

Re-Think the Tanzimat Period in context of relationship between education and culture

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Abstract

Education and culture are two areas closely related to each other. Especially the changes and transformation in the field of education brought by the modern period radically changed the cultural characteristics of the societies. The Tanzimat Period means the reform period starting from 1839 with the proclamation of Gulhane Hatt-ı Humayunu (Tanzimat Edict) to the year of 1876 in which the Ottoman Empire was proclaimed a constitutional monarchy. The reforms in the Tanzimat Period turned into a social modernization project. The Tanzimat Period means disengagement in the cultural area just like in many other areas from the previous period in the Ottoman Empire. In this study were analyzed the educational reforms in the Tanzimat Period where the first comprehensive initiatives toward modernization were launched in the Ottoman Empire, and the impacts of these reforms on the individuals and the social culture. It was discussed what kind of legacy this period leaved to the Turkish Republic in the context of the relationship between education and culture. In addition, it was aimed to re-evaluate the education-culture relationship in this period by breaking away from the existing stereotypes. Historical research was used as a method in this study.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, education, culture.

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1. Introduction

The Tanzimat Reform Period is one of the most important turning points in terms of the Ottoman-Turkish modernism. The period that started on November 3rd, 1839, with the imperial edict read by Mustafa Resit Pasha in the Gulhane Park deeply affected the social life in the Ottoman Empire. This period actually represents the efforts exerted to catch up to the modernism movement which had begun much earlier in Europe. For this reason, in order to fully comprehend the Tanzimat period, we need to show what is the concept of modernization.

As far as modernization is concerned, a very broad literature has emerged and many different definitions have been made. According to Van Der Loo (2003), modernization is not limited to industrialization; it also includes increasing urbanization, spell and decline of religion, further rationalization of thought and action, progressive democratization and declining social differences, extreme individualism and many other economic, social, political and cultural changes (p. 14). In the cultural context, modernization is seen as a rationalization process (Van Der Loo and Reijen, 2003, p. 36).

One of the most important means of modernization has been education. Education socializes the young generations and passes the social and cultural values of a society down to them, thus contributing to the protection of social and cultural values by the society (Kızılloluk, 2013). Through education, new generations learn the social norms and the punishments given in case of a breach of these norms (Tezcan, 1988). In this sense, education functions as an instrument for social control. Sociologically, education is the locomotive of the changes in the social, cultural, economic and political structure of a society on the one hand, while the changes in the social structure determines the direction of education on the other (Kafadar, 1997). It is of high importance for the individuals to become producers by acquiring the knowledge and skills required by the economic, political and cultural life as well as comprehending political obedience and contributing to the existing cultural background so that education can socially fulfill its function and achieve its objectives. The fact that sub-units of society are no longer capable of self-reproduction, that centralized exo-education is the obligatory norm, that such education complements localized acculturation, is of the very first importance for the political sociology of the modern world (Gellner, 2008).

With modernization, education has lost its traditional characteristics and has become an effective tool carried out by the state itself in the direction of raising the individuals who need the modern nation-state. In this context, modernization also brought about an increase in the rates of schooling and literacy. Modernization has revealed the belief that people can achieve a better life through education. In other words, it is thought that the most important philosophy of modernization, the idea of "progress" and the result of "the ideal order", which is the result of this, has passed through education. This situation brought together the systemization and massification of education (Zekiyan, 2005). State-sponsored schooling has spread rapidly, especially in the societies within the modernization process. In such societies, educational expectations have increased. The first of these is the expectation that education will speed up the economic structure, in other words, it will be the driving force of economic development. Another important expectation is the provision of national unity and integrity through education.

The change and transformation in the field of education during the modernization period had an important impact on the cultures of the societies. The modernization process brings with it significant changes or differentiation in the culture that already exists in society with all its dimensions. However, in the context of our work, we will focus more on how the changes in education affect cultural building. As is known, Ottoman modernization is a non-Western modernization. Although modernity is primarily thought to have emerged as a result of the internal dynamics of Western societies, the modern features of the rest of the world have emerged as "a consequence of the widespread dissemination of Western culture, not of natural processes of internal structural change." Hence

modernization processes have been perceived as' the imposition of Western European institutions on new countries in America, East and Southern Europe, Asia and Africa (Eisenstadt, 2007; Bhabra, 2015). The West has emerged as a role model in Ottoman modernization by creating Modernity and increasing its influence on other regions. The need to know and know Europe has been one of the most important issues during the Tanzimat period. In this period, when the Ottoman Empire turned to the West to learn not to conquer the direction, the West was taken as an example for the schools opened. However, Ottoman modernization, which started with taking the example of the West, gained its own peculiarity in the process. The reason for this is, of course, the internal dynamics of the Ottoman Empire and the society itself. As it is known, cultures have faced new things during the modernization process. As this encounter continues, the cultures change from one side to the other, and the elements that affect the change take precedence. In other words, while the existing cultural structure in modern society has changed with modernization, at the same time it has been an important factor in determining the direction of modernization. For this reason, while evaluating Ottoman modernization, it would be a major shortcoming to ignore its internal dynamics. Indeed, it is wrong to consider that the modernization in the other societies is incomplete or that it is derived from the European experience, compared with the emergence of European modernity. On the contrary, different processes and developments may enable the development of new and more adequate practices for the present and future, as well as allowing a richer interpretation of the concept of modernity (Bhabra, 2015).

2. Method

In this study, was used the historical research which is one of qualitative research methods. The researches carefully examined the documents in the period and focused to find answers to "what happened in the past?" question in the historical research (Buyukozturk, Cakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2012).

3. Findings and Discussion

There is no reference to education in Gulhane Hattı Humayunu (The Reform Edict of Gulhane) which started the Tanzimat Period. However, despite the lack of such reference, it can be seen that this period started by the edict was a period where the field of education was governed by the state itself and efforts were made to establish modern education institutions for the first time in the history of the Ottoman Empire. We can see important references to the reforms in the schools, where educational activities were carried out, in the explanatory document prepared by Meclis-i Umur-ı Nafia (Council of Public Works) about three months after the proclamation of the Tanzimat Reform Edict (for explanatory documents' full text see, Takvim-i Vekayi, 21 Zilkade 1254, No. 176; Mahmud Cevad, 2002). In this explanatory documents, it was stated that the students who were taken to the modern educational institutions (such as Engineering and Medicine) that were opened up to that time did not know how to read correctly. With this explanatory document, a reform initiative was taken to promote teaching useful information in the schools in addition to religious education. Following the presentation of the explanatory document, as emphasized by Akyurek, "a new political discourse flourished about the practical information about which there were economic concerns that arose upon the request of the agricultural, commercial and industrial recovery" (Akyurek, 2011, p. 66). In the explanatory document which includes the decisions about the reforms in the primary and secondary education, establishment of Darulfunun (Ottoman University) as a higher education institution was proposed. Upon the recommendation of the council, Mekatib-i Umumiye Nezareti (Ministry for Public Schools) was also established to carry out and inspect the activities of the Ottoman primary schools and junior high schools at the end of 1846 (Somel, 2010). This assembly was then

replaced by Meclis-i Maarif (Council of Education) in the following years. The members of the councils established during the Tanzimat Period were assigned by Babiâli (the Sublime Porte) itself, not by the Shaykh al-Islam. This is one of the most important indicators of secularization in the field of education during the Tanzimat Period (Akyurek, 2011; Akyildiz, 1993; Somel, 2010).

Although some other important steps were also taken during the Tanzimat Period following the abovementioned explanatory document, it can be seen that concessions were made from time to time in certain fields against the conservative ulema. For example, although the issues addressed in the edict proclaimed in 1847 under the title "Sıbyan Hocalarına Talimat" (Instructions for Primary School Teachers) had some implications of modern and systemic education, the existing social and political background remained incapable for the promises in the edicts, sometimes resulting in schizophrenic situations (Akyuz, 1994). An example to this would be the practice of separating girls and boys in the schools which was sustained even after the edict. Let's face it, the coercive power behind this was the failure in diminishing the impact of ulema who saw education as a field under their monopoly. In this sense, it is possible to consider the existence of equilibrium in the conflict between the reformists and the ulema. Moreover, the political benefit the reformists gained by not touching the monopoly over the primary schools and madrasas prevented the development of a comprehensive system of secular schools, thus restricting the training of civil bureaucrats for a series of private institutions (Findley, 1994). The politicians of the Tanzimat Period who failed to initiate a reform program in the primary schools began educational modernization from the secondary schools. The fact that the first modern schools established by the Ottoman politicians were secondary schools should be considered as the result of their desires to go through a rapid modernization process. These civil schools called "rusdiye" (junior high school) which were at the secondary education level were established in 1848. When the five junior high schools established in Istanbul as a model were proved to be useful, initiatives were taken to increase the number of these schools throughout the Ottoman lands. Junior high schools correspond to today's secondary schools. As Cevdet Pasa said, important steps were taken in the field of education, but "the efforts began from the middle" (Pasa, 1991).

The biggest step in forming an education system during the Tanzimat Period was Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi (Regulation on General Education) issued on September 1st, 1869. This regulation did not just include regulations in one single field. Maarif Nezareti (Ministry of Education) also undertook the activities of cultural institutions such as the activities related to museums, libraries and all kinds of educational activities in addition to the management of schools (Unat, 1964).

During the modernization period, education served as the sole instrument that enabled the dissemination and entrenchment of ideologies throughout the society. The modern education institutions—the schools that all people could attend together beginning from the second half of the Tanzimat Period—constituted one of the most important pillars of the "integrist nationalism" project in the Ottoman Empire. Mekteb-i Tibbiye (school of medicine) was the first school that both Muslim and non-Muslim students attended together. In 1841, Asker-i Tibbiye (Military Medicine School) also opened its doors to the non-Muslim students. In the Tuna province, workhouses (industrial schools) in which both Muslim and non-Muslim students received education were established by Midhat Pasa (Serbestoglu, 2014). Afterwards, inspired by these practices, the establishment of Mekteb-i Sultani (Galatasaray High School) was one of the most concrete indicators of Ottomanism in the field of education. The education curriculum shows that focus was given to the History and Geography courses (Serbestoglu, 2014). In this sense, it can be said that the educational policies were developed in a way to achieve unity and integrity in the Ottoman Empire. However, the lack of necessary organization and inspection in the implementation of these policies, together with the state's failure to build sufficient capacity, contributed to the emergence of a social structure where the number of different factions increased. Such a social structure was sustained in the following years. The centralized and differentiating bureaucracy in the Tanzimat Period required the formation of a class of "intelligentsia" which would feed this bureaucracy (Aydin, 2000). A concrete indicator of such a requirement revealed itself in the field of education. The modern education institutions established in this period should be considered in this sense. One of the primary objectives of these modern

education institutions was to eliminate illiteracy which was once regarded as the reason of all negative situations that the state was in. The idea of progress is especially important at this point. "Terakkiyat-ı Cedide" (new progress) was a magical definition for the Ottoman politicians and society in the 19th century. What the Ottoman intellectual bureaucrats thought of Europe and its supremacy during that period can be summarized with three words: "ulûm, funun ve terakki" (knowledge, science and progress) (Dogan, 2006). It was expected that progress in those fields would open up the Ottoman Empire and the society to "civilization". During the first years of the Tanzimat Period, there was no Turkish equivalent of the concept of "civilization"; however, the exact translation of the term in Turkish was found as "medeniyet". To Ali Pasha, civilization means "the state of perfect safety and continuous order and welfare in all aspects experienced by the individuals that form the society" (Cetinsaya, 2004). The Tanzimat Reform Edict was a highly precious step taken on the way to "civilization". Those preparing the edict saw the consequences of what they called "civilization" in Europe. They believed that the state would be saved by this means. Indeed, the idea of achieving "civilization" which had great importance in the minds of the Ottoman politicians and reformists caused breakdowns in the traditional Ottoman culture. Each education institution established in an effort of achieving "civilization" brought changes into the life and world view of the individuals and the society.

Above all, the Tanzimat Period was a period where the state exerted some efforts to become the sole power in the field of education for the first time. Although the educational reforms were insufficient, they achieved to improve the literacy rate in the society. To Findley (1994), "the education institutions of this period, just like the single-class schools of the 19th-century America, had an important impact on the literacy rate in contrast to how little hint their appearance gave" (p. 137).

The social modernization project initiated with the Tanzimat Reform Edict had a significant impact on the Ottoman family structure and the Ottoman women. The socio-cultural transformation brought by the Tanzimat Period enabled the integration of upper and middle-class women into social life. One of the most important educational initiatives of Tanzimat was the improvement of the educational opportunities for girls by the establishment of Ottoman junior high schools for girls (Ortayli, 2011). The women who had been restricted by the society until the Tanzimat Period began to transcend the boundaries set by the society. The expressions in *Takvim-i Vekayi* (Calendar of Facts) newspaper about the schools established in Sultan Admed for the education of girls indicate that education of girls was given importance as much as the education of boys (Mahmud Cevad, 2002).

The women were restricted in many ways before the Tanzimat Period. For example, there were already restrictions imposed on women including going out, and to crown it all, edicts were issued in the 18th century that totally deprived women of their right to go out. In 1722, some people reacted to the entertainments organized on the occasion of Eid-al-fitr and attended by both women and men, making some comments such as "The stuff like swings and carousels were allowed throughout six days, and on the top of it, women and men expressed shameless behaviors. May God bless us" (Karahasanoglu, 2013). Such expressions indicate that women were faced with serious criticism and pressure even about their participation in social entertainments during that period. Moreover, the comments on the conduct and manners of women, such as "in this day and age, sinners, and especially the women, are extremely free. Even the high-ranking people that do not deserve to be in the Sa'dabad Society were seen to express some strange behaviors" (Karahasanoglu, 2013) indicate the perspective on women and their position in the society. The period that started with the Tanzimat Edict was the beginning of easing the restrictions imposed on the social life of women and helping Turkish women have place in the society. The lines published in 1862 in an issue of *Takvim-i Vekayi* such as "The only way to glorify the state is to expand general education. Both female and male students should attend schools. A woman that makes her family happy should be decent in terms of both secular and ethereal practices. Education of girls is the duty of their parents" (Sakaoglu, 2003) point out the emergence of a positive social perception about the issue of girls' education. Still, it was not possible to break some taboos in the sense of relationships between men and women during the

Tanzimat Period. Although they could attend the same class, women and men could grab the opportunity of meeting in different social institutions, places or on the street very late.

With the educational reforms, a system of modern schools was incorporated in addition to the education provided in madrasas. The book-oriented class system in madrasas was replaced with a class system where the hodja (trainer) took the active role. The education system intended for training the prospective public officers in a "master-apprentice relationship" was replaced by an school and book-based education system intended for training intellectuals that would guide the society and aimed to be taken to all levels of the society. The innovation movement in schools is the indicative of the change of mentality in the Ottoman Empire. The breakthroughs in the field of education placed the people excluded from the innovations to the center of the modernization process. In the Tanzimat Period, the desire was to create an educated society. This objective was related to the new type of individual and social structure that the Tanzimat Reform Edict aimed to bring out. Thanks to the schools established in the Tanzimat Period, secularization, foreign language training and new behaviors and ways of thinking began to take place in the life of individuals, which gradually resulted in the emergence of a separate aristocracy (Kazamias, 1966).

During the Tanzimat Period when education and professional position started to give identity to individuals, the increase in the number of modern educational institutions and their graduates constituted one of the factors that restricted the power of the conservative ulema. Increasing level of education brought along increasing interest and desire for transformation and innovation. Such desire felt more powerful in the places where the modernization process was most intense.

Establishment of universities is of particular importance in terms of change and innovation. Modern universities established in Europe became a center of focus in the Ottoman Empire with the coming of the Tanzimat Period where the issue of modernization was centered on. Establishment of Darulfunun (Ottoman University) proposed in the 1845 report of Muvakkat Meclis-i Maarif (Temporary Education Council) was the first step to the idea of having a university in the Ottoman Empire. An important point here is the use of "Darulfunun" as the equivalent of "university". The term "funun" means "sciences". In other words, the term "Darulfunun" which means "the house of sciences" was used as the equivalent of English "university" in the Ottoman Empire. In the modern sense, the term university should correspond to "the place where all existing knowledge is taught". Namely, the most appropriate term could have been "Darululum" (house of knowledge). However, the term was avoided to be used, because the ulema had more say and control over the social knowledge. In other words, the term "Darulfunun" was preferred as the influence of the ulema on the social fields could not be diminished.

The practice of journalism which began with the publication of Takvim-i Vekayi before the Tanzimat Period in 1831 gained momentum during the Tanzimat period. Newspapers had an important place in the Ottoman social life and served as educational instruments to a great extent. Journalism contributed to the development of social sciences in the Ottoman world. It helped detecting social problems and reaching laws from cases and cases from events with an inductive method. Besides, "journalism was reported to have laid the professional-theoretical basis for the social missions of the social class of 'udeba' which emerged as a new intellectual class against the clergy class" (Gencer, 2012, p. 193). Newspapers were the most important factor in the emergence of the public sector in the Ottoman society. Newspapers and the practice of journalism had a particular importance in the sense of the impact of the Young Ottoman Movement which was the first modern opposition group in the social history of the Ottoman Empire.

The Young Ottoman Movement, just like its European counterparts, emerged in the second half of the 19th century. The primary aim of the movement was to disseminate their ideas to the public through the means of mass communication. In this sense, they served as the political ideologists of the Tanzimat Period as well as the trainers contributing to the dissemination of "integrist nationalism" policies, and later on the idea of constitutionalism (Kazamias, 1966). Young Ottomans were the first

literate-intellectuals in the new political culture that began to form in the Ottoman Empire (Turfan, 2005). The biggest innovation brought by the Young Ottomans to the intellectual area was the first examples of "critical thinking", or in the words of Serif Mardin "the critical discourse culture", which was the product of the age of enlightenment in the West and considered that all kinds of social and philosophical values could be discussed (Gunduz, 2010). Indeed, the will and policies of the state could be actually conveyed to the public due to the developments in the communications technology during the process that began with the Tanzimat period. The developments in the field of communication cause serious breakdowns in the conventional state-society relations. After the period starting with the invention of the printing press, the newspapers became widespread during the Tanzimat Period and the state was faced with the "public opinion" which created a social pressure, while also seizing the opportunity to increase its control over the peoples living in the different regions of the country. Another point that needs to be emphasized is the institutionalization movement involving the non-governmental organizations which guided the change in the society during the Tanzimat Period. Encumen-i Danis (Academy of Sciences) was one of these associations established on July 18th, 1851 as the first academy of sciences with the objectives of promoting debates and scientific researches, carrying out necessary activities to eliminate illiteracy and extending science and knowledge throughout the country as well as compiling and translating the course books required by Darulfunûn (Kafadar, 1997). The second institution after Encumen-i Danis was "Cemiyet-i İlmîyye-i Osmaniyye" (the Ottoman Society for Science) which was established in 1861. İsmail Dogan referred to this institution as the "first society established to disseminate the Western science and culture" (Dogan, 1991).

4. Conclusion

With the modernization movement, culture became the necessary shared medium, the life-blood or rather the minimal shared atmosphere, within which alone the members of the society can survive (Gellner, 2008). Therefore, each state strived to form a common culture within their boundaries during the modern period. The Tanzimat Period was a process in which important steps were taken in this direction.

With some of the provisions it included that guarantee equality and safety of life and property, the Tanzimat Reform Edict became effective in the emergence of the "individual" as a value in the Ottoman Empire. With the new look gained through the Tanzimat reforms, the individual is now a secular value and constitutes an important part of the political process (Kalaycıoğlu, 1986). In this sense, the establishment of education institutions in the Tanzimat Period was the most important step that had ever been taken in the way to form a modern society.

The 19th century was a period of reforms as well as the wars both in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Against the European countries that set their sights on achieving social welfare and progress through a rationalist state structure, the Ottoman Empire had to start a rapid modernization process. The Ottomans took the West (Europe) as their role model in this modernization process. Taking Europe as a role model was kind of an obligation. The import of modernization also brought significant problems. It was the state itself that transported the modern institutional structure to the Ottoman lands. This was conceived as a necessity for the survival of the state. In the following period, the state was always at the forefront of the modernization process. However, significant interruptions occurred in the process from time to time due to very different reasons. Nonetheless, taking the West as a role model led to both important breakthroughs and breakdowns in the Ottoman modernization. Due to its progressive nature, Western culture and civilization began to take a front seat in the minds of the Ottoman politicians and society. Hence, efforts were exerted towards progressiveness on the one hand, while some initiatives that were nothing more than mimicry also appeared in the society. Above

all, the educational reforms in the Tanzimat Period were highly important in terms of the change of mind in the Ottoman society. As mentioned previously, the Tanzimat Period was the first serious turning point in the Ottoman-Turkish modernization process. The effects of the education institutions established in the Tanzimat Period on the social life were sustained in the following periods.

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