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Examination of Turkish curriculums of the republic period in terms of objectives

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examination of the Turkish primary school curriculums of the republican era in terms of objectives. The data required for this study, which is an exemplary of qualitative research, have been collected by means of document review, the objectives of the Turkish curriculums of primary schools have been subjected to an in-depth analysis and the changes that have been made have been put forward. When examined in general, it has been determined that the objectives specified in the Turkish curriculums of the primary schools have been deepened in terms of both quality and quantity throughout the years.

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1. Introduction

Republic period has been a period during which novelties have been introduced in the field of education as in all other fields (Fer, 2005). An end has been put to the teaching of Arabic and Persian has been in all educational institutions as a result of the enactment of the law on the unity of education no. 430, on March 3, 1924 and and Turkish has been accepted as the language of education. Teaching Turkish has gained great importance not only in the formal but also in the non-formal educational institutions as a result of the literacy campaign which has been launched all over the country in those years and the foundations of the Turkish education of today have been laid together with the adoption of the Turkish alphabet in the year 1928 (Demirel, 2004). It has been ensured to base

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these foundations on a more systematic ground thanks to the program development works carried out during the course of time.

The existing educational programs become insufficient after a certain time as a result of the rapid developments in knowledge and technology. For that reason program development efforts are needed in the field of education (Yavuz, 2005). Education programs are reorganized by means of the products that have been developed and become more functional.

According to Doğan (1982), education program contains various courses and supporting activities within a definite order for the purpose of helping the individual to attain the long-term objectives of education. Education program covers all activities directed at the realization of the national education provided by an educational institution for children, youth and adults and of the objectives of that institution. Teaching activities, extracurricular social activities, celebration of special days, excursions, short courses, services and functions such as guidance and counselling and healthcare are all included within this scope (Varış 1996). Within these functions, the one which takes teaching as its basis and shaped in line with that concept is expressed as the curriculum.

The curriculum has predominance within the education program and is generally formed by the arrangement of definite categories of knowledge within a definite system (Varış, 1996). According to Demirel (1998), curriculums are formed by four elements, namely purpose (objective), content, the process of learning-teaching and evaluation.

The concept of objective refers to the feature which has been decided to be appropriated by a student through well-planned and regulated experiences and is suitable for being defined as a behavioural change and change (Demirel, 2004). Varış (1996) states the features which the objectives must have as follows:

- Objectives must meet the social conditions and needs.
- Objectives must be in the direction that makes it possible to meet the basic needs of human beings.
- Objectives must be in conformity with the democratic ideals.
- Objectives must not be in contradiction in themselves.
- Objectives must be expressed in a direction that would explain the intended behavioural change.
- Objectives must be realizable.

The aim of this study is to examination of the Turkish primary school curriculums in the republic period in terms of their objectives.

2. Method

This study which aims to examining the Turkish primary school curriculums of the republic period in terms of their objectives is an exemplary of the qualitative research. This research design has been preferred since the objectives of the curriculums have been evaluated within their own subjectivity.

The method of document review has been used as the means of data collection in the study. Document review covers the analysis of the written material containing information about the incident and facts which are intended to be investigated (Yıldırım&Şimşek, 2008). Within the scope of the research, the objectives specified in the programs have been subjected to an in-depth analysis and the changes in the objectives have been put forward.

3. Findings

The aim of the process of the social change which has been launched together with the foundation of the republic was to give a modern direction to the traditional social structure, let the people have a contemporary consciousness of citizenship and shapen the social structure through education (Fer, 2005). These aims have showed up in the objectives of the curriculums that have been prepared. The characteristic features of the Turkish curriculums that have been developed after the proclamation of the republic and the changes that have been introduced in the programs are set forth below.

3.1. The primary school curriculum of 1924

The primary school curriculum of 1924 which is the first curriculum in the history of the republic and has the status of a framework program has been put into effect one year after the proclamation of the republic and has remained in force for a period of two years.

The primary school curriculum of 1924 has been worked out taking into account the understanding of education and teaching of the republic as well as the conditions and needs of education and teaching of that period (Şahin, 2009). In this curriculum, the objectives of the curriculum and the courses have not been arranged under separate headings. Such items have been included within the scope of the curriculum as the classes in which the subjects allocated to the Turkish course like, reading, orthography and writing would be taught and the number of hours of teaching and how these subjects would be taught and the items to be paid attention to during that process.

3.2. The primary school curriculum of 1926

The determination of the objectives for the primary school and classes in a systematic manner and inclusion of those objectives in the curriculum has been first expressed in the primary school curriculum for 1926. It was firstly in this curriculum that both the objectives of the primary school and the objectives of the courses included in the curriculum have appeared under the headings “purpose of the course” or “objective of the course” in detail and item by item. (Arslan, 2011)

The objectives of the Turkish course have been stated in five articles in the primary school Turkish curriculum program of 1926 and the objectives directed at the topics within the scope of that course like alphabet, reading, memorization and writing, orthography and grammar and hand writing have also been stated. These courses have not been treated as separate courses as in the 1924 program and all of them have been gathered under the umbrella of the Turkish course parallel to the adoption of the principle of integrity. Such targets as “understanding correctly, expressing correctly, thinking correctly, development of literary tastes in the students and familiarization of the students with the national accent have been set as the objective of the Turkish course in the curriculum.

3.3. The primary school curriculum program of 1930

The objectives of the curriculum program of 1926 have also been included in the Turkish program of 1930 without making any change on the subjects included in the course as well as the objectives pertaining to those subjects.

3.4. The primary school curriculum program of 1936

Changes have been introduced in the programs and the primary school curriculum program of 1936 has been worked out and put into practice for the purpose of ensuring the revolutions which have been realized after the year 1926 to be adopted by the society. According to Fer (2005) primary school programs of 1936 which have been prepared as a result of the completion and consolidation of the revolutions reflected the ideas of the new regime.

In the program, the special objectives of the course have been stated under the heading of “objectives of the course” at the beginning of the section related to each course and a connection has been established between the objectives of each course and the principles on which the Republic of Turkey has been founded (Çelenk, Tertemiz&Kalaycı 2004). The same is true for the Turkish course. Six targets have been set for the Turkish course in the primary school curriculum program of 1936. Besides the objectives included in the Turkish curriculum program of 1926 aiming at ensuring the student to gain skills such as understanding an idea correctly and expressing an idea correctly, the reflections of the Turkish language revolution also show up in the objectives of the curriculum program and consequently objectives such as “letting the student love the Turkish language”, “developing the vocabulary of the student by teaching the meaning, correct writing and reading of the words in the Turkish language and “letting the student gain self-confidence in using the Turkish language by letting him/her grasp the rules of the

language by intuition” have been included in the program. The objectives have not been directed at the behaviour of the students but have reflected the behaviour of the teachers and the general functional overview of the school.

When the objectives included in the program have been examined it is clearly seen that the primary school curriculum program of 1936 focuses rather on the national elements and that the phenomenon of being nationalized comes to the fore in accordance with the social and political conditions of that period. Besides the general objectives of the Turkish course, Targets in the fields of reading, familiarization of the student to express himself/ herself and orthography have also been stated in the program.

3.5. The primary school curriculum program of 1948

The primary school curriculum program of 1948 which is the one that has remained in force for the longest period of time (namely 20 years) throughout the history of republic is without doubt the developed form of the programs of the years 1926 and 1936 (Arslan 2000). It may be said that the understanding of democracy has been widely reflected in the program of 1948 (Fer, 2005). When the Turkish dimension of the program is considered, it is seen that the objectives of the course are the same as those of the primary school curriculum program of 1936 and that no objectives different than these have been added in the program. As different from the program of 1936 the expression “objective “has been replaced by the term “purpose”. Besides the purposes of the Turkish course, the points which must be paid attention in the field of reading and writing at the elementary level as well as the purposes related to reading, verbal and written expression, orthography and grammar have been stated at the class level.

3.6. The primary school curriculum program of 1968

Six objectives have been stated in the primary school curriculum program of 1968 which has been based on scientific principles at a higher level in comparison to the previous programs. While the purpose stated in the primary school curriculum of Turkish course of 1948 with the phrase “the students shall be enabled to express what they see, hear, know, examine, learn, think and conceive of correctly both verbally and in writing” has also been included in the curriculum of 1968, the concepts of “purposeful” and “effective” have been added to the concept of correctly. When considered from the point of view of the objectives of the Turkish course there are indeed no noteworthy differences between the previous program and the program of 1968, but the latter includes such objectives as “observation and research” “the habit and taste of listening and reading” which are not included in the objectives of the curriculums of 1926, 1936 and 1948. Objectives related to each of the fields of reading, verbal and written narration, orthography, grammar and writing have also been included in the primary school Turkish curriculum of 1948 as in the other curriculums.

3.7. Primary school curriculum program of 1981

The objectives of the primary school Turkish education program of 1981 contain eight objectives in which national feelings and enthusiasm is emphasized. This program includes an objective which is expressed with the phrase “enable the students to gain scientific, critical, correct, constructive and creative ways of thinking” and is not included in other programs. Like the other programs, special objectives have been stated like understanding, narration, linguistic and writing belonging to each field within the scope of the Turkish course and special objectives in the fields other than the field of writing have been listed according to the class level.

3.8. Primary school curriculum program of 2005

Thirteen objectives have been stated in the primary school Turkish curriculum of 2005 in which the changes introduced by the constructivist approach are reflected.

In the constructivist approach, the knowledge learned by the student forms the infrastructure upon which the subsequent knowledge is acquired. New knowledge is combined and integrated with the knowledge which has been structured in advance by establishing meaningful connections between them. This transaction involves not memorizing, accumulating the knowledge items or placing them one on top of the other, but, just on the contrary,

thinking over, questioning, attributing meaning, examining them and integrating them with preliminary knowledge (MEB, 2009). Active participation of the students in the learning process is without doubt the most important feature of the constructivist learning processes. The teachers must use the active learning techniques in an effective and efficient manner in order to enable the students to participate in the learning process (Küçüktepe, 2010). The fundamental principles on which the constructivist approach, that intends to enable the student to have access to knowledge departing from the preliminary knowledge, have been reflected in the general conclusions of the curriculum.

This fact manifests itself in the objectives of the curriculum which are expressed by the phrases “The development of the skills of inquiring, discovering, interpreting knowledge and shapening it in mind” and “the development of the skills of having access to knowledge, using the knowledge and producing the knowledge”. These objectives which have not been included in other curriculums have intended to enable the student to discover the knowledge by his/her own means rather than design knowledge as a value which is passed by the teacher over to the student. One of the differences included in the objectives was the emphasis put on the top level skills belonging to the cognitive field and the encouragement of the use of the information technologies.

The Turkish primary school curriculum of 2005 have been shapened upon five fields of learning, namely listening, speaking, reading, writing and visual reading and visual presentation which has been introduced in this curriculum for the first time. Areas of learning comprises various knowledge items, skills, attitudes and values directed at the development of the students in terms of language skills, mental capacity and emotional and social respects. In the curriculum, areas of learning have been dealt with both within themselves and in integrity with other areas of learning and have been correlated with those areas of learning (MEB, 2009). The expression “gain” which has not been used in other curriculums has been used in this curriculum and the gains belonging to the areas of learning have been listed according to the class level order. Besides areas of learning gains directed at writing, punctuation and grammar have also been stated according to the class level. Furthermore, an emphasis has been made on the concept of intermediary discipline in the curriculum and the gains in the intermediary discipline areas which matches the gains of the curriculum of the Turkish course have been listed.

4. Conclusion

When the Turkish primary school curriculums of the republic period are examined it is seen that generally the number of objectives of each curriculum has increased in comparison to the previous ones and the objectives have been deepened in terms of quality.

When the Turkish primary school curriculum of 1924 is examined we see that the objectives of the curriculum and the courses in the curriculum have not been arranged under separate headings. The objectives have been taken up in the Turkish primary school curriculum of 1926 for the first time and the objectives of the Turkish course have been stated under five headings in the curriculum. Such objectives as understanding correctly, telling correctly, development of literary tastes in the students and familiarizing the students with the national accent have been concentrated on. The objectives of the curriculum of 1926 has also been included in the Turkish primary school curriculum of 1930 without making any changes. On the other hand six objectives have been listed for the Turkish course in the Turkish primary school curriculum of 1938. Besides the general objectives, objectives directed at reading, familiarization of the student with the alphabet and understanding have also been stated in the curriculum. When the objectives of the Turkish primary school curriculums of 1926 and 1936 have been compared we see that the national elements have come to the fore in the curriculum of 1936. It has also been observed that the objectives of the Turkish primary school curriculums of 1948 and 1936 are the same and that the term objective has been replaced by the term purpose in the curriculum of 1948. When the curriculum of 1968 is examined we see that objectives have been added which are not included in the Turkish curriculums of 1926, 1936 and 1948 like “observation and research “, “habit and taste of listening and reading”. On the other hand eight objectives have been put forward in the Turkish primary school curriculums of 1981 and the objective which have not been included in the other programs and expressed as “enabling the students to gain the ability to have scientific, critical, correct, constructive and creative mode of thinking” have been included. Thirteen general objectives have been included in the primary school Turkish curriculum of 2005 and the objectives have been expressed in accordance with the

philosophy of the constructivist approach. The expression “acquisition” which was not included in other curriculums has been included in this one and the objectives have been dealt with in more details compared to other curriculums.

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