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A Comparative Study of the Educational System, Teacher Education and English Language Education of South Korea and Turkey

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Abstract

Korean education has attracted the attention of researchers in the field of education due to its fast and steady development in the last 40 years. This paper aims to compare the educational systems, teacher education, and English language education of South Korea (hereafter Korea) and Turkey, by document and content analysis to compare the two countries. The results were enriched and validated with semi-structured interviews with the educational counsellor of the Korean Embassy in Ankara, Turkey, and with a Korean parent who raised two children in the Korean education system. The findings indicated that sharing elements of an Asian culture in which individualism is still a rather foreign concept especially in relatively more conventional parts of both Turkey and Korea, where governmental funding is insufficient, both Turkey and Korea are striving through some turbulences in their education systems, and English language teaching in particular. Rather than the more mechanical, years and hours of courses or even the starting age of English language instruction in the national curriculum, or the teacher training requirements, the major difference between the two countries is their perspective and attitude towards education in general.

Key words: Educational system, Teacher education, English language education, Korean education, Turkish education

INTRODUCTION

South Korea has shown a tremendous development in the last 40 years after the Korean War had left the country devastated and backwards. While it is the 11th largest economy in the world rankings today (The World Bank, 2017), its economy after the Korean War was quite poor. Unlike many countries which depend on natural resources, South Korea does not have any natural resources or touristic attractions that it can economically depend on. Hence, in its rejuvenation it had to invest in education and technology to enhance the production of many widely renowned brand names, such as Samsung, Hyundai and LG. The educational reform that helped South Korea expand its economic power in the world, deserves a thorough analysis since it is unprecedented, and should be examined closely in order to better understand what is called the 'knowledge economy' today. South Koreans seem to be raking at the top of academic achievement in international rankings only left behind by a few other Asian countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia. Yet, 'according to a recent analysis of English proficiency of sixty countries across four continents (excluding North America where English is the first language for most) conducted by the Swiss-based language learning company, Education First (EF), South Korea's performance in English is only 'moderate', which is intriguing (Educational Testing Service, 2012). Hence, this paper aims to explore the advancement of South Korea in the educational arena with a special focus on English language education as well as teacher education. The Korean educational system will also be compared with its Turkish counterpart, seeking the outstanding differences between the two. With this scope in mind the following are the research questions of this paper:

- (1) What are the differences between the educational systems of Turkey and Korea?

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- (2) What are the differences between teacher education in Turkey and Korea?
- (3) What are the differences between language education management in Turkey and South Korea?

METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to explore what has been documented in the literature on the development and present state of the South Korean (hereafter Korean) educational system based particularly on qualitative document analysis method. Document analysis is defined as “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Since documents are valuable sources of information in qualitative research, it helps researchers understand central phenomena in qualitative studies in a better way (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, one of the qualitative methods, interview was conducted in this current study which has some advantages such as providing useful and detailed information, and permitting participants to describe detailed personal information (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Interviews also provide the opportunity to have a better control over other types of information to be collected by asking specific questions to retrieve data although it is a time-consuming and costly approach (Creswell, 2012). Specifically, in this study, in addition to the extensive literature review, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the educational counsellor of the Korean Embassy in Ankara, Turkey and also a Turkish educator. To be able to triangulate the data a Korean parent, who raised two children in the Korean education system and a Turkish parent were also interviewed.

Educational Policy

A Brief History of South Korea in Relation to Its Educational Policies

Korean governmental organization dates back to 2000 BC and has witnessed constant attacks and invasions by both the Chinese and the Japanese dynasties throughout the centuries. At the turn of the 20th century, following Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War, Korea was under the rule of the Japanese until the defeat of Japan in World War II. In 1945, the Soviet Union declared war on Imperial Japan, and liberated North Korea. As a result of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, Korea was divided into two regions, and the war between north and South Korea started in 1950 when North Korea invaded South Korea. North Korea was supported by China and the Soviet Union, and South Korea was supported by the United States. The United Nations, with the United States as the principal force, came to the aid of South Korea. China came to the aid of North Korea, and the Soviet Union also gave some assistance to the North (Cumings, 2011).

The Korean Republic was founded in 1948, interestingly enough the two Koreas stopped their war with a cease fire agreement signed in 1953 which was not followed by a peace treaty. This condition can be interpreted as an ongoing war between South and North Korea. Turkey also lost about 1000 soldiers to the Korean War (Titiz, 2017).

Korean history bears a determining role in its educational policies, especially when it comes to the teaching of English since after the division of the country into two, the South was supported by the Americans, whose military administration temporarily ruled Korea. American English and American pedagogies and educational philosophies, such as constructive analysis and behaviorism—the basis for the Audio-lingual method—were adopted in South Korea and were determinants in the Korean national education planning policies and materials since there was a move to establish English as a second official language which has been a futile attempt up to the present, although there are some English-newspapers and television and radio broadcasts in South Korea today (Choi, 2006; Lee, 2004). Instruction focused on grammar was not proving to be effective, so for only a short period of time speaking and listening were emphasized but when the government desired to strengthen its control over the society, austerity and loyalty were highlighted, and communicative aspects of

language learning were overlooked. Grammar teaching became the norm. ‘During this time, education was heavily influenced by the dictatorship’s propaganda, and therefore creative or individual aspects of learning were restricted’ (Lee, 2004). Until the end of the dictatorship in Korea which lasted 20 years under the rule of President Park Jung-Hee’s military government, education policy aimed at accomplishing a high level of development because he was strongly motivated to develop and modernize Korea by economic growth which required cultivating Korean human resources (Chung & Choi, 2016).

South Korea is the 15th country in the world in terms of population density which will be referred to in education-related sections of this paper. About 80% of all Koreans live in urban areas. The literacy rate is quite high, 90%. There are Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and atheists in Korea, but there is no obligatory religious education in schools (Interview with Myung Ryu, 2017). Today, Koreans are well-known for being workaholics. Korea exports mostly electronic devices, especially for communication technologies, but also cars, ships and other mechanical vehicles.

A Detailed Analysis of the Korean Educational System and Its Comparison to the Turkish Educational System

The Korean education system is state-organized, planned and funded just like the Turkish system, while there are also private schools. There are three stages which are primary, secondary and high school in Korea (see Figure 1). Although the system in Turkey had long been similar, recently with the change in the compulsory education years (12 years since March, 2012, Act No:6287, Ministry of Education, n.d.), the years a student studies in each level have been readjusted to fit a 4+4+4 system in Turkey. In Korea, though, the first 6 years are compulsory and pre-school and high school are not. In Turkey the first 12 years are compulsory. The starting age for school is 7 in both countries. High schools offer education in three different programs, general schools, vocational schools and arts-oriented schools in both countries. There are mainly seven different faculties at universities in Korea, namely Education, Arts and Science, Engineering, Medicine, Law, Social Sciences, Communication and Religious Studies/ Ethics (Bakioğlu & Baltacı, 2013).

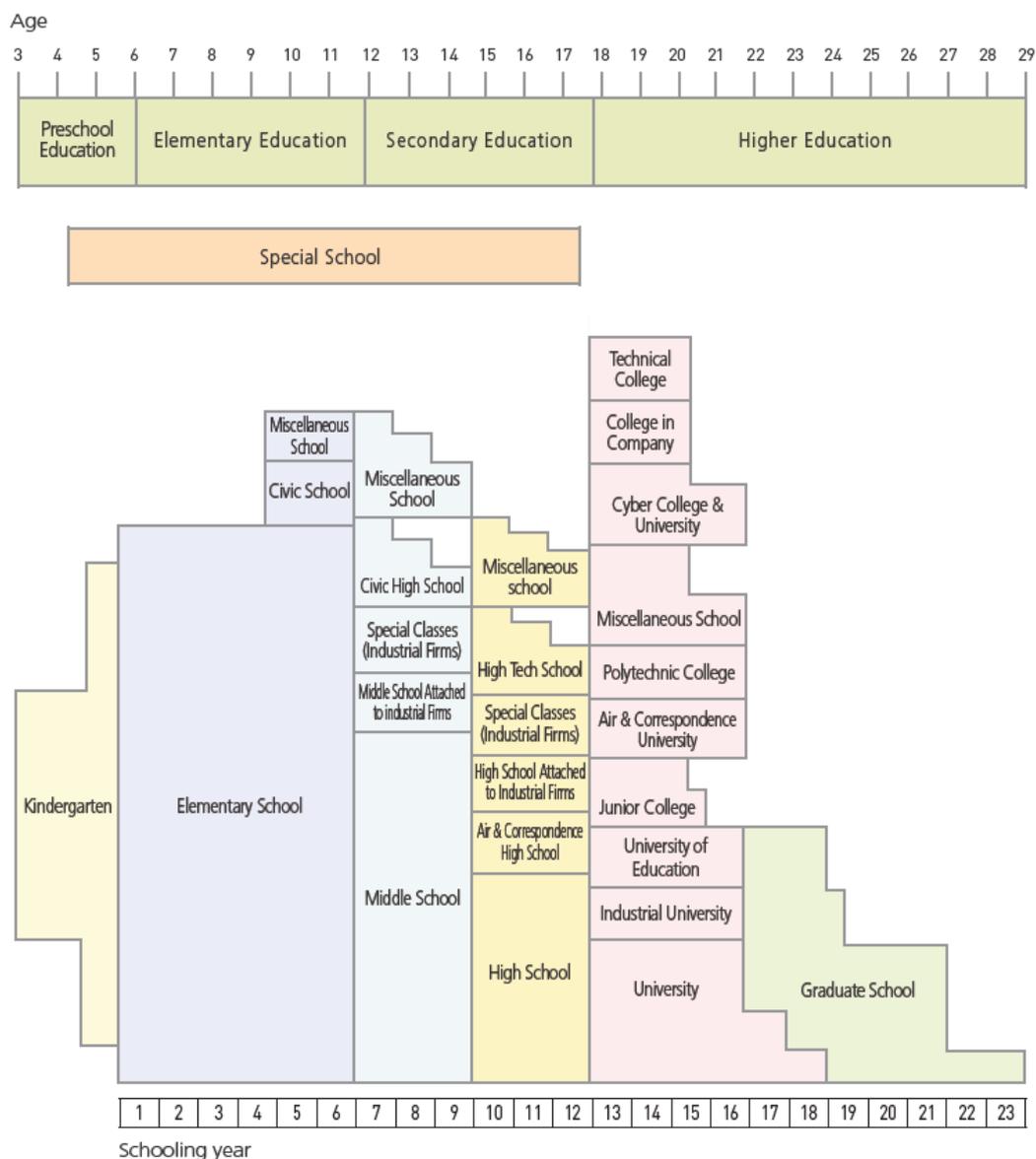


Figure 1. Structure and organization of education system of Korea (Adapted from Mest & Kedi, 2008)

Similarly, both in Turkey and Korea, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the educational institutions, the curriculum and materials country-wide. In Korea there are three subdivisions under the Ministry of National Education (MONE); educational councils, educational development councils and political councils. Until 1985, secondary education in Korea was not free, today while both primary and middle school education are free, high schools are not. Whereas in Turkey, all three levels of education are free at state schools. While in Korea there is no higher education council to monitor and to standardize university education, in Turkey the higher education council was founded in 1981 and is responsible for the academic positions, titles, requirements and the curricula at state and private universities. Both countries support successful students with government loans during their university education (İpek, 2009). What contributes to the income of the education in Korean schools is the gross national product of the country and student tuitions. Korea spares an equal amount of money for its educational budget as it does for military, unlike Turkey where the highest budget for the government is the one allocated to the military. The budget for education is 20% of the gross national product in Turkey, although government expenditure on education has been increasing ever since 2013 (data.worldbank.org). Both in Korea and Turkey, there are private schools and universities which do not depend on government funding but on their own tuitions to support themselves.

In Korea the curriculum is set by the national curriculum criteria, yet there are local modifications to it too (Lee, 2008). In Turkey, too there is a national curriculum; both state and private schools have to design their course content accordingly. It is also not uncommon that private schools offer more extracurricular activities and outside materials to enhance their education quality.

The standardized countrywide high school placement examination is similar in both countries before high school, yet in Turkey the content, question types or whether this examination is mandatory or not have changed frequently in the recent years. The new format of the high school placement examination in Turkey has been administered for the first time in 2017-18 academic year. In Korea, the improvement endeavors in the university placement examination brought about norm-referenced evaluation to replace criterion-referenced evaluation (Kim, 2003). The Turkish university placement exam is a norm-referenced one. The English section of the examination is compulsory in Korea, whereas in Turkey English is deemphasized towards the end of high school years because if students do not want to be placed in language-related departments they do not need to take the English section of the university examination. In both countries the high school grade point average of students plays some role in the calculation of their university placement examination score, but the percentage of the examination itself is much more than the students' grade point average.

In Turkey, all the universities are affiliated with the Higher Education Council. In Korea they are categorized according to the institutions that found them. There are private universities, state universities, local ones, and ones founded by independent educational institutions. The Korean government meets the basic demands of universities when it comes to allocating funds from the national gross product. Unlike Turkey, in Korea universities have the authority to evaluate documents, such as articles or academic proficiency according to their own criteria. In Korea there are 432 universities (Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea (MOE, n.d.), in Turkey there are 183 universities (Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu, 2017). The most prominent universities in Korea are Seoul National University, Korean University, and Yonsei University. In Turkey, the most prominent ones are Bosphorus University, Middle East Technical University, Sabancı University, and Koç University. The education system in Korea is infamous for being too demanding, too mechanical, expecting rote memorization, and not putting emphasis on individual differences or the importance of interaction in educational settings. However, since the 2000 educational reform 'open education' and 'performance evaluations' gained importance. Interestingly, Korean education now has new objectives that contrast with the current system. Some of the goals and objectives of the reform in the Korean education system consider individualistic education, see the student as a whole, and care about each student's personal learning styles, capabilities, creativity. Unfortunately, the two interviews conducted for this study, however, seem to disagree with the practice of these reforms.

The literacy rate in Korea is 98% (The World Bank, 2015). Almost 100% of the citizens are high school graduates. It is not at all common not to have a university degree. Kindergarten education starts at the age of 3. The year before primary school is free in state schools in Korea, just as in Turkey. Primary school in Korea lasts 6 years and middle and high schools, 3 years each. The education system is based on rote memorization, and although the students and the teachers engage in self-critique of the system, they still abide by the general attitude towards studying. An average middle school or high school student sleeps about 4-5 hours a day. The school day starts at 8:00 and ends at 5:00, but there are extra study hours at school that last until 9:00. There are cram schools after the regular school where students go to study even more. The cram schools last until midnight. The university placement examination in Korea is renowned for its difficulty, and the fierce competition to go to a good university starts at very early ages. It is very common for young children to take piano, English, arts and crafts and taekwondo courses even during kindergarten years (Breen, 2017).

Turkish students may start kindergarten when they are 0-36 months in the Nursery and Day Care Centers operating under the auspices of the General Directorate of Children Services of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Preschool education in Turkey is carried out in kindergartens for 36-66 months of children in addition to nursery schools for 48-66 months of children, both within formal and non-formal education under the responsibility of the General Directorate of Basic Education. In

addition, for 37-66-year-old children with disabilities, there are early childhood educational centers in special education kindergartens operating under the auspices of the General Directorate of the Special Education and Guidance Services (Eurydice, 2018).

Compulsory education in Turkish education system increased to 12 years in 2012-2013 education year and is divided into three stages (Ministry of Education, n.d). With this reform, the new education system is called '4+4+4 education system' (see Figure 2). The first stage is primary school and includes 4 years (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades) after kindergarten. The second stage again includes 4 years after primary school (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades). Finally, the third stage is high school and includes 4-year 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades) (Eurydice, 2018; Gürsoy, Korkmaz, & Damar, 2013). The school day is 6 hours a day in primary schools, 30 hours a week in primary schools and 35 hours in middle and high schools. It is not uncommon for students to be able to sleep 8 hours a day. The cram schools are usually for students at the 8th grade for the high school examinations and also for the university placement examination. Only the students who can afford them attend these courses. Although there are classes after regular school hours in cram schools on week days, usually the weekend schedule of cram schools is more loaded in Turkey. Again only students who can afford extracurricular courses attend musical instrument or language courses or receive private tutoring. Most parents who are financially advantaged expect their children to take musical instrument courses or engage in extra sports activities in Turkey.

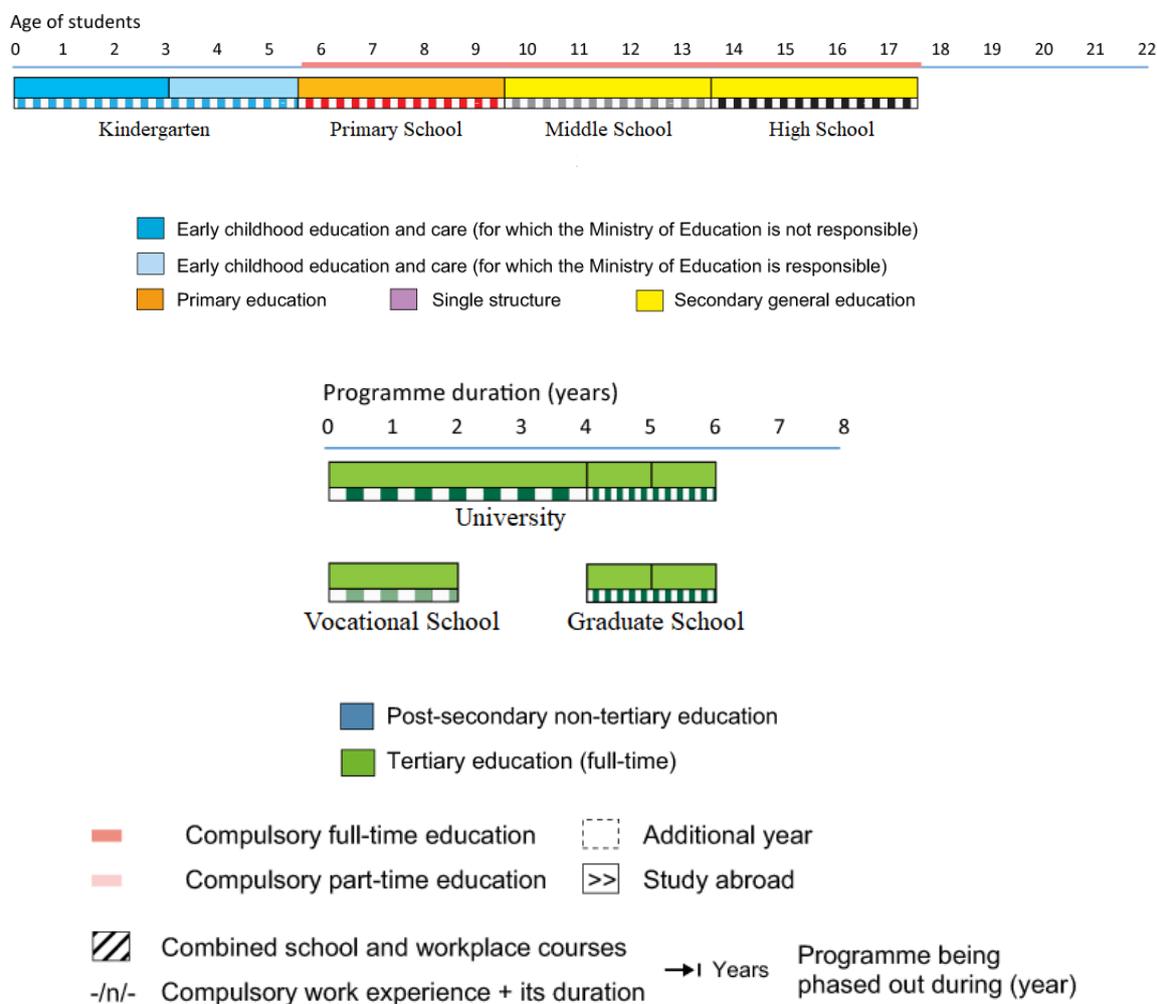


Figure 2. Structure and organization of education system of Turkey (Adapted from Eurydice, 2018)

In both countries at the 11th grade students at high school choose social sciences or sciences programs. In Korea one other option is a vocational program. In Turkey students can choose to study at high schools with vocational programs after the 8th grade.

Korean universities are very ambitious as well. There are a lot of facilities offered to students, such as the fastest internet in the world (Study in Korea, n.d.). Especially the engineering and science departments in Korea are very successful. One of the locally produced and exported products of Korea is robots. The education system aims to design, produce and manufacture robots for every walk of life. Robots have also been actively used in the education system too. The project called ‘R-Learning’ has provided 500 kindergartens and 8000 educational institutions with robot instructors (Tobe, 2011).

In both countries, there is a central university placement examination offered once every year. In Korea this examination is called the College Scholastic Aptitude Test and it has five main parts: mother tongue, mathematics, English, social sciences or sciences and second foreign language. In Turkey, the language section of the university placement examination is not compulsory for students who are not aiming to study at language-related departments which deemphasizes the importance of foreign language courses offered at high schools.

Both countries offer free education to their citizens although there are private schools claiming to offer a better education for which parents need to pay tuitions ranging from 20 thousand to 200 thousand dollars a year. In both countries free education is the right of any individual. Yet in Korea this state-managed free education excludes high school.

In Korea, religion courses are not offered at all at schools, yet in Turkey, they are required in all the curricula, at all the stages of education except for primary schools. In Korea, one of the main goals of education is to prepare individuals who can serve the industry. The goal of raising decent human beings who value ethical norms of the society is not achieved via religion courses (Kim, 2006). In summary, a comparison of basics of education systems of Korea and Turkey is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Basics of Education Systems of Korea and Turkey (Word Data on Education 2011)

Items	South Korea	Turkey
Annual training period	34 weeks (170 days)	36 weeks (180 days)
Daily course hours	5 days	5 days
	Primary school: 40 minutes	Primary school: 40 minutes
	Middle school: 45 minutes	Middle school: 40 minutes
	High school: 50 minutes	High school: 40 minutes
Semester	Two semesters: March-August September-February	Two semesters: September-January February-June
Weekly course hours	Primary school: 25-32 hours per week Middle school: 34 hours per week High school: 32 hours per week	Primary school: 30 hours per week Middle school: 30 hours per week High school: 32 hours per week
Program development	Centralized	Centralized

The next section explains teacher education of the two countries.

Teacher Education

In Turkey ever since 1990, teacher candidates have been required to take an aptitude test, only recently has such a test been on the agenda for candidate teachers. ‘The teacher education and

recruitment system are features that have consistently been reinforced by South Korea's English education policy' (Chung & Choi, 2016, p.5). Apparently, Koreans attach a lot of importance to teachers, who are thought to contribute a lot to Korea's global competitiveness in education as measured by PISA (Program for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2013). The teaching occupation comes with its fringe benefits in Korea. The most popular education-related job is being a primary school teacher. The programs for primary school teachers are highly reputed (NCEE, 2013). Many young people prefer to be teachers because the public thinks highly of teachers (Kim, 2007). Teaching is a well-respected and well-paid job. There are four institutions that provide in-service training for teachers, Teacher collages, education faculties at universities, and education departments (Kim, 2007). Korean teachers are categorized as assistant teachers, counsellors, librarians, training teachers and nursing teachers (MOE, n.d.). In Turkey in their first year teachers are called 'practice teachers in training'.

The following are the required courses for any education department at Korean Universities: Educational Psychology, Educational Philosophy, Educational Sociology, Classroom Management, Field Pedagogy, art and Physical Education, Practice Teaching and Teaching Applications. In Turkey art and physical education courses are only available at some universities as elective courses for education faculty students. The other required courses are similar to their Korean equivalents in content.

Teacher candidates in Korea can only receive their first degree teaching certificate after having completed a three-year training period which includes observations, participation in teaching, and classroom management (Ingersoll, 2007). Unlike Turkey, students who have studied at departments other than education faculty departments can teach at secondary level if they can complete a teacher certificate course. In Turkey this was the case in the 1990s, especially when the Ministry of Education needed more teachers to employ at state schools than the applicants from relevant departments. English medium university graduates from any department, not necessarily from language-related programs, could apply to English language teacher positions at state universities.

The number of credits primary schoolteachers need to complete is only slightly different in Korea (145 credits) (Usher, 2014) from Turkey (152 credits) (YÖK, 2017), yet both countries have four year programs at universities for primary school teachers.

In Turkey there is no annual teacher recruitment test specifically for teachers, but there is a nationwide recruitment test which has different field area questions for different professions to be able to be employed by the state. In Korea, however, there is a separate 'Teacher Recruitment Test' administered by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2006). 'To teach English at a private school, depending on the individual schools' policy, a candidate either directly applies to a particular school with a vacancy or takes the annual Private Teacher Selection Test conducted by the Private Schools Association' in Korea (Chung & Choi, 2016, p.6).

The next section explains English language education of the two countries.

English Language Education

In Korea, the concept of 'national religion' is replaced by 'national language' since it is a unifying power Koreans are proud of and it is quite homogeneous throughout the country. Lambert expresses this monolingualism as being 'ethnolinguistically homogenous' (1999). This situation is changing due to the increasing mobility of Koreans around the world, intermarriages and the migrant workers who are employed in Korea (Chung & Choi, 2016). English proficiency, in Korea today, is a symbol of prestige, 'modernity' (Lee, 2006), success and socioeconomic status (Choi, 2007). The attitude towards English in Turkey is not unlike the Korean attitude since the socio-political conditions of any developing country today require proficiency in English to survive in the global market. However, it

is unfortunately not possible to observe ‘the dedication and zeal’ (Demick, 2002) towards learning English in Turkey. The investments put in language learning in Turkish state schools differ from the more technology-oriented Korea.

Regarding with Turkey, three periods can be recognized in tracing the development of English language education in Turkey. The first period dates back to Tanzimat Period, the second half of the eighteenth century indicating westernization movements in the education system (Kırkgöz, 2005, 2007). This first period is just a historical recognition of the introduction of English in Turkish education and its spread in the whole country. The second period has started with implementing a particular English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum reform in 1997. And finally, in 2005, the third period has just started in response to efforts to joining the European Union and therefore efforts to standardize ELT and adapt it to EU standards.

Every year about 15 billion dollars is spent on English language education in Korea (Jambor, 2011), while in Turkey about 26 billion dollars is spent for English language education (Chawla, Horn, Jain, Shruti, Sahmali, Sethi, Peker & Emil, 2014). Although English is the most popular foreign language in both countries, in both countries--because communicative approaches to teaching are not effectively employed-- the general public educated in state schools is unable to communicate in English even after graduation from high school. When it comes to studying English too, Koreans do study a lot. They go to cram schools after regular school hours (at about 5 o'clock) and arrive home late at night, usually at about 9:00 pm, sometimes even later, until midnight. Yet their methods of language study even when technology and apps are integrated, emphasize rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules. The teaching method is not inductive or discovery-oriented. This seems to be one of the major complaints about Korean education in general, and about English language education in Korea, in particular. The national Scholastic Aptitude test in Korea had serious backwash effects on the practices of English language studies. The Korean government had designed a National English Ability Test in 2013, but due to the technical difficulties of testing a large number of students simultaneously, and due to increasing expenditures of English language education cram schools, the government decided not to administer this national language test in the Korea (Chung & Choi, 2016).

After detailed explanation of the education systems, teacher education, and English language education, the next section discusses and draws conclusions.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section aims to refer to the interviews with the Korean Educational counsellor in Turkey and a Korean parent in an attempt to shed light on the Korean education system to provide a holistic picture with a specific focus on language education as compared with its Turkish counterpart.

Education is and should be dynamic and each model whose student stakeholders stand out in the international standardized exams deserve a close examination. In language education too, there has been shifting focus from form-based to communicative approaches worldwide--and naturally in Korea as well--shaped by the context and the people (Menken and Garcia, 2010). The political position of countries always clearly reflects the reasons behind their educational reforms. After the end of dictatorship in Korea, education aimed to put weight on human-centeredness, autonomy and creativity. In the interview, Dr. Cho Yun-Soo expressed the fact that in the 1980s English was allowed to be taught as an extracurricular activity in primary schools for the first time. Before the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, Koreans elected a president for the first time by a democratic vote and democracy was emphasized in education too. This reflected itself by adopting communicative methods in English language teaching accentuating listening and including English in the university examination, Dr. Cho Yun-Soo added. Schools were allowed to use different books from that of the government-suggested ones, yet they still needed government authorization. Dr. Cho Yun-Soo also mentioned that multimedia assisted learning has become very common in Korea today. Choi (2006)

further exemplifies the extent of the use of technology in Korean schools by the 'English Villages' project:

English villages' that were meant to provide a short-term full-English-immersion experience to K-12 students came into existence in several provinces throughout South Korea. Many native English speaking teachers were invited from abroad by the EPIK program and stationed in public schools. The government also allowed diversification in college admission procedures, and students excelling in English were granted automatic admission.

During the globalization process of Korea in the 1990s, to be able to survive as a competent country, Korea gave tremendous importance to education, said Dr. Cho Yun-Soo since it could not depend on agriculture or underground sources. While the government allocated a high percentage (4.5%) of its budget to research and development projects- about 350 thousand people are engaged in research and development projects today--plans were made to revitalize the communication-oriented English teaching in school curriculums aiming to meet not only present demands of its people, but also the anticipated future ones. Dr. Cho Yun-Soo stated that English became a course that students start studying even at kindergarten level today and it is a regular course at primary schools, starting in the third year. This is very similar to the case in Turkey. Actually in Turkey, English courses are offered starting from the second year of primary schools. According to the interviews conducted with Dr. Cho Yun-Soo and Myung Ryu, there seem to be a lot of similarities in the Turkish and Korean treatment of second language teaching. Overall, the attitude and the methodologies and classroom settings and classroom populations are similar. Both countries seem to aim at communicative approaches which do not seem to work in practice since memorization and focus on form still precedes communicative skills in the actual classrooms in both countries. English is 'just another course to pass', rather than an actual communication tool. One major difference between English language education in Turkey and Korea, according to the interviews, is that Turkish and English use the same alphabet with minor differences, unlike Korean and English. In the first semester of the third grade in Korea, students learn English through listening only, there is no written text in the course books. In the second semester of third grade, the Latin alphabet is introduced, and after fourth grade, reading and writing are introduced (Chung & Choi, 2016).

Korean students' perseverance was referred to with distaste and pride at the same time during the interviews, since although academically they stand out in international examinations, the suicide rate in Korea is quite high. About 30 people per 100 thousand commit suicide every year in Korea (OECD). Unfortunately, the interviews revealed that school stress is the number one reason for young adults to choose not to live any more. In the interview with the Korean parent of two, it was openly expressed that parents are actually worried about the long study hours and the stress on students to a great extent. Yet, because of the competitive environment, and because of the predominant wish to study at a prominent university, and later work at a big company in highly respected positions, Korean parents feel the pressure of sending their children to private schools or crams after school that their acquaintances prefer. No parent would want their children to be left behind their peers, socially, academically, and professionally. Even in state schools in Korea, native speakers of English are very popular teachers of English since Koreans and the Japanese are known to be the worst English-speaking Asians, Dr. Cho Yun-Soo explained.

It is also interesting that both the parent interviewed and the educational council resent how Koreans are good at written tests but when it comes to speaking, they have a lot of difficulty using their communicative competence skills in the target language. Turkish students or government officers, or academicians too, can test the required tests, but they are not the most fluent speakers of English because they have had years of English language instruction. For many students in Turkey, speaking English is not an attainable goal. Communicative activities seem to fail in both countries.

All in all, apparently sharing elements of an Asian culture in which individualism is still a foreign concept especially in rather conventional parts of the countries where governmental funding is insufficient to reach out, both Turkey and Korea are striving through some turbulences in their education systems, and English language teaching in particular. Rather than the more mechanical,

years and hours of courses or even the starting age of English language instruction in the national curriculum, or the teacher training requirements, the major difference between the two countries is their perspective and attitude towards education in general. While in both countries the communicative methods and technological assistance do not suffice to bring about students who can interact independently, and are actually, to put it bluntly, bad at speaking in interactive contexts, the ranking of Korean students at the top of the successful countries lists in international academic aptitude tests, such as The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) can be adhered to their hardworking culture, and the emphasis put on academic success in Korea. It is not unexpected that with all the investments in education in Korea, with all the long study hours and social pressure on students for academic success, and high parental expectations Korea also ranks among the first three countries, lagging behind Singapore and Honk Kong in the world in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) or Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) examinations. The present academic state of Korean students among their peers worldwide is a reliable predictor for the future of Korea, a country growing exponentially, and taking the lead in technology and science in the global market, the only obstacle being the unbearable stress on students.

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