

The Internet, Globalization, And Possible Problems Of Turkish Teachers

İnternet, Küreselleşme Ve Türk Öğretmenlerinin Olası Problemleri

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ÖZET

Günümüz dünyasında, internet ve bilgisayar teknolojisi bazı kişiler için ülkeler arasındaki sınırları ortadan kaldırmaktadır. Bu kişilere göre yeni teknolojiler sadece kendileri için değil dünyanın başka bir yerinde yaşayan herhangi bir kişi için de büyük bir şanstır ve bu yeni teknolojiler gelişmiş ve gelişmekte olan ülkeler, fakirler ve zenginler arasındaki ayrımların ortadan kaldırılmasında mutlaka kullanılmalıdır. Diğer yandan bu fikirlerin karşısında olanlar ise bu yeni teknolojilerin fakirler ve gelişmekte olan ülkeler için hiçbir şeyi değiştirmeyeceğini iddia etmektedirler. Bu önemli konuya eleştirel bir açıdan bakmak amacıyla bu çalışmada öncelikle globalleşme değişik görüşlere dayanılarak tanımlanmış, internet ve bilgisayar teknolojilerinin dünya üzerindeki dağılımı istatistiksel olarak verilmiştir. Daha sonra, bu teknolojilerin günümüz Türkiye'sindeki dağılımı, Türk öğretmenlerini, özellikle de sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerini, bekleyen muhtemel tehlikelere temel oluşturması için örneklerle sunulmuştur. Son olarak ise sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerini bekleyen muhtemel problemleri göstermek amacıyla değişik ihtimaller ortaya konulmuş ve örneklendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: : İnternet, eğitim, sosyal bilgiler, globalleşme

ABSTRACT

In today's world, the Internet and computer technology are collapsing borders for some people. These people believe that it is also a chance for any people around the world and these new technologies should be used to close the gaps between developed and developing countries, poor and rich people, and so on. However, others strongly believe that technology will not bring up anything new for poor people and developing countries. In order to look at this important issue from critical perspective; first, globalization is defined from different views and current distribution of the Internet and computer technology is explained by statistics in this paper. After that, Turkey's current situation in technology is illustrated with some examples to provide a base to explain how the Internet and computer technology can pose problems for Turkish teachers, especially for social studies teachers. Finally, to exemplify problems for social studies teacher different possibilities are expressed and demonstrated.

Keywords: The Internet, education, social studies, globalization

1. INTRODUCTION

Many educators believe that the use of computers in education opens a new era of knowledge and offers a tool that has the potential to change some of the existing educational methods [1,2,3]. The teacher is the key to the effective exploitation of this resource in the educational system. As computer use continues to increase in society, educators must also prepare for the use of computers within the classroom [4].

The dilemma is that if computer technology and the Internet is an answer for many social problems (e.g. poverty, health care, and especially for education) why some people are still against this powerful tool. For example, the agenda of the Third Global Forum's Naples 2001 meeting was devoted to the single theme of "e-governance." The forum was sponsored by Italy, the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with high-tech participants like Cisco Systems and Microsoft. Delegates from about 40 nations participated. Organizers called it an opportunity to explore how technologies like the Internet

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and computer could make governments more accessible. "Anti-globalization protestors, on the other hand, were holding banners that the Internet Age is only exacerbating global inequalities, a result of greedy corporate leaders and failed international aid policies [5]. When many people, government, agencies, and companies support the use of computer technology, how did computer technology and the Internet become such a dangerous policy issue, drawing people into street protest and conference halls? What is the feature of the Internet and of computer technology that has led to the definition of the Internet and computer technology as a global social problem? These questions will be answered the following sections of this paper.

In order to answer these questions we should reconsider our perspective. I believe that for many occasions we forget to ask correct questions and look at this important issue using a unique lens. As stated by Bauman [6], "not asking certain questions is pregnant with more dangers than failing to answer the questions already on the official agenda; while asking the wrong kind of questions all too often helps to avert eyes from the truly important issues. The price of silence is paid in the hard currency of human beings" (p.5).

We often see useful effects of computer technology and the Internet whereas we hardly ever consider possible side-effects of these sources. One should never overlook the fact that it is a mistake to suppose that any technological innovation has a one-sided effect. Every technology is both 'a burden and a blessing' [7].

The purpose of this paper is to provide different perspectives to evaluate the use of computer technology and the Internet in education and to ask crucial questions for following important issue. What is the globalization? What is the relationship between globalization and computer technology? How do the spreading of the Internet, computer technology, and the global digital divide pose problems for teachers specifically Turkish social studies teachers? What follows is an articulation of these issues after a short review of global trends in Internet diffusion, and of global gaps in their current use.

2. INTERNET DIFFUSION AND GLOBAL GAPS

Internet development, which is built upon the few decades of innovative computer technology, makes progress by creating faster,

cheaper, and more capable communications through a shared and open network.

The Internet quickly became the fastest-growing information and communication technology ever. The number of the Web sites grew from 200 in June 1993 to 20 million such sites in late 2000 [8], with estimates of as many as 2 million Web pages added daily [9]; the number of internet users around the world grew 16 million in 1995 to over 655 million in 2002, and is estimated to reach 1.1 billion in 2007 [10]; the number of e-mail accounts grew from 15 million worldwide in the early 1990s to 569 million at the end of 1999 [11]. Even we do not know the certain numbers today.

The rate of diffusion of the Internet is like no other communication technology before it. The Internet was the quickest technology to ever be adopted by American households, faster than cell phones and personal computers and much faster than other households products such as the microwave, VCR, electricity, and the telephone [11,12].

The sum up, the Internet appeared on the field of communication technology in the early 1990s and quickly changed all parameters of technology diffusion.

Despite the fact that such changes in access to, and in the cost of, communication brought about by the Internet during the 1990s, this information and communication technology still left many people worldwide disconnected to this network. So, in spite of the Internet's dramatic diffusion, only 16.1 percent of the world's population is now "on-line" [10]. In addition, countries and world regions still differ greatly in their Internet capacities. For example, more than 97 percent of all Internet hosts are located in the developed countries, which correspond to only 16 percent of the world's population [8]. By comparison, in 2000, 35 of the least-developed countries, which corresponds to a half billion people, accounted for only 1 percent of on-line users [12]. This comparison between the share of global population and the share of the global on-line population is the most striking evidence of the global divide in access to the Internet.

Internet users in developing countries and in marginal regions, which their network is overloaded, if not overwhelmed, not because of a large number of users or great amounts of data transferred, but rather due to low capacity to serve those users. It is, then, the local network's capacity that prohibits people's full-fledged use of the Internet, if it is available at all.

Another related major barrier to universal access to Internet technology is the cost of the required hardware and connection. Mainly due to income differentials, Internet technology is beyond the reach of most humanity. In other words, most of humanity since they are hardly able to afford basic life necessities such as food, clothing, and medication, can certainly not meet the expense of purchasing the necessary technological tools or paying the connection fees. For example, in the United States, the cost of a single personal computer (PC) equal one-fortieth of the gross national income (GNI) per capita, while in Zimbabwe the cost of a PC equals the GNI per capita [13]. After all, half of humanity has never even made a single phone call [14]; hence, there are real doubts about the ability of these people to be able to use a phone system, let alone a PC [13]. Bauman's [6] following statement perfectly summarizes current situation of global divide and possible side effects of it.

...Rather than homogenizing the human condition, the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distances tends to polarize it. It emancipates certain humans from territorial constraints and renders certain community-generating meanings exterritorial – while denuding the territory, to which other people go on being confined, of its meaning and its identity-endowing capacity. For some people it augurs unprecedented freedom from physical obstacles and unheard-of ability to move and act from a distance. For others, it portends the impossibility of appropriating and domesticating the locality from which they have little chance of cutting themselves free in order to move elsewhere (p.18).

In conclusion, while the world's clear-cut "wired" persistent patterns of technological marginality remain; on some social dimensions, the patterns of technological marginality are growing. Such patterns follow the contours of location, social capital, age, gender, and race. In light of the analysis given in this section, what follow is an articulation of the main questions of interest for this paper.

3. GLOBALIZATION AND COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

Answering the question of "What is globalization?" is not an easy one. For many, globalization is only or essentially economic [15, 16, 17]: rising world trade, expanding foreign investment, global companies, multimode production chains, and international governmental organizations (IGOs) (mainly the

IMF (International Monetary Found), and GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/WTO)) that manage the world economy. Others emphasize political globalization in the form of international law and courts, democratization, the general population of global governance IGOs, the rapidly expanding array of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) that constitute civil society, and so on [18]. Still others focus on cultural globalization – values (e.g. human rights and environmentalism), lifestyles (fast-food restaurants, video games, high fashion), media consumption (CNN and Hollywood), and problematized local cultures and national identities [19, 20].

According to Marcos [6] globalization is nothing more than spreading out of global financial markets' logic on every part of life.

In the cabaret of globalization, the state goes through a striptease and by the end of the performance it is left with the bare necessities only: its power or repression. With its material bases destroyed, its sovereignty and independence annulled, its political class effaced, the nation-state becomes a simple security service for the mega-companies...

The new masters of the world have no need to govern directly. National governments are charged with the task of administering affairs on their behalf (p.31).

The totalistic quality has the interesting consequence of making globalization available as an explanation of almost any observable feature of contemporary world society.

Once the term globalization is defined, the next natural question that would come to mind is "What is the relation between Internet and globalization?" Global Internet diffusion refocused discussions on the issue of the consequences of globalization, assessing the role of social arrangements and organizations in determining the trends and the outcomes of this technology globalization process. Internet globalization added a technological dimension to the discussions of growing global disparities. The imagery of the Internet in such discussion has, basically, two faces: technological capacity is considered as (1) the new human capital criterion or as (2) a new form of Western imperialism.

On one hand, the Internet is considered as a hopeful vehicle for information diffusion and thus for all the social benefits that rely on greater access to free and open information

sources. In this postindustrial era, when knowledge is most precious commodity, the capacity to access the frontiers of knowledge defines the new human capital: greater prospects await those who acquire access to, and proficiency with, the Internet. In addition, for developing countries, the Internet is a gateway into the information society. Many developing countries believe that by way of the use of Internet they can catch up with developed countries by skipping over developmental stages, and thus barriers to its diffusion should be eliminated.

The alternative perspective on global Internet diffusion came to label the Internet revolution as "e-imperialism," referring to an electronic form of imperialism [21]. Here, the claim is that the Internet, through the control of its content by Westerners, is a vehicle for penetration of Western ideas and ideals. From hardware to software, the Internet is diffusing Western logic. And with its growing importance for global integration, the Internet is forcing indigenous cultures to surrender to its mechanics and thus to its logic. In this sense, the Internet is the most powerful, most integrated form of Western domination, combining economic pressures with cultural oppression [21]. From this perspective, Internet gaps maintain already existing, and widening, development gaps. Also, such technological gaps, because they follow the contours of Western dominance, contribute to the persistent marginalization of non-Western cultures, movements, and regimes [21].

With regard to all these aforementioned issues, what is the current situation in Turkey? Is Turkey a nation in danger of losing its national sovereignty due to this global Internet diffusion? How all these global Internet diffusion will affect Turkish teachers, specifically, social studies teachers? The following section will examine these questions in order.

4. THE INTERNET, COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND TURKEY

I believe that before explaining the effect of technology and globalization on existing education system one should understand current dynamics of Turkish economy and technology to evaluate this important issue.

Although Turkey is 20th biggest economy among 235 nations, and her economy has grown almost % 5-8 annually in last 20 years, with 3750\$ Gross National Income per capita in 2006

(ranked as 89th) [22] she is still accepted as a third world country in the world according to current statistics. Turkey has approximately 16 million Internet users and she is among the top 25 countries with that user number. Although this number seems really high, in fact, only 21% of total population is Internet user in Turkey [22] (almost %60 lives in big cities, such as, Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and so on) and these statistics are still far behind the developed countries.

When it comes to education in Turkey, starting from 1982, the Turkish Government introduced a series of funding initiatives to promote the use of information technology in schools. Applying information technology to effective learning and teaching is the key point in the current Turkish education policy. In 1992, as part of World Bank financed National Education Development Project, two hundred schools were equipped to work as curriculum laboratories, to test the new curricula and teaching materials, and 53 schools were identified as Computer Experimental Schools (CES), where information technology would be integrated with the teaching-learning process to facilitate education [23]. The CES schools, which had had no previous exposure to information technology, were to receive computer hardware, software, teacher training and minor facility renovation where required. Approximately 250 teachers were trained in the use of computers and educational software. A computer laboratory in any one of these schools contains 20 monitors, with one server, a printer, and a modem. The World Bank evaluators believe that a great deal has been accomplished since the CES project was first formulated, and undoubtedly more will be achieved in the coming years. According to these evaluators, CES has demonstrated that information technology, a powerful tool in the teaching-learning process, can also harness the support of the community to make the effort sustainable over a long period of time [23]. In fact, a study shows that implementation of technology in CES is far behind success. Data was drawn from a sample of 252 teachers who were working elementary and middle schools (K-8) (25 % in CES schools) in Trabzon, Turkey. The results revealed that many teachers were not computer users. Although 82% of the respondents have computers in their schools, ten percent of computer literate teachers found themselves effective computer users, whereas 90% of them admitted they were not. Many teachers lacked a functional computer literacy foundation upon

which to build new technology and skills. Analysis of teachers' knowledge of computer technologies revealed low levels of technical knowledge, as well as some interesting perceptions of the role of some specific computer-related items. For most teachers, the use of computers and related technologies had not been a routine part of their own educational environment [24].

The preceding example is quite important to show the relationship between global financial markets and developing countries. Developing countries are possible marketplace for global financial markets and by way of using education they try to prepare developing countries for the future. Shortly, they do not want to lose their customers. For example, the World Bank, emphasizing that the Internet has become a prerequisite for integration into the world economy and thus for economic development, argues that there exist a strong correlation between Internet capacity and foreign direct investment [22]. Hence, any lag in Internet connectivity results in further economic marginalization, for nations as well as for individuals. The same is true for the relationship between Internet connectivity and other dimensions of social development: inability to employ this technology for learning leaves already marginalized countries behind in terms of access to health information, educational resources, and political mobilization [22].

Turkish Ministry of Education still initiates projects regarding integration of Internet and computer technology into classrooms. In December 2003, Minister of National Education Hüseyin Çelik also signed up a contract with the Turkish Telecommunication Company to bring up high speed Internet (ADSL) connections into all schools [25]. Most recently on April 3 2007, Turkish Ministry of Education, Turk Telekom Company and Intel signed a contract under the name of *E21- Twenty First Centuries' Education*. With this contract, they are planning to educate six hundred thousand teachers in order to use computer technology more effectively [26].

Whether people like or not the Internet and computer technology are inevitably getting inside of their lives. Bauman [6] argue that global financial markets are mainly responsible from this extension because they want these technologies in all aspect of life and they have enough power to do that due to controlling politics. He claims that "...whatever is concerned with the economic life the state is not

allowed to touch; any attempt in this direction would be met with prompt and furious punitive action from the world markets (p.66)."

5. CHALLENGES OF TURKISH SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS FACE

Although Turkey is still behind the developed countries in terms of economy and technology, if spread of the globalization (Internet and computer technology) is unstoppable, what kind of troubles are waiting Turkish social studies teachers? What are the possible dangers for national sovereignty?

The first problem is related to content of social studies' software programs. Instructional technology is a newly developed field in Turkey. As being quite new and inexperienced, these companies take in U.S or other developed countries products to gain momentum to their production phase. Majority of the products had nothing to indicate that it is created for Turkish culture. For some products, the most apparent difference is the language rather than their design. Even, some of the American computer based learning materials were just translated into Turkish and they have been sold by American companies for many years.

Although U.S educational products are in good quality in terms of both design and multimedia characteristics and although they seem to be more effective than other products developed by Turkish companies, is it really suitable to use these products which points to the similar cultural context of Americans? While Turkish education system is different from the U.S. education system, and while formal education do not directly use other materials developed according to U.S. curriculum, why should we passively adopt these electronic educational products? Can we adopt effective parts of these products and blend it with Turkish cultural values? While all these products try to impose foreign cultures can we talk about national sovereignty? These are possibly some of the problems needed to deal with by Turkish social studies teachers.

The second problem is related to general structure of Turkish education system. Turkey is a country which has a unified curriculum for all disciplines. All teachers are obligated to follow these curricula in their areas. Therefore, the government can control education very easily. Teachers also are never worry about the content of lessons if they just follow the national curriculum since they will never get into trouble. However, the Internet and computer

technology possibly can change all these basic elements of education system. Both students and teachers can reach many other sources without government censor and they can use their freedom to question current regulations. For example, the Press Law requires each periodical have a responsible manager who is at least a high school graduate and above the age of 21. One copy of each issue of the newspaper or journal must be submitted to the local prosecutor's office as soon as it appears in circulation [27]. These regulations turn out to be totally impractical when applied to the Internet. It is a big danger for governmental agencies because they may lose their powers over students and teachers. However, governmental agencies urgently try to take some precautions before getting too late. For example, a new Internet Law draft, passed from Turkish Grand National Assembly Justice Committee on April 2007, was accepted a kind of censor by 13 civil associations.

According to the President of Internet Technologies Association, Mustafa Akgül, if this law passed from National Assembly bureaucrats will stop internet broadcast whenever they want and it will cause a result like closing a huge library for only one book. Therefore, the sanction – penalty balance will be unequal. In addition, Telecommunication Institute will have a right to censor Internet [28].

Also, the President of Contemporary Lawyers Association Hüseyin Biçen claimed that the government is not sincere about this issue. He said that Turkey has not signed *child porn protocol* since 2001 and the government just tries to use child porn issue for preventing communication [28].

Another draft which was prepared by the Turkish Ministry of Defense, "The National Information Security Act", introduces rigid regulations to control the Internet traffic and prescribes heavy punishments to those who refuse to obey (e.g., prison sentences from three to six years and fines from 35,000 to 150,000 Euros) six years ago. This act pronounces any personal, commercial, etc. data flowing through the national communication networks to be under the direct control of the Turkish government. It requires the ISPs to respond to all requests by the "National Information Security Organization," such as access to e-mail messages or any kind of information sent over the Internet. Refusing to comply with such requests would make their administrators liable for one to five years of imprisonment. This act

was withdrawn due to reactions from the members of Parliament and the general public [27].

As one can see, the Internet and computer technology seem to give students and teachers new opportunities to gain new freedoms and release a little bit from government control. Some students and teachers believe that in order to improve democracy in Turkey, the government must take into account the Internet as an opportunity. People should discuss freely and be notified about news items that do not sometimes find an outlet in the traditional mass media [27]. On the other side, government agencies give quick response to any of these actions because they believe that the Internet may be a possible danger for national security and sovereignty of state.

The final problem is related to current economic situation of Turkey. In the words of John Kavanagh of the Washington Institute of Policy Research,

Globalization has given more opportunities for the extremely wealthy to make money more quickly. These individuals have utilized the latest technology to move large sums of money around the globe extremely quickly and speculate ever more efficiently.

Unfortunately, the technology makes no impact on the lives of the world poor. In fact, globalization is a paradox: while it is very beneficial to a very few, it leaves out or marginalizes two-thirds of the world's population [6] (p71).

As a part of social studies courses, Turkish teachers always should emphasize democracy, equity, and human rights. However, current statistics show that technology does not close gaps between rich and poor, and not bring up equity among people, on the contrary, it props up inequity and make rich people much richer. There is a big gap between people who live in urban and rural area, or who live in downtown or ghettos in Turkey. As mentioned by Bauman [6], 'poverty' means not always equal to 'hunger'. There are many other complex dimensions of poverty — horrible living and housing conditions, illness, illiteracy, aggression, falling apart families, and lack of future [6](p. 74)— While many students in Turkey are dealing with all these problems I just wonder how social studies teachers motivate their students the use of computer technology. How can they bring up the Internet and computer technology into classrooms and make them more desirable and useful?

6. CONCLUSION

In today's world, the Internet and computer technology are collapsing borders for some people. They give big opportunities to these people to reach any information without

restriction of time and space. These people believe that it is also a chance for any people around the world and these new technologies should be used to close the gaps between developed and developing countries, poor and rich people, and so on. However, others strongly believe that technology will not bring up anything new for poor people and developing countries. They argue that it is another game of imperialism over developing countries to control them and exploit them. They also claim that with Internet and computer technology while poor people continue to remain poor, the elites of the world get much richer.

In order to provide different perspective for the issue of Internet and computer technology this paper started with these two different perspectives. Then, globalization is defined from different views and current distribution of the Internet and computer technology is stated by statistics. After that, Turkey's current situation in technology is illustrated with some examples to provide a base to explain how the Internet and computer technology can pose problems for Turkish social studies teachers. Finally, to exemplify problems for social studies teacher different possibilities are stated and demonstrated.

I believe that this study shows that in technology age while information flows so quickly around the world to maintain national sovereignty will not be easy. There is no way to put a barrier to prevent 100 % of our national sovereignty. The new technologies inevitably spread out every aspect of life, specifically education and they also possibly pose some problems for Turkish social studies teachers in terms of maintaining and explaining of national sovereignty.

It is a fact that new technologies affect our lives regardless of our opinions on them. Therefore, our concern should not be on "how to stop spread of Internet in Turkey", on the contrary, it should be on "to what extent we should allow the integration of Internet and computer technology into our lives in Turkey." The dilemma is: giving unlimited right to people to publish whatever they want by way of using Internet versus concerning governmental agencies allowing censor for the Internet like other mass media products. I believe that the best possible solution is lying somewhere in the middle of these two statements. Control but not government censor, freedom but not absolute. Is it possible to find this kind of a mediator? Hopefully, the future will show us the answer.

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