

Chapter 11

Citizenship Education Courses in Primary Schools in Modern Turkey (1920s–1950s)

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ABSTRACT

According to Mustafa Kemal, salvation is possible only through national education. The consciousness of freedom should be taught in schools. Teachers also had duties on the path to national awakening and organization. After the Grand National Assembly was established in Ankara, the government gave the students and teachers the task of enlightening Turkish people. The idea was that future generations should be raised with a national, scientific, and secular education to protect Türkiye's independence and strengthen the republic regime. The feelings of virtue, self-sacrifice, order, discipline, and self-confidence should be reinforced in the new generation. The "citizenship education at primary school," which the intellectuals of constitutionalism focused on within the scope of the "new man-new society" project, constituted an important dimension of nation-building. In this study, citizenship education courses with different names such as Citizenship, Homeland, Malumat-ı Vataniye, etc. will be evaluated by using official course books from the 1920s to 1950s in the Republic of Türkiye.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The most crucial issue of the new state and regime was the regulation of national education services and practices (Yalçın, 1985). The Turkish War of Independence profoundly affected education, and in return, education contributed to independence efforts (Akyüz, 2013).

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When the Grand National Assembly met under the light of a single kerosene lamp in 1921, there was no seat for all the deputies in the meeting hall. While The Great Powers were invading the country and many members, including Mustafa Kemal, were sentenced to death, the first Grand National Assembly Government established the principles of an education program based on the government program (Ateş, 2007).

During the worst days of the National Struggle, the enemy forces increased their pressure to achieve a decisive victory. Thus, the Greek forces launched an attack in the Kütahya-Eskişehir region which resulted in the withdrawal of the Turkish army to Sakarya. Even though the Greek attack gained dangerous momentum, especially throughout 16-21 July 1921, Ankara Government kept its focus on the program of national education. Furthermore, during the opening speech of the third meeting of the Grand National Assembly on March 1, 1922 (when the war was still ongoing), Mustafa Kemal stated that the first goal of the education program was to give the villagers adequate information on geography, history, religion, and ethics to better their understanding on their homeland, nation and the world (*Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III*, 1997).

According to Mustafa Kemal and Turkish nationalists, salvation was only possible via national education. In addition, it was essential to inform citizens about the stages of national liberation. Mustafa Kemal reached a synthesis of ideas at the beginning of the 1920s, and he had the necessary determination and a strategy to implement them. Starting from 1923, the keywords of this strategy could be explained as *civic consciousness, civil law, and secular administration, a national education system open to universal humanist values, women's role in society, civilization, and development*. The Republic's citizenship definition was based on a human type defined by their rights and a design with obligations (*75. Yılda Tebaadan Yurttaş Dođru*, 1998). A new republic was born under these conditions.

National education was the only alternative for the future (*Atatürk Haftası Armađanı 10 Kasım 1986*, 1986). The education Republic chose its primary goal as bringing the citizens an awareness and attitude that they became one of the elements of a democratic and modern society (Adem, 1982). Therefore, Mustafa Kemal accepted culture and education as equals and considered it one of the nation's basics (Bayer, 1997).

Single-party government's practices regarding the goal of nationalization had to accelerate the cultural change since it was difficult for democracy and good governance to go hand in hand in the country, even when there were no profound cultural changes. Most of the population was illiterate and did not have equal rights. In this sense, the reconstruction process was just starting, and poverty quickly turned into violence. Therefore, civilization, peace, and public security were inseparable. Mustafa Kemal and his administration wanted them all simultaneously (Mango, 2004).

Development was complex and slow in the early years of the Republican Era. However, as İsmet İnönü said to the members of the Teachers' Union to whom he addressed on May 5, 1925, "*they were not men who got out of their home on a spring morning and hoped for a handful of greenery among the groves in the beautiful weather*" (Turan, 2002).

Successively enacted laws on educational organization, which were facilitated by the centralization of education, accelerated the process (Golođlu, 2011). Laws on education, which were implemented to complete the Republican order, were unified with the society, and they paved the way for other innovative and beneficial practices. The planned education of the Republican era was not only limited to books.

One of the ways to understand being a Turk and the foundation of the Republic and popularize the Republic was to provide effective citizenship education to students and the public via national holidays.

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