

A Review of Curriculum History and the Conceptual Framework of Curriculum History in Turkey

Sümer Aktan*

Balıkesir University, Turkey

Abstract

Curriculum is generally defined based on the philosophical perspectives of the individuals. One of the definitions of curriculum states that curriculum is a field of academic study and research, having an intrinsic research systematic, theory, and tradition. From this perspective, this study is designed as three main chapters. The first chapter consists of the development process of curriculum as a field of academic study. In the second chapter, the period between 1918 and 1938 in the USA, during which curriculum studies have been institutionalized, was described and then the development process of the curriculum history as a field in curriculum studies was analyzed. In the final chapter of the study, the significance of the studies developed around the education history in Turkey within the context of the curriculum history and the relations between the education history and the curriculum history were analyzed.

Keywords: Curriculum studies, the curriculum history, research on the curriculum history, the education history

* **Sümer Aktan**, PhD, works as an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Studies, Necatibey Faculty of Education, Balıkesir University. His research subjects include curriculum theory, the curriculum history as well as the teaching and learning process.

Correspondence: saktanus@yahoo.com

Introduction

Despite the fact that curriculum as a praxis had a relatively prolonged history, curriculum as a praxiology only became possible as a consequence of a series of developments occurred in the USA during the early periods of the 20th century (Goodlad, 1985). An analysis of the development process of curriculum as a field of academic study points out that the Herbertian tradition, developed in the USA since the late 19th century as well as progressive philosophy of education, and management theories developed in the field of business administration significantly contributed to this paradigm shift. “The Curriculum” written by John Franklin Bobbitt in 1918 can be considered as the first step of the development process of curriculum as a field of study (Kliebard, 1975, 1986; Giroux, Penna, Pinar, 1981; Jackson, 1992). During the period of approximately 15 years following the publication of the above study, curriculum studies went under a rapid development, leading to the subsequent publication of main works referred to as classics today as well as the introduction of postgraduate courses on curriculum and teaching in universities and ultimately paving the way for specialization in the field of curriculum development. Furthermore, conducting a large scale research study as “The Eight-Year Study” during the period between 1930 and 1940 led to the introduction of the early comprehensive theoretical perspectives on curriculum development (Kriedel and Bullough, 2007; Kriedel and Bullough, 2002; Watras, 2006). During the following years, curriculum developers have been provided an occupational organization by the foundation of ASCD (The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) in 1942. The concept of curriculum has developed comprehensively in the USA thanks to such rapid developments. Curriculum practices developed from various philosophical movements were applied and the foundations of scientific and technical paradigms were introduced in the same period. This broad perspective has led to a significant accumulation of knowledge during time and curriculum studies have been categorized into various fields of study. Curriculum theory, curriculum philosophy, curriculum development, and the curriculum history are some of the subcategories of this field of study (Behar-Horenstein, 2000).

This study analyzes the development process of the curriculum history, which has been stated above and developed since the 1960s as a subcategory of the curriculum, as a field of academic study and its condition in Turkey. In the first chapter of the study, the development process of curriculum as a field of academic study has been analyzed. Afterwards, the course of development of the curriculum history as an academic field and its conceptual framework have been theorized and discussed. In the final chapter of the study, the curriculum history in Turkey has been analyzed and a conceptual framework has been suggested for the studies dealing with the curriculum history.

Curriculum: Development from a Philosophical Speculation Towards a Field of Scientific Study

Although the question of “what knowledge is of most worth?” was reportedly asked by Herbert Spencer, it seems that all civilizations throughout history have responded this question in some way or another. When considered from this aspect, it can be suggested that curriculum is a form of praxis. On the other hand, the nature of the response provided for the question of “what knowledge is of most worth ?” began to go under a change towards the end of the 19th century

and in the beginning of the 20th century. The question of “what is the most valuable knowledge?” constitutes a basis for curriculum studies in the USA, where production, domestic migration and immigration have been increased due to the development of science and technology and the nature of the responses provided for this question has consequently begun to be determined by scientific approach rather than philosophical speculations. It can be said that the Herbartian pedagogical concept developed in the USA as well as progressive philosophy of education, and the principles of scientific methods have a significant role in the dominance of scientific approach in curriculum studies.

The Herbartian pedagogical concept has caught the attention of a group of American educators towards the end of the 19th century. Herbart left behind a rich collection of heritage in terms of philosophy, psychology, and education. Herbart’s ideas on education and philosophy were developed based on the ideas of Kant, Hegel and Pestalozzi (Compayré, 1886; Cubberley, 1947; Dunkel, 1969). Herbart was mostly influenced by the ideas of Pestalozzi in the framework of pedagogy and according to Herbart, the child should be active during the learning process and should be in the center of the learning process. The pedagogical concept developed based on these ideas became a strong tradition within a short period of time.

The essential point emphasized by Herbart was the development of the characters of the individuals. In order to perform character education, the structure of school curriculum is required to go under a change. Herbart made two basic suggestions for the purpose of such a change. First suggestion was the concentration of the courses so as to make sure that an essential course such as history or literature would be in the center of curriculum. Another suggestion was the rearrangement of course subjects in correlation to one another (Compayré, 1907; DeGarmo, 1895; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 1996). Herbart emphasized five basic principles for the integration of his suggestions into the learning process. These five principles or steps were preparation, presentation, association, generalization, and application (Herbert, 1896; 1913). Although Herbart’s ideas did not receive much attention during his life, his ideas became widespread as a result of the efforts made by those who followed his pedagogical ideas over the years after his death. In particular, Karl Volkmar Stoy, Tuiskon Ziller and Wilhelm Rein contributed greatly to the formation of the Herbartian pedagogical tradition. Especially, the contributions of Tuiskon Ziller and Wilhelm Rein were significant in the transformation of the Herbartian concept into a theoretical structure and its development as a pedagogical theory (Dunkel, 1969). Many American pedagogues went to Germany towards the end of the 19th century to study the works of Ziller and Rein. Amongst these pedagogues, Charles and Frank McMurry brothers as well as Charles De Garmo had significant contributions to the Herbartian concept to become widespread in the USA and wrote books for the adoption of this pedagogical concept in the USA (Cubberley, 1947; Dunkel, 1969).

What is the contribution of the Herbartian concept to curriculum to become a field of academic study? As a matter of fact, the curriculum field began to become an academic field with the introduction of Bobbitt’s book published in 1918. Under these circumstances, what is the contribution of the Herbartians to this process? The most significant contribution of the American Herbartians was that they placed the curriculum concept in the center of the discussions about education theory and education (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 1996). In addition, the sense of curriculum suggested by them was in fact significant considering the conditions of the period. It can be said that the ideas suggested to design the course subjects in correlation to one

another and to allow for certain progressivity in the teaching process have provided an insight for today's interdisciplinary curriculum studies. Furthermore, the fact that curriculum as a concept constitutes a basis for discussions on education had an influence on the discussions that took place in intellectual circles. It can be said that these discussions provided a basis for curriculum to become a field of academic study in the following years.

Another significant factor influential in curriculum to become an academic study was the progressive philosophy of education that was developed in the USA. The development of this philosophical approach, which was developed in Germany, in the USA became possible thanks to the American pedagogs educated in Germany. Amongst these pedagogs, Francis Wayland Parker was the leading figure (Tanner and Tanner, 1975). According to Parker, as distinct from the Herbartians, the foundations of curriculum were based on the interests and needs of the children. In fact, this perspective adopted by Parker was fundamentally a different synthesis of the theories suggested by Pestalozzi, Froebel and Herbart. This new synthesis also provided a basis for the progressive philosophy having a significant place in the American philosophy of education (Kliebard, 1986; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 1996; Tanner and Tanner, 1975).

The ideas suggested by Parker were fundamental in the development period of the progressive philosophy of education. In the development of this fundamental approach, the contributions of such intellectuals as John Dewey, William H. Kilpatrick, Abraham Flexner, Lester F. Ward, and George S. Counts were particularly significant (Cremin, 1964). Dewey's studies in Chicago University significantly contributed in particular to the understanding of the theoretical and practical framework of the progressive concept. Furthermore, the Project Method developed by Kilpatrick was also significant in that it provided a new perspective in the practice of progressivism. The influence of the progressivist intellectuals on curriculum studies can be said to become more prevalent than that of the Herbartian tradition. In this context, the curriculum concept based on the concentration and correlation of the courses, developed by the Herbartians as an alternative to the classical subject-oriented curriculum concept, went a step further by suggesting that the interests and needs of the children should be in the center of curriculum and emphasizing that the teaching process should be based on learning through practice and experience, which definitely allowed for the introduction of a new paradigm. The idea that schools were in fact a manifestation of life and one of the objectives of schools was to ensure individuals to become efficient and productive citizens as suggested by the progressivist intellectuals can be considered amongst the contributions of this approach to curriculum studies. In particular, the objective of educating individuals to become efficient and productive citizens can be said to have a significant influence on the concept of scientific curriculum development.

The developments mentioned above can be considered as the cornerstones in the development process of curriculum as an academic field. A number of developments taking place in the first quarter of the 20th century allowed for the concept of scientific curriculum to be established based on these foundations. In this context, the most significant development was probably the development of the industry in the USA after the Civil War. The social texture gradually began to change as a result of rapid developments in industrial, transportation, and business sectors following the period after 1865 as well as domestic migration and immigration. Factors such as increase in the production of iron and steel, manufacturing of machines and urbanization have triggered a social transformation. The productivity of industrial enterprises and

their successful business activities resulting in high profits were particularly significant in the process of social transformation.

The contributions of a mechanical engineer to this development process had a great influence not only in the industrial field but also in other fields such as business, management, and education. The perspective of the engineer named Frederick W. Taylor about management processes resulted in radical changes in the concept of management in the early years of the 20th century. The theory suggested by Taylor was in fact quite simple. Each work would be completed in a shorter period of time provided that such work was divided into specific and significant smaller units and detailed time studies were carried out for the period of time allocated for the work (Taylor, 1911). The theory suggested by Taylor found a chance for a wide range of application field in the industrial sector within a short time leading to an increase in the profit levels. Consequently, the large-scale success in the industrial area came to the attention of those who study in the field of social sciences. Efficiently used in production units and factories, this approach was ultimately considered to be used in schools and education sectors. In fact, there would be no difference between a school and a factory provided that schools were considered as factories, teachers as workers whereas school management was considered as overseers. On the other hand, students were considered to be raw material in this process. The key problem was to determine the qualities of the product to be manufactured and the road map for the production process. The answer to this problem was curriculum.

John Franklin Bobbitt developed a practical suggestion about how to educate students to become efficient and productive citizens in his work *The Curriculum*, published in 1918 (Bobbitt, 1918; 1924). Based on this suggestion, all works and activities constituting the social life could be divided into smaller units and systematically taught to students. This suggestion made by Bobbitt was in line with the scientific principles adopted by Frederick W. Taylor in the industrial sector. If these principles resulted in a great increase in industrial production, then it would lead to efficient results in schools teaching students how to become a citizen (Callahan, 1962). In this respect, Bobbitt's suggestions were later considered as the starting point in terms of the development process of the curriculum field (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman, 1996). The twenty three year period between 1918 and 1941 was quite an active period in terms of curriculum studies. Shortly after the publication of Bobbitt's book, many books on curriculum design began to be published subsequently. This publication activity also found its way through the journals published in the same period. The concept of curriculum expert became popular in a short time and curriculum studies began in many states. These developments also took place in higher education towards the end of the 1930s. The department of curriculum and training found in Columbia University can be considered as a reflection of curriculum studies at university level. Furthermore, ASCD established in 1941 contributed to the institutionalization of curriculum studies within the scope of an occupational organization. Consequently, open to philosophical speculations during the period prior to 1918, curriculum gradually began to become a scientific field after 1918 and became independent amongst the educational sciences in the beginning of the 1940s.

Development Process of the Curriculum History in Curriculum Studies

Curriculum studies have achieved more than going through the institutionalization process since the beginning of the 1950s. Curriculum studies constituted an exclusive literature and

gained many grounds due to the publication of a great number of books, articles, and study reports as well as post-graduate and doctorate degree courses provided in universities during the thirty two-year period between 1918 and 1950. Moreover, a curiosity emerged amongst scholars during the same period to explain the origins and development of this accumulation of knowledge. Curriculum studies as a more specific field of study within the scope of the education history began to be explored since the beginning of the 1960s. On the other hand, there can be found other studies conducted in earlier periods to analyze the development process of curriculum as an academic field. Amongst these studies, the doctorate study titled *A Critical Review of Various Conceptions Underlying Curriculum-Making since 1890* by William M. McCall, submitted to The University of Missouri was quite significant. In the study, McCall (1930) introduces the development process of curriculum in the USA as a field of study through the studies carried out by the Committee of Ten and the Committee of Fifteen, and then he explores the contributions of Bobbitt to the process. Chapter 5 of the study discusses a study by Frederick Bonser on primary school curriculum whereas Chapter 6 introduces the education theory by Julius Merriam and its reflections on curriculum studies. The study carried out by McCall can be considered amongst the earliest studies on the curriculum history as it analyzes a number of reforms influential during the early periods of the 20th century and providing an insight to the developments in the curriculum field.

Another perspective about the curriculum history can be found in the work titled *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study*, a study on the education history written by Bernard Bailyn. Although this work is about the development of education through the American history, it is also significant for including discussions about the developments in the curriculum field. In the work that was published in 1960, Bailyn attributes the underlying cause of the developments in the curriculum field to high increase in the population of children of school age and demand boom as a consequence of the increase (Bailyn, 1960; Kliebard, 1992). Another work that analyzes the developments taking place in the early 20th century and leading to the emergence of the concept of curriculum development was *The Curriculum Field: It's Formative Years* written by M. L. Seguel. Kliebard (1992) considered this work as the first systematic work focusing on the curriculum history and described it as a work that analyzed the history of the field within the context of its founders. As a matter of fact, Seguel (1966) explored the historical foundations of the curriculum field developed around seven key figures in his work. The work is also significant in that it explores the curriculum history based on its contributors. In other words, it analyzes the curriculum history within the context of significant figures who contributed to its development as a field. Seguel's work was the first specific work on the field of curriculum history. Although the work was rather distant from the education history or the traditional perspective of education history, it played a crucial role in the development process of the curriculum history as a subcategory in the academic field by exploring the subject matters in its historical integrity and in line with the course of development.

An article written by Arno Bellack in 1969 was a milestone in terms of the construction of the conceptual perspectives of the studies on the curriculum history. In the study, Bellack pointed out that the curriculum history should focus on four main subjects. These subjects were the developments in curriculum and teaching practices, the development of curriculum as a field of study and research, the lives and careers of curriculum theoreticians, and the activities of the national committees and commissions acting within the scope of curriculum studies (Bellack, 1969).

This conceptual framework suggested by Bellack (1969) can be considered as being quite functional within the scope of the curriculum history and guidance for the determination of the research problems. An analysis of the studies carried out in the USA shows significant academic efforts within the context of the curriculum studies, the lives and careers of the scientists conducting research on the curriculum field, and studies on the problems dealing with the nature of the curriculum field. It can be suggested that the conceptual framework suggested by Bellack would make significant contributions to the institutionalization of the curriculum history studies in Turkey. Provided that the curriculum field is an academic and systematic research field, the historical and philosophical foundations of the field should be able to respond to the specific problems of the field. In this context, the present or the desired future condition of the conceptual framework of the curriculum history in Turkey should be also analyzed with a view to respond to such problems.

The Conceptual Framework of the Studies on the Curriculum History in Turkey

The studies on the curriculum history in Turkey are generally carried out within the scope of the studies on the education history. These studies on the curriculum history are in general deals with the subject matter within the context of the teacher education and the history of the institutions that educate teachers, general education history, or the viewpoints of the prominent figures on education. The studies directly related to the curriculum history amongst them appeared to be those analyzing the curricula designed during the Republic Period. It is a fact that these studies significantly contributed to the Turkish education concept. On the other hand, whether these studies satisfactorily contributed to the understanding of the specific problems of the curriculum field or providing an intellectual basis for the curriculum field is a significant concern. This issue can also be considered as one of the reasons why the curriculum studies are devoid of a sound basis. In this context, analyzing the place of the studies on the curriculum history in Turkey within the conceptual framework suggested by Bellack (1969) would provide a more precise perspective.

The Development Process of Curriculum Studies

The development of the curriculum studies in historical continuity is a basic field of research within the scope of the studies on the curriculum history. Such questions as how the field has emerged, what types of problems fall within its scope, and its development process should be accounted for as expected from an academic field. From this point of view, it appears that this problem was either mostly ignored or analyzed rather briefly in the studies conducted in Turkey on the curriculum field. For instance, Selahattin Ertürk's work titled *Eğitimde Program Geliştirme* (Curriculum Development in Education), one of the earliest works published in Turkey on the curriculum field, mainly focused on the technical processes (Ertürk, 1972). On the other hand, a work by Fatma Varış titled *Eğitimde Program Geliştirme: Teori ve Teknikler* (Curriculum Development in Education: Theories and Techniques) published in the same period, rather different from the work by Ertürk, includes curriculum studies carried out during the late period of the Ottoman Empire and partially mentions about the efforts made during the Republic Period in Turkey (Varış, 1971). The recent studies, however, emphasize that curriculum studies were introduced with the proclamation of the republic (Demirel, 2010; Gökmenoğlu & Eret, 2010).

It is beyond question that analyzing only the systematic changes in school curricula would be insufficient to inclusively explain the development process of curriculum studies. The reason is that the curriculum and curriculum history fields cannot be restricted to a mere analysis of the changes in school curricula. During the Pre-Republic period, especially since the 19th century, school curricula of colleges, vocational schools, and military schools began to be explored recurrently. Moreover, significantly comprehensive curriculum studies were carried out on the curricula of primary schools, high schools, and colleges during the period after 1880 (Somel, 2010; Fortna, 2005). Consequently, the schooling process that began to appear especially since the 19th century should be taken into account in analyzing the development process of curriculum studies. Considering that the schooling process only began in 1923 would apparently lead to overlooking a significant historical accumulation and the conceptual dimension of the historical process.

In this respect, such subjects as the schooling process that began to develop since the 19th century, the changes occurred in the new schools and their curricula during the course of time, the textbooks used in these schools and their didactic characteristics, the teachers employed in these schools as well as other activities associated with education and teaching are required to be analyzed within this scope.

The Lives and Careers of Curriculum Theoreticians

Curriculum theory, in the most general sense, can be considered as an analysis of the educational life based on its various dimensions (Pinar, 2004). From this perspective, analyzing the empirical processes of all types and nature associated with the education and training processes as well as the learning process from various dimensions is considered amongst the primary duties of those who carry out studies on the field of curriculum theory. The curriculum history field requires studying and understanding the biographies of the curriculum theoreticians as well as their studies and contributions to the field.

In this respect, significant studies were also carried out in Turkey. The studies on the lives of the education theoreticians such as İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, İsmail Hakkı Tonguç, Rauf İnan, Halil Fikret Kanad were quite significant within this scope. On the other hand, it is still impossible to find comprehensive biographies or well-documented monographies of the scientists who played an important role in the foundation of the curriculum field in Turkey. For instance, it is a significant drawback that no studies have been carried out on the scientists such as Selahattin Ertürk, Fatma Varış, Hıfzı Doğan, and İzzettin Alıcıgüzel, who specialized in the curriculum field by studying abroad and subsequently played significant roles within this scope in Turkey. Consequently, one of the most significant challenges faced by the curriculum historiography is the introduction and transfer of the heritage of the scientists, who played a leading role in the foundation and development of the field, to the next generations. Overcoming this challenge would be a crucial step to develop a tradition within the scope of curriculum studies. Developing a tradition for an academic field is highly important for the future of that field. The construction of a perspective for the future is only possible when an academic field is formed based on a sound historical background.

Curriculum Commissions and Their Activities

Another field of study analyzed by the curriculum history researches is associated with the activities of the curriculum commissions carrying out curriculum studies or making decisions on the implementation of curricula. The earliest curriculum commissions in the pre-republic period were founded after 1870. The activities of the curriculum commissions during the period of Abdul Hamid II were particularly significant. These activities included developing new curricula, research studies intended for the implementation of the applicable curricula, the procurement of the required classroom materials, equipments, and other requirements for the schools, and training teachers for the new curricula developed to be implemented (Ergin, 1977; Koçer, 1991; Somel, 2010).

An increase in schooling can be considered amongst the major factors playing a crucial role in the intensified activities of the curriculum commissions especially during the period of Abdulhamid II, and the progression of such activities during the subsequent constitutional period (Ergin, 1977; Koçer, 1991). The curriculum commissions meticulously examined the quantitative increase at the primary and secondary education levels as well as the problems that had arisen within the scope of the vocational schools and post graduate schools recently opened for education during that period. Another significant point was that the curriculum commissions explicitly identified the political functions of curriculum. The curriculum reports and the commission reports prepared by the curriculum commissions included suggestions to remove certain subjects from the curriculum as such subjects could endanger the unity and solidarity of the empire and to follow a disciplinary proceedings for teachers who fail to comply with the requirements of the current curriculum (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi / The Ottoman Archive of Prime Ministry [BOA] Mf. Mkt. 1331/1118. 30; Mf. Mkt. 1313/283.19; Mf. Mkt. 1325 / 997.52).

As much as the reports prepared by the curriculum commissions are concerned, it can be said that the earliest curriculum development activities in Turkey did not take place in 1923. In fact, the period of Abdulhamid II, during which systematic and planned efforts within the scope of the curriculum studies had been undertaken, can be considered to be the beginning of such activities. Consequently, one of the major challenges for the curriculum history studies is to comprehensively determine the development process of the curriculum field in Turkey. An interdisciplinary perspective is definitely required to address this challenge.

The Problems of Curriculum and Instruction

The problems of curriculum and education are another field of study within the scope of the curriculum history. The problems encountered during the implementation of the curricula, understanding the problems about education within the context of the course of the historical background, and the measures taken to address such problems can be listed amongst the main issues to consider within the framework of the curriculum history. Within the context of the curriculum studies in Turkey, the problems of curriculum and education were considered amongst the main problems undertaken by the education bureaucracy in the period of Abdulhamid II. Although the education bureaucracy refers to the curriculum commissions for the solution to the problems of curriculum and education, legal regulations also took place regarding such problems. Furthermore, such problems have been transferred from the Ottoman Period to

the education bureaucracy of the Republic Period. The problems encountered during the implementation of the primary school curriculum of 1926 and in the case of the practical education provided in the village institutes during that period can be considered within this scope.

Conclusion

The development process of curriculum as an academic field began towards the end of the 19th century and it was completed within the first 30-year period in the 20th century. Curriculum studies were especially influential in the USA both as an occupational field and a research field as a result of postgraduate programs and occupational organizations established during that period. An interest for the analysis of the development process of the curriculum field was observed during the course of its development. In fact, a similar interest was also observed in other scientific disciplines. Such research fields as the history of medicine and the history of physics require understanding of the development process of its own scientific field within the scope of its course of development and conveying the results of this understanding to the new individuals receiving occupational education and training in the same field. Ensuring this understanding is quite crucial to establish a sense of occupational identity.

An analysis of the studies within the scope of the education history in Turkey indicates that significant studies were carried out on certain subjects such as the general education history, and the history of the institutions providing education and training to student teachers. However, the studies on the curriculum history or the research fields of the curriculum history remained to be restricted in scope. In fact, the curriculum field has a unique historical background in each country and culture. This background is essential in the construction of identity as well as in contributing to the introduction of new theoretical initiatives. Today, the curriculum field in Turkey is seen merely as a technical scientific field and thus, the variety of practices transferred from the late Ottoman Period to our day and those adopted during the Republic Period have been overlooked. Such an approach would be insufficient to understand the origins of the curriculum field and to constitute a basis for future practices. Both international and national understanding of the development process of curriculum studies in the course of historical continuity would have significant contributions to the development of the concept of education in Turkey.

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