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An Evaluation of the Turkish Education System outside the Conflict between Old and New

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Abstract

Basis of the Study: Education is considered to be a system that provides solutions to communal problems, developing individual skills, bringing enlightenment and peace to people. However, the situation is somewhat different in Turkey, for education, which is regarded as a problem-solving activity, has itself become a problem. The Turkish education system has become one of our most serious social problems. This problem essentially stems from discussions over which civilization Turkey belongs to: the Eastern or the Western. The conflict between old and new in the Turkish education system is essentially a struggle between those who claim that "Turkish society is an Eastern society" (anti-Westerners) and those who claim that "It is a Western society" (pro-Westerners). This dispute is directly related to the ongoing process of Westernization that started in the 19th century. The Turkish education system is suffering from the conflict between old and new. The article is based on the premise that both parties, in effect, have an understanding of education that produces similar results.

Purpose of the Study: The aim of this article is to reveal the fact that the conflict between old and new afflicting the Turkish education system is a fruitless discussion by showing that both pro- and anti-Westerners have an understanding of education that inhibits students' creative skills, puts the teacher at the center, furnishes students with unnecessary information, prioritizes rote learning, defends discipline and makes students restless and unhappy. Some suggestions shall be offered for a new education system without taking sides with either of the disputing parties.

Source of Evidence: This article takes its cue from the following observations: i) The Turkish education system is not up to par due to the conflict between old and new; ii) It is afflicted by the inconsistencies as its targets are constantly changed and it is often left without targets; iii) It is constantly (re)structured by the governments alternating between the anti-Westerner conservatives and the

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pro-Westerners. The point of departure for this article is that the Turkish education system fails to produce happy, joyful, lively, free, talented, skilled, knowledgeable, honest and virtuous individuals.
Main Argument and Conclusions: This article focuses on the shortcomings and deficiencies of the Turkish education system. It negates the age-old conflict between old and new, and pursues the ideal education system where students are happy, discovering and improving their skills. It is a critique of the understanding that prioritizes the teacher and curriculum, encourages rote learning and defends oppression and discipline. It seeks the ways in which we can produce virtuous, happy and skilled individuals with free spirits and critical thinking skills, and who are at peace with themselves, their history and society. The article also emphasizes the urgency to find new solutions for our education system exempt from those voiced by the parties in the conflict between old and new.

Keywords: the Turkish education system, rote learning, oppressive education, free education, playful education, the ideal education system.

Introduction

The famous philosopher, John Dewey (2007, p. 19), who is mostly known in Turkey for his studies on education, argues, "mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of either-ors." Turkish people have a strong tendency to act according to "either-or logic," which permeates almost every sector of the society. Individuals' tendency to think and act in terms of extreme opposites is even manifested in the name of the country. Some people call the country "Turkey," while others call it "New Turkey."

"New" is a buzzword that has been widely used in Turkey in recent years. Interestingly enough, the word "new" is not frequently used by Western communities, whose history is marked with historical events radically changing their social structures, such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and revolutions in the fields of information and communication. Almost every day, a word appears that is defined with the adjective "new" in Turkey. In other words, "the concept of 'new' has become a common adjective in our country" (Aygün, 2014, p. 55). The word "new" has been fetishized, and several words have been coined with the adjective "new": New Ottoman, New Turkey, New Right, New Left, New Constitution, New Economy and so forth (Aygün, 2014, p. 63). "New education" is yet another coinage associated with this "new" hype.

Today, the Turkish society is divided into two hostile camps: one under the banner of "old education" and the other "new education." Our society has become a battleground between the pro-Westerners, who support "the modern education system" and modernization in general, and the conservatives, who are in favor of "the traditional education system" that prioritizes religion. Today, the situation is slightly different. The conservatives in power are perceived as the defenders of the

new, while the pro-Westerners are the defenders of the old education system. In brief, this article focuses on the main problems of the Turkish education system affected by the conflict between old and new.

Education as a Pillar of Society

Society is a powerful system, not an accidental entity. There are certain pillars of society. Its existence depends on such institutions as family, culture, religion, economics, politics and education. Deficiencies in these institutions cause deterioration in society. Education is one of the major institutions that enables societies to function, and ensues its existence.

The institution of education is necessary for individuals as well as the society itself. It cultivates and socializes human beings that are savages by nature. Education is "what makes us human, and we are merely what education makes of us" (Kant, 2007, p. 31). We are born weak, in fact, much weaker than any other creatures. As Machiavelli (2000, p. 46) notes, "only man is born bare of any kind of defense, without leather or spikes or feathers or fleece or bristles or scales providing a shield to him." It is education that strengthens this poor creature (human being), making it a part of society. "We are born weak, we need strength. … All that we lack at birth, all that we need when we come to man's estate, is the gift of education" (Rousseau, 2003, p. 12). Human being is the only creature that needs constant education. We go through the stages of infancy (when we need care), childhood (when we need instruction), and student (when we need education) (Kant, 2007, p. 27). It is a grueling experience to go through each of these stages. That is to say, "to educate rightly is not a simple and easy thing, but a complex and extremely difficult thing" (Spencer, 2013, p. 128).

Society desires to shape the individual through education. It keeps the individual under pressure from birth to death, controlling his/her actions, restricting him/her and throws him/her in a cage. Man is born free and happy. Society enslaves him and makes him miserable. Rousseau is one of the philosophers who emphasizes this negative aspect of society. According to him, man is born, lives, and dies in slavery. Man is forced to fit in a swaddle at his birth and in a coffin when he dies. Man, who is born in a free world, is chained at every level of society and further chained by institutions (Rousseau, 1966, s. 12; 1990, s. 14). Rousseau notes,

> The moment the child is separated from the womb, it tastes freedom by moving and stretching its arms and legs but soon this freedom is taken away from the child. Its head is fixed, its legs are stretched, and, at length, the child is pushed into a swaddle with his arms by its sides. It is wound round in a way to make sure that it cannot move... Its first feeling is that of pain and suffering; it attempts to move but it is hampered. Less fortunate than a galley slave, these children struggle, get angry, and then cry. One should not be surprised seeing them cry because the first thing they come across in life is the chains while cry is also the one thing they have at hand to show that they are not content. If you were swaddled like this, you would cry louder still (2003, p. 14).

"School" is the main mechanism of the education system that shackles and chains the individual. It is a means of restriction, but society does not realize that it enslaves children through schooling. Instead it promotes the idea that school teaches them a great deal and offers them good prospects for the future. Illich (1998, p. 46) succinctly puts forward this positive perception of school: "Children belong in school. Children learn in school. Children can be taught only in school." However, it is necessary to question this statement and discuss the benefits of school.

School is not an institution exempt from the class struggle prevalent in the society. It does not serve the interests of the oppressed majority, but rather the dominant minority. The dominant classes impose their opinions and ideologies on the oppressed classes through school. Marx and Engels' assert (1992, p. 70), "the thoughts of the dominant class are in every epoch the dominant thoughts, that is, the class which is the dominant material power is at the same time the dominant intellectual power." What is taught at school is determined by the power that dominates and controls the society. The socialization process of the school helps shape a certain type of character meeting the needs of the dominant power within the public sphere (Spring, 2014, p. 30). School serves as an ideological backyards of the dominant class. According to Althusser, school is "an ideological apparatus of the state." While equipping students with knowledge and skills, school ensures "subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice'" (Althusser, 2003, p. 159). School legitimizes the inequalities prevailing in society and "ensures the transmission of privileges" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2014, p. 50). Schools, as Bourdieu (1995, p. 40) notes, function like "Maxwell's demon", that is, they help generate class distinctions. "Schools offer the primary institutional setting for the production, transmission and accumulation of the various forms of cultural capital" (Swartz, 2011, p. 263).

In today's world, power permeates every aspect of life, and school is yet another agent of power. Schools have horrendous disciplinary elements (Foucault, 2003, p. 41; 2004, p. 156). The school dominates the children physically, morally and intellectually while it also pushes them into a desired mould (Ferrer, 2014, p. 87). Schooling that covers a significantly long period of time can be useful to some and harmful to others (Bloom, 1995, p. 253).

In brief, school means education, servitude or domestication (Ferrer, 2014, p. 87). There are ideological and political dimension of education. All societies and people in power have always attached great importance to education (İnal, 1996, p. 9). "School has become a propaganda instrument for parties" (Ferrer, 2014, p. 83). Educational institutions have never been impartial. They help preserve the existing hegemony. As Gramsci notes, every hegemonic relationship is necessarily pedagogical (Mayo, 2011, p. 53).

Dilemmas of the Turkish Education System

The Turkish education system has been a victim of the conflict between old and new. It has failed in its primary objective, for students have been subjected to a single curriculum regardless of their individual skills. For instance, each student is obliged

to learn world history, countries' geography, elements or the area of trapezoid. In our schools, "people undergo the same educational program as if they had the same skills" (Sönmez, 1997, p. 37). Students are perceived as automatons in the Turkish education system.

The Turkish education system puts the curriculum and the teacher at the center rather than the student. In the classroom, the teacher is an active speaker, and the student is a passive listener. The student listens to the teacher meekly, takes notes and does the assigned homework. S/he memorizes and repeats what the teacher has stated. Democracy and different points of view are not allowed in the classroom (Sönmez, 1997, pp. 72-73). As such, schools in Turkey turn students into parrots, memorizing everything that they hear. The Turkish education system produces individuals that can be defined as "rote learners who are totalitarian, passive, easily deceived, deprived of thinking skills and therefore who cannot produce knowledge" (Çınar, 2012, p. 114). Rote learning makes the student lazy, inhibiting his thinking faculties. Eventually, the student loses his/her enthusiasm and desire for learning new things (İbni Haldun, 1989, p. 146).

It is important to share knowledge with students using simple methods. School is an instrument that makes students' life easier. In fact, "education means providing the conditions that facilitates learning" (Illich, 1998, p. 27). By contrast, the Turkish education system is founded almost in a way to make learning more difficult. For instance, all students are taught mathematics for years, but most of the students do not learn anything and end up disliking mathematics. They are also force-fed Turkish and Turkish history. Thus, they never truly learn Turkish or Turkish history.

Oppression has always been a major element in the Turkish education system. Every student has to learn mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, history, geography, arts, music, religion, and so forth. Oppression is pedagogically wrong. Students cannot be forced to learn anything. They fail to internalize what is taught at school. They just do what the teacher has stated, accept school authority abhorrently and flatter their parents' egos. However, as Russell (1981, pp. 21-22) notes, "children who are forced to eat acquire a loathing for food, and children who are forced to learn acquire a loathing for knowledge." An education system based on oppression leads to irretrievable problems, damaging students' personality and skills.

Discipline lies at the heart of the Turkish education system. School administrators and teachers are most feared by students. Most of the students attend school because they are afraid of their teachers and parents, not because they want to learn new things. Our students have school phobia. Students are punished when they do not obey school or classroom rules. Punishment is frequently used as a means to better students, get them to adopt positive behaviors, and make them successful. As Sönmez points out, oppression, humiliation, ridicule and suspension are common means of punishment in Turkish schools (Sönmez, 1997, p. 37). Punishment at school may have lasting negative effects on students' lives. Oppression at school intimidates students, discouraging them greatly.

The negative effect of oppression, violence and abuse manifests itself in years to follow. Students who have been exposed to violence tend to use violence against those weaker than themselves. That is to say, "violence breeds violence; compassion

and kindness breed kindness. Children exposed to violence turn out to be rude and insensitive" (Spencer, 2013, p. 122). Physical violence and verbal abuse against students are failures of the Turkish education system. As İbni Haldun (1989, pp. 160-161) notes, ill treatment in education is harmful. Teachers and parents should never treat children harshly in order to teach them manners, for it will lead to formation of bad habits.

In addition, over teaching and assigning too much homework can be regarded as another form of violence in the Turkish education. Burdening the student with unnecessary detail is another way of humiliating the student. The worst thing a teacher can do to a student is to cram him/her with knowledge regardless of its importance and usefulness. The student is tormented by being made to sit in the classroom quietly for hours. That is to say, "school is nothing but a memory device that aims at cramming as much knowledge as possible into young brains" (Topçu, 2006, p. 55).

In the Turkish education system, students, overwhelmed by inaccurate education practices, are alienated from themselves and their community. The student forgets the acquired knowledge in a short time and comes to dislike school and courses. Burdening the student with unnecessary information causes him/her to abhor school and life. Thus, school in the Turkish education system serves to detach students from life, rather than prepare them for it. Eventually, the student becomes unhappy, restless, violent and distressed due to school. Only a lucky few manage to find a job in this education system at the expense of their dreams and identity. Anxiety and depression have increased in keeping with the rise in the number of schools. However, "the aim of education – in fact the aim of life – is to work joyfully and to find happiness" (Erich Fromm; qtd. in Tezcan, 2005, p. 88). Pre-modern world was founded on "joy" and "comfort" as schooling was not common, whereas today's world is built on "boredom" and "stress." In this context, Nietzsche's (2014, p. 105) following assertion is inspiring:

The men of the world of antiquity knew better how to rejoice: we how to suffer less; the former employed all their abundance of ingenuity and capacity to reflect for the continual creation of new occasions for happiness and celebration: whereas we employ our minds rather towards the amelioration of suffering and the removal of sources of pain.

Boredom is one of the major problems afflicting societies today (Fromm, 2004, p. 27). Perhaps that is why Nietzsche wrote the following line 150 years ago, "come hither gilded mirth" (qtd. in Zweig, 2011, p. 116). The problems associated with school are not restricted to Turkey. Although they are expected to be cheerful, lively and sociable, children may become depressed and troublesome due to school in other countries (Kant, 2007, s. 107). Children are more miserable than chained prisoners (Rousseau, 2000, p. 25). Restricted in every respect, they live miserably. School to children is what a racetrack is to a horse. The testing system ruins students' lives. Hundreds of exams that they need to take throughout their education distance them from the joys of life, as exams means anxiety and stress. Today, students compete with each other like commodities on the market. This competitive school system does not work properly even in our country.

Both pro-Westerners and conservatives set inaccurate goals for students. As a result, students come to regard school as an opportunity to become a civil servant. They consider a career as a civil servant to be the sole prospect for their future, which annuls their skills and makes them lazy. Prince Sabahattin's (2013, p. 58) writings on this issue, dated 1908, still holds true today: "As a result of the education we have received since our childhood, we want to live without having to earn our lives, become rich without toil, and thus we aspire to become civil servants." In other words, our education system is intended to make students dull and obedient civil servants, rather than free and happy individuals.

Another dilemma facing the Turkish education system is that it produces individuals with psychological problems. The hypothesis that "the number of qualified, honest and respectable people increases in parallel with the level of education" is applicable to our country. The higher their education level, the more quarrelsome and aggressive some people may become in our country. Almost a century ago, Ziya Gökalp (2005, p. 114) stated, "in other countries, people with strong character and high morals are generally those who have received the best education possible. The opposite is true in our country. Traitors generally come out of madrasah (religious school) and schools." He also argued that people's morals deteriorated, and psychological and mental disorders increased with the spread of education (Gökalp, 1997, p. 324). According to Sönmez (2014, p. 76), Ziya Gökalp's views about the Turkish education system are still valid today.

Conclusion: What are the Characteristics of an Ideal Education System?

Although institutions of education, namely schools, are well respected in every society, they have deteriorated in time, and "school has become a social problem" (Illich, 1998, p. 76). Schools, as Nietzsche states, have always been an institution that rots one's brain (qtd. in Baker 2013, p. 62). "Modern educational methods are thoroughly artificial and the fatal weaknesses of the present day are to be ascribed to this artificiality" (Nietzsche, 2003, p. 9). It is irrational to subject every student to the same curriculum and equip them with the same knowledge. Paul (2014, p. 202) was right to argue, "one size does not fit all. There are many different sizes today."

Teacher-centeredness is yet another dilemma of the education systems. Most education systems are based on a principle that prioritizes the teacher over everything else. The teacher is the determining factor while the student is just an obedient figure. Freire (2014a, pp. 57-58) lists the characteristics of teacher-centered education systems as follows;

> The teacher teaches and the students are taught. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about. The teacher talks and the students listen meekly. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined. The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply. … The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it. …The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.

The approach which prioritizes the teacher over the student is completely erroneous. This is the banking concept of education where students are regarded as "containers" and "receptacles" to be filled by the teacher. It is a model where "instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (Freire, 2014a, p. 56). This model should be discarded altogether. Gramsci believes that we should start "not from the point of view of the teacher but from that of the learner. … Education is not a matter of handing out 'encyclopedic knowledge' but of developing and disciplining the awareness which the learners already possess" (Giroux, 2011, p. 80). Similarly, Freire (2014b, p. 74), notes, "a progressive educator must not experience the task of teaching in mechanical fashion." The concept of creative school should be taken into consideration where the student acts individually and freely and the teacher initially functions as an observer and a friendly guide (Gramsci, 2012, p. 233). The teacher is not someone who teaches the student what s/he does not know; that is the purpose of the books. The student finds what he does not know at the library (Topçu, 2006, p. 60).

Meanwhile, school is like prison. It confiscates students' freedom and locks them up. It forces them into a never-ending race. Every obstacle students overcome are replaced by yet another (Baker, 2013, p. 178). School is an institution that imprisons students. It keeps students under custody while their parents are at work. It teaches them the information necessary for the machine called society to run, imposes obedience, and eliminates most while also assigning roles (Baker, 2013, p. 260). School systems should save themselves from this despotic approach. Rather, the aim of schooling should be to develop critical thinking skills. School should never restrict students' freedom. Trying to teach students, school should not fetter students' freedom because "the only condition necessary for learning" in a proper and healthy fashion is to be free (Baker, 2013, p. 169). As Freire (2005) argues, education should be seen as "critical consciousness" and "the practice of freedom", and it should be designed accordingly. The individual should make his/her life meaningful (Fromm, 2003, p. 226). To extricate the Turkish education system from the vicious circle caused by the conflict between old and new, it is necessary to liberate school and turn it into the center for critical thinking, abandoning the model in which the teacher bombards the student with unnecessary information.

Education system or school is generally perceived as a means of providing employment. This misperception should be abandoned. It is important to educate people properly and make their lives easier. Education should be designed as a process that makes us who we are. "Each of us desires to become someone in life, but oftentimes we forget that we are first and foremost humans. What is important is not that we are born humans but we remain humans" (Sönmez, 2014, p. 24). To do so, the Turkish education system should be based on a principle that prioritizes students and studentship (Gökalp, 2005, p. 130). Teachers should "proceed Socratically by attempting to be 'the midwife of his listeners' knowledge" (Kant, 2007, p. 98). Schooling in Turkey should become part of a system where students discover their skills.

Another problem of the Turkish educations system is that its structure is constantly altered as a result of the conflict between old and new. As is known, the

first action of a new government in Turkey is to change the education policies of the previous government. Almost a century after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, this understanding still dominates our education system. A view about our education system, which was also featured in a newspaper called *Tanin* a hundred years ago, is still valid today: "We have undone what is done before us! This explains all about our education system" (qtd. in Sabahaddin, 2013, p. 194). We cannot break this deadlock unless we abandon the perception of school either as the guardian of the old system or the backyard of defenders of new Turkey. The power struggle over schools damages students most, turning their lives into a nightmare.

Students in Turkey are afraid of schools and want them to be closed. For instance, "when a weak earthquake hits their city, a secondary school student gets happy, hoping that the walls of the school building may have cracked so that it will be closed temporarily, and the exam that he is going to take the new day will be cancelled" (Ergun, 1987, p. xiv). Students are extremely happy when schools are closed for a few days due to heavy snowfall. Antipathy towards school is one of our serious social problems. We can only reduce the feeling of abhorrence by spreading love. "Hatred," as Spinoza maintains, "is increased by being reciprocated, and can on the other hand be destroyed by love" (Spinoza, 2011, p. 421). That is why an understanding of education based on love should be promoted in our schools (Sönmez, 1997). When students love school and what they learn there, they embrace it. "One loves what he works for" (Fromm, 1995, p. 33).

In brief, the Turkish education system should be severed from the fruitless debates over "secular" versus "religious education" between the pro-Westerners and conservatives. Our education system should be liberalized. School should not be administrated like a governmental institution. Learning should be conducted not only at school, but also at other alternative centers like home. The time students spend at school can be reduced, and attendance can be more flexible. For example, they can go to school three days a week instead of five, and spend two hours there each time. As Neill argues, "the student should be free to attend classes… courses should not be designed on a pass-fail grading system" (Sönmez, 1998, p. 169). Parks and streets can be turned into areas where learning takes place. Teaching can be made fun through games. Courses can be associated with real life on a concrete basis.

In the final analysis, our current education system inhibits one's skills as it leads students to focus on a single field of study. For instance, a professor is generally perceived as the most qualified individual in society and is expected to have a full knowledge of his/her field of study, but s/he may turn out to be exactly the opposite, not even aware of simple everyday tasks. "The knowledge of the learned is but shallow" (Schopenhauer, 2011, p. 29). According to Hazlitt,

> (A professor) knows no liberal or mechanic art… [he] has no skill in surgery, in agriculture, in building, or in working in wood or in iron; it cannot make any instrument of labour, or use it when made; it cannot handle the plough or the spade, or the chisel or the hammer; it knows nothing of hunting or hawking, fishing or shooting, of horses or dogs, of fencing or dancing, or cudgel-playing, or bowls or cards, or tennis, or anything else. The learned professor of all arts and sciences cannot reduce any one of them to practice… (2011, p. 17).

Nothing can be more deadening than restricting one's education to a single field of study (Dewey, 1996, p. 343). However, as Marx points out, it is possible to create a society in which no individual is locked up in his own sphere and each individual can develop himself in any activity that pleases him. This makes it possible for the individual to do one thing today, another tomorrow; without the sheer necessity of having to become "one" hunter, fisherman, or critic. It therefore makes it possible for man to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, and criticize after dinner (Marx & Engels, 1992, p. 56). Given that life is multifaceted, we should not confine students within a single occupation. One can be brought up to become a sociologist, historian, biologist, sportsperson, carpenter, mountaineer, artist, writer and poet. All we need is to think outside the patterns of the conflict between old and new, and declare war against its tenets.

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Türk Eğitim Sistemine Eski-Yeni Çekişmesinin Dışında Bakmak

Atıf:

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Özet

Çalışmanın Temeli: Eğitim, toplumların sorunlarına çözüm üreten, karanlıkları aydınlatan, bireylerin yeteneklerini geliştiren ve insanları ferahlatan bir sistem olarak düşünülür. Fakat Türkiye'de var olan eğitim sisteminin durumu biraz farklıdır. Çünkü problem çözme etkinliği olarak görülen eğitim sisteminin kendisi bir probleme dönüşmüştür. Türk eğitim sistemi, en ciddi sosyal problemlerimizden birisi haline gelmiştir. Bu problem, özünde Türkiye'nin hangi medeniyete mensup olduğu (Batı medeniyetine mi yoksa Doğu medeniyetine mi) tartışmalarından kaynaklanmaktadır. Türk eğitim sisteminde "eski-yeni çekişmesi", "Türk toplumu Doğulu bir toplumdur" diyenler (Batı karşıtları) ile "Türk toplumu Batılı bir toplumdur" görüşünü savunan kesimler (Batıcılar) arasındaki mücadeleden ibarettir. Söz konusu mücadele, 19. yüzyıldan günümüze devam eden Türkiye'nin Batılılaşması süreciyle doğrudan bağlantılıdır. Türk eğitim sistemi, "eski-yeni

çekişmesi"nden muzdarip bir sistemdir. Makalede, her iki tarafın benzer sonuçlar üreten eğitim anlayışlarına sahip olduğu teması esas alınmış, Türk eğitim sistemi eski-yeni çatışmasının dışında değerlendirilmiştir.

Günümüzde Türk toplumu, "eski eğitim" yanlıları ve "yeni eğitim" taraftarları olarak iki büyük düşman kampa bölünmüş durumdadır. Başka bir deyişle, toplumumuz eğitimde "dinselliği" ön plana çıkaran "geleneksel eğitim sistemi"nden (geçmişe dönük özlemden kaynaklanan eğitimde dinin vitrine çıkartılması, din merkezli bir eğitimin referans alınması, dindar bir neslin yetiştirilmesi vb.) yana olan muhafazakâr kesimler ile eğitimde "çağdaşlaşma"yı savunan, "modern eğitim sistemi"nden (dine mesafeli olan laik eğitimden, akılcı ve Batıcı eğitimden) yana olan Batıcı kesimler arasındaki kavganın bir arenası haline gelmiştir. Türk eğitim sistemi, tarihinin en büyük "eski-yeni çatışması"na sahne olmaktadır. Fakat günümüzde işler biraz terse dönmüştür. Türkiye'de son yıllarda ilginç olan, muhafazakârların "yeni" diye öne sürdüklerinin daha çok "eski"ye (örneğin, eğitimde dinin, yani İslamiyet'in referans alınması, din eğitimi veren okulların sürekli açılması ve çoğalması gibi) gönderme yapmasıdır. Bu muhafazakâr "yeni"ler! karşısında Batıcı laik kanata dair sanki "eski"yi savunuyormuş gibi bir algı yaratılmıştır.

Kısaca, bu çalışmanın temeli, nüfusumuzun en önemli kısmını oluşturan çocukların ve gençlerin (bugünümüz ve geleceğimiz olan bireylerin) eğitim hayatlarını doğrudan ilgilendiren "eski-yeni çekişmesi"ne farklı bir gözle bakmaya, Türk eğitim sistemini söz konusu kısır döngüden kurtarmaya ve onu yeniden yapılandırmaya dayandırılmıştır. İşte, bu bağlamda, bu makalede, Türk eğitim sisteminin ana meseleleri üzerine odaklanılmış, ideal bir Türk eğitim sistemi nasıl olmalıdır? sorusuna cevap aranmıştır.

Çalışmanın Amacı: Makalenin amacı, Türk eğitim sistemindeki "eski-yeni çekişmesi"nin kuru bir gürültüden ibaret olduğunu ortaya koymak, bu çerçevede gerek Batı karşıtı muhafazakârların gerekse de Batıcıların savundukları eğitim anlayışlarının öğrenciyi yeteneksizleştirdiğini, öğretmeni merkeze aldığını, öğrencileri gereksiz ve hayattan kopuk bilgilerle kuşattığını, ezberciliği önemsediğini, disiplini ve korkuyu savunduğunu, öğrenciyi stresli, kaygılı, huzursuz, mutsuz ve yeteneksiz yaptığını göstermek, söz konusu çekişmede herhangi bir tarafta yer almadan yeni bir eğitim sistemi için bazı öneriler getirmektir.

Kanıt Kaynakları: Bu makalede, Türk eğitim sisteminin "eski-yeni çekişmesi" nedeniyle sağlıklı bir şekilde işleyemediği, hedeflerinin sürekli değiştiği, çoğu kez hedefsiz kaldığı, bir "yap boz tahtası"na dönüştürüldüğü, tutarlı olmadığı, Batı karşıtı muhafazakârların ya da Batıcıların iktidarları dönemlerinde sürekli olarak darmadağın edildiği gerçeğinden hareket edilmiştir. Türk eğitim sisteminin mutlu, neşeli, hayata bağlı, özgür, yetenekli, hünerli, bilgili, dürüst ve erdemli insan yetiştirmediği gerçeği, araştırmanın kalkış noktası olarak görülmüştür.

Ana Tartışma ve Sonuçlar: Eski-yeni kavgasının biçimlendirdiği Türk eğitim sisteminin manzarası içler acısıdır. Bu ürkütücü halin fotoğrafı insanlarımızın tamamını ilgilendirmektedir. Bu devasa fotoğraf karesinde her insanımız kendisine bir yer

bulmaktadır. Bu sıkıntılı karede kimi insanımız ön planda/merkezde, kimisi kenarda/kıyıda, kimisi ise arka fonda bize bakmaktadır. O büyük resimde yer alanlar, okula giden öğrenciler, onları eğiten öğretmenler ve okuyanların ve okutanların aileleridir. Dolayısıyla o çerçeve içindeki herhangi bir sorun, sadece eğitimcilerin değil, aslında herkesin sorunudur. Bu makalede, Türk eğitim sisteminin hatalı yönleri ve kusurlu yapıları üzerine odaklanılmış, eğitim alanında kalıplaşmış ve köhneleşmiş olan "eski-yeni çekişmesi" olumsuzlanmış, öğrencileri daha mutlu edebilecek ve yeteneklerini keşfedip geliştirebilecek iyi/ideal bir eğitim sistemi nasıl olmalıdır? sorusuna cevap aranmıştır. Bu makalede, "eski-yeni çekişmesi"nden kaynaklı olarak çeşitli açmazlarla dolu Türk eğitim sisteminin sorunlu bir sistem olmaktan çıkartılması için şu öneriler geliştirilmiştir: İlk olarak, Türk eğitim sistemi, "eski-yeni çatışması'nın (muhafazakârların "dinî eğitim", Batıcıların "laik eğitim" kısır kavgasının) bir alanı olmaktan çıkartılmalıdır. Bu çerçevede, eğitim sistemi, gereksiz bilgilerle öğrencinin zihnini ve bedenini mahveden, öğretmeni ve müfredatı merkeze alan, öğrenciyi dışlayan ve onu sadece ezberciliğe yönelten anlayıştan vazgeçmelidir. İkinci olarak, Türkiye'deki eğitim sistemi özgürleşmelidir, yani okul, öğrenciyi cezalandıran ve disiplin altına alan bir aygıt olmamalı, öğrenme etkinliği sadece okulla sınırlandırılmamalı ve okula gitmede öğrenciye büyük esneklik tanınmalıdır. Eğitim kurumları demokratikleştirilmelidir. Üçüncü olarak, okul, kuralcı, nizamcı, otoriter, baskıcı ve resmi bir kurum olmaktan ziyade, sevgiye dayalı, neşeli ve öğrencinin yeteneklerini geliştiren şen bir kuruma dönüştürülmelidir. Neşeye, sevgiye dayanan şen eğitim esas alınmalıdır. Son olarak, hayatın çok karmaşık ve çok katmanlı oluşu gerçeğinden hareketle öğrenciler, tek bir mesleğe göre değil, birden fazla mesleği yapabilecek bir şekilde çok yönlü olarak yetiştirilmelidirler.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türk eğitim sistemi, ezberci eğitim, baskıcı eğitim, özgür eğitim, şen eğitim, ideal eğitim sistemi.