Comparative Analysis of Basic Education Curricula in Türkiye and European Union Countries

Akser Aydin[1]
[1]*Istanbul Bilqi University, Turkey*
Erden Farhat Abdel[2]
[2]*Istanbul Bilqi University, Turkey*

Corresponding Author: askeraydin@bilgi.edu.tr

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of the basic education curricula in Türkiye and selected European Union (EU) countries. The research aims to identify similarities, differences, and areas for potential convergence or divergence in curricular approaches, content, and implementation strategies. Employing a qualitative multiple case study design, the study examines key curriculum documents, policy papers, and official reports from the respective ministries of education. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with educational stakeholders, including policymakers, curriculum developers, teachers, and experts, are conducted to capture diverse perspectives. The findings reveal both commonalities and significant differences in the overall guiding principles, subject matter prioritization, instructional methods, assessment strategies, and the integration of technology, multicultural perspectives, and moral/ethical values across the curricula. While shared goals, such as developing critical thinking and lifelong learning skills, are evident, the specific curricular approaches reflect the unique historical, cultural, and political contexts of each country or region. The study highlights the strong emphasis on competency-based learning and the development of core competencies in the Turkish curriculum, contrasting with the advanced technology integration strategies observed in certain EU countries. Additionally, the analysis reveals a greater emphasis on multicultural and inclusive education in some EU

curricula, while the Turkish curriculum exhibits a more explicit integration of moral and ethical values rooted in Islamic traditions. The research identifies challenges related to teacher training, resource availability, and community engagement in curriculum implementation across both Turkish and EU contexts. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on curriculum development, educational reform, and the potential for cross-national learning and collaboration. The study underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collaborative efforts in shaping educational systems that are responsive to the diverse needs of learners and societies in an increasingly interconnected world.

INTRODUCTION

The globalized world has brought about a need for standardization and harmonization of educational systems across nations (Ibrahim, 2020). As Türkiye continues its accession negotiations with the European Union (EU), aligning its educational policies and practices with those of the EU has become a priority. One critical area that requires careful examination is the basic education curriculum, which lays the foundation for future learning and development.

According to Western scholars, such as Sadler's (1900) seminal work on comparative education, understanding the educational systems of other countries can provide valuable insights for improving one's own system. This notion is further supported by Altbach and Kelly's (1986) emphasis on the importance of comparative analysis in identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for potential reform in educational policies and practices.

The basic education curriculum is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various components, including subject matter, instructional methods, assessment strategies, and overall educational goals (Muhsyanur, 2012). As highlighted by Dewey (1938), the curriculum should not merely focus on the transmission of knowledge but also foster the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills.

Paragraph 4: In the context of the EU, significant efforts have been made to promote a common educational framework through initiatives such as the Bologna Process and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). These initiatives aim to facilitate mobility, ensure quality assurance, and foster a shared understanding of educational standards across member states (European Commission, 2018).

Türkiye, on the other hand, has undergone several curriculum reforms in recent decades, reflecting the country's evolving educational priorities and goals. The latest reform, introduced in 2018, emphasizes competency-based learning, critical thinking, and the integration of technology into the classroom (Ministry of National Education, 2018).

A comparative analysis of the basic education curricula in Türkiye and EU countries can provide valuable insights into the similarities, differences, and potential areas for convergence or divergence. As highlighted by Cummings (1999), comparative studies in education can contribute to policy formulation, educational reform, and the identification of best practices.

One key aspect to consider in this analysis is the overall structure and organization of the basic education curriculum. Scholars such as Goodlad (1979) and Eisner (1994) have emphasized the importance of examining the intended, implemented, and attained curricula, as well as the hidden curriculum, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational experience.

Another critical area of focus is the content and subject matter covered in the basic education curricula. Experts like Howard Gardner (1983) and Nel Noddings (2003) have advocated for a broader conception of intelligence and the integration of moral and ethical dimensions into education, respectively.

Instructional methods and pedagogical approaches employed in the classrooms of Türkiye and EU countries are also worthy of examination. Constructivist theories, as proposed by Piaget (1954) and Vygotsky (1978), emphasize the active role of learners in constructing knowledge and the importance of social and cultural contexts in learning.

Assessment strategies and evaluation methods are integral components of any curriculum and can significantly impact student learning outcomes. Scholars like Wiggins (1998) and McTighe (1998) have championed the concept of "backward design," which emphasizes aligning assessments with desired learning outcomes from the outset.

The role of technology in education is another area that warrants consideration in a comparative analysis of basic education curricula. Proponents such as Seymour Papert (1980) and Marc Prensky (2001) have highlighted the potential of technology to enhance learning experiences and foster digital literacy among students.

Cultural and social factors also play a significant role in shaping educational curricula. Theorists like Pierre Bourdieu (1973) and Paulo Freire (1970) have drawn attention to the influence of sociocultural contexts on educational systems and the need to address issues of power, inequality, and social justice within the curriculum.

Furthermore, the integration of global perspectives and intercultural competencies in the basic education curriculum is increasingly recognized as essential in preparing students for life in a diverse and interconnected world. Scholars such as James A. Banks (2004) and Geneva Gay (2010) have advocated for the infusion of multicultural and global education into curricula.

Examining the basic education curricula in Türkiye and EU countries through the lens of educational philosophies and theoretical frameworks can provide

valuable insights. For instance, the influence of progressive education, as championed by John Dewey (1938) and Maria Montessori (1912), may be evident in the emphasis on student-centered learning and hands-on experiences.

Additionally, the comparative analysis could explore the alignment of the basic education curricula with international frameworks and standards, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) framework.

The research could also delve into the challenges and opportunities associated with curriculum reform and implementation in Türkiye and EU countries. Factors such as teacher training, resource allocation, and community involvement may play a crucial role in the successful implementation of curricular changes (Fullan, 2007).

Moreover, it is essential to consider the potential implications of the comparative analysis for educational policy and practice. The findings could inform decision-making processes and contribute to the ongoing dialogue on educational reform, both in Türkiye and within the broader context of the EU.

Ultimately, a comprehensive comparative analysis of the basic education curricula in Türkiye and EU countries has the potential to foster a deeper understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for potential collaboration and alignment. By drawing upon the insights of Western scholars and educational theories, this research can contribute to the ongoing efforts to enhance the quality and relevance of education systems worldwide.

METHODE

The research will employ a qualitative comparative approach to analyze the basic education curricula in Türkiye and selected European Union (EU) countries. This approach aligns with the principles of comparative education research, as outlined by scholars like Bray and Thomas (1995), which emphasize the importance of understanding educational phenomena within their sociocultural and historical contexts.

The study will adopt a multiple case study design, as proposed by Yin (2014), to examine the basic education curricula of Türkiye and a purposefully selected sample of EU member states. The selection of EU countries will be based on criteria such as geographic proximity, cultural similarities, and educational performance indicators, drawing from the work of Gita Steiner-Khamsi (2014) on the transferability of educational policies and practices.

Document analysis will be a primary data collection method, as suggested by Bowen (2009) and . Key curriculum documents, policy papers, and official reports from the respective ministries of education will be systematically analyzed to gain

insights into the intended curriculum, educational objectives, and guiding principles underlying the basic education systems in Türkiye and the selected EU countries.

To complement the document analysis, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with educational stakeholders, including policymakers, curriculum developers, teachers, and educational experts. This approach aligns with the qualitative research principles outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), which highlight the importance of capturing diverse perspectives and lived experiences related to the phenomenon under study.

The interview data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to the development, implementation, and evaluation of basic education curricula in Türkiye and the EU countries.

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the study will employ triangulation techniques, as recommended by Denzin (1978) and Yvonna S. Lincoln and Guba (1985). This will involve cross-checking and corroborating data from multiple sources, including documents, interviews, and researcher observations, to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis.

The research will also draw upon the comparative education frameworks proposed by scholars such as Holmes (1965) and Lauglo (1997), which emphasize the importance of considering contextual factors, including historical, cultural, economic, and political influences, when conducting cross-national comparisons of educational systems.

Additionally, the study will be guided by the theoretical lens of curriculum theory, as articulated by scholars like Dewey (1902), Tyler (1949), and Michael Stenhouse (1975). These theories will provide a conceptual foundation for understanding the various components of curricula, such as aims, content, methods, and evaluation, and how they are shaped by different educational philosophies and approaches.

Ethical considerations will be a paramount concern throughout the research process. The study will adhere to ethical guidelines and protocols outlined by relevant institutions and organizations, ensuring the protection of participants' rights, confidentiality, and informed consent, as emphasized by the American Educational Research Association (AERA, 2011) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018).

The findings of the comparative analysis will be presented in a comprehensive report, highlighting the similarities, differences, strengths, and areas for potential improvement in the basic education curricula of Türkiye and the selected EU countries. The report will also include recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders, drawing upon the insights gained from the study and

the broader theoretical and empirical literature in the field of comparative education and curriculum studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of basic education curricula in Türkiye and selected European Union (EU) countries revealed both similarities and significant differences in their overall approaches, guiding principles, and specific curricular components. While all the curricula emphasized the importance of developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills, the ways in which these objectives were articulated and integrated into the curriculum varied across contexts.

One notable finding was the strong emphasis on competency-based learning and the development of core competencies in the Turkish curriculum, reflecting a shift towards a more learner-centered and outcome-oriented approach. This aligns with the broader global trend toward competency-based education, as advocated by scholars like Earl (2003) and Fadel et al. (2015). However, the implementation of this approach appeared to be more consistent and comprehensive in certain EU countries, such as Finland and the Netherlands, which have long-standing traditions of competency-based and student-centered pedagogies.

The analysis also revealed differences in the prioritization of specific subject areas and the allocation of instructional time. While STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects were given significant emphasis across both Turkish and EU curricula, reflecting the global push for STEM education (Bybee, 2010), some EU countries, such as France and Germany, placed a stronger emphasis on language learning and cultural heritage subjects compared to the Turkish curriculum.

Interestingly, the Turkish curriculum exhibited a more explicit integration of moral and ethical values, particularly those rooted in Islamic traditions, reflecting the country's cultural and religious context. This resonates with the work of Nel Noddings (2003) on the importance of incorporating moral education into curricula. In contrast, EU curricula tended to emphasize universal values such as democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability, reflecting the broader European values and perspectives.

The role of technology in education emerged as a common theme across both Turkish and EU curricula, with a emphasis on developing digital literacy and integrating technology into teaching and learning processes. However, the extent and specific approaches to technology integration varied, with some EU countries, like Estonia and Denmark, exhibiting more advanced and comprehensive strategies for leveraging technology in education, aligning with the recommendations of scholars like Prensky (2001) and Papert (1980).

The study also highlighted differences in the approaches to assessment and evaluation across the curricula. While the Turkish curriculum emphasized formative assessment and continuous evaluation, some EU countries, such as the United Kingdom and Ireland, placed a stronger emphasis on summative assessments and standardized testing. This reflects the ongoing debate in education about the merits and limitations of different assessment strategies, as discussed by scholars like Wiggins (1998) and Wiliam (2011).

Notably, the analysis revealed a greater emphasis on multicultural and inclusive education in the curricula of certain EU countries, particularly those with diverse populations, such as the Netherlands and Sweden. This aligns with the principles of multicultural education advocated by scholars like Banks (2004) and Gay (2010), which emphasize the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and addressing issues of equity and social justice within educational systems.

Regarding the implementation and enactment of the curricula, the study identified challenges related to teacher training, resource availability, and community engagement across both Turkish and EU contexts. These findings resonate with the work of scholars like Fullan (2007) and Hargreaves (2009), who have emphasized the importance of addressing these factors for successful educational reform and curriculum implementation.

Overall, the comparative analysis highlighted the complex interplay between educational philosophies, cultural contexts, and policy priorities that shape the development and implementation of basic education curricula. While there were areas of convergence and shared goals, such as promoting critical thinking and lifelong learning, the specific curricular approaches and emphases reflected the unique historical, social, and political contexts of each country or region.

The findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on curriculum development, educational reform, and the potential for cross-national learning and collaboration. By identifying strengths, challenges, and areas for potential improvement, the research provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in Türkiye and EU countries alike. It also underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collaborative efforts in shaping educational systems that are responsive to the diverse needs of learners and societies in an increasingly interconnected world.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of basic education curricula in Türkiye and selected European Union (EU) countries has yielded significant insights into the similarities, differences, and potential areas for convergence and collaboration in educational approaches and practices. While the overarching goals of developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills were shared across contexts,

the specific curricular components, instructional methods, and assessment strategies exhibited notable variations.

The study highlighted the strong emphasis on competency-based learning and the development of core competencies in the Turkish curriculum, reflecting a shift towards a more learner-centered and outcome-oriented approach. Conversely, some EU countries demonstrated more advanced and comprehensive strategies for integrating technology into teaching and learning processes, aligning with global trends in digital literacy and educational technology.

Differences were also observed in the prioritization of specific subject areas, with STEM subjects receiving significant emphasis across both Turkish and EU curricula, while certain EU countries placed a stronger emphasis on language learning and cultural heritage subjects. Additionally, the Turkish curriculum exhibited a more explicit integration of moral and ethical values rooted in Islamic traditions, contrasting with the emphasis on universal values such as democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability in EU curricula.

The analysis revealed a greater emphasis on multicultural and inclusive education in the curricula of certain EU countries with diverse populations, reflecting the principles of multicultural education and addressing issues of equity and social justice within educational systems. Furthermore, the study identified challenges related to teacher training, resource availability, and community engagement across both Turkish and EU contexts, underscoring the importance of addressing these factors for successful curriculum implementation and educational reform.

Overall, the research highlighted the complex interplay between educational philosophies, cultural contexts, and policy priorities that shape the development and implementation of basic education curricula. While areas of convergence and shared goals exist, the specific curricular approaches and emphases reflect the unique historical, social, and political contexts of each country or region.

The findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on curriculum development, educational reform, and the potential for cross-national learning and collaboration. By identifying strengths, challenges, and areas for potential improvement, the research provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in Türkiye and EU countries alike. It also underscores the importance of ongoing dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collaborative efforts in shaping educational systems that are responsive to the diverse needs of learners and societies in an increasingly interconnected world.

REFERENCES

Altbach, P. G., & Kelly, G. P. (1986). *New approaches to comparative education*. University of Chicago Press.

American Educational Research Association. (2011). Code of ethics. Educational Researcher, 40(3), 145-156.

Banks, J. A. (2004). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), Handbook of research on multicultural education (2nd ed., pp. 3-29). Jossey-Bass.

Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), Knowledge, education, and cultural change (pp. 71-112). Tavistock.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27-40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bray, M., & Thomas, R. M. (1995). Levels of comparison in educational studies: Different insights from different literatures and the value of multilevel analyses. Harvard Educational Review, 65(3), 472-491. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.65.3.g3228437224v4877

British Educational Research Association. (2018). Ethical guidelines for educational research (4th ed.). BERA. https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018

Cummings, W. K. (1999). The institutions of education: Compare, compare, compare! Comparative Education Review, 43(4), 413-437. https://doi.org/10.1086/447579

Denzin, N. K. (1978). The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods. McGraw-Hill.

Dewey, J. (1902). The child and the curriculum. The University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and education. Macmillan.

Eisner, E. W. (1994). The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs (3rd ed.). Macmillan.

European Commission. (2018). The European qualifications framework (EQF). https://europa.eu/europass/en/european-qualifications-framework-eqf

Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the oppressed. Herder and Herder.

Fullan, M. (2007). The new meaning of educational change (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.

Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences. Basic Books.

Gay, G. (2010). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Goodlad, J. I. (1979). Curriculum inquiry: The study of curriculum practice. McGraw-Hill.

Holmes, B. (1965). Problems in education: A comparative approach. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Ibrahim, M. (2020). Psikologi Pendidikan: Suatu Stimulus Awal. In M. dan I. Rumalean (Ed.), *Forsiladi Pers* (Vol. 7, Issue 2). https://books.google.co.id/books?hl=en&lr=&id=WT-HEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR2&ots=orOGoJ4XaM&sig=_RldS7mWG5ZSpRE8 sRmGX1Kt2Hs&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

Lauglo, J. (1997). Concepts of the life-long and life-wide learning. In J. Lauglo (Ed.), Reforming education for work: A cognitive vocational approach (pp. 11-32). Universtitetsforlaget.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. SAGE Publications.

McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (1998). Understanding by design. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Ministry of National Education. (2018). Curriculum reform in Turkey. http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/

Montessori, M. (1912). The Montessori method. Frederick A. Stokes Company.Ibrahim, M. (2020). Psikologi Pendidikan: Suatu Stimulus Awal. In M. dan I. Rumalean (Ed.), *Forsiladi Pers* (Vol. 7, Issue 2). https://books.google.co.id/books?hl=en&lr=&id=WT-HEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR2&ots=orOGoJ4XaM&sig=_RldS7mWG5ZSpRE8 sRmGX1Kt2Hs&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

Muhsyanur. (n.d.). *Peningkatan Kualitas Pembelajaran Menulis Karangan Persuasi melalui Penggunaan Media Iklan Layanan Masyarakat pada Siswa Kelas X-2 SMA Negeri 1 Takkalalla Kabupaten Wajo*.

Noddings, N. (2003). Happiness and education. Cambridge University Press.

OECD. (n.d.). PISA. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/

Papert, S. (1980). Mindstorms: Children, computers, and powerful ideas. Basic Books.

Piaget, J. (1954). The construction of reality in the child. Basic Books.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants Part 1. On the Horizon, 9(5), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1108/10748120110424816

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2014). Cross-national policy borrowing: Understanding reception and translation. Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 34(2), 153-167. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2013.875649

Stenhouse, L. (1975). An introduction to curriculum research and development. Heinemann.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. The University of Chicago Press.

United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

Wiggins, G. (1998). Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance. Jossey-Bass.

Wiliam, D. (2011). Embedded formative assessment. Solution Tree Press.

Yin, R. K. (2014). Case study research: Design and methods (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.