

# THE NEW ORIENT

## EDUCATION IN THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

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THE Turkish Republic was declared on October 29th, 1923. A long struggle had resulted in complete independence for the Turkish people. For the first time in history, Turkey was a nation unified in race, language, religion, and cultural ideals. The rapid changes which have followed during the past eleven years have been revolutionary and far-reaching. Like all modern governments, Turkey regards public education as a powerful means for furthering its principles, and far more than some modern nations, she is using it for conserving, advancing, and perpetuating the aims of the Revolution. Hence the large emphasis in all forms of educational activity.

Modern education in Turkey began in the army and in the Medical School which was organized on a European model a hundred years ago. Important beginnings toward a general system of modern education had been projected in the latter years of the Ottoman Empire when religious, minority, and foreign schools assumed responsibility for a large part of the education available. But the revolution of 1908, the succession of wars, and untoward political conditions delayed progress. For all practical purposes, the modern system of education may be credited to the republican regime. Four months after the proclamation of the Republic, a new law unifying education was adopted, since which time, by new law when necessary and by administrative procedure under the laws, frequent changes and improvements have been made.

The Ministry of Public Instruction whose chief is a member of the Cabinet with political as well as educational functions, is in charge of education in the broadest sense including not only schools of primary, secondary and university grade, but Fine Arts, Museums, adult education, and publications. Although certain institutions such as Military Schools, the Ankara School of Law, and other special schools are connected with other ministries, the Ministry of Education has certain responsibilities toward these. One may fairly characterize the work of the Ministry of Public Instruction as seek-

ing to develop a *modern, secular and centralized system*. In general, Turkish education follows the forms of western systems, especially the French, though American influences are marked. The ultimate aim is an entirely literate people, with appropriate educational opportunities open to all. With a very high percentage of illiteracy, the population sparsely settled in large areas, and a limited budget, the ideal will not soon be reached, but progress is rapid, intelligent, and noteworthy.

Education is centralized, as indeed every government activity is highly centralized. The Ministry includes the Minister, the Permanent Under Secretary, a National Bureau of Education and Instruction which passes on policy, curricula, text books, and keeps informed on educational progress in other lands as applicable to Turkish needs, a Director of Primary Instruction, a Director of Secondary Education, a Director of Higher Education, a Director of Fine Arts, a Fine Arts Commission, a Director of Archeology and a Director of Hygiene, with a number of general inspectors. The law of 1926 divided the country into thirteen areas for educational administration, with a Regional Superintendent carrying large powers in each; but later this office was discontinued, leaving the Primary Schools under the Provincial Director of Education, while the higher schools were made more directly dependent upon the Ministry. The personnel of the educational system and particularly its leadership, impresses one with its devotion and ability. A fine spirit of service, a really constructive educational passion marks many members of the group. Changes in the ministry have been far more frequent in recent years than seem compatible with the largest success. But while ministers come and go, and even higher officials are transferred from one position to another, sometimes apparently for political reasons, there is a good degree of continuity. Men once in positions of leadership remain long in the system if not in the same position. Every effort is made to give dignity to the teaching profession and while salaries are modest, a high degree of security is provided, and modest retiring allowances safeguard old age. The centralizing policy of the government includes the relatively few remaining minorities' schools, and the foreign schools, a decreasing factor in Turkish education, are fully under control. Foreign schools of which none are given recognition as of higher than secondary grade, have been required progressively to adapt

their programs to Turkish standards, their curricula, text-books, and teachers must be approved, and teachers of some subjects must be Turks appointed by the government.

Education is thoroughly secularized as well as centralized. In the old days, a large part of the education was given by religious teachers in the Mosque schools. It consisted largely in reciting the Koran and was medieval in spirit. The new government has closed all such schools and placed the children in state institutions. There some lessons are still labeled religious, but these are taught by lay, not clerical teachers, and contain such modern injunctions as the religious duty of supporting the aeroplane society. Private and minority schools are secularized with equal thoroughness, and education must not be used for religious or any other form of propaganda. Friday is the weekly holiday but this is general and far more largely used for rest and recreation than as a day of worship. Whereas a few years ago, most students kept the fast of Ramazan, now few do, and whether fasting or not, teachers and pupils are required to attend to their duties promptly. The greater religious holidays are observed as school holidays but far more emphasis is given to national holidays. The secular approach is found in all text books, and the history text presents the historical facts about Christianity as fairly and disinterestedly as the corresponding facts about Islam.

Education, again, is truly modern. Few states have been as fearless and thoroughgoing in disregarding the old and adopting the new, as Turkey. The most conspicuous change, of course, has been the adoption in the summer of 1928, of the new phonetic Latin alphabet in place of the old Arabic script. The latter was flowing, lovely to look at, but hard to read and to learn and unsuited to Turkish. It was discarded, at once, absolutely. Not only are children able to learn to read and write far more easily but thousands of persons who would never have aspired to literacy, have now learned the new characters. The change was thorough. No text books in the old characters are allowed, notes must not be written in the Arabic script, though books of reference may be used. Further, the language is being constantly simplified, even to the extent of eliminating words of foreign origin which have long had apparently full recognition. Even names are changed and titles such as "efendi" and "pasha" have been forbidden recently.

But in outlook, methods, and equipment, Turkish education is modern. A national bureau in Ankara keeps a close watch on edu-

cational advance abroad, able educators like John Dewey of Columbia, A. Ferrier of the J. J. Rousseau Institute of Geneva, and Omer Buys of Belgium have been brought to advise on educational problems. Teachers returning from abroad bring up-to-date ideas. Many of the buildings used for secondary schools compare favorably with modern school buildings abroad. Even the new village schools which are appearing in large numbers are well planned architecturally on indigenous lines, are well lighted and offer a striking contrast to the poorer buildings once deemed suitable for schools and to the surrounding simpler buildings and homes. And whereas once the teacher was looked down upon as a man who could probably find nothing more useful to do, or a religious man more concerned with the other world than with this, now schools of all grades are taught by certified teachers with modern training and professional ideals. The change is striking but it is the result of a determination to modernize the entire system and fit it for the newer generation and the needs of the twentieth century.

The government system consists of schools divided as follows:

Primary Schools, comprising a 5-year course in the towns and less often in the villages, ordinarily coeducational and free.

Secondary Schools, comprising Middle Schools of three years, and Lycées of six years (including the Middle School course), Normal Schools for men and for women, and a number of practical schools such as Commercial, Agricultural, Trade Schools and the like, all requiring at least completion of the primary course for entrance. Most schools are coeducational, charge no tuition, and many have boarding students, many of whom are accepted on scholarship.

University Grade Schools, including the University of Istanbul, with its Medical, Law, Science, Education, and Theological Faculties, the Military Academy, General Staff School, Merchant Marine School and Naval Academy under the Ministry of Defense, the Veterinary School, the School for Higher Civil Service, the Engineering School, the School of Mines, the Higher School of Agriculture, and the more recently organized Law School at Ankara. To be considered a Higher School, or school of university grade, schools must require lycée graduation for admission.

In a paper of this scope, statistics are of minor importance but the following figures published widely in connection with the Tenth Anniversary of the Republic in 1933 are suggestive:

Total number of schools of Primary Grade increased from 3,413 in 1913-14 to 4,894 in 1923-24 and to 6,713 in 1931-32, with the corresponding enrollment 223,279, 336,061, and 542,136 respectively.

Students of all grades are reported as follows:

Primary—	1923-1924		1931-1932	
Boys	273,107		350,322	
Girls	62,954	336,061	191,814	542,136
Middle—				
Boys	5,362		22,805	
Girls	543	5,905	7,511	30,316
Lycées—				
Boys	1,011		5,120	
Girls	230	1,241	1,720	6,840
Special Schools		931		4,155
Normal Schools		2,528		5,293
University, Higher Schools		2,914		4,853
TOTALS		349,580		593,593

The Primary Schools provide education for children normally from 7 to 12 years of age with a five years' course in towns and less in some villages. The importance of pre-school or kindergarten education is not overlooked, but the demands of primary education compel the government to begin with primary education. The ideal is to have every child in a primary school. This cannot be realized for many years but there is an encouraging increase in the number of village schools. In the Izmir province more than two hundred village school buildings were erected in two recent years. The number of girls is considerably less than that of the boys and the proportion is higher in the towns and cities. For these schools, administered by provincial Educational Directors, with a corps of inspectors chosen from experienced teachers, a modern curriculum has been provided. Of course, Turkish language, history, and civics are stressed, but the education is practical and unified projects are

undertaken. There is usually a school garden, and much hand work is provided. The museum of a village school often shows rather remarkable work by primary children who are encouraged to give expression to their creative instincts by clay modelling, drawing, and the use of some simple materials locally available. The ideals of the "New Education" have influenced Turkish primary education through men trained in Geneva. The teachers, usually graduates of Normal Schools, include more men than we are accustomed to find in American primary schools, but there are many women. Efforts are made to adjust the school to local needs. Excursions to places of local interest, to museums and factories, are encouraged and the school seeks to gear into practical life. Each of the normal schools has a practice school where ambitious instructors are able to try out and demonstrate new methods. In Ankara, under the direction of an Association in close touch with the Ministry, is a primary school attended by children of many high government officials. To this school was brought Dr. Beryl Parker of New York University to help apply to Turkish conditions the best results of foreign experience in primary education. Such schools may have a wide influence as their success, in a country where everything is so centralized, can rapidly be made known to inspectors and be widely adopted.

Secondary schools leading to the University are known as Middle Schools if they offer only the first three years or Lycées if they include the upper three years of the full six-year course. These and a number of special schools offer advancement to the graduates of the primary course. The number of lycée students has been increasing so rapidly of late that steps are being taken more rigorously to limit those who go on to the University. One of the means is the introduction of two sets of examinations, one at the end of the Middle and one at the end of the Lycée course, each a comprehensive examination covering three years. Although coeducation is general in the primary schools and in the University, and is not unknown in secondary schools, the larger cities have separate schools for boys and for girls. But the course of study is almost the same for the two sexes and the examinations are now taken together. The curriculum is based largely on the continental model with more required science and mathematics for all students than is general in American schools. French was formerly the usual language studied in addition to Turkish, and a government lycée, Galata Serai, instructed in French, but the recent reorganization of the University

has stressed the need of higher standards. French, German, and English are available, but there is an increasing emphasis on English in all schools and a new lycée in Ankara is now instructing in English. There is more emphasis on memory work, and mastery of subject matter in a text, and less opportunity for individual laboratory and library work than in an American high school on account of a very crowded program. Recent changes, however, tend to reduce the number of required hours and to provide more activity. But the crowding of the schools, and sections too large for efficient teaching make this a difficult reform. A general science course based on an American text and other contributions from American education are noteworthy. There is some practical work for girls in lieu of military training given to the boys. Health education with, of course, much stress on citizenship, sports and student activities are encouraged in all the secondary schools.

There has been an abnormal demand for trained young people to meet the call from government offices, new industries and the like in recent years, as these have rapidly expanded. But there is danger in Turkey as elsewhere, that the supply of "white collar" workers will soon exceed the demand. Hence the government is increasing the number of special schools, or schools of practical arts on the secondary level, such as commercial schools, trade schools, and agricultural schools. In Ankara one of the fine new building houses the Izmit Pasha Institute for the training of girls in practical arts. In Izmir a Turk from Bulgaria began a private school for basketry, weaving, and flowermaking. It grew and now the government has taken it over and expanded it to train girls in these and other trades. There are agricultural schools, manned by able teachers largely trained abroad, which specialize in training for the agricultural needs of the area in which they are located. The government is fully aware of the importance of this type of education and as Turkey is following a policy of economic self-sufficiency and limiting the lines of work in which foreigners can be employed, there is a steady demand for well trained technicians and for skilled workers in many lines.

The University or one of the higher schools awaits the Lycée graduate who has passed the Baccalaureate as the final Lycée examination is generally called. Higher Schools are institutions of University grade not affiliated with the University in Istanbul. The old University was completely reorganized less than two years ago after a careful report by Professor Malche, a Swiss expert. The

aim is to bring the University up to the highest standards. It is increasingly influential in the national life so that ambitious young people covet its training. Men and women are admitted to all the faculties on equal footing and a good many women are taking the medical course. As in the lower schools, tuition is free and in several departments poor students may have full living against commitments for future government service. In addition to the various faculties of the University proper, there are Higher Schools of Engineering, Mining, Agriculture, etc., and a notably strong school for Higher Civil Service. To help meet the need for young modernly trained judges and lawyers, a second Law School has been set up at Ankara. The law graduates who propose to practice, are required to attend upon the lower courts as judges for a fixed time and thus gain practical experience. This enables the lower courts to be presided over by abler men than otherwise might offer and thus serves two worthy ends.

The training of teachers becomes a very important factor in such a system as Turkey has established. While there are older men and women, some ably trained, in the system, the majority are young people. The mental adjustments required by the revolutionary changes are obviously easier for younger than older persons, and of the latter the supply was limited. The practice of accepting teachers with less than the full training had to be adopted temporarily and there are still members of the system lacking the normal requirements but allowed to continue by reason of their experience and success. But definite professional standards are set and are progressively increased.

Normal Schools for Men and Women supply a steady stream of young people for primary schools. Admission was formerly from the primary school, but the practice is now being changed to require completion of the middle school, beyond which three years are required, making the new course more nearly parallel the Lycée course but naturally with more emphasis on pedagogy and practice teaching. As Turkey is a poor country and many desiring to be teachers lack the means for adequate training, the Normal Schools choose promising young people and provide not only free tuition but also board, lodging, clothing, and pocket money. Hence, poor but honest parents may aspire to have their children educated at public expense if they can secure the appointment. But the state not only gives, it demands a return. A graduate is obligated for a fixed term, some-



times as much as eight years, to serve wherever appointed. This requirement is strictly enforced, not even marriage cancelling it. Through the Normal Schools are readily spread the new policies adopted in Ankara and these schools have developed a fine spirit among their students and a real professional pride among primary school teachers. There are special normal courses for training teachers of music, drawing and handicraft, and physical education.

Advance in the profession for promising primary teachers formerly was not easy though the way was never entirely closed. By the new standards, it is facilitated. At the Gazi Institute in Ankara a shorter course has been offered for prospective teachers in the Middle Schools and some have been accepted into the lycées proper. But the usual path to secondary school teaching is through the University. The Higher Normal School is a department of the University, and opportunities are offered, similar to those in the normal schools, for students to secure full living against obligations to serve. But graduates of other University schools are also allowed to teach appropriate subjects in secondary schools. No department of the University exactly parallels the Arts and Science course of an American University; so a good many young Turks take the Law course with little idea of practicing but as a good training for life. The tendency however, is for the certification of teachers to be made more strict and eventually, doubtless, it will be required that teachers shall be certified only for those subjects they have intensively followed in the University.

Advanced professional training for Turkish teachers, however, is not limited to Turkish schools. A considerable number of young people, prospective teachers or prospective experts for other departments, are chosen from lycée, normal, or higher school graduates for foreign study. While during the war a good many seemed not to do very well, the great majority spend their time to good profit and really serve the country well. Fortunately the government allowances are generous, enabling the students to see something of the land to which they go, and move in a wider circle than merely the University group. And students who do well are usually left abroad long enough really to master their fields. It is of interest to Americans to note that a considerable number of young Turks are now in the United States under the direction of a high official, long director of primary education, studying in various colleges and universities. A limited number of Turkish young people, graduates

of the American colleges in Turkey, have secured scholarships or financed themselves for graduate work in the United States, and some of these have found places in the government system. But of the Turkish young people going abroad, the larger number seek European universities, usually French, Swiss, or German.

Teachers' institutes and conferences have not been as conspicuous in Turkish as in American education nor are as many opportunities for summer study as in America. But conferences are held when special need arises or when able lecturers are available. Special courses as for English teachers or Biology teachers, have been made available. Teachers long in service are sometimes sent to conferences in Europe or to inspect foreign systems.

Non-institutional education is not overlooked. When the Latin characters were adopted, night schools for adults were everywhere opened. Even the President of the Republic, who is deeply interested in education, became a teacher. Everyone was encouraged to learn to read and write. Many lines of employment were limited only to the literate so it was an important thing to learn. According to the figures in the tenth anniversary publication, by 1932 more than two million persons had been educated in this way. The adoption of the new characters called for more newspapers, magazines, and books than private enterprise unaided was able to undertake so subsidies were provided for a time. Through the National Press, the department has provided splendid text books, which must be approved to be used in the schools. Public reading rooms, unknown a few years ago, now number more than 1,700. No longer does the coffee house have a monopoly on the free time of the young men, who, in considerable numbers in cities and towns, are found in these reading rooms which are a part of the service of the official Peoples' Party. Among the potent educational forces of Turkey must also be noted the military training which practically every male receives. Students in secondary and higher schools postpone the bulk of their military training till graduation but then serve the balance of the eighteen months required to become reserve officers. The Ministry also cares for the important archeological interests of the country and the fifteen museums where priceless treasures of the past and new discoveries are made available to the public.

Private foreign schools are still found in Turkey but are far less numerous and popular than in former years. Regardless of the grade of their work, they are not given official standing higher than

secondary, and if their students are to enjoy admission to the important government examinations, their course must conform closely to the government programs. Robert College and the Woman's College at Istanbul continue with considerably reduced numbers and three schools for girls and two for boys are conducted by the American Mission Board, which has, however, closed three other schools in recent years for lack of funds. Several other foreign schools, including the International College, a strong, well-endowed, American institution in Izmir, have also voluntarily closed. While the attitude of the government toward the foreign schools is correct, the strongly nationalist tendencies have made the position of the foreign schools much more difficult than in earlier years. There are some Turkish private schools but these are strictly controlled and must conform to government standards and compete with government schools giving free tuition.

A critical evaluation of the present Turkish system is hardly called for in a paper of this nature, whose chief aim is to describe rather than to appraise. Obvious limitations may be noted, such as the total inadequacy of the present system to meet the needs of the whole population with primary schooling, the impossibility of holding to literacy village children with only a year or two of schooling, the crowded condition of many of the schools, the lack of adequate literature in the new characters, the effort to make over a language which is the result of growth; with all of these our Turkish friends are fully acquainted. An American used to freedom and variety, finds the system too highly centralized and the principals and teachers too much hampered by regulations. The secondary course seems too heavy, too standardized, and not sufficiently flexible to meet normal adolescent needs. But the task of educating any nation is stupendous. That of making literate a nation largely illiterate, of training all in citizenship, of fitting youth for significant participation in a new and complex society, of choosing and equipping the leaders of tomorrow; this task Turkey has assumed seriously and with a good degree of success. She has done it in trying times; for the past five years in the face of a worldwide depression which has robbed her of some of her richest markets. The task is unfinished as all such tasks always are, but Turkey realizes the importance of modern education, has made wise plans, is learning by her own experience and that of others, and her achievements deserve the attention and the appreciation of men of good will in all lands.