

US Influence On The Education System In Turkey: An Analysis Of Reports By American Education Specialists


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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to analyse reports prepared by American education specialists visiting Turkey from the Proclamation of the Republic till the end of the 1950's to inspect Turkey's education system. In accordance with this purpose, first, the foreign specialists' reports are briefly introduced chronologically and then American specialist reports are analysed. This study examined reports prepared by J. Dewey (1924), Beryl Parker (1934), the committee under the presidency of E. Walter Kemmerer (1933-1934), W. Dickerman (1951), John Ruffi (1951), R. J. Maaske (1953), and M. Costat (1955). These seven reports were selected for analysis as they were published by the Ministry of National Education. Since the main source of data for the study was the reports of American specialists, document analysis - a qualitative research method - was employed. It is important to check the originality of the written sources acquired for document analysis. As the Ministry published all the reports as a book, they qualify as original, first-hand sources. Secondary data sources were reviews or explanatory studies on Turkey's education history and foreign specialist reports. The study ascertained that the reports prepared by American specialists largely corresponded; the observations and recommendations in the reports essentially focused on the same issues. Based on these similarities, it can be inferred that all the specialists stayed informed of each other and correctly identified the problems in the Turkish education system.

Keywords: Foreign Specialist Reports; Education Specialists; American Specialists; Education History; Education System in Turkey

1. INTRODUCTION

 Examining Turkey's education views and practices in both the Ottoman and Republic periods indicates that foreign educationists were, from time to time, invited to Turkey (Şahin, 1996; Yıldırım, 2008). Following the proclamation of the Republic by the force of Westernisation and development, methods to imitate developed countries and benefit from foreign specialists were adopted. Undoubtedly, education has most benefitted from the knowledge of foreign specialists (Akdağ, 2008; Akkutay, 1996; Budak, 2010; Ergün, 1990; Koç, 1970). It is uncertain how many foreign specialists visited Turkey during the Republic period, but Akyüz (1996) notes that the Ministry of National Education published 15 reports from 1924 to 1957 and Şahin (1996) indicates that 123 foreign education specialists visited Turkey between 1923 and 1960.

Research into the origin and number of foreign education specialists visiting Turkey between 1923 and 1960 ranks the US in first place (48 specialists; 39%). Germany, Belgium, and France are second with 42 specialists (34%). Most foreign specialists were invited from the US in the years focused on in this study and generally in the field of education during the Republic period. As such, it can be said that the US has significantly contributed to the establishment and development of the republican period education system. Therefore, this study aimed to critically analyse the reports prepared by the American education specialists who visited Turkey between 1923 and 1960 to research the Turkish education system. Before analysing these reports, they are briefly introduced below.

1.1 Atatürk Period (1923–1938)

Shortly after the introduction of the Law on the Unification of Education, the famous American educationist, John Dewey, came to Turkey, being the first foreign educationist to visit Turkey after the proclamation of the Republic (Ata, 2010; Bal, 1991; Binbaşıoğlu, 1995; Kirby, 2010). Dewey had visited China before his visit to Turkey, and afterwards visited Mexico (1926), Russia (1928), and North Africa (1934), which contributed to his prominence in the international arena (Berube & Berube, 2007; Chakrabarti, 2002; Ching & Wang, 2007; Cremin, 1959; Dalton, 2002; Özsoy, 2009). Dewey played an important role in Turkish education history with his two reports intended specifically for the Turkish education system.

After Dewey, many foreign educationists were invited to Turkey and asked to prepare reports on the Turkish education system's weaknesses and to sound any precautions (Akyüz, 1999). Between the years described as the Atatürk period, the German Kühne (1925), Egyptian Omar Buyse (1927), Swiss specialist Albert Malche (1932), the committee under the presidency of American E. Walter Kemmerer (1933), and American education specialist Beryl Parker (1934) visited Turkey. These specialists researched and reported on Turkey's education and school system. This study analysed three of the reports prepared during this period. The first was prepared by Dewey, and the other two by the American committee under the presidency of E. Walter Kemmerer and Beryl Parker.

1.2 National Chief Period (1938–1950)

Between 1938 and 1950 - the National Chief Period - almost no foreign educationists were invited to Turkey. Thus, no printed reports for this period have been found.

1.3 Democratic Party Period (1950–1960)

The analysis indicates that all foreign education specialists visiting Turkey in this period were American, which is significant. Akyüz (1999) states that after 1957, many specialists - mostly American - were invited to Turkey by the National Education Ministry. These specialists reported on the Turkish education system (Ekizceli, 2006; Karakök, 2011). This study analysed four of the reports from this period; namely, those by W. Dickerman, J. Rufi, R. J. Maaske, and M. Costat.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Model

This study conducted a critical and comparative analysis of reports concerning the Turkish education system prepared by American specialists visiting Turkey between 1923 and 1960. For this reason, *document analysis* - a qualitative research method - was employed. Research into previous studies focusing on the foreign specialists visiting Turkey during the Republic period to prepare reports indicates that no studies have been conducted on specialists coming from just one country. Moreover, no detailed and comparative analyses were conducted in previous studies. This study differs from others in that it focuses specifically on the US, from where the most foreign specialists came, and conducts a detailed comparative analysis on the reports prepared by these specialists.

2.2 Sampling

Criterion sampling was employed to select the reports analysed in the study. In this sampling method, the researcher determines the criteria on which to define the sample (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The two main criteria determined for this study were 'prevalence over a period of time' and 'generality'. These criteria are explained in the validity and reliability section.

The following reports were analysed within the scope of this study:

- J. Dewey (1924), ‘*Report on the Turkish Education System*’
- B. Parker (1934), ‘*Report on the First Education in Turkey*’
- The committee under the presidency of E. Walter Kemmerer (1933-1934), ‘*From the Report by American Committee: Educational Affairs*’
- W. Dickerman (1951), ‘*Report on Public Education in Turkey*’
- J. Ruffi (1951), ‘*Observations, Problems and Recommendations as Secondary Education in Turkey*’
- R. J. Maaske (1953), ‘*Report on Teacher Education in Turkey*’
- M. Costat (1955), ‘*Report on Vocational Schools in Turkey*’

2.3 Data Analysis

Document analysis includes resource exploring, reading, note-taking, and evaluation (Karasar, 1998). In the first step, the research resources (foreign specialist reports, dissertations, and articles on the specialist reports gathered) were obtained. They were read in detail, the required notes were taken, and tags were made. Following this, they were evaluated as the final step.

2.4 Validity and Reliability

To increase the validity and reliability of the research, the following methods were applied:

- Specialist analysis method increased the *internal validity (plausibility)* of the research. In accordance with this method, two meetings were held with an academic specialist in the field of education administration and management. The first was to determine which reports to use at the end of this study’s literature review. The meeting culminated in determining which reports to use based on two criteria; namely, *prevalence over a period of time* and *generality*. The criterion of prevalence over a period of time means that there is no time difference between the selected reports, and these reports represent the periods they were analysed in. Generality points out recommendations in the report on general education systems more than a certain education problem. The second evaluation meeting was held approximately six months after the first. During this meeting, the common subjects determined at the end of the first analysis of the selected reports were hashed out and seven categories/subjects to be used in the research were determined.
- Elaborate description method increased the *external validity (transmissibility)* of the research. Pursuant to this method, the reports were analysed in detail according to the seven common categories/subjects determined at the end of the second evaluation. Throughout the analysis, an effort was made to remain as faithful to the original data as possible.
- Consistency analysis method increased the *internal reliability (consistency)* of the research. After categories/subjects were determined for this purpose, a second analysis was conducted approximately six months after the first, and the analyses were examined with regard to their consistency, which showed a 97% correlation between the two analyses.
- Verification analysis was applied to increase the *external reliability (verifiability)* of the research. Following the logic of this method, an academic - a specialist in the field of education administration and the school system - was asked to provide support. The specialist checked the codifications based on the reports against the results obtained in the research, indicating a 99% correlation. Trivial faults detected were rectified.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study conducted a comparative analysis of the reports of seven American specialists. Common opinions and recommendations identified at the end of the analysis are discussed below.

3.1 School Premises, Facilities, and Fixture

Concerning this topic, it was found that while the specialists strongly advised the construction of new schools between 1923 and 1938, they proposed protecting the existing premises between 1950 and 1960. In this study, parallel with the results of Budak (2010), most specialists advised constructing new schools. Although the number of schools increased each year from 1923, it is known that the need was not satisfied. Kaya (1984) highlights a shortage of school premises in rural and urban areas, attributing this to the high cost of construction and legislative conditions. It is difficult to say that this problem has been totally solved - even now - in as much as today the dual education system is applied in most schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. This system confirms the shortage of schools.

However, no periodical difference in the recommendations for school facilities (i.e., gymnasium, laboratory, library, museum, etc.) and fixtures (i.e., equipment, map, graphic, etc.) was found. In both periods, specialists recommended improving school facilities and fixtures. The recommendations for both periods corresponded, implying that the specialist recommendations for 1923-1938 were not considered in the following periods. It is difficult to say that the recommendations are properly followed even today (Akyol, 2011).

3.2 Organisational and Administrative Structure of the Education System

For this topic, the specialists flagged over-centralisation in the Ministry of National Education. Dewey was the first specialist to caution on this practice, emphasising that over-centralisation would threaten the education system in the future. Specialists for the 1950-1960 period collectively expressed concern with regard to over-centralised practices in the Ministry. This confirms Dewey's evaluation, indicating that he had sufficiently analysed the Turkish education system. Referring to the hazards of an over-centralised structure (i.e., disregarding local opinions and desires, officialism, etc.), the American specialists recommended abandoning the structure and shifting to decentralisation. Ekizceli (2006) states that administration issues in the Turkish education system had already been questioned in the first report and that subsequent specialists had emphasised these concerns.

In Turkey, the decentralised structure recommended by the specialists is a long-standing controversial issue. In the Tanzimat Reform era, the Dynast Sabahattin defended his position, asserting that the Ottoman Empire could only survive thanks to such an administration. Since then, many academic circles have defended this administration (Bozan, 2003). Today, some pedagogues (i.e., Bursalioğlu, 2012; Özden, 2010) protest centralisation in the Ministry and recommend abandoning it gradually. Centralised administration is still a primary issue today, thus confirming the accuracy of the specialists' evaluation.

3.3 Levels of Education

Primary education, secondary education, and higher education were analysed separately.

3.3.1 Primary Education

The most significant finding with regard to primary education is that the subjects taught at schools cannot be correlated to real life. Most specialists emphasised this and recommended developing a flexible/master schedule based on local needs. Research on the primary school schedules prepared since the Republic period reveals that all include vitality, locality, and flexibility as main principles (Güngördü & Güngördü, 1966; Keskin, 2002). The problem is that teachers do not implement the schedules properly.

The American specialists also made recommendations for rural primary schools. The first is that the needs of rural areas and people differ from those of urban ones. For this reason, they noted that rural and urban area primary school schedules should differ. The *Law on the Organisation of the Ministry of Education* (Maarif Teşkilatı'na Dair Kanun), dated 1926 and numbered 789, attempted to enact Dewey's recommendation in this regard. In accordance with this law, primary schools were categorised as rural or urban schools. Rural schools were classified as day and boarding schools (Budak, 2010; Kalaycı, 2004). Today, rural boarding schools have been transformed into *Regional Primary Boarding Schools* (Yatılı İlköğretim Bölge Okulları) and they continue providing education.

3.3.2 Secondary Education

The specialist opinions of this education level were analysed under two headings; namely, general and vocational secondary education. The specialists stated that secondary education schedules should focus on preparing students for life and higher education. Unfortunately, secondary schools still primarily provide general education, only preparing students for higher education (Adem, 1986). The issue of preparing students for real life has remained in the background. Furthermore, it was found that the specialists agreed that education schedules were overloaded and too academic. They recommended that course content be simplified and schedules reconstituted as flexible master schedules. In fact, the research on secondary and high school schedules during the Republic period shows that the content was heavy, uniform, and academic (Doğan, 1986; Keskin, 2012).

With regard to vocational secondary education, recommendations to increase the number and type of such kinds of schools between 1938 and 1950, and improve the quality of such schools between 1950 and 1960, were made. Most specialists emphasised the important role of vocational education in the development of the country. As in the past, today the issue of vocational and technical education is one of the main problems of the education system.

3.3.3 Higher Education

It was inferred from the reports analysed that the specialists had limited recommendations for higher education. Dewey gave more opinions with regard to higher education, agreeing with the committee that students should be sent abroad. Maaske made the most important recommendation for higher education, proposing that universities conduct research on education problems. Of these, Dewey's recommendation to send students abroad has been the most successful. As in the past, today many scholarship students and academics are sent abroad (Akyüz, 1999; Kaya, 1984).

3.4 The Teaching Profession and Teacher Education

The specialist' opinions and recommendations for the teaching profession and education largely correspond with each other. Until the 1930's, most recommendations focused on increasing the number and quality of teacher's education schools (Dewey). After that, recommendations for improving quality were found. Overlapping recommendations to enhance the quality of teaching can be summarised as increasing in-service education, opening schools of application, creating discussion groups among teachers, opening summer schools, and increasing the number of professional publications. The specialists also recommended improving the personal rights (especially salary increases) of teachers to change the status of the profession in the public eye. When considering current conditions, it is apparent that this recommendation is not respected to the extent it once was. The specialists stated that considering that rural and urban lifestyles differed, rural and urban school teachers should be trained separately. They also proposed interesting ideas for the education of teachers at schools in rural areas, essentially that rural schools open and close at different times, opening rural boarding schools (today's Regional Primary Boarding Schools), and applying mobile teaching. It is necessary to emphasise that although partially, the reports prepared by the American specialists influenced the education of teachers in rural areas and the application of rural institutes.

3.5 Curriculum

The analysis revealed three areas of focus with regard to the specialists' reports on curriculum. First, curriculum are unrelated to real life - a fact criticised by all the specialists. They recommended preparing flexible and master schedules, taking into consideration local conditions. Second, there was no correlation between courses included in curriculum. To solve this problem, the specialists recommended collecting the courses (collective education) and enhancing the relationship between them. Third, teachers did not properly apply curriculum. The specialists contended that teachers did not embrace the curriculum as required, thus causing problems with its application. To address this problem, they proposed increasing in-service education and benefiting from teachers in the process of developing instruction schedules.

The analysis revealed that all the specialists made interrelated and important findings with regard to curriculum. Most curricula that have been applied in Turkey for many years look exceptional on paper (Keskin,

2002). For example, collective education started with a 1948 primary school schedule and was employed in all the other schedules prepared (Güngördü & Güngördü, 1966). The main problem is that teachers did not apply the schedules as required. Although the principles included in the schedules were quite contemporary (locality-movement from the immediate surroundings, feasibility for every child), the teachers kept teaching in a traditional way.

3.6 Education Planning

The specialists proposed many overlapping recommendations for education planning. As emphasised for the organisational and administrative structure of the education system, the specialists criticised the centralised structure, regarding it as the biggest obstacle for education planning. The second common recommendation is related to not acting hastily when questioning education. The specialists requested that long-running education-intended schedules/plans be prepared and steadily applied. The third recommendation was to develop a national model and philosophy rather than using the models and philosophies of other countries. The last common recommendation for education planning deals with vocational education. The recommendation to prepare and apply long-running plans could not be implemented during the Republic period of education history. In Turkey, education policies and applications were altered many times when the government changed and even when the same government prevailed (Keskin, 2012). The specialists' recommendations to develop a national model and philosophy, instead of using imported philosophies, could not be implemented. Since Dewey, the education philosophy adopted in Turkey has been progressivism and the Turkish education system has been affected by an American school of thought (Keskin, 2011).

3.7 School Atmosphere

As in other topics, the specialists had common findings and recommendations in this topic as well. Here, specialists' opinions centred on the principle of democracy. The specialists criticised the official environment at schools and recommended that school and classroom environments be democratic and that such rules be applied. This recommendation for democracy has been reflected properly in curricula for many years (especially since the 1960's). However, democratic applications in classes and schools are not evident (Keskin, 2002).

3.8 Overall Reports

When collectively analysing the specialists' opinions and recommendations for the Turkish education system, it is evident that they touched on many issues, ranging from school premises to the atmosphere in the classroom. The opinions of Dewey, the pioneer of US education specialists, and his successors are similar. That the specialists accredited each other in their reports implies that they conducted a planned study. Ekizceli (2008) states that the specialists acted as if it had been determined in advance how they should express opinions and did what was expected from them. That the specialist opinions correspond to and are similar to Republic education ideals enforces this finding. However, it is not possible to infer from the existing resources who the masters of the specialists were.

Of those recommendations for the Turkish education system made by seven specialists analysed in this study, some were immediately put into effect, some were delayed, and some were not applied. Akkutay (1996), Başıoğlu and Wilson (1968), and Şahin (1996) stated pessimistically that these recommendations had a limited impact on the Turkish education system. However, regardless of what happens, some of the opinions and recommendations of foreign specialists were put into effect and quantitatively led to positive outcomes.

To conclude, the American specialists have played an important role in shaping the Turkish education system. The most important confirmation that the Turkish education system has developed to be US-focused since the proclamation of the Republic is that the specialists were invited. The seven reports analysed in the study were selected from the reports prepared by American specialists visiting Turkey between 1923 and 1960. It is important to analyse their studies and reports between these years and the following years to better determine US influence on the Turkish education system with the help of new studies.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

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