The Critical Review of the Westernized Late Ottoman Empire Education System in a Cinematic Context with an Education Related Focus

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ABSTRACT

Objective – An individual improves his/her cognitive level by implementing terminal behaviour changes to his/her own life through educational institution located in his/her living space. In this context, the education system of a country is very important in terms of mental development and how people perceive the world. Developments in the world after the French Revolution had influenced Ottoman. Various institutional reforms had been required because of repeated military defeats in the late Ottoman period. In this regard, renovation of educational institutions modelled on Western-based was thought as a saver solution for the empire in period of regression but this modernization process also brought many problems with it. We can understand the approach to education of societies by way of literary works such as novels written in that period.

Methodology/Technique – In this study, the late Ottoman education system is examined by the critical review of through novel. It is narrated the late Ottoman fall reflecting in the field of education. The irregularity system of that period is criticized. It has been adapted to Turkish cinema especially by adhering to the novel which is a remarkable reference about the history of Turkish education system.

Findings – The quality difference in education between centrums and suburbans shows administration of suburban was omitted by Ottoman. Besides, the inequality between man and woman can be observed. It was emphasized that, in Ottoman, men is always right and strong and women are useless and not able to consider. Republic let the woman to arm their rights and gave us the belief that women can be powerful and right.

Novelty – The study reviews the education system of Ottoman empire based on the novel.

Type of Paper: Review.

Keywords: Late Ottoman; Modernization; Westernization; Education Problems.

JEL Classification: I21, I24.

1. Introduction

The position of the knowledge in traditional and modern social life is different. However, the path and speed of access to information are also different. Access to information has a direct relationship with the education system. In this context, the education system is one of the most effective elements will be used to shape the society. The shortcomings of the education system are concerned on the basis of irregularity that began in the
last years of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Empire tried to come up with this problem by synthesizing ‘New’ that get from West and ‘Old’ that it had.

Therefore, it may be said; one of the biggest problems of Ottoman Empire is related with the education. It is possible to find to the historical resources of the problems experienced in the field of education in works of authors who lived in that period. Resat Nuri Guntekin, who wrote remarkable works of Turkish literature, is one of these great authors. After Guntekin had worked as a teacher in different schools in Bursa in 1913, he started to work in the Ministry of National Education as an inspector and then wrote ‘Calikusu’ which shed light on the irregularity of the system in the late Ottoman period. This novel was adapted to film and television series in the advancing years and it has the characteristics of a document for the late Ottoman education system.

The novel has several layers. One of these layer is the problems which Feride had to deal with the education problems that exist in the late Ottoman period when she was a teacher. In this context, the book includes both the life of an idealistic teacher and the educational problems of the period. It is also important to reach more people adapted to cinema and to inform them about the late Ottoman period. Various indicators shown to the audience, which take advantage of audio-visual identity of the cinema, provides to understand and interpret the period with the visual codes. Thus, the differences in traditional and modern education system in a changing world by connecting with the past and today can be distinguished.

We will examine in this study that what Feride experienced city and village in where she was a teacher after the introduction of the film. The education system in village has remarkable difference between the centrum of the Ottoman. While the traditional education approaches refers rural, modern represents the centrum. Calikusu has a romantic love main theme but has a social content by leaving with its criticism against the system from the others, is different with the subject of the novel setting in different cities, towns and villages of Western Anatolia and also reflecting the life of these places. Another hallmark of the novel is that a young girl from Istanbul works in Anatolian towns and villages for the first time in a subject of novel and confronts the many challenges at that time (Akyuţ, 2010).

2. The Concept of Education

Education is a process of conscious behaviour change that is experienced throughout an individual’s lifelong. Mankind has been developing within the education circle and has been civilizing with the technology which has developed. If thinking to continue the education of individuals for the life, it is seen to proceed on the continuous improvement line of the individual. Education is a process of communication. The process of communication is generally defined as reaching a message from source to the receiver via channel. Here also, feedback which is required the notification from receiver to source is necessary to understand whether the communication is healthy. Education performs the development of the individual's physical, mental and emotional, and creating, and learning the necessary rules to live together with people function. The school is the place to be planned and controlled education (Basaran, 1996).

3. Education in Ottoman

Ottoman elementary-level schools were, generally, called to "Ottoman elementary-primary school" or "neighbourhood school". At first, only writing was taught in those schools, then basic Islamic information had begun to be given in those schools. Mosque imams worked as a teacher because of the fact that there were not trained teachers for this education and were no buildings as like schools. Children had started the school in 7 ages and graduated 13-15 years in Ottoman. Generally, schools were in the form of a single classroom and children have different level and ages could attend to class. That's why, in such environments had become too much of a beating. The basis of teaching was Qur'an. Students were asked to memorize the Qur'an in three years. Students were taught to how to worship at these schools. The child who read the whole of the Qur'an up to ten years, later, could have studied three more years on vocabulary, rhetoric, grammar, literature and history (Ergun, 2000, p.1).
Madrasa education in the Ottoman Empire from the 16th century has evolved into a scholastic structure and has become unable to produce science. One of the most important reasons of this negative result, as Koci Bey Booklet stated, had been become widespread of bribery and nepotism in madrassas. Mudarrises have been appointed to the madrassas by way of bribery and nepotism. These non-qualified mudarrises both broke the tradition of the madrasa education and failed to produce science. However, Europe started to eliminate the scholastic philosophy started with Renaissance and Reform and started to produce science. This was the main reason of regression of Ottoman Empire against the West (Uskudar, 2007).

Ottoman Empire began to feel the pressures of development started in the 12th century in West. It was not possible to respond these changes with their education and knowledge production system. After the processes of critical decision, Ottoman Empire began to imitate to the Western education system, at first, in military science and medicine, then began to get organized the state organization taken the example of France and continue to imitate to France in civil education. Western-type education institutions were not just that established the Ottoman state officials. Foreign governments and the Christian communities in the Ottoman Empire also established Western-type education institutions for their own benefits. In fact, since the second half of the 19th century, there were four education systems in Ottoman: a) School-madrassa system, b) Ottoman education system that taken example by the West, c) Foreign state system, d) Minorities school system (Ergun, p.23).

Multi-religious and multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire had a suitable environment for missionaries. Rights and capitulations given to minorities and foreigners has led to good opportunities for these kinds of activities. French are the first missionaries came to Ottoman Empire. They came to the Ottoman region at the end of the 16th century in order to take care about the education of foreigners and minorities living in Istanbul and established schools, besides religious institutions. Britain, Germany and United States have started the school campaign to spread Catholicism and Protestantism, apart from France. Missionary activity was not just a religious phenomenon; it was a type of penetration that had economic and socio-cultural dimensions exceeding the religious dimension. It was an effort that tried to create an economic and socio-cultural field by European and American forces in Ottoman land (Kocabasoglu, 1989).

In short, it might say; educational activities described as a transferring process of own culture to the citizens of a community was carried out by madrassas for centuries in the Ottoman society. Alienation from these traditional educational institutions began with the opening of Western military schools in period of Mahmoud II. Minorities and foreigners conduce to diversification of education opening private schools in Tanzimat period, but they were pursuing separatist activities by serving their own minority group, not the Ottoman Empire (Acun, 1999). All these effects, Westernization of the Ottoman Empire began with the example of France. Therefore, with the impact of the French Revolution, regime, policy and ideology always has been discussed; and so culture and regime were changed, instead of science and technology.

4. Missionary Schools

Missionaries came to Ottoman to promulgate own religious were exploited to create new a zone of influence in Ottoman Empire. For as much as, multi-religious and multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire was suitable for missionaries. For this reason, all purpose and maximum missionary activities emerged in 19th century in Ottoman Empire. The country entirely was opened with the missionary schools. Inadequacy of education institutions in some parts of the country raised interest of the missionary schools. It is clearly shown how effective of these schools that especially if thought to try to popularize the nationalist movements among the minorities after French Revolution, made propaganda in these schools, taught their own language and culture (Sezer, 1999).

As Feride's father is a soldier and has to campaign, Feride spends most of her time with her mother. It can be clearly understand the political structures of the period with the wars, the situation in the country, sent to the front line of Feride's father and sometimes stay there in many years. After her mother died, Feride lives with her aunt. Her father wants her to study at boarding school to have a strong personality because of the fact
that he decides to send her to have a good education to foreigner school. The one of the important factor of the
film is that the Ottoman education system is not preferred by Ottoman soldier. In the film, Feride's father
characterises as an intellectual soldier who thinks his daughter's future by supporting to study at school where
provides modern education system and benefits, even has Christian teachers. In addition, chosen a French
school came for missionaries to Ottoman is an important criticism to the education system of late the Ottoman.

Feride makes an impression a very naughty student in primary school ages. Teachers wear formal clothes
as like for male suit, for female religious clothes in this school where has students wear uniform and has got
braided hair. It shows how strong financially of Western schools that students have pen, pencil, erasers,
notebooks, books and these kinds of equipment and also each two students have one desk. Teachers use the
best technology blackboard and chalk in those days. Students' laughs, jokes and happiness indicate not to be
pressure at Notre Dame Sion represent the modern education system, but of course, there is an educational
institution has some specific rules. Students are punished warning not to do again and pulling their ears. These
kinds of rules promote the students as a not only non-passive individual but also conformist.

5. Irregular System

After Feride learns to be cheated, she wants to leave the city and try to go as far as possible. Feride with
her diploma in hand is faced with a situation that she never expected at Ministry of Education. On this stage,
it is seen that today's mentality of civil servants dates back to the Ottoman Empire. Civil servants do everything
not to complete the documents of Feride who try to go to Anatolia where describe orient. Firstly, we see the
officer of the Ministry of Education angry, always shouting and talking with people as scolds them. After
encoded negatively the first civil servant, we notice that the officer reorients suddenly. When learning Feride's
request to go to Anatolia, the officer surprised and then he wants his assistant to help Feride to solve her issue.

Feride cannot complete the documents requested her to apply, even if the order is very urgent. She always
encounters the officers who always say "not today, come back tomorrow", that those kinds of officers also use
the same sentences to tea maker. Today also ongoing, the civil servant in cumbersome structure of government
departments is perceived as "not to work". Some officers request Feride who goes from unit to unit at
government office to write the petition sixteenth time and then they scold her to make them busy. The director
who emphasizes the lazy system of government offices very nicely gives humorous point of view with
repetitions. Some officers say "come back Ramadan", some says "come after Ramadan, it is impossible to
work during Ramadan because of fasting". Finally, the documents are completed after all "come back
tomorrow"s, "come next week"s.

Favouritism and playing politics in the state is described in a remarkable way. A woman who is friend of
Feride from boarding school is appointed to the same school with Feride who was appointed as a geography
teacher to a school in Bursa after completed the documents. The assistant manager of the school explains the
situation that two people was appointed to the same school because of the failure of civil servants in the
ministry of education. In this case, assistant manager sends Feride to Zeyniler village where, according to him,
is very close to centrum, magnificent, adorable place. Zeyniler is a disappointing place for people coming from
the big cities. In this village, Lady Hatca will help to Feride. In this stage, it is noteworthy that domestic people
in village try to direct to Feride when she meets with Lady Hatca. According to them, Lady Hatca is a muslim
women, a healer. Meanwhile, we see how effective the social pressure is. Villagers think that Feride should
leave to the religious lessons to Lady Hatca.

6. The Conflict Between Traditional and Modern

Feride and Lady Hatca illustrate the conflict between the modern and traditional. Feride wants to implement
the process at school she graduated in İstanbul to Zeyniler village. Firstly, she tries to make some formal
regulations. She started to seat students sitting on the floor to chair and give a lesson. According to Lady Hatca,
people sitting on the chair astride don’t understand to the lessons. It may be associated with the lack of school
life in places have oppressive religious education. One day Feride sees children to perform a funeral prayer in front of coffin rest. According to Lady Hatca, they do preparation for the future life. People educated with social pressure grow without question, research, reading and start to accept everything directly because of dogmatism. They are far from the Islamic conception: Be prudent for the future life as if you were to die tomorrow. Work for the world as if you were to live forever.

Taking course from unpermissive teacher causes the some limitations of students’ behaviour. It is remarkable that all children sitting on the floor with the head bent and keep quiet on the Feride's first day of class. The methods of punishment for children are very harsh. At the school, the flogging used by Ziya Pasha's saying, "who doesn't improve by admonishment should be reproved; and who doesn't become wiser by reproofs deserves a good flogging", is a discipline method by Lady Hatca for naughty students. She tries the new education method by closing a coffin-shaped crate to students who not to settle down with flogging. Thus, she gives punishment and helps to students to make them understand to the future life. Conflict in all subjects between Feride and Lady Hatca is examined in the film. Lady Hatca mentions about the punishment of the grave to primary school age children. According to her, this world is a lie; "This world swinging on the ox horn is a lie". It is indicative that Lady Hatca didn’t have an education about the positive sciences. Thus, in the film, it refers that traditional education is theological, modern is scientific.

A different element that attracts attention in the movie is the effect created on students by psychological conclusions of modern and vintage, traditional and contemporary. In the theocratic style education, constant fear, beating, limiting the behaviours as rules impose causes the children to grow up as an unhappy, introvert, frightened individual. It is an indicator that Feride’s father wanting Feride, while she studies in elementary school, to graduate as a powerful individual is he knows the deficiency of the Ottoman education system and it will not be possible to reach the contemporary civilizations by just falling behind the era. There are obvious differences between Feride’s and Lady Hatca’s behaviours against children. Feride takes care of the children closely. She is utterly warm, and full of compassion. She wanders around with them, listens to their problems and talks to them. She is more a friend to them rather than a teacher. As opposite of Lady Hatca she does not overawe them and frighten them.

It is decided to close down the school in Zeyniler Village after the visif of the Inspector. The decision is it is not possible to give education in a place such as like a stable. The inspector symbolizes the elite segment society in Ottoman Empire. The Inspector is a French society wannabe and one of every two word he uses is a French word he does not remember the Turkish meaning. It is obvious that Inspector looks down on people, he sees Lady Hatca as a “tomb spider” and we can understand this is a metaphor for women wearing chador in Ottoman traditions, also it shows that Inspector sees himself as a “superior person” and humiliates other people in a lower status then him. The inspector’s carelessness in inspecting districts and not making any investment, besides blaming people that returns stables to schools shows us he is an “educated ignorant”. It also shows us who ruled Ottoman Empire in it last times. “Misery, misery!” and “Europe, oh Europe!” sayings has negative effects on the audience. The inspector’s way of thinking is, “We can’t think better than Europeans” or “The European education system or none”. After leaving to Zeyniler, Feride goes to inspector office. Inspector who went to Europe before tries to show something that he has learnt there. He asks the personal card to Feride before asking who she is, he wants to know personal information through personal card. The prototype of the inspectors in the film is an affected Ottoman officer who speaks lot and disturb to people with the words: "Europa", "Ohh Hometown", "Pardon?" The inspector is shocked that Feride can speak French and then, he is ordered to be appointed to her as a French teacher in centrum of Bursa.

7. Modern Education in Ottoman

Feride is no longer a teacher in a more modern school located in centrum of Bursa after Zeyniler village. Students sit on chairs and there are modern equipment as blackboard, chalk as like Notre Dame boarding school. The school has more contemporary instruction and education methods compared to Zeyniler village that punishment is just a warning by head-teacher as "I bring the stick ha!" Girls and boys are educated in
separate classes at schools. What if it seems a modern school, Ottoman Empire is an Islamic state. And we can see some effects of religious pressure. But the school is similar in many ways with Feride's boarding school as like students’ uniform, jokes and laughs. According to head-teacher, enlightenment cycle is as follows: Europeans have received all knowledge from Arabs, and now, Ottoman tries to get from Europeans. Feride wants her appointment to another city due to encounter some problems. Then, she is appointed to Canakkale under favour of the head-teacher. The new school has a headmistress. It can be considered the first step of modernization that generally, woman was positioned at the secondary position in Ottoman. It is very important for modernization to change the women's position and evaluate as an individual in Ottoman.

8. Criticism of Religion

Imams speak to public in mosques related with Feride has the legendary beauty. They inform to people with frightening things as burned eyes by pouring tar in Armageddon. In this context, the film also has a very harsh critique of religion. We understand that uneducated people, in late Ottoman Empire, who should be normally compassionate and affectionate behave merciless, calumnious and stern. This led to misunderstanding to religion by people until today. Feride is removed from the school because of slander. It doesn't work that headmistress of the school tries to convince the governor to protect Feride. But he covers her request because of some pasha's sake and he also adds that 'it is a man thing' and so woman does not conceive that kind of things. Women are always positioned to the background in male-dominated world. They are forced to close both physical and intellectual way. As a result of educating children in the same perspective with individuals not to think in a modern way, intellectual human concept has evolved into darkness. This is one of the reason for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

After coming from Canakkale to Izmir, Feride has same difficulties what she had in Bursa. Then, eventually she assigns to the town of Kusadasi. In this town, students have similarities with Zeyniler village. They are always silent when they sitting on the floor with the head bent. In the advancing years upon the start of the war, Feride is charged with nursing. In those years, the country needs to well educated, knowledgeable people in all areas to help the sick and injured people. She fulfils a nursing duty quite successfully. Feride is taken home by a colonel doctor due to a psychological crisis. But the society does not hold with unmarried woman and man living in the same place, and accusations begin. As in other small cities, bad rumors spread quickly in this small town, and public is provoked by imams:

"Why so much calamity and disaster comes upon us? Why the moslems does not get rid of the war, blood, earthquake? Because of these hussies and rapists. What happens if an old man who is a colonel in army take home a teacher who takes care of our children without sharia law? The world is falling apart.!

Feride has to marry with the colonel because of the society pressure. At the same time, she is dismissed to disturb the peace of the society and to be a wrong example to other teachers. Finally, she regains her lover Kamuran by the help of the colonel.

9. Conclusion

In the wake of the Turkish Revolution, female teachers who spread to the country's poor areas saw a fate partner in her by reading Feride's experiences in towns and villages. Calikusu gave them stamina. It had been a kind of pioneer of the women's liberation in Turkey. Many of our girls imitated Feride to overcome the difficulty encountered, and they learned self-confidence from her (Kudret, 2004).

Calikusu movie continues lining up various dualities from the beginning until the end. The quality difference in education between centrums and suburbans shows administration of suburban was omitted by Ottoman. Besides, the inequality between man and woman can be observed. It was emphasized that, in Ottoman, men is always right and strong and women are useless and not able to consider. Republic let the woman to arm their rights and gave us the belief that women can be powerful and right. Nevertheless, still we can come across with old-fashioned habits in some regions of the country. The mentality of traditions
transferring from father to son still continues. The sexual control on women is on the top level. In the societies where reactionist, congregation relations are intense, women’ sexuality is taken under control with honour and shame factoid, they are trapped in home-life, their freedom of travel and relation with opposite sex is limited and some similar limitations are applied. All these behaviours took place through familial, social, cultural, religious orders in patriarchal community (Celebi, 2013).

In the film, being mixed up in an affair in the last period of the Ottoman Empire is shown successfully. Preciousness and upstart attitudes of individuals grown up Eastern culture that remains under the pressure of Western culture foreshadow the current insincere environment by moving away the sincerity of the East. Feride has been a model of Republican woman showing a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures in this film. Calikusu allows us to analyze the profile of people in different cities and villages and also to get a panaromic stroll in Turkey. It clearly shows us to woman-man, non-contemporary, educated-uneducated, rich-poor, good-bad, townee-peasant dualities. It should be understood that education is not only teaching for the growth of a more enlightened society.

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