

Muğla Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi
Bahar 2011 Sayı 26

**A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF HISTORY IN EUROPEAN UNION AND
THE REFLECTION OF IT ON THE CONCEPT OF THE DIALOGUE
BETWEEN CULTURES**

Salih YILMAZ*

ABSTRACT

Towards the end of the 20th century European Union entered into a quite strong period in terms of economics. During this period, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, some of the countries which came out of these unions applied for the membership of the European Union. This causes the need of the European Union to have a new plan for the future. In this plan for the future there occurred some ideas and projects related to the political, cultural and social ways of integration along with the economic union and help. One of these projects and ideas is the thought that the course books play an essential role in the development of societies and generations. And because of this there occurred an idea of workshop with reference to the course books between the member countries of the European Union and the candidate countries. History course books occupy a cardinal place in realising this project. In accordance with this thought European historians think that the history of the 20th century should occupy a bigger place in the general history education. Moreover, they stress that instead of strengthening the national identities, as it was in the past, the history course books should provide more space for the European social history and by doing this they should establish European consciousness. As an example of this project, East Europe, Caucasus and Black Sea countries with the support of the European Council realised and are still holding the projects of the development of a new understanding of history. The aim of this project is to encourage the neighbouring countries to be tolerant towards each other and in a way to smooth patriotism. However, this understanding encompasses some drawbacks because it provides an understanding of history with the European centre. This presentation scrutinises the change in the history course books that is going to take place because of the new understanding of history. What is more, it is going to evaluate the influence of this change on the relationship between Turkey and its neighbours with which it has some problems – Bulgaria, Greece, Siria, Armenia – and the reflection of this change on the dialogue between the cultures.

Key Words: Dialogue between cultures, History Education, becoming European, Identity, European Union.

**Avrupa Birliği'nde Yeni Tarih Eğitimi Anlayışı ve Bu Anlayışının
Kültürlerarası Diyalog Kavramına Yansıması**

ÖZET

Avrupa Birliği 20. yüzyılın sonlarına doğru ekonomik anlamda oldukça güçlü bir döneme girmiştir. Bu süreçte Sovyetler Birliği ve Yugoslavya'nın yıkılması ve bu birliklerden

*Doç. Dr., Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Tarih Bölümü.

A New Understanding of History in European Union and the Reflection of it on the Concept of the Dialogue Between Cultures

çıkaran bazı ülkelerin Avrupa Birliği'ne üyelik başvurusu yapmasıyla Avrupa Birliği yeni bir gelecek planlamasına ihtiyaç duymuştur. Bu gelecek planlaması içerisinde ekonomik birleşme ve yardımlaşmanın yanında siyasi, kültürel ve toplumsal birleşimin nasıl gerçekleştirileceği konusu üzerinde de fikirler ve projeler ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu projeler ve fikirlerden birisi de ders kitaplarının toplumlara ve nesilleri yetiştirmede önemli roller oynadığı ve bu nedenle ders kitapları konusunda birlik ülkeleri ve aday ülkeler nezdinde çalışmalar yapılması ihtiyacı olduğu konusudur. Bu anlayışı gerçekleştirmede tarih ders kitapları önemli bir yer edinmektedir. Buna bağlı olarak Avrupalı tarihçiler temel olarak 20. yüzyıl tarihinin genel tarih eğitimi içinde daha büyük bir yer kaplaması, tarih ders kitaplarında eskiden olduğu gibi ulusal kimliklerin pekiştirilmesi yerine Avrupa toplumsal tarihine daha çok yer vererek Avrupalılık bilincinin yerleştirilmesi gereğinin üzerinde durmaktadır. Bunun bir örneği olarak Avrupa Konseyi'nin desteğiyle Doğu Avrupa, Kafkasya ve Karadeniz'e sınırı olan ülkelerde yeni bir tarih anlayışı geliştirme projeleri yürütülmüş ve yürütülmektedir. Bunun amacı komşu ülkelerin birbirine daha hoşgörüle bakması ve milliyetçiliğin bir anlamda törpülenmesidir. Ancak bu yeni anlayış da Avrupa merkezli bir tarih anlayışını içermesi bakımından tehlikeler içermektedir. Bu bildiride Avrupa Birliği'nin yeni tarih eğitimi anlayışı doğrultusunda gerçekleştirmeye çalıştığı tarih ders kitaplarında değişim ve bu değişimin Türkiye'nin komşuları olan Bulgaristan, Yunanistan, Suriye, Ermenistan gibi sorunları olan komşularıyla ilişkilerinde etkisi ve kültürlerarası diyalog kavramına yansımaları değerlendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürlerarası Diyalog, Tarih Eğitimi, Avrupalılaştırma, Kimlik, Avrupa Birliği.

1. INTRODUCTION

As the history of this century has shown, it is possible to spread the sense of hatred among nations and races in several days. On the other hand, the way of a mutual toleration takes years, decades and even generations. Through education it is possible to raise ardent fascist generation; at the same time, if the education levels are used in an appropriate way it is also possible to raise tolerant and peaceable generation. And this is the greatest dream of the European Union; therefore, they work on new projects in each country in this regard. The role of the education of history in the raising of tolerant and peaceable generation is very important. (Tarih Yazımında, 2000). The teachers of history in the countries of the European Union progressed a lot in the spreading of the concept of open-mindedness by deploying history education. (Breisach, 2009) In order to attain their aim they chose the museum which can be used as their tool because all museums encompass historical materials. The museums that include contemporary fine arts have also taken place in this group of investigation. However, it should not be misunderstood that all museums are interested in history. To illustrate, there are museums of nature. In the last years in Europe the museums started to embrace the 20th century European history as well as they began to be presented as powerful and popular means of learning and teaching history. The annual number of the visitors of the museums in

Salih YILMAZ

England changes between 75-85 million people. There is an evident tendency towards the democratisation of history in all the museums of Europe. For instance, the industrialisation museums have developed grossly recently. There are samples of these museums in our country as well – Koç Museum in Istanbul. Everything in this museum is the history of ordinary people whose lives have changed greatly with the industrialisation in the 20th century in all the European countries. The Internet site - www.art-ww1.com – can be given as an example for this. This site is prepared as an electronic museum for the easy use of everybody who wants to learn and to teach history.

2. THE HISTORY EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND IN THE CANDIDATE COUNTRIES AND THE TARGET OF RAISING TOLERANT GENERATION

In all the work of the European Union done with reference to education there is an aim to raise the future European generation which will understand and absorb the concept of Europeanisation. They started with the renewing of the course programmes and they also hold the projects that make these renewed course programmes suitable for the use (Yılmaz, 2009:). It is possible to give some examples of countries of the European Union to show how they integrated their course programmes into the new system and how they work out these programmes. We can list them as follows:

2.1. Malta:

The museums are widely used in the school educational levels. There was established a war museum which presents the politics of the Axis Powers in Malta. In the educational level realised in this museum the events are explained in totality together with the explanation that in today's world the conditions are different and that it is futile to feel hatred towards other countries. The instructors stress the importance of democracy and tolerance and ask the students to understand that there should not be the sense of revenge among the new generations, to avoid doing the same mistakes that were done in the history by analysing the historical events correctly. The students can see that the difference of point of view is not something wrong, that if they learn to respect each other's opinions and if they accept that they are different from each other everything can be solved in a healthy way.

2.2. Austria:

In the universities of Austria in recent years there has been work done on the development of the didactic-methodologic concepts related to history education. The purpose of this follows: to regard the structural approaches, such

*A New Understanding of History in European Union and the Reflection of it on the
Concept of the Dialogue Between Cultures*

as family structure history, industrialisation history, labour history as oral history and to combine it with daily life. When the students have their university education and return to their own schools they learn how to analyse critically their interviews and write a short report related to the topic of the interview or the person. In this way, they come to terms with the past and they can differentiate between right and wrong. It is impossible to think of a student after this process who can have wrong information and prejudice regarding the problems experienced in the past.

2.3. Czech Republic:

In Czech Republic, the education has been reformed and the history books have been written again since 1989 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. There were significant steps to raise a new generation together with the generation which was formed according to the Soviet ideology. The educational levels were deployed to raise tolerant and peaceable generation.

2.4. Bulgaria:

In schools of Bulgaria 20th century European history is taught in two academic years. In the secondary school, the last part of the curriculum of the 9th grade covers the period from the early 20th century until the World War I. The courses of the 10th grade, on the other hand, are left for the modern world history. The education policy of Bulgaria is based on the principle that “if a student wants to know his own history well and wants to have an efficient lesson from it, his priority should be the learning of the other countries and cultures”. As a consequence of this principle, the students are advised to think independently and to approach critically when they analyse historical sources, so that they can gain something. In Bulgaria, the history courses usually include the analysis of the documents or events that left a mark on history. For example, the World War I and its immediate aftermath are taught by analysing the document that is called the Wilson Principles in history, which was announced by the USA President Wilson after the World War I. The students are taught the selected passages from the international contracts by discussion. When the world history is taught the programmes of the political parties, the laws of the international organisations etc are scrutinised. German National Socialist Party or the French Public Front programmes are taught by comparative method. In this way, the political ideas that were decisive for the countries’ past are scrutinised. Moreover, the Bulgarian instructors make use of memories and written memories in order to make the course more attractive. Churchill’s or Stalin’s memories help the students to understand the process that was moulding Europe. In the last semester, the students are usually asked to

Salih YILMAZ

compare and contrast the interviews of the European politicians. By analysing historical letters, for instance, the mistakes related to the past are brought to the fore. Indeed, it would be useful to develop democracy and tolerance if such documents take place and are analysed in the history books. It would be helpful to avoid such enmity like anger which was felt in Turkey when in 1989 Bulgaria started to deport Bulgarian Turks if the letter communication between the shattered families after the migration to Turkey was inserted into the course books; it might influence some students and make them evade similar actions. Similarly, if the samples of the letters written to their families by the innocent people who underwent capital punishment in Turkey in 1980 during the Military stroke were inserted into the history course books in Turkey, it would be easier to make the new generation understand that military stroke is not a good action and it would also be easy for them to comprehend the events of the period. Producing a discursive generation leads to the increase in tolerance and to the decrease in the secret hatred among people. Therefore, by deploying history courses to transfer the past to the new generation, we should not forget that we are raising a new generation and that we should strengthen their belief in democracy and peace.

European Union has been holding quite useful social projects recently. And by supporting the renewing of the educational programmes of the European Union countries and the candidate countries, they assist in the production of the books for the new generation. During this assistance they work to make the countries mutually eliminate the statements from the course books that would increase the sense of enmity towards each other and to make the books more comprehensible and more open to be tolerated in the process of being a European citizenship. In fact, each country is left to face its own history. For example, such pairs like Belgium-Holland, Holland-Germany, Germany-France, Russia-Germany, Turkey-Greece, Turkey-Armenia (Yılmaz, 2008:111-130), Italy-Greece, Portugal-Spain etc. have reached an understanding in the European Union with reference to the avoidance of the reflection of the historical problems on the educational programmes and in relation to the avoidance of the filling the new generations' minds with harmful ideas in the environment of tolerance. After such an understanding it will take time to reach a consequence and the countries that had problems will have stronger relationships.

2.5. Greece:

When we look at Greece we can see that the history education has changed completely. This change process started after the process of the

*A New Understanding of History in European Union and the Reflection of it on the
Concept of the Dialogue Between Cultures*

integration into the European Union. Similar to Turkey, in Greece the course books are distributed by the government. Greek history books usually cover the period of ancient age which is intensively studied. The elimination of the parts with serious statements in relation to Turkey after the mutual convention and the political relationships between the two countries that developed recently assisted greatly in the tolerance and peace. Similarly, when there was the same dense enmity between Turkey and Syria several years ago, the two countries made an agreement, then, they mutually reformed the education programmes and created today's peaceful atmosphere. There is also an aim to confirm that the new generation will not doubt the eternal friendship between the two countries by inserting the passages related to the good neighbourhood relationship into the course books during the change in the history programmes. Similar studies are in progress in relation to Turkey and Armenia and in the last years an important progress is established (Tarih Öğretiminde, 2003: 59-104; Tarih Eğitiminde, 2003:34-81).

**3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF THE
INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND THE THINGS TO BE DONE
TO CREATE A NEW EUROPEAN IDENTITY IN THE TOLERANCE
ATMOSPHERE**

We can see that significant steps are made in the direction of the production of the future new European identity when we look at the work done by the European Union. When they make the steps they are careful to be at the same distance to the member countries and to the countries which will probably be the members. According to the "Number 1283 advice moderation in relation to the European History and the Learning of the European History" that was accepted on 22 January 1996 by the European Council Parliamentary Assembly (Tarih Öğretiminde, 2003:105-108):

1. People have right to own their past as well as to disown it. History is one of the various ways of regaining this past and of creating a cultural identity. Moreover, it is a door that leads into the experience and the wealth of the past and the other cultures. It is a discipline over the critical approach to knowledge and the development of the controlled imagination.
2. History has got a political role in the contemporary Europe. It can assist in more understanding, tolerance and security between the individuals

Salih YILMAZ

- and among the European nations. At the same time it can become a power of separation, violence and intolerance.
3. Historical consciousness is a seminal skill of citizenship. A person devoid of it can be weak against political and other orientations.
 4. For most of the young history starts at school. This process should not be limited to the learning by heart of the historical events. It should be a means to enter the path to the historical knowledge; it should cause the development of a point of view of a tolerant and responsible citizen with critical mentality.
 5. Schools are not the only source of historical knowledge and opinion. The other sources can be public communication tools, films, literature and tourism. Families, peer groups, local and national societies, religious and political environment can also be influential.
 6. The new communication technology (CD, DVD, Internet, etc.) widens the variety of the historical subjects and influence.
 7. There can be a categorisation of the different historical types: traditions, memories and analytical history. For each fact there is a different measure. These different history types play different roles.
 8. The politicians have their own opinions about history and some of them tend to play with history as their tactics. Almost all political systems have used the history according to their own needs and have brought forward the versions regarding historical facts and regarding bad and good people in history.
 9. Even if the stable aim is to approach the concrete, historians are aware of the abstraction of the structure of history and of the fact that history has got different ways of allowing fabricated opinions.
 10. People have a right to learn a history that was not used for various aims. The state should comply with this right and should encourage a scientific approach which does not include any religious or political ideas.
 11. In order to update and renew the contents of the history education constantly, the teachers and the academicians should be in close contact with each other. It is important that history closely follows the contemporary developments.
 12. There should be transparency among the people who work in the field of history in a school class, in a television studio, in a university library, etc.
 13. A special attention should be given to the problems in Central and Eastern Europe which has undergone the troubles of the fact that history

*A New Understanding of History in European Union and the Reflection of it on the
Concept of the Dialogue Between Cultures*

was used as a tool according to some aims until recently and which has been under the political censure in some situations.

14. The assembly advises to encourage the teaching of the European history according to the following suggestions of the Committee of Ministers:

- History consciousness should be a basic element in the education of all the young. Teaching of history should provide the students with critical thinking skills, with the ability to express their ideas by analysing the knowledge in an efficient and responsible way, with the comprehension of the complexity of the issues and with the concept of value of the cultural variety. National, racial, religious or other types of clichés based upon prejudices and the other distortions should be identified.
- The course subject of history teaching should be quite obvious. All the directions of the society (besides the political history social and cultural history) should take place in it. It should appreciate the woman's role. Besides local and national (being away from ardent nationalism) history, the history of the minority should be taught. Discursive, sensitive and tragic events should be balanced with the positive effects.
- In the course programmes, the place should be given to all Europe history, primarily to political and economic events, philosophical and cultural trends that moulded European identity.
- The schools should follow the different ways of analysing the same subjects in different countries. It is possible that this will be the development of the basis for the relations between schools.
- George Eckert National Course Books Studies Institute should be supported. The Ministries of Education and the educational publishers should be asked to provide the constant updating of the course books collection of this organisation.
- Different kinds of history learning (course books, television, project studies, museum visits, etc.) should be combined and none of them should have a priority. New communication technology should be total. The materials used should have educational (and academic) standards.
- There should be a wider interrelationship between school and the external environment for the young people's comprehension of history. In order to do this, museums (especially history museums), cultural journeys should deploy such ways as tourism.

Salih YILMAZ

- Especially for the new technology, besides creative approaches, constant in-service training should be encouraged. A net that can establish a relation between history teachers should be encouraged. In the European teacher courses, which were organised in the frame of the in-service training programme for the teachers by Cultural Cooperation Council, there should be a subject with the priority of history.
 - Cooperation between teachers and historians should be encouraged by means of new project like the project related to the learning and education of 20th century European history by Cultural Cooperation Council Education Committee.
 - A state support should be given to organise independent national organisations of history teachers. These should be encouraged to participate actively in European History Teachers Union (Euroclio).
 - A practical convention related to history teaching and a European contract should be prepared with the cooperation of the history teachers in order to protect them against political orientations.
15. The assembly endorses academic studies, but as it is in the field of parallel publishing, it waits for the professional responsibility. Therefore, it advises the following to the Ministry Committee:
- Ask the governments to provide a constant financial support for the multilateral and double sided work on history studies and contemporary history.
 - Support the cooperation between historians by means of the approach of taking into consideration the difference of experience and opinion to help to cause the Europeans to take pains over the development of a more open-minded and tolerant points of view.
 - Ensure the protection of the historians' right to have freedom of speech.
16. European cooperation in the field of history should be encouraged. The assembly advises the following to the Ministry Committee:
- Analyse basic elements of the European nations that took place in different periods; when these are accepted by everybody, they can be put into all the European history course books.
 - Think about the possibility of the organisation of an electronic history library in the member countries.
 - Encourage the member countries to establish national museums similar to the concept of German "History House" in Bonn.

A New Understanding of History in European Union and the Reflection of it on the Concept of the Dialogue Between Cultures

- Support the multilateral and double sided projects on history and history education and the regional projects especially between the neighbour countries.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can see that history education plays an important role in the educational work done by European Union. The main reasons of the significance of the history education, as it was pinpointed before in several examples, are hidden in the fact that it is a seminal factor in the development of the new generations. Because the European Union is aware of the importance of the history education for the future of Europe, it realises studies by thinking that all the member countries should teach one history. It is not possible to finish the work in a short time, though. Therefore, it started to work by analysing the individual education programmes of the countries and by renewing the educational programmes and the course books of each country. The aim is to have a unitary education in 20-30 years. In this way, all the students in member countries may have similar course books. And this education will provide a life for the new generations who will live in a peaceful and tolerant atmosphere in a unitary European identity.

REFERENCES

- Breisach, Ernst, (2009). *Tarihyazımı*, (Çev: Hülya Kocaoluk), İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Tarih Eğitime Eleştirel Yaklaşımlar*,(2003). İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları.
- Tarih Öğretiminde Çoğulcu ve Hoşgörülü Bir Yaklaşım Doğru*, (2003). İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları.
- Tarih Yazımında Yeni Yaklaşımlar, Küreselleşme ve Yerelleşme*, (2000). İstanbul:Tarih Vakfı Yayınları.
- Yılmaz, Salih, (2008). “Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti’nde Okutulan 10. Sınıf Tarih Ders Kitabında Türkler Aleyhine İfadeler ve Sözde Ermeni Soykırımı”, *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, sayı: 177, 111-130.
- Yılmaz, Salih, (2009) “Avrupa Birliği'nin Türkiye ve Diğer Avrupa Ülkelerinin Ders Kitaplarında Uygulamaya Çalıştığı "Kimlik, İnsan hakları İle Tarihte Öteki" Kavramı Ve Sırbistan Örneği”, *Uşak Üniversitesi, Avrupa Birliği Eğitim, Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Müdürlüğü, I. Uluslararası Avrupa Birliği, Demokrasi, Vatandaşlık ve Vatandaşlık Eğitimi Sempozyumu*.