

## **Can Progressive Education Be Translated into a Progressive Idea?: Dewey's Report on Turkish Education (1924)**

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### **Abstract**

John Dewey, who visited Turkey in 1924, prepared a report on Turkish Education in which he emphasized the importance of progressive education. The report was translated into Turkish. However, the translated version does not transform the idea of 'progressive education,' and the concept of 'progressive' education has hardly been discussed as a philosophical approach in Turkish education system, instead remained to be a term that has been interpreted with different corresponding words in Turkish at different times. This paper focuses on the discrepancy between the English and Turkish versions of the term "progressive" as a philosophy of education, and the implications Dewey's report created in teacher education along with non-progressive practices in the field of education in Turkey.

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*"How often misused words generate misleading thoughts."*

— Herbert Spencer, **Principles of Ethic**

**Introduction**

John Dewey (1859-1952), American philosopher of education and Father of 'progressive education' visited Turkey in the summer of 1924, and he prepared two reports on Turkish education reflecting his observations and suggestions on how to improve the quality of education in Turkey. (Varış, 1996; Wolf-Gazo, 1996). Dewey submitted his first two-page Report, which is referred as the 'Preliminary Report', at the end of his visit prior to his departure, and then he sent in a more comprehensive version upon his return to the States. According to Binbaşıoğlu (1999), the reports have been printed four times since they were first issued, two of them by the journal of Ministry of Education in 1925 and 1928. However, in Bal(1991), the same reports are said to be published jointly by the Ministry of Education in 1939 for the first time. The translator of the 1939 addition is unknown<sup>1</sup>. In his report, Dewey emphasized the importance of progressive education for which he had gained worldwide recognition with the Laboratory School that "he founded and directed at Chicago (1894-1904)" (Wirth, 1967). In his article "John Dewey in Turkey: An Educational Mission," Ernest Wolf-Gazo (1996) states that

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 (p.16).

The curriculum rationale of his Laboratory School was that "a primary task of formal education was to help the young develop insight into the events that were transforming the human situation" (Wirth, 1967). Dewey's report of 1924 on Turkish education reflects the very same philosophy and suggestions to raise the standards of schools as educational facilities and teacher education as steps to be taken for a comprehensive reform in Turkish education. The report that was later translated in 1939 (reprinted in 1952) and in 1987 by different translators and has been widely read by the educational sciences scholars in Turkey; Dewey's ideas inspired many others to pursue a similar course of action, i.e. student-centered, relevant to life and centered around the interest of a child, in creating educational reforms<sup>3</sup>. However, when we take a look at the translation of the report, both the 1939 and 1987 versions, the word 'progressive' does not seem to be consistently translated. Instead, other synonyms or interpretive words of similar association were used throughout the text inconsistently. Thus, what Dewey tried to communicate via the concept of "progressive education" in the report still remains to be unclear and untranslated as it was meant to be a philosophical school of thought for educational reform.

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<sup>1</sup> Türkiye Maarifi Hakkında Rapor, (Report and Recommendation upon Turkish Education) 1952.

<sup>2</sup> 1987 version of the Report has been translated by Vedat Günyol, a prominent Turkish literary figure and scholar.

<sup>3</sup> These are the main pillars of the constructivist approach that the Board of Education of Turkish Ministry of National Education, has recently adopted in the new curriculum for the primary education.

## Method

The interest of this study is in the various interpretations of Dewey's idea of 'progressive education' which was a reaction to an elitist understanding of education and thus innovative for its time, as it finds its voice in the text translated into Turkish. The study displays a qualitative interpretive inquiry using a critical historical approach to understand the dynamics of a report and its implications on Turkish education system prepared by an American scholar in the early Republican era.

For the text analyses, I used both the 1939 (reprinted in 1952) and the 1987 versions for comparative purposes. The 1987 Turkish version of Dewey's Report was published as an appendix to the translation of Freedom and Culture by Vedat Günyol (Bal, 1991). The reverse translations are mine as the author of the study.

## Study

Cross-cultural exchange of ideas do not always translate into the best corresponding meaning of words and terms in the target language due to the syntactic and lexicological differences between the target language and the source language. Therefore, more often than we realize, the message received may not be decoded with the same emphasis and intention of the word used in the encoded language. Translation creates interlingual impediments in the transformation of ideas from one language to another.

However, according to Malmkjaer (2005), "the word is only occasionally and incidentally the effective unit of translation: words in texts tend to operate in unison, and it is generally more helpful to speak of stretches of text (of varying length and composition) when discussing translation units. It is this problem with the notion of the word which underlies the distinction, traditionally drawn in writings on translation, between translation word-for word and translation sense-for-sense" (87). Following a similar line of thinking with Malmkjaer, it is appropriate to say that the word 'progressive' in the report was not translated as word-for-word translation for accuracy, but rather, sense-for-sense translation for creativity in both versions of Turkish translation.

For the purposes of this study, I will point out the discrepancy the words that are used in place of "progressive" create between the original report and the Turkish version in its entirety. I will also look into why and how the word "progressive education" had been left out of the context throughout the translated version of the report and in other works of Dewey translated by Turkish scholars. The analyses will include the philosophy of education in Turkey in the early Republican era and of today to compare the administrative perspectives both then at present times.

## An Overview of Dewey's Work Translated into Turkish

The only work of Dewey's that was translated into Turkish prior to his arrival in Turkey was *School and Society*. The same book was translated again in 1930 in a simplified and revised version. The following is a list of translated works by Dewey:

- **School and Society** (1899) (1920 –14<sup>th</sup> print edition was used for translation): *Mektep ve Cemiyet*, translated by B. Avni in 1924 in Arabic script; in 1930 with new Turkish Alphabet.

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<sup>4</sup> I had a chance to interview with Vedat Günyol on the Report on May 30, 2004, shortly before he passed away on July 9, 2004.

- **Democracy and Education** (1916): first translated in 1928 by Avni (Başman)<sup>5</sup> as *Demokrasi ve Terbiye*. 2<sup>nd</sup> translation by M. Salih Oturan in 1996, and by Professor Dr. Tahsin Yılmaz in 1996 as *Demokrasi ve Eğitim*.
- **Schools of Tomorrow** (1929): *Yarının Mektepleri*, translated by Professor S. Celal Antel in 1938.
- **Experience and Education** (1938): *Tecrübe ve Eğitim* translated by Dr. Fatma Başaran and Dr. Fatma Varış in 1966.
- **Freedom and Culture** (1939): *Özgürlük ve Kültür* translated by Vedat Günyol in 1952, reprinted in 1964 and 1987. (1987 version includes the translation of the Reports in modern Turkish.)

### Historical and Political Background to Dewey's Visit

The Caliphate, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and religious schools were abolished on March 3, 1924, the religious courts followed suit a month later on April 8, 1924. What that meant was that the public education in Turkey would be administered by the Ministry of Education, not by religious foundations. This was a tremendous step towards creating a secular society and wiping away the remnants of the educational institutions that fed the autocratic regime.

The year 1924, the year of Dewey's visit to the newly established Republic of Turkey, was a dramatic year in general, as much as for educational reforms. A law for the Unification of Instruction (Tevhid-i Tedrisat) unified entire Turkish school system. This meant that all educational institutions were placed under the control of the Ministry of Education. [...] Furthermore, co-education was introduced at the ministry level during the academic year 1923-1924. No doubt, this law, as well as others in due time, was to be a part of a vast legalistic promotion to secularize Turkey. (Wolf-Gazo, 19)

The separation of church and state in the context of reforming education was a crucial combination of efforts in the historical context that they were orchestrated, and undoubtedly, those efforts did not go without any opposition domestically and internationally. However, Dewey's accounts regarding the abolition of the Caliphate in the article he wrote during his stay in Turkey, *Secularizing a Theocracy*, are to the point and historically accurate:

In the United States and in western Europe the abolition of the Caliphate, the closing of the mosque schools and the assumption of the revenues of the pious Moslem foundations aroused misgivings as well as amazement. Was not the new republic going too fast? [...] Upon the ground, in Constantinople, perhaps the most surprising thing is the total absence of all such misgivings and queries. The move appears a simple, natural, inevitable thing. It presents itself as an integral and necessary step in the process of forming a national state after the western model. To question it would be to question the whole course of European history for the last three centuries. What has been effected in the rest of Europe is now taking place in the former Ottoman empire. [...] It is a stage in one of those revolutions which do not go backward. (The Middle Works, 128-129)

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<sup>5</sup> Binbaşıoğlu (2005) reports its date as 1927. (p.171)

Both Atatürk's political revolutions and Dewey's stance before them, and creating educational changes that would continue the 'progress' were in tune with the design of a democratic society in the young Republic of Turkey. However, there was still much to do. In 1924, the schools were still using Arabic script as the alphabet. The alphabet reform which introduced the new script with Latin letters became law in November 1928. Lord Kinross points out the social and educational implications of alphabet reform as follows:

Introducing it into the Assembly as the 'key which would enable the people of Turkey to read and write easily.' The objective was to create a literate population—from those who could not read and write at all to those who could do so only in the old characters. Within a year more than a million citizens received their diploma (Kinross, 444).

The change of alphabet facilitated the raising of literacy rate in the nation; however, the language was still pervaded by Arabic and Persian vocabulary and syntax. To complete a momentous revolution in education and language, the Turkish Linguistic Society was founded in July 1932 to improve, develop, enrich, and reform the Turkish language by eliminating Arabic and Persian words and forms.<sup>6</sup>

### **Dewey's Visit to Turkey**

Dewey was invited to Turkey in 1923 by Ismail Safa Bey, Minister of Education, immediately after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Dewey came to Turkey in July 1924 and among the places he visited were Istanbul University, some high schools, Teacher Training Schools and vocational affiliations. Before his departure for the capital, Ankara, Dewey prepared a press release in which he clearly stated the purpose of his visit. He said that he was in Turkey not to impose his ideas or an education system, which was foreign to the people and to the culture but rather, based on his own observations, to recommend a system for Turkey that would be formed by bringing several positive aspects of the systems in various countries. His intention was to understand Turkish education first and then solve its problems with universal principles later.<sup>7</sup>

Dewey met with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and first President of the Republic, in Ankara and spent ten days there before going to Istanbul until September. Atatürk's and Dewey's ideas about development and progress were similar. Atatürk had geared all his action and thoughts toward creating a modern Turkey fully equipped with all the democratic institutions of a sovereign nation (Cohen, 1983).

Dewey prepared two reports at the end of his visit. While he was still in Istanbul he wrote the first Report (Preliminary Report) which was essentially an advisory memorandum for an urgent need to raise teachers' salaries. The second report (Report and Recommendation upon Turkish Education) was written after he returned to the United States.

Dewey's Report about Turkish education was never seriously considered for implementation by either by Ismail Safa Bey, or by successors, Vasif Bey, and Abdullah Suphi Bey. The reports were first translated into Turkish in 1939 during the administration of Hasan Ali Yucel between 1938-1946, known to be one of the most reformist and progressive ministers of education of Turkey. It was during that time when Dewey's suggestions in the report were partially fulfilled by opening teacher training schools

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<sup>6</sup> The language used in the 1939 translation of the Report sounds almost like written in a foreign language to the young generation of Turks.

<sup>7</sup> "Profesör Dewey'in beyanatı" (Professor Dewey's Statement) in *Cumhuriyet*, August 16, 1924.

called ‘village institutes<sup>8</sup>.’ (Binbaşioğlu, 1999). In “Education in 75 Years,” (1999) a collection of articles on history of Turkish Education, Sakaoglu states in his “Central Organization of Ministry of Education,” that although J. Dewey recommended that Ministry of Education should take the lead but refrain from becoming too bureaucratic with useless records, requiring and filing useless reports from others, Dewey’s warning must have been totally misunderstood, and consequently, the central building of the ministry was filled with reports for years, and finally everything was destroyed in a fire in 1946. Thus, the 1939 translation of Dewey’s report was destroyed as well (113).

The first version of the translation of the report was reprinted in 1952. “The English version appeared in 1960, after it had been lost for some time. The complete version [...] published for the first time in 1983 in Dewey’s Collected Works, volume 15” (Wolf-Gazo, 20).

Fay Kirby, an American who taught in Turkey between 1947-1950, was the harshest critique of Dewey’s Reports on Turkish education. She claimed that foreign scholars were far from contributing to Turkish education, for each one of them saw Turkey as an extension of his own country. She also stated that she did not believe Dewey understood the gist of Turkish political reforms (Bal, 1991).

Wolf-Gazo, on the other hand, underscores the relevance of Dewey’s philosophy to his visit to Turkey:

His daughter Jane M. Dewey pointed out, in an autobiographical section of the first volume of the famous Schlipp series of the Library of Living Philosophers dedicated to Dewey, that “His visits to Turkey in 1924 and to Mexico in 1926 confirmed his belief in the power and necessity of education to secure revolutionary changes for the benefit of the individual, so that they cannot become mere alterations in the external form of a nation’s culture. It may be said that Dewey contributed to such a revolutionary change in Turkey, a nation steeped in traditional forms, by offering ideas that helped guide it toward becoming a modern, dynamic society. Although Dewey’s visit was short, his mission was more intense. (p.16).

Again, it is obvious that what Dewey was trying to achieve at the American elementary school within his progressive school project in Chicago was in an historical conjunction with what needed to be done in Turkey for Turkish education. “Dewey was, no doubt, the right man, at the right place to give advice” (Wolf-Gazo, 17).

Carl Cohen who wrote the introduction to volume 15 of *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, which includes the Report on Turkish Education, testifies to Wolf-Gazo’s statement as follows:

Turkey was a principal object of John Dewey’s attention during the period in this volume. In part this was but one manifestation of his catholic interest in international affairs. [...] The new government looked to America, and invited John Dewey to come to Turkey [...] to examine the Turkish school system, and to make recommendations to the government for its improvement and modernization. [...] In his deliberations on Turkish matters Dewey is unfailingly hopeful, but never sanguine. [...] Transforming what had so recently been a medieval theocracy, ruled by the Sultanate, into a modern nation on the Western model, while retaining the richness of its cultural traditions, could not be easy. (Cohen, xix-xx)

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<sup>8</sup> Those schools were not long-lived and they were closed when Reşat Şemsettin Sirer became Minister of Education after Hasan Ali Yücel.(İlhan Başgöz, 1995, 246)

### The Wording in the English Version of the Report

The word “progressive” was used a total of twelve times in the “Preliminary Report” and the “Report and Recommendations.” The language of both reports, the one written in Turkey and the one sent back to Ankara by Dewey upon his return to the U.S., is clear and straightforward in the sense that it does not leave much room for vagueness or misinterpretation. The Report does not include any difficult vocabulary, and Dewey’s style does not sound either too scholarly or too subjective to the reader. Despite some long statements, and some convoluted expressions, the word “progressive” was consistently used in reference to “progressive education” that Dewey introduced to the discipline. Here are the word combinations where “progressive” was used in the Reports:

progressive and efficient pedagogical methods, progressive schools, progressive methods, progressive education, progressive countries, progressive development, industrial progress, progressive program, progressive schools, progressive teachers, progressive pedagogical ideas, progressive teachers.

**Table 1**  
*Comparison of Wording in 1939 (Reprinted in '52) and 1987 Translations*

English	1939 ('52) Translation	1987 Translation	Reverse Translation (of '87 version)
1. <b>Progressive</b> and efficient pedagogy <sup>a</sup>	(...) muessir pedogojik usuller	<b>yetkin</b> egitim yontemleri	“progressive” is missing ( <i>inadequate translation</i> )
2. <b>progressive</b> school <sup>b</sup>	<b>müterakki</b> mektepler	<b>İlerlemiş</b> okullar	<b>developed schools</b>
3. <b>progressive</b> methods <sup>c</sup>	<b>müterakki</b> usuller	<b>ileri</b> usuller	<b>advanced</b> methods
4. <b>progressive</b> education <sup>d</sup>	inkisafla <b>terakki</b> etmesi	<b>Gelişmesi</b>	<i>development</i>
5. <b>progressive</b> countries <sup>e</sup>	<b>müterakki</b> memleketler	<b>İleri</b> ülkeler	<b>Developed</b> countries
6. <b>progressive</b> development <sup>f</sup>	<b>mütekamil</b> inkisaf	<b>yetişkin</b> gelisme	<b>mature</b> development
7. industrial <b>progress</b> <sup>g</sup>	sanatçı <b>terakkiye</b>	Sanatçı <b>ilerleme</b>	artistic <b>progress</b>
8. <b>progressive</b> program <sup>h</sup>	<b>mütekamil</b> program	<b>gelişken</b> program	<b>Improving</b> program
9. <b>progressive</b> schools <sup>i</sup>	<b>mütekamil</b> mektep	<b>gelişken</b> okullar	<b>Improving</b> schools
10. <b>progressive</b> teachers <sup>j</sup>	<b>mütekamil</b> muallimler	<b>yetişkin</b> öğretmenler	<b>experienced</b> teachers
11. <b>progressive</b> pedagogical <sup>k</sup>	<b>mütekamil</b> terbiyevî fikirler	<b>yetkin</b> eğitim düşünceleri	<b>efficient</b> educational ideas
12. <b>progressive</b> teachers <sup>l</sup>	<b>mütekamil</b> muallimler	<b>yetkin</b> öğretmenler	<b>efficient</b> teachers

Table 1 Notes

<sup>a</sup> “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 in acquaintance with the most progressive and efficient pedagogical methods in use in other parts of the world.”  
(Preliminary Report)

<sup>b</sup> “The material should be mainly of a practical rather than of a theoretical character dealing with such topics as the equipment of school buildings, sanitation and hygiene, playgrounds, games, cheaply made equipment for the playgrounds, scientific and industrial apparatus that can be made in the school or the village, and about methods of teaching that have been found in actual experience to secure the initiative and self-activity of pupils; accounts of the methods used by **progressive** schools;”

<sup>c</sup> “The ordinary construction almost automatically prevents the adoption of **progressive** methods and restricts teachers and pupils to the use of text-books and blackboards, with at most the addition of a few maps, charts and material of object-lessons which are merely observed but not actively employed.”

<sup>d</sup> “No steady development of a **progressive** education is possible without buildings which have proper sanitary and toilet facilities, places for manual training, domestic science, drawing, and art, library, museum, etc.”

<sup>e</sup> “In any case this section should collect and study continually building plans from all the **progressive countries**, prepare detailed plans of various types of school buildings, and keep up with improvements to be introduced.”

<sup>f</sup> “Only when this is done is it possible to be clear upon the means to be used and to lay down a definite program of **progressive** and gradual development.”

<sup>g</sup> “Develop the traits and disposition of character, intellectual and moral, which fit men and woman for self-government, economic self-support and industrial progress, namely initiative and inventiveness, independence of judgment, ability to think scientifically and to cooperate for common purposes socially.”

<sup>h</sup> “To render it applicable over a term of years, it should be a graded or **progressive** program, indicating a series of steps to be undertaken in successive years, with respect to the opening of additional and new schools.”

<sup>i</sup> “Attention should be given to translating foreign educational literature especially that of **progressive** schools, giving accounts of practical methods, equipment, etc.”

<sup>j</sup> “They should therefore be selected from the most progressive teachers and be given a year or so to study methods in foreign countries and then be sent about, especially to the more backward districts, to give others the benefit of their knowledge and experience.”

<sup>k</sup> “The problem of attracting to the teaching profession the right kind of intelligent and devoted men and women and of equipping them with both knowledge of subjects taught and with modern and progressive pedagogical ideas is the crucial problem.”

<sup>l</sup> “The normal schools, both in the departments for teachers and in their attached practice schools should have the most progressive teachers in the country;”



As can be seen in the Table 1, the original work consistently uses the word “progressive” as a philosophical term to specify and define the nature of educational reforms that Turkey was advised to undertake reflecting Dewey’s own philosophy of progressive education. The published translation of the Report came fifteen years after its preparation, in 1939, for the first time. The copy used for this study was the 1952 reprint of the 1939 translation. Because the language reform was still on its way both when the Report was translated (the translator was not indicated on the Report) and when it was published, the language of the Report was almost archaic and difficult to understand especially for those generations born after 1960.

In the 1939 (1952) translation, the word “progressive” was translated into Turkish with three different, yet morphologically and lexicologically neighboring words<sup>9</sup>. An interesting point arises here. In a “reverse translation,” Lord Kinross uses the word “progressive” for an opposition party founded in March 1924. The original name of the political party in Turkish is Terakkiperver, which means “those who like progress” or “progressive.” In a similar line of thinking, the best word choice for the 1939 (1952) translation of the Report would be “terakki”, rather than “mütekamil” which means “developed” or “mature,” not “progressive.” The major problem in this translation is with the first line in the above table. “The most progressive and efficient pedagogical methods” were not fully translated, and in the Turkish version, the word “progressive” is completely left out. Although the language of the 1939 translation is archaic and difficult for modern-day readers, the accuracy and the consistency of the word choice in the translation does not cause a major diversion from the original meaning, despite the fact that it fails to come up with a term for ‘progressive’ throughout the text.

The “modern” version of the translation poses myriad of words corresponding to “progressive.” The confusion of terminology is at its peak, for all eleven “progressive”s seven different corresponding words used in Turkish translation. We can see this confusion in the “reverse translation” practice more clearly, and realize that the meaning inherent in the word “progressive” is lost in all seven attempts. One can easily assume that, what was done here was not a re-translation of the original text but a re-write of the earlier translation in modern Turkish<sup>10</sup>. As soon as a reverse translation practice is applied to the text, the final meaning of the word “progressive” becomes distantly relevant to what was intended in the original text due to the fact that seven different synonyms, or corresponding words, were used in the Turkish version. The range of meaning for “progressive” changes from “developed” to “advanced” to “mature” to “improved” to “experienced” and finally to “perfect.” This is all due to the fact that the word “progressive” was not used as a “term” to be protected with an accurate word choice as part of the discourse of Dewey’s philosophy of education so that it could be used consistently throughout the text.

### **The Word “Progressive” in Dewey’s Other Translated Works**

In the introduction to *Schools of Tomorrow*, a work that was translated into Turkish in 1938, “progressive education” was translated as “new training,” borrowing from its French translation “l’education nouvelle.” In *School and Society*, translated in 1939, the chapter entitled “The School and Social Progress” was translated as “Mektep ve İctimai Terakki” (School and Social Development), which

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<sup>9</sup> Although there is not a major discrepancy among the meanings of those three words (i.e., *müterakki*, *mütekamil*, *terakki*) the word *müterakki* is the best choice for the purpose signified by the word “progressive.”

<sup>10</sup> After I found out that Vedat Gunyol was the translator of the modern version of the Report in Bal (1991), I visited Vedat Gunyol on May 30, shortly before his death on 9 July 2004 and asked him why he translated “progressive” in seven different ways. He told me that he hardly used the original version in English as the source, rather he re-wrote the original translation in modern Turkish as he also referred to a text of the report in French (The day is documented with photos and with two other colleagues who were with me during the visit).

may not be considered a major deviation from the intended meaning, but still not consistent with the “progress” discourse.

In the translation of *Experience and Education*, “progressive education” was consistently used as “ileri eğitim” (advanced education).

In recent studies on Dewey written in Turkish and in the works of Dewey that were translated into Turkish, the tendency is to keep “progressive” as is, and use it as a term for the philosophy of education that Dewey advocated and became the godfather. In one of such works on Dewey in Turkish, the author, Huseyin Bal (1991) chooses the word “ilerlemeci” for “progressive” and I believe it is the closest and most accurate word among all other translations that can be used consistently if or when the original is not used.

### **Past and Present Day Implications of Dewey’s Recommendations**

The preliminary report and the subsequent report include and reflect Dewey’s educational mission as described in his idea of progressive education. In the report on Turkish education and during his visits “to China and Japan in the late 1910s and the early 1920s, he called for mutual understanding between the East and West for the cause of democracy” (Saito, 1758, 2003). Mentioning the difficulties of articulation and transformation of concepts in one language into the other, Saito brings up the cultural differences and the differences of mindset between the encoded and decoded versions of a newly iterated idea. As Saito (2003) questions the reasons why Dewey’s notion of democratic education was not welcomed in Japan, he delves into translation issues and the difficulties of cross-cultural mental framework that creates the gap of a common ground and he extends “Deweyan notion of the art of communication into the art of translation—translation as a specific mode of communication that at once highlights the gap between languages and driven by the hope of creating a common ground of conversation” (1770).

In his “Letter of Transmittal for Preliminary Report on Turkish Education,” Robert M. Scotten, First Secretary of the American Embassy in Istanbul during Dewey’s visit to Turkey, writes the following to the Secretary of State in Washington:

Professor Dewey was painfully impressed by the extreme centralization of the Turkish educational system. The present Minister is an incompetent and self-inflated Czar (the expression is not Professor Dewey’s, although I have no doubt he would agree to its accuracy) and is sparing no efforts to concentrate in his hand the whole educational administration. [...] Professor Dewey, while at Angora, had three interviews with the Minister of Public Instruction who showed himself quite willing to answer Professor Dewey’s questions, but by no means anxious to elicit or even receive Professor Dewey’s suggestions. It was apparent that the Minister had clearly in mind his own program for education in Turkey and was not particularly interested in ascertaining the views of an “advisor” foisted upon him by his predecessor. [...] So far as Turkey is concerned I fear the effects of Professor Dewey’s reports will be practically nil. [...] Until Turkey exchanges her naïve faith in grandiose theories for an actual and persistent putting into effect of certain practical and unsensational improvements nothing of real moment will be accomplished. (The Middle Works, 15, 419-420).

As self-explanatory as it is, the above letter is a perfect example to a naiveté of a kind that is different from what the First Secretary describes in his letter. Borrowing Rhodes’ words, “If the U.S. were to fulfill its democratic promise, so Dewey (and others) argued, the common will had to grow out of cooperative activity. It could not be imposed in a top-down fashion by a ruling elite”(143). Success of any reform cannot be dependent solely upon the novelties and solutions presented regarding the existing

system. A systemic change requires the communication, participation, cooperation, and dedication of all parties involved. Unless one of these strings holding the change breaks it becomes a very heavy burden for all the other parties to carry it to a sustainable level.

### **Conclusion**

The literature basically supports the aim of the study that the absence of an accurate translation for 'progressive education' in Dewey's reports on Turkish education was inadvertent since the word 'progressive' was not perceived as a rubric for a school of thought. It may be totally due to lack of understanding by the translator what was meant by 'progressive education' as an educational jargon since it was not clear enough even in the United States at the time what is meant by 'progressive education.' As Feinberg(1972) argues in his article "Progressive Education and Social Planning" that:

The established interpretation of Progressive education insists that the problems of the schools result directly from the fact that Dewey's educational ideas were never clearly understood or widely implemented.... They, therefore, conclude that where people have attempted to implement Dewey's ideas, they have misunderstood them, and where they have criticized them, they have mistaken the disciple for the master. Those who defend Dewey, however, fail to realize that most contemporary educational practice is based on a generally correct reading of Dewey's educational philosophy, and that twentieth-century educational thought since 1940 is best understood in terms of the orthodoxy of his theory. (485)

For Dewey's 'progressive school', experience, hands on approach, problem solving, critical thinking and a sense of optimism toward the future were essential for his cognitive developmental approach. In that kind of educational activity it is the progressive teacher's duty to guide the student "towards an open future full of risk, but also possibility. ...This is the reason why Dewey always understood education as being an integral part of the body politic, and not a mere appendix to the established political and social order" (Wolf-Gazo, 1996).

When we look at the history of Turkish education, it is indeed impressive to see all the radical steps taken in the early republican era in such a short time with the abolition of caliphate, thus creating a secular education; change of alphabet from Arabic script to Latin, opening people's schools to increase literacy, and the co-educated schools for all school age children. That was a major progress for Turkish education compared to what was inherited from the Ottoman Empire. However, as Akyüz (1982) rightfully states that the eventual practices of Ministry of Education when it comes to hiring teachers at different periods in Republican history with hardly any professional training with a justification to fill the need for more teachers than teacher education institutions could graduate caused a major damage to the quality of teaching as a respected profession. It worked against the wishes of raising the quality of education of society by extending everybody the opportunity for schooling. As Wolf-Gazo (1996) clearly states, "Education meant, not merely instrumental usage of information, but ideas, as plans or instruments to be realized, on behalf of the enlightenment and betterment of human beings, preferably toward a truly democratic order. For Dewey, the democratic order, despite its obvious shortcomings, did not mean the rule of the masses, but the rule of the morally good for the benefit of the democratic citizen" (24).

In the communication of new ideas, it is all very natural to encounter difficulties in understanding even among those who speak the same language. In a cross-cultural exchange of ideas, the activity of translation, once left alone, may not be the best tool to achieve communication of a totally new idea or perspective. As Malmkjaer (2005) states, "translation, like all linguistic activity, is inherently forward looking. Meaning is seen as relational and momentary, as a function which maps a constellation of utterances, circumstances and interactants onto interpretations. Language use must therefore be

differential to future users, and although past usage constitutes a monumental corpus that guides and informs future usage.” (185). It might be a good idea to translate Dewey’s Report on Turkish Education with a more accurate approach maintaining his philosophical implications of ‘progressive education’ intact with an appreciation of a democratic education at all levels of our education system.

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