

PRE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY

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Abstract: *In this paper, critical analysis of language teacher education and educational planning following a historical overview in Turkey is presented. The analysis intends to cover both pre-service and in-service language teacher education with the sole idea that they both complement each other and without one the other lacks an important component in terms of teacher development.*

Historically, it is possible to classify pre-service language education into three categories as Pre-Ottoman Period, Ottoman Period, and Post-Ottoman Period; however, for in-service language teacher education, only Post-Ottoman Period is analyzed since there is limited information about the issue before this period so far.

Keywords: *pre-service language teacher education, Turkey*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most discussed issues in academia; however, a comprehensive solution has not been offered yet. In my opinion, it will not be possible to offer such a solution as to what the best education model is since we are in an ever-changing world whose speed is enormously increasing day by day. The best offered solution is out of date the moment it is released which is quite ironic. Rather than offering solid solutions, proposing frames could be more suitable and practical.

Given this, when it comes to teacher education in general and language teacher education in specific, the issue gets much more complicated: education of educators. Every concern needs to be taken into account with a more serious attention than general education then. Each country has experienced a different pattern of language teacher education; therefore, language teacher education in Turkey is studied in this paper.

2. PRE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

Pre-service language teacher education refers to education and/or training of language teachers taken before they begin the profession. Education will be used as a more comprehensive term including training in the present paper. There are various models and approaches to language teacher education; however, the scope of the present study is to provide a historical perspective of language teacher education in Turkey.

2.1 Pre Pre-Ottoman Period

The Turkish history is very old and it dates back to years even BC. Turks lived a semi-nomadic life in Ural-Altay region for many years. Later on, they dispersed to

various places like Indian peninsula, the Caspian Sea, and the west which definitely had an effect on language [6, 16, 19]. Some of the people moved above the Black Sea and some of them met Islam and converted to Islam. They definitely should have faced the language issue. When there is an issue of a new language, there must be an issue of learning and teaching of it which makes it necessary to consider the question 'who' in the sense that who should teach? It can be inferred from this that there was teachers of newly faced languages teaching those languages for a variety of purposes ranging from social reasons to military or intelligence reasons.

Having a diverse history, Turks have moved various places in the world including Anatolia where majority of them live today. The more they changed their locations the more variety of languages they must have met and the more learning and teaching languages must have been an issue for them. Teacher education is not an exception to this. There is little document about this and according to one in Attila the Hun's lands, a couple of languages like Turkish, Gothic, Latin, and Chinese were spoken by people according to Orkhun scripts [4]. The greatest change has occurred when Turks met Islam since religion is one of the most influential assets in human life. People needed to learn Arabic, being the language of their religion [13]. Additionally, Persian language has had considerable effect on Turkish language during Anatolian Seljukis as well [4]. These languages must have had implications for language learning and teaching thus language teacher education; however, there is little information available.

Since it is history and we need chronicles to claim, the present exposition of the issue does not go beyond assumption as for language teacher education pertaining to Pre-Ottoman period. What we know is they faced a lot languages they had to handle.

2.2 Ottoman Period

Although I provided a separate section for the whole Ottoman period, even this period has not been studied comprehensive enough in order to give sound information about language teacher education of the time. Studies begin to discuss the issue beginning from 18th century onwards [3, 4] although Ottoman history starts in 1290s. Fortunately, there are a lot of documents pertaining to this period though since bureaucracy was important to them and they kept detailed chronicles. The thing is they have not been fully accessed yet.

In the 18th century, relations with France resulted in increasing French language teaching movement [4, 8]. There were basically two kinds of schools: Sibyan (meaning child) schools providing primary education where Arabic was taught and Medrese schools providing higher education where Arabic was the medium of instruction [5]. Another type of school was Enderun schools where leading people were educated regardless of their religion. Arabic and French were two languages taught as foreign languages [4, 5, 18].

Due to failures of attempts to send learners to France to learn French, the government decided to establish a secondary school with French medium instruction approach; therefore, Galatasaray Sultanisi was established in 1868 which is a cornerstone in language teacher education since it led to paradigm shift in the issue [1, 4, 5, 13]. Another school with English medium instruction called Robert College was established in 1863 which marks the beginning of English language teacher education in Ottoman Empire later in Turkey. Shortly before those years in 1848, teacher education institution was established with the name Darülmualimin (Teachers' House). But it is difficult to find anything about language teacher education much in detail in this institution [5, 12].

Ottoman Empire experienced glory for more than 300 years between 1400 and 1700 as the leading country in the world; therefore, they must have had a sound education system whatsoever and it is worth delving into I believe. This education system must have covered language teacher education as well. A giant country with a lot of languages spoken throughout and lived with harmony for a long time... This forces me to assume that they must have had a very quality education system if we take the importance of education as the top granted regardless of time in history.

2.3 Post-Ottoman Period

A This is the period when the Turkish republic was announced marking the end of Ottoman Period according to some historians and a-marking a transition according to others. Since this is not an issue for the present paper, it is not elaborated on in detail.

Following the War of Independence, the Republic was announced in 1923. Since people experienced harsh conditions of life losing the 'brains' of the country in the various battle especially the one fought in Gallipoli, there was the need to restructure in almost every single area. Education was in the top priorities [8]. Within this scope, 'the law on unification of education' was passed from the parliament in 1924 with the idea of organizing and restructuring educational institutions giving the authority to the Ministry of National Education [6].

When we look at the initial years of the new Republic, we see that there are teacher training schools designated for boys and girls with the number of 20. Every year the number of teacher training schools was increased. Moreover, curriculum development practices were also conducted in these schools as well [18]. I think these schools were heritage from the Ottoman ancestors since it would be difficult for a country to establish such organized schools within a year or two.

John Dewey, the man who grew the USA (rather than the man grew up in the USA), was invited to Turkey by Atatürk, the founder of the new Republic, himself in 1924 for educational reforms which gave rise to the establishment of 'Village Teacher Training Schools' with the aim of teaching how to read and write to villagers in Turkey in 1926 [18]. Those schools were at high school level. Then in 1926, first educational institution was established in Konya with the name of "Gazi Education Institution" which was at the higher education level. The aim of the graduates of those schools were to provide villagers with the knowledge of reading and writing, i.e., literacy [1].

Teacher training institutions were unable to fill the teacher gap in education; therefore, the government came up with alternative solutions like assigning non-professionals as teachers and language teachers. It almost sufficed to speak a language to be assigned as a language teacher [4].

Some 30 years later than the establishment of the new Republic, the popularity of French language declined whereas the popularity of German increased since Turkish people migrated to Germany for occupational reasons [4]. The reaction of the government to this rapid demand was practical: open evening classes and summer distance education in 1970s which have always been debated. But I think, this is better than nothing. They at least tried to meet the new demand.

In 1982, all the teacher training institutions were transformed into universities. However, full transition of two-year teacher training schools and all other sort of teacher training schools into education faculties and/or universities took almost a decade [3, 10]. There were great differences among ELT programmes then in specific according to Sali [15] in terms of content.

In 1997, a project funded by the World Bank was embarked upon in higher education in Turkey and new decisions were made and put into action. The need for this move was due to the increase in compulsory elementary education period: it was increased to 8 from 5 in those years. This required more teachers [6]. This also influenced language teachers as well.

There was another restructuring movement in 2006 in teacher education in order to catch up with the developments in the world in education; therefore, language teacher education programmes were revised then [16]. Priority was given to practicum in the last regulation and school experience courses have been increased.

Another movement came with 12-year compulsory education which resulted in the vacancies in terms of teachers of almost all braches and language teachers were among the top vacancies. Foreign language teacher educations departments were opened with the demand.

For the last three decades, it is clear that there is a planning problem in terms of education which in turn influences language teacher education. It is like constructing the floors first and then trying to embed infra-structure which is quite weird indeed. A system is changed, for instance, from 5-year compulsory education to 8-year compulsory education and then changes in language teacher education programmes are initiated which is too late because the system will be changed to 4+4+4. Now new demands and new regulations. We see that first decision is made and then the reasons are provided. There is few studies in terms of content change in language teacher education approaches.

3. IN-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

The Turkish This refers to education during the service, i.e., teaching. To broadly speak, it is difficult to find evidence for earlier practices in Turkey let alone Ottoman period.

In-service programs in Turkey have been conducted by the Ministry of National Education, local schools and universities, and other private organizations such as Cambridge ESOL (now Cambridge English), British Council, and various teacher training centers in general.

The Ministry of National Education announced the goals of in-service training programs in the website as follow:

- to orientate the new (novice) teachers in the institution,
- to help the personnel grasp the aims and principles of Turkish National education,
- to compensate for the drawbacks of pre-service training with respect to professional competency,
- to improve the professional perceptions and competencies of the teachers,
- to assign eager and skillful personnel (teachers) to higher ranks,
- to provide necessary skills and knowledge for those coming from out of the profession,
- to provide integrity in the interpretation of Turkish National Education policy,
- to integrate the applications of basic principles and techniques,
- to help improve the educational system by training in-the-service teachers.¹

These are the general aims of the ministry and are for the EL teachers as well. Therefore, the ministry has organized a number of in-service language teacher education

¹ accessed at www.meb.gov.tr as of May 15, 2015 13:24

programs. Those programs are generally in the format of periodical courses run during the summer break. The content of the programs is announced as methodology, recent developments, and techniques; however, teachers report that they do not find these programs effective in general [2, 10, 15, 21]. The method of delivery for most of the time is an experienced teacher or teacher trainer instructing and sharing her/his experience with the audience. As can be easily concluded, these programs are for all teachers rather than EL teachers.

The effectiveness of the programs was discussed by many scholars (for example Alan [2], Gökmenoğlu [7], 2012; Kervancıoğlu [11], Sabuncuoğlu [14], Şallı-Çopur [17], Ümit-Öztekin [20], Ünal, D. [21], Ünal, E[22]) earlier. Overall conclusion of the studies is that teachers are not satisfied with in-service language teacher education especially with those provided by the Ministry of National Education.

4. PULLING IT TOGETHER

I had submitted a paper for Syllabus design course during my MA. I am citing my ideas from there in the form of voice-thinking here since I find it relevant:

"I have received formal education on a longitudinal basis that is over the years. I am still undergoing formal education as an PhD student. When I count the years, five years for primary school, three years for secondary school, four years for high school (lycee) plus four years for university plus two years for MA make up eighteen years. Eighteen years of my childhood and youth and even adolescence... When I think about the impact of that much education on me, I can hardly see direct concrete results. As an educated citizen and as a teacher who is familiar with at least what education is and how its outcomes are observed, I do not claim to see the effects fortnight. I know that it takes years to observe the results of education and training of one's life. However, I behold from the other side of the fence, I imagine that what would happen if I were not formally educated that much? Would not I be able to produce as much things as now I do? Or would not I contribute to my environment in any way? The answers to the questions above are basically YES... In some way or other I would definitely be able to... I might not be within the field of education but I would be contributing somehow though... If the main aim of formal education is to prepare people for the real life situations, then I can heartily say that there is something wrong... There must be something wrong..."

Despite individual success stories and despite small-scale success stories, there is something to consider from the perspective of comprehensive overall planning of formal education, I believe. If we are talking about effective planning, it should be able to maximize effectiveness in real life. What is the role of Teachers?"

I still have similar feelings when it comes to language teacher education. After this monologue, I can say that rather than increasing the meaning and content if changing the ongoing plan becomes the system itself, it gets difficult to be able to mention a real long-term plan. I think every component of education has been influenced by this planning issue. Teachers are not exception.

Go find somebody in the street and ask what the most significant problem in Turkey is; the response will more or less be 'education'. Moreover, when you ask about the most important component in education, the answer will definitely be "teacher". Therefore, if the perception is so, it is worth considering, I believe. Both education in general and teacher education in specific.

When we think of the current situation, that is the attitudes towards educational planning and planning about teacher education as well in Turkey, they are basically 'save-the-day' planning practices rather than holistic and comprehensive ones aiming at

meeting expectations and aiming at finalizing basic problems. When we look from the distance, it looks like changing a pattern embodied earlier has become habitual to imply that there is something carried out for the sake of education. And since the results of such changes can only be observed after several years, there is no choice but wait for another 'change'.

This is the general picture of what I see in terms of overall educational planning and language teacher education in Turkey. When it comes to planning foreign language education, I can assert that in spite of the effort, money, and more importantly time devoted, reaching a high language proficiency level has remained a serious problem in Turkey as Işık [9] mentioned which has references to language teacher education I think.

The solution to the problem is clear: designing a curriculum based on needs analysis following the steps: data collection and context analysis, defining the aims, planning, piloting, application, feedback analysis, testing and evaluation, and re-planning. Within this scope, teacher education and training is of great importance, I believe. It should be well-placed in the overall planning process. There are good practices at Boğaziçi and Yeditepe.

All in all, attitudes to educational planning in general and foreign language planning in specific should be aiming at fundamental solutions rather than 'save-the-day' policies. All other components of education like language teacher education, materials development, curriculum development etc. should be considered within this holistic approach I think. In specific, Early Ottoman period should be delved into in terms of language teacher education since there is little information available today since they must have a very effective education system along with language teacher education system including language teaching system and language teacher education. What we see is late Ottoman period teacher training practices in the current literature both for pre-service and in-service phases. As for in-service language teacher education, it should be planned in such a way that it should scaffold practicing language teachers increasing their interest and motivation in the profession decreasing teacher burnout. Earlier practices and current practices for in-service language teacher education should seriously be considered and should be well-documented. Moreover, since it is in a way learning process, general learning principles should be incorporated in the process of language teacher learning in the form of pre-service and in-service. More importantly, daily politics should interfere the least; otherwise, all the gain from research and science is left defunct.

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