

THE EDUCATION OF SYRIAN CHILDREN IN TERMS OF FUNCTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL SOCIAL INTEGRATION: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

In the current study, the formal education of the Syrian children living in Turkey who are in the position of refugees under temporary protection was investigated sociologically in terms of the two basic dimensions of social integration. Social integration are regarded in two dimensions as functional and spiritual. According to official data, there are almost 4 million Syrians living in Turkey. The integration of 4 million people to the social structure is a hard process with all its dimensions. Education is the most important instrument of the Integration process. One of the significant functions of formal education is to make the individual a member of community. Being a sociological phenomenon, integration corresponds with the social integration and the objectives of education. While socialization and cultural heritage transfer, as the objectives of education, aims at spiritual integration, the purpose of political function, economic function and the function of developing the individual are functional integration.

Keywords: Education, Social Integration, Functional Integration, Spiritual Integration.

INTRODUCTION

With its geographical location, historical infrastructure and geopolitical importance, Turkey has been the centre of the physical social action in social sense throughout history. This feature of it has been exposed to movements of migration and refugee surges caused by wars, natural disasters and other social crises. As the most significant examples in the history of Ottoman, Turkey accepted Spanish Jews or people who wanted to take refuge in the country from Caucasia, Balkans, Middle East and in many other places in the world with any reason (Yenen, 2017, 192).

From early 1990s onwards, regional events developing during and post 1st Gulf War brought about important social events affecting the Middle East in general and Turkey in particular. The state and social structures of the countries in the region especially that of Iraq, Egypt, Yemen and Syria was affected negatively in this process. The movements of migration from the countries where anarchy, civil war and social turmoil were experienced to other countries became so wide in this era.

In the civil of Syria, the problems experienced in the country led to migration of millions of Syrians. The direction of this widespread movement of migration was towards Turkey with two reasons. The first reason was that the longest territorial border of Syria is with Turkey and it is near. The second reason is that other countries including the Muslim ones in the region do not want refugees in their countries. A similar case is also valid for European countries.

The case of Syrians in our country must be taken into consideration with its positive/negative sides as a "social phenomenon" and social problems regarding with it. In this sense, a scientifically, sociologically large perspective must be adopted as the method.

Social Integration

The concept of integration is used in social sciences together with the concepts of order, unity, balance, solidarity, stability. In general, it expresses the compatible interaction of the parts comprising the social structure in the sense of unity and order. In sociological terminology, integration was mostly used as accommodation physically and as unity politically and culturally in the

chaotic environment emerging after the World War II. In terms of individual, integration expresses the process of socialization and acculturation. Integration could be considered in two ways as social integration as being a part of a social structure and cultural integration as adopting and experiencing the culture of the society. Generally social and cultural integration are interwoven (Abercrombie, 2000, 182).

Social integration is realized through the construction of a common structure by social groups different from each other at a higher structure by protecting their own social-cultural features but as a new one. The concept is separated from assimilation in this sense. As for cultural integration, it is the fact that social groups exhibiting basic differences culturally create a new, common and synthesis group and adopt and live that culture. It is also a cultural integration that the new group participating in this social structure later on adopt the culture and live it. Social problems in such basic social institutions as politics, religion, economy, education, morality, law, family in healthily integrated communities in social sense are encountered less compared to other communities.

Social integration appeared as a more important issue in the nation states emerging with the collapse of empires in 20th century. This concept became more important in the communities where such segregations as racial, ethnic, religious, sectoral, class, economic differences, regional differences turned into conflicts, even into civil wars. In fact, a new world order was established with the conflicts, wars and migrations in the communities throughout the world up to 21st century. At the end of this problematic process, the communities completing their integration became civilized, wealthy with fewer social problems while those still having integration problems became the communities experiencing more intensive conflicts, civil wars, poverty and migrations.

Social integration is realized in two ways. First one is the functional integration and the second one is spiritual integration. Both integrations support each other and are interwoven. While functional integration is at the level of more secondary social relations, spiritual integration is rather aims at cultural integration. While functional integration aims primarily at becoming a citizen in the context of law, economy, politics and education, spiritual integration focuses mostly on becoming an individual of a community in the context of religion, culture, morality and tradition.

Social Integration and Education

One of the most basic institutions of a social structure is education. In fact, education is of a dominant function in shaping other social institutions. Education in the social structure of Turkey is of positive/negative functions in shaping, changing, improving and regression of a social structure as a social institution.

It is necessary that Syrian refugees articulated to the social structure of Turkey as a new element be regarded as a new humanitarian/social phenomenon some parts of which cause a social problem. The issues of economy, religion, internal peace, foreign politics that are currently discussed are other processes that would provide the education and social integration of Syrian refugees, which must be considered as a more conclusive issue and problem covering all the others. Official statistics show that there are almost 4 million Syrians in Turkey. Despite the statistics, it is discussed that the figure could be more. The pre-admission that all of 4 million people could live in Turkey from now on depends on the statements of the political authority and the ones in charge.

With its broadest sense, education is the process of making an individual a part of the community he lives and making him attain behaviours. Education is one of the basic social institutions and has a feature encompassing the individual and the community. As an example, the continuation of communities is an educational process in the sense of transferring culture to new generations. A child becomes an individual of the community he lives by means of formal and informal educational processes. The basic functions of education could be given as socialization, transferring the cultural heritage, political process, selection and allocation function, the function of improving the individual, economical function and secret functions (Konuk, 2002, 331).

The main functions of the education for the purpose of social integration of Syrian refugees could be classified as follows in terms of functional integration and spiritual integration:

Spiritual Integration and Education

Spiritual integration adapts the cultural and spiritual values of the community and applies them. At this point, all of the cultural elements that a child attains starting with his birth make him a part of the community. This process is the process of socialization. In the first places, the individual has to learn the language of the community in order to become the individual of it. Learning the religion, tradition, morality, the etiquette, customs that are important cultural elements forming the social structure is also important in terms of spiritual integration. Spiritual integration is not a hard process for the communities exhibiting some cultural common features. The common values of the community facilitate the spiritual integrity with the adoption of these common values by the new generations or the individuals joining the community later on. The provision of spiritual integration will facilitate the functional integration to a great extent. As an example, even though there are some important differences with the Syrians coming to our country in terms of language and some other cultural elements, just the religious similarities could be the function to facilitate the spiritual integration. The only tool of spiritual integration that will be realized with socialization and cultural transfer as a process is the informal and formal education.

Socialization

In general terms, the most basic function of education is to make the individual socialized, namely, make him an individual of the community he lives. This function is actually the process where the individual is constructed by means of enculturation. In this process, the individual attains all the features of the community he lies as a value, feeling and behaviour. The native language of the individual, his religion, values and customs in this framework are attained and shaped to a great extent in this process. Socialization is a permanent phenomenon starting with even before the birth of the individual and continuing till the death. In this sense, while the socialization function of formal education is in a limited context, the individual is socialized till the death in all informal processes. In every new and different stage of the process, he attains new values status, roles and behaviours

As the socialization environment of the peer group of an individual, formal education is a process starting with the preschool period and continuing till the stage of post-graduate education. In this process, there are other applications to realize the other aims and functions of education but the general purpose is to make, for example, to attain the values and roles regarding the status that an individual will occupy in the community generally with teaching, which is socialization.

There are nearly 800 thousand Syrian children at different age groups in Turkey, even those who were born in Turkey and reaching the education age. A great part of these children were included in the education system. The inclusion of these children quantitatively in the education system should not mean that things that must be done by the political and educational institution are done. Essentially, the most basic function of the education should be realized occupationally, practically and pragmatically for this part of the community as well. The basic purpose of the Turkish education system for the Syrian students at age intervals is to educate them in a socialization process compatible with the social structure of Turkey. What is meant here is not an adaptation or assimilation process at all.

The educational applications that would make these people feel on their own that they are a part of this community must be realized carefully with a basic humanitarian and social approach. The most basic component of this education process which is also a process of acculturation is teaching language. The process will not be so difficult in terms of common features we share historically, culturally, religiously and in many other ways. However, the fact that Syrians become introverted because of economic, political and other reasons with an ethnic hatred and with possible wrong approaches of the state or Turkish society could not yield the desired results in this process. In this

sense, education is not the only way to make Syrians a part of the community. Education must be supported with communication, economy, urbanization, social inclusion processes.

Transferring Cultural Heritage

It is likely to say that culture is the most basic component of a community even it is the community itself. Culture is the most important element comprising the identity of a community, the continuation of a community through education is realized by transferring the culture to new generations. In this sense, it is of vital importance. Generally, Turkish education system transfers the historical/cultural background through different courses, teaching applications, activities, ceremonies etc. to the Turkish child in all educational processes starting from preschool period. This could, for example, be applied by teaching literature and art courses and music which is one of the verbal culture starting from preschool period or the courses of History is of a separate and important function in this sense.

Despite the similarities of historical/cultural background of the two communities mentioned above, it is necessary that a great many cultural, historical elements that are of great importance but showing basic differences in terms of the ideological function of education must be taught to Syrian children. In this sense, a Syrian child who was born in Turkey and is called bilingual because of Turkish language he learns before he starts his learning life could be made to be competent of cultural elements as much as a Turkish child with this competence. This could make a contribution to social integration by teaching cultural similarities which are important advantages by means of education (Arslanoğlu, 2015, 173).

Functional Integration and Education

Functional integration is the inclusion of the individual in the community where he lives or get involved later on in terms of secondary relations. As an example, it is in the form of subjecting to the judicial system of the state he lives in as a citizen rather than being an individual of the community, fulfilling the tasks of citizenship, obeying the rules and restrictions. Another more important dimension of functional integration is that the individual takes place in the economic life of community. It is the concrete contribution of the individual to the community by taking place in the production process and in terms of personal features. For instance, even though the workers going to Germany had problems in adapting to German community in 1960s, they were integrated to the community as they provided the necessary workforce needed by the German state. Obtaining functional integration is more important than spiritual integration. Social problems emerging in the case of not obtaining the functional integration are the problems putting the integration into trouble. These problems could emerge in the form of unemployment, ghettoization, crime, diversion, conflict, terrorism. When the problems of economic functional integration are combined particularly with political and religious integration, they can appear as racism, xenophobia, religious, sectorial conflicts. The only instrument of the integrations for the economic, political and social development of communities is again informal and formal education.

Economic Function

Economy is the dominant institutions determining the shaping of other social institutions as one of the basic social institutions. When it comes to economy based social change, the phenomenon that economy comprises the infrastructure of the community and other institutions are shaped according to it comes to the fore. While education itself is an economic activity when the fact that all contexts of social life have an economic dimension are taken into consideration, it is true that every education activity has a direct/indirect economic function. In fact, training the workforce needed by the community is roughly the economic function of education in its easiest approach. The most complex humanitarian and social, even international activities and interactions are essentially economic relations as a more sophisticated process. The method, content and outcomes of these relations are the norms shaped by education directly.

The most basic economic function of education is the creation and development of human capital. In this sense, it is essential to train human source in every sense in line with the need of the community, to realize necessary applications for the special fields needed (Teyfur, 2015, 135).

When the quantitative integration of Syrians to the community is taken into consideration, a great mass has been included in human capital of Turkey in current conditions. However, as mentioned above, general profile in terms of age, gender, education status, social stratum/class do not exhibit a positive table. It is likely to regard the student number at the education level quantitatively disadvantage, but the positive result that will appear by educating these children through Turkish education system advantage.

Social activity that education could provide economically must be considered as an effect that would increase and facilitate integration for Syrian students. The concrete results that education would provide could be observed easily at the second generation born in Turkey and at their children even if not in short term. Involving in business through education and being in economic activities is the most basic component that will make the integration functionally. Education's function of making the development between generations would yield positive results depending on social movement in terms of social integration.

Political Function

One of the most basic functions of education is the political, in other words the ideological function. The political function of education exists in all stages of teaching but it mostly appears in primary education stage where affective behaviour education is done and basic social values are tried to be attained. The political function of education is the human training model in essence which the state desires. It is one of the most important functions of all formal education processes in general sense. The human type adorned with intellectual, emotional and behavioural features that the state wants is constructed with the course contents, books, activities, ceremonies, discourses and symbols in educational processes. As an example, singing the National Anthem in the flag raising ceremonies in Turkey is an educational activity of ideological function of education. With this approach, the students are expected to develop their feelings of independence, freedom, loyalty to their state and nation. At the same time, it is aimed to train a conscious voter and a responsible citizen by means of education. The political leaders needed by the community will also be trained through education (Doğan, 2008, 230).

The ideological function of education in terms of social integration of Syrian students is of great importance. In this sense, what is meant by ideological function is not educational policies and applications appearing in training a uniform individual with totalitarian, fascist approach. The function expected from education in order that a community that is integrated spiritually and functionally in the protection and supervision of legal and other social control norms is to make these values and norms adopted and turn into a behaviour.

The purpose of the education expected in every level teaching to Syrians in terms of the ideological functions of the education is not the function of "identity construction". As an example, it is the teaching of Turkey as the subject of "Our Homeland" with its cognitive content in the course of Social Studies in the primary school to a Syrian child born in Turkey and speaking Turkish at the level of native language not as the homeland he took a refugee 7 years ago but as a land he was born and belonged to. No other social, ethnic, religious or sectorial purpose and content has nothing to do with it.

Regarded with the political function of education in the context of democratic citizenship education, Syrian students do not have any natural difference from Turkish students. In this sense, what is essential is to give a citizenship education aiming at functional integration depending on basic universal human rights, law and other social norms. This content is carried out till the end of

secondary education starting from preschool education at different level and content (Küçüker, 2015, 157-159).

Positive and negative discussions are still going on with regard to the status and problems of the Syrians in our country in every context. One of the focuses of these discussions is indispensably the institution of politics. The basis of the discussions made in political sense are mostly mass communication media and social media. Generally, the level and content of these discussions cannot go beyond usual politics with for or against approaches. However, there have been some destructive results for the social integration in the events experienced or in unreal sharing on social media even if they are considered individual events. In this sense, the educational activities focusing on solving these kinds of problems are of great importance in terms of the integrative function of education.

Function of Selection – Allocation, Improving the Individual

The fact that the community is a permanent and decisive development process is directly related to the function of selection and allocation. Selection and allocation is one of the basic aims and principles of education philosophies in general a Turkish national education in particular. In this sense, the human force needed by the community, the state or private sector in every field will be trained in this way. The basic purpose at this point is a functional and contextual for the benefit individual and community based on the interest, tendency and capacity of individual (Giddens, 1987, 308).

This function of education is of vital importance in terms of Syrian students at every stage. In fact, functional social integration is the admittance by the community with regard to the qualifications of the individual, his contributions to the community and the need felt for him by the community. One of the exclusivist, actual, political discussions mentioned above regarding Syrians is that they are mostly uneducated, having no expertize occupation. When this perception is supported by some baseless social media provocations, they could lead to problems making the social integration difficult even cause to social disintegration and conflict. Therefore, this factor must be taken into consideration in every teaching level for the education of Syrians. The most basic problem of Turkish education system for Turkish community is that the function of selection and allocation is not enough. The current results of the problem are unemployment and other social problems caused by it. The fact that the result and other social problems caused by it could have negative impacts on social integration in the sampling of Syrians and also could lead to social disintegration must be taken into consideration.

Education's function of improving individual points to the process supporting the community in the end. Improvement and maturation of individual through education in line with opportunities is a way facilitating the individual in integration with the community with these gains. As an example, the fact that an individual finding a job after a vocational course process and becoming a successful technician is integrated with the community with positive feelings depending on the added-value and express himself in this context is a gaining for both the community and the individual. This norm is of importance at the same level for a Syrian individual living in our country to integrate with the community.

CONCLUSION

Depending on the troublesome process experienced in our geography, almost 4 million Syrians taking refuge in Turkey was involved in our social structure as a new demographic phenomenon. This involvement is not an only participation or involving. This case that emerged because of the civil war in Syria and other problems experienced in our region is an important event humanistically and socially with regard to the results which could affect Turkey globally and regionally. Besides the discussions made at the very beginning with the arrival of Syrians in Turkey, the criticism with regard to the process, all the predictions and expectations over what will happen next, another more concrete phenomenon and problem that we face today is how these people coming to our country

will be integrated to the community in this process. The most active and functional instrument of this process is naturally education. At every age and stage, how Syrians will be educated and what kind of criteria will be dependent must be considered by taking social integration into consideration in terms of the basic functions of education. This approach must focus on problem solving and aiming at integrating the process spiritually and functionally for both communities. The socialization function of education, economic and particularly political function are of great importance in this sense.

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