

PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES IN THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF TURKEY'S EARLY REPUBLICAN PERIOD (1926-1927)*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the general characteristics of the physical education classes in early republican period in Turkey by examining the photos taken at schools in various cities in those times. The document analysis technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, has been adopted in the study. The data of the study have been obtained from 37 physical education classes photographs, preserved in the Ministry of National Education, General Administration of Innovation and Education Archives, and which were taken between the years 1926 and 1927. The analyses of the photographs were made by using the four predetermined themes (the curricula of the classes, the clothes used in the classes, sports branches, and the instructors of the classes). When the data obtained with the analyses are examined, it has been determined that the curricula of the classes were characterized with the Gymnastics of Sweden and scout applications, which is in agreement with the soul of the period; the clothes were preferred as school uniforms and casual wear; the sports branches were preferred as cricket, tennis and basketball. The teachers are visible in 26 of the photographs (18 male teachers, 8 female teachers), and there are only the students in other photographs. As a consequence, it may be suggested that the physical education classes in the early years of the Republic in Turkey has -in the light of the photographs- a variety in the contents, the applications and the clothes; the participation of the students -rather than their sportive performances- is cared for; and the instructors are not specialized as the physical education teachers.

Key Words: Physical education classes, early Republican period, photographs.

* This study was poster presented in Erpa International Congress on Education, 4-7 June 2015, Athens-Greece.

INTRODUCTION

Physical education has been indispensable in human education process so far from the archaic times. When the history of education is examined, it becomes obvious that the education of the body is used as a tool to reach upper-level educational targets either in formal or in informal ways in various cultures and geographical areas. When the findings on this issue are considered, it is observed that human beings are described with their height and powerful and moderate body properties in ancient Egypt, and generally with their acrobatic movements in power shows in ancient China in wood carvings and in pictures. In addition, there are pictures, statues and written texts about the education of the body and the perception of the body especially in ancient Greek culture (Alpman, 1972, p. 15-70; Gillet, 1975, p. 20; Kirchner and Fishburne, 1995, p. 4-5; Swaddling, 1999). In older historical records, on the other hand, we see

that there are figures of human body depicted on rocks that date back to Prehistoric Era in Anatolian territory (Alok, 2012).

In Middle Age European times, although there were no physical education or sports concept as we have conceptualized today, physical activities were scattered in everyday life and had an extensive significance (Vigarello, 2008, p. 189). This situation is depicted in an impressive way and in enormous detail in the paintings of the Dutch Artist, Pieter Bruegel. In the Turkish History, there are historical visual works of art belonging to Seljukian and Ottoman Eras showing people in physical activity like hunting, playing games and performing physical activities. Especially in miniature works of art, people are depicted gorgeously as shooting arrows to the targets, wrestling, riding horses, horsemen playing with javelin, playing truncheon, etc. (Yıldız, 1979, p. 147; İrepoğlu, 2012).

The development of physical education as we know it today dates back to 17th and 18th century Europe. Basedow, a German educationalist, included physical education activities in school curricula and made the term *school gymnastics* emerge in those years. Then GutMus published the works under the titles “*Gymnastics for Youth*” and “*Games that Make the Body and Mind Relax and Workout*”. The effects of these works were so enormous that they pioneered in the development and spread of the physical education in school curricula both in his own country and especially in Northern Europe. With this effect, Ling in Sweden announced a new physical education system which was based on scientific and physiological principles. This new system spread in many countries in a very short time. This system showed a fast spread firstly in the army and then at schools with the help of the facilities it brought in teaching physical education classes and its applications (Alpman, 1972, p. 156-195; Wright, 2000).

In Turkey, the application of physical education at schools started as of 19th century. First physical education classes began in military schools and in Galatasaray Highschool. With the declaration of General Educational Law released in 1869, the “*Gymnastics*” classes (the name given to physical education in those times) began to be educated in Boys’ Schools (Secondary Schools) (Günay, 2013). Then, in the following process, it is observed that physical education classes were included in the curricula of various school types and developed in the forthcoming years. It is also observed that the Physical Education classes were included in the curricula prepared in 1915 for the schools of those times which may be defined as the first primary schools or secondary schools (Cicioğlu, 1985). With the declaration of the Turkish Republic, physical

education classes started to be taught in state schools (Dever and İslam, 2015). The First Educational Council, which convened in 1923, formed 5 commissions, National and Scientific Organization, Primary Education, Secondary Education, Scout Training and Physical Education and Executive Committee. The issue of training the physical education teachers was also discussed as a significant topic (Günay, 2013).

On the other hand, Akin (2004, p. 55-58) states that there were various debates that varied from the comparison of gymnastic systems, to what the widespread sports should be; and to the philosophical debates on the agreement and contrast between the body and the mind in late Ottoman and early Republican years. The purpose of the social change process that was started with the establishment of the Republic was to give the traditional social structure a modern route, to give the conscious of modern citizenship, and shape the social structure with education (Fer, 2005). For this purpose, the 87th Item of the 1924 Constitution was regulated as “*Women, men, all Turks have the assignment of receiving primary education. The primary education is free of charge in State Schools*”, and with this Item, the aim was to make all children receive primary education (Kaya, 1984).

The photographs which were examined in the scope of this study correspond to the time when Mustafa Necati was the Minister of National Education (the MoNE). He was appointed as the Minister of National Education on December 20, 1925, and established several commissions as soon as he took office to perform educational studies. One of these commissions was the Physical Education Commission (Günay, 2013). There are also photographs of the classes and school buildings showing the same period in the Ministry of National Education Archives, where the study findings are obtained from. It is considered that the photographs authenticates the changes that took place in the period in which Mustafa Necati was the minister. Some of these photographs have been collected into a book with the name “*Traces from Education in the Early Years of the Republic*” (the MoNE, 1999). The aim of this study is to examine the practices of the concept of physical education, which has been described above, at schools with the help of the photographs taken in early Republican period in various cities of Turkey at various schools; and determine the main characteristics of the physical education classes in this period.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The document analysis technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods, has been adopted in the study. Documents are important sources of information that are used in

qualitative studies. They may be in written form as well as in visual form like films, videos and photographs (Silverman, 2001; Creswell, 2003; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). The data of the study have been obtained from the 37 physical education classes photographs preserved in the Ministry of National Education, General Administration of Innovation and Education Archives, and which were taken between the years 1926 and 1927. The analyses of the photographs were made by using the four predetermined themes (the curricula of the classes, the clothes used in the classes, sports branches, and the instructors of the classes). For this purpose, the researcher defined the aspects of study to be analyzed for each theme and encoded the collected data using an Excel software package, and finally conducted a percentage and frequency analysis by calculating the percentage and frequency, respectively.

FINDINGS

The findings on the four themes that are investigated in the study have been explained in figures.

The First Theme: The Curricula of the Classes

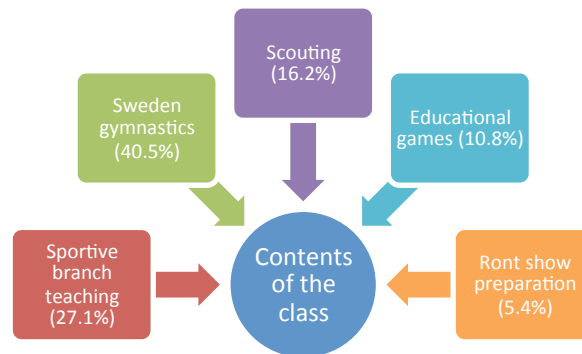


Figure 1

When the data obtained with the analyses are examined, it has been determined that the curricula of the classes are characterized with the Gymnastics of Sweden and scout applications, which is in agreement with the soul of the period; and then came the sportive branch education.

The Second Theme: The Clothes

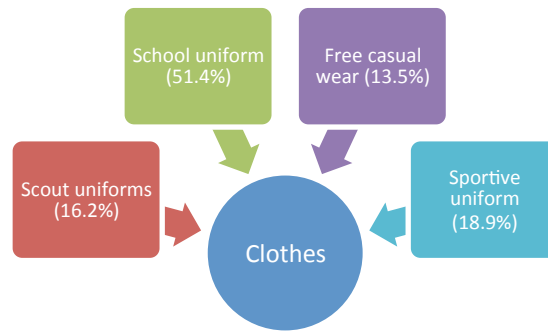


Figure 2

When the clothes worn in physical education classes are considered, it is observed that the school uniforms and casual wear are preferred in physical education classes; and uniforms for specific sports branches are also used.

The Third Theme: Sports Branches

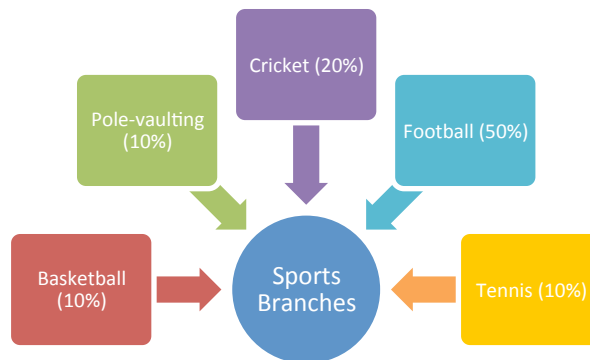


Figure 3

In the sports branches theme, it is observed that there are findings on a sports branch in 10 photographs out of 37 photographs; and football is dominant in the photographs as well as cricket, tennis, basketball, and pole-vaulting.

The Fourth Theme: Class Teachers

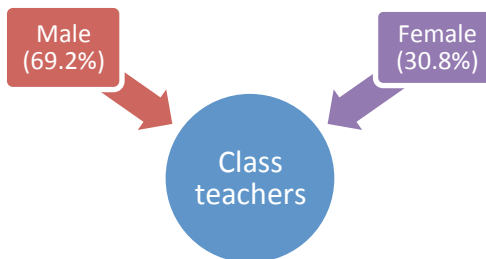


Figure 4

It has been determined that there are teachers in 26 of the photographs, and there are only students in other photographs. It is also observed that the majority of the teachers are male.

Samples of the Photos:



Antalya - Gazipaşa Erkek İB Mektebi (Okulu) - 1927



İstanbul Bahariye Dönüşüne Başlı Pastır İB Mektebi (Okulu) / Erkek Okulu - 1926



Antalya - Gazipaşa Kız İB Mektebi (Okulu) - 1927



Antalya Selçukpaşa Mektebi (Okulu) - 1927



Zeytin Kızı Müberrides Mektebi (Okulu) / Öğretmenler Okulu - 1926



İstanbul Kız Müberrides Mektebi (Okulu) - 1926



Sivas İsmail Paşa İsmail



Sivas Cumhuriyet İB Mektebi (Okulu) - 1926



Eskişehir Kız İB Mektebi (Okulu)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Physical education applications are influenced by the social, political, cultural and economic characteristics of the historical periods they are performed in, and this influence may easily be observed. In this context, parallel to the applications in the world (Lumpkin, 1990; Kirk, 1998; Siedentop and Mars, 2011) and with the influences of Selim Sırrı Tarcan, who was an important sportsman in those times in Turkey, Swedish gymnastics applications became widespread in physical education classes (Gillet, 1975, p. 107; Yıldız, 1979, p. 329-332; Atabeyoğlu, 2000). In sportive branches, on the other hand, it is observed that there are a variety, and even the cricket, which is not common in today's Turkey, is observed in two different photographs. In teaching sportive branches, it may be observed that the participation is cared for instead of teaching the basic sportive techniques that are specific to that branch. The naturalness in the behaviors of the students attract attention. It is also observed that the scouting activities are

considered as a part of the physical education classes. The examination of the effects of the ideas of Ethem Nejat, who is one of the educationalists of the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period, about physical education and scouting (Altın, 2008) may be significant in this context. In the themes of clothing and instructors, i.e. the teachers, in the physical education classes, it is observed that there was not a specific clothing for physical education classes yet; however, some uniforms were used and there were no specific uniforms for the teachers.

As a consequence, it may be suggested that the physical education classes in the early years of the Republic in Turkey has -in the light of the photographs- a variety in the contents, the applications and the clothes; the participation of the students -rather than their sportive performances- is cared for; and the instructors are not specialized as physical education teachers. Also, similar research to contribute to physical education and sports culture is recommended.

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