Chapter 10

Curriculum Reforms in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to examine and assess the basic structure of changes in the 2004 curriculum in Turkey. It also aims at evaluating how restructuring of the education system in Turkey have been affected by the general social and educational trends in the changing world and by the accession process to the European Union. Literature and document analyses-including curricula development endeavors in education in Turkey dated 1924, 1926, 1936, 1948, 1962, 1968, 1998, and 2004 since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 were used in this study. Of the educational curricula, especially the 2004 Educational Curriculum, was examined in terms of its vision, structure, aims, and contents as well as evaluating the effects of the general, social, educational trends, the educational norms, and preferences of the European Union on this curriculum. This study demonstrates the effects of an improvement movement that can be effective in terms of the effects and outcomes in Turkey as a growing and developing country in the Eurasian region can also be important for many other countries in the Eurasian region. In other words, similar improvement policies can be followed in other countries of the Eurasian region. As a result of these reform efforts, these countries can have an opportunity to increase their level of development first and then contribute to the economic and geopolitical importance of the Eurasian region in the general sense.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3264-4.ch010
INTRODUCTION

Education is shaped by the dominant paradigm of the time and restructures its own system in accordance with the needs of the time. The education system of each country also determines the future of that country. It is rather difficult to realize national ideals in an educational system that does not have universal values in the 21st century, just as it is impossible for a nation that does not have contemporary knowledge and technology to maintain economic and political independence. When late history is taken into consideration, it has been observed that the countries that give importance to the education after the Second World War have developed rapidly and established solid democracies, whereas the countries that do not do so have not taken part in the development process and cannot have an ideal democracy as it should be.

In fact, educational reform has begun to be considered as a critical issue in almost all countries in recent years. There are a lot of reasons why it has been so. One of them has been about the education of immigrants. Integrating of them is of critical importance. Another important reason for education reform is that the economy is becoming increasingly knowledge-based and education-based as a result of the transition from the industrial age to the information age (Hanushek, 2007). It is a well-known fact that society of this age is described as an information entity. The changes and developments that have occurred in the fields of science, technology and communication, and innovations taking place in information technologies in the last half century have influenced Turkey like the other countries. Learning and sharing of knowledge is not only limited to schools, so it is necessary for educational institutions and educators to develop themselves according to the qualities required by the new age. Curricula have also been affected by it.

Changes in information age, new paradigms that have emerged with globalization, and globalization itself have made it compulsory in inevitable changes and developments in education systems, its approaches, and processes. Information technology has also begun to change the nature and shape of the learning. Today, face-to-face contact between teachers and students have taken place by e-mail, books by the internet, and classrooms by chat rooms. In addition, schools, colleges and universities are not the only places where people are taught. In the age of lifelong learning, learning has become a desire that easily comes to life in the home or workplace. Therefore, the education system has begun to lose the monopoly of transferring information over against the media, commercial software companies and the Internet.

Moving from these changes and developments, especially with the impact of globalization on educational systems and institutions, many countries and schools around the world have been in search of various quests in the direction of the
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