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An Analysis of History of Turkish Education: Sources, Pioneers and Approaches



Lifelong Learning Programme

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An Analysis of History of Turkish Education: Sources, Pioneers and Approaches

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Abstract

This paper aims to present an overview of the history of Turkish education. For this purpose, the relationship between Ottoman modernization and the reforms in the field of education is underlined. In terms of the period under study, the paper covers the period from late Ottoman history and to the Republican Era. The first part of the paper concentrates on the educational institutions, ranging from traditional schools (such as sıbyan mektebi and madrasa), to modern secular schools in Turkey. Then, the sources of Turkish education are analyzed. The importance and the use of the primary sources such as the Ottoman Prime Ministry Archive, vakfiye registers, and state yearbooks are emphasized in this section. Leading secondary sources are also stressed. In its third section the paper dwells upon an important methodological debate in Turkish education: whether to build and reform the education from top down or bottom up. Here, Emrullah Efendi's the Tuba tree theory is summarized and proponents and opponents of these approaches are briefly mentioned. The final section is on the history textbooks in Turkey. The paper draws attention to the political agendas of the ruling elites and their influence on the history textbooks. The paper highlights the continuity in education institutions and manpower from late Ottoman to the Republican history.

Chapter 1: Ottoman Modernization and Education

The political developments in the late Ottoman Empire, as it is the case in any modernizing society, were very much related to the developments in Ottoman-Turkish education. The nineteenth century, known as the longest century of the Ottoman Empire, was a period of reform, modernization and centralization; and education, though relatively late, was also touched by these reform initiatives. The modernization process in Turkey included state centralization and the weakening of the traditional sources of authority. In this process the authority of the state spread from center to periphery. Education was one of the field by which the central state began to penetrate and shape the periphery. While in the classical period expenditures of education were not met by the government, starting from the mid-nineteenth century public education became one of the main tasks of central administration (Alkan, 2008, 11).

The first civil and secular government schools were opened with the purpose of bringing up a body of civil servants required for the newly growing bureaucracy. In this regard it would not be wrong to say that the modernization of Ottoman bureaucracy is closely intertwined with history of education in Turkey. The developments and reforms in the field of education during the late Ottoman period were important in the sense that the legacy of educational uniformity and centralism was subsequently adopted by the Turkish Republic.

While the first serious attempts for modernization were laid down in the imperial Edict of Gülhane in 1839, the field of education had been hardly touched in this document. During the whole *Tanzimat* period (1839-1876) we see an increasing emphasis on Ottomanism. Due to the nationalist uprising in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire, the ruling elite launched a policy of Ottomanism for preventing separatist nationalist movements. The policy of Ottomanism, which became the official ideology of the Ottoman state during the *Tanzimat* period, aimed to embrace all of the Ottoman subjects regardless of their ethnicity, religion and language. This policy had very significant role in terms of the transformation of Ottoman "subjects" into "citizens". The Ottoman case in this sense bears significant resemblance with the contemporary states (Fortna, 2005, 67-73).

As the result of this, the Ottoman government made the legal arrangements and promulgated the law for citizenship in 1869. The idea was to create an “Ottoman nation” and “good citizens” and, as will be seen in the following parts, these developments had significant reflections on the textbooks in the schools. As will be detailed below, the second half of the 19th century witnessed significant reforms in the field of education. It is an undeniable fact that the founding cadre of the Republican Period was educated in these modern and secular schools.

The reign of [Abdülhamid II](#) (1876-1909), was a period in which education began to spread from imperial center to the provincial periphery. In terms of the number of schools opened, this period represents the peak point of the 19th century Ottoman history of education. In addition to the proliferation of the secondary schools, Abdülhamid II opened many Occupational High Schools as well.

As Somel pointed out, Ottoman educational reforms contained to a considerable degree the ancient tradition of viewing education as a means of inculcating religious and moral values to students with the ultimate aim to ensure feelings of obedience and loyalty toward the central authority (Somel, 2001, 6). This understanding of education was more dominant during the last decades of 19th century Ottoman world. Abdulhamid II is believed to have ignored the traditional Quran schools (*madrasas*) and made the modern schools widespread throughout the empire. When compared with the traditional schools, the modern schools had less courses on religion and moral values. Instead a positivist and materialist thought came to spread in these schools. It is quite interesting that the graduates of these modern and secular schools produced an elite group that opposed the very political regime of the sultan. It is for this reason that the curriculums were rearranged and courses on religious and moral values were increased. This was more strictly applied in schools that brought up bureaucrats of the later years (Alkan, 2008, 16). Furthermore, although the modernization attempts of Tanzimat period were maintained during the reign of Abdülhamid II, the stress on westernization was now reversed and the emphasis on “Ottomanism” left its place to “Islamism”.

In the atmosphere of the Balkan Wars and the World War I, the Young Turks began to see the solution in the promotion of Turkish nationalism as opposed to the Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism of the previous decades. There is no doubt that the WW I affected education negatively, as many students and teachers had to fight in the frontiers rather than studying in classes.

While the late Ottoman and the Young Turk Era prepared the background for a true reform in the field of education, the first decade of the Republican Period created the suitable conjuncture for the realization of these reforms. In the first five years the emphasis of the Kemalist regime in Turkey was on the Unification of Education and Alphabet reform (Sakaoğlu, 1993, 29; Akyüz, 2008). With the Law of Unification of Education in 1924 the Kemalist aimed to abolish the existing dualism in education and for this purpose they outlawed the traditional schools, namely *madrasas*. On the other hand, with the adoption of Latin alphabet the Republican regime turned its face to the West. It was for this reason that the 1930s and 1940s was a period in which the Kemalists aimed to increase the literacy level and spread public education. People’s Houses and Village institutes were quite significant instruments not only in trying to increase the level of literacy but also in terms of the indoctrination of the Kemalist regime to the populace.

The emphasis during the Republican period was on Turkish nationalism based on Turkish race and culture. This is quite evident in the formation Turkish Historical Thesis and Sun-Language Theory in early 1930s. However, it is also an undeniable fact that Kemalists during the Republican period strived much for the development of a national education policy. The equality in education, emphasis on girls, and teachers as the pioneers of change and development were the leading emphasis of the Republican regime.

Chapter 2: Educational Institutions in Ottoman Turkey

Until the eighteenth century education in the Ottoman Empire consisted primarily by traditional religious schools¹. While the Quran schools, known as *sıbyan* schools, were for the elementary level education, the *madrasas* served for the purpose of higher level education. Both of these institutions were civil educational for Muslim population of Ottoman Empire and they were under the control of the lower *ulema* (Ottoman learned class). The Quran schools were the step where the pupils began their early education. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that they were the first level of public education.

Despite the introduction of some modern schools (especially in the military field) these traditional schools constituted the skeleton of the educational institutions. However, it was during the 19th century that thanks to the modernizing reforms these traditional Ottoman institutions lost their importance and secular government schools came to the forefront. As the Ottoman attempts for modernization started first in the military institutions, so was the case in the field of education. Military Engineering schools (*Mühendishane-i Berri Hümayun* and *Mühendishane-i Bahri Hümayun*), Military Academy of Medicine and Military Academy of War were the first examples of modern schools in the late eighteenth century Ottoman Empire. Later on civil educational institution were gradually established, the purpose of which were to meet the need for qualified persons in the state bureaucracy.

The reign of **Mahmud II** (1808-1839) witnessed the early attempts for modernization in education. He selected a few students and sent them to Europe for education in military sciences. It was again during his reign that primary public (religious) education became obligatory in 1240 AH/AD 1824-1825². The imperial decree was strengthened with an Islamic discourse and made the school teachers, local judge (*kadı*), local Muslim leader and preacher (*imam*) and the head of the guilds responsible for the implementation of the new regulation. The importance of the *ferman* laid in the fact that the need for education and significant of being literate were articulated for the first time by an Ottoman sultan (Sakaoğlu, 2003, 59). Despite this first sultanic initiative, one has to wait until the late 1830s and early 1840s for the establishment of first civil schools. While the traditional schools were usually built next to the mosques, this was no longer a concern for the secular governmental schools.

The *ibtidâiyye* (primary) schools accepted children no less than 6 years old. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that the *ibtidâiyye* schools were modern versions of the traditional Quran schools. After a 4-year study in the *ibtidâiyye* school, the student could go to the *rüşdiye* schools. The *rüşdiye* schools admitted only the graduates of *ibtidâiyye* schools and during its 3-year study, the students were taught the following courses: Mathematics, Engineering, Accounting (*Hisâb*), Geography, History, Basic Health Information, *İlm-i hâl*, language, and Calligraphy. The traditional schools did not have a system of classroom; it was only with the *rüşdiye* schools that class system was introduced. It was quite probable that the quality of education and the diversity of courses changed from region to region.

The reign of Mahmud II witnessed the insufficiency of the *sıbyan* schools and a reform program for these schools was planned. However, later a new school, named *rüşdiye mektebi*, was introduced. The pupils could visit the *rüşdiye* schools after their graduation from the *sıbyan/ibtidaiye* schools. A new ministry for *rüşdiye* schools (*Mekatib-i Rüşdiye Nezareti*) was created. Though some researchers consider the *Mekteb-i Maarif-i Adliye* as the first *rüşdiye* school in 1838, some other stressed the occupational character of this school (Kodaman, 1999, 91-92). It is for this reason that the first *rüşdiye* school is believed to be opened in İstanbul in 1847. When the first *rüşdiye* became successful, new *rüşdiye* school began to be opened, but its dissemination to provincial periphery required several decades. As far as the curriculum of these schools were considered, at the beginning the reading of the Quran, Writing, and basic computation and Arabic come to the forefront, but later Geography, Mathematics and Persian were added to the curriculum.

¹ The Court School at the Topkapı Palace (*Enderun Mektebi*), and School of the Janissary novices (*Acemi Oğlanları Mektebi*) were exceptions. These schools had distinct features and was closed to Muslim subjects of the empire.

² The text of the imperial decree (*ferman*) can be seen in Mahmud Cevad İbnü's Şeyh Nafi, *Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti: Tarihçe-i Teşkilat ve İcraatı – 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Maarif Tarihi*, (compiled by Taceddin Kayaoğlu) Ankara: Yeni Yürkiye Yayınları, 2001, pp. 3-5.

The ministry that was earlier established with regard to the *rüşdiyye* schools was, in 1846, extended to cover other public schools as well: Ministry for Public Schools (*Mekatib-i Umumiye Nezareti*). Until 1867 the *rüşdiyye* schools accepted only Muslim students, but parallel to the Ottomanist policy of the period, non-Muslims pupils began to be accepted after this date. The regulation for *rüşdiyye* schools, which was issued in 1869, further improved the conditions and service of these schools³.

How successful were the *rüşdiyye* schools? Somel answers this question as follows: “Looking at the Tanzimat period prior to 1869, the main steps of reform in the realm of education could be observed in the fields of secondary and professional institutions. Though *rüşdiyye* schools as institutions embodied educational modernization during this period, they ultimately proved to be unsuccessful as secondary schools (Somel, 2001, 8). Despite the introduction of civil educational institutions, traditional schools continued to exist, and as in many other *Tanzimat* institutions, institutional dualism continued in the field of education.

The basic characteristic of the *Tanzimat* period in terms of history of Ottoman-Turkish education is the growing state control over the educational institutions and the concomitant decline of the *ulema*'s role in these institutions. The decreasing control of the *ulema* on the educational institutions and the growing number of governmental schools meant a significant degree of secularization in the field of education. One concrete example of this process was the change in the terminology. For instance, as far as teachers are concerned, *muallim/muallime* replaced the traditional “*hoca*” (Alkan, 2008, 15).

The most significant turning point of the mid-nineteenth century is the foundation of Ministry of Public Education in 1857. The growing need for public education was the primary reason for its establishment. With the promulgation of Regulation of Public Education (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi*) in 1869 the Ottoman Empire assumed the responsibility to provide modern education for its subjects (Alkan 2001, 127). The Regulation, which was adopted under the influence of French Ministry of Education, is considered to be the sign of an important shift toward a more secular understanding of primary education. The Sublime Porte had now more saying over the schools and the school buildings began to be constructed in accordance with the plans sent from İstanbul. The regulation also envisioned the establishment of education councils in the provincial capitals. It is quite meaningful that by 1872 only two provinces had education councils, namely Tuna and Baghdad, where Midhat Pasha had provided the necessary infrastructure

The 1870s and the Hamidian period, in general, witnessed the rise of primary *ibtidâî* schools and the secondary *idâdî* schools, while the *rüşdiyye*s of the Tanzimat period, though continuing to exist, increasingly became obsolete” (Somel, 2001, 8). The traditional *sıbyan* schools were reorganized and became *ibtidaiye* (primary) schools; however, this period comes to the forefront with a strong emphasis on [idadi \(secondary\) schools](#). This period also witness the foundation of mekteb-i sultanis, namely the and [Darüşşafaka Lisesi](#).

Chapter 3: Sources

Among the sources of the history of education in Turkey, the archives, *vakıf* registers, court registers and yearbooks come to the forefront. The Ottoman archives contains thousand (perhaps millions) of documents on Turkish education. The researchers can search on the website of [Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives](#). Some of the files in the archives are quite more related to the educational institutions. For instance the catalogue of *Ruus Defter*s contains 261 *defter*s referring to the developments in the last two centuries of Turkey. Among other things, the *Ruus Defter*s include *Medaris-i Edirne ve Bursa (two defters)*, *Medrese*, *Müderislik*, *Müderislik-i İstanbul*, *Müderislik-i Edirne*, *Müderislik-i Bursa*, *Medaris-i Edirne Ruusu*, and *Medaris-i Asitane-i Aliyye* (Hızlı, 2008, 577-592). These registers are quite crucial for the traditional schools in İstanbul as well as neighboring cities of Bursa and Edirne.

The *vakfiyes* (foundation certificates) are also significant sources of history of education in Turkey. Vakfiye is the register of a foundation (*vakıf*), which resembles to present-day NGOs. In the Ottoman Empire, the construction of public works, including the educational institutions, were mainly conducted

³ For the articles of this regulations see, *ibid*, p. 93.

by these foundations. Though a considerable number of these foundations were established by the member of the Ottoman dynasty and the leading bureaucrats, these foundations were distinct from state bureaucracy and played very important role in the spread of educational institutions. Each foundation has a register, known as *vakfiye*. These registers were prepared by the founder of the foundation and ratified by the local court. They include information concerning the functioning of the foundation, its revenues and expenditures, and the management of the foundation. Most of the traditional schools in the Ottoman Empire were built by foundations. Therefore, they have usually a register document (*vakfiye*). The register of a traditional school usually contain information about the number of students, the scholarship to be given to the students, the accommodation of the students, the number of teachers and their salaries, the courses to be taught to the students etc. In short, these data are quite crucial for the understanding of traditional educational institution. The registers of the foundations can be found in the [archive of the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi](#) (General Directorate of Foundation) however, unfortunately, not all of these registers reached our present day. As these documents were also registered in the local court, they could also be found in the court registers (*şer'iyye sicilleri*). Hence, the court registers are also one of the sources of history of education.

Another significant source for the history of Ottoman-Turkish history is the yearbooks known as *salnames*. *Salnames* began to be published in the Ottoman Empire after 1847 and between 1847 and 1911, 68 volume state yearbooks (*devlet salnameleri*) were published⁴. While the earliest yearbooks were approximately around 100 pages, gradually their volume increased and reached more than 1000 pages. The state yearbooks contain data concerning not only administrative, military organization of the empire, but also cultural and historical issues as well. Apart from state yearbooks, there were provincial yearbooks, which are more important for the local history of a particular region. The provincial yearbooks were usually published in the provincial print house. These provincial yearbooks contain data pertaining agriculture, natural sources, animal husbandry, local population, hospitals, schools, administrative and military officials and so on. The first provincial yearbook was published in 1866 in Bosnia. Until the end of the Ottoman Empire more than 500 provincial yearbooks were printed.

In the course of time, some of the state department began to publish their own yearbooks. These institutional yearbooks were in a true sense the inventory of a particular state department. The most well known of these institutional yearbooks have been yearbook of Foreign Affairs (*hariciye salnamesi*), yearbook for Learned Classes (*ilmiye salnamaesi*) and yearbook of Ministry of Public Education. The purpose of the institutional yearbooks was to list the institutions and the name of the official tied to a particular ministry.

As far as yearbooks of education (*maarif salnamesi*) are concerned, one should note that these yearbooks have been one of the most significant sources for the history of Ottoman-Turkish history of education. Between 1898 and 1903, six yearbooks were published. There were entitled *Salname-i Nezaret-i Maarif-i Umumiye* (Yearbook of Ministry of Public Education). These yearbooks contain detailed information on the history of Ministry of Public Education, ministers of education, the officials, teachers, schools, libraries, exams, awards, educational institutions in the provinces, and the ratio of the pupils with regard to the provincial population and so on (Hızlı, 2008). In the History on Line portal, we uploaded one of these yearbooks of Ministry of Public Education. It was published in 1317 AH (1899). That it is 1512 pages, gives the detailed information in contains. Through this yearbook of Ministry of Public Education (*maarif salnamesi*) one can read the [biographies of ministers of education](#), the [regulations](#) concerning education, [curriculum](#)s and the [contents of the courses](#). For example, one can also learn the number of [schools in Erzurum](#), the date of their constructions, officials in directorate of education in Erzurum, and the number of students among other topics.

As far as secondary sources are concerned, several works come to the forefront. Mahmud Cevad's *Tarihçe-i Nezaret-i Maarif-i Umumiye*, Nafi Atuf Kansu's *Türkiye Eğitim Tarihi Hakkında Bir Deneme*, and Osman Ergin's five-volume *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi* are worth to mention here.

Mahmud Cevad is usually considered to be the first historian of education in Turkey. After the 1908 revolution, he began to serve in the Ministry of Public Education. For his *Tarihçe-i Nezaret-i Maarif-i Umumiye* he extensively made use of the archives of the ministry. Although the book was first planned as a two-volume work, due to the difficulties encountered during the WWI it was published in 1920 as

⁴ For detailed information on yearbooks in the Ottoman Empire see, Hasan Duman, *Osmanlı Salnameleri ve Nev-salleri Bibliyografyası ve Toplu Kataloğu*, Ankara: 1999.

a single volume. The book starts with the *sultanic ferman* that made primary education compulsory. The book narrated the developments concerning history of education in chronological order, especially in accordance with the ministers in charge. The opening of various schools, developments concerning the ministry itself, educational journals, libraries are among the topics discussed by the author (Selçuk, 2008, 729-731).

Nafi Atuf Kansu was one of the leading intellectuals who contributed to Turkish education during the Republican period. *Fenn-i Terbiye Tarihi* (1916), *Pedagoji Tarihi* (1929), *Türklerin Terbiyeye Hizmetleri* (1934) and *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi Hakkında Bir Deneme* (2 vols. 1931-1932) are among his major works. His two-volume [Türkiye Maarif Tarihi Hakkında Bir Deneme](#) is available on History on Line portal. His work starts with the classical educational institutions (madrasas, sıbyan mektebi, Enderun, and first modern engineering schools) in the Ottoman Empire until the *Tanzimat* Period (1839). Kansu, among other things, dwells on the conditions of the schools in Turkey. He especially describes the miserable conditions of educational institutions and incompetent teachers: the sanitary conditions were not sufficient, the teachers were usually very old, and the one-room class was not adequate for the students. For the *Tanzimat* period, the author put emphasis on modern secular schools, such as *rüşdiye*, *sultani*, *darulmuallimin*, *darulfünun* and non-Muslim schools. In the second volume, the state of education during the Second Constitutional Period, agricultural education, girl's education, the theory "Tuba tree", national education and Ziya Gökalp are among the topics discussed by the author. This two volume work, however, have been criticized for his relatively official discourse, insufficient number of documentation and lack of analytical interpretation with regard to the political conjuncture of the period. With the publication of Osman Ergin's *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi*, Kansu's work began to lose its importance in the field.

Osman Nuri Ergin's five-volume [Türkiye Maarif Tarihi](#) is one of the most important and encompassing works on history of Turkish education. Educated in the late Ottoman institutions and survived the Republican period, Osman Nuri Ergin produced many work on Turkish education. By his multi-volume work Ergin aimed to surpass 3 books: Nafi Atuf Kansu's *Türkiye Eğitim Tarihi Hakkında Bir Deneme*, Mahmud Cevad's *Tarihçe-i Nezaret-i Maarif-i Umumiye* and Hasan Ali Yücel's *Türkiye'de Orta Öğretim* (Yörük, 2008, 689-693). When compared to Kansu's book, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi* has enormously rich primary sources. The rich archival documents, manuscripts, secondary sources, periodicals and oral sources are almost impossible for a contemporary researcher to exploit. Today, this multi-volume is probably the first source for a student to enter into the world of history of Turkish education.

Chapter 4: Pioneers and Approaches to Turkish Education

The first decades of the twentieth century witnessed quite significant discussions of various approaches concerning Turkish education. [Emrullah Efendi](#) had a leading role in these discussions. Emrullah Efendi was born in 1858 and he served in different positions: he was appointed as the member of the education council, and became director of *mekteb-i sultani*. After the 1908 election he entered to the National Assembly as MP of Kırklareli. He served twice as the minister of Public Education, first in January 1910 and then in December 1911 (Ergün, 1982, 8). Emrullah Efendi wrote many articles in newspapers and journals. He is the author of encyclopedic [Muhitu'l-Maarif](#).

Emrullah Efendi is well-known for his educational approach, formulized as "the theory of *Tuba Tree*". This approach of Emrullah Efendi emphasized the structuring of the educational system from top down. In fact, the political conjuncture was quite effective in Emrullah Efendi's view. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, due to the westernization and modernization attempts, the Ottoman Empire felt it necessary to start from and give priority to the secondary and high educational institutions. The lack of qualified officials and bureaucrats was an important reason for this top down approach in education (Ergün, 2008, 8). Rather than putting emphasis on primary schools, higher educational institutions were emphasized for the sake of bringing of qualified officials. Emrullah Efendi believed that although the organization of the educational institutions is from primary to secondary and high schools, the science and knowledge is transmitted from top to bottom (Emrullah, 1914).

The metaphor of *Tuba* tree comes from the fact that the *Tuba* tree is believed to be a tree in the Paradise. The distinctive characteristic of this tree is that its roots are said to be not in the soil, but in the air. That is to say, the tree is fed not from the bottom, but from the air. This metaphor, according to Emrullah Efendi, underlines the significance and the priority of higher educational institutions. It is for this reason that this approach has also brought the issue of “elite education” into agenda.

During his service in the ministry, he upgraded the *idadi* schools to level of *mekteb-i sultani* and increased the number of faculties in the university (*Darülfünun*) in Istanbul from three to five. Therefore, Emrullah Efendi is believed to have developed the idea of modern university (Sakaoğlu, 2003, 308). Emrullah Efendi argued that:

The science starts from above. When I put forward this theory, I did not say that I will not build primary schools or I will not give significance to them. I will surely pay attention to them. I will start from above for the sake of these primary schools. The genealogy (three) of education is for sure like the Tuba tree. Its roots are up (Ergün, 1982, 14).

By saying this, Emrullah Efendi implied that the reform and improvement of higher educational institutions is crucial for bringing up good students in primary schools. Therefore the reform of the secondary and high school was to serve to the primary schools at the end.

The theory of *Tuba* tree was discussed widely not only during the lifetime of Emrullah Efendi, but the debates intensified after his death. There were both proponents and opponents of Emrullah Efendi’s theory. [M. Sati Husri](#), for instance, was probably the most prominent figure who opposed the theory of *Tuba* tree. M. Sati known also as Sati El-Husri, is one of most significant figures of Turkish education at the very beginning of the 20th century. Born in 1880 in Yemen, M. Sati graduated from administrative school (*Mülkiye Mektebi*) in 1900 and served as teacher for some years. Due to his journal articles and close interests in education, he was appointed as director of School for Teachers (*Darülmualimin*) in 1909. His opposition to the theory “Tuba tree” of Emrullah Efendi (who was then the Minister of Public Education) was quite effective in his resignation from this directorate. M. Sati published more than 15 books and wrote many articles on education in various journals. His [Fenn-i Terbiye](#) is available in digital format at History on Line portal.

Unlike Emrullah Efendi and his theory of *Tuba* tree, M. Sati argued that education should be structured from the bottom. However, most of his writings on this subject appeared after the death of Emrullah Efendi. According to M. Sati, education starts from the very ground. The institutions of higher education can not be built upon a weak and corrupt primary education. A genuine class of intelligentsia grows up not like the *Tuba* tree, but normal trees (Sati, 1914). M. Sati stressed the strong link and hierarchy between the levels of educational institutions. In this context, the development of high school is bound to development of primary and secondary schools. In response to Emrullah Efendi’s arguments M. Sati asserted that in Balkan countries and Japan the higher educational institutions (universities) were established after that the consolidation of the primary schools (Ergün, 1987, 5).

The discussion on methodology in education was not only between Emrullah Efendi and M. Sati Husri, rather it was maintained by the representatives of both sides in later decades. Feridun Vecdi and Ziya Gökalp were among the well-known followers of Emrullah Efendi’s theory.

Chapter 5: School Textbooks and Politics

While in the classical period, history education was limited to members of the ruling elite, especially those in the Ottoman palace, during the 19th century it came to be an important instrument for bringing up statesmen as well as learned classes. This is to some extent related to the emergence of history as an academic discipline in the 19th century.

Besides the institutions of bureaucracy and military, education has been one of the most significant institutions by which the official state ideology is conveyed to mass population and their obedience and loyalty is assured. It is for this reason that one of the essential functions of education, not only in the Ottoman Empire, but also in other countries as well, has been the functioning of “social disciplining” (Somel, 2001, 5). As it is detailed below, this social disciplining easily shifted into “social engineering”.

However, it is also a well known fact that the modern history has many examples of governments that tried to convey their values and ideologies to the society through educational means. They considered the educational institutions not only as places for obtaining knowledge, skills and talents, but also as places where the pupils could be indoctrinated with the state ideology or *weltanschauung*. In this context, the school textbooks and the curriculums are quite useful in tracing the reflections of state ideology. In a similar fashion, the textbooks in Late Ottoman Empire played crucial role in conveying the Ottomanism of Tanzimat period, the Islamism of Hamidian regime and the Nationalism of the Young Turk Era.

It was during the *Tanzimat* period (1839-1876) that patriotism and citizenship came to the forefront in education. In accordance with the Ottomanism policy, congregational structures (*millets*) were allowed certain freedom with regard to primary education. The policy of Ottomanism was more visible in the *sultani* schools in which Muslim and non-Muslims were educated together.

In parallel with the westernization/modernization process of the *Tanzimat* period, textbooks were translated in to Ottoman Turkish under the institutional guidance of *Encümen-i Daniş*, established in 1851 (Alkan, 2008, 28). The result was that when compared with the courses on religion, the science courses dominated the curriculums. Courses on moral values and religion were almost not taught after the *rüşdiyye* schools. History textbooks regarded the *Tanzimat* modernization/westernization as an achievement in Ottoman history.

As Somel pointed out, the Hamidian period (1876-1908) prohibited any school instruction independent of the repetition of the textual content of those schoolbooks approved by the Ministry of Public Education. Thus the usage of textbooks with the desired educational content became a standardized procedure in the late Ottoman Empire (Somel, 2001, 7). The yearbook of education contains a [section](#) which indicates the time schedule of each topic to be taught in the schools. Which subject should be taught at which longevity? Which class is proper for the teaching of a particular topic? Similar questions were answered in the yearbook of education.

It is quite interesting that Abdülhamid II, who is well-known for the proliferation of modern schools in late Ottoman history, had in the course of time changed the curriculum of the schools, because he realized that the same modern schools gave way to the emergence of Young Turk movement, the first organized political opposition to the Hamidian regime. Therefore, starting from early 1890s, he ordered for an increase in the hours of courses on religion and morality hoping that this will strengthen the sense of loyal among the students. The students were expected to observe religious precepts at school, and textbooks on humanities were reshaped toward this direction (Somel, 2001, 4).

Mehmet Alkan argued that the textbooks in military and civil schools differed from each other in that the former ones included detailed sections on early Turkic mythologies (and hence on Turkish identity) which might account for the development of Turkish nationalism among the army officers (Alkan, 2008, 34). Abdülhamid II’s emphasis on “Islamic-Turk Synthesis” turned into “Turco-Islamic Synthesis” and Turkish nationalism during the Second Constitutional Period.

Perhaps the most striking example for the use of history textbooks as tools of political and cultural indoctrination took place in early 1930s. As far as the history textbooks in 1930s are concerned several of them come to the forefront. The first work which worth to mention was [Türkiye Tarihi](#) (History of Turkey) which was written by Hamit and Muhsin in 1930. Used as a textbook in secondary schools, the authors made emphasis on the historical events rather than the great persons in history (Ersanlı, 2003, 116). Unlike the other history textbooks written in 1930s, this book allocated great room for Ottoman history. Nevertheless, the use of primary sources is almost absent.

The history textbooks written in 1930s give us important clues with regard to the use of history textbooks by the political authorities. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk commissioned a group of scholars to write *Türk Tarihinin Anahatları* in 1929. Under the pressure of Mustafa Kemal, the authors, most of

which were parliamenters of the ruling party (Republican People's Party), compiled the book in a very short period of time. Therefore, the book was criticized not only for its mistakes, but also lack primary source as well (Uzunçarşılı, 1939, 349). The book put emphasis on history of Turkish people in the pre-Islamic period, while the glorious Ottoman history was shortly summarized. The authors made use of the works of prominent Turcologists, but Ottoman/Turkish primary sources were not used at all (Ersanlı, 2003, 121).

The purpose of book the book was quite clear: to glorify the honor of the Turks. Parallel to this purpose, it was underlined that the Turks has an inherent (racial) ability in state organization. the introductory 90 pages (known as *Türk Tarihinin Anahatları- Medhal Kısmı*), of the 605 page long book was reprinted in 1931 and used as a supplementary book in the schools.

Türk Tarihinin Anahatları became source of inspiration for other history textbooks. [Ortamektep İçin Tarih III](#) (History for Secondary Schools III) was first published in 1933 and this three-volume book soon became a standard history textbook in the secondary schools. Inspired by *Türk Tarihinin Anahatları*, this book exalted the Turkish race and asserted that the Turks not only established great civilizations but also affected other ancient civilizations. There is no doubt that these history textbooks prepared the necessary background for the formulation of Turkish Historical Thesis and the Sun-Language Theory in early 1930s.

Concluding Remarks

For the last two centuries Turkey has been in the process of modernization and the educational institutions were indispensable instruments of this process. In a nutshell, it should be underlined that the bureaucrats and intellectuals who graduated from the modern and secular schools played quite significant role in Ottoman/Turkish modernization. In this regard, thanks to the modern educational institutions which were established during the late Ottoman history, their graduates actively shaped the Republican period and implemented many reforms as in the field of education. It would not be wrong to state that the Ottoman legacy in educational institutions and the Ottoman manpower made it possible for young rulers of Turkey in the first quarter of the 20th century to built upon/reform the Turkish education.

Chapter 6: Selected Bibliography

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