

THE FUTURE OF GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION IN TURKEY

Salih Sahin

Turkey has experienced some developments in geography in terms of geographic understanding, content and teaching-learning processes. It is necessary to evaluate the past and present state of geography education in Turkey to be able to foresee the future state of it.

Recently, one of the important issues in social life is planning the future. In this context, individuals try to make future plans in social, political and scientific terms. This is a need for nations to survive. Geography education has an important place in the planning for the future because; one of the most important concerns of geography is to develop world perception, consciousness of citizenship and geographical consciousness in individuals.

There have been several important changes in both physical and human events since the beginning of the world. Some of them are population growth and migrations, usage of natural resources and energy consumption, as well as global climate changes, floods, calamities, drought, earthquakes, and hurricanes. Contemporary individuals should understand these events and be able to evaluate them. Geography education has an important place in providing people with these qualities through the teaching-learning process.

In fact, it is not easy to anticipate what will happen in the future. However, present rapid developments in natural and human events give us some hints about the future. In this context it is necessary to foresee the possible events that can occur in Turkey and shape geography education. Changes and developments will have different dimensions in terms of teachers, students, and other stakeholders. For instance, this age is the technology age. Information communication technologies will have much more influence on our lives in the coming years. In this context, benefiting effectively from ICT has become more important to provide permanent learning in geography education.

In the light of rapid changes and developments, it is inevitable that any important developments in geography education progresses in terms of teachers, students, and other processes. Therefore, having knowledge of developments all over the world, using information communication technologies more frequently, understanding the changes in physical and natural events, making the world a more livable place and maintaining it should be determined as the most important aims in geography education in Turkey.

As the past developments in geography education are considered, it is very probable that changes and developments in almost all fields will affect the future. In this context, when determining the future of geography education in Turkey, the following points should be paid attention to:

When the content of geography is determined within the context of recent changes and developments, the characteristic of being sensitive to global changes and problems should be maintained. The effective usage of geographical knowledge should be provided to answer the expectations of the community.

Current issues such as sustainable development and being careful about the effective and economical usage of natural resources should be determined as basic contents in geography education. This case should be one of the main components of future geography education in Turkey in terms of developing consciousness of the world and educating individuals that are sensitive to the world, which is one of the main aims of geography education.

To be able to attain these desired objectives, we should give sufficient importance to geography education. It is necessary to teach geography in appropriate ways from the preschool period. Designing geography classrooms in every secondary school is a necessary condition for effective geography education. In these classrooms, necessary laboratory materials and ICT should be provided to increase the efficiency of geography education.

In Turkey, to benefit from geography education as much as possible, a content which ensures that individuals can use the geographical knowledge that they get throughout primary school and university, should be arranged.

Necessary background services should be conducted to provide sufficient opportunities for students and teacher in terms of benefiting from information communication technologies and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). In this context GIS, which is one of the important expansions of geography, should be applied at all levels of geography education.

It will be suitable to consider social studies-mathematics points instead of social studies points in geography thanks to its location in natural and social sciences.

One of the important components of geography education is teacher training. The curricula of geography departments in higher education institutions should be updated. Furthermore, we should give importance to in service training so that teachers can keep up with the changing conditions.

One of the important matters for the future of geography education in Turkey is arranging appropriate materials for geography education to enable teachers to be effective.

Beside all of these, it is necessary to give importance to cooperation between teachers and students by preparing projects with other countries in all levels of education. Thus, we can provide integration between Turkey and other countries in terms of geography education.

When we consider the past and present state of geography education it is clear that similar developments will exist in the future. In this context the present problems in geography education should be determined. Thus, the future of geography education will be in safe hands.

With this aim we should make plans by considering developments all over the world and conditions in the country. Also, some arrangement should be made in primary and secondary schools in terms of the curriculum, content, instruction-education activities, materials, usage of new educational techniques and usage of information communication technologies.

One of the most important claims of geography education is to grow as individuals that have geographical consciousness and that are sensitive to nature and human conditions. In this context, geography education should design the future and have concern for the future. Therefore, from the preschool period, geography education should be provided to people in appropriate ways.