

An evaluation on the transformation of local governments in Turkey with new public management reforms

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Abstract: As globalization increased its importance in the world after the 1980s, local governments emerged as an active administrative subject in this process. As a matter of fact, local governments increased their capacity in terms of democracy and efficiency by integrating with the new public administration reforms that increased their impact in this period. As a matter of fact, a similar process took place in Turkey. In this study, it is aimed to focus on democracy, participation and effectiveness at the principle and institutional level after the regulation of local governments in Turkey with new public management reforms. The method of the study is literature review within the framework of qualitative analysis.

Keywords: local governments, new public management, democracy, effectiveness, Turkey

Introduction

Local governments have become administrative units with increasing powers, duties and responsibilities in the global world. As a matter of fact, local governments, as public service units closer to the public, are structures that play a role in both the development of democracy and increasing service efficiency.

In Turkey, especially starting from the 1980s, local governments have followed a course depending on the world conjuncture. Turkish local governments have been organized in a more participatory, accountable, transparent and decentralized manner within the framework of new public administration reforms after the 1980s and especially the 2000s. On the other hand, it has been seen over time that local governments have important roles in dealing with the problems caused by the population growth and urbanization of cities in Turkey.

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In this context, it is thought that the new public management approach, which began to be implemented in the world and in Turkey after the 1980s, contributed to local governments in this process.

In this study, it is aimed to evaluate local governments in Turkey generally within the framework of democracy and efficiency, adhering to new public management values. The method of the study is literature review.

Administration and Turkish administrative organization

The activities carried out by the administration to meet the daily needs of the people are evaluated in several categories. In terms of its duty, the administration's activities generally appear to be public services. While this is true, there are also activities that are not considered public services. Public activities carried out continuously, in accordance with public law procedures, in order to ensure and maintain the orderly and civilized life of the society within the direction and framework determined by the state, legislative and executive bodies, can be called administrative activities. In this sense, the duties of the administration are examined in various categories, including planning, public service, law enforcement, incentive and support activities (Deniz 2021).

The Turkish administrative organizational structure is divided into two main parts (Parlak and Doğan 2021). The first of these is the central administrative administration, that is, the part that we describe as the state, and the other part is the decentralized government organizations that are described as local or regional government. The central administration is divided into two parts. The first part consists of the capital organization, and the second part consists of the provincial organization. Decentralized government organizations are also divided into two parts. The first part is territorially decentralized institutions, in other words, local governments. The second part is decentralized organizations in terms of service.

New public management in Turkey

Although the roots of the new public management movement date back to the 1960s, it led to a paradigm transformation in the public administration discipline after the 1980s. Essentially, this movement or understanding proposes to transfer the methods and techniques in the business discipline to the public. Among its basic qualities: There are principles such as “small government, free market, strengthening of the

private sector, development of civil society, localization and accountability” (Özer 2010).

The first steps towards the new public management approach in Turkey were taken with the implementation of privatization and economic liberalization policies aimed at narrowing the public space after 1980. In this period, which is considered the first wave reform process, state monopolies were abolished, higher boards began to be established, and importance was given to the liberalization (deregulation) of markets. Political instability and economic crises in the 1990s were effective in slowing down the pace of reform efforts. In the 2000s, the second wave reform process started with the Draft Public Administration Basic Law and deeply affected the administrative field. It is possible to find traces of the new public management approach in almost every field, both in the legal field and at the practical level, from financial management to ministerial structures, from local governments to the audit system (Lamba 2015, 130).

In Turkey, in the 1980s and especially after the 2000s, reforms were made in local governments on the principles of participation, democracy and decentralization, bearing the traces of new public management (Denek 2022, 317).

Local governments and democracy in Turkey

The emergence and development of local governments in our country took place within the innovation movements that the Ottoman Empire started from the beginning of the 19th century. The Ottoman Empire, which gained multinational and intercontinental military and political power starting from 1299, presented a completely centralized view in terms of administration and the states did not have legal entities. In this respect, the Ottoman state system can be described as a breadth of authority (Sakınç 2001, 194). In this respect, it can be said that the local government system in Turkey, with its roots from the past, is considered as a form of organization that complements the central government but is of secondary importance. The distinctions between local government and central government and local politics and national politics emerge at this point. Local organizations are the basic institutions that are important in terms of developing political maturity, adopting democratic understanding and contributing to the peace of the country. Success in these methods will help develop democratic

understanding and achieve success and soften the political process at the country level (Çukuçayır and Tekel 2003, 298-299).

Local governments, which have played important roles in the past under various names and different statuses in the provision of local services, continue their activities in contemporary states in areas left to their own responsibilities. Two of the reasons for the existence of local governments are important. One of these is the local people living in a certain region, and the other is public services that correspond to the common local needs of these people. These two elements necessitate the establishment of local governments, both because it is impossible for the central government to provide all public services across the country on its own in a timely, appropriate and effective manner, and because the interests of the local people living in a certain region require differentiation and diversity in service provision. It is the most important element that makes As long as these two elements exist, local governments will continue to exist (Arikboğa et al. 2007, 5).

On the other hand, these two elements are also the source of discussions around the concepts of efficiency and democracy (Arikboğa et al. 2007, 5). As a matter of fact, today, when local government is mentioned, it is understood as institutions that meet the needs of individuals in a local community, provide public goods and services, and are managed by bodies elected by the local people. It can be said that the existence of such a local government unit aims to achieve three goals. The first of these is that it allows people to exercise one of their fundamental rights. When it is accepted that people are free to consume market goods to the extent of their financial power, it must be accepted that the same people are free to come together to meet their needs and produce and therefore consume public goods and services. The second goal that such an institution is expected to achieve is effectiveness. Having all public services produced by the state in society by the central government is actually a very expensive solution. In the provision of public services, ensuring the compatibility of both the economy and the service produced with local demands requires a division of labor between the central government and local government. But the phenomenon of local government cannot be understood only as a technical division of labor problem. There is an aspect beyond this. This aspect includes the third aim to be achieved within the understanding of local government, namely democracy (Tekeli 1992, 3).

Local governments can sometimes be established as a result of a tradition, sometimes a geographical responsibility, sometimes a political purpose or a sociological reason. In addition to its many benefits, the central government increases red tape, and civil servants can be distracted from work and service by acting to tolerate the center, sometimes resulting in an increase in civil servant staff and an increase in costs by introducing new forms of service. Local governments also have a goal of trying to eliminate these problems. By reorganizing the manpower use of local governments, power loss can be prevented and efficiency can be increased. Again, in extremely centralized governments, the burden of the center is very heavy and it struggles to carry out all kinds of activities. The way to prevent this is to transfer some of these tasks to local governments. It is also a known fact that local governments increase public participation in the provision of services. If the public can well understand what governments want to do, they can help with the work to be done (Güney 2000, 11). Strong local governments also function as blood vessels that nourish participation democracy by ensuring the distribution of power from the center to local units. Thus, since power and authority are distributed at the spatial level, it protects the individual against possible practices of arbitrary rule, such as creating pluralism and monopolizing political and economic power. In addition, strong local government can contribute to both the country's democracy and the political development of the individual by using local participation opportunities with an "egalitarian" approach (by leading in referendum practices, associations, unions, etc.). It develops the individual's awareness of active citizenship, entrepreneurship, solidarity, initiative and responsibility, accountability and accountability, participation and local representation. Thus, it can create a more dynamic, conscious and productive society throughout the country (Yılmaz 1994, 44-45).

Local governments have made significant contributions to the formation of democratic tradition, the establishment of democratic culture, the creation of democratic development and the establishment of democracy in the country as a whole. From this perspective, local governments play an active role in democratic development as the institutions closest to democracy. Another point that should be noted on this subject is the fact that local governments are democracy and democratic education institutions (Güney 2000, 11).

On the other hand, the central government keeps local governments under control in two main ways: The first of these is called “guardianship control” and includes legal control aimed at ensuring national integrity and ensuring the order of the general government. The second control method covers the general principles regarding the creation of the necessary resources to carry out the powers and duties transferred to local governments, which are called “financial dependency” (Erder and İncioğlu 1995, 10-11).

Below, brief information on the types of local governments operating in Turkey is given.

Municipalities

A new definition of municipality was introduced in the Municipality Law No. 5393, dated 2005, in accordance with the Municipal Law No. 1580, which it replaced. In this definition, the content of “autonomy” interpreted within the concept of public legal personality is clearly written. Accordingly, the municipality; It is a public legal entity with “administrative and financial autonomy”, established to meet the local and common needs of the residents of the town and whose decision-making body is elected by the voters (Art. 3). The word town, which is one of the elements that make up this definition, refers to a settlement with a municipality (Toprak 2006, 86).

Metropolitan municipalities

In our country, metropolitan municipality administration emerged in 1984. Metropolitan municipality management is a new management model introduced to alleviate the problems of big cities, whose burdens have increased significantly due to problems such as urbanization, environment, infrastructure and housing (Eryılmaz and Şen 1994, 34).

While the metropolitan municipality model preserves the local character of its districts and ensures the participation of the public in management, it also aims at coordination between various interrelated service units in the metropolitan area. Thus, while taking advantage of the advantages of large-scale units in the “economic” aspect, district municipalities are also included, and the importance of small-scale units in the “democratic” aspect is emphasized (Eryılmaz and Şen 1994, 34).

In big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, which have gained the status of metropolitan centers by receiving the largest share of urban development and covering many districts, difficulties and

drawbacks have arisen in the monopoly execution of all municipal services. As a result of the increasing difficulties that hinder the delivery of services, it became necessary for the services at the main city scale as a whole to remain under the management of a main city municipality and the rest to be left to local municipalities (Sencer 1986, 305).

For this reason, in line with the Constitution, which states that special management forms can be introduced for large settlement centers, the management of Metropolitan Municipalities was regulated by the Law No. 3030 dated 27.6.1984, which amended the Decree Law No. 195 dated 23.3.1984. The law defines cities with more than one district within the municipal borders as “metropolitan cities”, and municipalities established in the districts within the metropolitan municipality borders are called “district municipalities” (Sencer 1986, 305).

The justification of the Metropolitan Municipalities Law No. 5216 includes the following statements:

“The problems that arise in big cities are getting worse day by day and the more difficult they are to solve. The main problem is the lack of management in these areas”. While the problems arise from the entire metropolitan area, the authority and financial resources required to solve these problems are shared among multiple local government units. Population growth, industrialization, transportation, environmental problems and developments in technology have increased the scope and scale of public services. This situation causes the problems. The organizational structure, service production capacity and insufficient financial resources of many local administrations established within the metropolitan area and not in coordination make the solution impossible. It eliminates effectiveness and efficiency in management. “Since many units are authorized to provide services that must be carried out at the metropolitan level, planning and coordination and scale efficiency disappear, resulting in waste of resources.”

Special Provincial Administrations

Special Provincial Administration is a territorial decentralization organization with public legal entity established to meet the common needs of people living in a geographical area surrounded by provincial borders arising from their living there (Gözler 2002, 155).

The province, which is the provincial organization of the central government, is also a local government. As a local government, the province is completely separate from the central government and has a separate legal entity other than the state legal entity. Although the province, as a local government, was established by the law providing for the establishment of the province, which is the provincial organization of the central administration; In other words, it is established without the need for a separate law and shares the same land with it. But unlike it, it was established to meet the common needs of the people living within the borders of the province and was given some duties for this purpose. However, the main duty of the province, which is the provincial organization of the central administration, is not to meet the common needs of the people living within the provincial borders, but to ensure that the services carried out by the central administration at the entire country level are carried out within the borders of that province and that the people living within the borders of the province benefit from these services (Günday 2003, 419).

The basic law regulating the Special Provincial Administrations is dated 13 March 1913 and was inherited from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic. It is known that various changes were made to this Law later on. The new law is dated 22.2.2005 and numbered 5302 and came into force by being published in the Official Gazette numbered 25745 under the name of the Special Provincial Administration Law (Sabuktay 2007, 16).

Law No. 5302 envisages a provincial local administration system that has fundamental differences from the previous term special provincial administration. With the law, civilian participation was allowed, transparent administrative practices were made mandatory, the administration was regulated in an accountable manner, the democratic structure of special administrations was strengthened, and a citizen-oriented administrative structure was aimed. This law gave a new character to the provincial general assembly by regulating the position of the governor in special administration in a different way than before (Sabuktay 2007, 16).

Villages

The smallest and most widespread local administration is the village. Today the number of villages is 35,427. While the ratio of the village population to the general population was 72% in 1950, this ratio

decreased to 29.4 % in 1995. Village administration was regulated by the Village Law No. 442 dated 18 March 1924 (Gözler 2002, 163).

Village Law No. 442 defines the village in three aspects: First of all, in the 1st article of the Village Law, it defines the village based on population measurement. Accordingly, dormitories with a population of less than two thousand are called villages. The village law defines places with a population between two thousand and twenty thousand as towns, and places with a population of more than twenty thousand as cities. It is stated that sub-districts, districts and provincial centers with a municipal administration, although their population is less than two thousand, are also considered towns and are therefore subject to the Municipality Law and excluded from the scope of the Village Law. In the 2nd article of the Village Law, the following definition is found: “People who have common goods such as mosques, schools, pastures, pastures, swamps and live in collective or scattered houses constitute a village together with their vineyards, gardens and fields.” Finally, in the 7th article of Law No. 442, the village is defined as follows: “The village is an entity on its own that owns goods that can or cannot be taken from one place to another and performs the tasks assigned to it by this law” (Günday 2003, 457-458).

In Turkey, in cities and towns traditionally divided into neighborhoods, there are neighborhood management organizations similar to decentralization organizations. Neighborhood management is regulated by the “Law on the Establishment of Neighborhood Headmen and Councils of Elders in Cities and Towns” dated 1944 and numbered 4541. Although the organs of this administration are elected, it does not have legal personality. According to the municipal law (art. 8), “the establishment, removal, merging of neighborhoods within the borders of a municipality, and changing their names and borders are possible with the decision of the municipal council and the administrative board of that place and the approval of the governor” (Sencer 1986, 313).

The relationship of local governments with new public management in Turkey

The new public management approach has begun to radically transform the basic arguments of traditional management culture. The units most affected by these changes are local governments, which constitute an important pillar of the management system. The new management approach has affected local governments in many aspects,

especially the institutional structure and service processes (Sezer and Büyükpınar 2021, 88). In this context, the transformation in public administration that started in the 1980s is not only a one-dimensional phenomenon such as efficiency, effectiveness and savings, but also a multi-dimensional phenomenon in which principles and values based on the social responsibility of the public bureaucracy, such as participation in management, transparency and accountability, come to the fore. However, effective and efficient use of public resources facilitates the implementation of other new public management basic principles. Because there will be no reason for a local government that can respond to social needs at an adequate level and quality with its performance to avoid accountability and transparency (Tunçer 2013, 290). As a matter of fact, local governments in Turkey will provide services within the framework of effectiveness, efficiency and productivity based on the new public management approach (Aktalay 2011, 17). In this context, it can be said that the new public administration in Turkey will be an important method and policy tool in eliminating or minimizing chronic urbanization problems with its contributions to local governments, especially in terms of democracy, effectiveness, quality and efficiency.

Conclusion and evaluation

It is possible that local governments in Turkey will modernize with the universal values (such as democracy, openness, accountability, ethics, openness, locality) that have been incorporated with the new public administration reforms after the 1980s and find solutions to basic problems. As a matter of fact, local governments, as democratic and effective administrative units closest to the people, have features that will activate social and cultural dynamics in addition to their political capacities. In this context, local governments, integrated with the core values of the new public administration and the values that include the components of liberal democracy, can be decisive in the institutionalization of democracy and strengthening its effectiveness by creating an ethical structure in social, cultural and political aspects in Turkey.

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