

REFLECTIONS OF REPUBLIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL LIFE ON MERSİN PROVINCE

CUMHURİYET KAZANIMLARININ EĞİTİMDE VE KADIN SİYASİ HAYATINDA MERSİN VİLAYETİNE YANSIMALARI

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine the reflections of the achievements of the "Modern Turkish Republic", which is being tried to be built especially in Mersin in terms of education, culture and women's rights. After the victory, reforms were established in various fields, in order to complete the social and political structures in Turkey, in terms of the construction of Republic of Turkey and to bring it to the level of contemporary modern states. In the modernization model of the Republic of Turkey, which has adopted the Kemalist system, the reforms cover all social, political, economic and cultural areas. In this period that created the revolutions, every decision, every practice, every thought was handled on a national scale and considered as national solutions. In another circumstance of the reforms are inclusive of all parts of the country rather than being regional. Considering Anatolia as a whole, reforms in all cities were developed as the achievements of the Republic. One of this city is Mersin. The applications of the reforms made in the field of education in Mersin are at a level that would set an example for other provinces. The efforts which was about to open a first level school, turned into a race after the alphabet reform, were followed by schools in other levels and fields that appealed to different fields. Despite the difficult conditions of the period, school attendance efforts in Mersin have reached admirable levels over the years, and as a result of this; communal and social developments have shown itself. Another major change was the change in the social status of women, whose are the cornerstones of social development. Leaving the old habits aside, equality between men and women was ensured, then other rights were given for women in terms of social structure and within a short period of time, women gained the respect which they deserve in social life. The image of the modern Turkish women, which was tried to be developed and built over the years with the Republic, was embodied by the election of the educator Müfide İlhan as Mersin Mayor, the first female mayor. And it showed an important step forward from the goals that the achievements of the republic were trying to reach.

Keywords: *Republic, Kemalist Thought System, Turkish Revolution, Education, Women Rights, Mufide İlhan, Modernity, Mersin Province.*

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Öz

Çalışmanın amacı, inşa edilmeye çalışılan “Modern Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin” Mersin özelindeki kazanımlarının eğitimdeki, kültürdeki ve kadın haklarındaki yansımalarını incelemektir. Zaferin kazanılmasının ardından Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devleti’nin inşası ve devamında Türkiye’de sosyal ve siyasal alandaki yapılanmaları tamamlamak ve çağdaş olan güçlü devletlerin düzeylerine ulaştırmak amacıyla çeşitli alanlarda inkılaplar yapılmıştır. Atatürkçü düşünce sistemini benimseyen Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin çağdaşlaşma modelinde inkılaplar sosyal, siyasal, ekonomik ve kültürel alanların tümünü kapsamaktadır. İnkılapları oluşturan süreçte her karar, her uygulama, her düşünce ulusal boyutlarda ele alınmış, ulusal çözümler olarak düşünülmüştür. İnkılapların diğer bir özelliği ise bölgesel olmaktan ziyade vatanın her kesimini kapsayıcı nitelikte olmasıdır. Anadolu bir bütün olarak ele alınarak tüm şehirlerde inkılaplar cumhuriyetin kazanımları olarak geliştirilmiştir. Bu şehirlerden birisi de Mersin’dir. Eğitim alanında yapılan inkılapların Mersin özelindeki uygulamaları diğer illere örnek olacak seviyededir. Harf inkılabından sonra adeta bir yarışa dönen ilk seviye okul açma çabalarını, farklı alanlara hitap eden diğer seviye ve alanlardaki okullar takip etmiştir. Dönemin zor şartlarına rağmen Mersin’de yıllara göre okullaşma çalışmaları takdire şayan seviyelere ulaşmış, sonucunda da toplumsal ve sosyal gelişme kendini göstermiştir. Diğer büyük değişim toplumsal gelişimde mihenk taşı olan kadınların toplumsal statüsünün değişmesidir. Yılların alışkanlığını bir tarafa bırakarak öncelikle kadın erkek eşitliği sağlanmış, sonra kadınlara toplumsal yapıdaki diğer hakları verilmiş, kısa zaman dilimi içerisinde de sosyal yaşamda kadınlara hak ettikleri saygı kazandırılmış, bu çabalar kadın hakları konusunda dünyada ilkler arasına girme başarısını getirmiştir. Cumhuriyetle birlikte yıllar içinde gelişerek inşa edilmeye çalışılan modern Türk kadını imajı, ilk kadın belediye başkanı olarak eğitimci Müfide İlhan’ın Mersin Belediye Başkanı seçilmesiyle vücut bulmuş, cumhuriyetin kazanımlarının ulaşmaya çalıştığı hedeflerden önemli bir aşamayı göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Cumhuriyet, Atatürkçü Düşünce Sistemi, Türk Devrimi, Eğitim, Kadın Hakları, Müfide İlhan, Modernlik, Mersin Vilayeti.*

INTRODUCTION:

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk expressed the main purpose and decision of the struggle started as follows in his "Speech", in which he told the National Struggle to the public: "...Then what could have been a serious and real decision? Gentlemen, there was only one decision in the face of this situation. And that is to establish a new, unconditionally independent Turkish state based on national sovereignty! Here is the decision that we thought before leaving Istanbul and that we started the practice as soon as we set foot on Anatolian lands in Samsun."¹

Three pillars shape the basis of this decision: *National Sovereignty, independence and a new Turkish State*. Therefore, the struggle started on May 19, 1919 will not only end with the liberation of the country from occupations and regaining its independence, but also a "*modern Turkish State*" will be established as a noble member of the civilized world family that fulfills the requirements of the age on the basis of thousands of years of history and culture through the nation's own representatives. Because, according to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk; "*Civilization is such a powerful light that it burns and destroys those who do not care about it. I have no doubt that the forgotten great civility of Turkishness and its great civilized ability will rise like a new sun on the horizon of high civilization of the future with its further development.*"²

In fact, the modernization movement has been one of the important issues of Turkey in the last two centuries. These changes, while preserving the traditional structure of the administration, were handled in the axis of the administrative structure and it was not possible to go further than granting special rights to the non-Muslims living in the country with these movements rather than social change.

The modernization efforts that have been going on since the 18th and 19th centuries, although there were pioneering initiatives in the Ottoman Empire, were not completely assimilated and adopted by the society. Therefore, the main solution in the process of these reforms, which would be realized under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, would be to ensure that the society adopts and assimilates these efforts. Thus, it would be clearly seen that the modernization process experienced in the Ottoman period in the process of realizing the reforms set out for this purpose was transferred to the Republic as an "experience".³

Immediately after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, many reforms were made in order to complete the social and political structures in Turkey and to reach the level of powerful contemporary states. It is understood that these reforms were implemented by a certain thought system and principles. In this direction, the modernization model of the Republic of Turkey, which has adopted the Kemalist thought system, covers all social, political, economic and cultural areas.⁴

1 Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Nutuk, Fark Publications, Ankara, 2016, p.14.

2 Atatürk, Nutuk, p.14.

3 Fatma Acun, "Osmanlı'dan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne: Değişme ve Süreklilik", Hacettepe University Faculty of Letters Journal, Special Issue on the 700th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Ottoman State: 1999, 155-167, p.166.

4 Suna Kili, Atatürk Devrimi Bir Çağdaşlaşma Modeli, Türkiye İş Bankası Culturel Publications, İstanbul, 1998, (6. Edition), p.105.

Atatürk's ideal for the Turkish nation is to take its place in the world as a civilized society in every field.⁵ Therefore, the social, intellectual and economic situation of the Turkish nation should be raised to the level accepted by the civilized world.⁶ Thus, Atatürk's desire to raise the Turkish nation to the level of contemporary nations led to the realization of the reforms that affected the society in every field.

In this framework, the newly established Republic of Turkey made reforms that affected social life, especially between 1925 and 1935. Now, forward-looking changes in society have begun. However, while this transformation was taking place, it was not easy for some segments of the society to suddenly break with tradition. This situation led to some reactions to the social and political reforms and to find supporters for these reactions.

These reforms, which were accepted as the achievements of the Republic, were brought to every province and district in Anatolia. As before, they were delivered to all segments of the people. One of these provinces is Mersin, one of our southern provinces.

Mersin, which is an important port city in terms of trade and tourism and the gateway of Turkey to the Middle East and the Mediterranean, has embraced the republic and its achievements as in all other provinces and sections. Particularly, the reforms in the field of education were observed in significant changes in Mersin, and as the first female Mayor of Turkey, "*Müfide İlhan*", she led the way in this sense by demonstrating the right to "*vote and be elected*" given to women on December 5, 1934.

1. Achievements of the Republic (Turkish Revolution)

The reforms that changed the new Turkish State, the Republic of Turkey, were a planned move before the Ottoman Empire disintegrated. Especially the last two centuries of change in the Ottoman Empire should be seen as the steps of the Turkish revolutions. For this reason, in order to understand the Turkish revolutions and the social developments brought about by these revolutions, it is necessary to go back to the foundation of Ottoman history and to take this history as a whole. Otherwise, it will be seen as a big mistake to talk about the Turkish revolution by thinking only about the last periods.⁷

Three factors came to the ahead in the realization of the Turkish revolution. The first of these factors is the issue of making the Turkish nation believe in the reality of this change. The second factor is the fact that the Turks have come to the importance of the idea of nationality, and the last factor is the existence of a great personality to lead this movement for the realization of these reforms. The disintegration of Ottomanism with the Turkish revolution, which can be realized with the presence of these factors, so that the Turkish nation will have the secret of resurrection to become a whole independent state, and as a result, it is to think that both the state and the social forms of the Turks will change.⁸

5 Afet İnan, Atatürk Hakkında Hatıralar ve Belgeler, Türkiye İş Bankası Culturel Publications, İstanbul, 2015, p.411.

6 Afet İnan, Atatürk Hakkında Hatıralar ve Belgeler, p.405.

7 Celal Nuri İleri, Dil ve Edebiyat Yazıları, (By; Recep Duymaz), Kitabevi Publications, İstanbul, 2002, p.4-5.

8 İleri, Dil ve Edebiyat Yazıları, p.74-75.

The stages and factors are necessary for the realization of the Turkish revolution to remove the originality of this revolution. The Turkish revolution actually has a spectator feature, which the West nations watch. In that case, the Turkish revolution will be realized by the following ways and methods that the West has covered in its progress. In this respect, the Turkish revolution is not original. So what needs to be done is to “take” and develop these things in the axis of our own values.⁹ In this regard, the end of the Ottoman Empire has no matter how well the Ottoman Empire is governed, it can survive for a while, but it would not be possible to prevent the end of the Ottoman reign. Because in the world, the state models governed by empires were outdated.¹⁰ In that case, at the stage of taking the developments in the West and developing them in accordance with our own values, it will be essential that the “reign” be treated as it should, and that it will pass to the “republic” administration that has become widespread in the West.

With the Turkish Revolution, for the first time, a non-Christian nation accepted European civilization. Again, for the first time in history, it is an indication that a nation, which is in an Islamic community, acts freely in the world rules while protecting its Islamic beliefs. Also, for the first time, a nation of Central Asian origin (Turk) was separated from the social and historical destiny of Asia.¹¹ It is characteristic that this idea of revolution is a first for Turkish and Muslim societies under the auspices of the Ottoman State. Thus, the Turkish nation will change by taking a different culture as an example, and as a result, a new form of society will emerge.

2. Republic Achievements and Reflections in the Field of Education and Culture (Revolutions) on Mersin

When it came to the period of the National Struggle, educational problems that could not be solved in the Ottoman period were also inherited. With the opening of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), it also dealt with many issues, especially education, along with the struggle against the occupations. As a matter of fact, after the establishment of the Ankara Government, the first target of the education policy was drawn by including the Ministry of Education in the Assembly convened on May 2, 1920.¹²

Before the Sakarya War, an Educational Congress was held in Ankara. Mustafa Kemal attended the congress convened on 15 July 1921 and made a speech. This speech gives clues for the education policy of the new state to be established by Mustafa Kemal in the future. In his congress speech, Mustafa Kemal Pasha wants our education system to have a national understanding.

In his speech at the First Education Congress, Mustafa Kemal Pasha draws the basic framework of education as follows:¹³

“... I have the opinion that the education and training methods followed so far are the most important factor in the history of our nation (history of backwardness). That’s why,

9 İleri, Dil ve Edebiyat Yazıları, p.78.

10 İleri, Dil ve Edebiyat Yazıları, p.92.

11 İleri, Dil ve Edebiyat Yazıları, p.117.

12 Bayram Kodaman, Atatürk’ün Eğitim Politikası, National Cultural Publications, Ankara, 1982, p.8.

13 Mustafa Ergün, Atatürk Devri Türk Eğitimi, Ataturk University Faculty of Language, History and Geography Publications, No. 325, Ankara, 1982, p.18.

when I talk about a national education program, I mean a culture that is compatible with our national character and history, completely free from the superstitions of the old era and foreign ideas that have nothing to do with our innate qualities and all the influences that may come from the East and the West. (...)"

After the proclamation of the Republic, the main purpose of education was to provide a Republican and democratic political education to students in schools at all levels.¹⁴ The issue of duality in education, which was treated during the reform period, has been one of the most disturbing issues for the young Republican staff. For this reason, on March 3, 1924, when the caliphate was abolished, the Law of Unification of Education was adopted, which would ensure unity in education. In the justification of the law proposal given by Saruhan deputy Vasif Bey and his friends; it was stated that *"the duality that started in education during the Tanzimat period had harmful consequences in education and training, that two kinds of education would raise two kinds of people in the country and this would not be able to achieve the aim of providing feelings and consensus"*.¹⁵ The bill consisting of seven articles was accepted in the same form.

The most important revolution in the history of education is undoubtedly the *"Law on the Acceptance and Application of Turkish Letters"*, which was published in the Official Gazette on 3 November 1928.¹⁶ With this law, the number of literate masses in the country, which is already very small, has also gone beyond the literate classification. The first non-formal education initiative of the Republic was launched with a great campaign in which Atatürk was the head teacher. In the first 4 months, 5000 (five thousand) teachers had learned the new script in order to teach the people the new letters.

As stated in the law, it became mandatory to use new letters in all official and private correspondence. At the beginning of June 1930, the old writing could not be used in any field and in any way.

A reading and writing campaign was launched with the new letters. As a result of these efforts, 3,304 People's Classrooms were opened between 1927-28 and certificates were given to 64,302 people.¹⁷ National Schools were played directly under Atatürk. Atatürk was officially the head teacher. Thus, the seriousness of the business was revealed and the governors started to compete with each other in the provinces.

Today's Mersin province was administered as two sanjaks affiliated to Adana province during the Constitutional Period. These sanjaks were transformed into Mersin and İçel Sanjaks, which were independent from Adana in 1924. When the administrative structure of the sanjaks was brought to the provincial level, İçel province was formed with the merger of the two sanjaks in 1933.

In the first years of the Republic, educational activities did not show vitality in Mersin. Educational services were tried to be provided with the schools remaining from the

14 Yahya Akyüz, *Türkiye'de Öğretmenlerin Toplumsal Değişimdeki Etkileri (1848-1940)*, Ankara, 1978, p.275-281.
15 TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, Term 2, c.7, 3 March 1924, 25.

16 *Türk Harflerinin Kabul Ve Tatbiki Hakkında Kanun*, Publication: Official Gazette Number: 1030 Publication Date: 3 November 1928 Law No: 1353

17 Cevat Geray, *Halk Eğitimi*, Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences, 2. Edition, Ankara, 1978, p.258

Constitutional Period. While the madrasahs continue to exist with their own identity and characteristics. It is understood that there is a very weak demand from the public to open new schools. The development in Mersin has been achieved due to the commercial activity provided by the port. After the War of Independence, Greek and Armenian merchants left Mersin. With their departure, a vacuum has emerged in the commercial area. Local traders trying to fill this gap are completely unfamiliar with the business. They are far from running commercial businesses and running transactions. For this reason, it is seen that the business of education was taken over by the traders. Evening Tecim School had the chance to be the first school opened after the Republic because of this need.

In the days when the Republic was declared, there were 7 primary schools in Mersin Center from the pre-Republican era. The secondary school was opened in 1923. There is also the Evening Trade School as a course feature.

It is seen that no new school was opened in Mersin until 1928.

As in other parts of the country, educational activities in Mersin were tried to be structured quickly. The schooling efforts, which accelerated especially after the alphabet revolution, became a success indicator for the governors.

As a result of the examination carried out in Mersin Karaduvar village on 9 July 1931, 30 students who were old enough to attend school but did not go to school were identified. The fact that the illiteracy of the village people caused the governor to show more interest here. With this observation, it was understood that the existing school needed to be expanded. It was decided to start work immediately. The governor, who personally participated in the investigation, instructed the relevant authorities to complete the school as soon as possible.

The school, which was built by the villagers in Mezitli, was organized in a way to give the children of two more villages apart from Mezitli, the opportunity to read. A building left over from Greek fugitives in Buluklu was expropriated and turned into a school. The garden of a house in Yampar village was expropriated. An addition was made to the school building in Kazanlı village. The buildings belonging to İskender Zahlud Efendi on Soğuksu Street in Mahmudiye Neighborhood and buildings belonging to Hasan Kırk Efendi in İhsaniye District were expropriated to be used as schools.

The 1938 İçel Provincial Yearbook mentions that in the republican period, after the alphabet revolution, the educational work accelerated and the schooling rate was increased to 47 % and the literacy rate to 39 % with the schools opened and the courses called National School. The current situation is described in the yearbook with the following sentences:

“Today, there are 140 primary schools in the İçel region, a total of 3 secondary schools, one in Mersin, Tarsus and Silifke Centers, an evening trade school in the center of Mersin, Issı Yuva Kindergarten, and an American High School in Tarsus. 4 Turkish Women’s Cutting and Sewing Courses were opened, one in Mersin and three in Tarsus. Community Centers and their libraries were put into service in Mersin, Tarsus and Silifke”.

In addition, a library was opened in Tarsus and Mersin for teachers to benefit from.

It is seen that constructions such as schools, workshops and teachers' houses increased in the villages after the teachers who graduated from the Village Institute started to work. The fact that the villagers are held responsible for the construction of these works in the villages makes the work of the trainer coming to the village very difficult.

There was no state aid in the school constructions carried out in the villages. The schools were built by the village people with a drudgery and a certain obligation. However, this practice did not work well at all. Starting from 1946, it was decided to provide state aid and reported to the provinces. However, it was seen that these aids did not go beyond the project aids. The peasant's job thus became more and more difficult.

Until the Evening Girls Art School was opened in Mersin in 1942, the only vocational school operating in Mersin was the Evening Trade School. This school was opened as Mersin Trade Course in 1928 and was closed after operating for 5 months.

It was reopened as the Evening Trade School in 1929 and was closed again after continuing its activities for 5 months. It is understood that the school was closed by the Ministry due to the lack of sufficient teacher staff for education together with the vocational schools across Turkey.¹⁸

A Vocational Trade Course was opened in 1929 under the auspices of the Governor's Office and under the control of the Chamber of Commerce.¹⁹ Middle School would be run temporarily until the course building was completed. In the course, education would be given according to the programs of the Evening Trade School, which was closed and anyone who completed their primary education and engaged in trade would be able to enroll. Vocational Trade Course was taken under the command of the Ministry of Education in 1931 under the name of Evening Public Commerce School.²⁰ On March 15, 1932, it was transferred to the order and budget of the Ministry of Education under the name of Evening Commercial School.

The teaching staff of the Evening Trade School was increased in 1937 and the number of teachers was increased to four.²¹ With the establishment of the Regional Art Schools in 1931, Mersin was connected to the Aydın Regional Art School. The expenses of the Regional Art Schools were covered by the provinces within the region. Regional Art Schools were transferred to the Ministry of National Education in 1935.

Especially in the 1940s, it is understood that many schools were opened in the field of vocational and technical education in Mersin and there were important developments in the field of vocational and technical education. Evening Art School, which was the first of these schools, started to enroll students on 15.12.1942 and started education in İdman Yurdu building on 24.12.1942. The first principal of the school was Sabahat Ocaklılar.²² In the 1942-1943 academic year, 138 students studied at the Evening Girls Art School.

18 Yeni Mersin, 15 Ağustos 1929.

19 Yeni Mersin, 1 Teşrinievvel 1929.

20 Yeni Mersin, 21 June 1947.

21 Yeni Mersin, 18 March 1937.

22 Yeni Mersin, 15 Birincikanun 1942.

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The first exhibition opened by the school attracted great attention in Mersin.²³ A Girls' Institute was opened in Mersin in the 1943-1944 academic year.

In the 1945-1946 academic year, Alata Technical Gardening School was opened in the village of Alata, based on the Law on Technical Agriculture and Technical Gardening Schools No. 4480.²⁴ The school started education on October 1, 1945 with 122 students.²⁵

A Middle Art School was opened in Mersin in the 1945-1946 academic year.²⁶ Mersin Middle Art School Principal, in a statement to Yeni Mersin newspaper, stated that the rapid development of the technical and war industry in the world during the World War II, was not a loss but a gain for Turkey and accelerated the industrialization efforts. He also explained that students started to show great interest in art schools.²⁷

In September 1947, 61 Village Institute Graduate Instructors were appointed to Mersin. An allowance of 200,000 TL was received to be spent for the Village Institute graduate teachers who would work in the villages of İel. This amount, which comes to the province, would be spent on building and agriculture-livestock works in the villages rather than teachers' salaries.

Mersin High School was an educational institution that was acquired after a longing for many years. With its establishment, it has also been a pioneer in some developments in Mersin. While the established football team played successful matches in the surrounding provinces, it also took its place in cultural events within the province. The theatre, painting, exhibition, folklore performances, sports events and commemoration days, as well as charity campaigns, showed itself.

In the 1947-1948 academic year, the Practical Art School was opened within the Middle Art School in order to train young people who have completed at least five classes of primary school and who were not successful in general knowledge courses, and whose success and talent in art were seen.²⁸

However, the school was closed after a while because it did not receive much attention. Middle Art School started its activities as Male Art Institute since 1948-1949 academic year.²⁹

The Middle Commercial School was transformed into a Commercial High School in the 1949-1950 academic year and continued its education in the lower part of the Child Protection Agency building opposite the station.³⁰ It is understood that banks, factories, private companies and other institutions constantly prefer trade school graduates and

23 Yeni Mersin, 21 August 1943.

24 Yeni Mersin, 21 June 1947.

25 Yeni Mersin, 20 June 1947.

26 Yeni Mersin, 10 March 1946; The workshops of the school were opened with a ceremony on March 9, 1946. Deputy Muhtar Berker, Süreyya Anamur, Governor Tevfik Sırrı Gür, CHP Provincial Executive Board Chairman Mithat Torođlu, Director of National Education and many teachers attended the ceremony.

27 Yeni Mersin, 14 October 1946.

28 Yeni Mersin, 16 September 1947.

29 İel il Yıllığı, (By: Kazım Erbil), Şan Matbaası, Ankara, 1967, p.65.

30 İel il Yıllığı, 1967, p.66.

the Middle Trade School's inability to meet this need was effective in the opening of the Commerce High School.

The National Schools in Mersin were opened with a ceremony on January 1, 1929, as in the whole of Turkey. School students were walking around all the bazaars and neighborhoods with flags in their hands, making propaganda that a war was declared against ignorance and that everyone should be mobilized on this issue. Yeni Mersin newspaper, on January 3, 1929, stated that the government made a great effort to teach new letters, the teachers worked day and night and after that; the task was with the people and made the following call to the people: "Come on, citizen! Run to the Nation Schools and do your duty. Read and learn".³¹

In 1929, a total of 134 classrooms A and 52 classrooms B were opened in cities and villages in Mersin province, while 186 teachers were working in these classrooms. A total of 5,635 students attended classrooms A, of which 3,697 were male and 1,988 were female. 2,221 students attended classrooms B, of which 1,696 were male and 525 were female. The total number of students going to A and B private teaching institutions was 7,906. It is understood that the number of students decreased to 4,478 during the course and 56 % of those enrolled in the courses left the courses.³²

Mersin Education Directorate announced in the Yeni Mersin newspaper on April 29, 1929; that an exam would be held in the first week of May for those who attended the National Schools in 1929 and those who learned the new Turkish letters in a special way to obtain documents.³³ It is seen that a total of 4650 people, 2,862 men and 1,788 women, received certificates from the National Schools in the first year, along with 172 people who studied abroad and took the exam at the end of the course, throughout the Mersin province.³⁴

As a result, although the National Schools did not fully realize the expected goal of making 100 % of the people literate, they made a significant contribution to the increase in the literacy rate in Mersin. According to the 1927 census, the average literacy rate in Mersin province was 9 %. This rate was 15 % for men and 3.5 % for women. The literacy rate in Mersin city center is 28 % for men and 14 % for women. In villages, the literacy rate is 11 % for men and 2 % for women.³⁵

According to the 1935 census conducted after Mersin and İel provinces were merged in 1933 with the law numbered 2197 and the İel Province was founded, the literacy rate in Mersin was declared as 37.9 %. While the literacy rate was 47.8 % for men, it was 26.3 % for women. The literacy rate in Mersin township and villages was 15.9 %. 27.1 % of this belongs to men and 4.8 % to women. Literacy rates for both males and females in the center of Mersin were well above the average of İel Province. While determining the rate of literacy in the 1935 census, the population aged 7 years and over was taken as a basis.

31 Ergün, Atatürk Devri Türk Eđitimi, p.132.

32 DİE, Millet Mektepleri Faaliyeti (1928-1934), İstanbul, 1934, p.36-37.

33 Yeni Mersin, 29 April 1929.

34 DİE, Millet Mektepleri Faaliyeti (1928-1934), p.36-37.

35 DİE, Umumi Nüfus Tahriri, Fasikül 1, 28 Teşrininevvel 1927, Ankara, 1929, p.132.

3. Republican Achievements in Women's Rights and the First Woman Mayor Müfide İlhan

The women's rights studies, which started with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, went through a long evolution and were able to come before Mustafa Kemal. But his thoughts on the matter had been formed much earlier. In 1916, in his headquarters on the Eastern Front, he thought that "not granting women social rights, and the benefits of raising mothers to society, but also to include women in working life."³⁶

The education of the mother should be given importance for a healthy society that will be the mother who brings up the child. While a man had the knowledge to prepare a woman for the life style necessary for her to be happy, the woman had to receive an education that would facilitate the life of the man. Mustafa Kemal, who said that we need to change the crooked image of women under old thoughts, came to the following conclusion: *"Let's be brave in this women's issue. Let's leave the delusion. Let them open up, let's decorate their minds with serious science and science. Let's explain in a chaste, scientific and sanitary way. Let's give priority to their honor and dignity"*.³⁷

In the first years of the Republic, the leader of the women's movement was Nezihe Muhiddin. Feminist women took their place in frontline wars under the leadership of Nezihe Muhiddin and have constantly expressed their views on women's rights since 1922. It aimed to ensure that women get the rights they deserve and that their rights are recognized. Nezihe Muhiddin and her 13 female friends decided to convene a women's council for the political rights of women. The group leading this movement included Nezihe Muhiddin, Latife Bekir, Naciye, Saniyye, Nimet Rumejde, Nesime İbrahim, Matlube, Naciye Naim, Faize, Atif and Zeliha Ladies.³⁸ She held this council in the Conference Hall of Darülfünun on June 15, 1923. She decided to establish a political party in the Council. The party's program was covered in the press. The name of the party to be founded was decided as "Women's People's Party". The most important feature of this party is that it was the first political party in the history of the Republic, by completing its founding work and submitting its founding petition, even before the Republican People's Party was founded. Nezihe Muhiddin is the person who struggled to raise women's rights between 1920 and 1934.³⁹

In the 1924 Constitution, there was no equality between men and women in terms of political rights. Election as a member of parliament is given only to men who have reached the age of 18. About being elected as a member of parliament, it was also about men. Women did not have the right to vote and be elected. In 1924, the Law of Unification of Education was enacted and a modern education system was established. In this education system, men and women have had equal educational opportunities. Stating that women's education should be a duty, not just a right, Mustafa Kemal Pasha stated that women have more right to education than men. On this subject he said: *"Our*

36 Tezel Taşkıran, Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları, Prime Ministry Printing House, Ankara, 1973, p.75-76.

37 Afet İnan, Atatürk'ün Karlsbat Hatıraları, TTK Publications, Ankara, 1982, p.148.

38 Serpil Çakır, Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi, Metis Publications, İstanbul, 1994, p.38.

39 Yaprak Zihnioğlu, Kadınsız İnkılap (Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği), Metis Publications, 2003, İstanbul, p.140.

*women are obliged to be more enlightened, more virtuous and more knowledgeable than men. If they really want to be the mother of the nation, they should be like this”.*⁴⁰

In the 1924 Constitution, every Turkish citizen was considered equal before the law (article 69). Equality remained only in the constitution. It could not be implemented. The principle of equality in civil law has found its true meaning. With the adoption of the Civil Code in 1926, the civil rights of women were recognized. Men and women were equal and had equal inheritance rights. Gaining the status of women is provided by the Civil Code. After gaining the perception of equality, it became easier to gain other rights. The exclusion of women from society has come to an end. Women are the values of this society. Respect for women started to spread together in every field. This equality was supported by the laws and it was ensured that it was adopted by the people.⁴¹

Rights related to education started to be discussed before the 1924 Constitution. With the adoption of the Law of Unification of Education in 1924, all education and training were gathered under a single roof. All Turks, men and women, have to study primary education. Primary school has been free of charge in public schools. In the 1924 Constitution, the obligation for all children to read without gender discrimination continued. The number of co-educational schools has increased.⁴² It was emphasized that education has no gender and that everyone living in the country should be educated for the development of society. There was a consciousness that a society without education has no future. With the civil law, the idea that educated girls would better educate their children when they become mothers in the future has also emerged. Education no longer has gender and age. The state has made efforts to increase the number of schools. It is the right decision for the public to force it by law in order to break the idea that girls cannot read. Girls' education would make a great contribution to their political participation in the future.⁴³

The 1924 Constitution, which was our first constitution, made many political contributions to our country. At the beginning of these, it is possible to show the position given to women in the political life. In 1923, the participation of women in political life was discussed in the law on parliamentary elections.

In 1926, the Turkish Civil Code was enacted. Women were provided with new civil rights.⁴⁴ With this law, the marriage of men to more than one woman was abolished. It was the beginning of the greatest rights gained by women. Atatürk, who believes that there is no social, political and economic difference between men and women with the Turkish Civil Code and that society cannot reach a modern level unless women take their place in society. Atatürk explains these ideas as follows:⁴⁵

40 Atatürk Söylev ve Demeçleri, National Education Printing House, İstanbul, 1967, p.151-152.

41 Şafak Kaypak, Mehmet Kahraman, Türkiye’de Kadının İnsan Hakları ve Anayasal Yansıması, Mustafa Kemal University Journal of FEAS, 33(13): 150, 2016, p.300.

42 Yüksel Çallı, Türk Anayasa Hukukunda Eğitim Hakkı (Master Thesis), Ankara University Social Institute, Ankara, 2009, p.65.

43 Yüksel Çallı, Türk Anayasa Hukukunda Eğitim Hakkı (Master Thesis), p.66.

44 Kemal Gözler, Anayasa Hukukuna Giriş, Ekin Publishing and Distribution, Bursa, 2013, p.25

45 Atatürk Söylev ve Demeçleri, p.150-151.

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“With a superficial view, who do not know the soul of Turkish women, looking at the appearance of Turkish women, they say – Turkey cannot be a civilized nation? Because the people of Turkey consist of two parts. It is divided into two parts as men and women. - On the other hand, if all men and women do not pursue the same goal in a social society, there is no possibility of advancement in science and science. There is a path we can walk with more carefree and fearless, more honest. It is the way to make the great Turkish woman a partner in our work, to lead our lives with her, to make the Turkish woman the man’s partner, friend, helper and protector in the scientific, moral, social and economic life.”

Atatürk made great efforts to give women the necessary place in society and working life. He showed a more humane approach to women. It enabled women to be active. He emphasized that the high level of women’s effectiveness is necessary for success in society. The first female district governor was appointed to Çankaya district of Ankara on April 3, 1992. Her name is Azize Düşer. The first woman to exercise her right to be elected in 1935 was Benal Arıman. It is seen that women in Turkey have been fighting for a long time to gain political rights. This struggle lasted for many years between men and women. The main reason for the struggle is inequality.⁴⁶

As a result, in 1930, the first Municipality Law came into force, the Village Law was amended in 1933, and Gül Esin, who was elected the first female headman of Turkey in 1933, was rewarded by Atatürk when she was the headman of Karpuzlu Bucak, Çine District of Aydın. With Ms. Gül Esin becoming the headman, gambling in coffeehouses was prohibited, kidnapping incidents were prevented and marriage proceedings were regulated. Ms. Gül Esin was elected as the headman at the age of 32. She received 500 votes. During the Ottoman Empire, women did not have the right to vote and be elected, as there was a gender-based voting principle. They gained this right for the first time in 1934. In 1934, women were given the right to vote and be elected and every woman and man over the age of 22 gained the right to become a member of parliament (Constitution Article 10). During the Ottoman Empire, women did not have the right to vote and be elected, as there was a gender-based voting principle. They gained this right for the first time in 1934. In 1935, women’s participation and election in elections was implemented for the first time. In addition, World Women’s Rights were still not included in the agenda during this period. Turkey is ahead of the world in this regard. Especially the USA and England gave the right to vote in 1918 for women 30 years old and men 21 years old. France gave women the right to vote in 1944.⁴⁷

In 1930, women gained the right to participate in municipal elections. The first female mayor was Müfide İlhan, who was elected as the Mayor of Mersin (province) in 1950.⁴⁸ In

46 Şefika Kurnaz, Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını, Turkish Prime Ministry Publications, Ankara, 1991, p.170.

47 Mümtaz Soysal, Dinamik Anayasa Anlayışı Anayasa Diyalaktığı Üzerine Bir Deneme, AÜSBF Publications, Ankara, 1968, p.33.

48 Müfide İlhan was born in Istanbul (Beykoz) in 1911 as the daughter of Mehmet Nazi Bey, the brother of Fevzi Çakmak Pasha, who was martyred in the Battle of Çanakkale. After completing her primary, secondary and high school (Kandilli Girls’ High School) education in Istanbul, she graduated from Istanbul Teacher’s School in 1928 and started to work as a teacher in Istanbul (Moda Primary School). After he got married, he continued his teaching profession in regions such as Erzurum, Doğu Beyazıt and Kırklareli, respectively, and went to Germany in 1936 and studied educational activities in Germany for a year. While she was continuing her teaching career in Ankara on her return from Germany, she took care of the education of Turkish children in this country until

1933, according to the Village Law, women were given the right to elect and be elected to the village headman and the council of elders. The first female headman was Ms. Gul from Çinekarpuzlu, central Dereköy. In 1934, the intellectual women's community walked up to the Turkish Grand National Assembly and demanded that all political rights be given to them.⁴⁹

The Democrat Party (DP) showed its success in the general elections in the local elections held in September 1950. One of his achievements has been the mayor of Mersin. With his success, the city's 27 council members had superiority over the Republican People's Party (CHP). Ms. Müfide İlhan, a teacher who settled in the city for a short time due to her husband's being from Mersin, was among the first of the elected members of the DP's Council. The most important debate in the city was the issue of who should be the mayor. Although the general opinion was that she was chosen by the people, the name of Ms. Müfide was prominent from all walks of life. Yeni Mersin Newspaper wrote the following about "why" the new mayor should be Ms. Müfide İlhan;

"This lady is in a position to devote all her time to municipal affairs. Since she is extremely energetic, she does not waste time with "paper transfer" until the evening, leaning on her seat in the municipality office. She travels all over the city, identifies every need and is beneficial to the people of the city. She has information about the needs of cities and their construction works, as she has visited and seen various cities and towns of the world with her esteemed husband Faruk. It would not be wrong to assume that the majority of the townspeople wanted her to be the mayor, since the Mersin electorate had won the most votes. And finally, the fact that the Mayor of Mersin is a woman is both a justified pride for the people of Mersin, and an expression of a brand-new mentality for Turkey on a world scale."⁵⁰

Seeing more favor than expected, Müfide İlhan made her mark in history as the first female mayor of Mersin and Turkey, unanimously at the meeting held on September 8 by Sefa Çiftçi, the oldest member of the municipal council. At the end of the election, Mayor Ms. Müfide; shared her excitement with the members of the council by saying that; *"I will rely on the cooperation of the council members and the people of the city by promising that I will work with all my might to ensure that the city works are carried out in an orderly manner"*.⁵¹

This success of Ms. Müfide aroused great interest and repercussions in the national and international media. The bright face of modern Turkey was announced to the whole world in the European and other countries' print media, especially in the US media. "The Tipton Daily Tribune" newspaper published in the USA announced on the front page the news that *"the first female mayor was elected in Turkey"* in its issue dated 8 November

1945, when her husband Faruk İlhan went to Afghanistan as an officer. Müfide İlhan, who settled in Mersin, her husband's hometown, entered active politics with the Democrat Party in 1946 and was elected as the Mayor of Mersin in the 1950 local elections. When Müfide İlhan, a mother of seven children, passed away in 1996, she was chosen as the mother of the year by the Turkish Mothers Association. (Kudret Ünal, Müfide İlhan, Türkiye'nin İlk Kadın İl Belediye Başkanı, Tarsus Municipality Culture Publications, Tarsus, 2013, p.15, 19)

49 Gözler, Anayasa Hukukuna Giriş, p.27.

50 Yeni Mersin, 8 September 1950.

51 Yeni Mersin, "Yeni Şehir Belediye Meclisi üyeleri toplandı. Müfide İlhan ittifakla Belediye Başkanı seçildi", 9 September 1950.

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1950⁵², and The Racine Journal Times stated that *“there is a situation that prevents a woman from being a mayor like a man.”* published the news titled *“Turkey’s female mayor is confident”*⁵³.

Celal Bayar, the “Victory Hodja” of the National Struggle, who was also the President that year, congratulated Müfide İlhan in a telegram which was sent by himself⁵⁴ (the content was published in the Zafer Newspaper). He congratulated her on his satisfaction for being elected Mayor.

Yeni Mersin Newspaper, which has supported the mayorship since she was elected as a council member, and Mersin public opinion expressed the happiness felt “for the election of a female mayor” with a poem they published.⁵⁵

In the interview she gave to Cumhuriyet Newspaper from the national press after she was elected Mayor, Ms. Müfide explained what her responsibility means and her thoughts especially on the rights and problems of Anatolian women.

“Since the city is the common house of its citizens, I consider it necessary for women to take part in the City Council, which organizes its affairs. Since I call the city a “home”, the health and comfort of the citizens should be considered with a mother’s care in urban planning, the needs of the muktasid, the house and the family members should be arranged in the best and cheapest way, within the budget permits. They say, “It is the female bird that makes the nest”. It needs to be made an attractive home in the city. I regret that I am the only woman in Mersin City Council. But I am sure that my fellow citizens from Mersin will not refuse to help me. Their involvement will make up for this deficiency.”⁵⁶

While continuing her services to the people of Mersin, she resigned from politics in 1951 in a resentful manner, as she could not see her political future in the Democrat Party amid intra-party political conflicts. Although the newly established Nationalist Democracy Party (MDP) was trying to return to politics in order to find a place in Turkish politics, which was reshaped after the 1980 Military Coup, she resigned from the Mersin Provincial administration after she could not receive the necessary attention from the Party Chairman Turgut Sunalp and the party headquarters. She published the petition of Ms. Müfide İlhan, dated September 26, 1983, in the newspaper Hâkimiyet published in Mersin. Ms. Müfide stated the reason for leaving in her petition. She explained⁵⁷ that *“Irregularity in the work of the Party and adherence to Atatürk’s principles are just simple words”*.⁵⁸

52 The Tipton Daily Tribune, “Turkey Mayor”, November 8, 1950.

53 The Racine Journal Times, “First Woman Mayor In Turkey Is Confident”, December 29, 1950.

54 Zafer, “İlk Kadın Belediye Reisimiz”, 15 September 1950.

55 “Müfide İlhan, Uzak değil Mersinin mazisi, tarihçesi. Yüz seneden beridir geliyor güzel sesi. 1950 de oldu Müfide İlhan, Şirin, güzel Mersinin tekeden kraliçesi”. (Yeni Mersin, “Hayal Çiçekleri, Portreler,” 21 October 1950).

56 Cumhuriyet, “İlk Kadın Belediye Reisi ile Mülakat”, 11 September 1950

57 Hâkimiyet, 28 September 1983.

58 Müfide İlhan kept both the Hâkimiyet Newspaper, in which her petitions were published, and the article in which the MDP rejected her request to become a member of parliament. Source: Kadın Eserleri Library, Müfide İlhan Special Collection.

Ms. Müfide İlhan, who did not break her ties with Mersin even though she was not interested in politics, continued her relations with the people of Mersin and especially with women through various associations she founded. Ms. Müfide, who was buried in Bodrum after she died on February 2, 1996 as a result of a heart attack in Bodrum, where she went to visit her children, was never forgotten by the people of Mersin. Her statue was erected and she was kept alive, especially by giving her name to educational institutions, parks and various organizations.

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

When the Republic of Turkey was officially established on October 29, 1923, it received a legacy from the Ottoman Empire that was left under rubble in almost every field. Because although the Ottomans tried to remove this wreckage, they could not succeed. Therefore, the responsibility was left to the newly established Republic of Turkey. In this direction, the executive staff of the young state, which tends to realize innovations, acted within the framework of certain principles. In the social transformation realized around certain principles, secularism took place in almost every revolution as the main element and ensured its validity in other principles. In addition, while the reforms were carried out with these principles, the main purpose was to reach the level of “*contemporary civilizations*”. In line with this plan and framework, the Republic of Turkey, which took action under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha, abolished the Sultanate in 1922 and determined the administrative system in 1923, and realized the first of the regulations in 1924, which would pave the way for radical steps to develop its society.

As women are one of the main elements that make up the society, they are a touchstone in the social modernization process. In this context, ensuring that women reach a modern level in appearance which is an important issue that needs to be addressed in terms of social change. Turkish women’s clothing, before being exposed to the modernization process, was shaped by the influence of her faith and the cultures of the geography she lived in. With the effect of the wind of change blowing in the 18th and 19th centuries, women’s clothing also started to change, but this change caused a confusion in Turkish women in terms of appearance with the effect of traditionalist understanding. Therefore, the young state, which turned to modernization with the establishment of the Republic, sought solutions for the Turkish women to get a modern appearance by saving them from this confusion with the understanding of secularism. In this context, although the Republic of Turkey has started to work with legal regulations in men’s clothing as a solution, it has designed to realize the change in women’s clothing by encouraging, not by legal regulations. Because, without the reaction of the oppressive perception towards women in Turkish society, there is no other rational way for women to gain a modern image. Efforts for Turkish women to completely change their old clothes such as chadors and veils and to attain a modern appearance were initiated by encouraging them both through discourses on this subject and through publications in the press. Despite all these practices, when sufficient change could not be achieved in all of Turkey, the removal of these clothes was made compulsory by prohibiting them by local governments. However, as expected, this change was not welcomed by the oppressive understanding, especially due to the woman’s being in the background in the society. Ultimately, the existence of the mentality perception mentioned in the reactions to this change was clearly seen.

Likewise, the discourses put forward in the reactions regarding the moral disapproval of women throwing away the veil and chador support this situation. Apart from these reactions, it is possible to come across reactive discourses of people who cannot accept change. In addition, this change was reacted both from the Islamic geography and from Europe. The reactions from the Islamic geography, which are in the nature of negative discourses towards change, are in parallel with the discourses seen in the country. It is seen that the reactions from Europe emerged from the inability of Turkish women to take the European woman to a point beyond her position in society. However, these reactions from both domestic and foreign countries could not create the desired effect and remained inconclusive.

It is possible to find the most important evolution of Turkish society in the social status that Turkish women have reached. The share of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, was quite large in the realization of this change. Atatürk, who wanted to realize a secular, liberal and democratic life for his nation, fought hard for the necessary reforms. Because he believed that he could achieve this wish by changing the status of Turkish women, who were treated as second-class citizens in society. Atatürk started a great transformation with these reforms. He liberated the woman, who was closed due to religious bigotry in the Ottoman Empire, with the westernization reforms she carried out in Turkey, and enabled her to have equal rights with men in the legal field, and to take part in the economy and politics.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his intellectual friends started the revolutions with firm steps, confident that the most permanent and contemporary social change would be realized through education. The issue of which segments will participate in this change process is of great importance. A sociological Turkish identity has been revealed as a result of the studies and researches on how to apply a method in the transition from the empire to the national state. The Turkish identity in question has become a unifying identity for everyone who lives in the Republic of Turkey and feels Turkish, and has opened the door to a brand-new culture. Its motto is "How happy is the one who says I am a Turk". All the revolutions made for the realization of such a comprehensive change process were shared with all segments of the people, and non-formal education began to be used in the most functional way.

As a concept that found its true purpose with the proclamation of the Republic and included adult education, non-formal education became an important tool for the process of social change. In this way, it is aimed to raise the cultural level of the people and to understand and adopt the changes made. Alphabet revolution was carried out in order to increase the literacy rate.

In order to teach the revolution to the people, Nation Schools were opened and education started in 1929 and it was tried to ensure the participation of all citizens, from small to large. Nation Schools made significant contributions to the process in order to introduce the new alphabet to the public and to facilitate social change by increasing the literacy rate. As a result of our investigations, we see that the National Schools carry out non-formal education as well as alphabet education in such a way that there is no land left unreached in the country.

With the beginning of non-formal education studies with schools, a certain part of the population (30%) became literate. Social change activities have also accelerated due to the fact that literate people can now read newspapers and magazines. In this way, the basic principles that are desired to be brought to the society of the Republic of Turkey have begun to be determined and it has been tried to bring the people together under a cultural roof. The first study in this direction was the establishment of the Turkish Historical Society. Because if a common culture is to be formed, there must also be a sense of unity. For this reason, by starting to investigate the periods when the first identity of the Turks was formed, it was aimed to explain to the society that the entire past did not consist of the Ottoman Empire, and that there was a glorious history with a unifying power before. The Turkish History Thesis, which started with the reading of scientific books written on the subject and tried to be supported concretely by archaeological excavations, was put forward. Thus, the people, who are in a social change, started to ask the question of what we were and what we are before the question of what kind of society we will be.

In the Republican period, as in all of Turkey, primary education was given the most importance in Mersin. Great efforts were made in Mersin, especially for the opening of primary schools in the villages and the awareness of the villagers. Villagers, who did not understand the importance of school and education or did not see the benefit of education throughout Turkey, expected the state to build schools in their villages. This attitude of the villagers who traditionally built their mosques, fountains and roads themselves is interesting. As such, it was difficult for the state to reach all villages with its own means. For this reason, the Instructor Application has been started, in which practical ways of spreading education without spending much money have been researched in the villages whose number has reached 40,000. When positive results were obtained from this practice, in 1942, with the Village Institute and Village Schools Law, each village was asked to build its own school. With this Law, as a result of the State's support of the villagers with necessary construction materials such as cement and nails, many schools were built in the central villages of Mersin with the help of the cooperative method, and as a result of the appointment of teachers to the villages whose schooling was completed, many villages had schools. For example, while in 1942 there were 42 schools, 12 of which had trainers and 30 were teachers, in the villages of Mersin center, this number increased to 80 in 1950.

In 1942, there were schools in 23.6 of the villages in Turkey. On the same date, the rate of schools in the villages of Mersin center was 42%. In 1950, while the rate of villages with schools in Turkey was 45.5, this rate was 80% in the villages connected to the center of Mersin. This situation is well above the Turkey average in terms of schooling in villages. The extraordinary work of the Governors, the Education Administration, the people and cultural institutions had a great impact on this result. However, the obligations of the villagers to build schools became the subject of criticism with the transition to multi-party life, and this practice was abolished in 1951. On the other hand, there were important developments in terms of both quantity and quality, especially in primary and technical education between 1940-1950 in Turkey. In parallel with these developments, a significant increase has been recorded in the number of schools and students in primary education in Mersin, especially in villages. In 1923, the number of primary schools in Mersin center

and its villages was 13, 7 of which were in the city center, while the number of teachers was 35 and the number of students was around 800. By 1950, there was a great increase in the number of schools, teachers and students as a result of the education policy and practices of the Republic.

Accordingly, the number of schools in the center of Mersin and its villages reached 94, the number of teachers reached 208, and the number of students reached 9807. In other words, between 1923 and 1950, the number of teachers increased by 482%, the number of schools by 623%, and the number of students by 1125% in Mersin center and its villages. Accordingly, the increase in the number of schools and teachers lagged behind the rate of increase in the number of students. On the other hand, in a speech he gave to Yeni Mersin newspaper on October 29, 1949, Deputy Governor of İel, Eşref Erkut, declared that 91% of the children who are obliged to primary education attend schools. These developments show that the target of the Republic to have every citizen through primary education and to achieve primary education 100% is very close in Mersin and its central villages. In 1949, there were a total of 316 primary schools, 27 of which were in the city center and 289 in the villages, throughout the province of İcel.

Mersin has taken its deserved place in the civilized world family by making the gains which gained with the Republic suitable for its structure in a short time, especially in education, as in all provinces in Anatolia. With the first “female” mayor, pulled out of itself, Mersin set an example not only for the country but also for the whole world.

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