



ISSN:1306-3111

e-Journal of New World Sciences Academy
2011, Volume: 6, Number: 4, Article Number: 1C0453

EDUCATION SCIENCES

Received: April 2011
Accepted: October 2011
Series : 1C
ISSN : 1308-7274
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**THE FOURTH VISIT OF JOHN DEWEY TO TURKEY
(PROBLEM BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN TURKEY)**

ABSTRACT

This article aims to survey the influence of John Dewey's opinion on Turkish educational system. In fact, on one hand the reports that he had written during his visits to Turkey are like a short summary of the constitution of a new educational system. In this article, authors are going to discuss about Dewey's opinions, the educational models he developed based on his observations during his travels around Turkey. The authors have also debated and commented on completed and incompleting points of Dewey's thoughts with retrospective approach. Moreover the educational problems caused by the rapid transformation in the society, especially in the second half of the 20th century and the pursuits for a solution for those problems are defined chronologically. The final part is concerning about the importance and applicability of the PBL method being applied in DEU as a result in the searching of a qualified educational system.

Keywords: John Dewey, Problem Based Learning, Turkish Education, Village Institutes, Dokuz Eylul University

**JOHN DEWEY'İN TÜRKİYE'YE DÖRDÜNCÜ ZİYARETİ
(TÜRKİYE'DE PROBLEME DAYALI ÖĞRENME SERÜVENİ)**

ÖZET

Sunulan çalışma, John Dewey'in eğitim konusundaki düşüncelerinin Türk eğitim sistemine etkisini ele almaktadır. Dewey'in Türkiye'ye ilk ziyareti sırasında hazırladığı özet raporlar yeni eğitim modelinin oluşturması konusundaki doğrudan kaynak niteliğindedir. Ancak, çalışma esas olarak Dewey'in pedagojik yaklaşımlarının ve eğitim konusundaki düşüncelerinin Türkiye'de zamana bağlı seyahatlerini tartışmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu çerçevede Türk eğitim sistemi konusunda Dewey'in düşünceleri Cumhuriyetin kuruluşundan günümüze ele alınarak irdelenmektedir. Bu kapsamda, özellikle Cumhuriyet sonrası Türk toplumunda gerçekleşen hızlı dönüşümün eğitim sürecinde yarattığı etkiler kronolojik olarak ele alınmıştır. Çalışmanın son bölümünde, Dewey'in eğitim düşüncelerine uygun olarak tasarlanan Probleme Dayalı Öğrenme (PDÖ) modelinin Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesinde uygulama sürecinin kısa öyküsü verilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: John Dewey, Probleme Dayalı Öğrenme, Türkiye'de Eğitim, Köy Enstitüleri, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi

1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

John Dewey was one of the greatest philosophers and educational reformer of the 20th century. He is known as one of the founders of the philosophical school of Pragmatism and the father of functional psychology. John Dewey is personally wrote his concept on education¹ on his early Works[1]: *"I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. All reforms which rest simply upon the law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile... But through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move... Education thus conceived marks the most perfect and intimate union of science and art conceivable in human experience"*.

The Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) established on national sovereignty, held its first opening session on 23 April 1920. Turkish government planned an educational reform in order to make urgent, permanent and progressive modifications. As a consequence, many of well-known philosophers' and also Dewey's works [2, 3] were translated into Turkish -in Ottoman-. On the other hand, many experts related with this issue such as educationists and sociologists, were invited to Turkey. John Dewey was also invited to Turkey in August 1924. The views and recommendations in the reports he had written about Turkish Education system are still crucially valid, even today.

The first studies conducted to determine the impacts of John Dewey on Turkish Educational System, exhibit also the sociocultural and educational regulation before the Republic [4]. In his study, Büyükdüvenci states that negative effects of Dewey's pragmatic approach are being disregarded while his important impacts on Turkish educational system are considered. Wolf-Gazo indicates that the common ground on which Dewey met Atatürk in 1924 in Turkey was that the literacy had been the most essential element for a democratic society [5]. He also claims that social, political and economic reforms were not possible in a society where the literacy was very limited, and that the main aim of the *language reform* -establishment of a new Turkish alphabet based on the latin script and use of Turkish instead of Ottoman language, 1928- inspired from Rousseau and French enlightenment, and the reforms in education and training was to spread the literacy widely through the country. Wolf-Gazo denotes that according to Dewey Ministry of Education should adopt the role of an enlightened leadership. Kazamias also stated that in case of an overcentralized general public educational system there was also the danger of that system's becoming bureaucratic, arbitrary and tyrannical in action in the future as any centralized system would [6]. Turan points out in his article that "the intellectual and political elite controlling the information and power overlooked the vital importance of pluralist education, and the transformation of the Turkish society had been from the Ottoman theocratic state to a new republican state dogmatism" [7].

2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

In the presented study the influences of John Dewey's suggestions on public education in the newly founded Republic of Turkey are surveyed. His only visit to Turkey is well documented with two reports written by himself. In these reports, he illustrated his proposals on funding of education and training of teachers, and also

¹ John Dewey, *My Pedagogic Creed*, 1897

execution of an educational plan. In this article, the authors discuss Dewey's proposals of Turkish educational system following these reports. In this context, the Village Institutes practice and subsequent educational problems are investigated in connection with Dewey's philosophy.

3. HISTORICITY OF PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION (CUMHURİYETİN KURULUŞ DÖNEMİNDE EĞİTİM SORUNLARI)

After the proclamation of Turkish Republic in October 1923, the traditional educational system, which was being implemented in two different manners as religious and secular -mostly military-. With the enactment of the *Law of Unification of Education* on 3rd of March 1924, the education system had been reformed to a completely secular-modern system under the control and responsibility of the Ministry of Education. Young Turkish Republic was facing the fact of illiteracy around 93%; besides 80% of the population was living in rural areas.

The statistics of that period shows that there were approximately 3,200 primary schools and 5,600 primary school teachers under the ministry of education. On the other hand, 75% of the teachers was working in metropolitan schools whilst there were around 40,000 villages, 32,000 of them having less than 400 inhabitants [8].

The opinion of authors is that the goal of the republic was an enlightenment revolution which aimed the transition to a nation-state and the citizenship. Taking into consideration that this revolution was from top-to-bottom under the available circumstances, it must have been very difficult for the ministry of education to put Dewey's recommendations into practice. The young republic, which had not only depleted all economic resources but also lost most of its educated people during the war, aimed to disseminate the enlightenment by idealist teachers. On top of that, it shouldn't be forgotten that at that time Turkey was composed of ruined cities and dispersed villages, there was almost no industry, and most of the population was living in rural areas. Therefore, it is not surprising that a centralized educational model was chosen for such a country in which the fundamental educational problems were illiteracy and basic health training. Neither economics nor human resources were adequate for local and democratic educational model. Another problem was the coeducation of girls and boys which is included in Dewey's educational model. Despite the fact that the women were working in fields in rural regions, they had no part in social life, especially in education in 1920's. Even now, particularly in eastern regions, some feudal traditions such as *customary murders* -during the last 5 years more than 5,000 young women have been murdered-, *bride price*, etc. still exist.

4. THE FIRST VISIT (DEWEY'İN TÜRKİYE'Yİ İLK ZİYARETİ)

After his observations during his two-month visit to Turkey, Dewey prepared two reports where he showed his recommendations. The first report prepared in Turkey is very short (approx. 7 pages) and focuses on the topic of funding of education and improving the training of teachers [9].

In the second report, which he wrote in the United States, he elaborated the recommendations for the formulation and execution of an educational plan [10]. The plan contains redefinition of the school system, the development of schools as public centers, the reorganization of the Ministry of Education, the training and formation of teachers, the improvement of health and hygiene conditions in schools, the development in understanding of discipline, and other revisions considering schools.

Even though Dewey suggested that the function of the Ministry of Education should be a moral-intellectual leadership and inspiration, young Turkish Republic preferred a centralized and authoritarian educational model. In this period in which German-French effect was being felt intensively, a model that was being applied in Europe was chosen.

The reports Dewey had written in 1924 were published in Turkey only after 15 years. Even more interesting than this the quite few publications about the impact of those reports and Dewey's proposals were published only in the second half of the 90's. Despite the fact that not all the implementations were able to be executed, Dewey's work was still being pursued. While his first translated book was going to have another edition, another two books of him were translated into Turkish [11, 12]. In this period of time the look for a model in education resulted in a unique experience.

5. SECOND VISIT: A UNIQUE SURVEY, VILLAGE INSTITUTES (İKİNCİ ZİYARET: BENZERSİZ BİR DENEYİM, KÖY ENSTİTÜLERİ)

By 1935, the number of primary schools had risen only to 5,000 with 7,000 teachers and 370,000 pupils [8]. Young people educated in teacher schools in cities who were not aware of the village realities, were sent to schools in villages. Those idealist young teachers, who were deployed in villages, were disappointed, and they were not able to adapt to rural life, therefore they were looking for a way to escape from the village, and they could not be helpful as expected. Besides, the villagers were not espousing the teachers who were completely different from them.

In 1936, the talented soldiers had been chosen during their military services and sent to take an eight-month education program. In this way, a total of 8,675 trainers worked in village institutes in a three year education program in the villages having less than 400 inhabitants and in those schools 1,600,000 students were trained until 1947 when the government of that time had ended the activities of those schools. The two village teacher schools opened in late 1920's had constituted the basis of Village Institutes which were opened in 1940 with five-year educational program. The students who came to Village Institutes by being selected from *Village Schools with Trainer* were initially completing the primary school education in their first two years. All in all, 16,400 teachers and 7,300 health officers had graduated from Village Institutes whose most brilliant period was between 1940-1946, and which lost their functionality after 1950 [13, 14] and were completely terminated in 1954.

In 1952 John Dewey passed away at the age of 93 and that was during a delicate period where Turkish Republic was dealing with the problems which came with the establishment of a new multipartial democratic system. Therefore death of a such man almost wasn't announced and heard in Turkey but only Burian mentioned about him in one of his articles published at a magazine [15].

Particularly between the years 1935-1946, the Ministry of Education implemented plans coherent to the definition stated in Dewey's report as "The functions of the Ministry should be *intellectual and moral leadership and inspiration*, rather than detailed administrative supervision and executive management" [16]. In this period an educational mobilization had been realized, which was appropriate to the realities of the country and to the historical process. The country had lived through, meeting the local needs according to Dewey's opinions stated in his report as "Only by diversification of materials can schools be adapted to local conditions and needs and the interest of different localities be

enlisted" [16]. In this context, the authors reckon the village institutes period as the second visit of Dewey's philosophy.

6. AFTER THE VILLAGE INSTITUTES: THE THIRD VISIT (ÜÇÜNCÜ ZİYARET: KÖY ENSTİTÜLERİ SONRASI)

In 1961, after the proclamation of a new and more liberalistic constitution the freedom movement surrounding the world had also started to spread in Turkey. Just after a year "Freedom and Culture" [17] was translated and published with an article of Burian's (1952) as its preface and then after four years "Experience and Education" [18] was translated into Turkish [19].

The Village Institute experience is a model that has been discussed intensely in the area of education both in Turkey and in the world, especially in the first two decades after the termination of those institutes. The discussions were focused especially on two main topics: their political meaning, and the metamorphosis in the fields of education. The human resources created by the educational model implemented in these institutions and the fact that this model might be used as a tool for the liquidation of feudalism had been ignored.

As a consequence of the effects of the new political and social conditions which had emerged after World War II, charges started to arise that the Village Institutes had been established by taking the Production Schools developed by socialist system as an example. It may be said that not only the special conditions of the country (preparation for passing into multi-party system, staying out of World War II, etc.) but also international atmosphere had done an important contribution in this attitude. The most effective factors in this period may be defined as McCarthyism and approaching "Cold War".

Because of the geostrategic location of Turkey, since the Soviet Union was one of its neighbours, the Village Institutes weren't able to be discussed in a scientific way.

In his PhD thesis on Village Institutes, Korur [20] says that, "Dewey praises the Village Institutes saying that they are the schools of his dreams", cited on Benli (1990)'s book [21]. In some Turkish publications similar statements were used by referring to the newspaper "Le Monde" dated 21st of March 1945. However, the authors of this article could not find anything about Dewey's views on Village Institutes in "Le Monde" on the mentioned date or in any other publications. It is interesting that discussions are still being related to Dewey's effect even 50 years after the abolition of Village Institutes and 80 years after his visit to Turkey. The authors have the intention to believe that these claims had been put forward to try to save and/or reconstitute the Village Institute model by means of Dewey's ideas, and therefore they define this period as Dewey's third visit.

7. GROWING EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS: FROM 1950 TO 2000S (KÖY ENSTİTÜLERİNDEN GÜNÜMÜZE EĞİTİMDE BÜYÜYEN SORUNLAR)

The times in which the Village Institutes were abolished were the days of the rising of cold war politics and stress policies were used in a bipolar world. This period is also a process of passing into multi-party democracy for Turkish Republic. Although intensive discussions were held in the mentioned period, it must be stated that these discussions were conducted in an atmosphere in which the political points of view and being in favor of or against the concepts *secularism* and *unity* rather than being on objective bases were prevailing. Unfortunately, the non-constructive attitude in discussions conducted widespreadly in Turkey in this period was not only an attitude peculiar to cold war years but it still exists in

today's Turkey. Consequently, the society constantly argues around phantom problems and can rarely get favourable results. Unluckily, discussions about Village Institutes and educational problems are still going on in this way.

As Turkey gave up the original model by which it might have been able to accelerate the enlightenment and development in its villages, it declared its economical choice as rapid industrialization. The first result of this preference has been the massive migration from villages to cities. This migration wave which was directed especially towards Istanbul, resulted in the cities being surrounded by squatter houses with many problems such as lack of infrastructure and housing.

Those people living in these regions, which have rapidly become ghettos physically near but culturally very far to the city and developed a new culture, called *arabesque*. Since proper strategies were not developed, infrastructure and urbanization problems caused by this migration wave have not affected only Istanbul, this migration has continued towards other big cities and the problems have continued to grow by deepening the economic crises.

After the abolition of the Village Institutes, a new problem has emerged: ever-growing number of students as a result of migration. Since it is not possible to increase the number of classrooms and teachers, the first solution (and still continuing at present) was double-session educational system. In this way, the number of existing classrooms was doubled. However, the number of teachers was not changed and the pupils had to be educated in more and more crowded classrooms. It can be thought that even these reasons are enough to corrupt the secondary education. Because of the ever-increasing younger population, especially the secondary and higher education has become a meritocratic system. Since having a bachelor degree has been seen as the only way to gain a profession, the secondary education has become focused on university entrance examination.

The Turkish primary and secondary educational system is based on teaching a pre-determined curriculum. The education is being implemented with absolutely rigid curricula and as caused by high density of young population also in crowded classes due to a lack of enough teachers and classrooms. These conditions make it almost impossible to discover the students' different skills and talents. The goal of almost all of the students in the secondary educational system is to pass the university entrance test exam which requires the cram schools be transformed into intense test tutoring centers.

Nowadays the literacy rate has risen in Turkey to 90 %. However, the definition of literacy has changed considerably over the years and continues to change. Unfortunately, 25% of the students participating from Turkey to the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2003 survey conducted among 15-year-old students are below Level 1 which represents the lowest proficiency level for reading, mathematics and science literacy [22]. PISA surveys aim to measure three major domains: mathematical, reading and scientific literacy. Mathematics and science were the major focus of the year 2003 assessment and 2006 assessment, respectively. PISA 2006 *Science Competencies for Tomorrow's World* presents the results which focused on science and also assessed reading mathematics and science literacy are shown in Figure 1.

Besides the fact that the results seem better than the previous year, the average of the OECD countries could be defined with normal distribution, Turkey intends to have a positive skewed distribution. It is engrossing that while the percentage of the students of Level 1 and lower is 46,6%, the percentage of the students of Level 2 and

lower is 78%. Hence, there are still many reasons to remember Dewey's recommendations and to provide a student-centered education.

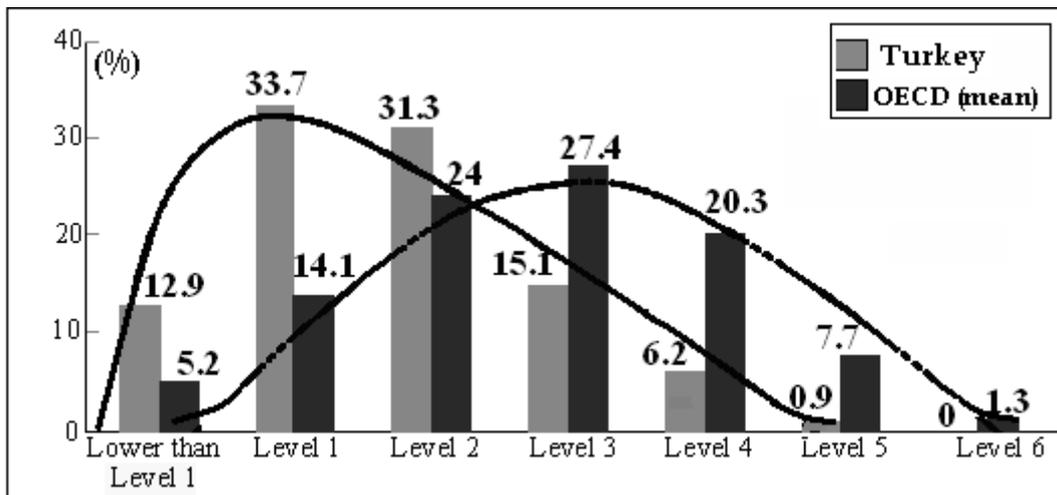


Figure 1. The compared results of PISA 2006 of Turkey and OECD-mean in reading mathematics and science literacy
 (Şekil 1. PISA 2006 sonuçlarına göre, matematik ve bilim okuryazarlığı dağılımının Türkiye ile OECD ortalamasıyla karşılaştırılması)

On the other hand, the ratio of the quota for universities to total number of applicants taking the university entrance examination is approximately 1/8. The number of candidates taking the centralized university entrance examination administrated by the Student Selection and Placement Center is about 1,6 million, and the number of those placed in 4-year-programs of higher education is circa 200 thousand.

The students completing their undergraduate education with a good grade in these universities usually go abroad for graduate degree and mostly prefer to stay in. As a result of this brain drain process, even the big companies established in Turkey declare that they are experiencing the scarcity of qualified personnel. The solution should be sought in secondary and higher education processes, rather than preferring wage-indexed ways, as most companies do.

In a country having a young population and an education-demanding demographic structure like Turkey, it is possible to make significant improvements in social development and welfare levels by means of projects developed in educational area. In case if these reforms were actually carried out, it would be possible to have a rapid acceleration in development of the educational system. A failure in improving the possibilities of education for young people will result in just the contrary consequences.

Those that might be done in the educational area are discussed under two headings:

- Technical and vocational high school-weighted reconstruction in secondary education
- Enhancement of the number of qualified people in selected areas (software, nanotechnology, etc.) at universities (defining priorities and targets)

The authors of this paper believe that both these targets should be accomplished immediately. However, the solution of the basic problem in education is to drive up the average of knowledge. Problem Based Learning (PBL) presents opportunities to be used very positively also in this point of view for Turkish educational system.

8. THE LAST VISIT: PBL EXPERIENCE IN DOKUZ EYLUL UNIVERSITY (SON ZİYARET: DOKUZ EYLÜL ÜNİVERSİTESİNDE PDÖ DENEYİMİ)

PBL applications provided a dynamic discussion and evaluation environment, which first begun to be used in the Faculty of Medicine of Dokuz Eylül University (DEU) in Turkey. Later, PBL is rapidly widespread in the faculties of Arts and Sciences, Education, Theology, Law and some departments of the Faculty of Engineering. The applications of PBL are such models that are formed due to the different necessities of each faculty. As an example, during the accreditation process run by Engineering Evaluation Board (MUDEK), the concepts and targets of educational programs were widely discussed and new instruction techniques were taken into agenda. At this period with the analysis of the Medicine Faculty's model, it was achieved to develop a new model suitable for engineering faculties [23]. Apart from being an educational model defined by an integrative approach, PBL with its features such as compatibility with adult education, arousing interest and curiosity, preparing environment for creative thinking, also creates opportunities to train engineers who should find innovative solutions to original problems. It is possible to reach numerous studies on the advantages and drawbacks of PBL. This educational model presenting opportunities for engineering education is of special importance for the conditions of Turkey.

In the case of those students who succeeded in university entrance exam, and who are suffering from the internalization problem of the knowledge acquired in the secondary education process, it is possible to transform their knowledge into a usable and useful form with PBL sessions/applications. Otherwise, the students are unable to break the habits gained in previous educational processes (especially in basic sciences like physics, chemistry and mathematics), and the education is carried out with low motivation and productivity by both educators and students. For this reason, the PBL sessions in the first year should be formed and planned to overcome these deficiencies.

The most important feature of the PBL sessions is the opportunities it has created for development of the abilities of teamwork, leadership, criticism, and self-criticism. The most significant opportunities of PBL are the ability of empathy in small workgroups. Since both students and moderator (tutor) have to take responsibility for focusing on the topic, investigating, contributing the brainstorming process and being a part of the solution, the teamwork and feedback compose an important part of the sessions.

PBL applications in DEU aim to force the students to think about problems or projects similar to the ones they would face in real life. In the long term, PBL would motivate students both to relate the subjects they have learnt in different courses and to seek and solve the problems existing in their fields. This is of special importance for our age in which the game and the model technology (digitalism and virtualism) based on virtual simulation has become widespread, especially for the countries like Turkey where *the form is more important than the content (form-based societies)*. These advantages of PBL open new horizons in education for both young generations and tutors in countries like Turkey, in which both tutors and students usually use the knowledge and technology rather than producing or creating them themselves, have interest especially in results of digitalism and virtualism, and are focused not on learning but on results.

9. CONCLUSIONS (SONUÇLAR)

The differences between Turkey and OECD - means in mathematics and science literacy (PISA 2006) results show obviously that Turkey must reorganize the educational system. Since the competitive capacity

is depending on the trained, innovative and creative labor force, the results also show that Turkey is rapidly losing the capacity of both production capacity and competitive power. In that respect, the last visited of Dewey must carefully examine. PBL educational model has been firstly applied by DEU in Turkey. The PBL system has been realized without any financial support from national or international organizations. DEU tries to spread the PBL based undergraduate education within the university with devoted and self-sacrificing teaching staff and own sources while giving support to other universities.

Another factor that makes the continuing process in DEU particular is that this model has arisen in order to find solutions to the problems in secondary educational system. DEU has tried to create an original model rather than adapt or copy any of the existing PBL applications in other universities. At the development process of PBL in different Faculties needs, six different types of PBL applications are being implemented, and these are contemplated according to the specific necessities of the faculties and/or departments. The philosophical foundations of these models consist of

- Dewey's philosophy of education and epistemology,
- Village Institute experience which was designed taking into consideration the specific conditions of Turkey and over which the influence of Dewey's pragmatic approach is seen,
- The reports which were prepared by Dewey with the progressivist approach and lost nothing of its actuality.

Unfortunately, the decision of the increase of the student quota in universities makes the PBL educational model almost impossible to sustain. The necessity of the small work groups' application is substantially depending on the tutor/student ratio. Hence, firstly the social sciences (Law Theology and Education Faculties) are decided to back to the classic system. Now, only Electric and Electronics department of Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Medicine of Dokuz Eylül University (DEU) are remain.

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