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EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TURKEY IN THE 14TH HIJRAH/20TH CENTURY

The degree of prôgress made by a country emerging from a primitive to the more complicated economy of today, based on industry and mechanised agriculture, can be measured to some extent by the degree of literacy and especially of technical education among the population. All the countries of the Middle East are aiming at greater industrialisation, at the development of their raw material resources and at its processing, as far as possible, by themselves. They seek to import machinery and capital goods to this end. But not all of them take as yet very seriously the problem that is arising in the wake of these importations and developments, namely the training of the professional staff and of the skilled mechanics to run such equipment and undertakings as hydro-electric plants, chemical industries or agricultural combine harvesters. The tendency in all these countries, including Turkey, the Arab lands and Persia, has been in the early stages of his renaissance, to produce in the schools and colleges potential members of the free professions. If they are doctors and teachers, they fit into the new economy. But unfortunately too many lawyers and journalists are produced to enable them all to find work. Consequently the ranks of the political agitators with a grievance and an ability to rouse the mobs of the principal towns are unduly swollen. But Turkey's reaction to this new situation is somewhat different from the others.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century the only schools that existed for the mass of the people were the religious ones—called Madressahs, run by Mullahs who only taught pupils to recite the Koran by heart in Arabic. Yet in the sixteenth century Turkey had the most powerful army in Europe and Western Asia, with the best equipment of the day. The economic advance of Western Europe which failed to influence Turkey, coupled with the Capitulations which gave privileges to importers of foreign goods, effectively killed all technical progress in Turkey in the nineteenth century. But at the time of the Tanzimat reforms in the middle

of the nineteenth century an attempt was made to establish some secondary schools with a liberal education. This was encouraged by Sultan Abdul Mejid, in 1859 an Imperial decree ordered general and compulsory education, which, however, became largely a dead letter. Nevertheless, the Liberal Grand Vizier, Midhat Pasha, founded with State help industrial schools in Istanbul and the Balkan Provinces to teach boys various crafts. On the other hand, under the shelter of these Capitulations, British, American, French and, later, German schools were started. The famous Robert College at Istanbul and the American University at Beirut arose out of this movement. But unfortunately the results were not entirely satisfactory. Being foreign, they were to some extent suspected by the Government, as having political motives. The Moslem population patronised them only to a small extent. But the Christian minorities sent their children there in large numbers. Most of the younger generation of the more well-to-do Armenians, Greeks and Bulgars at the turn of the century had been to one of these foreign colleges, and this still further separated the Moslem from the Christian population of the Empire and increased the educational disparity. In the darkness of the reaction that accompanied the rule of Abdul Hamid II after 1876, nearly all education except that protected by the Capitulations was suppressed. Yet in spite of the reaction the Sultan realised that Turkey could not survive in the world without some education, especially technical, so he allowed Hassan Fehmi Pasha with private funds to found a Civil Engineering School at Istanbul in 1883, which later became the Istanbul Technical University.

But it was not till the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 that a real attempt was made to start primary education on a popular scale. Even then, however, decrees by the Government, supported by Parliament, ordering compulsory education became virtually a dead letter because, on account of high military expenditure connected with the Revolution and foreign complications arising from it, no money was available from the Treasury. So the responsibility of finding money for education was thrown entirely on the provinces, which meant that in practice virtually nothing was done.

The First World War showed how hopelessly backward Turkey was in general education and technical equipment, and the continuing wars from 1911 to 1922 made all technical progress impossible. At last, after the National Revolution in the 1920's a real start could be made. It is safe to say that not more than 10% of the population of Turkey could read or write in 1925, while the only section of the population where probably 40 to 50 % were literate, namely the Christians, had either

succumbed in the war or had left the country. The Republic found itself with a population of which 80% were living in villages, and there were about 3,000 primary schools and about 5,000 teachers. By 1935, twelve years after the foundation of the Republic, the number of primary schools was not more than 5,000 and the teachers not more than 7,000. So the prospect seemed grim.

But, as so often in Turkey, the hour brings forth the man and the idea to meet the situation. Led by the Ataturk himself and the Director of Education, Bey Hakki Tongush, a plan was drawn up to secure teachers. The first thing to do of course, was to get Turkey free from the Arabic alphabet, at least so the founders thought, and not without reason. So the Latin alphabet was introduced, partly for the sake of simplicity and partly to facilitate Western and European ideas. Then came the next difficulty. The primary schools could be built in the villages, given time. Most of the village elders were interested in Education and were ready to get the schools built. But there were no teachers there. The few teachers training schools that had been founded during the early days of the Revolution in the principal towns turned out young men who did not want to go back to the villages. The trouble, more or less common to all Middle Eastern states, was the idea that Education must lead to head-work in offices in the towns and that life in villages was beneath one's dignity. But the Turks showed by what happened in the 1930's that they had a way of solving this difficulty. Instead of training a young teacher in the towns and thus giving him the chance to acquire snobbish ideas about his superiority to his fellow citizens in the village to which he came, he was in future to be trained in 'village institutes' scattered about all over the face of Anatolia. Not only was the young teacher to have no taste of the comfort of the towns but he was to be trained under conditions of Spartan severity. The village institutes for training primary teachere were in remote regions and only had the bare necessities of life. The whole training was arranged so as to make the young man or woman learn that not only were they teachers but also leaders and pioneers of new ideas in the development of rural life. They were taught to dig irrigation canals, take the initiative in building a tractor station and repair shop, and help the village elder in any movement that aimed at raising the standard of life of the village.

The courses at the village institute were for six years, and covered not only the teaching of the three R's with geography and history but also practical work of carpentery and blacksmith, gardener and farmer work while the girls were taught housework, needlework, hygiene and cooking.

The danger in these institutes is that the curriculum is so wide and the young teachers are supposed to cover such a large ground on so many subjects that it is impossible for them to master them all. It is probable that there is a good deal of superficial knowledge amoag many that issue from these institutes to take on the mastership of village schools up and down Anatolia. Yet there is no doubt that the main objective of the Ataturk and his colleagues has been attained. A start has been made and primary schools are now covering the greater part of the country. Improvement in the quality of teaching will doubtless come later. Meanwhile the numerical results are impressive. If in 1935 there were 7,000 teachers, after some years of village institutes these had risen to 35,000. This showed itself in the figures for primary school children. In 1945 out of about 3,000,000 children eligible to attend school, 1,026, 410, actually attended. In 1949 this had risen to 1,700.000. By 1951 the figure was round about 2,000,000. About 1,000,000 children still do not receive primary education, either through lack of a school in the village where they live or lack of a teacher, or due to the remoteness of their home. The difficulty about building schools, however, is being got over. The peasants, whose responsibility it is to build the schools, are now getting Government grants for this, which formerly was not the case. As regards shortage of teachers, pending further recruits from the institutes, headmasters are appointed to cover a group of four or five schools and supervise instructors who are not fully qualified. It may be said, therefore, that two-thirds of Turkey's children are now receiving primary education, and the gap is closing. It can roughly be said that of the total population 70% are still illiterate in the villages, but probably not more than 20% or so in the towns. It may be guessed, therefore, that perhaps 60% of the population of Turkey is literate. The only other country in the Middle East which has anything comparable to this is the Arab Republic of Syria, where the French did great pioneer work in the last half-century. But Turkey achieved this result by her own efforts after the Revolution, and her primary education today forms a basis on which her higher and technical education can definitely be built.

But all this has not been without some opposition and obstruction from the reactionary elements in the remoter parts of Anatolia. A graphic account of the sort of difficulties experienced by a young teacher in one of the poorest parts of Anatolia near the Tus Gol is given in a book published recently in English translation. The book created a sensation at the time, but is in some degree exaggerated. It undoubtedly shows,

however, that the Ankara Government and the progressive forces in modern Turkey have even now to meet the hostility of secret societies based on the suppressed Dervish Orders, who still hanker after reviving the regime of the old Sharia religious law.

In order to pave the way for some form of specialisation, so that a pupil leaving the primary school can acquire some knowledge of a trade, there have been started over a wide area vocational courses for boys and girls who have finished their primary education after thirteen years of age. This is designed to assist the education of those who for one reason or another are unable to go to higher Educational institutions. The establishment of scholarships and bursarships gives assistance to the more promising pupils from the primary schools, but they are not sufficiently generous yet to give all children a chance, and those whose parents need their help at home must have recourse to the vocational courses in the villages. There are commercial courses given by some instructors in a local business on book-keeping, accounts and typewriting. There is a garden and farming class, giving a boy or girl some knowledge of horticulture or agriculture. There is a course of carpentery and metal-work, and for girls domestic courses in sewing, cooking and hygiene. The numbers of these schools, called 'Sanat Okulu' (technical schools), has increascd from 28 in 1942 to 284 in 1949. The instructors move about, and it is hoped in time to cover all the 40,000 villages of Turkey. They give the opportunity for boys to become efficient artisans and for girls good housewives.

Next in the Educational ladder come the secondary schools. These are divided into Lycees based on the French system, giving a general Education which will lead to higher Education and the University. Secondly, there are middle schools which are designed for those who do not intend to go to higher Education but to proceed to work. They can enter business as clerical workers, and the lower grades of the civil service, railway administration and become foremen in industry. There were over 500 Lycees and middle schools in the country with over 100,000 pupils in 1945, and the number has increased since then.

Those who are able and wish to go to higher education can then enter the Technical Institutes ('Sanat Institutu'). There are a number of these schools for engineering, building and construction, woodwork and civil engineering. There are about 10,000 pupils in 78 of these institutes who take a five-year course, if they pass their examinations, they can then enter the professions as engineers or architects, without going to the University or to the higher technical institutes. The candidates for these technical institutes are taken by preference from the villages

and small towns, so as to make technical education as widely spread geographically as possible. Every facility is provided for the students, and they are under an obligation when they leave the institute to work for the Government for one and a half time the period of their education. This kind of work is generally with the Ministry of Works or the State railways. After this period they can go to private employment if they wish. It is interesting to note that in the last ten years the number of students who have entered the technical institutes have greatly increased, while the number of those who enter the Lycees for general Education remains about the same. The desire for technical Education has become more and more popular.

Finally, there are the highest educational institutions in the country the Universities of Istanbul and Ankara and the Technical University of Istanbul. The first two are for those who seek careers in a profession, the higher civil service and as business executives. These two Universities are of long standing, and their standard is comparable to the Universities in Western Europe. There are a number of French, German, British and American professors and lecturers, especially now since the American-founded Robert College has been merged into the education system of Turkey. The third University, the Technical University of Istanbul, prepares engineers with theoretical and practical training, and also technicians to act as assistants. This University probably turns out annually as many trained engineers as the country can absorb in its present stage of economic development. There have been attempts to start another one at Ankara which has been unsuccessful, and that Institution has now been merged into Ankara University as its engineering faculty. The one weakness that has shown itself in connection with higher technical education in Turkey has been that there is insufficient opportunity for practical experience in workshops. This is largely due to the still backward industrial state of the country, so that the chance of sending the student for a period of practical work to the bench is often not afforded. This tends to foster a weakness which is found in all middle Eastern countries, where students when they reach a certain standard do not want to 'dirty their hands'. This tends to make them theorists and planners only. Yet it can be said that this danger is less common in Turkey than in other Eastern states, though it does exist there, too.

As Turkey is predominantly an agricultural country, the need for specialised education in this basic industry is all-important. In 1884 the only agricultural school in Turkey was at Halkaly near Istanbul. But

in 1933 the Agricultural institute was founded at Ankara. This is now the only centre of higher agricultural education in the country and is affiliated to Ankara University. Recently there has been started also Agricultural technical schools in the provinces. There are seven of them, and they take the sons of peasants on a two-year course and send them back to the villages better farmers. This is good work. But in the higher grade of agricultural research and education matters are not so satisfactory. There are several able men in charge of the Agricultural Institute at Ankara who are mostly German trained. But their educatonal work is largely theoretical and there is no demonstration farm attached. In fact, these kinds of farm are not yet well-developed in Turkey, and until this is done agricultural education will tend to be too theoretical.

Education is the fourth item in the national budget in regard to the amount of expenditure. In 1945 it was 8% of the total. In 1953 it was 10% and reached 34,888, 6000 Turkish liras. It came next after the expenditure on defence, public works and industrial investment.

The year upto 1960 show further progress in the directions indicated above. Since 1951 the figure for the children attending the Ilk Okolu (Primary schools) rose from roughly two to three millions.

In nine years one million more children attended primary schools. There were in 1960 forty-two teachers training institutions and three hundred and fifty thousand teachers were teaching in the primary schools.