

Does the Turkish Education System Have an Educational Philosophy?

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Abstract

There is a widespread belief as regards our educational system, which is also evaluated as the "Human Raising System", that it lacks an educational philosophy. It is obvious that as education system without an educational philosophy cannot raise people suitable for the information society. Considering the people raised by the system, it would not be a very unfair to label the education system as without philosophy. The objective of this study is to try to look for an answer to the question "if the education system has a philosophy or not" by examining the issue within the context of the objective and principles of the Turkish education system. To this end, objective and principles of the system were examined and discussed in terms of educational philosophies with an eye to achieve the cited objective. Given the fact that the human type that raised by the system in general "does not question things, believes that all the things said by the rulers is true, makes everything ordered without any objection (approach of "I Close My Eyes and Do My Duty") and obeys the authority by all means", the opinion that the system is "without philosophy" emerges by itself. However, although the system actually owns a philosophy, beliefs as to what this philosophy are different than each other.

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1. Introduction

Once I had watched two people talking to each other in a movie and when one of them talked about a third person, he said: "It is normal for him to talk senselessly, because he studied philosophy." Furthermore, "making philosophy" is not also something valuable in our culture and we even have a song on this issue (sung by the singer Mustafa Topaloğlu).

Sure enough, Montaigne also states that philosophy has become something which is disreputable in the society and says the following: "Things have become so that in our age philosophy has begun to be considered as something meaningless without any theoretical nor practical function even among the wise people" (Montaigne 2001: 14). Time has not come yet for Turks to be interested in making philosophy which means completely abstract thoughts and which has no practical benefit according to Ziya Gökalp. It was unnecessary for a society living continuously with wars and difficult economic circumstances to focus the thinking power thereof to a luxurious concept like philosophy (Heyd 2002: 31). On the other hand, Socrates says that everybody should be involved with philosophy some little and especially teachers should be interested more (Turgut 1994: 3). On the other hand, Socrates considers a life which is not questioned as a life which is worth living.

2. What is Philosophy?

Philosophy gives the chance to people to ponder on the work they perform. If a person does not think about the work he performs, it means he is performing his work unconsciously. Z. Gökalp's words, "I Close My Eyes and Do My Duty (approach of "making everything ordered without any objection") were the words we heard a lot during our education period. However, access to philosophy is only possible by thinking and thoroughly examining (Günaltay 1994: 22). Philosophy is the description of the adventure of the soul on the universe and exists in order to meet the understanding need of the human beings (Yıldırım 1998: 28). Philosophy is the perspective of mankind as to the universe. Philosophy denotes the systematic expression of the will of a nation coming from its national existence and extending all over the universe. Philosophy emerges as the will in a nation and gives directions to the nation and the history thereof. If a nation has philosophy, it also has a heart. (Topçu1970: 11). Adnan Adivar explains how important the philosophy is for human life in his letter he has written to Halide Edip Adivar : "You were living ill and I was living with sorrow and pain many years ago in a simple hotel room of this city located in Central Europe. I saw everything and finished seeing all streets, forests and parks of a small city by walking. One day, while I was sitting with the boredom of a man who had nothing to do in life anymore and you said all of a sudden: "You are not living. If you live with your soul and mind a little, and for example if you read philosophy a little you will get rid of this boredom (Adivar 1987: Sunu (Presentation)". Here, it is indicated how functional the philosophy is for human life. The continuous and critical observation of comprehension and examination efforts is also within the scope of philosophy as a process (Ertürk 1988). Philosophy requires people to create new answers to new problems by

making them get rid of ready answers by directing them to thinking (Ertürk, 1988). Philosophy is an activity of enabling people to think by asking questions. However, the education system does not have "philosophy" as much as it should have. This is because the education system rather desires to raise individuals who "do not ask questions, who obey everything in a well-behaved manner and who reply questions which are asked them". Children who "ask questions" and "give different answers to questions" can be accused of "disobedience"

3. Turkish Education System and Philosophy

Our education system considers children as empty cubes and fills these cubes with encyclopedic information. Furthermore, our education system also does not question this information (Turgut 1994). We cursed the madrasah (Moslem Theological Schools) almost for a century however we maintained the same method (Turgut, 1994). The Ottoman ulema (scholar) class always repeats. They always repeat the Qur'an, hadiths (the prophet Muhammad's sayings/deeds) and previous imams (muslim religious leaders) and mujtahids (interpreter of Islamic law). The intellectuals after the Tanzimat (the political reforms made in the Ottoman state in 1839) are also repetitive and they repeat the European writers (Meriç 1978: 390). As a result, we came to a situation of not teaching thinking in any educational institution (Kaya 1981: 374). "Eclecticism" has existed for a long time in Turkey and effort of creating was "almost" rejected and when the ambition of reaching "contemporary civilization level" was combined with eclecticism, progression was made difficult and creative attempts were always blocked (Ertürk, 1988). However the peasant of a generation which has never been involved with philosophy, namely which has never thought of himself, never given meaning to his life and which has never sought answers to the knowledge of his destiny, sits face to face with a barren and dead earth on a mountain top and waits for his salvation with an agonizing patience like waiting for a mahdi (rescuer) (Topçu 1972: 63). The situation of our present generation exactly is same with this definition.

4. What was the Philosophy of Establishment of the Turkish Education System?

Ziya Gökalp, as an autochthonous thinker, is considered to be the spiritual father of the Turkish revolution leader (Türkdoğan 1994: 128) and theoretical foundations of the contemporary Turkish state is believed to be laid by Ziya Gökalp (Heyd 2002, Sunuş (Presentation). Education would realize two things: 1) Planning the transition from Ummah (religious community) to nation, 2) Preparation of becoming a nation process around the national culture axis (Türkdoğan 1994: 128). "Turkification, Islamization and Modernization" trilogy of Z. Gökalp, accepted as the spiritual father of the Turkish Revolution, later was replaced by the slogans of "Secularization, Westernization and Turkification" (Türkdoğan 1994: 129). "Islamization" in this trilogy which was the basis of Z. Gökalp's teachings and which he received from Hüseyinzade Ali had a little place in the beginning (Jöschke 1972: 15). Z. Gökalp's triumphalization of Atatürk made the trilogy of Z. Gökalp concrete with these expressions: "The outline of our national education policy should be as follows: "to enable all the whole peasants to read and write and give geographical, historical and ethical information in order that the peasants know our country, nation, religion and the world (MEB: 1981, 75)". However later, national cultural policy, Turkish Humanism and absolute Westernization thesis left deep traces in the formation of our system (Türkdoğan 1994: 131). A school, in this context, shall carry out the activities thereof in order to teach the dogmas of a revolution regime and the type of man it considers to be ideal of revolution, and young people who were kept away from another effect outside and would be raised mostly in a way to embrace this discipline (Güngör 1978: 265-266). Adoption of principles of secularism by the government, naturally, has entailed the removal of religion lessons from the school programs (Ergin 1977: 5, 1702). This case can be evaluated an important indicated that the education system was based on a thought "excluding religion" in the establishment of the Republic. Removal of religion lessons, although it had some deficiencies, from the school programs and placing nothing instead of them has caused a very important moral crisis among our young people and it had very important negative consequences in the country (Ergin 1977: 5, 1702). This occurrence which has excluded all historical values and made its fate same with the West forms the main philosophy of the model of Turkish Westernization (Türkdoğan 1994). This approach also forms the main philosophy of the Turkish education system (Türkdoğan 1994). As a matter of fact, İsmet İnönü's following sentence also gives important clues about the fundamental philosophy of our education system: "The method to be followed in training and education is to make knowledge a device to be used in theory and practice to be successful in material life more than to be used as an ornament, a means for human domination or a spiritual pleasure (Civil Information for Citizens 1931: 188)." This statement expresses that education is only for training "individuals". However, human is not just a material entity. Mevlana considers that human beings have two lives and says, "The animal type of life is the ability to live, develop, drink, and produce future generations while the human type of life is the ability of understanding, talking, thinking, performing good deeds and making things for the benefit of the society (Masnavi 4:79) " As it can be seen, "the human type of life" constitutes an important dimension as to an individual's "being a "human". The individual can get rid of his "self" by virtue of this feature and can be a "human" which is a social being. According to H. Ziya Ülken Ülken "Our case must not be to constitute a nation

but making a nation constituted in the 10th century completely western (Türkdoğan 1994: 131)." The objective of education is that all the citizens recognize the Republic very well and they like it and know religion and faith issues as a concept outside the limits of their life in this world; this is the most important principle that the knowledge will inspire. (Türkdoğan1994: 187). This purpose reveals the fact that basic philosophy of education is a philosophy which does not include religion. However, spirit and source of education is shaped by religious values (Türkdoğan132: 1994). "We want a national education and what does this mean? We can define this with its opposite. The opposite of this is religious training or international (universal) education. You teachers will give national education, not religious and civic education. Religious training is a kind of international education. Our education will belong to us and will be for us (Sakaoğlu 27: 1992)" said İsmet Pasha in a conversation. According to Mardin (1981) Atatürk wanted to use science to shape the society and in this respect, used it in the meaning brought through positivism and drew attention to the fact that education should be constructed only to raise "individuals" (Cited by Yigit 1992: 31). This was because Kemal Atatürk was especially a successor of the nationalist, positivist and Westernist wing among the "Young Turks" (Lewis 290: 1970). Today, the Turkish children are raised in a way and with a character not in line with wrong and harmful dogmas but in a way and with a character to think, decide and work according to realities obtained by positive sciences by virtue of scientific methods (Ergin 5: 1636: 1077). This situation means that currently raised Turkish children are raised in line with "positivist" philosophy. To accept today's schools in their current state a "national institution" can be considered as an important dilemma of our education system. In the past, the schools were based on this philosophy and work to teach the dogmas of a revolutionary regime and to raise the type of human being that the revolution would consider ideal; young people who were kept away from another influence from outside usually were raised in a manner to adopt this training (Güngör 266: 1978). The intellectuals were both optimistic and idealistic in this period, which is accepted as the period of reform. In other words, it was believed that the life of the society would achieve a good order and reach the ideal society it had adopted by virtue of education, (Hilav167: 1997). This case, according to some people, meant that national education was an ideal of secular and democratic education against the religious and disciplinary education approach of the Ottoman Empire (Başgöz 1995: 129). It seems, after ninety-years of experience with this approach, that the type of person we have raised is considered as a type of person open to question. The concepts of a "beneficial person", "productive person" and "creative person" are no longer included in value indices. These value indices have created a new consumer society member who is "wearing brand clothes" and "driving sports car", "who does not care for anybody" "who is neither another person, nor himself" and "who has no goal and target" (Atabek2010: 20). It is obvious that we could not obtain the human type we desired from this educational system which we have practiced since many years. It is now discussed that the Turkish education system is not at the desired level in terms of raising a human being. Özbaydar (1972) narrates from a professor who has worked as a teacher in Turkey and who loves Turks the following: "I see that the cute Turkish children are much more clever than their peers whom I have seen in other countries but I wonder, which method you use then and obtain these elders who are different than these intelligent children? (Cited. Kaya 1981: 374-375). As you can see, the founding philosophy of the Turkish Education System continues to be open to question in our day. It is believed that it is required to examine the general purposes of the system with a view to be able to understand the philosophical background of the Turkish Education System. This is because the philosophical background of a system can be observed best by examining the general purposes and basic principles thereof.

5. General Objectives of Turkish Education System

The idea, on which the education system was based while the Republic of Turkey was founded, was shaped by a fundamental law enacted in 1973. Enacting the "Fundamental Education Law" of the Republic after 50 years of its establishment in 1923 is meaningful. Establishment of Israel was 1948 and its "Fundamental Education Law" was enacted in 1949. Is this related to the fact that the Israeli education system is successful in terms of raising the human type? "General Purposes" section of our Fundamental Education Law, which is currently in effect can give an idea about the philosophical background of our education system. The general objectives of Turkish Education System as regards all members of the Turkish nation are as follows:

1- To raise citizens who are loyal to Atatürk's reforms and principles and Atatürk's nationalism approach which is expressed in the Constitution and who adopt, protect and develop the Turkish nation's spiritual, moral, human, spiritual and cultural values and who love and try to glorify their families, country and nation, who are aware of their duties and responsibilities towards the Republic of Turkey, which is a democratic, secular and social state of law based on human rights based on the fundamental principles in the beginning of the Constitution, and who have adopted them as their behavior.

This goal is the aspect of the system to raise "good citizens". It is emphasized in this paragraph that the individuals who are raised should be raised as "good citizens". This purpose is for a "public-national" purpose. Unfortunately, there is no clarity on the cited criteria. For example, what is the criterion of "one's loving his country"? Does a person who writes to the back part of his car "I love my country very much" really

love his country? How can we test "Atatürk's nationalism approach"? Moreover, to what extent is it possible to abstract youth from all the ideas outside Atatürkism at the age of communication? (Serter 1997: 133). And how can this effort accord with the idea of democracy and freedom? Is Atatürkism laid on such weak foundations that it cannot protect itself and opening it to debate, is equivalent to betrayal? (Serter 1997: 133). Furthermore, in this purpose, "first state, then the human" understanding is obviously seen. Actually the fact is that, states are organized and manage with an approach which prioritizes the human in our day.

2. To raise citizens who have personality and character with a balanced and healthy body, mind, ethics and soul, who can think freely and scientifically, who are respectful to human rights, who value personality and enterprise, who have responsibility against the society and who are constructive, creative and productive. This goal is the aspect of the system to raise "good citizens". The system reveals its purpose of raising "a balanced person with universal values". It is possible to say that this goal has not been realized when we observe the adults and young people who have been raised as a "selfish generation". Because it is inevitable for people whose "self" stand out to remain as "individuals". It is difficult for a person acts only as an individual" to be "balanced".

3. To prepare them to life by developing their interest, skills and abilities and giving the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors and habit of working together with others and to ensure that they have a job which will make them happy and make them contribute to the happiness of the society. The system reveals its purpose of raising a "good professional man" in line with this purpose.

One of information resources related to the educational philosophy of the Turkish National Education System is the "Basic Principles" within the Basic Education Law. There are 14 items listed as "Basic Principles" in the law. These are as follows:

- Generality-equality
- Requirements of individual and community
- Orientation
- Right of Education
- Equity of opportunity and chance
- Continuity
- Atatürk's reforms and principles and Atatürk's nationalism
- Democracy
- Being Secular
- Being Scientific
- Acting in a Planned Manner
- Co-education
- School-family cooperation
- Education everywhere

Especially the principle of "secularism", "democracy" and "Atatürk's nationalism" cause debates. For example, there are arguments that principle of democracy has contradictions within itself. According to N. Serter, "It is mentioned that that citizens should have consciousness of democracy for the realization and continuation of a free and democratic society order however it is said again in the same article that' it is strictly not allowed to make political and ideological teachings in the training and educational institutions against Atatürk nationalism which is expressed in the Constitution and to be involved in daily political events and discussions of this nature (Serter 1997: 133). Indeed, it seems that the "democracy principle" is the reason why democracy has not become a culture in schools. Furthermore, the principle of "secularism" has been added to the system as an "undefined" concept. It is a contradiction in itself that the lesson of "Religion Culture and Moral Knowledge" which has been included for the purpose of "religious education" under the title of Secularism Principle is compulsory. This is because presence of "secular education" on the one hand and "compulsory religious education" on the other hand is contradictory; "compulsory religious education in a secular educational system is contradictory situation.

6. What type of a person is it desired to be raised with the Turkish Education System?

Avni Akyol, the National Education Minister of then, replied "What type of person in line with the national education policy?" the question (MEB 1991: 203-204) as follows: "We shall raise a person within our national culture on the basis of love, intellect and science, who has national, modern, secular and democratic values, who have feelings and virtues of goodness, beauty, honesty and responsibility by protecting and strengthening our common national and spiritual feelings, spirit and unity himself and without alienating to himself, his family and society with following values:

With personality and awareness,
Self-confident and self-sufficient,
Realistic, inquisitive, productive and creative,
Can constantly renew and develop himself,
Competes with himself and others,

Not satisfied only with his own happiness,
In addition to making himself happy, a person who considers the happiness and peace of others, society and humanity valuable and meaningful and who is conciliator and sharing,
Having a critical brain and moral courage,
Always trying to glorify himself and his nation,
Considers his duties, responsibilities and dignity above everything,
Considers righteousness and justice above everything,
Desires to participate in economic, social and cultural developments and activities, both independently and in cooperation with others and who is determined, courageous and daring,
Thinks in an organized and disciplined manner in order to live freely and independently as an individual and nation who works continuously, has the feelings sense excitement and effort of competition and achievement, has a heart full of love for humanity and his country, who has modern, rational and secular personality, moral and behavior (Akyol 1991: 203-204).

As it can be seen, the National Education Minister of then repeats in details the "general objectives" in the Fundamental Law of National Education. From these explanations, it seems possible to have some clues as to the educational philosophy of the Turkish Education System. It is drawn attention to the fact that a person has to be raised with the ideological background of the Republic.

7. Conclusion

According to Z. Gökalp, who is considered as the spiritual father of the Turkish revolutionary leader, the main philosophy of education, was planning the transition from Ummah (religious community) to nation and preparation of being a nation process around the national culture. Gökalp expressed this with the trilogy of "Turkification, Islamization and Modernization". However, this trilogy became a slogan as "Secularization, Westernization and Turkification" in the following years. Atatürk, especially a successor of the nationalist, positivist and Westernist wing among the "Young Turks" believed there was no solution except the modern civilization of the West and formulated this idea of him in the form of "Reaching the Contemporary Civilization Level". In order to realize the idea of Westernization, he emphasized on the adoption of the philosophies of "rebuilding" and "progressivism", which reflect the pragmatism philosophy in education and that education should be structured according to these philosophies. Atatürk's saying of "Teachers, the new generation will be your work," reflected exactly the philosophy of "rebuilding". It can be said that the will which established the Republic accepted Westernization as a fundamental philosophy in education as it is in every field. According to this situation, the answer of the question "Is there an educational philosophy of the Turkish Education System?" is "Yes, there is". The Turkish Education System was based on "rebuilding" and "progressivism", which are the philosophies of education of the pragmatism. However, it is known that classical educational philosophies are more effective in practice. For example, although philosophies of "Progress and Restructuring" defend "student-centered education", "teacher-centered education" is applied in the Turkish education system. And although these philosophies defend the concept of "constructivism" at the same time, it is known that classical education methods are applied in schools. On the other hand, education programs in schools as well as classroom management and discipline understanding are continued with the habits of classical schools. Educational programs put forth an understanding in line with the understanding of "I Close My Eyes and Do My Duty (approach of "making everything ordered without any objection") instead of prioritizing thought. It is difficult to talk about the existence of educational philosophy in the education system in its current status. Schools are not organized in a way to allow students to think but in a way to make the students memorize encyclopedic information. It should be emphasized by underlining the necessity and at the same time the difficulty of the Turkish Educational Philosophy that we should get rid of transference; it is not possible to proceed for us unless we do not get rid of dogmatism which is the dangerous resistance and which is our most basic obstacle (Ertürk 1988). An educational philosophy must be established in order that the education system comes to a healthier status. Establishing educational philosophy denotes to teach "asking" and "thinking" to individuals who are raised. It is possible to see that a philosophical substructure of the education system is not in practice in its current situation. According to Ertürk, if we wish to establish an educational philosophy, we should not take and copy what has been done in advanced countries; it is not also a solution to take and repeat the outstanding methods which has begun with Atatürk or to imitate a powerful philosopher who has been accepted by the world and to try to apply his method or to imitate our present elites and do what they do (Ertürk 1988). What is important is to allow children to be raised as individuals who "ask questions", "think" and "freely expressing what they think" in schools of the generation raised. And this is only possible by making philosophy the subject of education. The schools in their current state seem to be institutions engaged in raising people who only "memorize" and "solve tests". Answer of the question "Is there a philosophy of the Turkish Education System in this case? Is "No, there is not!" It will be a futile expectation to have individuals who are "themselves" who "think" who "question" and who "question life" from our schools by continuing the tradition of schools

without philosophy,

8. Recommendations

It is necessary for schools to be identified with "democracy culture" so that the Turkish Education System can be an organization which raises thinking people. Making the issue explained by Rumi's "compasses metaphore" the basic paradigm of the system can give the opportunity of reconstruction of the system's philosophical infrastructure. "I look like a compasses; one of my feet stays fixed in my own culture while with one of my feet wanders the whole world and I take 'wisdom' where I find and identify it with my own culture. "This understanding requires is the creation of a new sense of civilization. The problem of "lack of philosophy" will continue as long as our school does not raise generations which think, ask questions and express the thoughts thereof. This is possible with the establishment of schools in which there is not "absolute obedience" therefore it should be possible to re-establish schools.

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- 359 *Reflections of the Education Philosophy from Past to Present*