

1960-1970 Period Yozgat High School Graduates: Our Teachers*

Mehmet Sağlam**

Abstract

This study aims at constructing the remembrances of the 1960-1970 period Yozgat High School graduates about their teachers who were one of the leading elements of education. Yozgat High School has a historical importance in terms of its education and architecture and witnessed the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Young Turkish Republic. The graduates of the period recall their teachers due to the fact that their teachers were qualified, idealistic, disciplined, had nicknames shaped with their educational practices, discriminating their students coming from the center or periphery. The narratives of them become prominent not only for the educational practices of the teachers that have vital significance for their remembrances but also for the history of educational institutions. Oral history methodology whose contributions are remarkable in explaining the significance of teachers' educational practices taking place in the memories of their students was used and people were reached among the Yozgat High School graduates of 1960-1970 period via snow ball method. Totally 22 interviews were actualized, two of them were for testing. Unlike the real names of the interviewed people, the narratives of the graduates of the period were presented in their original form. These narratives delineate how the educational practices become traction in taking place in the minds of today's 60s year old elders.

Keywords: education, educational practices, teachers, oral history, Yozgat High School

* This study is a part of Scientific Research Project coded as 2014EF/A135 at Bozok University and was presented at the 24th National Educational Sciences Congress, 16-19 April, 2015, Niğde/Turkey.

** Bozok University, Faculty of Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, Yozgat, Turkey.
E-mail: mehmet.saglam@bozok.edu.tr

1960-1970 Dönemi Yozgat Lisesi Mezunları: Öğretmenlerimiz

Öz

Bu çalışma, 1960-1970 Dönemi Yozgat Lisesi mezunlarının, eğitimin temel öğelerinden biri olan öğretmenleri hakkında hatırladıklarını kurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Yozgat Lisesi eğitimi ve mimarisi bakımından tarihsel bir öneme sahip ve Osmanlı'dan Genç Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne geçişe şahitlik etmiş bir okuldur. Dönemin mezunları, öğretmenlerini nitelikli, idealist, disiplinli, eğitim uygulamaları ile şekillenen lakapları, merkez veya çevreden gelmelerinden kaynaklı ayrımcılıklarından dolayı hatırlamaktadırlar. Onların anlatıları sadece öğrencilerin anımsamalarında hayati önemi olan öğretmenlerinin eğitim uygulamaları için önemli değil aynı zamanda eğitim kurumlarının tarihi için de önemlidir. Öğrencilerin hafızalarında yer edinen öğretmenlerin eğitim pratiklerinin açıklanmasında kayda değer katkıları olan sözlü tarih yöntemi kullanıldı ve 1960-1970 dönemi Yozgat Lisesi mezunlarından olan kişilere kartopu yöntemi ile ulaşıldı. İki deneme olmak kaydıyla toplam 22 kişi ile görüşmeler gerçekleştirildi. Görüşme yapılan kişilerin gerçekte isimlerinin aksine, dönemin mezunlarının anlatıları özgün halleriyle sunuldu. Bu anlatılar, eğitim pratiklerinin nasıl bugün 60lı yaşlarında olan kişilerin hafızalarında yer edindiğini betimlemektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: eğitim, eğitim uygulamaları, öğretmenler, sözlü tarih, Yozgat Lisesi

Introduction

Yozgat High School was built in 1895 and since then it has been exposed to distinctive changes and continued its educational activities. At the beginning it was a primary school. Between 1924 and 1933 it turned to be a secondary school. The school was transformed to a high school in 1933. It has been a high school since then (Acun, 1995, p. 12). Students as the voiceless part of education occupy the basic domain in education however, what they experience as part of their educational experience is commonly ignored while education is taken into consideration by the mainstream educational policy. What they have experienced during their education materializes what take part as educational practices in schools from their point of view and enrich our extensive knowledge about education. Therefore, presenting their narratives about their teachers withal oral history method which is considered to be particularly appropriate for educational research as educationalists are interested in 'getting at the experience' rather than at facts (Arat, 2003, p. 60-61) helps the researchers to be aware of the significance of these experiences for an entire comprehension of education.

In this sense, the studies performed with oral history on educational experiences have risen and produced broader dialogues in the interdisciplinary studies in the last three decades in Turkey. Sağlam's (2015) *Primary school students of 1980's Turkey: remembering their teachers* brings out the reminiscences about the primary school students of 1980's Turkey and is subsidiary to the researchers to think the reasons why the teachers are remembered by the students who are not only the voiceless observers of educational practices but also have important role in the social construction in whole. Moreover, Arat's *Where to look for the truth: memory and interpretation in assessing the impact of Turkish women's education* elaborates the women's assessments of their educational experience and allows their voices to be heard and locates the social and cultural determinants of gender relations and their reproduction (Arat, 2003, p. 57). Intercalarily, Tan's *An Oral Project with the Children of the Republic* underpins these studies through stimulating the educational and childhood experiences of those who were primary school students just after the foundation of Turkish Republic (Tan, 2000, p. 346).

Oral history is also evaluated as a fruitful tool and frequently consulted in teaching social science courses. Redfern's *Oral History in Schools: Why Brother* explicitly divulges the vital contributions of oral history in history teaching (Redfern, 2000, p. 341). Moreover, Ross' *Children becoming historians, an oral history Project in a primary school*, depicts how children of seven to ten years of age can acquire certain historical skills through oral history work (Ross, 1998, p. 432). Briefly, adjoining the countless studies about education based on educational experiences helps the researchers embrace components of education. Besides, the crucial point of the narratives collected from educational experiences is to have them be hip to their importance while reconsidering education.

Method

In this study, the data have been gathered from the narratives of 1960-1970 period graduates of Yozgat High School by making use of oral history methodology as well as personal libraries (photographs etc.), diaries, their educational documents and scarcely written documents. When getting the sensualities of those who lived in past oral history has a respectable situation and function (Hoşgör, 2000, p. 330). According to P. Thompson (1988, 2, p. 21) oral history is a history built around people. It thrusts life into history itself and it widens its scope. According to Yow (2005: 3) it is the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form. Oral history methodology allows the voices of those that have been partially or totally ignored, marginalized or silenced within particular contexts to be heard (Haynes, 2006; Wall, 2012, p. 90). It lets ordinary people seek to understand the upheavals and changes they experience in their own lives. In oral history the sense of time is not strictly linear and ‘recalling past assessment’ is different from ‘making present assessment of the past’ (Carsten, 1995, p. 318). Thompson believes that oral evidence breaks through the barriers between the chroniclers and their audience; between the educational institution and the outside world. It is peculiarly suited to project work both for groups and for individual student enterprise: in schools, universities, colleges, adult education or community centers (Thompson, 1988, p. 8).

Oral history has been an appealing method utilized in interdisciplinary studies and for most kinds of history some shift of focus recently. It is commonly consulted for the history of institutions, family, education etc., (Vansina, 1985; Öztürkmen, 2001). Thence, the educational historians become concerned with the experiences of children and students as well as the problems of teachers and administrators (Thompson, 1988, p. 6). What is more, it would benefit those of us in the educational community by providing rich data (McAdoo, 1980, p. 420). Above all, it is almost impossible to reach to the teachers’ educational practices in the written documents. Thus, attaining to them with the views or words of students who are reciprocally active during the educational process becomes indispensable for the studies on education at large.

Study Group

The universe of the research group is the 1960-1970 period Yozgat High School graduates. The students of the period to be interviewed with were chosen among those who were students in Yozgat High School during this period. In spite of the fact that it was preferable to reach both men and women, it was not possible to reach to the women for certain reasons.

Research Instrument

The data collected for this study were derived from the semi-structured interviews (Arat, 2003, p. 60, Ekiz, 2013, p. 63) that were carried out with 1960-1970 Yozgat High School graduates via a recording device. For this study, totally 22 interviews with 22 men were carried out. Two of them were for testing. The

interviews were recorded by a recording device and then transcribed via keeping their original forms and the text reflecting their memories about their teachers was reconstituted. The open-ended questions that were expected to be responded by the interviewees were 1) whether they can remember their teachers or not, if they can, why, 2) if their teachers had discriminated their students and recommended anything about their future educations (Sağlam, 2015, p. 763, Tan et al, 2007).

Procedure

For this study, at the first stage, I tried to reach the 1960-1970 period Yozgat High School graduates in. After getting appointments, I visited them either in their residences or offices. I reached them via snow ball method. The interviews were semi-structured. Before starting the interviews, they filled an *oral history data document* and then they began to answer some demographic questions and then followed a conversation style with more open-ended questions. The conversations were not completely “interviewee-guided”. At times, I posed a question or repeated a question in different words, avoided having debates and refrained from challenging inconsistencies in their reporting (Arat, 2003, p. 60). After the interviews, an *oral history story* was written for each interview (Tan et al, 2007).

Analysis of the Data

Descriptive analysis was used so as to analyze the interviews. Thus, I could put what they were able to call up about their teachers into a context and establish a relation between their remembrances and the reasons that led to the recollections of them (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2013). The narratives are evaluated considering their similarities and differences (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). The narratives which display the similarities and differences were classified accordingly. The description of the organized data was directly quoted to the related place in the text in their original form. The validity and reliability of interviews were proved both by getting the approval of the interviewees after decoding the interviews and the help of an academician about the framework provided previously in order to use the narratives in the text (Sağlam, 2015).

Findings

In this part, data relevant findings reached after the data collection is presented. All those who were interviewed with as 1960-1970 Period Yozgat High School graduates were able to recall their teachers in different branches and school administrators due to their mutual communications and their educational practices with their miscellaneous forms in the classrooms and at school. These are teachers’ professional qualifications, enjoying the courses, being disciplined, idealist in training their students, discriminating their students, teachers’ nicknames shaped by their educational practices, their student achievement assessment criteria etc.,

Teachers' Professional Qualifications

Some of the period graduates recollect their teachers as they were very qualified in their professions and striving for their students in order to train them well. This is attested by Murat Koçođlu, Erhan Danışır, Mehmet Cihan Yılmaz, Hasan Başarılı, Seyfullah Yiđit and İsmet Ak's narratives. Seyfullah Yiđit puts it;

"Our school director Nejat Yüzbaşıođulları was a good man of letters. He knew French and was reading poems from Boudler."

Murat Koçođlu describes how his teachers were in terms of their teaching practices.

"There was Mrs Esin. I do not remember any ladies teaching like her. Because when she came, she was drawing the topic she was going to teach with a colourful pen: human body, flower and tree. She was wating at the board for five, ten minutes while we were drawing. Then she was teaching by showing them with her hands without looking to the board, I did not know how she was doing it. We did admire her."

Taha Akyol (Akyol, 1995, p. 21) reveals how he remembers his teacher Aygün Korkmaz in one his writings:

"Mrs Aygün taught us researching"

Enjoying the Courses

When the graduates of the period remember their teachers, they take our attention to what extent they enjoy they enjoyed the lectures. This facilitates calling up their teachers. This has been verified by five narratives, such as those of Hasan Başarılı, Mahmut Gözüaçık, Alper Reşit Kaplan, Aykut Kar and Mehmet Cihan Yılmaz. Hasan Başarılı depicts one of his teachers as;

"There has come to my mind Mr Ömer from Akdağmadeni. He was lecturing physics. He did contribute my transformation. He encouraged me since he saw my talent and let me be a better student then."

Mahmut Gözüaçık thinks he can not forget the teachers of courses he was interested in.

"I can not forget the teachers of courses I was interested in."

Mehmet Cihan Yılmaz:

"Aygün Korkmaz was a serious teacher. We loved literature because of her despite being science students."

The Teachers Being Disciplined

It seems easy for the graduates students to remember their teachers and school administrators who were very much disciplined. Mahir Kazancı, Seyfullah Yiğit, Servet Ok, Nail Kara, Salih Uyumaz, Demir Sadık and Hasan Başarılı's reminiscences endorse the relationship between being disciplined and their reflections in the memories of the students of the period. Seyfullah Yiğit:

"There was a very disciplined our school director." Demir cites his school director's words as "Nejat Yüzbaşıoğulları: this country gets no benefit from those who do not get up early in the mornings. I met the sugar when I was secondary school. I get up at five thirty' said. He was coming and inspecting the students. He did care about the outfits. He wanted the caps on our heads, ties at our necks, short hair."

Servet Ok recounts one of the cases he witnessed while he was in his classroom as one of his memories.

"Our teachers were despotic. There was a young teacher lecturing our physics course. Her nickname was Kara Sevim (Dark Sevim). When the students and teachers did not come to the school, all the doors were locked. No one was able to enter the school. One day she had been late to the school poor lady. She was knocking the door. We saw her knocking the door as we were in the classroom from which we could see who was coming to the school. She knocked the door for half an hour, nobody was opening it. She was freezing. One or two friends of us went to open the door. Our school director Nejat Yüzbaşıoğulları called as Totem was waiting at the back of the door and had not let the school servant. After she had waited for a long, he relented and had it opened. What he told her was: 'Teacher! Do not come to school late.' When she came to the classroom she was blubbering. Her hands were almost frozen. I still remember how she was crying."

Salih Uyumaz recalls the discipline that the girls faced. This reminds us the function of hidden curricula and its nested stance with gender called gender curricula whose strict regulations are imposed on girls but denied the notion that there are any reminders of sex at school (Arat, 2003, p. 59).

"The female teachers were trying to discipline the girls, the female teaches rather than the male. They were paying heed to girls' hair, attire or outfits, hemlines."

Training the Students Idealistically

Being trained idealistically by teachers leads to their remembrances easier by some of the graduates. Murat Koçoğlu, Aykut Kar, Nail Kara and Hakan Erciyes corroborate this claim with their own words. Murat Kocaoğlu puts into words it as;

“They wanted to train us as idealist human, not someone with property.”

Nail Kara pictures his teachers as:

“Our teachers were usually giving us morality lessons. They general positing was that they were teaching to be honest.”

Hakan Erciyes’s narrative reveals the relation between ideology and educational practices. The ideologic function of education most of the time emerges circuitously (Sağlam, 2014, p. 18).

“Our teachers were so impressionable about the principles of Atatürk and reforms. They were notably behaving about the foundation period of the Republic, its philosophy.”

Teachers’ Discrimination of Their Students

There is a striking point that comes up when recalling whether their teachers discriminated them or not. Most of the period graduates who had come to the city center from the villages and small towns elucidate that they had been exposed to discrimination that they could feel from their teachers’ educational practices. Only one from the center narrates that;

“Our teachers did mostly like the successful students” (Beyhan Arca).

Demir Sadık, Fırat Zengin, Hasan Başarılı, Seyfullah Yiğit and Murat Koçoğlu (comig from periphery; villages and small towns) and Beyhan Arca substantiate particularly countrified-urban discrimination. Demir Sadık puts it;

“There was that discrimination. You could see that from their treatments. The son of the director of Ziraat Bank’ Can a teacher have such an appeal for example? This discrimination was between the children of those who were affluent, with proper outfits and those of the poor. They did downplay us.”

Our Teachers with Their Nicknames

The nicknames which had been shaped with their teachers educational practices bring about their remembrances as part of the students’ educational practices. Nail Kara, Aykut Kar, Mahir Kazancı, Mehmet Cihan Yılmaz, Seyfullah Yiğit and Servet Ok embody this with their reminiscences. Mahir Kazancı recalls that they called their school director as Totem. Moreover, Seyfullah Yiğit remembers one of his teachers as;

“Maths teacher, I can not remember his name now. We called him Jesse James with his nickname.”

Aykut Kar also explicates his literature teacher as;

“My literature teacher Mr Cemal, Cemal Kula, we gave him a nickname. We called him as Mafya (Mafia) Cemal.”

It is possible to increase the number of the narratives displaying how they recount their teachers with their nicknames.

Discussion and Conclusion

Unveiling the hidden narratives of students who are the real agents of education helps us comprehend their necessities due to the fact that they are the explicit reflections of the educational practices. Both teachers and the students are the leading elements of education and thus they mutually affect each other. Notably, the students do remember their teachers for certain reasons. In this study, they recall their teachers it is because of their professional qualifications, enjoying their courses, their disciplinary and idealist practices in training their students, discriminating their students and their nicknames. There have been some studies about the students' educational experiences including what they narrate about their teachers. Most of them are about the educational experiences of primary school students being students at different times in Turkey. Here what an educational historian is expected to do is not just describe past or explain why things happened in the past but *has to explain the continuity*. Continuity requires more attention than change as Prins argues for the historians' responsibility (Prins, 1991, p. 137).

It is clear to see that the leading factors which become remarkable in the remembering their teachers change from the primary school students to those of the high schools. Despite this, there appear certain intersecting and disintegrating points from their narratives when they remember their teachers from various reasons. When indicating the common points to discuss, it is better initially to mention that the students remember their teachers because of their qualifications. In Cumhuriyet'te Çocuklular, H. Özgüler puts how his teacher was talented in playing musical instruments.

"Our teacher was playing the violin fairly well. I was such a lucky student" (Tan et al, (2007), p. 76).

One of the graduates of Yozgat High School remarks his teacher as;

"There was Ahmet teacher whom we called him as Sofu (ascetic) Ahmet. I have a memory that I never forget. For example, there was a course called logarithm. Thanks to him we learned logarithm. When I was at university I was the best at logarithm as I was studying engineering (Mehmet Cihan Yılmaz)."

Taha Akyol puts it;

"Mr. Halil's special feature was to cite the vivid depictions of historical figures. 'When the printing press was introduced, those artisans who were earning their lives from book writing put their ink pots and pen cases and said our art died' and demonstrated. Then there happened the Patrona Rebellion" (Akyol, 1995, p. 21).

In line with, teachers' professional qualities, caring about the courses of the teachers and school lead to their remembrances by the students of the period which can be fallen with other narratives in the other studies. Alper Reşit Kaplan as one of the graduates of Yozgat High School recalls his French course teacher as;

“There was a French teacher, Türkan Mat. I remember Türkan Mat well. That was it was because of my interest in French.”

In "Sözlü Tarih Yöntemiyle 1970ler İlkokul Öğrencileri", Gülizar Çağla depicts how he ensured their liking school.

“There was a bully teacher of mine. Emin Erdem was a great teacher. He was the only teacher who helped me enjoy school” (Sağlam, 2014, p. 101).

Furthermore, being a disciplinary and idealist teacher or headmaster seems constantly to be encountered attributes of teachers that pave the way for being remembered easily by the students. Nail Kara who was a student at Yozgat High School between 1960 and 1970 pictures one of his teachers as;

“Everybody was afraid of Şükrü Hodja (teacher) but Şükrü Hodja taught us maths with that stick. Fortuanatelly, he had done, otherwise I would not have been an engineer.”

This also can be seen from the narratives of the students of 1970s. Mahmut Ersan puts it as;

“During our primary school education there was a strict school director. I remember him well” (Sağlam, 2015, p. 767).

Nail Kara as a graduate of 1960-1970 puts how his teacher was an idealist teacher while training them.

“He was advising met o read multidirectionally, Cemal Hodja. However, he told me to question after reading these books.”

Yasin Aksu who was a primary school student in 1970s puts it;

“He/She suggested us reading more books. Those who were successful were given boks to read during the holiday” (Sağlam, 2014, p. 120).

Unlike the resemblances experienced in this and previous studies, there appear prominent variations to be conceptualized such as, teachers' discrimination and nicknames. Even though in the prior studies, teachers' discriminations were partially or even less observed in periphery but more in the center, here in this study a distinctive feature becomes recognizable. The students coming from the villages and small towns believe that after coming to the city for their high school education they

felt teachers' discrimination deeply. Ayla Işık, a primary school student in a village in 1970s mentions as;

"No, we did not feel any discrimination. We all belonged to the same region. Since everybody was at the same economic level, I did see such discrimination" (Sağlam, 2014, p. 108).

Almost 6 of the 20 graduates who come from villages attract our attention to that segregation. Murat Koçoğlu puts it;

"There was discrimination between those from the villages and those of coming from the city."

This reveals that there seems to be a need to enlarge the studies on the high school students so as to see the countryfied-urban discrimination observed from the teachers' educational practices by the students.

Also, the students of the primary school do not recall their teachers with their nicknames unlike the high school students remembering them with their nicknames (seven of them). To illustrate, Murat Eren who was a primary school student in 1970s narrates his teacher as;

"I never forget my teacher Ahmet Göçer, we called him Ahmet Efendi (Sir)."

Sevet Ok, a Yozgat High School graduates, narrates his headmaster as;

"Nejat Yüzbaşıoğulları whom we called Totem was waiting behind the door."

Nail Kara;

"The famed Muammer Gürdü, he was called Kör (Blind) Muammer."

In fine, students' educational experiences shaped within the educational milieu can be appraised in various perspectives. This study displays that students' experiences based on education concerning their teachers let us reconsider the importance of teachers' educational practices and their reciprocal interaction with their students and bridge the relations between the educational practices and their appearances in the memories of the students in general. The question is what becomes surfaced in the collective narratives of the students as their educational practices. Additionally, more studies on schools like Yozgat High School as historical studies are to be performed in order to see and explain their historical and educational change and significance both for history and sociology of education as well as the teacher education.

References

- Acun, H. (1995). Yozgat Lisesi'nin tarihçesi hakkında. *Yozgat Lisesi 100. Yıl Bülteni*, 1, 12.
- Akyol, T. (1995). Öğretmenim canım benim. *Yozgat Lisesi 100. Yıl Bülteni*, 1, 21.
- Arat F. K. Z.. (2003). Where to look for the truth: memory and interpretation in assessing the impact of Turkish women's education. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 26 (1) 57-68.
- Büyüköztürk Ş., Çakmak, E. K., Akgün, Ö. E., Karadeniz Ş. & Demirel, F. (2013). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri*. Ankara: Pegem Akademi Yayınları.
- Carsten, J. (1995). The politics of forgetting: Migration, kinship and memory on the periphery of the south-east Asian State. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1 (2), 317-335.
- Ekiz, D. (2013). *Bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri*. Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.
- Haynes, K. (2006). Other lives in accounting: Critical reflections on oral history methodology in action, University of York, [Available online at: <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/2582/1/ymswp21haynes.pdf>], Retrieved on June 18, 2013.
- Hoşgör, A. G. (2000). Methodological and ethical concerns regarding application of oral history techniques in sociology. *IOHA Confrence*, I, İstanbul: 330-335.
- McAdoo, H. (1980). Oral history as a primary resource in educational research. *J. Negro Educ.* 49 (4) 414-22.
- Öztürkmen, A. (2001). Celebrating national holidays in Turkey: History and memory. *New perspectives on Turkey*, 25, 47-75.
- Prins, G. (1991). Oral history. In Peter Burke (Eds.), *New perspective on historical writing* (114-139). University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Redfern, A. (2000). Oral history in schools: why bother? *IOHA Confrence*, Vol: I, İstanbul: 341-345.
- Ross, A. (1998). Children Becoming Historians: an oral history project in a primary school. In R. Perks & A. Thomson (Eds.), *The oral history reader* (433-447) London & New York: Routledge.
- Sağlam, M.(2015). Primary school students of 1980's Turkey: remembering their teachers. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 10 (6) 761-768.
- Sağlam, M. (2014). *Sözlü tarih yöntemiyle 1970ler ilkökul öğrencileri*. Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı.
- Tan, M, Şahin, Ö, Sever, M. & Bora, A. (2007). *Cumhuriyet'te çocuklar*. İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Tan, M. G. (2000). An oral history project with the children of the Republic, *IOHA Confrence*, I, İstanbul: 346-355.
- Thompson, P. (1988). *The voice of the past: Oral history*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vansina, J. (1985). *Oral tradition as history*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Wall, J. (2012). Can democracy represent children? Towards a politics of difference,

childhood, <http://chd.sagepub.com/> 86-100. (Retrieved on, 15. 01. 2014).

Yıldırım, A. & Şimşek, H. (2005). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri*, Ankara: Seçkin.

Yow, V. R. (2005). *Recording oral history*. N. York, Toronto & Oxford: Altamira Press.

