An Overview and history education in Republic of Turkey and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

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Abstract

In this study, comparing and examining the history education in Republic of Turkey and Republic of Northern Cyprus by looking at the development in the historical process will find differences and similarities. This study will basically give information about how the history lesson entered the school curriculums in Republic of Turkey, what are the goals, methods and techniques to be used considering what and how the history education should be given. Also, the past of the history education in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, entrance of the textbooks and goals will be examined. After all these were reviewed, similarities and diversities will be compared between the two countries about the findings of the history education study. However, an assessment and recommendations will be made based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: History, History Education, History textbooks, History curriculum;

1. Introduction

History education and learning is one of the necessary elements for the progress and development of society. History; is the science of analysing past events in the relations of place-time and cause-effect. Most important role of the history is to illuminate the present and open the way to explore the future by showing the evolution of humanity. History shows the cultural, political and economic evolution of the humanity. As a part of thinkers show emphasis on the political evolution, and another part show emphasis on the economical evolution in history lessons, some countries and societies find it necessary to show emphasis on the history of civilization evolution. For that reason, History education is a necessary element for the societies and communities.

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History should be taught to cherish the social progresses and for the community to establish a link between the past and the future. When this point is approached, as our great leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said, it is harder to teach the history than to make it. Because history should be teach objectively. History, takes the societies’ progress and awareness as a target and for that reason it reconciles the past and the present with the future. Also another target of the history is to move from the rote approach to the student-cantered approach. Showing a critical approach where students can have their own opinions help them to fully learn what history is about.

Like how it is important for an individual to know himself or herself, it is also important for societies, cultures and nations to know themselves. Before anything else, it is necessary to know their history as well as their present status. For that reason there are many causes and importance to learn and teach History (Tamçelik, 2009).

2. Objects of the Study
In this study, history teaching in Turkey and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus will be compared and assessed with the data results to make recommendations.

3. Sub-Objects of the Study:
Sub-objects were tried to be answered being suitable to the main object.

1. How was the history lesson introduced and spread into the school programmes in Turkey?
2. What are the purposes of history education in Turkey?
3. What are the methods and techniques of history teaching?
4. What are the contents of the history textbooks in Turkey?
5. How is the history education in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus?
6. What are the contents of the history lesson books in TRNC?

3. Method of the Study:
Document scanning method was used in the study.

4. Data’s and Comments:
Data’s and comments of the study are below;

4.1 How did the History lesson entered the school programmes and speeded in Turkey?

History entered the Turkeys’ curriculum at the same time with the Europe. In the Ottoman Empire period 1869, as defined in the Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi which was prepared by Saffet Paşa, “Muhtar Tarih-i Osmani”, “Tarih-i Umumi” in Rüştiye and “Tarih-i Osmani” subjects were added to be thought in the four-year education schools. The content of the history lessons taught in the said period is the history of the Ottoman Empire. After the 1860s, however, Turkish history began to appear in the history books. (Demirel ve Turan, 2009).

II. Constitutional period appears as an important period which the intellectuals produce ideas and come to the point of westernization stage of the Ottoman state (Demirel ve Turan, 2009). In this context, particularly between the years 1909-1912 Sati Bey becoming the head of Darülmuallim is the turning point of Turkish education (Oruç, 2005). With the declaration of the republic in Turkey, actions of innovation began in many institutions and organizations where attention has also been given to the studies conducted in the field of history. Indeed, after 1930, especially in line with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s Turkish History Thesis, history lessons have been restructured (Çapa, 2002).

1923 – 1938 period is said to be Nationalization period in the influence of the Turkish History Thesis. Ataturk’s determined history lessons, education and cultural policies in Republic period government programs and ideas and statesmen’s principles they have put during the period (Koçak, 2000).

If looked at the 1938-1950 period, it can be said that the Humanism movement was effective. In this period, national history and national culture based on the concept of Atatürk's period were headed towards the Turkish Humanism (Koçak, 2000).
The period between 1950-1980, the Republic of Turkey is referred to the period of transition to multiparty system and democracy, as it’s known. It is normal as the effects of this period reflect on the education and history teaching. With the transition to multi-party system, new revolutions were formed from the ruling and especially nationalism and secularism principles of Atatürk were differently interpreted. Naturally, this also reflected in textbooks and individual attitudes that show ideological effects seems to be specialized in the name of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis especially after 1980. (Koçak, 2000).

With the amendment to the History program in 1993, it has been claimed that no significant change was seen in the curriculum even though changes were made in the teaching of history and historical information 1993’s program was prepared in accordance with passing a course and credit system but with a decision made in 1998, this was adapted to passing class system without making any changes to History Curriculum Program (Demircioğlu, 2006). As History textbooks are prepared on the curriculum basis, program must be developed pedagogically and the contents should be carried out in accordance with the psychology of children. (Demircioğlu, 2006).

4.2. What are the purposes of history teaching in Turkey?

Purposes of history teaching; to show what the students would gain at the end of this teaching process in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. In this context, teachers are guides who show students what they can do through the history lesson (Demirel ve Turan, 2009).

Especially after World War II, changes in the world has reflected to Turkey’s purposes of teaching history and evolved it into a student-centred approach, which will also bring students problem solving skills. Today, within the framework of the on-going student-centered approaches, one of the main objectives of history teaching is to adopt and increase interest in the cases instead of memorizing them (Demirel ve Turan, 2009).

4.3. What are the methods and techniques of teaching history?

The opinion of student-centered and research-oriented teaching technique of history in Turkey was thrown out from the 1. Constitutional period, however it was only during and after the Republican period for this opinion to become real especially with the history program published in 2010. Techniques to be used in history education is lecture, question-answer, research, travel, movie watching, use of maps, case stimulus and drama. (Demirel ve Turan, 2009).

4.4. What are the contents of history textbooks in Turkey?

While the context of the history textbooks in Ottoman Empire period was limited with only Ottoman history, with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, contemporary changes were made in the context of history textbooks. During and after the national struggle period until the period up to the present day, although history books are constantly revised, "National History" approach has been adopted as the content (Demirel ve Turan, 2009).

Also in today’s history books, the mistakes and errors may be present and escaped from review. However, the availability of textbooks being limited of five years is allowing the authors to make correction of these mistakes. In history lessons, teachers usually stick to textbooks instead of program. This could affect the students’ understanding of history lessons. (Demirel ve Turan, 2009).

4.5. How is history teaching in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus?

Many states have ruled Cyprus until the Ottoman administration dominated the island. When the island was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, housing and management, economic and educational policies of the island have shaped in accordance with Ottoman Empire (Özkul, 2005). After the British took over the island in 1878, total number of educational institutions of Turkish society during the British period was 73; the total number of Christian schools was 83. The British Education Director who began his career at 1880 has not changed the Evkaf of the Turkish society who works on the educational affairs; he only referred an English manager to be the head of the association. The Turks had Turkish and English education in schools where the Greeks had Greek and English education. Other than that, there were Ottoman Empire lessons in history education taught in Turkish schools, based on the teaching of history in the Ottoman Empire (Feridun, 2001).

The final acceptance by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1924, along with the British administration of the island, the Turkish school system has not made too much of a change. History education prepared in Turkish schools was based on the Republic of Turkey administration and in Greek schools based on the history being thought in Greece.
(Feridun, 2001) After the British administration in 1960, until the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the curriculum of Republic of Turkey was adopted in Turkish schools in Republic of Cyprus (Önen, 2010). While history programs were developing in Cyprus, the main problem before else was ‘What should be the subject of school historiography in Cyprus’. Because, education appears to be an instrument of political objectives for nationalism and ethnic conflict, nurture and sustaining the division in ethnically divided societies. Therefore, it would be wrong to sit that history education in Cyprus is not used for political purposes. This is said to be the case for both sectors. (Feridun, 2001). If looked at the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 15 November 1983, it can be said that in the early years of the Republic, the struggle for the independence of the Turkish Cypriots were given with details in history education and National Historical consciousness has been adopted (Tamçelik, 2009)

4.6. what is the content of the History textbooks in TRNC?

In TRNC schools, Vehbi Zeki Serter’s “Cyprus History” was the only history book that had been thought for about 30 years (Önen, 2010). Cyprus history textbooks have changed two times since 2004. First one was during Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi (CTP) government and the second one was after Ulusal Birlik Partisi (UBP) has won the elections and became the governance (Önen, 2010). While the textbook that was being thought during the CTP government was named ‘Cyprus History’, the one that was used after the UBP government was named ‘Cyprus Turkish History’. Actually, the point here was to say that History is not a government policy and it should not be used to lead people. Indeed, the history books in the TRNC are changed constantly due to a government policy, rather than state policies and this reduces the belief in the objectivity of history. In any case, history education should not be a means to overturn the political agenda in favour of a new agenda. History is not transferring reputation, common goal or extraordinary legends to a group. Exactly the contrary to this, history is irrelevant and universal, based on evidence and argumentative.

5. Results and Evaluation;

As a result, history teaching in Turkey leads to past. In the time of Turkey’s changing policies, History education also showed changes and became what it is today. Especially, due to the Anatolia’s geographical and geopolitical importance, history is of great importance for Turkey even more. In fact, several nations, states and societies ruled in this region. In addition the history of Turks goes back to very ancient times. History is what makes countries and societies radical. For that reason, for more of the both nations and states there is a need of history knowledge. At this point, history education is needed to gain history knowledge. Therefore, history education is important for all societies. It is also important how history education is given and how well they are. In our age, human-cantered approaches in education have gained importance as in every field. For this reason, attention must be given to this kind of history teaching approaches and more studies are needed in this area.

When viewed in this context, the teaching of history in Turkey today is given more value than the value given before and many studies are being worked on for this issue. The reason for this is that our age is an age that appreciates learner-cantered approaches. Development of the History education is very natural and common in accordance with these approaches.

In addition, TRNC was with an understanding of national history teaching in the first place, but later it has become political. History is a science. Therefore, the History teaching must be simple, objective, understandable, and should be student-cantered. Textbooks that being taught must be in this form and it should be organized thinking what the students will be gaining from it. With all these, history-teaching programmes in the TRNC must be re-organised with the student-centred approach and away from the political events while also being objective.

Is the matter was to be evaluated based on the findings of the research, history education policies in Turkey and TRNC are moving in the same frame. The reason for this that the historic ties between the two countries relies on very ancient periods. As a result, in many areas of history teaching, similar processes and developments are seen between the two countries.

The scientific development of the teaching history in Turkey had started especially in Atatürk period with the establishment of Turkish Historical Society, the Turkish Language Association the Faculty of Language, History and Geography. In the Ottoman period, depending on the policy and the state of the Ottoman, it can be said that mainly Ottoman History and Islam History lessons were given. However, these reflections are also seen on the
island of Cyprus, which is connected to the Ottoman Empire. With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk led to the adoption of a modern civilization and has also adopted a modern approach to education. In this context, the Law of Unification (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu) of the Republic of Turkey modernized education up to the adoption of the Latin alphabet, which also reflected Cyprus. Especially, adoption and implementation of the Latin alphabet in Turkey soon began to be implemented in Cyprus.

As a matter of looking at the teaching of history in terms of history education in Cyprus can be said that it is going in a parallel direction with Turkey. If we compare the teaching of history in terms of the two countries, the declaration of the Republic of Turkey in the period between the declaration of the TRNC, history teaching went in parallel with the Republic of Turkey. Turkish Cypriot history had started to be taught as well as the Republic of Turkey’s history after the proclamation of the TRNC. However, the contents of these courses within the framework of government policy have shifted. Apart from this, in primary education History of the Republic of Turkey is thought within the life sciences lesson, History of the Republic of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire in secondary education, Principles of Atatürk and History of Revolution is thought in universities. Unlike Turkey, Cyprus History lessons are taught in secondary education as well as other lessons.

**Recommendations:**
Recommendations were given for both countries.

- A distinction can be made between the various History formats; traditions, memories and analytical history.
- New communication technologies (internet, virtual realness, documentaries etc.) can spread the historical subjects and increase their effect. These kinds of facilities must be increased.
- History teachers must independently build up their national associations, communicate with each other for information sharing and government must support them for these to be done.
- Different forms of history teaching must be combined. (Books, tv, projects, museum trips etc.)
- Material that are being used must be educational and academicals.
- For young people, in terms of a better understanding of history, support should be given to a wider interaction between the school and non-school environments, museums, cultural trips must be organized for this purpose.
- Equal attention must be given to European and universal history in TRNC.
- Students must be included in personal and vocal history studies.
- History should include multiple perspectives in Cyprus and the international contexts.
- Objectives in the students’ developing ideas about historical concepts should be explicitly included in the program.
- History textbooks must include tasks and activates that are carefully designed with factual knowledge of specific concepts, skills, and suitable for the purpose, which aims at trends include tasks and activities.
- Instructors that are specialized in history education should organize teacher-training courses.
- Teachers who give history lessons must be supported.
- Bi-communal panels, conferences and seminars must be organized.
- Map, picture, film and documentary materials must be increased.
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