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Teacher Training for the Primary Education and Employment Policies during the Republic in Turkey

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Abstract

The founders of the Republic established new teacher training institutions such as village teacher schools, middle teacher school, village educator courses, village institutions, and village high institutions by regulating the teacher schools according to the principles of the Republic. The governments, coming into power after entering into a period of multi party system in 1946, started applying liberal policies in education. Teacher training schools for the village were closed. The teacher training to the primary education was run by the Primary Teacher Schools until 1974. The teachers were trained by the two-year Educational Institutions after that time. The teacher training schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) were affiliated with the universities in 1982. However, the universities were insufficient to meet the teacher demand of the primary education. The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) started a new regulation in the faculties of education. According to the new regulation, it was started to train the teachers to the primary education in four-year programmes. In spite of this new positive development, YÖK opened up a number of faculties in the name of meeting the teacher demand without actually examining the number of available academicians at universities. YÖK not only increased the capacities of these faculties but also permitted the opening of evening class programmes and diverged from training qualified teachers. Practices such as transported education, contractual teaching, temporary substitute teachers, career steps in teaching ease and spread the privatization of education and can be seen in the practices of the Ministry of National Education in the year 2010 as public policy. The coordination between YÖK, MoNE, and State Planning Organization (DPT) should be ensured and employment based teacher training policies should be adopted and practiced.

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1. Introduction

The most important element of an educational system is the teacher. As we all know, a good teacher should have two features. One of them is the personal features including tendency to the profession, being a model, humane and affectionate and the other is the professional features including the general culture, knowledge of the field and knowledge of the teaching profession. The first features are evaluated as the selection criterion during the introduction period. The second features are awarded during the pre-service training and sustained with the in-

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service trainings. In this report, the policies and practices about teacher training and employment to the primary education during the Republic in Turkey are examined.

The history of the teacher training in Turkey in modern sense goes back till the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876) of the Ottoman Empire. A male teacher school called Darulmuallimin was opened up for the first time on 16 March 1848 (Akyüz, 2010:177). This school carries out an important role because of being the first teacher training school out of the madrasa system in the modernization of the Empire (Güven, 2010:184). The First World War ends, the Ottoman Empire is counted among the losing countries and the victorious ones starts landing the troops. The Independence War is started under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, so the foundations of a new country are tried to be established while the war is still going on. One of the most important foundations is the forming of the TBMM on 23 April 1920 in Ankara (Guven, 2010: 362). This is followed by forming the TBMM Government on 1 May 1920. In this government’s programme, the Maarif Organization (Ministry of Education) takes the responsibility of national educational issues.

2. Kemalist Education Philosophy and the Teacher

Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) joined to the Maarif Congress in Ankara on 15 July 1921 while the War was going on at full speed and he both told his opinions about the education and declared his expectations from the teachers (MEB, 1946:3). Atatürk utters these lines on 1 March 1922 while opening the TBMM first term third meeting year: “The necessity to dispose the elements which are enemies with the independence of Turkey, own selves, and the national values has to be taught to our children and youngsters above all no matter what the limits of their education are because societies without these knowledge and values do not have a right for living and independence”. However, teachers were inadequate in number and quality. In TBMM governed areas of the year 1921, there were 14 primary teacher schools. In 1927, this number reached 37, but some of them was dysfunctional and inadequate in terms of quality. Their numbers were reduced to 18 by closing the inadequate ones.

‘Teacher License Exams’ were held in Ankara, Konya, Antalya, Kastamonu and Balikesir during the holiday months based on the temporary primary education law Article 43 to meet the teacher demand at that time. The license is valid for 3 years (md.44). It is mandatory to get the diploma in these three years’ time by entering the teacher school exams (Ozalp, 1982,91). “Teaching Methods” courses were opened up in 1923 to develop their professional abilities.

Atatürk wishes that the Turkish community would live according to the changing world state as independent, modern and developed and he states these lines by emphasizing science at the second meeting of TBMM’s second term. “We will take science wherever it is and put it into every individual’s head. There is no condition or requirement for science. The most genuine navigator for everything and life in the world is science. It is ignorant and deviant to look for a stimulator other than science.” With this, he urges that education be based on a secular and scientific ground and put too much importance on experiment and observation. The fundamental function of the Republican education is to free the mind because it is pointless to bring secular system to a society whose mind are not freed by science.

After passing the Teaching Union law, the madrasas were shut down in three years; Arabic and Persian were removed from high school curriculum. Religious symbols were banned in minority and foreigner schools and it was ensured that Turkish be taught along with the foreigner or minority mother tongue. These developments prepared a suitable atmosphere for the Alphabet Revolution in 1928 (Tanilli, 2008, ss. 70-72).

Big responsibilities were given to the teachers on enlightening, developing and contributing to the society’s improvement during the foundation period of the Republic. These responsibilities played an active role in forming a teacher identity and determining their positions among the society. The teacher not only deals with teaching at schools but he also tries to turn the environment into a cultural place. In order to do that, he cooperates with the local authorities, students’ families, and the people nearby by making the society aware and enlightened. Mustafa Necati’s
contribution (then Minister of Education) is immense. Mustafa Necati practiced the Kemalist education principles during his ministry.

Mustafa Necati also put too much importance on joining the teachers into the decision making procedure and directing the practices on education. Mustafa Necati who grasped the importance of experience in education quotes these lines in one of his speeches: "One of our fundamental principles on general education problems is to take all of our teacher's opinions from the youngest to the most experienced one and not to take any decisions without any consulor and we follow our profession according to these principles." (İnan, 1980; Güven, 2001)

Atatürk in a feast given for the honour of the Teachers Union Congress members on 25 August 1924 quotes " Teachers! You sacrifices will train the new generation of the Republic and the new generation will be your creation. This creation's value will be in accordance with the degree of your sacrifice. The Republic needs those who are mentally, physically and scientifically strong and with high characteristics." However, there were not adequate teachers at that time.

3. Efforts to Train Skilled Teachers

The primary problem for those founding the republic was the teacher training problem. The priority in teacher training was the quality. For this reason, while they regulated the Ottoman educational system according to the new Republican principles, they put too much importance to open up new institutions such as village teacher schools, teacher middle school, village trainer courses and village institutions.

Middle Teacher School was opened up in Konya during the 1926-1927 educational year and moved to Ankara on 25 October 1925 (Altunya, 2006:18). This institution took the name "'Gazi Teacher School and Decency Institution’’ and the departments of History-Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Nature and Mathematics were also opened up(Okcabol and others, 2003:8).

The teacher training for the village issue was held in the first years of the Republic and two village teachers schools (one in Denizli 1926 and the other in Kayseri 1927) were opened up by the then Vice Minister of Education Mustafa Necati Bey (Karagoz, 2005; Aydogan, 2007). These schools were closed after a short period of time (Kayseri Zincidere 1931 and Denizli 1932) because of the death of the then Vice Minister and founder of these schools Mustafa Necati Bey resulting in a lack of interest and efficiency in the issue, and the negative effects of the worldwide 1929 economic depression. Also, there happened to be a discrimination between village and city teachers (Karagoz, 2005:234) and 5 year compulsory service was brought for those graduated from teacher schools. For Tonguc, (1947:4008) it was because of the efficiency of decision makers and bureaucrats in the Ministry after the death of Mustafa Necati Bey (Bilir, 2008:8) by stating: " It was inevitable that this teacher training job would stop in a minute which had started in 1926 and doubled its pace in these two years because it was impossible for these schools to train teachers for village schools. And the minds of those being in positions were not suitable to bear the consequences and bothering of these works speaking of which each of them could snatch a storm.”

After 1930’s, the village problem became a government policy. "' Village Affairs Commission” was founded in the ministry at the time of Vice Minister Necati Bey. The education problem and the teacher training issue to the village were examined and spoken upon (Tonguc, 1947). Although %80 of the population in Turkey lived in villages in these years, there was not a single teacher in 30,000 villages of the 40,000 villages at large and small sizes. The poverty was common and the people were ignorant to the developments, stick to their own traditions and withdrawn to their own selves in terms of culture and economy. The transportation and communication facilities with the outer world (city, county) were weak, infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis were common, feeding and accommodation facilities were bad and the infant death rate was high (Dirican, 1996). In short, the majority of the people was in the villages with learnt helplessness and few of them could actually read and write. The primary education was tried to be made common in order to stop the misery of the people and instructor training schools were founded in Eskisehir Çiftele and Izmir Kızılçullu as a trial for the less populated villages. The Instructor Courses were spreaded because the results were positive (Uyar, 2000).

Two village teacher schools, one in Eskisehir, Çiftele, Mahmudiye and the other in Izmir, Kızılçullu, were opened in 1937-1938 educational year. These schools accepted village school graduates with an exam and they were the
cores of the Village Institutes founded in April 17 1940 to train teachers, medics, obstetricians, farmers, technicians which the villages were in need of (Aydoğan, 2007).

The village institute practices were aimed at training both teachers and medics, agriculturalists, cooperatives of the village. The final objective was to eradicate the gap between the city and the village and to bring a wholesome development to the country (Tütengil, 1948). In these schools, mixed education philosophy was accepted and women started to have a profession in the public field through teaching. The freedom and contribution of the women in the public life started with the teacher training programmes.

4. Transition to the Multi-Party Period and Liberalization

The programmes of these institutions were changed first after entering into a multi-party period in 1946 and mixed education model was abandoned and then they were closed in 1954 by turning them into primary teacher schools. This situation did not help to close the gap of the number of teachers but contributed to the increasing number.

Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) took over the control on May 27 1960. With the October 11 1960 dated Article 97, high school, equal graduates and ones having not finished colleges or universities for various reasons were given the right to be Reserved Officers and complete their military service as primary school teachers to reduce the gap. It is also known that some of these were allowed to be grand teachers according to their wishes and with the Primary Education and Training Law Article 222 in 1961, the middle schools and equals graduates being over 18 years of age were also appointed to the primary schools by attending the "temporary teacher" courses. These practices decreased the teacher quality and weakened the status of being a teacher in public.

The teachers were obliged to get a college degree according to the Article 1739 National Education Basic Law passed in 1973. The primary teacher schools were turned into teacher high schools and they were started to be trained at two-year educational institutions to meet the demand of the primary schools. The selection of students in the beginning and village internships of the teacher candidates during their studies were abandoned. Also the right to get a pedagogical formation for university graduates to be teachers was awarded.

In 1974, about 46,000 students were accepted to the teacher training programmes thanks to the practice of letter education. Rapid changes in the government after 1974 created a political camping among the society. These political and ideological changes mostly affected the teacher training institutions because every new minister taking the power after each political shift tried to establish his way of thinking in these institutions. The ones opposed to the school management could not continue their education. Intensive programmes were intended to solve this problem in 1978. This practice resulted in the loss of quality and status of the teaching profession (Öztürk, 2005:196).

On September 12 1980, Turkish Armed Forces took over the control again and the Kemalist way of thinking showed itself in education and important decisions were taken upon the specialization and training of the teaching profession in X. and XI. National Education Congresses held at that time. The teacher training schools dependent to the Ministry of National Education were affiliated with the universities according to the Article 41 Decree on July 20 1982. Teacher training schools to the primary schools were two-year educational institutes, but after then they were called Educational High School (Gök, & Okçabol, 1998).

The Ministry of National Education sent an official paper dated 16.11.1983 number 19700 to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and urged that students accepted to the teacher training schools be also applied scales measuring their tendency to the teaching profession apart from the written exam held by ÖSYM and most importantly, the academicians at the teacher training institutions should be trained well and all of them must have a pedagogical formation (Duman, 1991:203), but YÖK did not implement any practice upon MONE’s wish.

5. Re-formation in Teacher Training

The Özal government coming into power after 1983 general elections and established on 13 December 1983 adopted free market economy and followed liberal practices in education. The teachers were allowed to retire and a
lot of public teachers were transferred to private courses and schools. This practice weakened the public educational system and also increased the number of gap. The unpreparedness and anti-adoptive behaviours of the universities to train teachers at the beginning, the changes in the student source of the teacher training institutions, the abolition of the scholarship and boarding system and ignoring the related academic board’s opinion upon the teacher candidates’ capacity of being a teacher resulted in the failure to award a teacher profession conscious to the candidates (Duman, 1991:215-216).

The number of teacher gap increased in the beginning of the 1990s and there happened to be a geographical difference in that spread. For example, at some schools teachers used to lecture in front of 70-80 students while at some schools teachers used to sit idly because of a surplus in the number of teachers. The Republic governments could not solve the quantity and quality problem of the teacher profession and sometimes applied irrational practices while ignoring the quality issue. The liveliest example of this was in the 1995-1996 educational season when all of the university graduates were appointed to the primary schools as class teachers without looking for any pedagogical formation.

Primary schools inspectors’ effort to guide and develop to increase the primary school teachers’ quality while in-service have to be praised at all times. However, we need to have a sustainable teacher training policy in our day. There has to be cooperation with not only inspectors but also educational faculties both during the internships of the teachers and while in-service to achieve this goal. This cooperation provides the professional development of the teachers and gives the opportunity for lecturers in the faculties to contact with the real teaching practices of the candidates at the same time. Experiences held in these practices could contribute to the development of the pre-service educational quality (TED, 2009:175).

In order to meet the demand created by making the compulsory primary education period 8 years in 1997, educational faculties were re-formed during the 1997-1998 academic season. According to the new regulation; primary education, foreign languages, computer education, kindergarten, physical training and fine arts teachers were begun to be trained in four-year undergraduate programmes (YÖK, 1998). In spite of this new positive development, YÖK opened up a number of faculties in the name of meeting the teacher demand in numbers without actually examining the number of available instructors. It not only increased the capacities of these faculties but also permitted the opening of evening class programmes and diverged from training qualified teachers (Karakütük, 2001). The Research for Educational Faculties (YÖK, 2006) along with the Turkey’s Higher Education Strategic Report (YÖK, 2007) stressed the quality problem of the teachers and an another research (TED, 2009) also showed that teachers have a lot of professional and individual development problems. Apart from these quality and efficiency problems, hundreds of thousands graduate teacher candidates are waiting to be appointed or employed. While lots of teachers are waiting for an employment, the Ministry of National Education does not appoint teachers to vacant positions and they fill these vacant positions in the name of paid, contractual teaching. They also lower the salaries of the teachers when compared to their colleagues in the world and they do not spare enough money for the facilities and equipment in the public schools thus resulting in an education inefficient and in poor quality. The citizens were forced to send their children to private courses or schools to raise their children in a healthy way. The education is taken out as a right and turned to be a commercial product. The teacher does not have any professional union to get himself out of this play.

This situation shows that there is not enough cooperation between State Planning Organization (DPT), Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to follow a healthy policy on teacher training. Moreover; sectors such as education, health and security are presented for the use of the international monetary capitals. Practices such as transported education, contractual teaching, temporary substitute teachers, career steps in teaching ease and spread the privatization of education and show themselves as a public policy. The coordination must be set between State Planning Organization (DPT), Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and Ministry of National Education (MONE) and a national teacher training employment policy based on quality must be adopted and applied.
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