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The effect of recent history courses that are taught at primary schools in line with the consideration of handing down the next generations in nation statism

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Abstract

It can be said that French Revolution, broke out in 1789, affected Europe deeply in freedom, equality, particularly with the ideas of. After the French Revolution, growing nationalism idea and communities in Western Europe broke from the empire idea and started to gather around the idea of nationalism. New values were introduced with the nationalism. Within this new formation, political powers adoption by the community and its efforts to provide legitimacy, transfer tools to future generations is extremely important. In this context, the teaching of history is of great importance.

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1. Introduction

The French Revolution, that flourished later than the events that are considered as the beginning of the modern age like Humanism, Renaissance and Reform, is accepted to be a landmark in the world. With the idea of Nationalism brought by the French Revolution, empires started to fall and nation-states started to be established.(Özbudun, 1995, 90; Hobsbawm, 1989) The nation states, that were established instead of the empires, started to put forward their national components while forming their new systems. While these states were trying to create a new identity for the society, they were also trying to legalize (Özbudun, 1995, 39.) the new political power. (Hobsbawm-Ranger,1989, 1–2.) Undoubtedly, among these efforts, the most important matter is the history education. The embracement by the society, legitimacy and handing down the new generations of the new political system are only possible by the teaching of the national history through the most enduring way.

The issues of the last periods of Ottoman Empire, the projects of sharing Anatolia and the realization of liberation through National Struggle, the declaration of Republic and movements of revolution are steps taken towards the way of National State in Turkey. Accordingly, issues like the embracement, handing down the next generation and ensuring the pursuance of the Republic are considered as extremely important. (Mustafa Yılmaz, *Türk Eğitim Sisteminde Atatürkçülük ve Cumhuriyet Tarihi Öğretimi* (Ed.Yasemin Doğaner), Hacettepe University Press, Ankara, 2006, s. 3; İsmail Acun,“T.C. İnkılâp Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük Dersi Öğretiminde Bilgi ve İletişim Teknolojilerinin Etkili Kullanımı”, *Türk Eğitim Sisteminde Atatürkçülük ve Cumhuriyet Tarihi Öğretimi* (Ed. Yasemin Doğaner), Hacettepe University Press, Ankara, 2006, p. 155).

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The course in which all these issues are stated as official ideology was started to be taught in all the schools under different names like “Turkish Revolution History”, “Turkish History of Revolution” and “Turkish History of Revolution and Atatürk’s Principles.” This course generally includes the teaching of issues like the sophisticated international problems of the period before the foundation of The Turkish Republic, how those problems were solved, the efforts of being a modern society and achieving democracy. Again, it aims to embrace them and hand down the next generations and keep the best place in contemporary world by preserving its value through this way. (Seçil Akgün, “Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılâp Tarihinin Amaç ve Kapsamı”, Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılâp Tarihinde Yöntem Arayışları, Ankara: Hacettepe University Press, Ankara, 2004, p. 15.)

Generally, problems of, the course’s not being able to achieve its aim, the inadequacy of the course books and problems caused by the teacher are being emphasized in the studies made on the teaching methods and problems of History of Revolution. It is interesting that generally the problems related to this course, which is being taught in all the levels of the educational institutions, are about the same issues. (Mustafa Safran, “İnkılâp Tarihi Öğretimine Yaklaşım Sorunları”, *Tarih Eğitimi Makale ve Bildiriler*, Gazi Bookstore, Ankara, 2006, p. 107.) Beyond giving the historical information, it is necessary to solve the problem about the course named “History of Revolution and Kemalism”, which aims to serve for purposes primarily like the lasting of the Republic, strengthening the unity and solidarity by raising the senses of nationalism and handing all these down to the next generations.

Problems about this course should also be reviewed from the aspects of the teaching methods, the course books, the attitudes of the teacher, the approaches of the students as well as the attitudes of the families.

In this survey, the questionnaire workout made on the level of primary school, the results that are reached in the survey are analyzed by grounding on the province of Kırşehir.

2. Method

In this part, the model of the survey, the basis and sample, the data collection tools, the collecting of the data and the analysis of the data are emphasized. In this part, the model of the survey, the basis and sample, the data collection tools, the collecting of the data and the analysis of the data are emphasized.

2.1. The Model of Survey

In this research, we used the method of survey. Survey research is a range of works that aim to collect the data to specify certain features of the group. (Büyüköztürk and the others, 2009: 16).

2.2. The Basis and Sample of Survey

The students who were studying in Kırşehir in the 2010-2011 academic year, set the population of the survey. And the sample of the survey consists of 148 eighth grade students who are attending Cacabey Primary School, İnönü Primary School, Hüsnü Özyeğin primary School, Vali Mithat Saylam Primary School in Kırşehir. The information about these students is listed at Table 1.

Table 1: Information About The Students In Extent of The Survey

	N	%		N	%
Gender			Province		
Girls	76	51	Kırşehir	148	100
Boys	72	49			
Total	148	100			
Educational Background of Father			Educational Background of Mother		
Primary School	50	33,8	Primary School	85	57,4
Secondary School	37	25,0	Secondary School	34	23,0
High School	50	33,8	High School	29	19,6

University	11	7,4	University	-	-
Total	148	100	Total	148	100
School					
Cacabey	35	23,6			
İnönü	19	12,8			
Namık Kemal	18	12,2			
Hüsnü Özyeğin	36	24,3			
Vali Mithat Saylam	40	27,0			
Total	148	100			

2.3. The Data Collecting Tool

To collect data in the survey, a questionnaire is used with the aim of discovering the opinions of the students about the course of “Atatürk’s Principles and History of Revolution”. The pilot scheme of the questionnaire is conducted in Kırşehir with 75 students who are not included in the major pool and the reliability coefficient is determined as 758. Later we had 5 teachers, who teach the course of “Atatürk’s Principles and History of Revolution” in the eighth grade, read them and made the regulations according to the responses that came from the teachers. Finally, the scale is finalized by taking the opinions of two professionals who work in the field of Educational Sciences in The University of Ehi Evran. The final questionnaire consists of three sections. In the first section, the personal information of the students (gender, school, educational background of mother-father etc.) are asked. In the second section, they are asked to write a short composition about the life of Atatürk. And in the last section, there are 16 questions in the form of five points liker that aim to discover the opinions of the students about the course of “Atatürk’s Principles and History of Revolution”.

2.4. The Analysis of The Data

In the analysis of the data that is collected by the data collection tool, packaged software of SPSS 15,0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), is made used of. In the analysis of lower aimed data, the t-test is used and the method of single factor variance analysis (ANOVA) is used in the analysis of the other lover aimed data. To find out the responses given by the students to the questions, we calculated the percentage frequency.

3. Findings and Interpretation

The results of the survey made in the frame of the sense of Nation-State about the course of Atatürk’s Principles and History of Revolution which aim to raise the next generations around the goals of the continuation of Turkish Republic, preserving its values, providing the unity and solidarity by increasing the sense of nationalism.

Table 2: The Results of The t-test on The Course of Atatürk’s Principles and History of Revolution According to The Gender Factor

Gender	n	SS	t	P
Girls	76	61,55	8,3080	
Boys	72	63,33	-4,434	,164

According to the gender variable among the students, there is a meaningful difference between the girls and the boys. [$t_{(146)} = -4,434; p \leq .05$]. The opinion average of the girls about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is found out to be ($\bar{X} = 61,55$) and the opinion average of the boys is found out to be ($\bar{X} = 63,33$) (Table 2.)

Table 3: The Results of The Anova Test About The Course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution According to The Educational Background of The Mothers of the Students

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>S</i>			
School	1-Cacabey P.S.	35	63,48	7,2532		
	2-İnönü P.S.	19	60,57	10,1615		
	3-Namık Kemal P.S	18	60,27	6,0663		
	4-Hüsnü Özyeğin P.S	36	65,36	5,3246		
	5-Vali Mithat Saylam P.S	40	60,67	8,7541		
<i>The Situation of The Resource of The Variant</i>	<i>Sum of The Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Meaningful Difference</i>
Between Groups	619,961	3	154,990	2,685	,034	2-4
Within Groups	8254,066	143	57,721			3-4
Total	8874,027	147				4-5

Table 4: The Results of The Anova Test About The Course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution According to The Educational Background of The Fathers of the Students

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>S</i>			
Educational Background of Mother	Primary School	85	62,57	7,1453		
	Secondary School	34	61,50	9,6679		
	High School	29	63,03	7,2184		
<i>The Situation of The Resource of The Variant</i>	<i>Sum of The Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Meaningful Difference</i>
Between Groups	41,809	2	20,904	,343	,710	---
Within Groups	8832,218	145	60,912			
Total	8874,027	147				

It is made out that there is no meaningful difference between their opinions about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution according to the educational background of the mothers and fathers of the students (Table 3). It is discovered that there are no university graduates among the mothers and most of the fathers are primary school and high school graduates while there are also some university graduates. However, with the results of the analysis, it is remarkable that there is no meaningful difference among the responses given to the question about the sensibility of the family against the course (Table 4)

Table 5: The Anova Test About The Course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution According to The Schools The Students are Attending.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>S</i>			
Educational Background of Father	Primary School	50	61,92	7,9586		
	Secondary School	37	61,78	7,6126		
	High School	50	62,64	8,1909		
	University	11	65,81	4,8952		
<i>The Situation of The Resource of The Variant</i>	<i>Sum of The Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Meaningful Difference</i>
Between Groups	156,920	3	52,307	,864	,461	---
Within Groups	8717,107	144	60,535			
Total	8874,027	147				

As seen Table 5, The Results of the analysis suggest that there is a meaningful difference among the opinions of the students about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution according to the schools they are attending. [$F(4-143) = 2,685$ $P < 0.05$] In the analysis made to discover among which groups the difference is present, it is found out that there are meaningful differences between Hüsni Özyeğin and Cacabey Primary Schools and among İnönü, Namık Kemal ve Vali Mithat Saylam Primay Schools. As a matter of fact, these two schools that have been mentioned are the schools that have the highest socioeconomic status. The other three schools are weaker from this aspect. So, it is discovered that the students who attend the schools which have lower socioeconomic status and located in the outskirts have lower average opinions about this course.

Table 6: The Range of The Percentage Frequency of The Responses Given to The Questions of the Questionary

	Strongly agree		Agree		I Don't Know		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
The course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is one of the courses that I like the most.	50	33,8	63	42,6	24	16,2	4	2,7	7	4,7
The method of teaching of the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is adequate.	60	40,5	53	35,8	22	14,9	8	5,4	5	3,4
The lecturing of the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution contributes to my future life.	88	59,5	38	25,7	17	11,5	4	2,7	1	,7
The lecturing of the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution by following the units of the course book is adequate.	21	14,2	20	13,5	27	18,2	44	29,7	36	24,3

It is necessary that the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution should be taught according to the course book.	49	33,1	22	14,9	32	21,6	28	18,9	17	11,5
It is necessary that the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution should be backed up with materials like map, CD, movie.	108	73,0	24	16,2	10	6,8	1	,7	5	3,4
The knowledge and teaching of the teacher who teaches the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is adequate.	87	58,8	25	16,9	17	11,5	10	6,8	9	6,1
It is enough that the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is limited just by the period of Atatürk.	46	31,1	21	14,2	30	20,3	33	22,3	18	12,2
It is necessary that the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution should be compared with the period after Atatürk to make the development and evolution visible.	61	41,2	42	28,4	36	24,3	6	4,1	3	2,0
I am eager to know what happened in Turkey in the period after Atatürk.	100	67,6	33	22,3	9	6,1	1	,7	5	3,4
In my opinion, the definitions of the concepts like reform, revolution, civil insurrection are adequate.	55	37,2	54	36,5	22	14,9	10	6,8	7	4,7
Adequate information is being given about the atmosphere before Atatürk.	68	45,9	52	35,1	21	14,2	4	2,7	3	2,0
The reason why the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is being taught is being explained adequately.	64	43,2	46	31,1	27	18,2	6	4,1	5	3,4
In my opinion, the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is appropriate for the goals of raising good citizens, handing down the new generations, continuing the Republic.	89	60,1	35	23,6	16	10,8	3	2,0	5	3,4
My family is sensitive about this course to be given adequately.	58	39,2	27	18,2	47	31,8	7	4,7	9	6,1
I have difficulties in narrating the subjects of this course.	45	30,4	19	12,8	15	10,1	39	26,4	30	20,3

As seen Table 6, that the students are marking the course of Atatürk's Principles and the History of Revolution as one of the courses they like the most and that they are aware of the fact that it will contribute to the future of the country are found as extremely positive. This result revives the sense that the course will reach its goal on condition that the problems it has are resolved.

In the questionnaire, it is realized that there is a variety among the responses given to the fourth and the fifth questions. As a matter of fact, the resource averages are contradictory although the same question is being asked. This situation can be explained by facts like some of the students couldn't comprehend the questions or their having read the questions carelessly. Likewise, while among the responses given to the eighth question, the opinion that it is adequate that the course is limited just with the period of Atatürk is dominant, among the responses given to the ninth and the tenth questions, the idea of their being eager to have information about the periods before and after Atatürk is dominant. According to these results, it can be said again that it is because of the carelessness of the students.

The results about the necessity of the courses of Atatürk's Principles and The History of Revolution in aspects of raising good citizens, raising the awareness of the next generations, which are the aspects of these courses that are particularly taken as the subject of this survey, are pleasing. The rates like %60,1 strongly agree, %23 agree are considerably high. Paralelly, it is possible to say that, according to the responses given to the question of I have

difficulties in narrating the subjects of the course, the reason of the negative responses about the course is this matter. Thus, the responses of %30,4 strongly agree, %12,8 agree and %10,1 I don't know are rates far from being unimportant. Accordingly, this problem can be solved through the teaching of the course from a clearer, more objective, more realistic perspective and through the usage of some visuals.

If we try to make a general evaluation; according to the responses given to the questions of the questionnaire, the students show interest to their schools and the course and they have comprehended the aim of this course. However, the sources of the problems are well known, which can be summarized as; the inadequacy of teachers, the dullness of the course book, the methods of lecturing and lack of the usage of visual tools, socioeconomic and psychological problems, carelessness of the students and lastly the indifference of the family.

The results of the section in which some information about Atatürk's life is demanded is as followings; while 115 students have written the birth date and birthplace of Atatürk, 51 of them have also mentioned the year of his death, 20 of them gave only this information. (Especially the students on İnönü Primary School) while 1 student has included the detail of the time of Atatürk's death, 1 student has included his age of death and 2 students have mentioned the name of his disease.

While 71 students have written the names of Atatürk's father and mother, 15 of them, have written the names of his father and mother in addition to their birth date and date of death. While 32 students have written about Makbule with whose dead siblings he grew up, 24 of them have mentioned this detail in addition to the information given above. Another remarkable point is that, especially the students of Namık Kemal Primary School expressed the information with the same sentences.

In the schools the survey applied, while 11 students have mentioned Atatürk's personal characteristics like his patriotism, intelligence, farsightedness and sophistication in addition to the information above, the number of the students who have mentioned only the personal characteristics of Atatürk are 19. While 16 students have written his birth date and date of death and the names of his father and mother, 53 students have mentioned the schools he attended; while 23 of them have written the Şemsi Efendi Local School, 9 students have mentioned Harbiye School, 5 of them have mentioned the high school in Monastery and 10 of them did not mention a name of a school.

The information to be expressed as dissimilar are as follows; 2 students have written that he moved to his uncle's after the death of his father, 1 student has mentioned the job of his father, 3 students have mentioned the wars he crusaded, 1 student has mentioned his marriage, one student has written that he took the surname of Atatürk in 1934, 1 student has mentioned his western and revolutionary characteristics, 3 students have mentioned that he got inspired from the provinces of Selonica, Sophia, Monastery and İstanbul, 3 students have mentioned that his mother is originally from Konya and 2 students have mentioned that his father is originally from Söke.

It is detected that just in 2 papers among all the papers, adequate information is given.

Considering the information given about Atatürk, it is concluded that Atatürk is not being taught adequately and accurately. It is supposed that more importance is being given to the family life of Atatürk than his achievements and the information given are not more than conventional sentences. Hence, nobody, instead of those two students, has mentioned the subjects like especially the Republic, revolutions and his principals. Also, matters like his leadership of National Struggle, his Presidency, his ideas of National Sovereignty do not take place in the papers.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

The teaching of the courses about national history in a lasting and accurate manner is extremely important in the aspect of shaping the future of the country. The course taught in every level of education in Turkey under the name of Atatürk's Principles and The History of Revolution since 1930s, is taken as an important element to shape the future of the country. Although the importance of this course is being emphasized in the introductions of the books, in syllabuses, in the daily speeches, in lectures and in the academic environments; it is not possible to say that it achieves its goals. The results of all the surveys made about this issue are not different than this one and the problems repeat themselves in the same way.

The mentioning of the problems like the course books, teachers, the teaching methods of the course, the sensitivity of families, the attention of students in all the surveys show that it is necessary to make urgent regulations about the matter. When we consider the problems of today in the world and in our country, it is necessary to realize the fact that the necessary importance is ought to be given to the courses of National history.

It is necessary to remove the methods of memorization and giving bare information from the courses and teach the subjects with a realistic approach by correlating them with facts, concepts and their relationship with the past, the outer world and the features of the time period. For sure, the most important issue is that, the teachers should be able to adopt the objective style instead of reflecting their own political views and above all, they should be able to meet the accuracies, goals and the expectations of the course.

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