

Chapter 23. Education of Turkish People for Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey

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Introduction

Turkey has received 3 million Syrian refugees in 4 years. The terror, chaos and the uncertainty of the Syrian war made many Syrians to live in Turkey for long years. Many people indicate that they will accommodate in Turkey even the war ends since Syria is a ruinous country. Additionally, Syrian people have started to build a life in Turkey. Thus, Syrians should be considered as permanent citizens rather than temporary visitors and the social cohesion of Syrians to Turkey is significant need for Turkey. A successful cohesion will ensure Syrians a more peaceful and comfortable life both financially and socially. Education is one of the most significant tools to ensure a successful social cohesion. Therefore, both Syrians and people of Turkey should be trained to live together. Emergently necessary education areas are language, vocational, intercultural and regular education which will be provided as a result of communication and networking between Syrians and people of Turkey. These activities to know each other for Syrians and people of Turkey will provide a healthy social structure in Turkey.

The aim of the study is to investigate the education needs of Turkish people for social cohesion with Syrian refugees and to understand the use of education for this aim. Education should be provided for people of Turkey to have respect to Syrians, help them in dignity, have a healthy communication and recognition of both sides. This will lead peace for people of Turkey and Syrians in our country. Additionally, contributions of people of Turkey to support Syrian refugees to ensure them to settle here peacefully will help Syrians them gain self sufficiency which gives the feeling that they are not in need, they are not a burden for Turkey but independent citizens building a decent life here as free citizens and ensure social cohesion between Syrians and people in Turkey.

Methodology

In depth interview, literature review and participant observation are used as the method of the study. Firstly, we have started to visit Syrian schools (Temporary Education Centers) in Ankara, Altındağ, in 2015, to observe the conditions of Syrians and education they get. For 6 months we visited the schools every week besides family visits to Syrians in the area. In each visit we spent 4-5 hours. We also attended to lectures of the Syrian classrooms, visited teachers' room of Syrians, and Turkish teachers. At these Turkish formal school buildings Syrian children receive education from Syrian teachers, with Syrian curriculum. We realised that the programme is prepared assuming return of Syrians back to their country soon, and be prepared for their life back in Syria, while the war did not end. The buildings are

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also shared with Turkish students and teachers. Turkish part use school in the morning but by Syrian students in the afternoon. The school principle is Turkish while there are Syrian vice-principles responsible from Syrian part of the school. Furthermore, a Turkish coordinator has been assigned for each school responsible for Syrian schools. We have observed this mixed style in education of Syrians which raised us the questions on the conditions of the new society being constructed with Syrians in the future.

However, there were invisible but significant problems were obvious for us. Turkish teachers did not have any communication with Syrian teachers when they meet. Additionally, some of them were not responding salute of the Syrians, and tell each other that the Syrians can not be accepted as teachers and their diplomas were not accredited and their university education is useless. It was astonishing that the Turkish teachers were not even curious about Syrians after all these adventures they had. This discern spread even to students and parents of Turkish part even they are educated seperately within the same buildings. There have been protests from Turkish parents rejecting sharing school with Syrians, students writing curses and insults to their desks about Syrians.

Since 2014, with the new law (2014/21 from Ministry of education)² Syrians have right to send their children to regular schools besides Syrian schools. However, we have seen that many of the Syrians do not prefer regular school since the kids are discriminated in the school, there are not Turkish language teaching programmes to integrate them faster to the system and not a compensation programme for the missing years of the students during the war. As a result of these observations we have understood the necessity of the education of people of Turkey to have a better social cohesion with Syrians.

Recognising the problem of education and social structure of Turkey, reluctance of some officers adopt to a new life with Syrians, anxiety of Turkish parents and students about Syrians we have visited school principles and teachers of Syrian schools to analyse the issue deeper. These visits lead us to include vairous government officers and NGO workers to our research.

Therefore, we started semi-structured in depth interviews with NGO workers, government officers, Turkish and Syrian school teachers and school principles, parents of Syrian and Turkish children. The interviews took 30-60 minutes. Two researchers have performed the interviews with 20 people during our visits between november 2015, until june 2016 in Ankara. While one was making the interview, the other one was observer. Considering the consequences of the interviews and participant observation we have investigated the related literature on the refugees and social cohesion, role of the education on social cohesion, and intercultural education.

Literature Review

The effects of the mass migration of Syrians to Turkey is a very recent topic. The role of education in social cohesion is generally understood only as the

² http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/yabyonegiogr_1/yabyonegiogr_1.html, 23.09.2014, Erişim tarihi 25.03.2016.

education of the minorities ie. refugees and migrants. Furthermore, in Turkey, all the written work about the integration of the Syrians to the Turkish society through education are about the education of Syrians, while they are very limited and consist mostly of the reports about education and the number of school aged Syrian children. (Al-Haj, 2014; Emin, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2015; Orhan et al, 2014; O'Rourke, 2015; CDCC, 2001; Culbertson ve Constant, 2015; UNICEF, 2015) However the number of the refugees change daily and these reports are not relevant.

There is not any study on the role of the education of people of Turkey on the social cohesion of Syrians. The most relevant studies are as a report investigating the perception and social acceptance of people of Turkey about Syrian refugees in Turkey. (Erdoğan, 2014) Additionally, Ruhat Yaşar's study (2014) "Perceptions about Syrian Asylum Seekers in Kilis : Initial View of Social Autism and Othering Process" is an academical research on the issue. Yaşar performed his research in Kilis (a Turkish city in the border of Syria) which had Syrian refugees more than its original population. In this study Yaşar investigated the problems and endeavours for social cohesion between Syrians and people of Kilis. Besides the other results he found that even the people of Kilis has various problems and concerns related the mass migration of Syrians, the positive perception of the people of Kilis is stronger than the problems which they face. Furthermore, there are researches studying the education needs of the immigrants for social cohesion in European countries. (Suarez-Orozco ve Suarez-Orozco, 2009: 65; CDCC, 2001: 9). Additionally, studies on the train the trainers programmes for host countries are available. (Lemaire, 2009), However, they are limited to the trainers and teachers, but our study aims to suggest education not only trainers but also officers, parents, students, health workers, etc. besides teachers. Intercultural education for every part of the society is a significant element of social cohesion for all over the World. (CDCC, 2001; Lemaire, 2009; Banks, 2009, 1994; Nieto, 1992; As GÖK, et al, 2011; Acar Çiftçi and Aydın, 2014) Thus, studies emphasising the significance of intercultural education are also relevant resources for our study which we also suggest the education of Turkish people should be included in intercultural elements.

As GÖK, F. et al (2011) emphasise that even Turkey is a multicultural society, multicultural and intercultural education has not been available in Turkey. Our study is basically unique in two issues. Firstly, we search about the need for education of people of Turkey on awareness on social cohesion with the migrants and other cultures which is not searched before. Furthermore, during the interviews with the officer of minister of education it is mentioned very often that a programme for the Syrian children should also include some items of Arabic culture and language besides Turkish ones. This application will lead in future an education programme ensuring social cohesion of Syrians and people of Turkey and this will change Turkish education system open to an intercultural vision. Therefore; secondly, this research is unique on researching the effects of mass migration of Syrians to the education system of Turkey considering intercultural education.

The need for education of people of Turkey on social cohesion has been revealed with the mentioned problems during the interviews. These problems occur in almost every part of the society. Furthermore, even laws and regulations are given to

Syrians gradually, as on education, having ID numbers, registration of their car licences, health insurance, right to have translation service, right to have a bank account, right to work, many officers do not know the rules or reluctant to implement the rules and many Syrians do not know their rights properly. Even the rights are not sufficient, they also are not so easily implemented. Some part of people of Turkey have prejudice about Syrians seeing them “war betrayers”, “beggars”, besides the prejudices taught us about Arabic people as the enemy of Turkey in the history classes. Furthermore, some government officers despise Syrians since they are muslim and religious.

Additionally, Syrians are unexpected burden for the officers in the government institutions which causes problem for Turkish officers and Turkish system. In the government offices, bureaucracy is slow and officers do not want to risks about new regulations for Syrians. With the extremely increasing numbers of Syrians, fake-certificates popped up and the suspicion between the Turkish officers and Syrians caused problems and sometimes stopped the ID procedures for uncertain time. In order to check the documents, police and the other registration institutions started to work with extremely tight collaboration which also caused slowness of the processes. Many hospitals for example were already barely enough for the Turkish patients, now they are also responsible for Syrian immigrants with the same capacity, while most of the Syrians are already sick or wounded as a result of the trauma of the war and even some Syrians come to Turkey just for treatment especially in the border cities. Language barrier is also a difficulty on communication of Turkish and Syrian parts. Syrians can not express themselves efficiently, and there are not enough translators in Turkey which causes stress and desperation for Syrians and people of Turkey. A doctor for example, can not understand the Syrian patients even and gets anxious about the treatment and afraid to apply wrong treatment. At the regular Turkish schools, Syrian children are just delivered to classes with Turkish students without any language course or complementary programmes for them. Furthermore, teachers are not trained about intercultural school environment and they are overwhelmed with the Syrian children. Under these circumstances, Syrian children are not embraced with a welcoming atmosphere, learn Turkish, understand the lessons and have friends.

The disrespect and discrimination of the Turkish teachers to Syrian teachers and the students is the first problem recognised:

“Teachers do not talk to us, they do not respond our ‘essalamualeykum’ (hi). They do not accept us as teachers” (R.G., A syrian female teacher, 35 years old)³

A Syrian parent explains that teacher of her 10 years old son does not like him and even she tries to comfort his son, he is very sorry for this. (A.H., A syrian female parent, 38 years old)

An officer from ministry of National ministry (S.I., Turkish officer, male, 35 years old) also explains that even he could not register a Syrian student to a Turkish school without fighting hard for it. The principle firstly rejected claiming there is no regulation about it. Then he used the parents as an excuse for his rejection. The

³ Description of the quotations are in a paranthesize the with the order of the first capitals of attendee her name and surname, nationality, sex, occupation and age

officer talked with the parents and convinced them. Only then he could register the Syrian students to school.

“Some officers do not know the regulations, rules, and rights of the Syrians. Some of them are rude. We have to call general directors even to get a regular service and paper work” (F.A, Turkish NGO member, female, 47)

Another institution Syrians complain about is the hospitals. Even they have free health insurance, in Turkey, they complain that the doctors are discriminating them *“Doctors in government hospitals misbehave us, to avoid these kind of maltreatment, we have to go to private doctors which is very expensive.” (H.A., A Syrian female teacher, 42 years old)*. Another Syrian woman tells about the ill-treatment of a Turkish doctor when she wanted to be treated to have a baby:

“I am married for 8 years but I can not have a baby. I want to have a child, but doctors insult me when I say so. They say ‘how you dare to want a child while you are beggars and burden on us wit all your population” (F., T., A Syrian female teacher, 30 years old)

Additionally, there are not sufficient translation services in the hospitals to help Syrians which causes Syrians not to be accepted to any hospital they need. As an example, N.Ş., (Syrian housewife, female, 23) was having a complicated delivery because of the chemical weapons used in Syria which she has been exposed before she fled. However, a well equipped hospital did not accept her since they do not have any translator. A Turkish volunteer who accompany her to the hospital alarmed her friends to call the vice-head of the hospital, by then they have accepted her for the labour.

Significance of Locals' Education for Social Cohesion

Education is a very important tool for the social cohesion. It can be implemented in three processes as, education of the immigrants, education of the locals and regulating the education programme. Even we focus only on the education of the locals in our study, in order to achieve a succesfull living together peacefully, all of them should be implemented conjunctionally. Education, especially intercultural education serves to establish a common ground, common cultural understanding, solidarity and healthy communication between different groups within the country, security and peace. Additionally, education should lead an awareness about human right and equality between people, knowing and respecting diversity.

Common ground is what keeps society together. It mostly depends on social rights and freedom, laws, language, religion, being religious (even within different religious identities). An education system should be arranged to include all the items mentioned above necessary for social cohesion. As a result of the atmosphere created with this common ground, all cultural differences should be demonstrated freely. Thus, there will be an environment enact intercultural learning and this learning process will dispell the fear from the other. When the fear from the other disappears, a healthy communication and learning will provide a secure and normal daily life for all of the society. As an intercultural education programme is implemented in Turkey it can also lead to find a common ground that all the different cultures are demonstrated, people learn from each other and communicate with each other to establish a social cohesion.

Thus, both Syrians and people of Turkey need education and this education will serve and enrich all the society providing a successful social cohesion. The necessity and obligation to educate the hosts have various reasons. Firstly, citizens of the host country are the advantaged group, they need to serve, guide, understand, the new comers first. Additionally, they need to accept to share their life with the refugees first, at schools, at parks, at workplaces, at hospitals, etc. Furthermore, citizens of the host country make and implement the laws and regulations; thus, they need to be respectful of human rights, and recognize the problems and conditions of the refugees while they are performing their duties.

Education of host country should basically include teachers, government officers, media, health service employers, and parents. This education should be about firstly awareness raising, intercultural competence, learning about the law regulations and their implementation on foreigners. Additionally, these education issues should include; making laws, implementing laws, cultural diversity, learning Turkish and Syrian Culture, Human rights and language sensitivity which includes encouragement of Arabic learning in general, in adult education courses, encouragement of learning Arabic for officers in critical positions, guaranteeing translation services in government.

During this process teachers should be trained about intercultural education and gain democratical behaviour in the classroom environment besides, teaching to traumatised, non-native-language speaker students. Additionally, government officers should be educated to make democratic laws and regulations and implementing them. Employers and employees of the private sector should also be trained to be aware of the rights of the Syrians.

Conclusion

In almost every migration stores in all over the World, tendency is to stay permanent in the migrated country. Thus, after five years of the mass migration, Syrians should be considered as permanent citizens in Turkey. There should be policy considering Syrians to participate to the social, political, economic, education life etc. of the society. If the Syrians have the possibility to be a part of the society, there will be a way to lead to social cohesion. The social cohesion of Syrians to Turkey is significant need for Turkey and for Syrians. A successful cohesion will ensure Syrians a more peaceful and comfortable life both financially and socially. Education is one of the most significant tools of social cohesion. Especially, intercultural education helps the different parts of the society to learn from each other and to know each other. Both Syrians and people of Turkey need intercultural education to live peacefully; therefore, education will help construction of social cohesion of Syrians and people in Turkey. The new education system helping social cohesion will also effect the education system of Turkey deeply. Education of people of Turkey to have a better social cohesion with Syrians will lead a paradigm change in Turkey about living together peacefully and in education system. This also reveals the insufficiency of Turkish education system in intercultural education, democracy education, active citizenship and participation. Therefore, this study aims to attract attention to the rebuilding of the Turkish

identity and education system considering the role and the needs of the big amount of Syrians.

The characteristics of the education which is directed to the people of Turkey should be democratic, intercultural and respectful to equality and human rights. This new education system should be based on a consistent policy which is aware of the new student-oriented, non-hierarchical education system in the World. This education programme should also include mostly cultural activities which would enable people to know different cultures. Learning language is also a very important aspect of this intercultural education for the people of Turkey which will easily lead to paradigm change about the education system and worldview. This education should include almost everybody in the society as the Turkish politicians, officers, teachers, employers and employees of the private sector, health service workers, parents, media, etc. Finally, our study also suggests a new area for various studies and projects for social cohesion of Syrians in Turkey and in all over the World.

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