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## MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULUM CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION IN TURKEY: POLICIES, PRACTICES AND FUTURE

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### УПРАВЛЕНИЕ В ИЗМЕНЕНИИ ШКОЛЬНОЙ ПРОГРАММЫ И ЕЕ РЕАЛИЗАЦИЯ В ТУРЦИИ: ПОЛИТИКА, ПРАКТИКА И БУДУЩЕЕ

*This paper describes the most recent curriculum change and implementation experience in Turkey with a focus on management and organization of the process. Presentation is organized around four main continuous cycles of change process representing four sections of the paper; (a) Initiation, (b) Planning and development, (c) Implementation, (d) Future-Institutionalization. First three sections start with a presentation of how the process is organized-designed and how it is actually worked followed by a critique of alignment between underlying philosophy of the curriculum and institutional structure. The fourth section focuses on institutionalization process yet to come in our endeavor for change. This section attempts to provide a critique of experienced achievements and roadblocks, then moves on to a discussion of needed vision and organizational policies, structures and practices for institutionalization of new curriculum and further developments. It argues that, design, implementation and institutionalization of a new curriculum with a constructivist orientation requires alignment of management and organization of educational institutions in manner conducive to translating and transforming a well designed curriculum into better student outcomes.*

Compulsory education was expanded from five years to eight years in 1973 by Law 1739 (Basic Law for National Education). As the government did not succeed to allocate the necessary resources for the expanding basic education, Law 1739 was amended requiring eight years of enrollment wherever the physical infrastructure was adequate. Parliament passed a new legislation (Law # 4306) in 1997 mandating a timetable for implementing universal eight year compulsory education. By this mandate, three layer pre-university education composed of primary schools, middle schools and secondary schools were restructured into two layers; eight year primary schools and secondary schools. However, this structural change was nothing more than combining primary school education with middle school education. Curricula or content and meaning of compulsory education were not redefined and restructured. Most of policy debate and issues revolved around expanding basic education during the last decade leaving too little time, resources and energy that could be devoted to quality improvement and other developments in compulsory education. Furthermore, curricula were clearly out dated since there had been no major curriculum change or reform in Turkey's primary and secondary education since 1968.

During the last decade, policy makers and education managers struggled with a considerable number of issues, expanding basic education being the first in the line. These issues can be categorized in to four broad areas: (a) improving physical capacity and facilities, (b)

developing an up to date curriculum and instruction, (c) improving teacher training and quality of teachers, and (d) building information and communication technology infra-structure. These issues have dominated and continue to dominate the managers' agenda at every level of education management, from the central ministry down to the school. Number of internationally funded projects including World Bank; the National Education Development Project (NEDP), the Basic Education Project (BEP) and Support to Basic Education Project (SBEP) focused on these issues. Nevertheless, role of these projects has been primarily developmental, providing an additional motivation for change efforts.

National Education Development Project was designed to focus on quality enhancement and management improvement. The project was quite ambitious that it would improve quality of education through reform of curriculum management and policy development. One of the main obstacles of quality improvement was perceived as fractured management structure with overlapping roles and responsibilities across the Ministry. A dozen of Curriculum development units or departments are scattered at various levels and in various units throughout the Ministry. The NEDP was designed with the intention that curriculum development units would be consolidated into an Education Research and Development Center (ERDC). Instead of consolidation, Education Organization Law (Law #3797) was amended to establish Education Research and Development Department (ERDD) to unify curriculum development and textbook material development activities in one department while keeping all existing curriculum units or departments intact. Legal and practical conflicts over the ownership of the curriculum development and implementation processes were not resolved and considerable disagreement between Board of Education and ERDD frustrated the curriculum change efforts of late 1990's into early 2000's. New curricula were developed for 22 subjects, yet only two out of 22 were approved by Board of Education (World Bank, 2000). Curriculum change experience was catastrophic for both the lending institution and the Ministry. The lending institution, World Bank's Implementation Completion Report concludes that it was the Ministry's failure stemming from number of well known problems. However, as stated elsewhere in implementation literature for more than three decades by now (Berman and McLaughlin, 1978; McLaughlin, 1978; Fullan, 1993), the project design neglected the complexities of educational change and implementation process. As noted by Elmore (1995), structural changes

may be necessary for changing practices, but one has to focus on motives, values, attitudes and behaviors to change and sustain policies, structures and practices of education. Even structural change implemented turned into something quite different than intended one in the project design. The first wave of curriculum change efforts since 1960's failed for number of reasons;

- a) Lack of clear-shared vision of a secondary school curriculum
- b) Lack of ownership of the curriculum development process,
- c) Lack of agreement on many issues between the curriculum development unit at ERDD and BoE as the approving institution,
- d) Overlapping roles and responsibilities among different units of the MoNE,
- e) Lack of well articulated and planned dissemination strategy.

Both the Basic Education Project and the Support to Basic Education Project focused on improving physical capacity and preferred to stay away from curriculum change issues. Negative experiences; primacy of technicalities over substance, unresolved debates and conflicts coupled with political instability of late 1990's, over bureaucratization of operations, overlaps of tasks, roles and responsibilities between different units of the Ministry deterred decision makers and funding agencies from complex issues curriculum change and implementation. World Bank report (2000) clearly stated that ambiguity in tasks, roles and responsibilities fueled "the rivalry among units of the Ministry" which frustrated the policy making process and improvement of services.

Despite the significant progress in economic and political stability since the parliamentary elections of 2003, structural problems associated with curriculum development and implementation process have been persistent to a great extent. Curriculum development and change work has been assigned to Board of Education with a special decree, so called Urgent Action Plan<sup>1</sup> issued on January 3rd, 2003 by current government. Since then, Board of Education has been developing new curricula for primary and secondary education schools. After providing a brief to the current situation, remaining part of this paper describes the most recent curriculum change and implementation experience in Turkey with a focus on management and organization of the process. Since the curriculum development for secondary schools is still at very early stages, presentation of this case will be limited by curriculum development for primary education.

#### **Framework**

Educational change is a process with full of conflicting ideas, patterns and paradigms. Presence of conflicting interests, ideas and choices results in dissatisfaction of one or another stakeholder. Primacy given to technical aspects of planning rather seeing educational change as a complex and continuous process with constant modifications resulted in neglect of implementation and institutionalization of educational change (Berman, 1981; Craig, 1987; McLaughlin, 1987). Implementation literature describes educational change

process in three or four interrelated cycles: (a) Initiation, (b) planning/development, (c) implementation, and (d) institutionalization (Gibbs, 1998; Fullan, 1993). Initiation and planning cycles are treated together in some cases. Educational change or curriculum reform experiences of past three decades in many parts of the World proved to be as difficult as ever before. Patterson and Czajkowski (1979) contended that "the stark reality about curriculum change is that it seldom happens as expected" (p. 204). Two decades later, Fullan (1999) made a very bold statement; "we are at the very early stages of appreciating the nature and complexity of educational reform..." (p. 66). Curriculum reforms of the last decade, including curriculum reform in Turkey, have been characterized, most often blurred, by theories of multiple intelligence, constructivism and student centered learning coupled with a harsh criticism of behaviorist approaches of teaching and learning. However, an assessment of the 20 year impact of multiple intelligences on practices of teaching and learning concludes that multiple intelligences "has had the greatest influence on educators' beliefs and talk about differences in children's intelligence, moderate to high influence on the formal curriculum and instructional materials, and least influence on mainstream teaching and assessment practices" (Cuban, 2004: p. 141). Cuban states that minimal influence of theoretically well designed formal curriculum on practices of teaching and learning is largely due to mismatch between reform rhetoric and school structures, cultures and organization of educational institutions from Ministry of Education to classroom level. Transforming behaviouristic daily routines of teaching and learning into constructivist, more meaningful learning experiences for children requires a careful design of the process from initiation to institutionalization. Design of the process must appreciate the non-linear complex nature of curriculum reform, alignment of arrangement and organization of the reform process with very basic nature constructivist approach to curriculum, and a careful consideration of institutional and managerial structures conducive to implementation and institutionalization of new curricula.

#### **Dawn of Curriculum Reform: Initiation**

Urgent Action Plan decree issued by the government provided not only justification to initiate curriculum change efforts, but also imposed a legal mandate for bureaucrats of the Ministry of Education to take "urgent action" on this matter. Planning for curriculum reform started on May 2005. A series of ad-hoc meetings were organized by the BoE to explore ways and means of the curriculum reform process. A wide range of stakeholders including government institutions, universities and non-governmental organizations (NGO) participated in these meetings. To build the process on the experience and accumulated knowledge rather than starting from scratch, a quick assessment of previous curriculum development efforts; need assessment studies of 1990's and outputs of curriculum development process were conducted. Assessment of the current situation led to three important propositions for successful curriculum development and implementation:

1. Curriculum reform process should take a holistic approach rather than a fragmented one based on separate subjects.

2. Strategies should be designed to build consensus and cooperation among related administrative units,

3. The reform process itself; process, curricular content and approaches must be legitimized.

**Learning from the experience**

- Legitimizing the process and curricular content and approaches;

- formulating procedures for curriculum development and reform,

- A good balance of expertise and practice,

- Top priority to curriculum reform by political power,

- Active participation of stakeholders.

Development of basic education curricula is partly financed under Support to Basic

Education Program (DG1A-D/MEDTKQ/04-99). Curriculum development activities were not part of the planned program as it was started on September 2002, but curriculum development have been included in the Program as it was recognized that success of all components of the program heavily depends on development of an up to date curriculum. If the curricula are not relevant to economy and democracy or not up to date with scientific, social and cultural changes, improvement in management and teacher training could only marginally contribute to overall development of basic education for a knowledge-based society. After extensive review of findings from international comparative data and national/local studies, all stakeholders agreed that curriculum reform is a national priority;

1. To increase relevance of instruction to economy and democracy,

2. To ensure a balance of gender issues in teaching-learning process,

3. To align curricular content and structure with Lisbon objectives in terms of

"European reference framework" for basic skills and key competencies,

4. To ensure integrity of curricular content, structure and approaches thru the basic education from first grade to eight grade as well as appropriate linkages across subjects at each grade level,

5. To update curriculum in concert with developments in educational sciences and subject areas,

6. To increase the flexibility of the curriculum that the content and instructional strategies can be adapted to local situations,

7. To increase equality of opportunity by designing a more flexible curriculum, and

8. To establish multi-level, skill-concept-learning strategy relations in the curricular content.

If this capacity is mobilized and motivated by the MoNE the educational managers may be able design and implement unique solutions to increase quality of educational services. Experiences of other countries in European Union may serve as an example for creating Turkish specific solutions. However, importing ready-made structures and solutions from abroad could be a

fatal mistake. Solutions in one system may be causing problems in another one. Efficiency and effectiveness of solutions can not be considered in isolation from social, political, economical and legal context of an education system. Nevertheless it is recommended to organize a number of study visits to EU member states, including the so-called 'new members'.

Current reform efforts are quite comprehensive taking a holistic approach to improve quality and relevance of education and training to national development, economy and democracy. These efforts include increasing enrolment in pre-school, extending compulsory education from eight years to 12 years, restructuring secondary education to adapt International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-97), improving facilities, reforming curricula from preschool to 12th Grade, improving quality of teacher training and establishing teacher career system, establishing an effective guidance system, changing the concept of in-service training, integrating the use of ICT with education and training and integrating secondary school curricula with higher education.

Curriculum development is a top priority as stated in Urgent Action Plan of the government. Curriculum development activities have been financed partly from the MoNE's own resources and partly from a number of projects funded by EU and the World Bank. Curriculum reform involves major changes from Grade 1 thru Grade 12 and all of the programs at upper secondary education level. Curriculum change started with reforming the basic education curricula. Basic education curricula for basic skill areas, including mathematics, science and technology, social studies, Turkish language and life skills have been developed and being piloted in 120 schools in 9 provinces. New textbooks and instructional materials are being developed both by the MoNE and private sector. Nationwide dissemination and implementation of new curricula for Grade 1 thru Grade 5 is planned for 2005-2006. A stepwise approach will be employed to implement new curriculum.

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7. To increase equality of opportunity by designing a more flexible curriculum, and

8. To establish multi-level, skill-concept-learning strategy relations in the curricular content. Basic education (Grade 1 thru Grade 8) curricula for core subjects have been developed and curriculum development work for remaining subjects is in progress.

It has been widely recognized that secondary school curriculum must be fully integrated with basic education and also appropriate linkages between secondary education and higher education must be established. All students either in general education or vocational education must acquire basic skills first. Therefore, core curricula for basic skill areas are being designed to be same for both academic secondary education and vocational education. Differentiation in each field of education comes after mastering of basic skills and key competencies at a certain level.

Secondary education programs have been classified into 18 broad fields based on ISCED-97 by taking a holistic approach rather than a fragmented one based on separate subjects. One field is classified as general secondary education and 17 fields as vocational and technical education programs. Funding for secondary education curriculum development is partly provided by MEDA funds within scope of the Strengthening Vocational and Technical Education Project and a loan agreement with the World Bank; the Secondary Education Project (SEP). The SVET project provides curriculum development support for 10 of 17 vocational and technical education fields and The SEP for seven vocational and technical education fields plus general secondary education field.

Associated with curriculum development for lifelong learning, new textbook and instructional material development has been in progress. To increase quality of education and equal access to education, textbooks are provided free of charge at basic education level.

As part of curriculum reform process, all of approximately 2800 supervisors have been trained and training for 230000 classroom teachers will be completed by beginning 2005-2006 school year. Concept of in-service training for teachers is going through a major transformation from limited opportunities at training centers to multiple avenues for lifelong learning and continuous improvement of quality of teaching force. These include, distance learning opportunities with interactive ICT use, providing printed and multi-

media materials as well as locally organized, school based training activities.

Partnership between faculties of education and provincial level management have been established for teacher training activities, primarily designed for dissemination and institutionalization of new curricula.

Institutional and educational change initiatives are clearly in line with Lisbon objectives. A functional analysis of administrative structure of MoNE has been done with participation of relevant stakeholders such as NGO's and universities. Analysis indicated that current administrative structure is not conducive to efficient and effective operations of educational services. Structure is not aligned with tasks and functions to be performed.

Basic education curriculum and secondary education curriculum have been in the process of transformation as noted in previous section. There are eight key competencies clearly defined in new curriculum, designed to be common competencies for all citizens, regardless of the education programs they are enrolled in. These competencies including critical thinking, creativity, communication, research and reasoning, problem solving, information and communication technology skills, entrepreneurship and communication in Turkish are defined as key competencies across all subjects through the entire curricula of basic education and secondary education. In addition to these key competencies, seven inter-disciplinary learning domains are defined: (1) disaster awareness and safe living, (2) entrepreneurship, (3) human rights and citizenship, (4) special education, (5) guidance, (6) health culture, and (7) sports culture and Olympic education. These key competencies and inter-disciplinary learning domains together provide initial lifelong learning skills and competencies in basic education and then facilitate the further development of lifelong learning at the secondary education level.

Regardless of an individual's vocational or educational path to follow, lifelong learning skills/competencies acquired during the k12 will enable this person to learn more and adapt to new work and life situations. Key competencies defined across the primary education and secondary education curricula overlap with competencies defined in "basic framework for key competencies". However, these competencies are based on needs assessment and other studies in Turkish context.

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