

Ottoman Greek Education System and Greek Girls' Schools in Istanbul (19TH and 20TH Centuries)

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Abstract

Modernization efforts in education, which were initiated in the 19th century, can be seen as forerunners of the modernization attempts in the Republic period. In this article, Greek education system in the Ottoman Empire will be discussed and the effects and importance of the changes observed in Greek girls' education in 19th and 20th centuries on the modernization period of the Ottoman Empire will be emphasized. Greek girls' education system is examined in terms of the schools in Istanbul. In the secular Greek education system, education of girls was considered highly important. The underlying reasons were the social change emerging in Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, recognition of the importance of women in the said change and the need to train teachers for schools that were increasing in number every day. The courses taught and methods used in Greek girls' schools played a major role in the reproduction of Greek nationalism by means of education. State authorities that closely watched these developments perceived them as a threat against their political existence, as a result of which inspection on these schools were increased; however, some of these models were also adopted for modern Ottoman education. Furthermore, increase in number of these schools caused competition, which accelerated the opening of Muslim schools. Innovations and developments in the Greek girls' education are significant in perceiving and evaluating the Ottoman education system as a whole. As a matter of fact, this period, which lasted throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, presents us with important clues, which will help us in understanding the education system of today.

Key Words

Greek Girls' Schools, Alilodidaktik Schools, Community Regulation, Greek Literature Association of Istanbul, Greek Women Associations.

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The purpose of this study is to examine the education of girls as an integral part of the modernization process of the Ottoman Empire focusing on the education system of Greek girls and its transformation, within the framework of education of girls in general. The ultimate aim is to study the place and the influence of the Greek girls' education on the Ottoman girls' education system.

Method

The Historical method is used in a methodological way in this article. As it is well known, this method is a way of examining a larger number of documents. As the initial emergence of Greek girls' education is studied in this article, the historical method was considered to be the most appropriate for this research. Thus, the first hand sources (Ottoman archive documents, the special archive of Dimitris Frangopoulos, the retired director of Zografyon High School) were combined with Greek, English, and Turkish secondary sources and examined in a comparative way. Within this context, the explanation of Greek girls' education system was attempted within the radical change that the Ottoman Empire experienced in its education system starting as of the 19th Century. The appearance and development of secular Greek girls' education system within the context of Greek girls' schools in Istanbul and the effect of Greek girls' education on Ottoman education were assessed.

One of the most important difficulties faced so far is the fact that there is not a detailed analysis and research in Turkish literature on Ottoman Greek girls' education. Thus, the archive documents are privileged with being the main sources. Moreover, the continuous tracking of the changes that girls schools went through in the course of history is highly difficult. When there was a difference in terms of information between the sources, the problem was overcome by the comparison method.

The Ottoman Empire entered into a long-term modernization period as of *Tanzimat* (Reforms Period) and adopted this as a state policy. This modernization policy of the state included a very extensive transformation which would change not only the political institutions but also the traditional social order. The main reason of the reforms planned for the social order was, along with *Westernization*, to eliminate administrative autonomy or political disintegration demands that started to gain ground among the minorities together with the tide of nationalism and

to avoid foreign pressure and thus to prevent collapse of the empire (Fortna, 2005). To this end, while some legal and administrative regulations were being introduced as of *Tanzimat*, efforts were also being paid to enable the society to adopt a common identity and citizenship awareness via education (Sakaoglu, 2003).

Traditional social order of the Ottoman Empire organized the society as religious communities and therefore forced the individual to live under the spiritual, financial, and administrative authority of the religious community in which he was born. In this order, each religious community had its own schools and education system. The state had no effect or supervision on these schools.

In line with the modernization policy, the education policy of the state with regards to the non-Muslim communities was pursued under the principle of '*controlled tolerance*' (Kazamias, 1990). While the permission to open and develop their own schools was granted to the minorities, regular inspections were started to be made on the operations and education systems of these newly-opened schools. Within this period, the Ottoman Greek community made considerable progress in the area of education (Ortaylı, 1985).

First of all, the '*millî nizamname*' (community regulation), which meant the reorganization of the Ottoman Greek community, directly affected education system of the Orthodox Greek community (Düstur, 2, pp. 902-937). With this regulation, authority of the clergy on the community was relatively diminishing whereas influence of the civilians was increasing. With the increase of civilian participation to the administration, an important step was taken towards secular education (Davison, 1963). This act of enhancing civil authority caused influence of the Greek bourgeoisie, which integrated with the Western capitalism and bourgeoisie in the 19th century, to increase on the community (Özil, 2001).

The Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi (Regulation on Public Education) was enacted in 1869 (Düstur, 2, pp.277-295). With this regulation, non-Muslims were allowed to open primary and junior high schools and to be educated in the same schools with Muslims in senior high and secondary schools (Koçak, 1985; Akyüz, 1999). The *Cemaat Mektepleri Talimatnamesi* (Guidelines on Community Schools), put into effect in 1896, contained arrangements with regards to regulation of community schools (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. MKT.MHM. 748/.6, 1313.

Z29 / June 11th 1896). However, the Ottoman state granted significant privileges to the Greek community in receiving permission for their schools. Whereas the other communities had to present their curricula, the books to be used, names, and diplomas of their teachers to the local education director through their metropolitan bishops to receive a permission, information including the location and the degree of the school to be opened was deemed enough whenever permission was to be granted for a school to be affiliated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople (Vahapoğlu, 1992). This privilege facilitated opening of schools by the Greek community. As a matter of fact, a significant increase in the number of Greek schools after this date can be observed (Alkan, 2004).

Education of Greek Girls

The first junior high school for Greek female students was opened around the 1870s. Before that date, there was not any formal educational institution other than Ottoman primary school for girls. The rich and the well-educated families among the society were training their girls with the education provided by private tutors. The girls of other families were getting education which consisted of the basic learning provided by the churches in the schools founded in a church or near one of them.

With Tanzimat, whether girl or boy; all children had to attend primary school. The age of starting school was determined as 7-11 years for boys and 6-10 years for girls. The education of Greek girls was included in the agenda of Greek Patriarchate since the 1870s. However, in 1862, according to the *Rum Patrikliği Nizamnamesi* (Greek Patriarchate Regulation); it was decided that schools were going to be founded in appropriate areas under the supervision of the Patriarch, the Metropolitan and the mixed council in order to provide education for poor girls. (Düstur, 2, pp. 902-937)

After Regulation of Public Education was put into practice in 1869, the schools of primary and secondary level started to be founded for the girls in the Greek community around the 1870s. The first of them was Palada Girls' School (1874) and the other one was Zapyon Girls' School (1875) (Giagtzoglou, 2000). The finance of girls' schools was provided by foundations, community incomes, church incomes, and private donations (Tekeli, 1985).

In the Greek educational system, the education of girls was considered highly important. The underlying reasons were the social change

emerging in Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, recognition of the importance of women in the said change and the need to train teachers for schools that were increasing in number every day.

The social transformation witnessed in Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century led to the increase of the visibility of women in the social life, starting from Europe, in the beginning of the 19th century (Ergin, 1940).

After the 60s one could see that issues about women, articles on women, and news regarding women covered more space in the newspapers and magazines in Europe, Greece, and the Ottoman Empire. The time for women to part from home and be acquainted with social activities had started. In the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul took the lead for women's issues to be discussed. The fact that it was both the capital of the Empire and the center of press had much to do with it along with the fact that the city structure was cosmopolitan.

In the Ottoman society, Greek women first appeared in the social life as the "protectors of the poor" and tried to gain a place in the society. Within a short time, along with charity institutions, these women also founded social foundations focusing on education and culture and became active members of the social life (Mamoni & İstikopoulou, 2002). Besides the foundations by women (Anagnostopulu, 1999), it can be said that efforts to educate girls were paid in several different branches via, though less and less influential, the Patriarchate and churches, literature and culture communities and associations with mixed membership, where women and men worked together (Eksertzoglou, 2004). All foundations had to obtain certificate of registry from the state (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. MF. MKT. 43/106 1293.L.06 / October 25th 1876).

Moreover, the recognition of the importance of women in raising and educating the next generations caused a considerable increase in the education of the girls within the Greek community. In this respect, many Greek girls' schools were opened in primary, secondary, and high school degrees both in Anatolia and Istanbul (Hastaoglu, 1999; Statistics of the Greek Schools, 1919).

The need for teachers for these newly-opened schools, in a way, rendered professional education of women compulsory. This was generally accomplished by adding an extra two or three years of education to

the high school level schools or the young girls who graduated from some specific high schools were granted the diploma to become teachers (Sarioglou, 2004). However, the target to provide occupation to girls was limited with teacher training schools since the priority was not to provide job opportunities to girls but to increase the quality of the community via raising qualified and sophisticated future mothers and housewives who were capable of transferring the ideology of the community to the next generations (Roidis, 1995).

For this reason, the curricula of the girls' schools were made in harmony with this role model of the women. Pedagogy, technical classes, house-keeping, health and baby care courses were included in the curricula of junior and senior high schools. In some girls' schools, housewife raising departments were opened. On the other hand, in Greek girls' schools, efforts were paid to teach the students at least one European language properly and culture and arts classes were an important part of the program (Dalakoura, 2002).

Courses Taught in the Girls Schools

The schedule in the girls schools contained the instruction of a European language at a very high level (French especially). This issue raised much contempt in the traditional wing of the community. Within the framework of the previously held debates, the issue of adding a foreign language into the curriculum of the girls' schools was separately considered and serious disputes regarding the subject resulted. The starting point was that the foreign language education in especially girls' schools was intended to be restricted. In the conference held by the *Istanbul Greek Literary Society* (Ellinikos Filologikos Syllogos Konstantinoupolis) in 1909, it was proposed that a foreign language be taught only to the boys since it was significant in terms their career, whereas for girls foreign language education was suggested to be restricted with the secondary school level. According to this view for young girls to be lacking national consciousness would mean the corruption of many generations to come.

Despite this outlook the demand on the part of the parents of young girls for them to learn a foreign language was quite high (Karanikolas, 1975). Those Greeks belonging to the upper income group and were sophisticated would generally send their daughters to the foreign schools or private Greek schools in Istanbul, the reason for this being that these

schools were known for their sound foreign language education system. The most important rationale for this interest in foreign language education was that young girls who were educated and knew a foreign language well could make a good marriage and thus gain prestige in the society in general (Eksertzoglou, 2004).

Restructuring of Greek System of Education

Providing a cultural background along with the basic knowledge in schools was also important. Thus, the education of theatre, music, poetry and literature was also given in every girls' school and cultural activities were organized in certain periods of the year. Theatre performances in girls' schools were generally based on the works of Ancient Greece. The performances of dramas named Ifigenia, Elektra, Antigone were not randomly selected (Mpozi, 2002). With the effects of the Renaissance in Europe and the Enlightenment, the interest in Ancient Greek Culture was very high. Ottoman Greek Bourgeoisie was striving to form an identity by having the essential works, to which they based their heritage, studied in schools (Eksertzoglou, 2004). On the other hand, girls' schools were providing music courses at a good level as well. For example, the musical curriculum of Zapyon Girls' School included Italian opera along with French and German musical works (Mpozi, 2002).

Another side of the culture, art and applied courses in girls' schools was the fact that they were considered as an important tool for combining families with schools and providing financial support for schools. Students also got the chance to show what they learned in courses during the activities performed at the end of semester. Drawings for the hand-crafts of students were performed; tickets for theatre, ballet and concert were being sold by school administration during these activities. Thus, families had the chance to see the results of education that their girls got and thus they formed closer ties with teachers in schools and school administration. Moreover, the budget deficits of schools could be met thanks to these activities. In order to organize such activities, schools both had to inform Istanbul Municipality about the event schedule and get permission/license from the ministry of national education. (for example: Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. DH. MKT. 260/.33 1312.M.10 / July 14th, 1894; BOA. MF. MKT. 685/34 1320.Za.17 / February 15th, 1903)

Methods Used in Education

Another notable characteristic of the Ottoman Greek girls' education was that education was given using modern European education methods like *Monitorial (Bell-Lancaster)*, *Froebel* and *Pestalozzi*, which is an indicator that the Greek closely followed up the developments in the area of education in the West.

The method of education most widely used was the *Monitorial* one. The method which was developed in the beginning of the 19th century by Joseph Lancaster in England was put into application in quite a few Greek schools in the same century. Accepted also as the *Alilodidaktik* (mutual improvement) method, it had the most outstanding feature of making students responsible for each other in a hierarchical order. Hence senior students were in charge of the education and supervision of the junior ones. To this end, every class was assigned a senior student and this student tried to ensure education and supervision of the junior class she is in charge of. In this way, the kind of education considered to be necessary for the education and the socialization of lower grades was provided in a cheap way and the problem of teacher scarcity was also solved (Lancaster, 1992). A system as such was especially practical for the Greek schools in Asia Minor the numbers of which were increasing but which lacked funds and all the necessary educational equipment. This method was first started by the American Protestant missionaries in Istanbul in the 1830s and was named as the Alilodidaktik schools by them. Later on these schools were made use of for the adult and military education in the Ottoman Empire. The system spread fast among the Asia Minor Greek communities as well, (Somel, 2001) by the end of 1870s their number reached 1500, (Eksertzoglou, 2004).

The *Pestalozzi method* was a revolutionary alternative to the classical method which was known with its strict discipline and was based on theoretical courses only (Rufer, 1962). For this reason, a large number of educators in Europe and the United States were impressed by this method and they put it into practice in the 18th and 19th centuries. The German public schools were even shaped in line with this method (Aytaç, 1972; Fikret, 1931). The Ottoman Greek community, in close contact with Europe started to implement the *Pestalozzi method* in their own schools as of the 19th century. Within this framework, morals, physical education, drama, music courses and courses aiming at developing manual skills were also added into the curriculum. The first school

to adopt this method was the Zapyon Girls School (Dalakoura, 2002). It can be understood that the *Pestalozzi method* contributed a lot to the rise in the quality of education in girl's schools. This success story must have drawn the attention of Ottoman statesmen as well since in 1887 the curriculum of the minority schools was examined (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. MF. MKT., 1074/18, 1326.B.27 / August 25th 1908). The same year a regulation was passed regarding the formation of a council to incorporate some practical courses Moral Education being in the first place, into the curriculum of all state schools (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. İrade-i Dahiliye, 80409, 4 Cemaziyelevvel 1304 / January 29th 1887). The *Froebel Method*, however was used in the kindergartens. Some of these methods and education models were also adopted for modern Ottoman education (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. MF.MKT. 1089/51 1326.Z.4 / December 28th 1908).

The most long-lived and prominent Greek girls' schools in Istanbul were Zapyon (Büyükkarcı, 2003; Haydaroğlu, 1990), Yuvakimyon (Iordanoglou, 2000; Bozis, 1994), Center Greek (Dimitris Frangopoulos' archive, no.60/12, p. 4) and Pallas. Other than these schools there were a number of Greek Girls Schools in several districts in Istanbul (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. BEO, 31/2260, 1309.Z.3 / June 28th 1892; Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. MV., 239/41, 1333.Ca.14 / March 30th 1915; Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive. ZB., 73/51, 1323.E.09 / September 9 1905; Annuaire oriental, 1883).

Results

The courses taught and methods used in Greek girls' schools played a major role in the reproduction of Greek nationalism by means of education. State authorities that closely watched these developments perceived them as a threat against their political existence, as a result of which inspection on these schools were increased; however, some of these models were also adopted for modern Ottoman education. Furthermore, increase in the number of these schools caused competition, which accelerated opening of Muslim schools.

Innovations and developments in Greek girls' education are significant in perceiving and evaluating the Ottoman educational system as a whole. As a matter of fact, this period, which lasted throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, presents us with important clues, which will help us understand the education system of today.

The fast increase in the number of Greek schools gave way to a competition and speeded up the opening of Muslim schools. The transformations in the field of education starting in the 19th century and continuing until the fall of the Ottoman Empire can be considered to be the advance signals of the modernization activities just like all the other modernization attempts in that period.

This article has aimed to deal with the issue of modern education for girls in the Ottoman period within the framework of Greek girls' education, a topic on which data in Turkish are hardly available; it has also attempted to reveal the modern methods of education, curriculum and the different approaches adopted in terms of foreign language education in Greek girls' schools.

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