



The Curriculum Development Model of the Turkish Ministry of Education: A Search for Balance between Global Trends and National Demands

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Abstract

Turkey, which, in fact, has a deep experience in education, has turned its face towards the West in education with the foundation of the republic. In this context, an educational system with Western notion was introduced by inviting lots of pedagogues from Europe and USA, the most well-known of whom was John Dewey and a lot of students were sent abroad for the same purpose. However, there hasn't been a positive result from all these attempts. Because, even though it has universal dimensions, education is, in essence, a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, it can't be imported directly; it is produced within the country.

Despite this fact, Turkey has adopted importing curricula from the West as an educational policy and it has done so for many years. However, this foreign-rooted educational policy has never complied with the national structure since the historical reality and civilization codes have been neglected. As a result of this process, which has continued up to 2000s, generations were brought up who were not exactly Western but also not themselves. Relatively more authentic policies have been applied in economy and foreign policy in these years and it has clearly been realized that this foreign-rooted educational policy is no longer sustainable. In this case, authentic ideas, philosophy and curriculum demands have come to the fore. The Ministry of Education (MEB), which took into consideration these demands, introduced a comprehensive reform in the curricula in 2004, which could be described as a change of paradigm. The curricula that came to the fore with this reform are called the Ministry of Education Model.

The aim of this study is to analyze the Curriculum Development Model of the Turkish Ministry of Education with all its phases and dimensions. The conclusions drawn in the study carried out with documentary analysis can be summarized as follows: The MEB Model, which indeed seems to be a mixture of models and bears the signs of previous curriculum development models, is still in its infancy period. The model, which is sensitive to the market, learner-centered and houses the ideas of contemporary education, is in a sense represents the search of Turkey for a balance between the global trends and national demands in education.

Key Words: Curriculum development, Curriculum, Curriculum model, MEB Model, Educational reform

1. Introduction

The trend in Turkey to take educational models from West has started in latency periods of the Ottoman Empire and this trend continued in a faster pace with the foundation of Turkish Republic until the millennium. However this situation has been started to be questioned recently, because the country was developing in many means but the education was hitching (according to PISA measures) and commented to be "ineffective" [1], [2] and "collapsed" [3] according to critics. This education system had western tendency and almost no one and no parts were pleased with this fact [3], [4], [5], [6], [7]. This situation made MEB search new ways to come over this congestion.

As a result, a wide reform in primary school was held curricula in 2004 by MEB, triggered by the EU progress outside and critics inside the country and aimed to reach the world and back up economical acceleration caught for the recent years. The reform in primary school curricula was called the New



Primary school Curricula (NPC) .The NPC were tested and evaluated for one year and put into effect in 2005. In this study MEB's curricula development model and NPC as the product of it are analyzed.

2. Method

This study in scanning model is held in documentary analyses model. The data are obtained from. Scientific studies, news and reports about the issue. These documents are analyzed in context of "MEB's curriculum development model" and some results are reached after the analyses.

3. Curriculum Development Model of MEB

Until 2000s, MEB used the curricula of the west as they were without changes and made Turkish Education History a museum of world Education History [8]. The curricula were in Tyler, Taba and Taba-Tyler models, and in modernist and positivist characters rooting from essentialism and promoting behaviorist psychology. MEB made some revisions to these curricula without changing the essentials. The revisions made in 1924, 1926, 1936, 1948, 1954, 1968, 1970, and 1974 were far away from contemporary curriculum development techniques and were like- table-top exercises [9].

These revisions could not be successful because "it is not possible for a nation with a deep history to reach the civilization level it aims by just being audience" [10]. As a result MEB was in intensive efforts of reform [11]. "These efforts concluded in a wide reform in 2004. This reform was actualized by the effects of outer factors like global friends, new perspectives in education, and the EU and inner factors like economical, social and cultural development." [12]. Thus, these years were the years for many societies to "get ready for the 21st century with reforms in education [13]. In this reform, Named "change in paradigm," "reform", "holistic change [14], [15]. and "radical philosophical change" [16]. Maybe the first time in education history was an "original" curriculum development model used. The new curricula, named NPC, were organized with changes in curricula of 5 courses in primary school first stage, and put into effect in 2005-2006 educational year after a one year pilot implementation. The scope of this reform included all primary and secondary education courses in following years. The analysis of 2004 MEB curriculum development model is as in Table 1.

2001 MEB curriculum Development Process In the questions "what kind of a human?" was accepted as the starting point and special expertise groups were formed for the courses. In the process 38 non-governmental organizations, academics of 8 universities, 26304 students, 9192 parents, 2259 academics teachers, and 697 supervisors cooperated. The drafts were analyzed by specialists and, the pilot implementation was held in 9 cities in 120 schools, and reviewed and put into effect in 2005-2006 educational year [17]. The shortly summarized process in generally compatible with curriculum classified as "scientific" in context of curriculum discipline.

The NPC, which is a product of 2004 MEB curriculum development process, is based on sociological, individual, economic historical and cultural grounds. The curriculum is based on Humanism and Progressivist philosophies emphasize universal values like democracy and human rights, based on constructivist and cooperative learning, give importance to individual differences and are prepared with a contemporary perspective [18]. The NPC carries traces of Essentialism. This shouldn't shade the fact that it keeps a balance between conventional and contemporary aspects, however it shades the "paradigm change". MEB's statements about the 2004 curriculum development process "for the first time a holistic change project with an international comparison is held" shows that global trends are considered in comparison with this process and the statement "we changed from rigid behaviorist approach to cognitive and constructivist approach "shows the change in psychological bases of the curriculum. Arslan [19] comments on this as follows: "MEB plans a new transformation with these curricula based on constructivist approach rather than the behaviorist approach of modernization period.

MEB lists the focuses of NPC AS follows; Using Turkish correctly and fluently, giving importance to cultural values and arts, stating emotions and ideas easily, using at least one foreign language

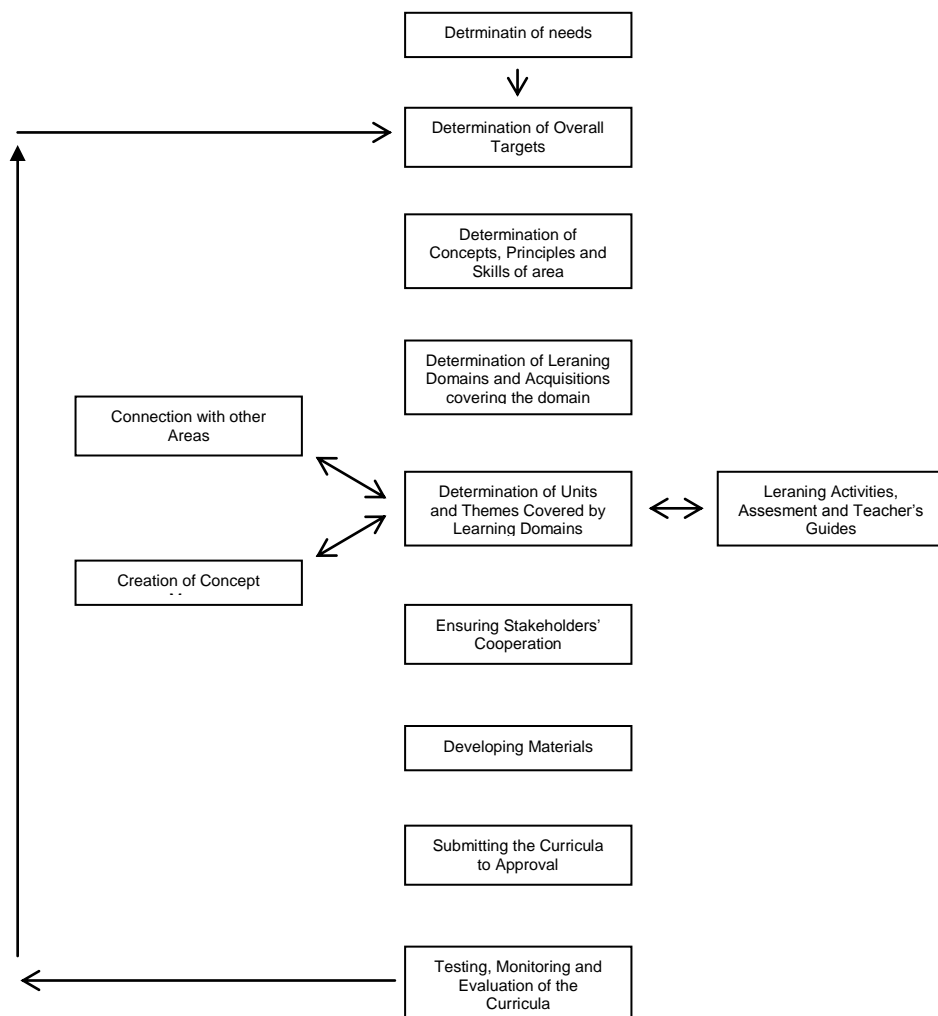


effectively, using information Technologies, working together and communicating, being aware that tolerance is a key for flexible mind [14]. What seems to be a change in paradigms is that, NPC promotes cognitive flexibility and holistic change rather than a pure cognitive development. NPC values more balanced individuals who can tolerate social conflicts

When we analyze the essential elements of the NPC it can be said that the former targets are changed to acquisitions and the contents are organized with a more holistic and psychological approach balancing the individual and society. The student is the active subject of curriculum the center [20]. We can also see the traces of postmodern approach and the quantum paradigm parallel to the EU's and the USA's educational curricula in NPC which can be seen as a balance between classical, technical modes and Romanticist approach [21].

Other differences in the NPC are the "Common skills" and "Inter-disciplinary domains". The aim of common skills and inter-disciplinary domains that are formed taking contemporary pedagogical approaches, and concepts into consideration with an inter-disciplinary view, is to develop the individual in horizontal and vertical dimensions. This approach associates the inter-disciplinary design (correlation) pattern [22], [23], but it also essentially closer to learner centered curriculum development pattern which requires the student to be actively involved in the process the shape and the analysis [24]. 2004 MEB curriculum development model is given below after all these evaluations.

Figure1: 2004 MEB Curriculum Development Model





Ref: [17], [26].

The model resembles Taba-Tyler model with its first two steps [23]. Although they may look different, the following three steps resembles Taba model since they can be accepted as the organization of contents. However, the horizontal relation on step 5, excluding the assessment and evaluation dimension, can be accepted as the most original aspect of this model, because both Taba and Tyler models are hierarchical models. First five steps can be accepted as the designing steps from the application and evaluation phases what needs attention here is that the phases of application and evaluation are bonded to curriculum design phase to make a whole. With this holistic form, the MEB model resembles Taba-Tyler model with a few relative exceptions.

4. Conclusion

Turkey, importing educational models for the last two centuries, faced a lot of problems 2000s and made an educational reform in 2004 with the effect of inner and outer factors. This reform was accepted as “A change in paradigm” because the NPC was different from former curricula in philosophical, epistemological and pedagogical aspects. The NPC was designed promoting quantum paradigm and learner constructivist approaches referencing progressivism rather than the essentialist, behaviorist and modernist-positivist approaches of the former curricula. On the other hand, the NPC, which focuses on learning rather than teaching, includes contemporary approaches as ÇZK [27] and cooperative learning [18].

However MEB’s NPC can be accepted scientific, paradigm change and contemporary, it cannot be classified as “original” or “national” in the aspects of philosophies and curriculum design and development models it is based on. The MEB model tries to form a balance between, conventional and new pedagogical approaches, individual and society, and Newton and Quantum and in a form of a “holistic” or a “karma” model taking different aspects from many ideas. It resembles Taba-Tyler models. The change in paradigms is significant for NPC in the philosophies, epistemological and pedagogical grounds it is based on. However it cannot be accepted as an original or national model based on Turkey’s own history, social and cultural Dynamics. It can be classified as “a reflection of searches of original model in education” and a model of mixture and balance.

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