

## CHAPTER 13

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# TEACHER EDUCATION IN TURKEY

## Issues and Trends

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### ABSTRACT

This chapter describes current changes recently instituted in teacher education in Turkey and analyzes the long-standing problems that initiated the changes. Recent inputs from the Turkish Higher Education Council, aided by a World Bank loan, are documented, with their effects on the changing situation. The chapter then considers the developments as they relate to one new program in a university in Ankara, and the effect this program is having on schools and teacher education in Turkey. The quality of mentoring and its effect on the mentors, plus the changed approach to graduate students in teacher training are considered.

Turkey is a key country for the modern world. It is the only Muslim country to have a secular constitution, it lies between Europe and the Middle East, it is awaiting entry to the European Union, and its understanding and cooperation are essential to a solution of the present concerns within the region. What happens in its schools and, as considered here, in teacher education, builds a foundation for regional and international participation. This chapter outlines and discusses the current changes in teacher education in Turkey, changes that are important if Turkish classrooms are to feel the influence of the educational developments that have shaken teacher training in the West over recent decades.

### HISTORY AND NEED FOR CHANGE

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, instituted momentous changes in the country that have been carried forward by his successors in government. Of his many transformations, education was dear to his heart, "Teachers, the future generation will be your masterpiece. If there are no teachers, there is no future for that country."

To help to accomplish his goals, Atatürk set a precedent by turning to the West for insights. He invited John Dewey to assess the educational system of Turkey and make recommendations for action. In 1924, after spending two months as a guest of the Turkish Government, Dewey wrote a report for Atatürk. In it he examined the Turkish school system and made recommendations to the government for its improvement and modernization (Dewey, 1988). His recommendations included changes in the role of government with regard to the leadership it provided, in the training and treatment of school teachers, and in school organization and the education of students, as well as extending education to all.

During and since the time of Atatürk, teacher education has developed and expanded. A quick run through the last 20 years will indicate the speed of this change. In 1982, responsibility for the education of teachers was transferred from the Ministry of National Education to a new body, the Higher Education Council (HEC). Since 1982, the HEC has set the programs, the curriculum, and the numbers to be trained in what have now become the faculties of education in nearly 60 of the country's universities. The Ministry of National Education retained its teaching certificate granting powers, but higher education governing bodies designed, implemented, and accredited the teacher training institutions.

In the last 20 years, both external international agencies (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], World Bank, European Union) as well as governmental organizations within have contributed to change in education. In 1989, the OECD produced a report on

education in Turkey, *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Turkey* (1989), which was critical of the teacher training programs and of the methods used both to train teachers and those used in classroom teaching in the schools. The OECD report indicated the concerns of government with school teaching and teacher training, and its publication was followed by a request from the government to the World Bank for a loan. The loan was to be used to institute changes in school teaching and teacher training. Both the HEC and the Ministry managed separate parts of the loan.

Meanwhile, in 1989, the HEC caused the teacher education programs in the colleges (Higher Schools of Teacher Education) to be extended from 2 to 4 years, and to be transformed into classroom teaching departments (preparing teachers for grades 1 to 5) of the faculties of education. By the early 1990s, then, teaching in Turkey had become an all-graduate profession with both elementary and high school teachers being educated and trained in four-year undergraduate programs.

The World Bank project followed in late 1994, soon after this institutional change, and extended until mid-1999. The project personnel, both national and international, worked with all existing 42 faculties of education to develop curricula, procure resources, and train young persons and key senior personnel in modern approaches to teacher education. A total of 3,200 people received in-country training. Those who received training outside Turkey, ranging from PhD and master's programs for young faculty to 10-day study visits for faculty deans and university presidents, numbered 313 (Sands, 1999).

Alongside the developments of its teacher education project, the HEC also restructured the faculties of education. Teacher education departments were streamlined. Subject-specific teachers were relocated in the arts and science faculties to try to ensure that the faculties concentrated on education rather than traditional subject matter. In addition, new programs and new or revised courses were added.

There was, thus, both a massive enquiry into the prevailing practices of teacher education in Turkey, and extensive exposure to developments in other countries. The results of the changes initiated by the HEC included large numbers of newly trained academic staff in the faculties, new books (in English) and equipment, and new curricula supported by a series of purpose-written texts for the teaching of methodology in key subjects at elementary and high school levels, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, science, English, social science, music, and art. In addition, a new system of faculty-school partnerships was set up nationwide, and a new system of standards within the faculties of education and the accreditation of the faculties initiated. At the time of writing, it is only three years since 1999, and these changes are still settling in. Since 1999, further work has been initiated. More recent developments include a World Bank loan of

\$2 billion to the Ministry of National Education to upgrade buildings and teaching, and to address inequalities of educational provision across the country. This effort has been assisted by a grant of 100 million euros from the European Union.

The current numbers show the size of the expansion. There are now nearly 60 faculties of education, and some 180,000 students in training to become elementary and high school teachers. This compares with about a half million total teachers in the schools.

### WHY CHANGE WAS NECESSARY

#### The Single Pursuit of Subject Area

As the Turkish teacher education system expanded and teacher education programs lengthened, old practices were retained. It was the old ways that the changes in the second half of the 1990s were designed to overcome. Prior to the changes, the emphasis in teacher education was on subject matter in the campus-based programs given to four-year education undergraduates. Students had to be taught their subject: biology, social studies, a foreign language, mathematics, the subjects needed for teaching grades 1 to 5, and so on. University faculty were recruited from the ranks of biologists, historians, and other relevant academic personnel. They were faculty who had entered university in the usual way—via obtaining a research assistantship, PhD, and then assistant professorship. Usually, they had not been in a school since they took their own school-leaving examination. They had not been a school teacher, taught in a school, nor obtained a teaching certificate. They did not often go to schools from the faculty of education in order to observe student teachers in their field experience. Neither did they meet with teacher mentors or do school-based research while working in the faculty of education. Their research interests, their reading, their lecturing, all lay in the area of their subject area. Understandably, their research papers were also in the subject areas in which they had been trained, for example, on freshwater algae or a minor poet, rather than on educational and pedagogical issues.

Thus, prior to the late 1990s, teacher education was not seen as the main objective of the work of individual faculty members who taught the teacher education students. Rather, their work was the pursuit of subject-specific research and teaching. Faculty did not wish to change in order to meet the needs of teacher education, or did not know how to do so, or were faced with a climate where it was difficult to change. One result was that faculties of education preferred to train high school teachers rather than elementary school teachers. By the mid-1990s the country was faced

with an oversupply of specialist high school teachers, and a yawning gap failing to meet the need for teachers for grades 1 to 5, middle school (grades 6 to 8) teachers with a mastery of more than one subject, pre-school teachers, and teachers for small rural schools.

Another outcome of the old teacher education system was that scarce departmental funds were spent on expensive items of equipment to maintain subject-based research, not on teacher education materials. The education faculties more or less duplicated the arts-science faculties in their staffing, teaching, research interests, and equipment, an ineffective use of resources in universities where resources were low anyway.

### **Neglected Methodology Teaching**

Parallel with the overemphasis given to subject area studies was the neglect of methodology teaching. Yes, student teachers did attend courses in how to teach their subject, but such courses were generally staffed by faculty who had little knowledge of the way students could be trained, or of the exigencies and needs of the classroom and school-age students. The methodology courses were usually staffed by subject specialists, taking it in turns. Like their colleagues, the subject specialists often had not taught in a school.

One of the authors saw such old-style methodology classes in action. The class consisted, week by week, of two student teachers giving a lesson to the whole group. The lesson was taught in the teacher-centered style in which the students themselves had been educated. The other student teachers in the group made comments, became bored after a week or two, and learned nothing new.

### **Diffuse Goals in Educational Sciences Departments**

Another feature of the old system was the separate departments of the educational sciences. They included curriculum and instructional technology, administration and supervision, guidance and counseling, and measurement and evaluation. Faculty from these departments gave the education courses but, like the subject specialists, they too generally had little experience of schools or school teaching. Furthermore, they gave classes that catered to the whole, mixed group of student teachers. Many of them would not have been able to draw on school examples or experience in particular subject areas—classroom management in a science lab class, for example, or role-play organization in a history lesson. The educational sciences departments themselves had undergraduate students. Even

though such students did not have a school practicum, many had to be recruited into teaching during the years of great shortage of teachers.

### **Little Experience in Schools**

The aspect that, perhaps, needed the most attention was the experience student teachers had in schools. The amount of time allocated to work in schools was low, one day per week for two semesters. Faculties of education had little interaction with the schools where their students were placed. There was no joint teaching of faculty and teachers together; no mentor training, and little knowledge of what the other was doing. Student teachers were sent in relatively large numbers to a school, with little in the way of a structured approach to their observations and activities. Teachers generally regarded student teachers as a nuisance, and were also critical of the lack of participation by faculty in the field process. Students did very little teaching, and were required to give only one lesson that was observed and assessed by their faculty supervisor. Student teachers thus entered their first post with very little practice in teaching.

## **REFORMS**

### **Initiatives of the Turkish Higher Education Council**

The activities undertaken by the Higher Education Council between 1995 and 1999 addressed the problems outlined above. In response to the accumulating problems and the desire for change, the HEC initiated a set of bold reforms to change teacher education (Günçer, 1998). The restructuring of the faculties of education was designed to remove the subject orientation of faculty staff as subject-based courses were transferred to the relevant department in the arts and science faculties. Emphasis was instead given to work in the education arena, and faculty research refocused on educational issues. With the restructuring and reorganization of the departments came new programs, revised and new courses, and new resources (Eğitim, 1998; Günçer, 1998; Sands, 1999).

At the same time as the restructuring was occurring, there was a huge shortfall of some 97,000 teachers to meet the needs of the elementary schools, grades 1 to 8. The shortfall partly resulted from the extension of compulsory schooling from 5 to 8 years in 1998. The number of student teachers in training was increased, as were the number of classroom teaching departments in the universities, putting a strain on the system.

### **New Faculty Development Opportunities**

The training of teachers in subject methodology, how to teach their own subject, was a different matter. Faculty had to be made aware of the need to use different methodologies and shown examples of good practice. They had to be encouraged to abandon old methods, and given techniques to replace them.

It is by no means easy to change attitudes and behavior in a time as short as the life of the HEC project. Previous education projects have shown that it takes one or two generations (Ratcliffe, 1998). In Turkey, the numbers of faculty involved in the process were high, and the HEC invested a huge effort. Resources, in the shape of international personnel and national experts, books and equipment, and training, were given to work toward the solution of the problems. At the start of its preservice teacher education project, the HEC set up subject panels on core subject areas for high school and for grades 1 to 5, with representatives of each from the participating faculties of education. The panels worked with a team of internationally and nationally recruited consultants, experts in the field of teacher education in each subject area. One tangible outcome of their work was a series of methodology guides, 20 books, at least one in each major subject area at primary and secondary levels. The books were explained and tried out at training courses all over the country and some 3,200 people attended such courses over two years, once at the start of the pilot year (1996-1997), and once after the revisions based on feedback had been made.

Coupled with in-country training was a concerted effort to get young faculty abroad to experience teacher education in the United Kingdom, United States, and Germany. Ninety-one were sent for master's degrees, PhDs, and post-doctoral fellowships. This resulted in a cadre of newly trained young people with up-to-date ideas and training who returned to work in the faculties of education in Turkey. In addition, a further 212 fellowships were given to mid-career faculty already in post for retraining as methodology teachers in the faculty, and for senior groups of heads of department, deans, and presidents to be exposed to current ideas and trends in shorter periods of one to two weeks.

The overproduction of graduates from the educational sciences departments, graduates who were not trained to teach, was solved by making these departments into graduate departments only. They now produce postgraduates with the maturity and experience to deal with the type of job they may get in guidance and advising in the schools or inspection, curriculum development, and materials production in the Ministry or other institutions.

### Student Teachers Must Spend Time in the Schools

It has long been recognized in other countries that schools are an essential part of teacher education. Training cannot be done without extended and worthwhile periods working with teachers and classes and must include the willing and full co-operation of teachers and schools (Department for Education and Employment, 1998; Dillon & Maguire, 2001; Reid, Constable, & Griffiths, 1994). Turkey is now doing this.

The need for more, and better, school experience for student teachers was tackled in two ways. First, the amount of time scheduled for work in schools was doubled to one day a week over three semesters. Second, a national system of partnerships between schools, faculties of education, and the local ministry offices was set up. Later, a system of accreditation based on national standards was set up. The importance of student teacher work in schools was recognized by allocating one of the seven standards entirely to partnerships. The remaining six standards are (1) planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program; (2) faculty; (3) students; (4) facilities, library, and equipment; (5) management; and (6) quality assurance.

Along with the doubling of time came new courses related to work in schools for students to follow as they pursued their practicum, with different tasks, and a list of competencies student teachers should achieve. The expectations were communicated clearly to Turkish educators (faculty, teacher mentors, and student teachers) in a book on faculty-school partnerships (Koç et al., 1998). The three courses, School Experience 1 and 2 and Teaching Practice, were structured to give continuity and progression in the observation and teaching tasks done by student teachers in schools (Sands & Özçelik, 1998). Students now use schedules to observe specific teaching skills. A typical sequence is as follows:

- Introduction to life in the classroom and teaching tasks by detailed observations for one day a week over a semester. The results of the observations are discussed and set in context in the weekly seminar.
- This leads to the practicing of particular teaching skills such as questioning, explaining, groupwork, and demonstration, for a short period within a lesson, either alone or by co-teaching.
- The student's first whole lesson follows, incorporating some of the techniques already practiced singly.
- The student teacher is then ready for teaching practice where he or she teaches full lessons with assigned classes. Here the student practices full class teaching and classroom control and becomes accustomed to the pressures of the job.

During teaching practice the student teacher can also extend the experience to wider school issues by, for example, working with teachers on some needed curriculum development, helping teachers to produce resources, searching the Internet, joining extracurricular activities, or other tasks. The partnerships formalized the arrangement between faculties and schools, with designated roles and responsibilities on each side.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGES FOR SCHOOLS AND FACULTIES OF EDUCATION**

In the United States and United Kingdom there have long been close relationships between faculties of education and schools. But in Turkey, it is such a major change that it is worth looking in a bit more detail at the implications of these changes to all members of the partnership.

#### **Faculties of Education**

For the faculties of education in Turkey's universities, the partnerships mean a major change in faculty research and writing. Research must be based on educational issues, a new field to most faculty, and research must take them to the schools. One of the authors had a long discussion with a member of another university who was planning to discover if teachers were better prepared under the new system than the old by comparing, at his desk, the courses, syllabuses, and credits of each, rather than by getting into schools and looking at the performance of such teachers in the classroom.

The change also means attention to methodology and, again, working with and in schools alongside student teachers, to implement new approaches to the teaching of the subject area, as well as working with mentors. The educational studies courses should also be taught by faculty who have experience of and connection with schools, and have the content and practical hours of their courses firmly based in school experience.

Education faculties also need additional records. It is unusual in Turkey for students to be followed up into their first job and beyond. But along with completion rates, information on first posts and employer satisfaction is collected and feeds back to the training.

#### **Schools and Faculty-School Relationships**

The school-university partnership itself means that both parties have to take the fieldwork done by student teachers seriously (Koç et al., 1998).

People have to be designated as coordinators and mentors, and they have to be trained. Faculties and schools have to work together: joint planning and mentor training before the practicum, joint supervision and collaboration throughout, and joint evaluation of the procedures and implementation afterward. This necessitates full communication and—by government edict—payment of mentors by the faculty to reflect their responsibilities. Mentors, therefore, have a much greater effect than before on the training of new teachers, and some of them may also be involved in campus-based work with their students (Stevens & Demirezen, in review).

Turkish teachers have very little experience of mentoring, as described in the American and British research literature. Where mentoring is established, mentors are expected not only to supervise the student teacher, but also to act as friend and guide as the student progresses. The mentor discusses his or her teaching approaches and techniques with the student, observes the student teaching, and gives constructive feedback. The mentor meets with the university supervisor, writes reports, and assists in student evaluation. She or he attends meetings at the university and holds meetings at school, and is involved in examining the teaching practices already used in the school. To the student the mentor is facilitator, organizer, provider of resources, motivator, questioner, and guide, as well as diagnostician and evaluator.

Even for an experienced teacher in a situation where mentoring is quite new, such a list is formidable and intimidating, if not overwhelming. Some of our mentors tackled the job with enthusiasm, dedication, and flair. Some could not meet the new expectations. In the next section, we look at how the mentors with whom we worked adapted to their first two years of mentoring.

#### **BILKENT UNIVERSITY PROGRAM: A NEW MODEL FOR TURKISH TEACHER EDUCATION**

We have seen the need for change and how Turkey has addressed that need. Let us now turn to how the authors, in the new program initiated in 2000 at one university, interpreted and responded to the new regulations, and how effective the changes have been. To do this, we will address the position of teacher education in this setting, the expertise of the faculty, school experiences of our students, and our partnerships with the schools.

Bilkent University opened in 1987 and now has some 10,000 students, around 20% of whom are graduate students. Bilkent University is a private university, with English as the medium of instruction. The university is located in Ankara, the capital of Turkey. The Graduate School of Education at the university was opened in the fall of 2000 with 25 students and

three full-time faculty. The teacher education program is a two-year master's degree program leading to a master's in education and secondary-level teacher certification. Students come to the program after receiving an undergraduate degree in a subject area. It is hoped that an elementary level program will be opened within the next two years.

The Rector (President) of Bilkent University thought change in teacher education would lead to change in school education in Turkey. He would like the graduates of the new program to work in the schools of Turkey using modern teaching methods, and with the ability to look to international sources for ideas and inspiration as well as traditional sources. He looks for a change in the focus of school teaching from a didactic approach leading to memorization, to a more student-centered approach where other skills are emphasized. To this end, the Rector supports the new teacher education program in a number of ways. He provides inspiration to faculty and students by telling us that we want students who have "a flame in the heart." He meets with students and personally monitors many program decisions. He initiates conferences and high-level meetings for the students. He has also ensured that all of our students receive a full tuition scholarship, which means that selection of applicants can be broadened.

### **Teacher Educator Expertise**

To ensure that students are able to implement new teaching methods and go into schools with a broader vision, the Rector sought foreign faculty to staff the program, share their expertise, and bring up-to-date methods, ideas, and resources. The Director of the Graduate School of Education is British and another faculty member is American—the first and second authors of this chapter, respectively. The third faculty member is Turkish, and received her master's degree in the United States and her PhD in Turkey. All must have strong research and writing backgrounds. In addition, faculty must have taught in high schools. This background gives the faculty credibility in the university as well as with the students.

### **Methodology and Other Courses**

Our students take 39 credits of teacher formation courses. The program must follow the HEC list of courses, outline syllabuses, and credits, but it also makes additional demands on the students. Following the Rector's vision to encourage our students to think more broadly, to grapple with

ideas, and understand the roots of democracy, they take a course in the history of philosophy.

In their methodology classes, the faculty include constructivist methods from the West, based on prior student experience, active learning, and cooperative interactions between learner and instructor, and between peers. Students regularly present mini-lessons to the whole group for critique. To this end, these classes include groupwork, role plays, discussion, and many other varieties of student-centered activities.

Students are constantly encouraged to reflect on their experiences in their internship schools and from their previous schooling (Stevens, Sarıgül, & Deger, 2002). They keep journals as well as discuss their insights into their field experiences. Students learn to listen to one another in ways that many say that they have never experienced before.

### **School Experiences**

As part of broadening the vision of schools and schooling, our student teachers have experience in five different schools. They work in three schools locally in Ankara, one school in either Istanbul or Izmir, and one in the United States. They spend at least one day a week in the Ankara schools, which are private schools. One is an international school. Their intensive school experience begins with the two weeks in either Istanbul or Izmir in two private schools where some of the classes are taught in English and some in Turkish.

The American experience for our student teachers is a central part of the program. At the end of their first year they go to the United States for two months, where they spend six weeks in American high schools. The Fulbright Program of the U.S. State Department fully supports the program. Students stay at the same American high school in the same classrooms for those six weeks. That means they get an in-depth experience of teaching in a different culture. We have found that their vision of schooling is significantly broadened. One of them, upon his return, said, "It was a life-changing experience. It changed my view of education and the world." In a departmental survey, students commented positively on the constructivist teaching methods and the classroom management strategies they had observed American teachers using. They were also amazed at the independence and work ethic of the American teenage students with whom they worked. Students of all abilities were reported as concentrating on their classroom activities, maintaining on-task behavior until the work was completed.

It is very important for our students to have these school experiences. Typically, in Turkish society young people bound for the university have

never held a full-time job. Few of our applicants have had any volunteer experience with young people except, maybe, tutoring a sibling or friend. When they write about critical incidents of schooling, for over half of them, the incidents are negative, citing corporal punishment, humiliation, and shaming in front of the class by the teacher (Stevens et al., 2002).

### **School–University Partnerships**

Some of the reform efforts in Turkey were designed to change the relationships between universities and the schools they use for teaching practice. As noted above, in the past, these relationships were either nonexistent or, at best, strained. With the new changes in teacher education, schools and universities are expected to work more closely together. The new governmental guidelines are described in a book (Koc et al., 1998) that outlines new roles for faculty, school staff, and mentor teachers.

Of course, legislation and books alone do not necessarily mean that previous relations between universities and schools will change overnight (Stevens & Sands, 2002). To make positive changes more likely, we initiated a number of strategies. First of all, we surveyed our mentor teachers and analyzed their responses (Stevens & Demirezen, in review). Nineteen teachers were asked to summarize their experience of mentoring before the program, and the effect that mentoring had on their teaching and their attitudes and behavior to trainee teachers. Second, we conducted mentor teacher training activities to foster the development of mentoring skills among our mentors. Finally, we go regularly to the schools as supervisors, helping our students and their mentors, learning about Turkish schools and building relationships as we work on bridging the university culture and the school culture.

### **Indicators of Progress**

The strongest indicator of our progress in the new program is the hiring of our graduates by schools in Turkey. Typically, Turkish private schools like to hire teachers with experience before hiring new and inexperienced teachers. We are pleased that 90% of our 23 students who graduated in 2002 found positions in private schools in Turkey. Two others have gone to a graduate program in the United States for a PhD, and three are teaching in the university.

## CHALLENGES AHEAD

### School–University Partnerships

One of the biggest challenges is to build our relationships with the schools and our mentor teachers. Our school–university partnerships build the foundation of our students' school experiences. Yet, our mentor teachers have little experience in new teaching methodologies and rarely implement them in front of our students. They were educated in the old model of teacher education and may not realize that they have an opportunity here to learn as well. Turkey has a probationary or *Staj* year during the first year of a new teacher's career. Beginning teachers should have a mentor and guide in the school, have professional development, take three examinations, and teach significantly less than they will after their first year has been successfully completed. One experienced teacher told us that this year was her most difficult. She was treated like a servant for the other teachers while she earned their respect. Even student teachers who come into the schools are sometimes treated disrespectfully by the teachers and may or may not have the opportunity to teach a lesson. Our student teachers, in particular, face great challenges in the schools, especially as they bring many new and different teaching methodologies. They challenge Turkish teachers who expect that they should be treated as the sage on the stage.

### Working With Turkish Governmental Organizations

The two government bodies that work with teacher education are the Higher Education Council and the Ministry of National Education. The Higher Education Council manages the higher education institutions. It also sets the programs and curricula for teacher education in these institutions. The Ministry appoints the teachers and administers the public schools. There are opportunities here for differences between the two, which can affect change and innovation in faculties of education, and the students they train.

Change never comes easily. Yet, in Turkey, many people have recognized that in order to change teaching in schools, they must change teacher education. Many groups within Turkey, assisted by input from institutions and colleagues in other countries as teacher educators and doctoral students visit and work abroad, are seeking to make these changes. In the next few years it will be most important to monitor the progress of these reforms and support the positive change for education that they represent.

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