty problems in these societies. As it is seen on the table above, as an average 14 % of the students get a scholarship from the GISs and pay less or in some cases get a free education. Participants of the study did not mention the sources of these scholarships but according to Tittensor (2014, p. 166), GISs make profit from the high tuitions and recoup the money to finance the outlay of scholarships. These scholarships are unrequited and could cover all the tuitions or some percentage of them. Some other conveniences are also offered by the schools according to the success of the students, the family's financial situation and brother or sister discounts or some other discounts are also offered. In this way the movement tried to help low income families in their regions. AM2 mentioned that it is impossible to help every student financially and their resources are limited in this point. However, in addition to giving scholarship to successful students in their schools, they are also cooperating with local administrations and supporting 180 successful students in local state schools too. He did not mention how they founded this scholarship program or where the resources for this activity come from, however it was observed that the schools in Africa are all well-structured and mainly because of the number of the students and the high tuition fees, they make profit from their business and use these financial resources again for their educational or charity activities.

The other crucial role of GISs in Africa is charity activities. As it was already mentioned, poverty is a big problem in these societies and the GISs try to help these communities by fulfilling this gap by cooperating with their parents. Mainly because of the local circumstances, charity activities are also very often practiced in GIS Africa.

"Actually, the school gives this atmosphere because if you do not promote them, they cannot do it... We have clubs, for example the charity club is one of them, they do collect their belongings, money, some other things that they are no longer using and put them together and give them to the people who need them. So, they go these poor families and give these things to the kids. Or in holy Ramadan we give iftar (Dinner) to some Mosques or to the people around our schools and we give them some packages with food." (AM1)

In addition to supporting the community, GISs also cooperate with the local schools and try to help them by fulfilling their needs. AM2 gave a school in their neighborhood, which had a clean water problem, as an example. Two years ago, they could not pay the bill and the state cut their water, which is a very dangerous for the children because of different type of diseases. The management alarmed their parents and collected 3500 dollars and a well was built for this school. The other school managers also mentioned several projects where students and parents helped other schools or students of these schools to fulfill their needs. In some cases, it could be school material or cement blocks in other cases.

All of these efforts are targeting the financial problems of that community, which is a crucial problem in the society. However, another gap or problem is segregation and skin color in the society, which is a crucial issue in Africa. Most people in these societies do not believe that their problems could be solvable, and a better future could be built if the necessary steps are realized today. They believe that white people exploited them hundreds of years and never led them to grow by themselves. That is why the majority of these people are "hopeless" which will stop them from doing the necessary steps for themselves and for their country. This is one of the biggest problems which will also cause many other problems in the society. This second issue needs more work and GISs contribute to this issue with several methods. One of the most important observations in this point is the managers of the first and the third school who are selected from local African black people. Unlike other schools or institutions where a white man works on the top and other black local people work under him, GISs leave the management of these schools to the local black people who understand and accept their philosophy and especially white Turkish teachers, or other white teachers work under them. This is a unique example which has a great impact on the society.

"In the beginning I joined to this school you know, at the beginning what I found, you know we are looking at the people and we think that Turkish teachers are coming from the same father and mother, because they are really loving each other. When we go for picnic, you know we used to eat together and when we finish, we play football, but we find them cleaning the dishes, they are replacing the place, they are helping each other, they care for other things whatever we leave over there. We are just looking at these people, they love each other. What is this? (AM1)

Besides, unlike the other white people in Africa, the engagement between white Turkish teachers with each other and also with black local people also impressed the students, the local teachers and their ambiance.

They are intamingo (a local word, I do not know the exact meaning), They come together, sit together, cook and eat whatever and all these things can find with other people. (Laughing) I think to myself what kind of Buzunbu (means Foreigner in local language) are these people who are just acting like us. (Laughing) So they are cooperative." (AM1)

In addition to local engagement, another important point that gives hope to local African people is the success of the students of the GISs in Africa. In this point, the success of the GISs in and outside of the country also contributed to this issue and changed this perception too. Participant managers from Africa also underlined this issue and highlighted that their society and government are proud of these successes which have never been seen in their country before.

"In terms of looking towards this country, our schools have changed their understanding of education here, people come from other schools, they come from national education, "How do you achieve this?" they asked to us. For example, the science Olympic committee of the country, that is the science and business ministry, only cooperates with us and sends students abroad."(AM2)

"This is a central exam for the whole country, and we have here maybe more than 1,500 schools, so out of this 1,500 schools they go up to 400, it depends on the level, we are in the top ten here every year. Last year for example, our school was the best in the nation. (Laughing) [...] Our standards allow us to have up to 25 students in the class and the country average at a secondary level is 50 in one class. So, people are asking for more schools and the government also asks us to open a university and they offer the land, but we have to first find money and then we can construct the university." (AM1)

As a result, achieving financial stability, practicing several strategies to solve financial and social problems in their society, giving hope to local people by presenting high quality education and by achieving national and international prices are some important localization steps that the GISs apply during their internationalization process in developing countries.

#### *3.3.5.4 Localization in USA: Through Charter and Private schools*

The United States of America is a huge country and many different types of schools conducting their activities. According to Hendrick (2013, p. 218) in general school choice includes, home school (individual school or small community), magnet school, private school, and charter school options. Among these options, the Gülen Movement in the US has two different types



of schools: private schools and charter schools. One of the main common characteristics of these schools is all of them are STEM schools based on natural sciences and mathematics. Learning analytics is very important in this type of school and according to USAM1 there is a gap of this type of schools in the educational market in the US. Therefore, the movement targeted this need in the market and founded their schools according to this understanding.

However, there are also differences between these two types of schools. The major difference between these two type schools is financial situation of these schools. As an example, Gülen inspired private schools (GIPs) were founded at the end of the 1990s and are financially based on student tuitions. On the other hand, Gülen inspired charter schools (GICs) are founded during and after the Clinton administration (after 1991) and they run with state support without any tuition.

By 2003, thirty-five U.S. states and Washington DC had legislated in favor of charter school choice, and in that year 2,575 charter schools educated 1.4 percent of the total public school population (K-12). By 2007, those numbers increased to 4,132 charter schools in forty states, educating 2 percent of the total public school student population. (Hendrick, 2013, p. 218)

According to the different surveys, today more than 7000 charter schools enroll nearly 3 million students in fall 2016 and the percentage of all public school students who attended public charter schools increased from 1 to 6 percent between fall 2000 and fall 2016 (SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2000–01 through 2016–17) These numbers shows how the sector growths and the huge demand to this type of schools in the U.S.

In addition to tuitions, the other remarkable difference between these private and charter schools depends on the admission process. In GIPs in the US they conduct an exam and choose the average or above average students and both national and international students could join this exam. However, GICs are bounded by law and they could only get students in their districts or neighbor districts and they have to conduct a lottery system to choose the students. Therefore, different type of students from different kind of families could be chosen in GICs. There are also several differences from different perspectives. As a result of these differences the GIPs are competing with other old traditional private schools in the US, but the GICs are competing with state schools and also other charter schools. Because of these main differences, both types of GISs have different localization strategies and in this section these strategies are explained separately.

#### a. Localization of the charter GISs in the USA

As it is seen from the circumstances of the Gülen Inspired Charter schools (GICs), they are strictly bounded with the law and their opportunities and resources are less than other state schools. USAM1 showed the teachers of the charter schools as an example.

"In comparison to other public schools, almost all charter schools are like this, you pay less, you work harder, and the contracts are renewed every year."(USAM1)

Because of this financial limitation, charter schools also have some other problems. For example, finding the right building is also a problem. The state schools built their own buildings with huge budgets for their educational projects, but charter schools could not build a new building because of the high expenses and that is why they try to find a suitable building for their education. In all most all cases, these kinds of buildings are in urban areas or some districts where low-income families live. In addition, students are selected with a lottery system and very different kinds of students in every level could have a chance to study at GICs in the USA. Despite all these difficulties, GICs succeeded in establishing their understanding in these charter schools and becoming successful according to results of the different type of state investigations and science competitions. In this point, Hendrick (2013, p. 220) gives Texas's Cosmos Foundation and Harmony Schools as a concrete example:

As of August 2010, nineteen of the foundation's the thirty-seven schools received commendable recognition by the Texas State Education Agency, and eleven more were noted as "exemplary". At the 2010 annual statewide science and engineering fair sponsored by ExxonMobil in Texas, twelve Harmony School students from across the state received the competitions top honors. According to the institution's press release, these twelve winners were selected from over 1,100 entrants.

According to USAM1, the quantitative growth of GICs is the result of such kind of high quality education and success in these different type of competitions.

"Because the number of these schools is increasing, if not successful, this is not possible. Every year I hear such news from my friends from all other regions. A new school was opened, we got an extension here and we got it there. It is not just adding a new school, for example 300 students become 500 students. Schools continue to grow." (USAM1)

In addition to the high quality of education, there are also some other localization strategies of the movement behind this growth. Like the other continents, targeting local problems in the US and contributing to the solutions to these problems is one of these steps.

Like in Europe, especially GICs in the USA are focused on the minorities and their problems. By increasing their education level, they contribute to integration of these minorities within the community and try to be a part of solution. For example, Ex2 pointed the segregation problem of the American society and said how the schools challenge with this issue. He quoted from one of the American experts who said that:

"He said to me: You have charter schools and in these schools your friends could educate black people. This is a huge problem because they have been slaves for 400 years and 65% of the black people in the US could not be educated today. Despite the positive discrimination, the local system is unsuccessful in this point, but you have success and America is seeing that and America noted it" (Ex2)

A similar example is also observed during the field study. The visited charter school was founded in a district where most of the residents are from South America and belonging to the Hispanic minority in the US. According to USAM1, the three districts from which they are allowed to get students are the districts where the lowest income families live, and the delinquency ratio is the highest district in their state. Due to this reason, a local newspaper published a story about one of their graduates from previous years who was accepted to Harvard with a scholarship. This type of success will give hope to other students and also parents there and motivates them even if they have different skin color or low financial resources.

In addition, all other social projects targeted to the American society have a positive impact for the GICs.

"We have social projects. We go to their homes on Veterans Day, we invite them to our schools. For example, our school is close to an air force base and we were constantly conducting programs with them. We invite the soldiers to our schools and we're going to visit them. We were going to the fire department, going to the police force. Here we go to the nursing homes with our students. We were going to the fields with the children, picking up something from there and taking them to places where homeless people live. Such kinds of social events happened a lot."(USAM1)

These kinds of social projects are very important in the USA and the GICs pay attention to these activities. All three managers mentioned that they organize these kinds of projects, but it was observed that in this aspect that, charter schools are ahead in comparison to GIPs. In addition to fulfilling the needs of the society with these kinds of programs, GICs also try to help their students and parents with several projects too. For example, conducting cooperation with other institutions and helping low income parents is one of them. USAM1 mentioned that they have a cooperation with two community colleges and their students from low income families

could visit the summer courses of these community college free of charge. All these activities, the high quality of the education and student success are the localization strategies of the GICs which have helped them to grow in the USA.

b. Localization of the Gülen inspired Private schools

As it was explained above, in addition to charter schools, Gülen Inspired private schools (GIPs) are offering the other type of schooling in the U.S. According to Hendrick (2013, p. 217); Science Academy of Chicago (est. 1997), the Brooklyn Amity School in New York (est. 1999), the Pioneer Academy of Science in New Jersey (est. 1999) and the Putnam Science Academy in Connecticut (est. 2000) are several examples to this kind of private schools in the U.S. It was observed during the field study that these type of schools are much more flexible and freer in comparison to the charter schools. They do not have any financial support from the state, like charters have, and that is why they are expensive, in comparison to charter schools.

*Table 7: Financial Structure of the visited GISs in the USA*

School	State Support	Tuition <sup>45</sup>
US1	Yes	0 \$
US2	No	18,000 \$
US3	No	12,500 \$

In addition to the financial situation, all these GIPs conduct an exam during the admission process and students who want to attend these schools also have to have a better grade on this exam. Therefore, they are much more selective in comparison to GICs and they are also competing with the other old traditional high schools in the USA. Due to this, the target group of the GIPs are different from charter schools and thus, their localization strategy is also different. Concomitantly, one of the other main difference is that, GIPs focus on national issues and they are not so bounded in their districts.

As it was mentioned above, it was observed that, GIPs have better financial resources compared to charters and as a consequence of this, they invest more on different educational models or modern education methods.

"Well-rounded education, it is called that here, not only academic success, but children's sports club, networking, communicating with other people in society...etc. [...] In America, universities do not only receive students according to academic achievement,

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<sup>45</sup> Anually without dormitory costs.

even 100 out of 100, even if a student with a top scorer at the SAT<sup>46</sup>, if he does not have social abilities, if he does not have different abilities, if he does not have contact with other people, this is not a very pioneering choice. We shape our education system in the same way as universities." (USAM2)

Especially during the visits in these schools, it was noticed that GIPs especially targeted this well-grounded education system and practiced it in their schools. For example, the second visited GIPs has a huge building with different facilities, like different play-grounds, a gym, laboratories and conference rooms with a small dormitory on the top floor. In addition to a high school, there is also a kindergarten and a primary school in this building, and it is observed that this second GIP practices the Montessori education system in their kindergarten. The manager of the school mentioned that they recruited teachers who have a Montessori certificate and they practice a Montessori education in their kindergarten. During the school visit he is asked why they have such a practice and he mentioned that, they are always researching different types of education models and they want to enrich their education system by composing all these different type of systems in their school.

However, because of the district, the third school has a small building and it does not have the possibilities like the second school has. Despite this situation, this school also targets the well-rounded education and finds several solutions to fulfill this gap. One of these methods is cooperating with other schools and the other colleges in their region. The manager of the school mentioned that the school building is located close to the city center and many other schools have the same problem, because of the high cost of land. They also apply the same method and build cooperation with other institutions to use their facilities. Besides, despite the lack of special facilities, the third school also focuses on some unique educational models that differentiate them from other private schools. As an example, the early college model, which allows high school students to attend college courses, is one of these practices.

"From the 10th grade, they are going to a full-time community college. They become college students. This is called early college model. After this program, when they finish it, they have two diplomas. One of them is associated with the community college and they also have a high school diploma. In this way, they finish the four-year university in two years. (USAM3)

According to the manager, such a program became so successful in that region that even the other schools also will start the same program in their schools.

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<sup>46</sup> SAT is a central exam in the US, which has a crucial role in college or university admission

We have been applying this program for two years. We are trying to implement this Early College Program in our school, and it is the only school in the whole county that does it. At the moment, this county has begun to say we are going to do it in five years. The other two neighboring counties of ours start next year. In other words, the first school to apply the early college model to the whole region is our school, and now the other major districts, which are schools with \$100 million in budget, are just getting it."(USAM3)

In addition to this early college model, USAM3 also mentioned that they have a cooperation with the University of Connecticut, and they apply the Dr. Renzulli education model which is based on highlighting the talents of the students. They invited Dr. Renzulli and his students to their school for teacher trainings and practice this type of educational model in their schools.

The other localization strategy, both mentioned by USAM2 and USAM3, is to organize science fairs by cooperating with universities and other institutions to develop their educational activities.

There is a regional science fair on Saturday, so this region means that there is a main school in this county and there are all other private schools, there is an interstate competition. One of the sponsors of this contest is our school, the organizer, the other is George Mason University. [...] Sometimes we go to research and use the laboratories of the universities. Or to bring the experts in the field to our school, they are part of our education. It is important for our students to come together with these kind of people in order to do things, to have the horizon." (USAM3)

As a result, GIPs also practice localization in a different manner in comparison to charter schools and contribute to their environment, especially from an educational perspective. They also aim to compete with other old traditional private American high schools and by using several methods mentioned above they have increased their student numbers. As an example, USAM2 mentioned that last year they had 272 students but this year they have 333 students. The main question here in this point is the background of these students. Both USAM2 and USAM3 mentioned that 10 to 15% of their students are international students and the rest is from the US. This ratio was higher before the coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, but after the event these private schools lost international students from Turkey and they were affected financially at that time. Therefore, they moved to more national students and worked on that issue. According to USAM2, localization and being national were their strategy for a long time and the failed coup attempt only accelerated this process. They also assumed that the ratio of

the Turkish students would decrease and, like other private schools in the US, they have more students from different nationalities in the future.



## Chapter 4: Conclusion

Despite the controversial content of the Subject, in this research only Gülen inspired schools were targeted modestly and their educational concept was researched in three continents under the current circumstances after the failed coup attempt. As it was mentioned before, the initial research question of the study is: “What kind of education model do the Gülen inspired schools follow worldwide?” and related to this point of whether Gülen Inspired Schools or the educational model of the movement could be counted inside the progressive education movements or not. Besides, “How were educational institutions of the Gülen movement, especially Gülen inspired schools which were dominantly national till the 1990s, founded and expanded in different countries and in different cultures all over the world?” was also researched as a second research subject. Later on, “How were Gülen inspired schools affected after the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016?” was also added to this study because of their close connection with the main questions above. Besides, related with these main research questions, the following sub-research questions are also examined “How does a national movement transform its educational institutions to integrate different cultures and different education systems? How do the followers of the movement cooperate with the local people? What is the contribution of these schools to their local environments? What are the factors which drives the institutions of the movement to be successful (quantitative perspective) in different cultures?” To answer these questions, Gülen inspired schools are analyzed particularly according to the conceptual framework of the study which consists of: special features of the Gülen inspired schools in comparison to traditional schools, teachers of the schools and the recruitment process in the GISs, curriculum and teaching/pedagogy in GISs, local activities and contribution of these schools and the effects of failed coup attempt in Turkey in 2016 on the movement, especially from a financial perspective. However, because of the unique structure of the movement and the complexity of the issue, not just GISs, but also the movement itself and the leader of the movement, Gülen, are also observed in a minor level during the research.

To answer the above-mentioned research questions, the researcher of the study conducted literature research, expert interviews with the managers of the schools and experts of the subject and also used his observations during the study. Similar responses from these different sources were accepted as a fact and contradictions between them were analyzed according to different point of views of the participants. As a sum, depending on these analysis, it was seen according to the conceptual framework that the Gülen Movement has a different education model and internationalization process in different parts of the world. The main distinctions and how these schools conducted their educational model will be summarized in

this part. Besides, Gülen's role or position, which is a very controversial topic in Gülen inspired schools worldwide and future assumptions related with this topic also will be mentioned subjects. Additionally, keeping national identity and highlighting local values during the internationalization process are the other important differences of the Gülen Movement, which will be analyzed in this part too. As a conclusion, effects of the failed coup attempt on Gülen inspired schools and Gülen movement will be highlighted and a few future prognoses will be mentioned at the end.

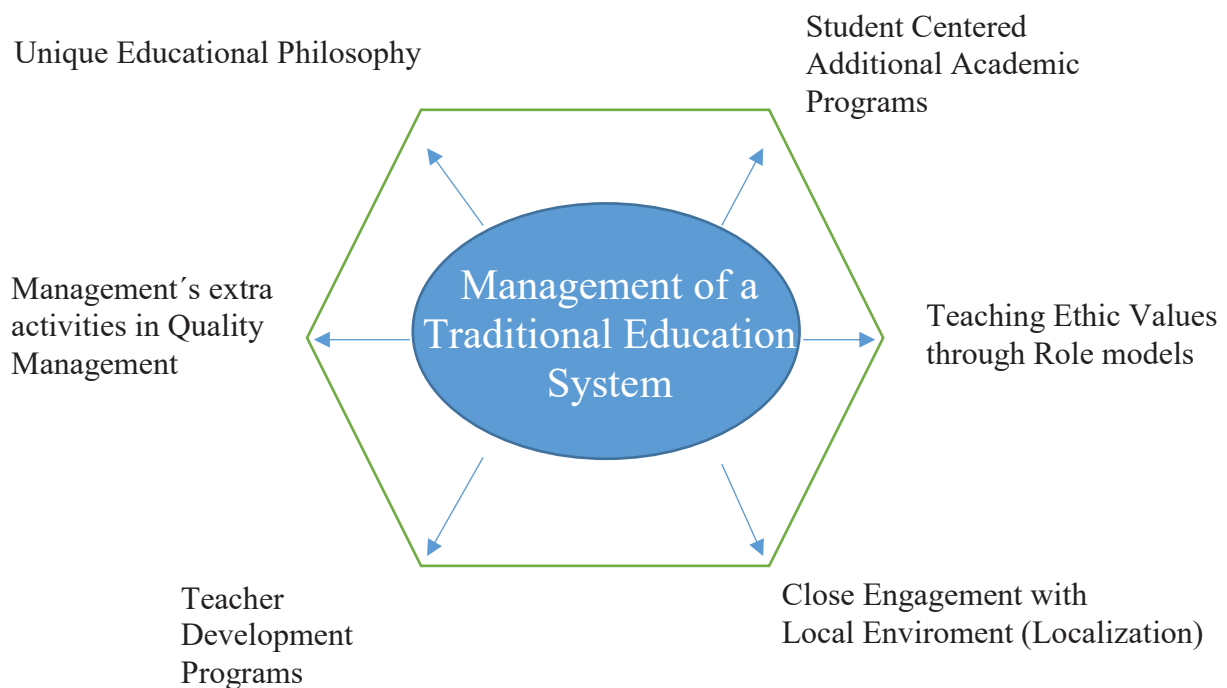
#### 4.1 Reforming Management of the Traditional Education System

As it was explained in the preceding chapters, the goal of this study is to explore the general school concept of the Gülen inspired schools worldwide. Because of this goal, GISs were not compared with other private or religious based schools in their regions and that is why it is difficult to call this study a comparative study. Instead, only GISs in three continents were observed and common parts of this type of schooling are highlighted as a school concept of GISs. Therefore, deficiencies or negative parts of the GISs were not observed and analyzed in the field study, however being aware of this gap, the researcher of the study conducted detailed literature analyses in chapter 2.1.4.3 and listed the most important critiques against these types of schooling. On the other hand, in that part and also in the field study, it was seen that even the scholars who stand against the movement, like Hendrick (2013, p. 241), highlighted that GISs have better quality and presents a high level of education worldwide. In the field study of this research, this difference, presenting better education, and the question of how GISs differentiate themselves from other schools was also researched. As a result, it was seen in the field study that the main difference is generally based on the specific management of the GISs worldwide.

Unlike the other progressive education models, the education model of the Gülen Movement depends on **reforming the management of a traditional education system**, instead of reforming teaching or pedagogy. In Gülen's approach, the traditional system is not enough, which other scholars like Montessori and Steiner also said before, however, unlike them, this insufficient system could be developed and transformed by eliminating negative parts and adding several missing parts. According to both manager and expert participants of the field study, to achieve this goal, the followers of the movement created a new type of school management system, in which managers or administrators of the GISs expanded the form of the management in traditional education from several different perspectives. Therefore, on the

teaching level, GISs practice standard lectures in the local curriculum or use a main book in their classes, like all other traditional schools do, but on the management level, it was observed that the followers of the movement enrich the traditional educational system in six expansion points and realize an ideal educational school system in their schools.

*Figure 7: Reforming Management of the Traditional Education System*



The main important difference of the Gülen education model **is the role of the management in educational activities**. The managers and their management teams play an important role in GISs and they are the ones who drive teachers to accomplish the figure which is given above. As it is seen in the figure, in addition to regular standard applications of a manager in a traditional school, the management in GISs do more extra work to improve the quality and enrich the teaching of their schools.

One of the most important reforms of the GISs depends on their **specific educational philosophy**. As it was explained in chapter 3.3.1.1, the managers of the GISs feel themselves responsible to God, in addition to local authorities and parents, and pay great attention to altruism and moral values in their schools. Besides, it is also seen that the management of the GISs are very professional and sensitive about education. The schools are based on anti-

discrimination (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 210) and especially controversial subjects like; politics, religion or nationalism are not allowed in the schools. The target group of these schools in the society differentiates according to the financial structure of the school and region. Each school follows the local curriculum and offers what is written there and that is why religion courses in GISs vary according to region and do not play an important role in GISs. It is also difficult to say that these schools are discipline based like other religion-based schools. There is a discipline in GISs, but it is observed that these schools are more respect and goal-based schools. Students are motivated to achieve different successes according to their levels and GISs are competing with each other and also with other schools in this manner.

The second specific practice of the management of the GISs, which is an important contribution of the Gülen movement to the educational sciences, is highlighting **student-based individual education with whole-day concept, in general in small classes**, in their schools (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 207). As it was explained in chapter 3.3.1.2: extra classes for weak students, consulting activities for the students against their social problems and improving the good students through motivating them towards national and international contests, demonstrate how the GISs practice student centered, individual education in their institutions. Gülen (1997d) also highlighted this issue in one of his interviews:

I would like to point out that we have never understood education as the equalization of students. On the contrary, we have encouraged individual differences. It even goes so far that today's students are more concerned with the natural sciences, lacking, to a certain extent, the bargain and opportunity to bring out their individual differences in the fields of art and literature.

In this practice, students' success is a crucial role. It is expected from every student to have high grades in their local curriculum and local system, especially in central national exams, however, depending on the differences of the students, they are also motivated towards the fields where they could be more successful and increase their skills. Gülen advises to put forward the individual capabilities of the students and to approach them individually, however, during this process it is crucial that they (students) do not feel isolated from their friends and this should not lead them to arrogance and pride (Şimşek, 2013, p. 27). Unlike other schools, especially excellent students are also prepared sensitively for central exams and national and international contests (Michel, 2003, p. 12), allowing not just weak or average students, but also very talented students to find chance to develop themselves in different points. This point is highlighted on the webpages of the schools and it is easy for the researcher to observe medals from mathematics, English, robotics...etc. contests during his school visits.

The other important contribution of the Gülen inspired schools to the educational sciences is the importance of the **character education** or the teaching of the so-called **ethic class** (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 207). According to several scholars, like Michel (2003, p. 5) or Alam (2019, p. 167) this is a critique of Gülen towards the Western educational system. Michel (2003, p. 5) highlighted this point as follows:

Leaders in both economic and political fields often favor and promote job-oriented, "value-free" education because it enables those with power to control the "trained but not educated" working cadres more easily. [...] The crisis in modern societies arises from decades of schooling having produced "generations with no ideals." It is human ideals, aims, goals, and vision which are the source of movement, action, and creativity in society. [...]The result is social atrophy, decadence, and narcissism.

However, during the field study it was observed that unlike other schools, which are mostly based on secular Western educational system, academic success is not the only goal of the GISs in their educational activities and students who have bad habits are not perceived as successful, even if they have good grades. Instead, by hiring role model teachers, teaching ethic lectures and spending more time with students in different projects; the followers of the movement also aim to develop the character of their students too (Alam, 2019, p. 175). In this point, the GISs keep their secular structure and build their education on the common human values, without affiliating to any other religion (Toguslu, 2007, p. 455) (Alam, 2019, p. 165). It was observed in the field study that the individual approach is very important in this education and GISs use consulting activities which are explained in chapter 3.3.1.2. In difficult cases, GISs cooperate with the parents of the students and try to help the students to fight against his or her bad habits. This point is very often mentioned during the field study and despite the fact that the movement is criticized for conducting indoctrination in these extra activities (Turam, 2007, p. 99) (Tittensor, 2014, p. 83), participants of the study highlighted this part of their educational understanding and just because of this point they have a different value in the eyes of their parents. From the responses of the school managers, it is easy to say that character education in educational sciences is as important as school grades and academic success for the parents.

In addition to the mentioned subjects, it was also observed on the field study that the managements of the GISs have a **close engagement with their local environment**. As it was mentioned, the schools use the local curriculum and follow the local system by enriching these traditional models with its unique features. As an example, as it was mentioned on the chapter 3.3.2 in detail, the majority of the teachers, almost 75%, are local people in visited schools.

Unlike the teachers of the Montessori or Waldorf schools, the teachers of the GISs do not need to visit special educational programs or faculties (Thayer-Bacon, 2011, p. 316) (Edwards, 2002, p. 3,4). Because of this simple structure of the Gülen education model, the followers of the movement could easily cooperate with local people, who do not know more about the movement, and founded schools in different places. Furthermore, it was also observed that, both Turkish and non-Turkish teachers built a common educational understanding which is a mixture of Gülen's educational philosophy and local culture, in GISs. Therefore, GISs in each country separate themselves from the other. In addition to teachers, the management of the schools have also close relationship with the local people and local authorities in their region. As an example, to this, during the visit in the first school Africa, the previous mayor of the city, who retired several years ago, came and visited the school. The researcher of the study found a chance to observe this visit and it's easy to notice that the management continues their close friendship with this retired person. Mainly because of the importance of this subject, the localization strategy of the movement during the internationalization process is explained as a separate chapter (See chapter 4.5) in detail.

The other unique practices of the managers in Gülen inspired schools are their **sensitiveness during the recruiting process of the teachers and teacher development programs** in their schools. It was seen in the field study that the majority of teachers in visited GISs are non-Turkish local people who do not any affiliation with Gülen. Geier and Frank (2018a, p. 309) also pointed out this issue and mentioned that the teacher teams in GISs in Germany are neither from Turkey nor Gülen followers. It was mentioned on the interviews that they try to choose the best candidates who could teach with high quality and also be a good example or role model from a character point of view. Unlike other schools, the teachers of the GISs also have to attend the teacher development programs of the GISs and have to work more than the teachers of other schools for the success of their students.

At a managerial level the constant in-service training of teachers and support staff is seen as vital to establishing and maintaining high standards and schools often join together, in greater or smaller numbers, depending on the need and the circumstances, to provide weekend and holiday skills training for teaching staff. A variety of training methods are used within the schools, including mentoring of new recruits, peer training through workshops and observations, and 'bought-in' expertise, that is, university lecturers and professional teacher trainers giving seminars or workshop sessions. (Woodhall, 2005, p. 4)

In addition to this point, Woodhall (2005, p. 4) also mentioned that the teachers of the schools also funded, if they joined any teacher development program outside too. To increase the participation of the teachers in these programs, the management of the schools present different types of motivation factors to their teachers. Gülen's speeches and works about the movement's philosophy are the main motivational factors of the Turkish teachers in GISs which alleviates the management's job. However, the motivation factors of the non-Turkish teachers of the GISs vary according to people and place. The most mentioned points in the interviews are low numbers of students per class, friendly multi-cultural environment and beautiful familiar atmosphere of the GISs as the main motivation factors for non-Turkish teachers. In some cases, like Africa or other developing countries, prestige and the high reputation of the GISs also motivate the non-Turkish teachers. However, it was not mentioned in the interviews that money is a motivation factor for the teachers. Previous research also supported this point that GISs are looking for teachers who has an ardor for teaching, not just focusing money (Alam, 2019, p. 176). That's why the income of the teachers in Gülen inspired schools are either average or less than average depending on the teacher and region. This is a disadvantage for Gülen inspired schools, especially in comparison to other private schools.

In addition to the five mentioned points, the managers of the schools are very sensitive about the **quality management of the schools**. Therefore, according to Alam (2019, p. 187), the Movement inspired schools were considered the dominant player in the private schools market in both primary and secondary schools of Turkey. On the other hand, the reputation of the GISs outside of Turkey differs according to region but in the field study it was observed that they are commonly keen on quality management issues. As an example, it was mentioned on the interviews that the management of the GISs conducts regular exams and questionnaires for students, teachers and parents. The results of these exams and questionnaires are analyzed carefully and all these results are worked with students, their teachers and also their parents. This enables that all parties know what they have to do and cooperate with each other. Geier and Frank (2018a, p. 310) gave the Private-gymnasium Dialog in Cologne as an example in this point, where almost the 85% of the parents of the school do not have any degree from any higher education institutions, however despite this fact, the main expectation of the parents and students from the school is to help them to fulfill the gaps in their academic career with high quality education. According to Boos-Nünning (2011, p. 210), this statistic was worse in the same school for students who had only one parent with an academic background in the 2008/2009 school year. As a reaction to this need, GISs follow the improvements in educational sciences and apply different modern methodologies through conducting cooperation with



universities. Besides, during the visits, it was observed that all schools are well equipped with different type of labs and the modern structure of the schools attracts visitors (Tokmak, 2011, p. 62). Mercan (2019, p. 320) supported this point by quoting from Professor Carter Vaughn Findley, who observed that the same type of high tech developed schools are in common in GISs in central Asian countries.

From all these observed points and also according to international experience in the last three decades, these schools or this model could be evaluated from quantitative perspective as successful. The number of these schools increased over the years till the coup attempt and despite the political disorder and Erdogan's unlawful attacks in and outside of Turkey, the schools still continue to teach in many important countries in the world. Besides, manager participants of the research all mentioned that the number of students are increasing in comparison to the previous year. Therefore, it could be also assumed that this resistance against the political pressure of Turkey will cause a counter attack when the regime in Turkey loses its power in the future. According to observations, the impact of the coup attempt and Erdogan's pressure outside Turkey are gone. It is also predicted that the movement's resistance against the Erdogan regime will be successful and the movement will survive this pressure. As a consequence of this, the followers of the movement could establish and develop more schools and other institutions in developed countries where they have financial support from the state in the future. However, the future of the GISs in Turkey is a difficult issue to estimate and it takes too much time for the movement to restructure its identity there.

#### 4.2 Unique Contribution of GIS to the Global World

As it was mentioned in the previous chapters (See chapter 3.3.5), localization is very important in Gülen inspired schools and it is their main understanding or strategy during the internationalization process. Only one school out of nine schools defines itself as a global school, which is an international school in the second visited school in Africa. The other eight schools define themselves as a local school which targets the local people and tries to contribute to its local environment. On the other hand, it is also observed that all these GISs in different regions have some common unique features that differentiate them from other schools. From this point of view, it could be said that GISs make a unique contribution to both the global world and educational science.

One of the most important contributions that Gülen inspired schools have in common is **to increase education quality in their schools and also in their environment**. Promoting students individually (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 207), showing them national and international

contests and using other strategies mentioned above brought quality to these schools. As an example, from the field study, the first school in Europe got the "the school of future" award from the local authorities and the third school in America also received an award from the previous American President Barack Obama. Other schools also received several rewards from different competitions and such a positive effect motivates students and also societies, especially in developing and undeveloped countries and gives them hope for future.

"So, what had happened, we entered the competitions around the world this time. I have not even heard the idea in Turkey before. So, it was believed that we could not do anything in science, and we could not be successful in these competitions in mathematics, chemistry or physics Olympics? The entrants, our students like Salih Adam (an Olympic prize winner in the field of physics) or others, they have received many more gold medals. In mathematics, in physics, Allah Almighty, we can do it, we came to a hope that we were not retarded." (Ex2)

In addition to this kind of psychological effect, because of competition, the other schools also focused on these issues and copied the same methods in their educational activities. EM3 mentioned that the difference between their school and other schools has been disappearing during the last 15 years because of this point and he is also proud to be a good example to other schools in their region. EM1 and AM1 also highlighted the same issue and mentioned that the management of neighbor schools came and visited them to observe how their schools reach such a high educational quality.

"What had happened? So the schools improved education quality. Hence hundreds of college preparations, colleges and universities are founded. [...] Then other private and state colleges enter a competition. So, the movement schools made a huge contribution to education in Turkey."(Ex2)

Additionally, all participants mentioned that they cooperate with universities in different parts of the world and try to keep their educational level high. This point is already explained in previous chapters.

One of the other important points is that **Gülen inspired schools present a good model or an example to Muslim societies by synthesizing Islam and Modernity** (Ebaugh and Koç, 2007, p. 551)(Alam, 2019, p. 266). This is the second important contribution of Gülen inspired schools all over the world. Geier and Frank (2018b, p. 54) highlighted this point as follows:

Recurring headline elements of the public media discourse such as "9/11", "Jihad", "Salafism", and "Islamic State" have become central to Islam, along which Islam and

Muslim life are an increasingly stereotypical background of terrorism and Islamophobia are considered as “religion of others”.

Aware of this situation, some other Islamic groups or movements who are fighting against the modern world and its values use this situation for their own profits (Ergil, 2012, p. xii). According to Park (2007, p. 47), the kind of radical Islam associated with the al-Qaeda network is additionally seen as resistant to globalization understood as Americanization or westernization, although it is simultaneously enabled by globalization via its exploitation of the modern media, the internet, international travel and emigration. However,

The Gülen movement, on the other hand, with its heady and promising combination of faith, identity, material progress, democratization and dialogue, might offer a model more attractive to and more worthy of emulation by Muslim states and societies struggling to orientate themselves towards a more dynamic and open future.(Park, 2007, p. 56)

According to Vicini (2007, 444), Gülen has discovered, he has more things in common with universal values elaborated within Western tradition, than with other expressions of Islam. With their unique modern structure, Gülen inspired schools in particular, have shown that Islam is not against modernity, science or technology (Alam, 2019, p. 261) and by using the right methodology Muslim societies could also produce science and technology like all other societies. Ex8, who criticizes the movement, said that this was a revolutionary approach which came from Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. According to Said Nursi, Islam is not against modern sciences, instead science and Islam are the two sides of a coin. It was a revolution according to Ex8 and the movement follows this understanding. Such an understanding is not just important for the Islamic world and Middle East countries, instead the field study demonstrated that it is also crucial for Europe and America. EM2 gave statistics about University studies, which is demonstrating the success rate of the freshmen students in college who finish the first year without falling a class in their western European country and mentioned that, on an average Muslim student have a much lower level than the other students.

"In this research, the Muslim community is at the bottom, and the success rate is about 7% in Muslims. A little more specific, this rate is 4% for Turkish and Moroccan students. Last year the ministry of education specifically sent us the figures of students who graduated from us. The ratio is 36% right now. However, a large proportion of our graduated students last year were foreign students who belong to a Muslim foreign minority in our country. We're well above average (Country average is 32%). And in recent years it seems that we have gradually caught up to the general average." (EM2)

Similarly, Geier and Frank (2018b, p.55) also highlighted this issue for Germany and mentioned that Muslim students in Germany are less successful in comparison to other students. Therefore, GISs contributions to the western world are very important in this context.

The third contribution of GIS, especially from the educational sciences perspective, is **teaching ethic values** in addition to other lectures their schools. This course has different names; however, it has a great importance in the GISs education model. This subject is explained in previous chapters (See chapter 3.3.3.2), however, it is important to highlight that the academic success is not the solely goal of GISs, instead it is to teach ethic values is as important as academic success. Ex7 gave tolerance and acceptance as an example and suggested that ethic values and also Gülen's ideals are presented in these schools.

"Yes, both local and global I see. First of all, local of course, but I think from the point of Gülen's ideals, it is about the global perspective. So, if you are now, (..) tolerant *hosgörü* (acceptance) and so on, I really thought, then it's a global perspective [...] To provide at least these through the students as one-to-one and give these moral values but also out of school activities or something. From these values, they have a global contribution." (Ex7)

On the other hand, all other participants debated on this issue and suggested that **Gülen's philosophy or the values of the movement are not taught in GISs**. They mentioned that the content of these ethic lectures are common international humanistic values like not to lie, working hard or being clean and punctual...etc. Such an understanding has an especially great effect on the parents of the schools. Ex2 also highlighted that this contribution is noticed by parents who compare students or graduates of the GIS with other schools.

"But both parents and also teachers, gave you feedback and say that your students are different. (Short break) You see that, the minds of students who go to the other school are a little more in the air but the student who comes to you has a goal, they have a responsibility. When he goes home, his behavior towards his parents' changes." (AM2)

"As I told you the first thing that parents are looking for two things in the beginning, performance and then the character. Because our parents are very busy, they compare with one kid in the school and one who stays at home or goes to other school. When they come home or during the holiday, they see the difference. [...] Because I have my daughter and I have my son who is studying so and so schools, no change, only from report. School report is doing fine but character wise no change, maybe he is getting worse but, in your students, they are very good, I love them."(AM1)

In this point Gülay (2007, p. 46) highlighted that not only Gülen inspired schools, but also Gülen inspired media also highlighted global ethic values, instead of Islamic values or Gülen's understanding:

The community's media outlets rarely evoke Islamic language—instead, they reference broadly understood terms such as hard work, charity, faith, and justice. Gülen justifies these efforts by appealing to an expanded conception of spirituality, writing: 'We seek the good and moral values, which are universal. These values are the same virtues and morality promulgated by all divinely inspired religions.'

The last but not the least of the contributions of the GIS to the global world is **to carry Sufism understanding** to the educational sciences and represent it today (Alam, 2019, p. 177). In this way the followers of the movement could build schools all over the world without paying attention to national or cultural differences and they are welcomed because of such an understanding.

"This basis is entirely based on the mysticism of Islamic Sufism. That is to say, with the way that the joys of Mevlana and Islamic tradition reach us. The master teacher (Gülen) has trained in a sufistic and mystic environment [...] Because what is Sufism? Knowing all beings as siblings, knowing everybody as brothers or sisters, even embracing the universe, integration with the universe. Because everything is a work of art by Allah (God). Everything belongs to God, the trees or human beings, everything. It, therefore, requires embracing all people."(Ex2)

Especially in some critical regions like in Africa or in some parts of Europe (Geier and Frank, 2018a, p. 308) and America, segregation and discrimination are main problems in society and, of course, also in the local education system. Additionally, the financial differences between low-income and high-income families or differences between minorities and majorities could cause several problems too. As a concrete example Boos-Nünning (2011, p. 209) mentioned that in Germany, 80% to 90% of the students who have an immigration background have a difficulty to attend high schools and higher education institutions. Thus, the GISs approach towards this subject from the sufistic point of view has a positive effect on students and parents and helps the movement to expand their activities in different difficult regions. This is also another global contribution of the Gülen movement to education.

**Figure 8: Global Contribution of the GISs**



#### 4.3 The Role of Gülen in GISs and the Movement

As it was discussed in chapter 2.1.4.1, Gülen’s role or position in Gülen inspired schools is a very controversial subject. All GISs are founded by local communities and none of them have a direct legal connection with Gülen himself. Besides, neither Gülen nor the movement have any position in the curriculum or teachings of the GISs. Therefore, the main suspicion in this point is that all these schools were secretly managed by Gülen. The role of Gülen and his relationship with the Gülen inspired schools is such a controversial issue and is one of the most discussed subjects of this study.

Actually, this subject has already been researched by other scholars, like Agai (2008) or Hendrick (2013), however the failed coup attempt in Turkey is a milestone in the history of the Gülen Movement and it is important to analyze this point with the current issues again. The effects of this coup attempt, the transformation of the movement and future assumptions of the movement, especially after Gülen, was uniquely discussed in this study with the expert participants of the research and explained following chapters. However in this part, Gülen’s position and contribution to the GISs worldwide and critiques in this point will be highlighted.

As it was explained in the literature review part, Gülen had an active role in the institutions of the movement during his residency in Turkey. He worked as a teacher in Izmir

and later on, even though he did not teach, he coordinated the foundation and expansion of these institutions actively. As an example, during the field study it was observed that during the internationalization process of the GISs, Gülen motivated his active followers, like Ex1, to move to the different parts of the world.

"From there (he means Turkey) I went to Azerbaijan. There, God blessed, to found university preparation courses. Then God gave the license to open the Caucasus University. Later on, Gülen asked me to go to Germany and I stayed here for nine years. Maybe I did 40 rounds in all Europe at that time."(Ex1)

Most of the people who were sent to foreign countries by Gülen are active teachers of the movement in Turkey and they played an important role during the internationalization process.

On the other hand, in comparison to his residency in Turkey, Gülen has a **passive role** in the GISs and also in the other institutions of the movement after he moved to U.S. In this new era, he made just minor contributions to the institutions of the movement during the foundation process. Like before, he does not have an official connection to these institutions, thus it is impossible to find any information on the websites of the GISs or other Gülen inspired institutions about Gülen or his movement (Hendrick, 2013, p. 104). That is why, according to criticisms, there is a secret connection and hierarchy in these schools which is concealed by the movement (Hendrick, 2013, p. 105). However, even if it is not announced online or through the media, the managers of the schools do not refuse their connection with the movement and they all accept that they are inspired by Fethullah Gülen (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 210). This is a very unique and also unusual practice of the movement.

As a concrete practice, regarding the foundation process of a school, these expert cadres visited Gülen and informed him about the project and asked his advices. Only in this preparation process Gülen contributed with his thoughts or advices to this institution, but later on, these people will develop and expand this institution according to their professional experience, qualification and knowledge. Before the coup attempt, these teachers used to cooperate with Turkish businessmen in Turkey to finance these schools, however it is not an option today. Instead of that method, these expert cadres cooperate with the local authorities today and try to found these schools with financing through public projects which was financed by the state. Charter schools in the US are good examples for this type of founding.

The main reason behind this unique/unusual practice is the **"avoiding conflicts" or "staying neutral"** policy of the movement. This unwritten rule in the movement is practiced on every level of the movement in different regions including Turkey. Because the Gülen



movement is highly sensitive about being involved in any controversy, it avoids taking up controversial issues or even entering public debates (Aras & Caha, 2000, p. 39). As it was discussed in chapter 2.1.4.3 b, Uğur (2007, p. 162) gives the headscarf debate in 1998 in Turkey as an example and mentioned that the movement did not take any position regarding this issue. Rather, the movement takes a more indirect way of influencing the public opinion. Promoting platforms of different groups in the society, including non-religious and atheists, is an outcome of this indirect approach. As it was mentioned in the previous chapters, ignorance, poverty and disorder are three enemies of the society according to the movement (Pahl, 2019, p. 19) and to fight these common enemies, the followers need to cooperate with society as a whole. Tolerance, dialogue, democracy and pluralism are promoted in the society and non-violent conflict resolutions by showing how to approach to social problems through collective cooperation is advised (Yılmaz I. , 2010, p. 196). Especially in some parts of the world like Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bosnia-Herzegovina, southeast Turkey and northern Iraq, where ethnic and religious conflicts peak, the movement is much more sensitive in this philosophy and tries to collect different parts of society in a common denominator and be part of the whole society. Aydın (2013) gives Nigeria as an example where in Northern Nigeria most Christians lives and Southern Nigeria where, dominantly, Muslims live and there is always a conflict between these people. He (Aydın, 2013, p. 10) mentioned that the movement builds multicultural and intercultural relationships through new school configurations that allow for direct interaction between members of diverse cultural groups. According to Park (2007, p. 55), similar conflict between Muslims and Christians is also an important issue in Philippines. That is why the followers of the movement try to stay neutral in society regarding divisions and try to cooperate against common enemies. Besides, instead of taking part in controversial issues, the movement creates common values where everybody can join them. For example, Aydın (2013, p. 10) mentioned that during interviews in the Gülen schools in Nigeria, the most used words are tolerance (107 times) and peace (87 times) and mentioned that the humanitarian values of the movement collect diverse groups under the same umbrella.

Even Gülen himself is an example in this point who prefers to call the movement the "Hizmet movement" (Service Movement), instead of the "Gülen movement" (Ergil, 2012, p. 179). He has resisted the idea that a movement should carry his name (Pahl, 2019, p. 12) which is mainly because there could be atheists or people of other religions who could be troubled or annoyed because of his personality or background as a religious Islamic leader. Therefore, from political, religious and national point of views, the movement aims to be a neutral, international and intercultural and provide an open structure to everybody. In this way the movement could

open schools in some dangerous regions and could easily work with different groups. The failed coup attempt and following issues accelerated this point which will be explained next chapters.

On the other hand, despite his passive role in the management of the institutions, Gülen has an **active role in social life** as a thinker and leader of the movement. He conducts weekly talks and has written many different books, mostly focuses on religion and about the movement. He highlighted the most important points about the current issues to his followers, like the importance of dialogue activities or avoiding any kind of violence in daily life...etc. in these speeches and his written works. All followers of the movement combine this philosophy with his or her expertise in their fields and realize a Gülen inspired institution in each field. In addition to this point, Gülen also continues his teaching activities with his students in Pennsylvania, USA. During the field study, it was observed in his residence that his teaching activities are conducted after breakfast till lunch time. There could be lessons in the afternoons but, in most cases, depending on his health situation, either he conducts a speech to all visitors, or he spends time on his own works. At night, he accepts visitors in his living room, answers their questions and discusses the current issues of that day. Despite his old age, he answered all questions which was asked to him during the visit. In addition to mentioned activities, consultation also takes an important time of Gülen. When not praying or in individual supplication, when not teaching students, reading, writing, editing, or watching TV (almost exclusively news), then Fethullah Gülen in America was likely engaged in consultation (Pahl, 2019, p. 289). In these consultations, the current situation of the movement and the important subjects from the media are discussed. For example, during the visit, one of the followers informed him that a writer from *The Guardian* published an article about the movement and he summarized the most important parts of this article to him. He asked how high *The Guardian's* circulation in England is. The person who gave the information did not know the exact number, but another follower searched it on Internet and after a few minutes he mentioned that it was almost 150,000. From these observations, it is easy to say that he is still aware of the situation of the movement and also almost all activities for and against the movement.

One of the remarkable points in this issue is **his stance or distance against the politics**. Gülen and the movement have an influence on politics, however he never took a part in any party or in any political discourse directly (Alam, 2019, p. 276). According to Volm (2018, p. 361), there are some other pragmatic reasons behind this positioning, but one way or another, Gülen and the movement still keeps its apolitical civil position today. Instead of being active in politics, which is not an illegal action, he and most of the followers of the movement have a

good relationship with all different kinds of politicians, and despite the offers from political parties, they did not take any role in any political organization and keep their distance to politics. Like Nursi, who famously exclaimed “I take refuge in God from Satan and politics.” Gülen also tries to keep the movement out of political debates and tries to contribute to society in different ways. Juxtaposing politics with Satan might seem like a rather flamboyant exaggeration but given all that Nursi suffered in his lifetime because of politics it seems eminently forgivable (Barton, 2005, p. 16). Even despite the huge pressure and cruelty against the movement in Turkey, Gülen also does not want to be part of political fights and only criticizes the unlawful acts of the current administration, especially from the human rights point of view. On the other hand, Maigre (2014, p. 39) debate on this issue and mentioned that the GM has some political discourses like the following two issues:

- 1) The return to the relations of independence between the State and the religion as they were fairly maintained at the time of the Ottoman Empire – and that also exists today in most western democracies
- 2) The integration of Turkey to the European Union – which should secure religious freedom and a neat separation between the State and religion.

However, as a religious leader Gülen is very sensitive about this issue. According to Gülen, Islam covers the whole life and collection of principles for everybody in different political views. Barton (2005, p. 17) quoted from Gülen and explained this issue as follows:

Qur'an is a great guide for the travelers in this world moving towards the hereafter. It is an inexhaustible source of wisdom. Such a book should not be reduced to the level of political discourse, nor should it be considered a book about political theories or forms of state. To consider the Qur'an as an instrument of political discourse is a great disrespect for the Holy Book and is an obstacle that prevents people from benefiting from this deep source of divine grace.

Gülen also muses about political Islam, especially Jihadist thoughts and theocracy understanding in Islam. He supposed that these understandings do not have any place in Islam. Woodhall (2005, p. 8) supported this issue and suggested that the movement is against all misinterpretation of Islam, especially in politics and explained this issue as follows:

In a very real sense, one of the movement's aims with greatest global appeal is not the propagation of Islam's universal values but the prevention of the misrepresentation of

Islam. In this the movement can be seen to be replacing or blocking more extremist developments in modern, politicized Islam, particularly in Turkey and Central Asia.

From these points of views, it is observed that Gülen plays an important active role in the movement as a leader, especially today, and despite the all political attacks he keeps himself and also his followers out of politics. His dynamic, strong and strict stance against these activities motivates all his followers in the world and also demotivates the people who are against him. This is one of the main reasons behind the resistance of the followers against the pressure of Erdogan regime. During the visit also, the only thing that was observed about his health is that he has some difficulties hearing but if the speaker speaks louder, it is not an obstacle for him. On the other hand, especially in during his residency in the U.S., he has a passive role in Gülen inspired institutions, especially in Gülen inspired schools. He left the management, development and internationalization of these institutes to his experienced followers and shows a passive leadership in these fields. That is why Pahl (2019, p. 290) liked him a micro-managing CEO, much less a puppet-master who manipulated cult devotees. Therefore, it is assumed that these institutions will not be changed too much, even with his death in the future. Instead, the professional cadres continue to develop these institutions according to his legacy. However, in such situation, the movement will need a leader who could fulfill his gap, which is a very difficult task to do. It is also assumed that a group of people who mainly consist of Gülen's old students could lead the movement as a leading committee in the future. However, because of his health, and also because of the current situation of the movement under pressure, this point is not discussed or mentioned in any level of the movement right now. Besides, till today he had not selected someone to continue his legacy, like Prophet Muhammed did during his life time.<sup>47</sup> How the movement reacts after Gülen is very unpredictable and depends on the situation of the movement at that time. However, all experts of the subject think that the movement has to prepare itself for such circumstances in the future.

#### 4.4 Transformation of the GISs from National Identity to International Identity

During the foundation and international expansion of the GISs, Gülen followers did not hide their identities and founded these schools by cooperating local people in their regions. Therefore, Turkish identity and culture were easily recognized in GISs worldwide till the failed coup attempt in 2016. Such a practice was seen as a contradiction and were criticized, which

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<sup>47</sup> Prophet Muhammed pointed Abu Bakr (573-634) as a Caliph after him. During his illness, Abu Bakr took his place and he welcomed such a deed. Therefore, after him he was selected as a first Caliph by the other Muslims.

was explained in chapter 2.1.4.3, with internationalization and international character of the movement.

As a contrast, **keeping national identity** is one of the unique strategies of the Gülen movement during the internationalization process. According to this understanding, there is not any contradiction between keeping national identity and internationalization or international expansion. Instead, keeping national identity and national culture will enrich the diversity in other hosted countries and increase the connection between these nations and cultures. Therefore, especially before the coup attempt, there used to be pictures of Turkey on the walls of GISs outside of Turkey or GISs used to organize Turkish Olympiads with their non-Turkish students. Because of such activities these schools were called "Turkish schools" inside and outside of Turkey and from this point of view some social scientists, like Dohrn and Volm, criticize the movement being national and promoting Pan-Turkism outside of Turkey (Volm, 2018, p. 343) (Dohrn, 2014, p. 235). Despite this criticism, the movement saw that keeping their national identity outside of Turkey as enriching the local diversity and used this strategy during their internationalization process from the 1990's to failed coup attempt in 2016.

On the other hand, after the failed coup attempt in 2016, the movement removed this strategy and started to **transform its national identity to an international identity**. Actually, during the field study, EM3 mentioned that they had already started to leave their national identity three to four years before the coup attempt, but the attempt accelerated this transformation. To have a better understanding about this transformation, it is crucial to analyze the effects of the coup attempt in different regions. As an example, Europe is the most effected place in comparison to Africa and America because of the Turkish minority living there which is mainly because the majority of the students were from the Turkish minority (Boos-Nünning, 2011, p. 207). Thus, three schools in Germany and one school in Switzerland were closed because many parents from the Turkish minority took their children from these schools after the coup attempt and they could not deal with the financial consequences of that. (See chapter 3.3.4.2) Other schools in Europe, almost 25, were also challenged by with the financial crises because of this issue, however with some other precautions, they survived it. Because the majority of the students were non-Turkish in the GISs in Africa and America, they had less damage from the failed coup attempt. Such a result became a good example for all other GISs in other parts of the world, and as a result of this, all GISs in different regions transformed their national identity to an international identity. In this new type, GISs targeted the local non-Turkish students for their schools. To achieve this goal, during the field research it was observed that, all visited GISs removed every picture or sign representing Turkey or Turkishness from

their facilities. Instead of them, local pictures, local maps, awards from different contests and the wise sentences from famous scientists and artists were displayed just to motivate their students. Besides, two visited schools in Europe changed their names, to focus on more local students. These practices helped the schools to survive financially and as a result of this disposition, more non-Turkish students started to study on these schools. It was also observed during the field study that two years after the failed coup attempt, the surviving GISs reached financial stability again and started to grow in the regions visited.

In this transformation, the movement leaves its national structure and becomes a more international and open movement.

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

As a concrete example, before the coup attempt, it was easy to see Turkish flags or pictures from Turkey in these schools (Dohrn, 2014, p. 235). However, during the field study, which was conducted after the failed coup attempt, there was nothing observed in these schools which represents Turkey or Turkishness. Besides before, local non-Turkish people just played a part in the management of the GIS schools, however especially just after the failed coup attempt, the first and the third managers in Africa left their positions and instead of them local non-Turkish people, who understand and support the movement's educational model, attended to this job. The same issue is also observed in the US, where the manager of the visited charter school is selected from non-Turkish local people. Gülen (2011c, p. 220) also supports this point:

For example, the administration and management of the institutions that you (his followers) founded, like schools, universities or culture centers, etc. could be left to the local people as soon as possible. Yes, no matter in which society you serve, let that society carry on with its own people. In this way, you have revealed that there is no ambition nor assertion that could be considered worldly in your works and you will avoid misunderstanding and misperceptions. In my opinion, this movement is an important opportunity to not cause a reaction.

According to observations and discussions in the field study, it is acknowledged that the failed coup attempt forced the Gülen Movement to transform their national identity. However, the internationalization process of the movement started almost three decades before the coup attempt and the movement ran these schools in many different countries in this time period despite keeping their national identity. From this point of view, it could be said that even though



it is not a case any more for the movement today, being national is not an obstacle during the internationalization process, instead it could be a good strategy if it is used in a right manner. On the other hand, the Gülen movement became an international movement and more diverse, especially from cultural point of view, after the coup attempt and it is expected that this structure will not change in the future, even if the political order changes in Turkey.

#### 4.5 Internationalization through Localization: Highlighting Local Values

As it was explained in chapter 3.3.5, the main method or strategy used by the movement is "**localization**" during this internationalization process. This type of internationalization, which is highlighting or paying more attention on local differences and local values is a new strategy in educational and in social sciences. It was observed on the field study that, managers of the visited schools pay great attention to local or regional differences and base their internationalization strategy on highlighting these local differences and local values.

The followers of the movement realized this strategy in two steps. First of all, building cooperation and collaboration with local people is very important in the first step. To achieve this goal, the followers of the movement adapt their identity to the local environment and conduct dialog activities with everybody in that region. In this way, every school has a strong relationship with local authorities and other similar local institutions. In addition to that, it was observed that GISs in every region use the local curriculum and the majority of teachers are hired from non-Turkish local people in GISs, which minimize the difference between GISs and other local schools. Even in some schools in Africa and in Central Asia (Alam, 2019, p. 268), the managers are also selected from local non-Turkish people. That is why the GISs aim to be a local school in their environment, however, with extra work, altruism and their specific philosophy, which was explained in chapter 4.1, the GISs try to achieve high quality and have better success rate in comparison to other local schools.

The second step is understanding or acknowledging local needs or local problems in that region. GISs try to contribute to these issues through their education activities and also with different extra activities. For example, they found charity clubs with their students and parents in Africa, however in America they prepare projects against gun violence or segregation. This contribution to the local issues in different regions honors the followers of the movement both in the eyes of the society, decentral local associations and experts. In addition to offering high quality education, such extra activities help the movement to build a strong relationship with other non-Turkish local people. Such a contribution is welcomed by



these local people, then they are more interested to be part of movement's educational projects and the movement can grow in these regions without challenging local differences or other cultural and national obstacles.

In this type of internationalization, the GISs do not force other local people to accept their methodology and educational understanding, based on global values or Turkish values in this case, instead, they are reshaping their methodology and educational understanding depending on the motivation and needs of the local people in every region. The flexible structure of the movement and the current highly-developed technology allow the followers of the movement to realize this strategy with ease. For example, due to the lack of a technological infrastructure, such a practice could not have been realized in the past or it would be very difficult or very expensive in comparison to today. Therefore, other movements and also many companies like McDonalds or Mercedes, use the traditional internationalization process which dismisses local differences and, instead presents people the same product in every part of the world. However, the Gülen movement uses technology and creates a new education model for each different country. That is why it is difficult to talk about just one education model of the Gülen movement, instead it is combination of several educational models which have common values or points but also differentiations according to regions. For this reason, all visited schools during the field study are found to be different from each other, especially in different countries, but by looking at their quantitative growth, they are all accepted as a successful school in their regions. It is also observed in participant managers that they all have different perceptions about the Gülen Movement's educational model or understanding. This is mainly because local values and local environment also influenced them as much as Gülen did, and they all combined these two philosophies in their institutions.

On the other hand, the movement, as a global player (Geier and Frank, 2018b, p.56), enriches this localization strategy or understanding by adding "**global thinking**" in these schools. As it was explained in chapter 3.3.1.2, the management of the GISs follow the international contests seriously and try to prepare their best students for these programs. Besides, the network between different GISs in different regions helps them to inspire or to contribute to each other. During the field study, it was observed that the managers of the schools in Europe know each other, share their experience and knowledge with each other or a school manager in Africa could find the same position in America after achieving a green card, which enables him to move and work in the US. Such similar connections and cooperation are also expected for other GISs in different locations. One of the main advantages of the Gülen

movement in this point is to use of modern technology. Today, Gülen and his followers have highly-developed technology and very fast communication options, which was not possible before. Therefore, Gülen and also his followers, especially in the GISs, could easily spread or share their ideas or experiences through media and social media. Interaction between Gülen and his followers or followers between each other is very high today. Therefore, it is clear that the followers of the movement have a global vision, in comparison to other local schools. Such a cooperation on an international level, using modern technology and communication options help or give the movement and also its students' global thinking ability, in addition to local acting, which differentiate them from other schools in their region.

Besides, it was also observed during the field study that despite the range of the movement and the difficulties of change, the movement easily adapts itself to this new international identity. One of the main reasons behind this is the flexible structure of the GM. Unlike the other religion-based movements, GM does not have a rock-solid structure or strict rules. On the contrary, the most salient characteristic of the movement is its ability to adapt to widely varying local conditions and its flexibility and responsiveness in the face of rapid changes over time, in other words its remarkable mastery of change itself (Woodhall, 2005, p. 10). Ebaugh and Koç (2007) highlighted the importance of the study circles role in the movement and reasoned this flexibility and responsiveness of the movement because of this local identity of the circles. The second issue in this point is the profile of the followers of the movement. As it was explained in chapter 2.1, the majority of the Gülen followers are very well educated, highly-skilled young people. That is why they all understand and know that we are living in a fast-changing digital world and they could easily reposition themselves in this new identity.

#### 4.6 Effects of the Failed Coup attempt on Gülen Inspired Schools and the Future of the Gülen Movement

The effects of the failed coup attempt on Gülen inspired schools and the future of the movement are fascinating subjects which were also discussed with the participants of the study. All these discussions acknowledged that one of the major expected changes in the future of the movement is the **position of Turkey** in the movement. Like the international central associations in

Waldorf education<sup>48</sup> or in Montessori education<sup>49</sup>, which listed at least these schools, (Dhondt, Nele van de Vijyer, & Pieter Verstraete, 2015, p. 641) there were important foundations, like Journalists and Writers Foundation, working in Turkey which had a central role in the movement. However, according to Alam (2019, p. 287), even Erdogan's coup narrative is not reliable, he succeeded in isolating Gülen and his movement from the Turkish society. By this way, not just the movement lost all these institutions in Turkey but also the people who were working in these institutions either escaped out of Turkey or were imprisoned because of their affiliation with the movement. Besides, today the followers of the movement could not travel there and that is why it is clear that, unlike before, Turkey lost its central position in the movement.

"So no longer after this time, the basic place of the Movement, I do not believe Turkey will be the main location. These people now could not hold on in Turkey for a decade or fifteen years in Turkey, it is impossible. And even as I see and hear, they all try to come to Germany and sell their homes."(Ex9)

From these perspectives, it could be said that it takes too much time for the movement to recover their situation in Turkey. On the other hand, during the field study it was observed that the current residence of Gülen has a meaning for the followers, but it is clearly not a center for the movement, instead, it is a combination of a small school and a small mosque with dormitories. Due to this, especially after the coup attempt, the decentral organizations in host countries become more important in the movement. Therefore it is very difficult talk about a central organization for the Gülen Movement in the future.

On the other hand, as it was explained in chapter 3.3.4, Gülen inspired schools and also other institutions of the movement outside of Turkey were also affected by the failed coup attempt and challenged with a campaign against Gülen movement, which was conducted through Turkish administration. Such a political pressure had also **negative effects on the GISs out of Turkey**. Especially GISs in undeveloped countries or countries which have a close political cooperation with Turkey, like Azerbaijan, banned these schools in their regions. Besides, other GISs in developing or developed countries were also confronted with different type of challenges because of this pressure. As an example, the GISs which have a close relationship with Turkey or with the Turkish minority in these countries was financially affected after the failed coup. They lost their support from the Turkish minority and student numbers

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<sup>48</sup> Bund der Freien Waldorf Schulen, HAGUE circle, International Forum for Steiner/Waldorf Education, International Assoziation for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education (IASWECE) and Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners

<sup>49</sup> Association Montessori International (AMI) or Association Montessori Schweiz (AMS)

decreased in these institutions, because Turkish students left these schools. Such a consequence caused financial problems in these institutions and as a result of this, four schools in Europe<sup>50</sup> and one school in the US<sup>51</sup> were closed or the followers of the movement transferred the management to other people. The other GISs which do not have any relation with Turkey or the Turkish minority in their region, like charter schools in the USA or GISs in the visited country in Africa, were not affected from the political issues in Turkey. Because of this issue, it was seen on the field study that all GISs outside of Turkey changed their strategies in their homeland and targeted local people or non-Turkish minorities in their districts.

"We are Turk and already 100% of our students were Turk when we first opened. 35% of them are Turk at the moment and after one or two years, this rate will be 10%." (EM3)

This situation also shows how the parents' profile of the GISs changed after the coup attempt. Actually, only in Europe and private Gülen inspired schools in the US lost their parents support. As a consequence of this, according to participant managers for example schools in Germany, other minorities, like Syrians, were targeted and tried to survive in this period with them, however, the private GISs in the US were mainly focusing on local Americans in their institutions. Mainly because of their structure and reputation, there is no change in the parents of Gülen inspired charter schools in the US and GISs in developing countries. Despite these mentioned negative effects of the political pressure on the GISs and change of parents, both manager and expert participants of the field study mentioned that the impact of the political pressure lost its power in the last two years and they do not expect any other change against the GISs in the future. Alam also pointed out this issue and mentioned that, despite persecutions from inside and destructions from outside, the movement will continue to grow in the future. (Alam, 2019, p. 270). This growth and new parents profile in GISs in Europe are stimulating research subjects for further studies.

The other result of the political pressure and human rights violations against Gülen followers is **the immigration and brain drain out of Turkey**. As it was explained before all Gülen inspired institutions were closed, a huge number of followers were under arrested and accused being a member of a terror organization till 2016. The cruel pressure of the government and the enormous propaganda through the media had a deep impact on the society. Even if the current Erdogan regime lost its power or a new mild administration which is not contra to the movement comes to power in the future, it is difficult for the movement to reestablish its position in Turkey again. Instead of this, the followers of the movement prefer to hide their

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<sup>50</sup> See foodnote 42 in page 211

<sup>51</sup> See foodnote 43 in page 213

connection with the movement and conduct their activities secretly in Turkey. Many of them already left the country through different ways and many more will also leave the country if the administration removes the bans in the future. However, despite the bans, illegal immigration out of Turkey will continue in the future. The question of whether these people turn back to Turkey in the future if the political pressure ends or Erdogan regime falls is not expected. During the field study many different cases were observed by the researcher and, because of the experienced pains in the past, returning back to Turkey is improbable for the immigrant Gülen followers. Instead they will take positions in their new homeland countries and continue their existence in their new environments.

As it is mentioned above, how the movement continues their activities inside Turkey will be seen in the future but the current situation in the international sphere is not significantly affected by the political disorder in Turkey and according to interviews with the participants of the study, it could be prognosed that the movement will continue them as it was before. In spite of all these accusations and threats, Gülen also continues his speeches and announces his works on [www.Herkul.org](http://www.Herkul.org), the official website of the movement, and educates his students according to basic Islamic subjects. In addition, the other official website, [www.fgulen.com](http://www.fgulen.com), contains Gülen's works and also other publications about Gülen and the Movement, is still active and includes Gülen's new publications.

Depending on this issue and explained points above, it is assumed that **more non-Turkish people in every country will take positions in the movement in the future**. Today, the participation of non-Turkish Hizmet volunteers in the decision making structure at the level of leadership is rare, if not negligible (Alam, 2019, p. 268). Central Asia and Africa are two exception regions in this point (Alam, 2019, p. 268). However, especially by looking at the pressure of Turkey after the coup attempt, it could be foreseen that this Turkish based structure of the movement out of Turkey will change in the future. Instead of Gülen followers from Turkey, the local people will take more active role on movements' institutions and activities in the future, which protects them against Turkey's intervention. Gülen (2017) also predicted this change and called it in one of his speeches on [www.Herkul.org](http://www.Herkul.org) a "Metamorphosis of the movement". In this case it is difficult to estimate or anticipate this new version of the Gülen Movement in the future, but it is assumed that the main principles like avoiding any kind of violence or keeping distance to politics and remaining a non-political social movement will not be changed in the future (Volm, 2018, p.361). Especially regarding the educational aspect, empowering youth through the promotion of education for economic prosperity, altruism, love and peace and promoting tolerance, unity, stability and the establishment of civil society based

upon democratic principles of governance are the common goals of these schools in different regions (Aydın, 2013, p. 17) and there will not be any change in these goals. On the other hand, depending on the needs of the local environment, activities in different fields, especially in arts, research and science fields are expected in the future. In addition to that, especially if the political situation changes in Turkey, more followers who have a high level of education and experience will immigrate to the other parts of the world which make the movement stronger and more effective in other regions outside of Turkey in the future.

According to the field study, as a consequence of the failed coup attempt, one of the major changes on the strategy of the movement will be "**Personalization**" instead "Institutionalization" both inside and outside of Turkey. Especially till the foundation of the movement, Gülen and his followers paid great attention to institutionalization, like schools, foundations, banks, help organizations...etc. Because of this understanding, the movement successfully established and founded different type of institutions in different countries and represented its philosophy and understanding through these institutions. They had the priority in the eyes of the followers and therefore Tittensor (2014, p. 159) described the movement as "Transnational Social Business Network". On the other hand, the failed coup attempt and the other events after the attempt demonstrated that, all these institutions are vulnerable and weak, especially against political power. In addition, all these institutions need financial resources during the foundation process and after the foundation, expertise and human resources are required for the future of these institutions. Mainly because of the "Personal Cleaning", today the movement has lost both financial resources and human capital in and outside of Turkey (Geier and Frank, 2018b, p. 53). This is why "Institutionalization" loses its importance today in the movement and instead, the movement focus more on their current human capital. Successful and talented persons in the movement will be more supported through scholarships or some other methods and instead of building or founding new institutions, it is expected from followers to go out and be successful in other institutions. On the other hand, it is also assumed in the future that the movement will continue with its remaining institutions outside of Turkey too. However, followers, especially the ones who could integrate in the local environment and become successful in their fields, will become more important in the movement and the movement will represent its ideas and philosophy through these people, not with its institutions.

Another major change expected in the future is regarding **the role of the women** in the movement. One out of three female participants had a pessimistic approach to the issue, however according to other participants, the role and the participation of women are increasing. The same issue is also seen by the researcher according to the observations in the field study,



especially after the failed coup attempt. The main reason behind the skeptical perception of the participant is the traditional conservative structure of the movement. Besides, the women followers of the movement also hesitate to take an important role on the movement, because of its traditional structure.

But I think it's a bit of a fault for the ladies. I think we have more than ever been able to express ourselves; I think we have stopped more. Now we're getting a little active now.  
(Ex3)

On the other hand, despite the traditional structure of the movement, during this transformation and in this new era, the women's participation in social and professional life is welcomed and encouraged today. For example, it was observed in Germany that one of the female followers of the movement founded a Kindergarten in the Ruhr Region or another female follower in Essen took several roles as a project manager in social activities of the movement. Ex9, who has a critical approach to the movement, also observed this issue and mentioned it as follows during the field study:

"There are such things, in meetings, he (Gülen) says more women have to join and more place has to be given to women. This is very positive, women's involvement to the movement activities."(Ex9)

As an example, Gülen highlighted this issue by talking about important women in the history of the Islam like Aisha<sup>52</sup> or Hind bint Utbe<sup>53</sup> in his speeches and interviews (Mercan & Kardaş, 2018, p. 214). It was also observed during the field study that, especially young followers of the movement are ready for such change and in this way several successful women participants already have important positions in the movement today. Is it enough, in comparison to the size of the movement, is another question which needs more research and is out of the scope of this study. However, it is expected that in the future a higher participation of women in more important roles in the movement.

The last but not the least major change is the foundation of the so called **“Culture Centers”**. As it was explained in chapter 2.1.4, some practices of the movement like "Lighthouses" or "Sohbets - conversation circles" are the target of the critics because of their un-institutional structure. Especially before the failed coup attempt, the movement preferred to found secular institutions for the community, however they conducted its religious activities in

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<sup>52</sup> One of the wives of the Prophet Muhammed who after him led an army and fought against Ali, the fourth Chalipf in Islam.

<sup>53</sup> She was the wife of the leader of the Mekka, Muawiye ibn Ebu Sufyan, on that time. Even she was against the Prophet at the begining, later she became a Muslim and she had a big contribution to the expansion of Islam in the different Regions of the world.



these lighthouses or in conversation circles, mostly for religious people in the society. (See chapter 2.1.2) These houses and circles are not illegal structures but because of their un-institutional structure or lack of information about these activities, these practices are foggy or seen as a conspiracy in the eyes of some social scientists, like Volm (2018, p. 147 and p.317) or Tittensor (2014, p. 83), and some people who do not know these places. (See chapter 2.1.4) These people accused the movement of doing brain-washing or acting like a secret sect with these activities. This subject is out of the scope of this research, but it was observed in the field study that the movement also reacted to this type of criticism by founding religious education institutions called "Culture Centers" in different regions after the coup attempt. In some places these institutions had already been founded before the coup attempt, however the number and also the importance of these places increased rapidly after the coup attempt, which was one of the major changes of the movement after the coup attempt. These culture centers are open institutions where the movement conducts all its religious activities like teaching the Qur'an or organizing weekly speeches or conversations with its members. Additionally, the followers also started to conduct their Friday prayers in these institutions, mainly because of the political stance of the Turkish Mosques supporting the Erdogan Regime. After the coup attempt, unlike before, the Erdogan administration pressured the mosques to conduct their propaganda against the movement and its followers.

"In spite of this, the innocent citizens in Germany are banned to enter the mosque or their shops are protested because of their affiliation to the GM. What is this? You're not saying hello to your friend of twenty years. This is what the Jewish people experienced in Germany." (Ex9)

This also pushed followers to leave these mosques and pray in these culture centers.

Depending on all these developments, it is expected from the movement to shift its religious activities to these culture centers and that it will found more of these types of centers in the future which are open to everyone and controlled by the local authorities outside. It is assumed that these centers will have a crucial role in the movement and will represent the religious identity of the movement. On the other hand, the role of the Lighthouses and Sohbet in the future are unpredictable today. It is expected that they will not be closed in the future, however with the foundations of these culture centers, they could lose their importance in comparison to before. This is another research subject which needs a field study in the future.

Related to this issue, the other question is whether the movement will also found mosques in the future or not. Mainly because of the impractical situation of the mosques today and the increasing role of the culture centers, such an attempt is not expected. Besides, Culture centers are much more flexible and practical in comparison to mosques and the movement does not want to compete with other Islamic groups, instead it tries to keep its differences with other Islamic groups. However, this subject again needs more research and sensitive work with experts of the subject especially in religious and social sciences.

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## Appendix A: Participant's Profiles

### Manager Participants

**AM1:** Mr. A, who became the manager of the school last year, is a black local person in his fifties. He told me that he was working there as a math teacher when the school was founded (since 1999) and therefore he has a great prestige in this school. He has a small office in the management building of the school.

He does not know Turkish, but he has a clear understandable English with an African accent. From his answers, it is understood that, he did not know the Gülen Movement before but later on he learned more about the movement with his duty in this school. However, because of his age and history in the school, he had a great knowledge and different point of views about the management and educational system of the school.

**AM2:** Mr. K is the manager of the school since the school was founded in 2014. He is a young active person in his forties who came from Turkey nine years ago as a Turkish teacher. He met with the Gülen Movement during his university years and after his graduation he worked as a teacher in GISs in Turkey. Later on, mainly because of the demand in Africa, he decided to move to this region.

He was talking with one of the other Turkish teachers in his room when I first entered his room. His room is quite big and very well designed. It's clearly bigger than the manager's office of the first school. It could be mainly because this school is an international school and has a different concept. (For more information please see Appendix B) I had to wait for almost twenty minutes there because the manager was very busy. He got several calls and some other people from the staff came and asked him several questions. He sometimes spoke Turkish, sometimes English and tried to figure out some other work. During that time period I had a chance to ask him why he was so busy on a Saturday and he told me that on Monday the new semester begins, and he and his staff have to prepare the building for the education. He was very confident and sure about his answers. He gave a lot of additional information about the school and also about the country.

**AM3:** Mr. N., who is a young black, local man in his thirties, graduated from GISs schools in Africa and then he went to Turkey and got a University degree from a well-known Turkish University, Middle East Technical University, as a Chemistry teacher. He returned back to this country and started to work in this school as a chemistry teacher. After working three years, he was promoted to manager of the school in this country.

In comparison to other managers that I interviewed he was quieter, and it was difficult to get information from him. However, during his studies, he did internships in different Hizmet inspired schools and we talked about the similarities and differences between Hizmet schools in Turkey and Africa, in addition to other questions.

**EM1:** The school manager Mr. O is middle-aged, I guess almost in his forties, participant who has been working in this school as a manager since it was founded in 2007. He was born in Europe, but his parents were immigrants from Turkey. He met with the movement, when he was in high school and he had deep knowledge about the movement and its history in Europe.

The interview took 55 minutes and I noticed that two of the sub-questions were not well prepared, therefore I changed them during the interview and I will use them in their new form in other interviews. Luckily this was my first interview in the field study, and I will use this new design in other interviews too. About the content of the speech, I could say that he tries to advertise his school and his works with success stories many times, but I already get my answers for my research questions. However, it is easy to notice that he knows the regulations and laws in his field. Many times, he gives examples from the state laws and differences between other states. This is mainly because he took an active role in the foundation of the school and sometimes it is difficult to take answers for the educational perspective.

**EM2:** Mr. Y is a middle age, dynamic person who educated himself very well. He is son of an immigrant family from Turkey. He was born in Europe and visited Gülen inspired tutoring centers in his adolescence. After his university studies he took several duties in the movement and later on, he has been working in this school since it was founded in 2003. He worked as teacher, deputy manager and manager in this time period. The city is a one of the important capital cities in Europe and there are four different Gülen inspired schools running in this city. Mr. Y worked in this time period at all these four schools and he had a great knowledge about the educational activities of the movement in that country.

The building that I visited is the biggest school out of these four and we mainly talked about the building that we were in. The other important thing that I observed was that his room

was garnished with balloons and some other celebratory things. I asked him if it was his birthday. He told me that yesterday was the day of "school managers" in that country and other teachers prepared his room for that celebration. I saw the light in his eyes which demonstrated the close connection between him and other staff.

**EM3:** Mr. I was the last school manager in Europe who I visited. He was in his forties I believe, and I could say that he had a deep knowledge in educational sciences. He is also belonging to an immigrant family, who came from Turkey and he met with the movement during his university years. He has been working there as a manager and also as a teacher of economics since the school was founded in 2006.

He also visited some other Gülen inspired schools in Europe and during our interview he compared his school with the other Gülen inspired schools in Europe. The school building was old, like other school buildings in the city but it is very large with many different facilities. He had a big room with a meeting desk, which was not a case in other schools, and it was very modernly decorated. His deputy managers' rooms are close to his room and there are three deputy managers working under him. After the visit, it was lunch time in the school, and I had change to observe his connection with other staff and students. They are very close to each other and it is easy to notice their friendly connection. In comparison to other schools visited in Europe, this school is more familiar than others.

**USAM1:** Mr. K is deputy manager and teacher in Mathematics in the Gülen inspired charter school in Massachusetts. He is young, in his thirties with an engineering degree from Turkey. Later he got a master's degree in education sciences in the US and focused on educational sciences and teaching. He has visited Gülen inspired high schools in Turkey and has been active in the movement since his adolescence. Therefore, he had a deep knowledge about the movement, especially in Turkey and in the US.

This was his tenth year in the charter schools in Massachusetts and he has conducted the same job in several other cities of that state. Therefore, he has a deep knowledge about the education system in that state and also about the charter school system. He also gave information about the improvement of the charter schools and compared his school in that city with other Gülen inspired charter schools in that region too.

**USAM2:** Mr. K is one of the oldest managers in the field study who is more than fifty I believe. He told me that, he started his career as a teacher in GISs in Turkey after his graduation. Later

on, he moved to Africa and he had had a teaching and management position in Kenya before. Then he won the so-called Green Card Lottery and he moved to the USA nine years ago. He has been at that school since 2012 and he has held management position there.

His school is the first private school of the Gülen movement in the US which was founded in 1999 and it was located in a big area with different facilities. He prefers to conduct the interview one of the meeting rooms instead of his room. This is mainly because the school is very busy at the end of the semester. His experiences from Africa also helped him to answer my questions and he made many comparisons between Africa and America during the interview.

**USAM3:** Mr. Y, who is approximately in his late fifties, is one of the oldest managers of the movement in the USA. He first came to that country in 1996 and took different positions in the movement. He told me that he moved seven or eight states in that time period and worked in different schools as a deputy manager and manager. He has been in his position for two years but because of his experiences he conducts this job with ease.

His experiences in the other schools help him to improve his knowledge in the management. It was observed just before the interview that one young teacher came and asked him several questions. From his confidence and explanations, it was easy to notice that he knows his job and also regulations very well. Several parents also came and asked some questions after the interview and he easily helped them in their problems too.

### Expert Participants

**Ex1** is one of the most important persons in the movement who also was the manager of the first school in Izmir, Turkey. He is over 70 and a retired imam living in Germany. He is very close to Gülen and is known as a very spiritual person in the movement. He had published several books about the movement and he still conduct speeches especially in Europe. He was selected for this research because of his experience and deep knowledge about the movement.

Because of his illness, the interview was conducted in his house. He welcomed me gently and gave important information about the first days of these schools and Gülen's role in these processes. He was selected for this research mainly because of his experience in the schools of the movement, especially in the foundation era in Izmir.

**Ex2** is also one of the most known followers of the movement who was a writer and journalist. He is also over 70 and spent all his life working on the movement. He had several positions in the newspaper and magazines of the movement and he has published more than 50 books and also articles in different fields. He is also the founder of the official foundation of the movement in Turkey and he took different roles in different Dialog Centers in Europe. He also had an important role in the meeting of Gülen with Pope John Paul II. Mainly because of his experiences and deep knowledge about the movement, he was selected for this study.

He accepted me in his office in Frankfurt. There are thousands of books there and during our interview he sometimes showed some books to explain my questions. For example, he showed me Sefik Can's book about Mevlana to explain the role of Sufism in the movement. He was selected for this field study mainly because of his knowledge about the movement and his articles about the coup attempt in Turkey

**Ex3** is a project manager in Germany who has been working in the Gülen inspired education Foundation since 2006. She entered the movement as a teacher in one of their private institutions in 1999, and then she had chance to learn more about the movement and took an active role there. She mentioned that, her husband and she are very famous personalities in the movement's activities in their region and therefore they hesitate to travel to Turkey. She is in her forties and she was selected for this research because of her current active role in the movement.

I visited her in her office in the center of one of the important cities in Germany. During the whole interview she seems very confident and strong, especially in her field but at the same time, a little disappointed, mainly because of the role of women in the movement. We had a long discussion about this point and also whether this issue will change in the future or not.

**Ex4** is one of the educational scientists in his forties who is working about the movement. He received his PhD degree from one of the German University and his focus area is intercultural education. He has been also working on the Gülen movement and he already published several articles about the movement. He was selected for this research because of his neutral position and academic background.

He accepted me in his office and the interview took almost 45 minutes. He gave many examples about the schools and the general structure of the movement especially after the coup attempt.

**Ex5** is a retired, important writer in Germany. He told me that, he first met with the movement 10 years ago, in 2008. It was a conference about dialog and intercultural relations which was organized by Stiftung Dialog in Berlin and after then he was invited to a Turkey trip after a year. Later on, he conducted several researches about the movement and their schools in Germany. I read his works first, and then because of his neutral and objective approach to the subject and also Gülen inspired schools, he was selected for this research.

He accepted me in his home which was in a central place in Berlin and talked more about the Turks in Germany and the differences between Turks in the Gülen Movement and other Turks. He also spoke a lot about the failed coup attempt and mentioned that it was similar to the events in early times of the Nazi Party. It was a long interview and I had a chance to get much different information, especially about the Movement's position in Europe.

**Ex6** is a retired professor in sociology and has a profound knowledge about the movement. She was one of the co-writers of a book about the Gülen Movement and talked as a key note speaker in several discussions about the movement. Therefore, the Gülen Movement has an important meaning for her, and she has been following movement's activities for many years.

She accepted me in her house in Germany and we had an hour interview with her about the movement and the educational philosophy of the movement's schools. She told me that she had a lot of contacts in the movement and she was invited as a keynote speaker to different type of conferences or other programs about the movement. Besides, we also talked about the role of the women in the movement too.

**Ex7** is a young social scientist in his thirties who just finished his PhD. He criticizes the movement from different perspectives, and he published an article in Eißler's book<sup>54</sup> which targeted the structure of the movement in Germany.

During the interview, despite his young age, it was noticed that he had read a lot about the movement and he had some new criticism about the movement. He was selected for this research mainly because of his position against the movement, his new criticism depending on nationalism of the movement and his academic background.

**Ex8** is a retired social scientist who finished his PhD in Political Science in West Berlin. He is against the movement and he has very strong criticism against the movement. He published

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<sup>54</sup> Eißler, Friedmann (2015), Die Gülen Bewegung (Hizmet)



several articles about the movement and criticize the movement mainly because of its political position in Turkey. He was selected for this research mainly because of position against the movement and his knowledge about political science.

He accepted me in his house in Berlin. In the interview, he talked a lot about the political situation in Turkey and Syria and he explained the political position of the Gülen Movement. He also gave detailed information about the coup attempt too.

**Ex9** is an academician in Germany who is still working in one of the universities of Germany as a social scientist. She is in her sixties and very well-known personality with her works about the rights of the women and with the role of women in Islam. Besides she also worked on immigration, integration of immigrants in Germany. She told me that, she was aware of Gülen's activities since it was founded in Izmir Turkey and she published several articles about the Gülen Movement. In these articles, she criticizes the movement from different aspects and mainly because of her stand against the movement, she was selected for this study.

I visited her in her office at the University and we conducted an hour-long interview with many details. Despite her contra position against the movement, she believes that there could be changes, if the movement could change itself. Women and their role and the religious identity of the movement were discussed in detail. The current political position and the role of religion in schools were also talked about in our meeting.

## Appendix B: Visited Schools<sup>55</sup>

### AFRICA SCHOOL 1:

*Table 8: General Information about the First Visited School in Africa*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	1998
<b>Number of Students</b>	625
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	65
<b>Form of the School</b>	Secondary School (from 11 to 16 Years)
<b>Status of the School</b>	Private School
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	2 Dormitories

On the second day of my visit I found the chance to visit one of the oldest Gülen Inspired Schools of the country visited in Africa. The school was constructed in a very big area which includes school buildings, two dormitories, a very big dining room and several sport centers like a beach volleyball court, basketball field...etc. It is like a small campus with many different facilities.

Before the visit, the website of the school was checked by the researcher but unfortunately there was not enough information about the educational concept or pedagogy of the school. There was a lot of information about the history, different branches in that country and contact information listed there. Besides the additional activities are highlighted in the "Events part", like international Competition Olympia or NASA's competition called Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) challenge. The school's achievements in state exams and previous competitions are also listed in the website of the school. From these projects and previous achievements and also depending on the researcher's observations, it could be said that this school has a curriculum based on STEM. (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)

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<sup>55</sup> All information in this part is depending on the field study from September 2017 to October 2018

*Picture 1: Physics Laboratory in the First Visited School in Africa*



The school was closed during our visit and made a semester break. Therefore, I could only see a few students but almost all the school management was there to help volunteers who come to that location for their charity activities. In the administration building there are a lot of certificates and different kind of awards like medals which demonstrates the success of the school and its students. In addition to that, there are several pictures of the important people from the Government and just one small Istanbul picture hanging on the walls. During my whole trip in the GISs in different lands, that was the only thing that I saw which is related to Turkey. I did not see any Turkish flag or any other national thing which represents Turkey in GISs.

## AFRICA SCHOOL 2:

*Table 9: General Information about the Second Visited School in Africa*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	2013
<b>Number of Students</b>	447
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	74
<b>Form of the School</b>	K-12 Education
<b>Status of the School</b>	Private School
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	Yes

In comparison to the first school that I visited the day before, this school is very small and consists of just one building with four floors. The first floor is assigned to primary school students and other floors are designated for the students from the 5th class to the 12th class. There are dining rooms and laboratories in the same building. Later on, another building across from the school building, was added to this school as a dormitory and there was a playground in between the two buildings. In comparison to the first GISs, this school was better designed and well decorated. The manager of the school mentioned that this is mainly because it was a new building which was built in 2014.

On the website of this school, the curriculum of the school is highlighted, which is the so-called Cambridge International Education (CIE) system. It was also mentioned In the website that Cambridge Checkpoint exams and International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) exams are conducted in this school. The manager of the school also highlighted this system and mentioned that they are cooperating with England and their degrees are globally known in other parts of the world.

During the visit, it was a Saturday and the school was very busy, because next Monday was the first day of the semester. The whole staff were there and there were also some parents who want to send their students to this school. I had a chance to talk with several parents and asked them why they choose this school. The most common answer is the reputation of the school. One of the parents told me that he had conducted an internet research and found out that this was the best school in that region. Another woman mentioned that her friends recommended this school. In addition, the food and the traffic in that region were also

mentioned as reasons to choose this school in these small talks. I also learned that during the admission process, candidates have to write a written exam and also an oral exam will be conducted for the ones who passed the written exam.

### AFRICA SCHOOL 3:

*Table 10: General Information about the Third Visited School in Africa*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	2005
<b>Number of Students</b>	436
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	40
<b>Form of the School</b>	K-12 Education
<b>Status of the School</b>	Private School
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	Yes

The third school is the smallest school that was visited in Africa. In compare to other two, this school looks a little bit older and not so modern. One of the main reasons is this country is poorer and smaller in comparison to the first one. The whole school consists of a four-floor building where the first floor is assigned for primary school students, the second and third floors were separated for secondary school students and in the last floor there is a huge dining room on the one half and a small dormitory on the other half.

The website of the school is not sufficient, and it is difficult to find important information about the school. The manager of the school, a local black man, is very young, in his early thirties. He had a teaching degree from Turkey, and he knows the local environment very well. He told me that the school has several problems, like financial problems, it needs renovation and the dormitory part is too small, it could host a maximum 50 students. However, he also mentioned that they are looking for a better building in the city center and trying to solve their problems with different projects. During the visit, the school was closed but there was a Seminar to the students, and I would have chance to take the picture of this Seminar.

*Picture 2: Seminar in the Third Visited School in Africa*



EUROPE SCHOOL 1:

*Table 11: General Information about the First Visited School in Europe*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	2007
<b>Number of Students</b>	440
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	40
<b>Form of the School</b>	Secondary School
<b>Status of the School</b>	Private School with State Support
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	No

I started my research interviews with this school which is in the center of one of the biggest cities in Germany. I live close to this big city and I already know the manager of the school from some other events in our region. That is why it was not so difficult to make an appointment with him. The first thing that I notice in my visit is the location of the school. I could easily reach the school with public transportation. The manager of the school also told me that it will not be difficult with car because the school is close to the highway too. There is an enormous tree in the entrance of the school and some parts of the school are under construction. After a small walk with the manager of the school, we came to a meeting room and conducted our

interview there. After the interview, the school manager showed me the school building and explained their facilities there.

From Internet research it was seen that the school had another name based on Gülen’s philosophy before. However later on, this name was changed and a local scientist’s name from the 18th century was given to the school. It could be mainly because of the localization strategy of the movement. The website of the school is very well prepared and detailed information about the school could be found there. The school complex, which is the combination of one old and one new building, is very big and there are two kinds of middle school on it, one school is for high level students (Gymnasium) and the other part is for midlevel students (Real Schule). Because of the summer break I could not see any student and everywhere the school workers are trying to prepare classes and other facilities for the semester. The strong parts of the school were highlighted in the website, like an all-day school concept, coaching activities and applications of digitalization and other technologies in their school. There is also detailed information about the school program and projects in school. After our interview, the manager of the school showed me their laboratories in biology, chemistry and physics and mentioned that these labs are prepared by Waldner company, which is a serious company in this field. According to information on the website and also my observations after the interview, it could be said that this is STEM based school and natural sciences are crucial in this school.

## EUROPE SCHOOL 2:

*Table 12: General Information about the Second Visited School in Europe*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	2003
<b>Number of Students</b>	270
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	30
<b>Form of the School</b>	K-12 Education
<b>Status of the School</b>	Private School with State Support
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	No

This school is one of the earliest GISs in Europe founded in 2003, in one of the most important capital cities in Europe. The manager of the school told me that he has been working there since from the foundation and there were just 19 students and eight part time teachers at the



beginning. In the last 15 years, three other new branches have opened in the other parts of the city and in total, GISs in this city have more than 1500 students and 200 staff working in these four schools. The school that I visited is the oldest one in these four branches, which has a five-floor building in addition to some other small buildings which work as a primary school and a kindergarten. The school building is close to the highway and on one side of the building there is a street and parking lot and on the other side there is a garden.

The manager of the school told me that there is a central system running in that country and the admission of students is organized by this central system. Therefore, the competition between schools are very low and it would be enough for them to put information to their website for their students and parents in French. That is why they do not need to put different languages on their website. However, according to internet research, there were several studies conducted about the school in different websites in English and in Turkish and it was seen in these studies that the school has an international and intercultural environment and the teachers have a good relationship with students and parents. These results and other research topics were discussed during the interview with the school manager.

### EUROPE SCHOOL 3:

*Table 13: General Information about the Third Visited School in Europe*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	2007
<b>Number of Students</b>	470
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	50
<b>Form of the School</b>	Secondary School
<b>Status of the School</b>	Private School with State Support
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	No

In comparison to other schools visited in Europe, the third visited GIS has a more familiar atmosphere. The school was founded in 2007 in a small building but later on they moved to the current location. The school building is an old traditional building which was very well kept and very well designed for a high school education. The building is in a "L" shape and one part has three floors and the other part has two floors. The third floor on the other part is the management and the manager's room with some other deputy managers and meeting rooms are located there.

It was observed on the visit that, unlike the second visited GISs in Europe, this school curriculum is based on STEM. Besides, mainly because of the high competition between the schools in that country, the previous achievements and successes of their students are also highlighted on the walls of the school. This school also used to have another name before but after the failed coup attempt in Turkey, they also changed their name and gave a local name to their school.

USA SCHOOL 1:

*Table 14: General Information about the First Visited School in the US*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	2007
<b>Number of Students</b>	360
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	60
<b>Form of the School</b>	Secondary School
<b>Status of the School</b>	Charter School
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	No

This school is one of the oldest Gülen inspired charter schools in USA, which was founded in 2007 in Massachusetts. There are 360 students from three districts around the school and 60 teachers are working at the school. The school building is old, but the classes and laboratories are very well organized. Previous projects and medals are shown on the walls of the school. The school has different facilities like laboratories, gym or dining room. From the buildings and houses around the school I assumed that low-income families live there. During the interview, the deputy manager of the school also pointed that issue and told me that it is the lowest-income district in the whole state and the delinquency rate is also very high in that region. Mostly people from South America immigrated there before.

The school concept and curriculum are based on STEM education. The word "Science" is also in the name of the school and there is more information about the previous successes of the school in STEM competitions in their website. According to the deputy manager of the school, all other GICs and GIPs are based on the STEM system in the USA. This is mainly because, there is a demand on the market for this kind of schools and the structure of the

movement could fulfill this demand through these schools. On the other hand, the college preparation part is another important point underlined on the website of the visited charter school with some statistics. The students of the school are selected in a lottery system, which makes the school a non-selective, tuition free college preparation school. This part is clearly highlighted in the website of the school.

## USA SCHOOL 2:

*Table 15: General Information about the Second Visited School in the US*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	1999
<b>Number of Students</b>	333
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	44
<b>Form of the School</b>	K-12 Education
<b>Status of the School</b>	Private School
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	Yes

This school is located in a 16500 meter-square with different types of playgrounds and there was a huge three-floor building with different facilities like classes, laboratories, dining room and a dormitory in the same building. The first and second floor is divided for the school part and on the first floor there is a kindergarten and primary school and on the second floor there are classes and laboratories for high school students. The international students of the school stay in the dormitory and the others live in their homes. There are 333 students and 44 teachers studying and working at the school during the time of the research, however, the manager of the school mentioned that, they were below their capacity mainly because of the failed coup attempt.

The core part of the curriculum of the school is based on STEM. It is clearly to see it on the website of the school. The school was founded in 1999 and in the last 19 years, they have reached important achievements in SAT exams and college attendance which are listed on the walls of the school. One of the interesting observations both on the website and in the building is that, they are conducting a Montessori education system in their kindergarten and primary school. The manager of the school mentioned that, they hired special teachers with a Montessori certification at their school and they are cooperating with American Montessori Associations in the US. In compare to the charter school visited in Massachusetts, this school is very modern

and very well designed. It was observed in this school, that, the school was well decorated with educational pictures and wise sentences from famous American intellectuals like Abraham Lincoln.

*Picture 3: Inside the Second Visited School in the US*



USA SCHOOL 3:

*Table 16: General Information about the Third Visited School in the US*

<b>Foundation Year</b>	1996
<b>Number of Students</b>	165
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	22
<b>Form of the School</b>	Secondary School
<b>Status of the School</b>	Private School
<b>Dormitory Options</b>	No

This school was a small school with 165 students and 22 teachers. One of the main reasons behind this is the building of the school, which is very close to Washington D.C. and the land

prices in that region are very high. Despite this fact, the followers of the movement found this small building and started their educational activities there in 1996. The manager of the school also complained about this issue and mentioned that they are searching another building to move into in the future.

Like the other GISs in the US, this school also promotes STEM in their education. In the website of the school, there is detailed information about it and it is also seen there, that they are applying a project-based learning program in their school concept. Another important information on the website of the school is that, despite its private structure, this school is an expansion of the other Gülen inspired charter schools in Arizona and Texas. This part is explained in detail in the history part of the website. Like other Gülen inspired schools in the US, previous successes, achievements and some other statistics, like SAT scores of their students, are listed on the website of the school. Uniquely it was observed in this school that; the huge picture of the ex-US president Obama is welcomed the visitors in the entrance of the school. As it was mentioned before, the students of this school attended a contest called "Future City" and their project was rewarded as the second-best project in the whole USA. Therefore, they were invited to the White House and presented their project to President Obama during his administration time. This presentation was pictured and exhibited in the most seen part of the school.

*Picture 4: The Students of the GIS with Mr. Obama in the White House and Presenting Their Project.*



