

# THE METHODOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIOLOGY TEACHING PROGRAM FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN TURKEY

Onur HAYIRLI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Phd candidate, University of Hacettepe, TURKEY, ohayirli@yahoo.com

## Abstract

In this study, the Ministry of Education in Turkey by the Chair of the Board of Education adopted on 14.12.2009 is being implemented from the academic year 2010-2011 "Secondary Education Sociology Curriculum" of; The basic criteria for scientific subject areas of science, aims to take in terms of scientific methods and research techniques. Discussed in this study, adopted in 2009, "Secondary Education Sociology Teaching Program" in the "Introduction" section; sociology of science became an independent field that accepts two assumptions are not included from the beginning. Thus, as judged by the introduction of the program is demonstrated how to address the issues from a perspective.

**Keywords:** Sociology Education, Turkish Secondary Education, Secondary Education Course

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study holds the notion that after military coup had taken place in Turkey on 12th September, 1980, the scientific methods and techniques, scientific concerns and gains weren't followed in educational programs that were prepared following this case. Education should be scientific. However, nationalistic, chauvinist, ethnocentric approach doesn't comply with the key principle of the education which is being scientific. These factors were mostly reflected to such areas as History, Biology, Education of Religion and Ethics, Philosophy and Sociology courses. These examples are the mandatory courses in the secondary education. The Education of Religion is centered on just one sect (sunnism) and most importantly it is compulsory. The History education is centered on a historical consciousness which focuses upon only one period of time and it is lack of objectivity. The biology education ignores evolution theory and natural development of living things. Philosophy education degrades the long creative mental history of humankind to the history of science. Sociology education is far from sociological imagery and degraded to Kemalism. All these aspects have been controversial for years in Turkey. Secondary education sociology teaching programs which were prepared after military took the control of government degrade sociology to Kemalism and impose these upon. With these aspects, it is a didactic program. Industrialism, Social stratification, alienation which are fundamental subjects of sociology are neglected, ignored or given by distorting them. This approach has been continuing in the renewed and rewritten textbooks for 35 years.

### 1.1. Method

Sociology Teaching Program for the Secondary Education was approved by the Head Council of Education and Morality which is a branch of Ministry of National Education in 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2009 and was based on the number 237 decision. It has been being applied since 2010-2011 semester. It can be named as historical literature research. This study aims at analyzing this program in terms of research methods, scientific methods, the subject matters of scientific fields and key criterions of science.

### 1.2. Scientific Method

From 15th century onwards, the age started which would be called as the "New Age". During the New Age, the way of thinking, art and science was renewed with the help of Renaissance and the religion was reformed. The process of changing social and political structures became faster and faster. There happened a transition from

paradigms that were based on faith toward another paradigm that was based heavily on observation and experiment. Instead of Aristotelian way which used deductive logic, the way of reasoning which used inductive methods began to gain importance. Therefore, notions, people, beliefs, government types and even holy books that were once accepted as unchangeable truths began to be questioned and looked at suspiciously. Such scientists like Copernicus, Bruno, Kepler, Galileus made physics, chemistry, biology modern sciences. These people approached natural events, law of motion from the perspective of reason and experiment.

The birth of modern sciences changed technology, economy, type of production and relations of production. Industrialism and urbanization effected society and politics destructively and deeply. In the 18th century, new sciences like psychology and sociology appeared which dealt with human and society problems. The profile of human and society began to stand out beginning with the New Age and became problematic subjects in the 19th century. Such scientists as Saint Simon, August Comte, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Wilhelm Wundt, İvan Pavlov, Sigmund Freud became the leaders of human and society sciences.

Regardless of distinguishing natural, human or society sciences, the principle of determinism and scientific method make up the basis of all sciences. Every research field has its specific and unique research subject and research techniques. Then it can be an independent science on its own. Psychology has become a science after it began to observe not the soul which is abstract but the behaviors of humans which is observable and concrete in order to understand humans and their problems. The fact that the main research field of sociology is not individuals but the society has been gradually accepted after sociology began to be seen as a science. That's why, it is not possible to analyze society, social events or norms by degrading them into "individual" or "social groups." The wholeness of society and the fact that there are always historical, economic and political reasons behind every human and social behavior should never be ignored. Sociology can be never degraded to psychology or social psychology. Sociological analysis cannot be degraded into surveys or public opinion polls. To handle social norms, events or problem from this point of view can certainly take us to wrong results.

## 2. CORNERSTONES BEING SCIENTIFIC

In the "Introduction" part of the program, two fundamental assumptions that makes sociology an independent science field are denied and ignored from the very beginning. The introduction makes it obvious how it will handle the subjects. This approach is expressed like this;

"It is possible to talk about two aspects of sociology which make it different from other social sciences: firstly, instead of precise determinism, the principle that determinism and indeterminism are interconnected is adopted. (...) The second distinctive aspect of contemporary sociology is that it focuses on the interaction between individual and society instead of preferring the effect and influence of one of them in individual-society relationship. Therefore, it has become meaningful that individual and society is mutually complementary instead of the superiority of one to another."

It can be said that basic principles of sciences (which is determinism) and the key subject of sociology (society) are made insignificant with this statement. Constructivist approach which began in Turkey in 2000s and put the students in the very center in the process of education brought skeptical view which discredits education and science. This skepticism doesn't use Descartes' methodical skepticism or scientific skepticism in the analysis of scientific datum and gains which have been achieved with experiment and reason. Instead, it involves metaphysics and nihilism that drag people to uncertainty and agnosticism. This point of view is reflected in sociology program and the principle of determinism. It obscures the subject matter of sociology. It is concluded from all these that this program is not proper for the key criterions of science.

The very basic and fundamental subject matter and the most important research body of sociology are not just "individuals" (not by one by) but the "society" as a whole. Social events and realities effect people deeply as physical realities do. It was stated in the first years of sociology when it began as an independent science field. That's why, the perspective which doesn't regard society as the fundamental subject matter of sociology doesn't comply with the sociological perspective. The studies that have been made in sociology field are not empirical which are focused on analyzing small groups and individuals. This approach limiting sociology with public opinion polls prevents social facts and society to be seen as a whole. It prevents social events to be understood well. The approached being approved in 2009 in sociology program limits the field of sociology.

## 2.1. Ideology Shadowing Being Scientific in Sociology Programs

There happened a coup in Turkish history on 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1980. The Turkish army took the control of the government for the third time. Military government governed the country for nine years. After the coup, "Kemalism" which was a dominant ideology in the country was more or less reflected on all curriculum and textbooks written right after the coup. Military government effected education system and curriculum. System and curriculum were shaped in accordance with the desire and ideology of the government and this effect lasted for years. Sociology was one of the courses that affected most by this ideology and approach. On the other hand, the process started in which laissez Faire Economy began to be adopted in Turkey on 24th January, 1980 as a result of the decisions taken in the economy field. This process went on after 12th September, 1980 (while coup was continuing). In 1984, there was once more a transition to multi-party system although it was not put into practice. The policy aiming at liberalization in economy was decidedly carried on by Motherland Party (ANAP) which was the ruling party at that time and its leader Turgut Özal under the name of "privatization". This policy was, paradoxically, contrast with the principle of etatism in economy which is one of the six principles of Kemalist ideology. On one hand, Kemalism and Kemalist ideology was emphasized; on the other hand, the policy which was opposed to Kemalism and its principles (all six principles) was followed in every field, particularly in education, economy and secularism. (Atatürk's principles: republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, etatism and reformism.)

Sociology programs have been renewed three times for 35 years since 1980. It has been emphasized that Kemalism is not an ideology. And paradoxically, it has been said: "The difference between Kemalism and other ideologies should be explained" (S.P.,2010)

The subjects of Kemalism were given under the titles of gains, the examples of activities and explanations in sociology program of 2009.

### 2.1.1 Gains:

"The student can give examples on how much Atatürk gives importance to women rights." (gain 46) "The student can express Atatürk's thoughts about education." (gain 49) "The student can identify the principle of secularism in Atatürk's system of thought." (gain 52) "The student can give examples on Atatürk's thoughts about economic systems." (gain 55) "The student also can give examples on citizenship, rights and responsibilities by relating them each other in Atatürk's system of thought." (60)

### 2.1.2. Activity examples:

A board should be prepared. It should depict the historical process of women, the rights that gained by them throughout years, their place in social life and their historical development. (page 35) The students should search for Atatürk's thoughts about education and present them in the class. (page 36) They write some statements of Atatürk on cards. The students are made to find the statements about secularism. The cards are hung on the board. The students are made to comment on Atatürk's thoughts about freedom of thought and faith and secularism. (page 37)

### 2.1.3. Explanations:

While the subjects of this unit are being discussed, Atatürk's thoughts about "nation", "nationalism", "populism" and "national unity" are taught to the students. (page 27) All the changeovers that were brought with Atatürk's principles and reforms are emphasized. (page 30) Atatürk's thoughts about culture should also be talked about. (page 31) The women's place should be emphasized in Kemalist system of thought. (page 35) The students research and present Atatürk's thoughts on education. (page 36) Atatürk's thoughts and statements about religion and secularism are included. (page 37) The difference between Kemalism and other ideologies should be explained. (page 40)

Furthermore, there are some irrelevant information and subjects which are not directly related to sociology. For instance, there is a subject under the title of "**How the Turkish and Islam Thinkers Contributed to the Civilization**". These information and subjects are not related to sociology but to the history of science.

## 2.2. The Subjects of Scientific Fields

These statements are presented in the beginning of the sociology program:

“The fact of change and development that is always accepted as a historical fact in sociology is presented in the 4th unit. In that sense, two periods of change has gained importance: modernization and globalization. With the help of these point of views, it will be easy for students to understand and make sense of the age that they exist in.” (S.P.,2010)

Here, it is emphasized that the process of **modernization and globalization** is crucial to understand the fact of change, development and the age that is lived in. However, **industrialization** should be analyzed and talked about rather than globalization because industrialization has been the driving force for all changes happened in economic, social and political aspects for 300 years. Industrialization is either not mentioned or not emphasized enough in all levels of sociology education in Turkey. There has been no such courses in sociology departments of universities as “industrial sociology”. Also, there isn’t a unit in high school curriculum titled as “industrialization and urbanization”. This subject is left out by the sociology program that this study analyzes. However, it is only possible to understand and make sense of sociological events, modernization, globalization and the age that we live in if social structure appeared after industrialization is known, understand and apprehended deeply and thoroughly.

**Social stratification and social mobility** are the fundamental concepts of sociology. In sociology programs, these concepts are distorted. Their true meanings are overlooked. While the social stratification pyramid is being explained, such terms as social stratum, social class and the difference between these two are not explained clearly. The reason for this is that this very unique subject of sociology is regarded as “**social class**” in Europe and as “**social stratum**” in America. This situation shows that there is a problem in terms of terminology and approach with which these programs are prepared. Also it effects the depth of it. It is not mentioned about the concept of sociology in the Continental Europe and American Sociology which degrades sociology to psychology. Therefore, the reasons why inequality (social stratification) and disintegration have appeared after industrialization are not given clearly.

In the program, there are these statements where “social stratification” is analyzed: “**The students understand that the social stratification is different in Turkey from other countries.**” (S.P.,2010) “**What can the differences and similarities be in social stratification in Turkey and social stratification in other countries?**” (S.P.,2010) Such statements as “social stratifications in Turkey” and “foreign countries” are ambiguous here. Also, it is not true sociologically to make an ethnocentric comparison by saying “we and foreigners/others”. This approach obviously ignores that other or foreign societies are not in the same level of development. In Gain 19, under the title of “Institution of Politics”, it says; “**Such terms as humanism and division of powers within the scope of democracy are put emphasis on.**” Humanism is a term to express the importance attributed to humankind and human values. This term has been used since 15th century beginning with Renaissance. Humanism and principal rights underlie the human rights which are protected by the constitution. Principle of division of powers was set forth by Montesquie in the 18th century. It is the concrete form of the principle of supremacy of law. Modern democratic government systems are based on these two principles. That’s why, “humanism and the principle of division of powers” are used haphazardly and without taking chronology into consideration. These examples show that sociological terminology wasn’t paid attention to while writing the statements in the program.

Another subject which is barely talked about in sociology programs is the concept, **alienation**. This concept, alienation, is special to sociology. It is one of the fundamental points of sociology. That’s why, it should be taught firstly and most importantly. People feel themselves alone and desperate in a society where millions of people live. In this case, there appears Social and psychological alienation. In Marxist theory, it is explained as the reflection of the alienation of the labor. Marxist theory proposes that alienation is the ultimate and inevitable result of the industrial societies and capitalism. The concept of alienation is crucial to understand the humankind and the social structure which appeared after industrialization. However, this concept is, surprisingly, ignored in all sociology programs and textbooks. In the program of 2009, the books never talked about this concept.

### 3. SCIENTIFIC METHODS AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

It is said in the sociology program that: "the techniques that are used in sociological are induction, deduction and analogy." (8) These techniques such as induction, deduction and analogy aren't used in sociological researches but they are used in the basis of scientific methods. This fact has been known and adopted since Aristotle. The techniques that are used in sociology to collect information and data should be explained and analyzed. The "scientific method" which is the basis of all sciences and "research techniques" that change from one scientific field to another are different things. As happened in former sociology programs, these terms are given in the wrong way in the program of 2009.

#### RESULT

"Secondary Education Sociology Teaching Program" applied in 2009 is lack of objectivity and universal criterions. It is full of ethnocentric and ideological terms and thoughts. Nationalistic approach is clearly seen here. The research techniques of sociology aren't explained enough. It can be concluded that this program doesn't comply with the criterions of being scientific.

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