

AN ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL AIMS IN TURKEY: A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT*



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Abstract: *what kind of a human model should be the aim of education? In this study, the meanings attributed to the aims of education and human model depictions were examined based on ontological, ideological and psychological approaches and the historical change of educational objectives in the Turkish education system. Turkey, a country integrated with international systems, has been constantly affected by the ideological, economic and social transformations in the world, and sought to adapt to this transformation with the regulations for the education system. Within the scope of this study, the aims of the Turkish education system and the human model depictions together with socio-economic and political transformations were analyzed in the historical process since the foundation years of the Republic. In this context, the periods of transformation were determined by examining the thinking structures dominant in the Turkish education system, and the change in educational aims in these periods were discussed.*

Keywords: *Educational aims. Curriculum. Turkish education system.*

What kind of a human model should be the aim of education? Deprived of an answer since the ancient times, not only has this question been debated within ontological, epistemological, socio-economic,

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and psychological contexts but also has been constantly questioned within everyday life by a regular parent. Educational aim strikingly varies across values, expectations, and ideological perspectives of parents who have to decide whether to send their children to school or not, hesitate due to the conundrum of private or state schools, choose between general and vocational high schools, and have to make a decision between foreign language intensive or religion intensive high schools. Despite bearing universal qualities to some extent, educational aims are highly vulnerable to be influenced by cultural and ideological components of a given era. Decisions by the ruling political structure are definitive over the aims and content of education. Besides working on rules that regulate social life in general, politics is also concerned with collective decisions and decision-making processes emerging as a result of living in a society (DEMIREL, 2012). Transformations that educational aims have undergone throughout the history indicate that politics lies in the very heart of decision-making processes. Value systems embraced by those who govern the country bear a crucial role in determining the educational aims by instilling political thoughts and educational policies. Central political powers build educational systems in accordance with their ideological perspectives via democratic mechanisms and authoritarian means occasionally.

By constructing socially constituted systematic knowledge that provides the development intellectual capacities and formation of personality, schools constitute an important instance for the democratization of the society and the establishment of social inclusion (LIBÂNEO; SILVA, 2020). Official educational aims are defined within formal educational curricula whereas educational processes are endowed with not only formal but also informal and covert learning experiences. Historically, formal educational curricula have been mainly shaped by philosophical and sociological doctrines as both philosophy and psychology have always been in close proximity to educational science. Questions such as “What is the aim of education?”, “What kind of an individual should be raised?”, “What to teach?”, and “How to teach?” have lacked answers since the early ages. Educational aims have been structured within the framework of two basic models, collective understanding (emphasizing the values and cultures of the society) and individual understanding (emphasizing individual preferences and actions) in particular (BERKOVICH; BENOLIEL, 2020).

However, the more general view which is centered on the development of a full human being, seems more central in the constitution of the aims of education (FIALA, 2007). When scrutinized with a historical glance, some characteristics of both mind and body have generally been neglected when setting the educational aims, and a holistic approach encompassing both spirit and body have rarely resided within curriculum. “All men by nature desire to know” reads the first line of “Metaphysics” by Aristotle to emphasize human thirst to get informed about the world around them, the society they belong to, their past, future, and their own selves (ARSLAN, 2017). In addition to Aristotle, other ancient Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Heraclitus, Democritus, and Pythagoras viewed knowledge from an epistemological standpoint, and attempted to gain insights as to the nature of both knowledge and human and processes they owned.

Philosophers’ ideas about educational aims were consequences of close interaction with the current circumstances of the time they experienced. Therefore, how Plato regarded education diverts drastically from Pestalozzi’s or Spencer’s conceptualization of education.

Asserting that knowledge is “*à priori*” for wisdom is the path to knowledge and educated are those who grasp the forms via pure reason, Plato, a rationalist thinker, advocates that education should unravel realities that a child has such as conscious, virtue, happiness, zest, and intellect. In Descartes’ philosophy, an individual who commences from idealism and actualizes realism can only aim attaining state of happiness (SARUHAN; OZDEMIRCI, 2011). While Comenius emphasizes that school is what prepares individuals for life (BURGER, 1914), Locke underlines that education should aim to equip learners with knowledge through sensory means and experiences for knowledge can only be attained “*à posteriori*” (BINBASIOGLU, 1982). The historical trajectory regarding the science of education indicates that debates about methods prevailed the seventeenth century and that the eighteenth-century hosted arguments mostly related to pedagogy and educational aims.

A leading philosopher of the eighteenth century, Rousseau, underpins that educational aims should be absolute for lack of ideals would be a natural consequence should education constantly be modified (ERGÜN, 2006). Even though preaching that child’s interests and skills should constitute the heart of educational processes, Rousseau, one of the proto-

figures of the enlightenment in Europe, strongly sided with the view that the primary aim of education should be to render children able in participating in a society (ADIGUZEL, 2013). Kant, as an adamant defender of Rousseau's school of thought (KANZ, 1993), regards experience as an integral component of education, and reasons that individuals should first be brought up mentally and physically rather than in compliance with the predictions of a moral philosophy (CILINGIR; KUÇUKALI, 2004). In the same vein, Pestalozzi – inspired by Rousseau's ideas – advocates that education should aim development in cognitive, emotional, and kinesthetic domains by pointing out to the significance of heart (coeur), head (tête), and hand (main) activation during education (SOËTARD, 1994). Spencer, who spearheaded the school of thought on education during the nineteenth century, emphasizes the need to put 'what is theoretical' into practice, which is compatible with Pestalozzi's ideas. Furthermore, Spencer also argues that schools and education should undergo comprehensive changes so that education at schools can be based on the societal needs (ADIGUZEL, 2013).

This dominant educational philosophy and school of thought regarding human nature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries evolved as a result of economic transformations, advancements in basic sciences – especially in physics and biology, prevalence of positivist approach, and accumulation of knowledge about learning and human psychology during the twentieth century. During the same time period, pragmatism and progressivism movements have highlighted student-centered approaches in educational systems. Growing psychology literature added variety to the sources of knowledge about the characteristics of learning processes, and child's interests were once again definitive over educational aims. Expectations from schools were reformulated as a result of rapid developments in science, technology, and industry especially during the first half of twentieth century, and economic function along with social participation skills became significant in terms of educational aims. It was highly important for schools of this period to contribute to the training of individuals that would fulfil the expectations of occupational groups central to the industrial development. Together with the increasing economic function of education, this period was also conducive to the birth of new educational trends such as "child-initiated

movement”, “rural education movement”, “vocational training movement”, and “collective education movement” (BINBASIOGLU, 1982).

A dense effect of sociological approaches such as functionalist, conflict, Marxist, and interactionist approach was almost visible on the educational aims in the twentieth century. Educational aims are described by Durkheim, the most prominent proponent of functionalist approach, as maintaining collaboration and solidarity in a society by teaching social norms and values, teaching how to comply with social norms necessary to live in harmony with other members of a society apart from family members and peer groups, and raising individuals equipped with knowledge and skills that industrialized societies need (ULUGTEKIN, 2012). The foundation of Marxist and conflict approach is based on Marx’s analysis of classes within a given society. Accordingly, due to the fact that capitalism and industrial production had deepened social inequalities (KOCAK-TURHANOGLU, 2012), educational aims, thus, were not determined by only capitalism, but rather shaped by the struggle between classes and ethnic and religious groups (ULUGTEKIN, 2012). Unlike class conflict, which was elaborately analyzed by Marx, conflict theory focuses more on the conflicts experienced between man social groups such as men and women, parents and children, and urbanite and provincial. Despite having different frameworks regarding educational aims, both conflict and functionalist approaches theorize that education serves as a social control mechanism in order to sustain the hierarchical structure by means of schools conveying present cultural values and behavior patterns to the new generation (DINÇER, 2003). Interactionist understanding, on the other hand, regards emotional features and social skills that would emancipate individuals as the gist of educational aims (TAN, 1993; DINÇER, 2003; ADIGÜZEL; DALIOGLU; ERGÜNAY, 2017).

The economic crises of the early 1970s and 1980s had a negative impact on the world’s industrialized democratic societies (HYSLOP-MARGISON; SEARS, 2006). This situation has caused the neo-liberal perspective that has been developing since the 1980s to become more widespread and be transformed into a hegemony that almost different country governments have to comply with these days (LENOIR; TUPIN; ADIGUZEL, 2016). The spread of neoliberalism is closely related to globalization and internationalization as two interrelated concepts (LIBÂNEO, 2016; LIBÂNEO; SILVA, 2020). In the global world, systems and approaches as well as

information are spreading very rapidly, and the international system makes countries more similar to each other day by day. As in different service sectors, education systems are also evolving into an international commercial structure as a sector with each passing day. Neoliberal education policy aims to directly embed market economy principles such as competition and consumerism in education (HYSLOP-MARGISON; SEARS, 2006) based on the basic principle that education is basically a sub-sector of the economy (MCLAREN, 2011). Therefore, the neoliberal understanding of education and the institutions that support this understanding transform teachers into educational technicians who follow similar instructions rather than teachers by offering them a new role model (CONNELL, 2009). Concepts such as individual-oriented education, quality assurance, accreditation and performance, which have become widespread in education systems especially after the 2000s, have accompanied this neoliberal transformation in the education system. There is a reaction to the understanding of a curriculum that is subject-centered and based on transferring knowledge with teacher-centered methods as well as neoliberal policies in the development of these approaches in education (BERTRAND, 1998).

Briefly, economic changes and social inequality deeply influenced ideological approaches and educational policies during the twentieth century. Ideologies often have a reciprocal interaction with social and cultural characteristics of a society. These characteristics contribute to the manifestation of ideologies on one hand, and ideologies, on the other, thrust social and cultural structural characteristics of a society into change (ÍSERI, 2014). Ideational shift in education has been affected by divergent ideological theories in time, and aims of curricula have varied in accordance with socialist, liberal, and neo-liberal policies across different eras.

Given the ideational evolution of education, it would not be wrong to label the first half of twentieth century as clash of ideologies. Consequential growth of nationalist and authoritarian regimes after WWI and WWII led to the prevalence of socialist and liberal economic policies in nation-states. Conditions of work life and spread of capitalist economy practice increased socialism across continental Europe as a reaction to social problems. Socialism nourished social pedagogy, which principally stipulated that education should soar upon unconditional justice to achieve treating people in accordance with their jobs and to help enhance culture

and prosperity (BURGER, 1914). These movements produced a single school system that all individuals living in a nation-state could receive a common education under equal conditions, and somehow banned different opinions and practices from the field of education for many years.

The development of democratic societies in parallel with economic developments over the years has also changed the point of view on human and education, and this situation has directly reflected on educational policies and therefore on educational objectives. There is a partial independence between political power and education policies in countries with a democratic tradition (DEPOVER; NOEL, 2005). In these countries, educational policies are determined in line with long-term goals, regardless of current politics. Therefore, even if the country's government changes, education policies are less affected by this. Although Turkey is a democratic country, the determination of educational policies is much more affected by the current political climate of the country. In the next parts of the study, how these educational policies and educational objectives had changed in the historical process was discussed in the case of Turkey.

THE STRUCTURE OF TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM AND CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL AIMS

Located on a wide land stretching between Europe and Asia, Turkey enjoys a strategic privilege due to its geo-political position. Turkey has secured land borders with Middle-East, Europe, and Asia. So far, Turkey has served as a founding member for a myriad of social, economic, and technical institutions among which are European Council, United Nations, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Currently, Turkey is still a candidate for European Union.

According to the statistics of 2019-2020 academic year, Turkey – with 83 million residents – is the second most crowded country following Germany within the member countries of European Union. Based on the records of Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Turkey hosted more than 18 million students in formal training, excluding those in tertiary education, during the academic year of 2019-2020. Table 1 displays the numbers of schools-students-teachers during 2019-2020 school calendar (MILLÎ EĞİTİM BAKANLIĞI (MEB), 2020).

Table 1 - Number of schools, students, teachers and classrooms in education institutions by level of education 2019-2020

Level of education	School/ Institution	Number of Students			Number of Teachers			Classroom
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Permanent	Contractual	
Total of formal education	68 589	18 241 881	9 435 000	8 806 881	1 117 686	1 015 956	101 730	727 347
Formal education (Public)	54 715	15 189 878	7 781 791	7 408 087	942 936	841 206	101 730	588 010
Formal education (Private)	13 870	1 468 198	804 170	664 028	174 750	174 750	-	139 337
Formal education (Open education)	4	1 583 805	849 039	734 766	-	-	-	-

Source - National Education Statistics/ 2020. <http://sgb.meb.gov.tr/>.

Eight-year compulsory primary education (5 years of elementary school and 3 years of middle school) and high school practice was replaced with 12-year discrete compulsory education providing four years in elementary, middle, and high schools respectively as of 2012-2013 school year calendar. Although preschool education is not compulsory within this system, toddlers between 36-to-68 months are admitted to both independent kindergartens and kindergarten classes started in mainstream schools. This system, named as “4+4+4 system” in public, divides the primary education which was previously designed as an eight-year compulsory block into two discrete phases as 4+4. Those students graduating from the primary education phase (elementary and middle school) transition to the secondary education which is another four-year block (high school) based on their scores on a national exam. Upon finishing the secondary phase, students become eligible for tertiary education again based on their scores in another national exam.

Weekly schedule of courses in primary education phase is loaded with 30 and 35 hours of lessons in elementary and middle schools respectively. While no elective classes are offered in the elementary school, 6 hours of weekly load (a total of 35 hours) in middle schools are allocated for elective courses among which are Religion, Ethics, and Values; Language and Discourse; Foreign Language; Science and Mathematics; Arts and Sports; and Social Sciences.

Secondary education phase is populated with schools providing education and training across different fields. Designed with General High Schools and Vocational High Schools, this system offers a 40-hour weekly schedule in Anatolian High Schools; Science High Schools, Social Sciences High Schools, Religious Vocational High Schools, Vocational and Technical Anatolian High Schools, Fine Arts High Schools, and Sports High Schools.

Owing to the heterogeneity of its population, Turkey displays socio-economic differences regionally and locally. Although Ministry of National Education's share from the general budget has increased in time, it is far behind to those of other European countries in relation to population density. Currently, the ratios of MoNE's budget in GNP and national budget are 2.57% and 11.45% respectively. Present student density and variance within Turkish education system has increased

since 2011 due to migration wave to Turkey from Syria as a result of the civil war, which ended in inevitable changes in both social structure and educational understanding. According to the statistics of 2020, Turkey accommodates 3.6 million Syrian refugees most of whom are 0-to-18 years old and 400 thousand other refugees and asylum seekers from various nations (DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT, 2020). Data distilled from Ministry of National Education in January 2020 indicate that schooling rates of refugee children in elementary, middle, and high schools were 88.80%, 70.13%, and 32.55% respectively during 2019-2020 academic year. These statistics should be interpreted as a proliferation of cultural variety in classrooms and as a need to be considered when determining educational aims.

A better and more clear understanding concerning the changes that educational aims in Turkey have undergone requires an analysis of the period since the foundation of Turkish Republic across historical eras. Changes in the education system and educational aims of a given era have been scrutinized together with political, ideological, and economic characteristics of the era in question.

CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF TURKEY BETWEEN 1923 AND 1946

Educational aims of Turkey have been steeply influenced by social, cultural and political characteristics of different eras. Economic crises, military interventions, regional and ideological conflicts, and shifts in value systems have repeatedly strayed Turkey from stability, leading to different system trials.

Modern state perspective of twentieth century was practically formulated by nationalism and capitalism, accentuating nation-states (DEMIREL, 2012). The new Turkish state, founded after the dissolution of Ottoman Empire, was named Turkey based on the philosophical, sociological, psychological, cultural, and historical grounds that gave birth to the new state, and “Turkish identity” was emphasized in order to establish the structure of a nation-state. Nationalist movements and nation-state understanding grew stronger under the influence of wars, industrialization struggles, and consequential nationalist policies expe-

rienced in Turkey during the first half of twentieth century. Having been widely guided by innovative educational trends in Europe since the Ottoman Empire, Turkish education system was subjected to attempts of reforms by experts of educational sciences and intelligentsia, yet a major resistance was exhibited by the religious and conservative structure of that era. After the official establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923, educational aims were redefined despite all resilience, and the foundation of our current educational system was laid.

Educational system of the Republican era was constructed in line with a national and centralist perspective. The goal was to settle a modern, democratic, egalitarian, and participatory social order following the proponents of enlightenment between 1923 and 1946 (DOGAN, 1999). Efforts of seeking and achieving a contemporary cultural and educational philosophy during the early years of the Republican era constitute the focus and ideological structure of educational understanding in this period (TOPSES, 1999). Accordingly, especially elementary school curriculum, but education in general, was reorganized in order to impose Republican revolutions and Turkish identity to new generations. In this sense, primary education curricula of basic and social sciences were redesigned. In line with a holistic approach for the modification of the curricula, efforts were exerted to raise individuals compatible with the new state perspective both physically and spiritually. The most significant challenge encountered by the founders of the Republic during the early years was probably to separate education from religion. Rising upon a secular world view, the Republic had to bear conflicts with religious ideologies to prevent the reign of religion over education and to release education from the influence of religion. To this end, religious education was monitored, regulated, and restructured centrally via Ministry of National Education. On March 3, 1924, the Law on Unity of Education was enacted so as to reconstruct the educational system in accordance with Republican revolutions. In so doing, all educational institutions under the guidance of various religious groups were brought under the control of the Ministry of National Education, which can be noted as the first steps of secular, national, and contemporary education. This law provided a central management of education, and new educational perspective was reflected on the mainstream schools via the primary education cur-

riculum in 1924. Following the fall of religious influence over education during that period, an egalitarian, mixed, and participatory educational system was embraced.

An eclectic philosophical standpoint dominated the decisions regarding educational aims during the early years of the Republic since the primary goal was cultural reconstruction of the society and economic development. During these times, the pursued goal was not only to build a new culture and nation identity in line with reconstructivism and irrespective of previous cultural ties, but also to reformulate all curricula based on realist and pragmatist philosophies. A closer examination of the curricula in that period reveals that educational aims included instruction, socialization, and qualification. Learning/learner-centered approaches guided the pursuit of these aims together with the influence from advocates of enlightenment.

Education in Turkey between 1923 and 1946 was mainly conducted to nourish nation-state doctrine and specifically to improve citizenship ties as imposed by the single-party regime and semi-authoritarian statist policies. Although a systematic curriculum development approach was not adopted during this period, a new human model was outlined in primary education instructional curricula designed between 1926 and 1936. The 1926 curriculum stated that the aim of primary schools was shortly to raise good citizens who can effectively adapt to their environment. In the 1936 curriculum, though, the aims of primary schools grew in number and gained variety as follows: to eliminate lack of science; to raise Republican, Nationalist, Democrat, Statist, Secular, and Revolutionist citizens; to value both intellectual and physical development; to convert knowledge into an instrument that would cultivate success in the material world; to raise nationalist and patriotic individuals immune to any foreign ideologies; to teach a proper moral understanding; to ingratiate national history with the new generations; and to preserve efforts in order to render the Turkish language a national language (BUDAK; BUDAK, 2014).

Obvious from the aims that economic and social functions of education were prioritized across the early years of the Republic. Congruent with the 1936 curriculum, primary schools were designed with a 5-year program with two semesters each year and 26 hours of class time weekly.

Contemporary turmoil reign across the continental Europe transcended the borders and cast economic crises upon Turkey. Coupled with the negative consequences of WWII, education system was deeply shaken. Despite the entirety of problems, the numbers for schools, students, and teachers grew steadily. Table 2 presents the increase of schools, students, and teachers between 1923 and 1940 with reference to the Ministry of National Education (MILLÎ EĞİTİM BAKANLIĞI (MEB), 2020).

Table 2 - Distribution of school-student-teacher numbers between 1923-1940

Year	Number of schools	Number of students		Number of teachers
		Male	Female	
1923–1924	20	2.558		325
1928–1929	47	5.302	3.202	715
1932–1933	68	4.183	2.200	777
1937–1938	78	6.899	4.235	948
1938–1939	81	7.871	4.481	982
1939–1940	86	9.361	4.949	1.011

Source - National Education Statistics. 2020. <http://sgb.meb.gov.tr/>.

The results of 1927 population census yielded that 75% of all the citizens in Turkey lived in villages and 94% of them were not literate. Understandably, the salient component of this period’s educational policies was to extend the scope of education to the children and adults in those villages in order to provide the underprivileged with vocational know-how and skills compatible with regional characteristics. Accordingly, village institutes founded by the law enacted on April 17, 1940 launched a major social, cultural, and economic wave of change covering primarily villages and eventually the entire country and lasting until 1954 when these institutes were neutralized.

The foundational framework of Village Institutes was rooted in several educational schools of thought such as “child-initiated movement”, “rural education movement”, “vocational training movement”, and “collective education movement”. As well as the economic and social circumstances of the period, reports published by foreign experts over

Turkish education system were also definitive for the establishment of Village Institutes. Developing a report about the education system conducted by Turkey in 1924, John Dewey emphasized the significance of unison in education, and concluded that teacher training schools should be started in villages for an intended social development (TANGULU; KARADENIZ; ATES, 2014). Characteristics of the new identity designed during the Republican era were among the educational aims of these schools when they were first officially commenced owing to the understanding that villages would disseminate economic development across the country. In a sense, village institutes were to spread the official ideology of the state on a national scale. A closer examination of curricula followed in these institutes reveals that not only primary education skills such as mathematics, science, history, and foreign languages, but also higher vocational and technical skills in agriculture, husbandry, and construction were among the aims of the curriculum. Along with these skills, arts and culture events were also intensively integrated in the curriculum including reading literary classics, conducting discussions, and staging drama and dance performances. Established along large fields in line with Humanist and Democratic approaches, Village Institutes utilized hands-on training and active learning methods requiring teachers to work with students, which contributed considerably to the economic function of education. Teachers graduating from these schools were to work for at least 20 years in provinces determined by the Ministry of National Education. Novice teachers of Village Institutes were teaching primary education skills and modern production methods to children and adults respectively as well as organizing arts and culture events for all villagers.

In substance, the aims and content of curricula between 1923 and 1946 were designed according to positivist and pragmatist approaches with a doctrinal and semi-authoritarian attitude towards the establishment of the nation-state ideologically (GÜLLÜPINAR, 2015). Fundamental approach of those years concerning education can be divided into two as before and after 1938. The period between 1920 and 1938, in other words the time of the founding leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was mostly designed with nationalization efforts based on Turkish identity. Valid trends of the period were to reconstruct the educational and cultural structure in order to raise a modern society following the

western civilization, nourishing a positivist perspective, and standing on a national identity perception. Likewise, educational aims were directed to the formation of such a society model (GIORGETTI; BATIR, 2008). In 1938 when Ataturk passed away, measures were taken to render National Education humanist as required by humanism approach (BILGILI, 2014). In this period, national culture activities started by Ataturk lost appeal, and both courses and cultural events shifted their focus onto the instruction of Greek-Latin civilization. The time span between 1920 and 1938, therefore, bears the label “Nationalization Period” while “Humanization Period” is designated to years between 1938 and 1950s (GULER, 2006).

Changes in Educational Aims of Turkey between 1946 and 1972

Following the end of WWII, Turkey made a choice to side with the western alliance against Soviet-Russia expansionism (AKINCI; USTA, 2016), and transitioned to a multi-party system in 1945 to foster democratic governance approach. As a consequential outcome of the multi-party system, Democratic Party, founded in 1946, rapidly evolved into a rival for the current political structure and secured a vast public support with its policies standing on conservative-liberal understanding. Waging a cold war against Soviet-Russia at the time and intending to escalate its influence on Europe and Asia, the United States of America was privileged to military and political effect over Turkey by way of Truman Doctrine of 1947 and support for the NATO membership of 1952 (AKYAZ, 2002). This influence of the United States over Turkish military and politics gave way to the foundation of liberal economy by bending statist policies employed by Turkey and to the prioritization of democratic education and entrepreneurship within educational aims (GIORGETTI; BATIR, 2008).

As Democratic Party became the ruling party on May 14, 1950, ideological transformation in Turkey started to accelerate, and right-wing conservative approaches also grew in economic management, which directly affected the structure of the education system. A steep policy change was closely felt in the educational aims of this period. For instance, Village Institutes representing a role model for national progress and development were closed down during this era claiming that these

schools served as a cradle for communist propaganda, and land management based on feudalism was continued and encouraged.

School curricula were updated in 1948 following these ideological transformations in Turkey. In the updated version, the aims of National Education were – for the first time – included in great detail across four categories, which were social, individual, human relations, and economic life (TURKOGLU; SARI, 2006). Unlike the 1936 curriculum, the new 1948 curriculum integrated knowledge and information about child development into the system as well. Although categorizing educational aims comprehensively and systematically, 1948 curriculum was subjected to some major criticism as listed below (ARSLAN, 2000):

- The curriculum prioritizes cognitive skills over emotional characteristics and psycho-motor skills.
- The aims are not compatible with its content.
- The aims neglect local and regional needs and are not designed with flexibility.

Systematic curriculum design approaches based on scientific methods and spearheaded by Ralph Tyler in the United States of America in the 40s, and the taxonomy of educational aims by Joseph Benjamin Bloom had a reform effect over curriculum development in Turkish education system. Economic and social relations with the United States of America during this period had an amplified effect on Turkish Education System, and curriculum design approaches rooted in scientific methodology prevailed the formation of educational aims and contents starting from the early 1950s and onwards. Especially the educational aims regarding the cognitive domain were categorized in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy in Turkey for a long time.

Close affiliation with the United States of America across those years was highly conclusive specifically over the education system and development of curricula and more generally over all the state policies. The extent of influence led Guler (2006) to describe the duration between 1950 and 1960 as Americanization Age. Relatively though, Turkey was able to improve its economy, and started to follow plans in education and state management. However, Turkey has unfortunately never been

the land of stability because of the international policies employed as a response to geopolitical threats and owing to nation-wide conflicts regarding the regime. Since the army of Turkish Republic has been designated with a constitutional responsibility to protect and preserve the Republican Revolutions, political institutions have historically been under close surveillance of the Military, and state management has had to survive several interventions at different times. For instance, the Army seized power on May 27, 1960 justifying that right-wing conservative policies of Democrat Party, which reigned until 1960's, had drifted apart from Republican achievements. Liberal and leftist movements swaying the world conjuncture as of 1960s had first guided the board of military management to develop a positive attitude towards freedom and democracy, yet a nationalist conservative structure was resurrected once again as a consequence of power struggle within the army. Parallel to the wave of freedom spreading across 1960s, principles of planning, individualization, and socialization were embraced for the educational aims produced after the amendments on curricula (GULER, 2006).

Recognized as the onset of planning stage, this period registered increase in the speed of economic and social reforms, and the establishment of State Planning Organization in 1960 marked the beginning of a more planned state management. Two main aims guided the educational policies of the planned period (AYTAÇ, 1967).

- Economic aim: Eliminating the uneven distribution among sectors across the whole country by improving sources for labor force
- Social aim: Providing nation-wide quality education via eradicating social and geographical barriers

Such a planned mindset in state management brought on the enactment of “Primary Education Law No. 222” in 1961 and led to a planned curriculum design initiative compatible with scientific principles and based on educational needs for the first time in 1962 in Turkey. The very first article of the “Primary Education Law” states the aim as “Primary education is the basic teaching and training that aims to ameliorate all Turks, both women and men, physically, mentally, and morally in accordance with national goals”. Clearly stated in the aim is a holistic approach that regards

humans as both mind and body. Draft designs of curricula initiated in 1962 spread across all the nation 5 years later in 1968 when the curriculum, unlike previous ones, treated aims, content, educational status, and assessment components separately (ÇELENK *et al.*, 2000). Considered as the most calculated curriculum of the Republican period, the 1968 curriculum redefined educational aims based on flexibility approach. Analysis of this period reveals that educational aims were directed to individual, economic, and social domains; that aims were expressed as learning outcomes; that classification of aims (cognitive, emotional, psycho-motor) was followed less; and that aims were broadly defined for education in general rather than specifying each course's aim in each grade (ÇELENK *et al.*, 2000).

Changes in Educational Aims of Turkey between 1973 and 2002

Enacted on June 14, the Basic Law of National Education No.1739 is considered to be the most significant milestone in terms of educational aims in 1973. This Law totally reconfigured the education system from scratch (TURKOGLU; SARI, 2006), and laid the foundation of a system reaching out today.

Overall aims of Turkish National Education, as mandated by the second article of the Law and applied currently, read as follows (mevzuat.gov.tr):

Article #2 – General Aims of Turkish National Education for all members of the Turkish Nation is:

- 1. to raise individuals who are committed to Atatürk's reforms and principles, his concept of nationalism as defined in the Constitution; who adopt, protect and improve the national, moral, human, spiritual and cultural values of the Turkish nation; who love and always elevate their families, homeland and nation; who are aware of their duties and responsibilities towards the Turkish Republic- which is a democratic, secular and social state ruled by law based on human rights and the basic principles defined in the beginning of the Constitution- and behave accordingly;*
- 2. to bring up individuals who physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and emotionally have a moderate and healthy personality*

and mentality, independent and scientific thinking power, a wide world view; who respect human rights, appreciate enterprise and individuality; who feel responsibility towards the society; and who are constructive, creative and productive;

3. to prepare individuals for life by ensuring that they have professions which will make them happy and contribute to the welfare of the society through equipping them with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitude and habit of working cooperatively in line with their own interests, talents and abilities.

Thus, the aim is to promote the welfare and happiness of the citizens and Turkish society, to support and accelerate economic, cultural and social development in national unity and cohesion, and finally to make the Turkish Nation a constructive, creative and distinguished partner of contemporary civilization.

As can be observed from the aims, the Law #1739 intends to raise individuals as good citizens by utilizing a holistic approach that covers physical, mental, moral, spiritual, and emotional domains.

Triggered in Paris during the May of 1968 and impacting the entire globe, a series of incidents unveiled both reactions against the political system and demands for more freedom among the public in Turkey. Political conflicts and economic instability during the subsequent years served as a new rationale for the intervention by the Army on September 12, 1980. After the army seized power, the impact that the United States of America had over Turkish political, economic, and educational policies once again grew stronger using Soviet threat and communism propaganda as an excuse. Resembling postwar era after WWII when statist policies had been bypassed to include more liberal policies imposed by the United States of America, a similar influence, but this time, with neoliberal policies was experienced in Turkey starting from early 1980s. Simultaneously, the effect of religious schools on the education system escalated, and the focus shifted towards cultural and educational policies formulated in accordance with Turkish-Islamic synthesis (BILGILI, 2014). Furthermore, curriculum of this period was mainly structured around course level. Coupled with the spread of neoliberalism and global capitalism after 1980, a

new education model was adopted in line with supply-demand relations (GÜLLÜPINAR, 2015).

This new educational model allowed incentives for the foundation of private schools as of 1985 (UYGUN, 2003). Early 1990s witnessed the birth of private schools, private teaching institutions (that support school curriculum and offer assistance when preparing for an exam), and foundation universities. Private education institutions regarded as a major investment would turn into a significant economic sector in the years to come. Religious sects and congregations strengthened via private educational institutions within this sector and had the opportunity to assimilate educational aims to their own belief system and ideological doctrine.

On February 28, 1997, Turkey went through another military coup, this time a postmodern one. Concerns related to religious constructs in political and educational systems served as the grounds for the army to force the government at hand to resign. Subsequently, the coalition government founded by center-right and center-left parties defined the primary aim of education as follows:

To raise individuals who have assimilated Atatürk's principles and reforms, adopted national, spiritual, and moral values, have a susceptible mind for scientific thought, and who are equipped with knowledge and skills to cope with the requirements of the information age (BILGILI, 2014, p. 10).

The following coalition government of 1999, consisting of center-right, center-left, and nationalist parties, advocated that an education system should also provide thinking and problem-solving skills, and stated the primary aim of education system as

[...] to raise individuals who are committed to Atatürk's principles and reforms; good at thinking, perceiving, and problem solving; devoted to democratic values: open to new ideas; have a strong sense of personal responsibility; assimilated national culture; can interpret other cultures and contribute to contemporary civilization; apt to science and technology production; have a high com-

mand of skills, productive and creative; and who belong to information age (BILGILI, 2014, p. 10).

As set forth in the definition of aims, the concepts of democracy, thinking skills, and multi-culturalism were emphasized together with individual, economic, and social functions of education.

Changes in Educational Aims of Turkey between 2002 and 2020

Private education institutions within Turkish Education System proliferated rapidly during the early 2000s. Consequently, prevalent perspective viewed students as “clients”, degraded the entire educational process to “performance” under the name of “quality” service, and delivered schools to a corporate logic (GÜLLÜPINAR, 2015). Accumulated reactions towards coalition governments steering Turkey to political and economic crises in the past helped Justice and Development Party accede to the power single-handedly in 2002. Neoliberal policies in educational system became more dominant after Justice and Development Party, and the number of private educational institutions targeting mainstream students skyrocketed. The Ministry of National Education started purchasing services from private schools in 2003 (UYGUN, 2003), student flow towards these schools were encouraged by the government. As a result, state schools faced an unfair competition since social inequalities in education increased tremendously. One of the primal consequences of these incentives was the reign of various ideologies adopted by different religious groups across the education system via of private schools. In short, employing neoliberal perspective in education converted Turkish education system into free market economy, and schools turned into corporates where teachers worked as corporate employees serving the clients who were previously students and parents. Accordingly, educational aims were reformulated with emphasis on competition and performance.

Early years of Justice and Development Party between 2002 and 2007 should be labeled as transitional period in terms of the Party’s ideological approaches. When Justice and Development Party reacceded to governance on its own after the election in 2007, a rather Islamic discourse started to become evident in educational aims, and a doctrinal

governance with a considerable semi-authoritarian trend was adopted resembling the years between 1923 and 1946. This trend snowballed following the shift to Presidential Government System in Turkey on June 24, 2018, and its impact is almost solid across the entire bureaucracy, especially in education system.

These ideological transformations cast the most serious effect onto the education system and its relevant aims. Owing to the fact that education is the fundamental instrument of change, virtually all religious sects have focused their efforts to infiltrate into educational institutions, and worked to design educational aims in accordance with their own ideological structure by starting schools where they aspire to produce generations that adopt and follow religious ideologies. Thriving on Turkish-Islamic synthesis, such religious constructs are known to have navigated the coup attempt on July 15, 2016 through their followers in the forces and army in order to seize power.

Compared to earlier periods, years between 2002 and 2007 were relatively more stable and peaceful. During this time, advances in economy were used to increase and enrich investment sources allocated for education. Adaptation process to European countries gained speed, and endeavors were made to harmonize European Union's educational policies with Turkish Education system. Turkish Education system enjoyed the reflection of self-learning, thinking, problem-solving, searching skills, and learning how to learn as emphasized by especially progressivism philosophy. As a matter of fact, aims of primary education were redesigned in line with progressivism and constructivism within the updated 2004 curriculum. Even though, the new curriculum reflected neoliberal and globalization perspective (INAL, 2009), the goal was to develop an educational structure and a citizen model compatible with the current age by focusing on the skills of twenty first century. However, this curriculum spread via a rapid implementation process without securing an extensive public consensus induced several practical problems stemming from either socio-economic difference across regions, schools' infrastructure and equipment, or teacher competencies, which drove the curriculum implementation in real life closer to a more topic-based and essentialism perspective. Whereas concepts such as pluralism, individual differences, tolerance, and globalization were emphasized in the 2004 curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education following the humanitarian ap-

proach, the 2018 curriculum is populated with frequent use of concepts such as nationalism and national values. This curriculum has been built around ten basic values listed as justice, friendship, honesty, self-control, persistence, respect, love, responsibility, patriotism, and altruism, and field-specific educational aims have been forced to relate to these values.

Numerous amendments have been applied within the education system throughout the reign of Justice and Development Party, which single-handedly managed to accede to governance after getting the highest number of votes for the elections in 2007, 2011, and 2015. Among all the most critical amendment was the enactment of “Law on Amendments in Some Legislation and Primary Education Law No.6287” on March 30, 2012, which repealed continuous 8-year compulsory primary education and mandated organizing a discrete 12-year compulsory education in the form of 4+4+4. This law stipulated following changes on primary education designed to include children between 6-to-13 years of age:

Article #9 – Law on Amendments in Some Legislation and Primary Education Law:

Primary education institutions include 4-year compulsory elementary schools, 4-year compulsory middle schools offering choices among various programs, and religious middle schools. Middle and religious school programs contain elective courses designed as a support for high school (lycée) education in accordance with students’ skills, development, and preferences. The Holly Quran and Life of our Prophet Muhammed is offered as an optional elective course in middle and high schools. Other elective courses to be offered by these schools and choices regarding the programs designed for religious and other middle schools are to be determined by the Ministry (RESMÎ GAZETE, 2012).

This law reopened religious middle schools that had been closed consequentially after the enactment of continuous 8-year compulsory education act, and elective courses on religion were included into the curriculum of general education middle schools that already had a course on “Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge”. Although these were classified as optional elective courses within the curriculum, a possibility that

would turn them into restricted elective courses became more and more probable as result of social pressure and political discourse.

In the aftermath of the disorder induced by the attempted coup of 2016 and following the transition to Presidential Government System in 2018, the Ministry of National Education started working on “vision 2023” in education. Turkey’s Education Vision 2023 document published by the Ministry of National Education consists of fundamental ideas regarding educational policies, content, practice, and learning-teaching and assessment processes to be abided across the Turkish Republic (MILLÎ EĞİTİM BAKANLIĞI (MEB), 2019). According to this document, primal educational aims can be summarized as follows: applying a diagnostic approach based on character and talent, building a relation among aim-character-behavior sensitive to individual differences, integration of activities inside and outside the school, and planting social culture.

Though this vision document developed by the Ministry of Education reflects a student-centered approach based on progressivism philosophy, it is not consistent with socio-economic realities of Turkey and the political discourse employed by the government. Therefore, the specified aims do not promise practical results in the short run. Instability in educational policies and political rhetoric poses another major challenge impeding the attainment of both short and long term aims worded in the document. Currently, a similar unsteadiness akin to those in the past still clouds the educational policies in Turkey. The education system hosts a contradiction between the official and political discourses regarding the definition of human. Such contradictions are rooted in several ideological and socio-economic reasons as well as in frequent reconfiguration of the organizational structure of the Ministry of National Education, especially the Ministers. To put it more clearly, average term of office for a Minister of National Education in Turkey ranges between 2-3 years. Coalitions and government shuffles of the earlier governmental systems can account for such hasty changes, yet 8 different Ministers have headed the Ministry of National Education throughout the last 18 years since November 2002 during a relatively more stable period run by a single party in power (ADIGUZEL, 2020). As each new Minister waged a “reform” on the education system according to his own opinions and perspective, the functionality of the entire education system has been mutilated several

times. Consequently, this slowed down the effectiveness, admissibility, and practicality of proposed alterations. This speed of change within educational policies provoked serious reactions of teachers, students, and parents, which induced a certain resilience against system changes on part of teachers. It is, thus, probable that all these factors prevented the public from displaying positive reactions towards Turkey's Education Vision 2023 document published by the Ministry of National Education.

Despite all the changes in the education system and single-party reign for the last 18 years, the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during his speech in October 2020, underlined that targeted intellectual sovereignty and human model had not been attained yet, and pointed to a total change in the education system:

Our children are receiving education, but we don't have enough educated human power to make all of us confident. We're raising a young population but we cannot properly realize our civilization vision. Our media has the modern infrastructure but does not reflect our voice and minds (<https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/president-erdogan-proposes-substantial-education-reform-159282>).

This statement can be interpreted as a signal to be ready for new changes in educational aims during the years to come.

Conclusion

As depicted by political, social, and economic indicators in Turkey, 97 years of the Republic mostly suffered from power struggle explained by the conflict theory in sociology. Dominating groups have worked to establish their own social structures and forced the other strata of the society to embrace their values and world views. In spite of the variations in doctrines supported for dominance throughout the history, political methods employed have not savored such a variety, and resembled each other. Thus, a power struggle has prevailed among groups of different ideologies leading to short-term coalitions and igniting public movements, military interventions, and economic crises, all of which have caused eco-

conomic, political, and social instabilities in the Republic of Turkey. During relatively peaceful and stable periods, Turkey has been able to flourish its economy and democratic institutions. Yet, such periods never lasted long due to conflicts between aforementioned groups, and fast-paced changes triggered new periods of unsteadiness. Changes resulting from conflicts between power groups have led to a constant amendment in both the structure of the education system and educational aims. Considered together with the fact that such amendments were not consequences of realistic educational needs born by either the society or individuals, and that they have been utilized as tools of suppression at times, public reactions and instability in the education system could not be avoided.

In conclusion, historical, sociological, and intellectual evolution of Turkey signifies that an education system should have a supra-political place to dodge negative impact of politics and should regard an individual as a whole person to provide both physical and spiritual development in line with a holistic approach. The primal aim of Turkish education system should be to raise a happy and successful youth as individuals who respect differences, regard diversity as wealth while protecting and preserving his/her own cultural identity, work towards the national goals of his/her country, assimilate universal values, and own skills of twenty-first century. Uttered by the founding and great leader of the Turkish Republic – Mustafa Kemal Atatürk –, “Teachers, the Republic expects you to raise generations with freedom of thought, freedom of conscious, and freedom of wisdom” (n. d.) should be the guiding principle when determining educational aims.

UMA ANÁLISE DOS OBJETIVOS EDUCACIONAIS NA TURQUIA: UM CONTEXTO SOCIAL E POLÍTICO

Resumo: Que tipo de modelo humano deve ser o objetivo da educação? Neste estudo, os significados atribuídos aos objetivos da educação e representações do modelo humano foram examinados com base em abordagens ontológicas, ideológicas e psicológicas, e a mudança histórica dos objetivos educacionais no sistema educacional turco. A Turquia, um país integrado aos sistemas internacionais, tem sido constantemente afetado pelas transformações mundiais ideológicas, econômicas e sociais e buscou adaptar-se a essas transformações com as regulamentações do sistema educacional. No âmbito deste estudo, os objetivos do sistema

educacional turco e as representações do modelo humano juntamente com as transformações socioeconômicas e políticas foram analisados no processo histórico desde os anos de fundação da República. Neste contexto, os períodos de transformação foram determinados examinando-se as estruturas de pensamento dominantes no sistema educacional turco e a discutindo-se a mudança nos objetivos educacionais nesses períodos.

Palavras-chave: *Objetivos educacionais. Currículo. Sistema de educação turco.*

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