

Development of Social Studies Curriculum in Turkey and John Dewey's Effect on the Modernization of Turkish Education

Bülent Tarman*

Selcuk University

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the historical development, status and purpose of the Turkish social studies curriculum in addition to understanding John Dewey's impact on the modernization of Turkish educational system. Document analysis as a qualitative research method is used in this study. The data were obtained from the historical documents about the development of the Turkish social studies curriculum, the Internet sources, printed literature—such as reports about the curriculum development process done by national governmental organizations like Ministry of Education and Board of Education, and review and research articles about social studies educations and Dewey's effect on the Turkish Educational system. This study consists of two main parts: one is *The History of Social Studies Curriculum Development in Turkey*, which addresses the historical development of Social Studies Curriculum in two major eras: The Era of Ottomans and the Republican Period. The second part of the study examines the impact of a famous 20th century American philosopher and educator, *John Dewey*, on Turkey.

Keywords: Social Studies Education, Curriculum Development, Turkish Educational System, John Dewey

* Bülent Tarman is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Studies Education and serves as the vice chair for the Institute of Educational Sciences at Selcuk University, Turkey. He pursued his Ph.D. degree in Curriculum and Instruction with the emphasis areas of Social Studies & Comparative and International Education from The Penn State University. His research and teaching focused on teacher preparation in social studies, democracy education, and European Union & educational systems.

Introduction

The purposes of the study are to examine and analyze the historical development, status and purpose of the Turkish social studies curriculum, and to understand John Dewey's impact on the modernization of Turkish educational system. Document analysis as a qualitative research method is used in this study. The data were obtained from the historical documents about the development of the social studies curriculum in Turkey, the Internet sources and printed literature (such as reports about the curriculum development process done by national governmental organizations like Ministry of Education and Board of Education), and review and research articles about social studies educations and Dewey's effect on the Turkish Educational system.

This study consists of two main parts: one is *The History of Social Studies Curriculum Development in Turkey* addressing the historical development of Social Studies Curriculum in two major eras: The Era of Ottomans and the Republican Period. The second part of the study examines the impacts of a famous 20th century American philosopher and educator, *John Dewey*, on Turkey. Therefore, the following questions were addressed in the second part of this study: Why did Atatürk invite John Dewey to observe and analyze the Turkish educational system other than someone else? What was his importance? What is his educational philosophy? What was his role and contributions on the modernization of Turkish Education system?

In order to have a clear understanding, it is obviously necessary to look at the questions from a historical perspective. Thus, in the first part, the issues are examined in two main eras: The Era of Ottomans and the Republican Era. In the second part, I deal with understanding of John Dewey's effect on the modernization of the Turkish curriculum. Of course, to understand that point we should be aware of his beliefs on educational systems. Therefore, in this part, I address Dewey's philosophy in the light of some of his writings related to social studies education such as *The School and Society (1900)*, *Democracy and Education (1916)*, *Freedom and Culture (1989)*, *Education from a Social Perspective (1913)*, and *Human Nature and Conduct (2002)*.

Method/Research Design

Qualitative research is the research technique used to gain insight into human behavior (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 2002; Holliday, 2007) and seeks to understand how and why certain events or actions or feelings occur. Through qualitative research strategies, researchers can obtain rich and robust data for their topic. These strategies, observation, interview, and document analysis, can stand independently or work in triangulation with others (Glesne, 1999). The primary focus of this study was of a historical nature; therefore, the primary research tool used was document analysis.

Glesne (1999) defines qualitative research as the deliberate collection of data, via a number of ways - interviews, data analysis, observations, and surveys - in order to acquire trustworthy and useful results while Myers (1997) points out that this type of research involves the use of qualitative data, such as interviews, documents, and participant observation, to understand and explain social phenomena.

Through the method of document analysis, researchers get access to written materials which will offer them the essential information to deepen the topic. These materials can either be primary (first hand) or secondary sources, depending on what are accessible and needed. Document analysis is oftentimes the first line of research for those looking to use other types of qualitative research, particularly observation, surveys, and interviews (Glesne, 1999). The advantages of document analysis are ease of access, cost, and reliability. By considering all of these advantages, this study used document analysis as a qualitative research method and data collection techniques to gain a thorough understanding of the issues addressed by the research questions. The researcher gained a deeper understanding of the social studies program and its historical developmental characteristics that impact student learning. The study included a review of information sources including the printed literature—such as reports about the curriculum development process done by national governmental organizations like Ministry of Education and Board of Education, social studies curriculum related records, published reports, and other salient data sources to provide details of the historical, economic, and social contexts for the development of the program and an extensive review of secondary resources, related research articles, online documents and websites about social studies curriculum and two reports about Turkish Education System written by John Dewey and his impact on the modernization of Turkish education system. This study consists of two main parts: one is *The History of Social Studies Curriculum Development in Turkey*, which addresses the historical development of Social Studies Curriculum in two major eras: The Era of Ottomans and the Republican Period. The second part of the study examines the impact of a famous 20th century American philosopher and educator, *John Dewey*, on Turkey.

Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of Turkish social studies program and its historical development and progress?
- Why did Atatürk invite John Dewey to examine and analyze the Turkish educational system other than someone else?
- What was his importance?
- What is his educational philosophy?
- What was his role in and contribution to modernization of the Turkish Education system?

The History of Social Studies Curriculum Development in Turkey

The Era of Ottomans

There was not a subject in schools specifically named “Social Studies Education” in the era of Ottomans. However, there were some subjects in the educational system that involved the common topics of Social Studies curriculum as it will be explained later in the study. Therefore, to be able to understand the place of Social Studies, we need to look at the educational system and schooling in general. “Since the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic state in nature, the philosophy of its educational system was based on the Islamic principles and Turkish tradition. It was influenced by Islamic scholars and institutions” (Kocer, 1987 as cited in Turan, 1997, p. 7).

The Ottomans established schools that were nearby the mosques, and organized a graded system of education, from the lowest *mektep* (primary school) to the highest *madrasa* (university). In addition to these religious schools, there were several other agencies that performed important educational functions. For example, the famous Palace School (Enderun Mektebi) engaged the choicest youth from among non-Muslim subjects of the Empire; it trained them in what may be called a combination of the liberal, vocational, and physical elements of education and prepared them for high positions in the Royal Court, in the army, and the civil bureaucracy (Kazamias & Massialas, 1965 as cited in Turan, 1997).

The Palace School and Madrasa were the two foremost institutions which contributed toward the greatness and the solidity of the Ottoman nation. The curricula and recruitment policies for these institutions were carefully developed and implemented (Kazamias 1966 as cited in Turan, 1997).

The inheritance of the Ottomans was partly based on its formal and informal educational institutions which were basically and partially based on religious principles (Turan 1997). The language of instruction in all levels and schools was Arabic which in the long run lead to a dichotomy of the literate (Ulema, versed in Arabic) versus the illiterate (juchela, speaking Turkish) and the inevitable low status of Turks and their spoken languages. Programs of teaching or curricula seem to have been grouped under three faculties or specialties: (1) Religion and Law, (2) The Natural Sciences, (3) Instrumental (or auxiliary for other) sciences.

Religion or Law (the advanced knowledge of Islam) included:

Tafsir (the meaning and interpretations of the texts in Qur'an),

Hadith (the Prophet's sayings and checking the authenticity thereof),

Fiqh (the systematic, historical study of Islamic law),

Kelam (Islamic philosophy defending faith in Tevhid/unity),

The Natural Sciences (rational sciences, philosophy, mathematics and astronomy),

The instrumental sciences (logic, rhetoric, eloquence, précis writing and esthetics).

Priest-preachers (Imam-Hatibs), state functionaries, and Kadıs (judge-governors) of cities and towns were, as a rule, all Madrasa graduates. Teachers of elementary (Sibyan) schools, teaching mainly reading and some writing, were graduates of special programs, comprising of Arabic, Arabic grammar, literature, rhetoric, ethics of discussion, didactics of the teaching-learning process, mathematics and geography. Arithmetic was included in geometry while history was part of, or taken up with, geography. Special requirements of the teacher training programs, namely ethics (rules) of discussions and didactics call for comment. These two seem to be unique and of Turkish innovation. Candidates in the teacher program were exempted from *fikh* (Islamic Law); Teachers were the accepted and respected members of community. Prophet Muhammad had declared that "Teachers are like candles of this world and the hereafter." More popularly, education was considered as a road to manhood.

One can wonders the relation between Social Studies and the things mentioned above. To make the connection between them, attention should be given to the primary aim of the Islamic education. In its view of the primary aim of education,

Islamic education is different from every other educational system in the world. Most of such systems are similar in that they aim at “the preparation of a good citizen,” in a given country. But since each country has its own specific concept of a “good citizen,” the education imparted on this base tends to be nationalistic and, therefore, narrow in scope. On the other hand, Islam takes a much broader view of the function of the education and concentrates mainly on “the development of a good human being” (Jaradat, 1978).

During the decline of the Ottoman State some efforts were made to change and “Westernize” the Ottoman State and its educational institutions. Since the beginning of the 17th century, the concept of reform, modernization, change, and westernization of the educational system have become part of the Turkish social, political, and educational life (Akyuz, 1994; Tarman, 2010 & 2008; Turan, 1997). The situation demanded that changes be effected in the traditional curriculum. Along with a theoretical understanding, practical operations had an important function in the military schools.

The Ottoman officials selected its first student for further study in Western Europe among the graduates of the military schools. From their ranks came the leading teachers for civilian as well as military schools throughout the years. The establishment of these military schools particularly during the 19th century, not only added a new group of institutions to the Empire’s educational system, but also provided a stimulating influence on educational thinking in general. They were a source of new ideas in curriculum and method. They directly influenced many of the civilian schools. “During the famous *Tanzimat* era (1839-1876), a Ministry of Education was established (1857). It promoted an extensive reorganization of the Ottoman state school system, including the elementary school (*rüşdiye*), lower and secondary school (*idadiye* and *sultaniye*), and the university. Some pioneering work in girls’ education was initiated, while some progress was even made during the more conservative reign of Abdülhamid II (1876-1909). The first modern university in the Muslim world was founded with the *Darülfünun* (1900) in Istanbul. During the last decade of the Ottoman Empire (1908-1918), in the second constitutional period (*Meşrutiyet*)—a pedagogical method with emphasis upon *terbiye*, (i.e., didacticism and education, rather than *maarif* (knowledge), was fostered” (Gazo, 1996, p. 3).

The Republican Era

The declaration of the Republic has brought a big change to the fundamental structure of the state, to its aims and functions. The educational system has become the central command for this change (Tarman, 2008 & 2010). Since then, the Ministry of National Education System is responsible for the performance, supervision and auditing of all educational services, on behalf of the Government in conformity with the provisions of the Basic Law of National Education.

From the beginning of the republican era to present, the curriculum has been regulated several times in the following years: 1924; 1926, 1930, 1932, 1936, 1948, 1962, 1968, 1989, 1993, 1999 and 2005.

For the elementary schools, the main purpose was to prepare the young people for their local and national needs as “good citizens” in 1926 curriculum (MEB, 1926).

The 1926 curriculum was a kind of reform in terms of principle, method, course and subject both as a form (structure) and content (Gülcan and et al., 2003). In this curriculum there are some concepts such as social studies, inclusive (integrated) education, school for work. These concepts are emphasized in John Dewey's first report about the modernization of Turkish Education system written in 1924 (Dewey, 1939; Kazamias, 1966). The objectives of the 1926 curriculum was stated that elementary school would educate young generation such a citizen that they would actively contribute to the society where they live. Characteristics of a good citizen and how well a good citizen would actively contribute to his society weren't expressed well in this sentence which tells the objectives of the curriculum. Especially in the first period, "integrated instruction" principle was accepted in all courses pivoting on life (existence) and society. In the 1926 curriculum, objectives of each course and main features of a method to be applied in education were implied (MEB, 1926). During that time *History*, *Geography* and *Civic* were taught in the 4th and 5th grades as core subjects, and two hours a week was devoted for each one. Here are the titles of some subjects in the 1926 social studies curriculum; our behaviors in the classroom, at school and outside the school, our house, followed direction between our house and school, encountered objects/items on the followed route, our body and cleanliness, farming and time spent on the farm, seasons, orchard, garden, visiting carpenters and forger's shops, our winter clothes, winter pastime, state organization, post, telegraph, sanitation, main diseases, agricultural experience in the school garden, forests. (Journal of Ministry of Culture, 1937)

On the 1932, 1936 and 1936 curricula, some other principles added for the purpose of the education such as providing the best mental and physical habits to the students, and teaching how to be well adopted for Turkish nation and the republic (MEB, 1930 & 1932).

In those years, the courses were offered under the same names as in 1926 but with, one hour reduction for *Civic* in the 5th grades. In 1962, instead of *History*, *Geography and Civics*, the names of the courses were changed as "Society and Country Studies" with the allocation of 6 hours a week for the 4th grade, and 5 hours a week for the 5th grade (MEB, 1962). The name, "Society and Country Studies", was changed to "Social Studies" in 1968 with the allocation of 5 hours a week for both the 4th and 5th grades (MEB, 1968).

As for the middle schools, *History* and *Geography* was offered under their own names. *History* was offered two hours a week in the 6th & 7th grades and three hours in the 8th grade until 1938. Between 1938 and 1949, it was two hours a week for each class. *Geography*, on the other hand, was offered 2 hours a week in the 6th grade while one hour in the 7th & 8th grades in 1924. In the 1927, 1930, 1931 and 1949 curricula, it was 2 hours a week for the 6th & 7th grades while one hour for the 8th grade. In 1968, instead of *History*, *Geography and Civics*, the names of the courses were changed as "Social Studies" with the allocation of 5 hours a week for the 6th & 7th grades and 4 hours a week for the 8th grade (MEB, 1968).

In the 1968 social studies curriculum was practiced nearly 30 years and the main purpose of the program was to create citizens believing that Turkish Republic is a national, democratic and social country based on human rights, and that Turkish Republic has an indivisible integrity with its land and people, and is a creative

member of the world community (MEB, 1968). The name of the subject called “Studies on Society and Country” was changed into “Social Studies”. The most important improvement with this curriculum was that the concept of integration provided for social studies course in the previous curriculum. With this curriculum, social studies and science studies courses besides life studies course were accepted as a main course. In this curriculum, all of the objectives were student-centered (Akbaba, 2004; Öztürk, 2006).

The following topics have been taught in the *6 grade History class*: Definition and importance of history and its place among other sciences; The importance of Central Asia in the formation of civilizations and the roles Turks played; The civilizations established in Central Asia spreading around as Chinese, Indian, Egyptian and Anatolian civilizations; The formation of the Mediterranean Civilizations; The relationship between the Aegean and Roman civilizations and the Eastern civilizations; The political and cultural development of Turks in Central Asia; History of Islam and its influence on the civilization of the world; Contributions that Turks made to Islam upon becoming Muslims; and Europe, the church and the feudal system during the Medieval ages.

The 7th Grades History Class: Turkish History starting with Turks coming to Anatolia in the 11th century (there was a left out section: The Ottoman Empire - its development, culture and civilization); Western Asia and Europe during the same period; History of Europe given within the framework of geographical discoveries, Renaissance and reforms. These are correlated with the Ottoman Empire in the 17th and 18th centuries; and the Reformation in the Ottoman Empire.

The 8th Grade History Class: Political, institutional and cultural development of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th Century; Tripoli and Balkan Wars, Europeans aiming at the Ottoman Empire; Evaluation of the World War I from the perspectives of Europe-World and the Ottoman Empire; The evaluation of the effects of the World War I on the Ottoman Empire and the relationship with The War of Independence; The War of Independence and Ataturk, and his characteristics; The universal, humanistic properties and the dynamism of Ataturk’s ideas.

The fundamental structure of Turkish National Educational System has been set up by the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and the Basic Law of National Education (2010). The following are the current constitutional principles underlining the Turkish Educational System (Eurydice, 2010; MEB, 2003):

- 1- Universality and equality
- 2- Fulfillment of individual and social needs
- 3- Freedom to choice
- 4- Right to education
- 5- Equality and opportunity
- 6- Education for all throughout life
- 7- Adherence to Ataturk’s reform principles
- 8- Education for democracy
- 9- Secularism
- 10- Scientific approach
- 11- Educational planning

- 12- Co-education
- 13- School-parent cooperation
- 14- Education everywhere (as supplementary to schooling)

As for the current Social Studies Curriculum, Turkey's candidacy for full EU membership has made it compulsory to make reforms in the field of education including Social Studies Curriculum. Therefore, "special attention is given to the recent curriculum reform of 2005 and the new Social Studies textbooks that have been redesigned as an aspect of Turkey seeking admission to the European Union. The Ministry of Education policy statements about the new curriculum and textbooks involve a claim that they promote critical thinking and open-mindedness, along with a student-centred approach" (Esen, 2007, p. 3). The new approach is closely related with the educational philosophy of Dewey and the Progressivism which will be examined in the second part of this study. In the 2005 elementary education curriculum, teachers were accepted merely as a guide instead of being as a transmitter (conveyor) of the knowledge in the social studies course. In the 2005 social studies course program, human being was mentioned as a whole with his biological, physiological, social and cultural sides, and both as a subject and as an object of the change. Therefore, three main teaching field/area including "individual", "society" and "nature" were stated, change was thought to be overall dimension covering all these learning fields. Changing role of teacher as a guide and child centered approach are the main features of progressive education as John Dewey stated in his writings at the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1924, Ataturk invited Dewey to examine and analyze the Turkish Educational System and make recommendations for restructuring and reorganizing the existing the educational system. Dewey accepted this invitation and went to Turkey in July 15, 1924 completing his visit on the 18th of September. At this point, one needs to ask: why did Ataturk invite Dewey to examine and analyze the Turkish educational system other than someone else? What was his importance? What is his belief on educational systems? What was his role on the modern Turkish Curriculum? The following part aims to find out answers to those questions.

John Dewey & His Beliefs on Educational Systems and His Impact on the Modernization of the Turkish Educational System

John Dewey was an American psychologist, philosopher, educator, social critic and political activist. Dewey's work is associated with philosophical pragmatism and he is one of the founders of the progressive movement in education. Dewey believed that education must engage with and enlarge experience. Education must be an exploration of thinking and reflection. Education must be an interaction with and an environment for learning. Education must be a democracy where all share in a common life that provides associational settings (Dewey, 1916).

Before he went to Columbia University as professor of philosophy in 1904, Dewey had been a professor of pedagogy at the University of Chicago, home of the "laboratory school" where he attempted to put into practice the ideas of "progressive education" formulated in *The School and Society (1900)* and *Democracy and Education (1916)*. Dewey's orientation was experimental, seeking the practical verification of hypotheses through ceaseless innovation.

The key to understanding Dewey on democracy is his understanding of governance. It is a way of life, an ethical ideal, and a personal commitment. Specifically, it is a way of life in which individuals are presumed to be self directing and able to pursue their own goals and projects. No society which maintains order through constant supervision and/or coercion can be rightly called democratic. Further, individual benefit and the common good are mutually enhancing in a democracy (Dewey, 1916; 1989; 2002).

The central focus of Dewey's criticism of the tradition of ethical thought is its tendency to seek solutions to moral and social problems in dogmatic principles and simplistic criteria which, in his view, were incapable of dealing effectively with the changing requirements of human events.

The social condition for the flexible adaptation that Dewey believed was crucial for human advancement is a democratic form of life, not instituted merely by democratic forms of governance, but by the inculcation of democratic habits of cooperation and public spiritedness, productive of an organized, self-conscious community of individuals responding to society's needs by experimental and inventive, rather than dogmatic, means. The development of these democratic habits, Dewey argues in *School and Society* (1900) and *Democracy and Education* (1916) must begin in the earliest years of a child's educational experience. Dewey rejected the notion that a child's education should be viewed as merely a preparation for civil life, during which disjoint facts and ideas are conveyed by the teacher and memorized by the student only to be utilized later on. The school should rather be viewed as an extension of civil society and continuous with it, and the student encouraged to operate as a member of a community, actively pursuing interests in cooperation with others. It is by a process of self-directed learning, guided by the cultural resources provided by teachers that Dewey believed a child is best prepared for the demands of responsible membership within the democratic community (Dewey, 1900;1916).

Dewey's educational philosophy proposes a child-oriented curriculum which promotes problem-solving strategies, conflict resolutions, critical thinking, and negotiation skills towards moderation; in short, towards the development of a mature adult human being, within the context of rights, obligations, and political freedom, to exercise those rights and obligations. Dewey's progressive perspective promotes the interaction between the child and its environment; it aims not at containment, but at open-mindedness towards risk and possibilities, which open the gateway of free choice and opportunity. Life is full of risks and there is no fail-safe insurance company or agent that can guarantee success without risk—failure is always a possibility within the context of trial and error. Dewey's pedagogy promotes change, development, and the progress of individuals and their respective societies (Dewey, 1900; 1916).

Dewey's concern was with the ideas implied by a democratic society and the application of these ideas to education. "The price that democratic societies will have to pay for their continuing health," Dewey argued, "is the elimination of an oligarchy—the most exclusive and dangerous of all—that attempts to monopolize the benefits of intelligence and the best methods for the profit of a few privileged ones" (1913, p. 127).

Dewey's Impact on the Modernization of Turkish Curriculum

In this part, under the light of Dewey's philosophy and his two reports on Turkish education, I intend to discuss the significance of Dewey's educational mission to Turkey.

Dewey's visit came at a time of social, cultural, and political transformation of Turkey. Atatürk invited Dewey in order to receive advice that would provide ideas with reforms and recommendations benefiting the Turkish educational system and propelling it towards a modern educational establishment. Therefore, Atatürk asked Dewey to survey the country's educational system and to recommend ways for its improvement (Dykhuizen 1973, Büyükdevenci, 1995) Atatürk must have been fully aware of Dewey's stature and significance in the United States and around the World (Gert and Miedema, 1996). Dewey had gained world-wide recognition, although a little less in an elite-conscious Europe, for his progressive education project conducted in Chicago. "Progressive education" was a label associated with Dewey. Progressive meant the battle against a classical curriculum, entertained in elite institutions of Europe for the children of the elite. Progressive also meant the reformation of a classical curriculum towards educating the majority, the citizens of a country contributing to the basic foundation of a democratic society. The most essential element for a democratic society was seen to be the literacy of the masses, boys and girls alike, for without literacy democracy is not possible. It was on that common ground that Dewey met Atatürk in the summer of 1924 in Ankara, Turkey (Gazo, 1996).

"After spending two months analyzing the educational system, Dewey prepared two reports. In the first report, which was written in Turkey, he made recommendations for better teaching training and the funding of education. In the second report, which he wrote in the United States, he made specific recommendations for the formation and an execution of educational plan, the development of schools as community centers, the reorganization of the Ministry of Public Instruction, the training and treatment of teachers, the redefinition of the school system, the improvement of health and hygiene issues in schools, the improvement of the discipline, and other areas of schooling" (Turan 1997, p. 4).

In the preliminary report, which is short, just seven pages for print, was submitted by John Dewey to the Turkish Government in September of 1924. It includes urgent suggestions for issues to be studied by commission of inquiry. (Dewey, 1939). Dewey starts his report by emphasizing the importance of improvement of teachers with the most progressive and efficient pedagogical methods "since without doubt the great body of teachers are earnest and sincere and since no real improvement of education can be made without improvement in the preparation of the teachers, both in scholarship and an acquaintance with the most progressive and efficient pedagogical methods in use in other parts of the world" (Dewey, 1983 as cited in Turan 1997).

In reports, Dewey advised against hurried and premature educational reforms. He insisted on the necessity for careful and extensive studies by Turkish educators; studies which would lead to a gradual formulation of a national educational plan by the nations' own leaders and experts. In some respects this recommendation

constitutes the most noteworthy aspect of his reports, and one which distinguishes him from most of the other foreign consultants. He thought that the existing educational system could be continued for another year or two, during which time the Ministry could set up a number of study commissions, gather data both at home and abroad, train needed specialists and then launch an eight or ten-year educational plan. He hoped that such studies and the resulting program could proceed without any kind of political influence.

In the “Report,” Dewey restates his fundamental educational conviction by emphasizing the dignity and respect that is due to the child. This is certainly a modern child, to be respected in terms of its own specific development towards a mature reasonable human being. Thus, the relevant remarks formulated in the “Report” are:

The great weakness of almost all schools, a weakness not confined in any sense to Turkey, is the separation of school studies from the actual life of children and the conditions and opportunities of the environment. The school comes to be isolated and what is done there does not seem to the pupils to have anything to do with the real life around them, but to form a separate and artificial world (p. 293).

This text reaffirms Dewey’s conviction in his progressive school ideas, worked out at the turn of the century in his Chicago school laboratory. In Chicago, huddled masses from Eastern Europe, and elsewhere, were to be integrated into the mainstream of American society; whereas, in Turkey, it was to be the rural peasants of Anatolia who were to be integrated into a great experiment, an enlightened and democratic Republic arising out of the ashes of a devastated Empire. Transforming the “Sick Man of Europe” (The Ottoman State) into a blossoming youth was no mean achievement, accomplished by Ataturk and many patriotic Turks. According to Gazo (1996) Dewey made some contributions to that transformation process, the great enlightenment experiment in Anatolia, even if only in a small measure. “His most visible impact was best observed in the policies and practices in the training of village teachers. The Village Institutes Project—launched in the early 1940s to introduce a model specific to Turkey—was extensively based on Dewey’s recommendations” (Uygun, 2008, p. 291).

Based on Dewey’s philosophy, education, as an institution of social engineering, provides society with a means to correct extremities of passions (Dewey, 1900; 1916; 1989; 2002). Thus, the educational system must be viewed as a social reconstruction promoting a democratic society (Dewey, 1916). Dewey pictured a democratic order for Turkey as well. He was aware, of course, that the newly-founded Republic of Turkey had to deal with different historical presuppositions, being of Turkish, Westernized (Modernized) or Islamic origin. But, he was convinced that, despite this, a democratic order, with its heart occupied by education, would turn out to be of universal value.

In general, the recommendations made by Dewey are historically significant in the development of the Turkish educational system. John Dewey “as a philosopher of education is still continuing to influence of the Turkish Education theoretically through his ideas on education, especially Pragmatism” (Büyükdüvenci, 1995, p. 23). Nevertheless, “it is difficult to practice his recommendations in a country where the

philosophy of education is strictly based on an “official state ideology” in a very centralized educational system” (Biesta & Miedema, 1996 as cited in Turan 1997, p. 19). However, Turkey’s candidacy for full EU membership has made it compulsory to make reforms in the field of education. The recent efforts made by the officials of Ministry of National Education to restructure the education system to meet with the EU’s standards has promising to show that almost 90 years later, Dewey’s recommendations seems to be understood and started to be implemented in the Turkish Educational System.

“The concept of competence has come to the attention in the context of European education policy due to a fundamental change in the way which education and knowledge is understood in the context of globalization and a rapidly changing work environment. Recent schooling policies in general are less orientated towards input and the process of knowledge transfer from one generation to the next. Instead they are tending to focus more on output and individual competences that enable the person to be an active, autonomous and motivated learner within a lifelong learning context (Tiana 2004 cited in Hoskins et al., 2008). Therefore, the learning of competences has refocused attention on the whole individual, including their attitudes, values and skills as well as knowledge.” (Hoskins, et al. 2008, p.15). In this regard, the latest social studies curriculum developed in Turkey in 2004 would be a good example to indicate how Turkey strives to harmonize its education system with the EU’s educational policy.

In the late 1920s, the historical suggestions of Dewey to restructure the Turkish education were revolutionary at that time so that they were not welcomed by the Ministry of Education officials since Dewey put emphasis on the importance of the social and cultural context of schools, and the local control of education (Ata, 2002; Bal, 1991). The top down reform efforts and domination of a single pattern and ideology purposely disregarded the culture of people. Consequently, the people lost trust in educational reform efforts and its leadership. However, today, it is obvious to realize that Dewey’s educational philosophy has a considerable impact on the modernization of Turkish educational system. For instance, most recently, projects like *Project of Democracy Education in Schools* are formulated to implement his views on democratic and progressive education (Uygun, 2008).

Conclusion

In this study I examined historical documents to understand the development of the social studies curriculum in Turkey and Dewey’s impact on the modernization of social studies curriculum and the Turkish educational system. Findings show that Dewey had a considerable impact on the transformation of Turkish education system from a traditional to a modern one. From Republic to present, social studies curriculum was changed periodically according to the social, economic and political needs and expectations of the period of its time. These changes were made chronically in 1924, 1926, 1930; 1932; 1936, 1948, 1962; 1968 and finally in 2005. While the Social studies programs has been revised or changed several times in the past, these changes occurred either by the direct influence of educational committees and educational councils or by the direct influence of foreign educational consultants like John Dewey.

The 1924 social studies curriculum carries the traces of temporary curriculum, which newly founded Republic of Turkey implemented without determining the current situation and practiced only for two years. This program focused on creating new and loyal citizens by using new values like nationalism, change, westernization and refusing dominance of religion (Öztürk, 2006; Üstel, 2004). Therefore, General Turkish History was given more importance than the histories of Islam and Ottoman Empire. This program also reflected essentialist perspective and employed teacher- and textbook-oriented education for social studies (Öztürk, 2006).

The 1926 social studies curriculum is the one, which completed political reform process and was mostly shaped by the suggestions of American educationalist John Dewey. He suggested in his first report (written in 1924) that education should be functional, practical, and related to real life. As a consequence of his recommendations, the Turkish Board of Education was founded in 1926 with the aim of developing improved teaching programs. Because of Dewey's influence, pragmatism became the main philosophy of the program. A new course called life studies was created for the first three years of primary schools by combining topics of history, geography, civics, science and nature classes (Ata, 1998). Turkish revolution and consciousness of citizenship were highly emphasized with the 1936 social studies curriculum. The 1948 social studies curriculum was designed to teach knowledge with overloaded content due to the increase in the number of subjects.

In the 1968 social studies curriculum was practiced nearly 30 years and the main purpose of the program was to create citizens believing that Turkish Republic is a national, democratic and social country based on human rights, and that Turkish Republic has an indivisible integrity with its land and people, and is a creative member of the world community (MEB, 1968). The name of the subject called "Studies on Society and Country" was changed into "Social Studies".

The 1998 social studies curriculum is generally a framework curriculum developed under the influence of behaviorist approach. The key concepts of former programs such as nationalism, secularism, patriotism, republicanism remained in their positions in the 1998 program. European Union norms and Western perspective affected the construction of program as well (MEB, 1998).

The 2005 social studies program has been developed based on the progressive and constructivist approach along with harmonization process with European Union. The program was designed by using interdisciplinary and thematic approaches and spiral principles. Concepts, skills and values were emphasized in the program with the modern pedagogical strategies, methods and techniques. With this last and current program, educational technologies are emphasized with alternative measurement and assessment models such as performance based assessment which is based on process of learning rather than results (MEB, 2005; Şahin, 2009). The recent efforts made by the officials of Ministry of National Education to restructure the education system to meet with the EU's standards has promising to show that almost 90 years later, Dewey's recommendations seems to be understood and started to be implemented in the Turkish Educational System.

One may ask what relevance Dewey's progressive philosophy of education has for contemporary Turkey. The reply may turn out as follows:

- Turkey need not adjust wholesale Dewey's entire educational suggestions;
- Turkey should make realistic adjustments of Dewey's pedagogy, taking into consideration the special conditions that exist in the Turkish society;
- Turkey's present ideas ought to encourage loyalty to its national identity in order to support a healthy psychology of its people not in a "standardized" manner, but in a spirit of a community of justice, freedom, and equal opportunity for boys and girls as well as for men and women (Gazo, 1996).

Consequently, education is a catalyst and designer for social change in a country. Especially, formal and non-formal educational institutions as in Turkey speed up the social change very rapidly. That is why Ataturk invited Dewey to investigate the Turkish educational system to accelerate the social, cultural and educational transformation of the new republic. In contemporary Turkey, as the population increases and the social life changes, the educational demands of the modern Turkish society are inevitably raising. Dewey's impact on the Turkish educational system is still visible as the present policymakers clearly make references to his works. Especially, with the current Social Studies Curriculum which was started to be implemented in 2005. This relatively "new" curriculum evidently emphasizes the importance of Dewey's Progressive pedagogy to the teaching of social studies education. Examining the historical development of social studies curriculum, (specifically this current social studies curriculum) proves that Dewey's educational philosophy has a considerable impact on the new curriculum and modernization of Turkish educational system.

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