



The construction of children at the primary education Turkish language teaching programme

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to discuss the Primary Education Turkish Language Teaching Programme concerning the subject that how the childhood is constructed based on the contention that childhood is not biological but social and cultural fiction. The research model used in this study is a theoretical and analytical model for the identification and analysis of the current situation. The document review, one of the qualitative data collection methods, is conducted in the study. It is set out, with the open or hidden targets, that how kind of child on what cultural and political context the programme builds. In the study, it is concluded that the programme aims to educate children as the carrier of nation-state centred official ideology, the entrepreneur who is neoliberal and accepts the national and moral values of the society without any question, and an individual who aims to eliminate the contradiction between individualism and traditionalism and doesn't conflict with universal values.

Keywords: Turkish Language Teaching Programme, Childhood, Cultural/Social Context, Childhood Construction

The Purpose

Education is "an intentional acculturation period." (Ertürk, 1994: p. 9). Turkish language teaching programme is the one that aims to transfer the state's cultural heritage and the political system to the child as well as being the native language teaching. The purpose of this research is to determine how the child is affected from this acculturation and how the National Education, that is, the State does this. With this purpose, the basic approach of Turkish language teaching programme, its general purposes, objectives, the characteristics of

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the texts, basic skills, topic explanation concerning Kemalism, inter-discipline, themes and activity samples were studied.

Limitations

This research is limited with Turkish language teaching programme used for Primary Education Turkish language course (2006-2009 1st -8th grades).

Method

The research type that is used in this study is a theoretical analytic research for the description and analysis of the current situation. In this research, general scanning (literature review) technique, one of the qualitative research techniques was conducted. (Karasar, 2005: p. 184). Documentary review involves the analysis of written materials including information concerning the fact or facts that are targeted to study. (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2008: p. 187).

1. Introduction

The child leaves his biological basis socially, politically and culturally. The child has become the target of modernity during history and he was accepted as a man to be constructed. The child and childhood have been under the governance of the State since the modernity. (Öztan, 2013: p. 26). In Turkish Education system, especially elementary education is in the domain of nation / state and it has a standard approach.

One of the purposes of education is to "maintain cultural heritage of the society and its continuity." (Tezcan, 1981: p. 42). It is to transfer the cultural values of the society and social behaviours to young generations. (Tezcan, 1981: p. 164).

The function of education in the social and political field is, however, to obtain loyalty to the current political system (state system). In this context, the purpose of Turkish national education system is to approve of law number 1739 in National Fundamental Law and opinions of Tezcan. Turkish language course is a significant base area of sovereign for the state politics. Accepting the child as the guarantee of the future of the nation makes the construction of the child an obligation. We can find the clues of this construction in these lines, as well.

“The individual that the society needs can be different according to the expectations from education. An educated person in 2000s is defined as the one who can modernize with the time, be an enterpriser, cooperate with other people actively, improve himself all the time and who can learn how to learn. That’s why, Education ought to deal with the needs of the society with the ‘lifelong learning approach’, not with traditional education approach.”(MEB, 2006a: p. 34). Because the current education programme cannot meet the needs for training a contemporary Turkish person, Elementary education programmes based on some education approaches were developed like constructive approach, multiple intelligence hypothesis, education that is sensitive to individual differences or thematic approach. (Güneş, 2006).

2. Findings

Current Turkish language teaching programme was studied in this research. Findings that were collected from two programmes prepared for 1st and 5th grades (2009) and 6th and 8th grades (2006) were explained below.

3. Discussion and the Result

The targets of education, according to Pragmatism, are to make the person licenced, strong and effective within the society. According to Pragmatism, the scales of desired behaviours are licence, strength, efficiency, benefit, collaborative work, problem-solving, lifestyle, dynamism and experience.

Turkish language programme at elementary education aims the concepts above and it recommends a pragmatic education. However, it is a programme that gives more importance to social benefits or benefits of the system. It is a programme that wishes to make the child more efficient with social and national values.

According to Tezcan, education protects the culture of current system with its conservative function in social changes and prevents the things that may spoil it. (Tezcan, 1981: p. 164).

In the basic approach of Turkish language teaching programme the most important statement is: ‘‘ training individuals caring for national and moral values.’’

The features that *reading texts ought to include* and *the materials to be watched / listened should include* are stated at Turkish language teaching programme: at Elementary

school 1st-5th grades. It says texts should be chosen according to “our national culture, our moral values, our sense of decency, our traditions and customs, our laws and indivisible integrity of our nation.” If so, the conservative function of Turkish language teaching programme can be defined to preserve national and moral values. A programme in which moral values and sense of decency are standardised cannot train autonomous individuals.

The programme also holds an aim to be innovative and to keep up with the modern era. It wants to combine national values with international values.

The basic approach of both programmes is that they are both student-centred and they both aim skill training and multiple intelligence approach. The programme aiming to consider the differences has had a vision a society formed with individuals who are entrepreneurs, collaborative, problem-solving, using information technologies, and compatible with the people around, scientific and productive.

In the domains of *learning fields* and the distribution of objectives according to classes in the programme, “the learner realises national, universal and cultural values.” and “he learner questions the relation between national and international values in the text he reads.”

In the objectives of listening skills that are repeated for the 6th, 7th and 8th grades, it says : ”The learner realises national and international values in the materials he listens / watches.”

As seen in the statement: ”The learner questions the relation between national and international values in the materials he listens / watches and life.”, cultural and political formation of the learner are confirmed with similar expressions in both programmes.

One of the statements of *basic skills* for 1st and 5th grades is defined as ” giving importance to personal and social values.” This statement is repeated the same in the programme for 6th and 8th grades. However, there becomes a contradiction because of the added statement saying: “caring for national, moral and international values.”

The objectives of speaking: “The learner speaks appropriately for the etiquette and social values (national, moral, cultural, ethical or social and so on...)”

Examples of studying texts My Name is Selen (p. 84), a Country Song (p. 191), Venus Passed the Sun (p. 212), The Sleep (p. 224); in these texts “The learner speaks

appropriately for the etiquette and social values (national, moral, cultural, ethical or social and so on...)"

The materials he reads / listens / watches, the words like he' 'realises / speaks appropriately'" contradict with its claim to be newer, more democratic and more international than the previous programme for the construction of the child. The programme acts as if national, moral, cultural ethical and social values were the same in Turkey. That's why, it does not match with the general aim of Turkish national Education because of the words like "... training the person who has a personality, has an independent and scientific world view, is respectable to human rights, appreciates personality, constructive and creative.. .'"

In the research conducted by Balcı, A., Coşkun, E. and Tamer, M. in 2012, they compared Turkish language teaching programmes from 1926 to today. They have found that the ones that included national values the most are the ones which were made in 1981 and 2006. (Balcı, A., Coskun, E. and Tamer, M., 2012: p. 1-13)

The programme in 2006 targets to be more empathetic by using the words "national" and "universal" together. However, it contradicts with the statement: "The learner speaks appropriately for the etiquette and social values (national, moral, cultural, ethical or social and so on...)"

The programme: in the inter-discipline domain activities "Using Turkish appropriately, and effectively. Giving importance to personal and social values. Helping students realise the importance of basic cultural and moral values like respect, or tolerance."

In listening skills, in the text "The way to Peace" was formed in order to provide a system between "Customs & Traditions and People. Living in peace depends on our showing respect to these values and being tolerant."

The principles, such as "We ought to show respect other people's opinions, traditions and their religion. Because there is tolerance and respect in the base of peace and comfort." target an empathetic and democratic child.

Deniz Melanlıoğlu, who studies Turkish language teaching programmes for acculturation, states that acculturation is not systematic and it remains abstract and he recommends these:

“What cultural values should be thought at what level students ought to be determined first and the distribution of these values should be put in the Turkish Language Teaching Programme according to the levels of the learners. In the programme, there should be explanations about what materials are going to be used and what activities are going to be performed in the acculturation and the instructor should be guided with sample performances.’ (Melanlıpğlu, 2008: p. 72). However, general principles function as a programme determining targets. It cannot be said that the programme acts without a system because it determines what values, which authors and poets are going to be included in compulsory education.

Compulsory themes, Atatürkism and our values headlines, make contributions to the child’s national culture. (Turkish culture (Festivals, and ceremonies, ballads, folk dances, native land, heroism and flag and so on.), our Turkish language , Turkish heroes (Mevlana, Fatih Sultan Mehmet, Yunus Emre, Mimar Sinan, Nasrettin Hoca, Hacı Bayram-ı Veli).

One of the optional themes, **Fine Arts theme**, introduces traditional arts and artists, such as marbling, illumination, calligraphy, artists, ballet, ceramic, sculpture, music, Aşık Veysel, Barış Manço, poets and so on.) to children.

“**Production, Consumption and Efficiency theme**”, however, makes the child accustomed to production-consumption circle directly.

The programme makes systematic and more concrete acculturation to Republic and Atatürk values at the topic, objective and text level.

Cultural concepts, objectives and aims in the programme are targeting the learner to be a good citizen, a republic child both in the international markets and cultural values, and a child of liberal world, as well. In the programme, patriotism is the basic characteristic of the child. The child that is suitable for the basic principles of the regime is the child, who is loyal to Atatürkism, a didactic one, the one who holds national consciousness and national culture; the one who is constructed with inconsistent values. (Öztan, 2013: p. 15-26)

The child of the post-modern era is the leading culture-bound child, the one sacrificing his own subjectivity, loyal to state nation, loyal to his leaders and a competitive adult, yet he is not an adult, as well.

In the general aims of Turkish language (6th-8th grades), one of the basic skills is “entrepreneurship”. Turkish language (1st-5th grades), “entrepreneur individual” is emphasised in both programmes.

The concepts of the programme can be defined as liberal concepts. The Education Union that shares the same opinion determines these:

”being a leader, the spirit of a team, problem-solving, developing a career, feeling the necessity for a product, planning the product, production, searching the market, marketing, team work and collaboration, leadership and so on.”

(<http://www.egitimsen.org.tr/07.16.2014>)

The programme directly includes political and economic improvements more compared with other programmes. It is willing to make the learner use information era. Entrepreneurship is the concept it specially emphasises. The characteristics of the entrepreneurship child are repeated in both programmes. They are; ”Human rights and Citizenship”, “Basic Rights and Freedom”, “Improving Career Consciousness” See.

(<http://www.erg.sabanciuniv.edu/>)

According to İnan, the basic thing in curriculums is “a pragmatic individualistic adult” model. A model with various skills (such as critical and creative thinking, communicative and emphatic, searching, problem-solving, decision-making, using information technologies, entrepreneurship, designing a product and marketing it, observation and social participation and so on.). It has an aim to guarantee to get the expected learning outcome at the end of the education years that are invested not for the versatile child but a “human capital”. (İnal, 2006: p. 283)

However, it can be investigated how much individual the programme constructs for the child that İnal describes as the “a pragmatic individualistic adult”. The programme that repeats the word ”emotion” 135 times repeats the word ”intelligence” twice. (Karadağ, 2012:567-579).

The programme predicts a child who is pragmatic and the one who cannot act as himself both for himself and for the society a child who cannot see his own subjectivity and his being unique while acquiring and improving his native language. The programme accepts the child as a social being and it almost never includes the word ’psychology’. It only talks about the appropriateness of the texts and objectives for the development of the child. Yet, it

does not mention the child's biological and psychological needs in the process of acquiring and improving the native language.

The programme that develops behavioural patterns in the direction of its wishes does not reveal the same characteristics in autonomous learners.

If we look at this direction, we can say that the programme that claims it does not have a traditional education and training is a continuity of the previous programme. That there were not a pedagogue or an expert on child psychology in the preparation staff of the programme supports this thesis.

How can a programme that cannot meet a child's needs, that is not full of texts and objectives succeed in real learning? How can it construct a child? The programme constructs a child that cannot be an adult because of these. The principles of the programme that we studied here are abstract and idealistic. It limits both the learner's and the instructor's world of thought.

In the programme, national, moral and ethical values are discussed as if they were the same for the whole Turkish people, as if they were not interpreted, and as if they could not be changed. Therefore it is a standardising programme.

It makes negative contributions to the construction of the child who is not democratic, independent and autonomous. The programme has some prohibitions without clearly stating this: The texts and objectives according to the unalterable articles of TR Constitutional Law are hidden in the basic principles of the programme. Besides, the programme is open for different performances and interpretations for ideological concepts. It can lead to misconceptions; it can make the person of interest a criminal and make him judged.

Unalterable principles of the Constitutional Law are concrete. The principles of the programme, however, are abstract, unclear and open-ended. They can be interpreted however it is desired. The programme is the one which does not care about the psychological side and needs of the child while learning his native language. It only constructs a child that protects national and moral values and social development. The programme suggests taking the individual differences into consideration; however it does not tell how to do this. Then, the child turns into a tool that acquires his native language just for the system and the State.

The programme repeats the words like ‘inquiries’, ‘criticises’, ‘compares’, ‘interprets’. It plans to train a child whose mental and cognitive skills have improved to a great extent. That’s why, it contradicts with its principles that limit thinking and behaving. The principles are abstract and open-ended. Here are some examples;

”Texts should not include expressions that might cause alignment or discrimination, destruction and they shouldn’t be ideological.”

”Texts should not include elements that are against our national, cultural, and moral values and our nation’s indivisible integrity.”

”Texts should not include elements that are against human rights and independence, democratic values and human values.”,

”The learner understands the importance of the freedom of thought and expression. He reads texts about human rights and he discusses them.”,

”The learner questions the relation between national and international values in the materials he listens / watches and life.”,

The programme constructs a child stuck between the TR unalterable articles of the Constitutional Law and Liberal values. It plans a child who can think scientifically and comprehend, who can do researches and make inquiries, and criticises. Yet, it cannot predict this is impossible with the student-centred training, multiple intelligence concept, and constructive approach. For this reason, it can be concluded that the programme that cannot develop concrete principles and suggestions will fail to construct a politically and culturally consistent child.

The programme recommends texts without an ideology. However, there cannot be a text without an ideology. What the programme wants is that a text that includes an ideology against the system should not be preferred. On the one hand, the child to be constructed will think and query but he will not think against the national, moral and cultural values; on the other hand, he will hold democratic values and believe freedom of thought, and he will read and discuss these kinds of texts.

The weakest part of the programme is probably the question how much the learner is a child and how much he is an adult unless he gets to know himself in natural acquisition of his

native language and unless he acts himself and if he acquires his native language in a way the system teaches him according to the state's economic, political and cultural development.

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