# Approaches of elementary school students towards the lesson of Ataturk's principles and history of Turkish Revolution of the Turkish Republic (Sample of Kırşehir)

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It can be said that French Revolution, broke out in 1789, affected Europe deeply in freedom, equality, particularly with the ideas of nationalism. New values were introduced with the nationalism. With the new symbols, national states sought to give the community a new identity. Within this new formation, political powers in the adoption by the community and in its efforts to provide legitimacy, transfer tools to future generations are extremely important. In this context, the teaching of history is of great importance. In this study, a field survey was conducted on the lesson called Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution which have aims such as being able to teach the stages of foundation of the Republic of Turkey and to transfer the information to future generations. In that study, it was also aimed to find out information about the methodology of the lesson which has great importance on the development of the consciousness of Nationalism and citizenship and about founder of Turkish republic Ataturk. In this study a survey model was used. The students, who were studying in Kırşehir in the 2010-2011 academic years, set the population of the survey. To collect data in the survey, a questioner is used with the aim of discovering the opinions of the students about the course of "Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution. In the analysis, the t-test is used and the method of single factor variance analysis (ANOVA) and percentage frequency is used.

#### Introduction

Nationalism movement, which rapidly spread in the world after the French Revolution, caused the dispersion of empires and establishment of nation states (Özbudun, 1995; Hobsbawm, 1989). While these states were trying to establish their new orders, they chose to focus on national elements by receding from values, which enabled their association under empire, national subject or other names in the past. While the new states were trying to bring a national identity in their communities on one hand, they were trying to provide the legitimacy of their newly-established political order on the other. Some symbols, institutions and educational elements were used efficiently in an attempt to create a new identity and make an effort for legitimacy. (Özbudun, 1995). Elements such as flags, marches, national days, ceremonies constituted the symbols and national history lessons that started to be provided at schools conducted studies aimed at raising awareness through education (Behar, 1992; Salman Bolat, 2007).

These developments, which initially were observed in the West, started to influence the Ottoman Empire, as well. Even though some other factors were effective upon the dispersion process of the empire, especially the nationalism movement generated the strongest reason. While the Ottoman Empire was trying to escape from its present condition, it necessarily had to string along with the

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new world order and keep the people together with the help of the Ottoman Nationalism. However, no precaution could prevent the dispersion and downfall of the state. The Ottoman Empire joined the I.World War, which broke out between 1914- 1918, with a last hope, but it receded from the stage of history with some part of Anatolia that remained at the end of this war and the Turkish nation.

The Allied powers dissolved the Turkish existence in Anatolia and their purposes of sharing the lands were suppressed with the National Struggle. A brand new process started in Turkey in 1923. The Turks established their own national state, the Turkish Republic, at the end of the Independence War. Following this phase, different efforts were made in an attempt to create a brand new order instead of the system that had continued for centuries. As well as the revolutionary movements for abolishing all available institutions and constituting the new ones, the efforts for accepting and adopting these are also considerable. In this context, the education of recent history lessons at schools has a great importance. The period of National Struggle, foundation of the Republic and revolutionary movements that were performed started to be included in school books as from 1930-1931 with this logic in Turkey. The narration of these subjects continued for many years with history lessons taught at secondary and high schools. The lesson became independent under the name of History of the Turkish Republic and Kemalism, as from the Military Intervention of 12 September 1980 afterwards (MEB, Tebliğler Dergisi, 1981). The leader staff of the intervention changed the name of lesson as the "Revolution History and Kemalism of the Turkish Republic" in 1982, in an attempt to rise a youth committed to the Kemalist thought (Özücetin, Nadar, 2010). The lesson was transferred to instruction programs in 1986 and subjects regarding Kemalism were added to all of the lessons, such as Turkish, foreign language, sociology, philosophy, mathematics, geography, music, physical education, religious education with the new regulations (MEB, Tebliğler Dergisi, 1986).

When the primary education became compulsory for eight years during the School Year of 1997–1998, the lesson of Revolution History and Kemalism of the Turkish Republic was included in the senior class. Making additions to the objectives, target behaviours and subjects of the lesson, some new regulations were performed (MEB, Tebliğler Dergisi, 1999).

## Objectives of the Lesson of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution

In general, the lesson of Atatürk's principles and history of Turkish Revolution;

The issues of the last periods of Ottoman Empire, the projects of sharing Anatolia and the realization of liberation through National Struggle, the declaration of Republic and movements of revolution are steps taken towards the way of National State in Turkey. Accordingly, issues like the embracement, handing down the next generation and ensuring the pursuance of the Republic are considered as extremely important (Yılmaz, 2006; Acun, 2006).

This course generally includes the teaching of issues like the sophisticated international problems of the period before the foundation of The Turkish Republic, how those problems were solved, the efforts of being a modern society and achieving democracy. Again, it aims to embrace them and hand down the next generations and keep the best place in contemporary world by preserving its value through this way (Akgün, 2004).

In this context, the lessons of Citizenship and History are very important to fulfil these objectives, in relation with the regime and structure of the country.

## Problems Regarding the Lesson of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution

The studies performed on this lesson, which is taught in all educational phases of the Turkish educational institutions, indicate that problems generally center on the same subjects (Safran, 2006).

In many studies; the fact that the lesson could not achieve a goal, it is considered a regime lesson, school books are inadequate, educational method, materials and Atatürk's ideas cannot be transferred efficiently and problems caused by teachers are generally emphasized (Akbaba, 2008).

Considering from the aspect of the lesson objectives, learning and adopting these subjects is perceived as a "civic" responsibility. This condition caused the problems regarding the teaching of the lesson to centres around Kemalism and it was perceived as a "regime" problem, instead of pedagogical assessment. This condition obstructed the solution of problems regarding education (Safran, 2006; Akbaba, 2008).

Another important problem regarding the lesson is caused by school books. The fact that books are not renewed in terms of both content and visual designment, references are not updated and new studies are not reflected forms the basis of this problem. (Ata, 2005).

A teacher-centered method is generally used during the education of the lesson. Even though the necessity of a student-centered structure is expressed, the counselling of effective, qualified teachers who have adequate field information and are aware of new researches and studies is very important for the lesson of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution to achieve its goals. Besides, avoiding a political frame regarding the subjects, in other words, an objective approach constitutes a very important point for the lesson to achieve goals (Hanioğlu, 1985; Akbaba, 2008).

Another important problem regarding the lesson of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is that Atatürk cannot be comprehended sufficiently. There is a problem with the accurate transfer of the information about both Atatürk's life and thought system. Kemalism is transferred as a dogmatic ideology. Yet, Atatürk left a legacy for future generations under the guidance of reason and science (Öztürk, 2005). Aside from the logic of teaching the lesson subjects with a chronological ordering, Kemalism is approached in a way of establishing rules (Kalaycioğlu, 1985). Lack or limitation of the material usage in addition to the teacher-centered method is another problem regarding the lesson. It is required to use the images more frequently, especially in relation with technological developments. Besides, the use of materials such as photographs, pictures, telegrams, documents is required, as well (Akbaba, 2008).

#### **Objective**

The objective of this study is to discuss problems and introduce new findings by taking other studies performed in relation with the lesson of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution that is taught in 8 th grades at middle schools as example. In the study, the province of Kırşehir, which was not examined before, was taken as the target population.

#### Method

In this study, a survey model was used on a group taken from the part of a large population as the method, in an attempt to come to a general conclusion regarding the population. The survey study aims to collect data in order to determine the features of a certain group (Büyüköztürk et al., 2009).

### The Basis and Sample of Survey

The students, who were studying in Kırşehir in the 2010-2011 academic years, set the population of the survey. And the sample of the survey consists of 148 eighth grade students who are attending

Cacabey Primary School, İnönü Primary School, Hüsnü Özyeğin primary School, Vali Mithat Saylam Primary School in Kırşehir. The information about these students is listed at Table 1.

**Table 1:** Information About The Students In Extent of The Survey

	N	%		N	%
Gender			Province		
Girls	76	51	Kırşehir	148	100
Boys	72	49			
Total	148	100			
Educational Background	of Father		Educational Backgroun	d of Mothe	r
Primary School	50	33,8	Primary School	85	57,4
Secondary School	37	25,0	Secondary School	34	23,0
High School	50	33,8	High School	29	19,6
University	11	7,4	University	-	-
Total	148	100	Total	148	100
School				<u> </u>	
Cacabey	35	23,6			
İnönü	19	12,8			
Namık Kemal	18	12,2			
Hüsnü Özyeğin	36	24,3			
Vali Mithat Saylam	40	27,0			
Total	148	100			

## The Data Collecting Tool

To collect data in the survey, a questionary is used with the aim of discovering the opinions of the students about the course of "Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution". Firstly, the scale is finalized by taking the opinions of two professionals who work in the field of Educational Sciences in The University of Ahi Evran. Secondly the pilot scheme of the questionary is conducted in Kırşehir with 75 students who are not included in the major pool and the reliability coefficient is determined as 0,758. Later we had 5 teachers, who teach the course of "Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution" in the eighth grade, read them and made the regulations according to the responses that came from the teachers. The final questionary consists of three sections. In the first section, the personal information of the students (gender, school, educational background of mother-father etc.) are asked. In the second section, they are asked to write a short composition about the life of Ataturk. And in the last section, there are 15 questions in the form of five point's likert that aim to discover the opinions of the students about the course of "Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution".

Answer codes vary between 1, 00 and 5, 00 for each item. The intervals taken as base during the assessment of the obtained findings are as follows;

- Strongly agree-5,00
- Usually agree- 4,00
- No idea-3,00
- Strongly disagree- 2,00
- Disagree- 1,00

### The Analysis of the Data

In the analysis of the data that is collected by the data collection tool, packaged software of SPSS 15, 0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), is made used of. In the analysis of lower aimed data, the t-test is used and the method of single factor variance analysis (ANOVA) is used in the analysis

of the other lover aimed data. To find out the responses given by the students to the questions, we calculated the percentage frequency.

## **Findings and Interpretation**

**Table 2:** The Range of the Percentage Frequency of the Responses Given to the Questions of the Questionary

Table 2. The Range of the recentage i	Strongly agree			gree	ΙI	Oon't now	Disagree		ree Strongly Disagree		Ss	$\bar{X}$
	f	f % f % f		%	f %		f %					
1-The course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is one of the courses that I like the most.	50	33,8	63	42,6	24	16,2	4	2,7	7	4,7	1,020	3,98
2-The method of teaching of the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is adequate.	60	40,5	53	35,8	22	14,9	8	5,4	5	3,4	1,039	4,05
3-The lecturing of the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution contributes to my future life.	88	59,5	38	25,7	17	11,5	4	2,7	1	,7	0,848	4,41
4-The lecturing of the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution by following the units of the course book is adequate.	21	14,2	20	13,5	27	18,2	44	29,7	36	24,3	1,361	2,64
5-It is necessary that the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution should be taught according to the course book.	49	33,1	22	14,9	32	21,6	28	18,9	17	11,5	1,408	3,39
6-It is necessary that the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution should be backed up with materials like map, CD, movie.	108	73,0	24	16,2	10	6,8	1	,7	5	3,4	0,914	4,55
7-The knowledge and teaching of the teacher who teaches the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is adequate.	87	58,8	25	16,9	17	11,5	10	6,8	9	6,1	1,227	4,16
8-It is enough that the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is limited just by the period of Atatürk.	46	31,1	21	14,2	30	20,3	33	22,3	18	12,2	1,421	3,30
9-It is necessary that the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution should be compared with the period after Atatürk to make the development and evolution visible.	61	41,2	42	28,4	36	24,3	6	4,1	3	2,0	1,003	4,03
10-I am eager to know what happened in Turkey in the period after Atatürk.	100	67,6	33	22,3	9	6,1	1	,7	5	3,4	0,907	4,50
11-In my opinion, the definitions of the concepts like reform, revolution, civil insurrection are adequate.	55	37,2	54	36,5	22	14,9	10	6,8	7	4,7	1,105	3,95
12-Adequate information is being given about the atmosphere before Atatürk.	68	45,9	52	35,1	21	14,2	4	2,7	3	2,0	0,926	4,20
13-The reason why the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is being taught is being explained adequately.	64	43,2	46	31,1	27	18,2	6	4,1	5	3,4	1,041	4,07
14-In my opinion, the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is appropriate for the goals of raising good citizens, handing down the new generations, continuing the Republic.	89	60,1	35	23,6	16	10,8	3	2,0	5	3,4	0,989	4,35

15-My family is sensitive about this course to be given adequately. 58 39,2 27 18,2 47 31,8 7 4,7 9 6,1 1,189 3,80

As seen Table 2, that the students are marking the course of Atatürk's Principles and the History of Revolution as one of the courses they like the most and that they are aware of the fact that it will contribute to the future of the country are found as extremely positive. This result revives the sense that the course will reach its goal on condition that the problems it has are resolved.

In the questionary, it is realized that there is a variety among the responses given to the forth and the fifth questions. As a matter of fact, the resource averages are contradictory although the same question is being asked. This situation can be explained by facts like some of the students couldn't comprehend the questions or their having read the questions carelessly. Likewise, while among the responses given to the eighth question, the opinion that it is adequate that the course is limited just with the period of Atatürk is dominant, among the responses given to the ninth and the tenth questions, the idea of their being eager to have information about the periods before and after Atatürk is dominant. According to these results, it can be said again that it is because of the carelessness of the students.

The results about the necessity of the courses of Atatürk's Principles and The History of Revolution in aspects of raising good citizens, raising the awareness of the next generations, which are the aspects of these courses that are particularly taken as the subject of this survey, are pleasing. The rates like %60,1 strongly agree, %23 agree are considerably high. Paralelly, it is possible to say that, according to the responses given to the question of I have difficulties in narrating the subjects of the course, the reason of the negative responses about the course is this matter. Thus, the responses of %30,4 strongly agree, %12,8 agree and %10,1 I don't know are rates far from being unimportant. Accordingly, this problem can be solved through the teaching of the course from a clearer, more objective, more realistic perspective and through the usage of some visuals.

The results of the section in which some information about Atatürk's life is demanded is as followings; while 115 students have written the birth date and birthplace of Atatürk, 51 of them have also mentioned the year of his death, 20 of them gave only this information. (Especially the students on İnönü Primary School) while 1 student has included the detail of the time of Atatürk's death, 1 student has included his age of death and 2 students have mentioned the name of his disease.

While 71 students have written the names of Atatürk's father and mother, 15 of them, have written the names of his father and mother in addition to their birth date and date of death. While 32 students have written about Makbule with whose dead siblings he grew up, 24 of them have mentioned this detail in addition to the information given above. Another remarkable point is that, especially the students of Namik Kemal Primary School expressed the information with the same sentences.

In the schools the survey applied, while 11 students have mentioned Atatürk's personal characteristics like his patriotism, intelligence, farsightedness and sophistication in addition to the information above, the number of the students who have mentioned only the personal characteristics of Atatürk are 19. While 16 students have written his birth date and date of death and the names of his father and mother, 53 students have mentioned the schools he attended; while 23 of them have written the Şemsi Efendi Local School, 9 students have mentioned Harbiye School, 5 of them have mentioned the high school in Monastery and 10 of them did not mention a name of a school.

The information to be expressed as dissimilar are as follows; 2 students have written that he moved

to his uncle's after the death of his father, 1 student has mentioned the job of his father, 3 students have mentioned the wars he crusaded, 1 student has mentioned his marriage, one student has written that he took the surname of Atatürk in 1934, 1 student has mentioned his western and revolutionary characteristics, 3 students have mentioned that he got inspired from the provinces of Selonica, Sophia, Monastery and İstanbul, 3 students have mentioned that his mother is originally from Konya and 2 students have mentioned that his father is originally from Söke. It is detected that just in 2 papers among all the papers, adequate information is given.

Considering the information given about Atatürk, it is concluded that Atatürk is not being taught adequately and accurately. It is supposed that more importance is being given to the family life of Atatürk than his achievements and the information given are not more than conventional sentences. Hence, nobody, instead of those two students, has mentioned the subjects like especially the Republic, revolutions and his principals. Also, matters like his leadership of National Struggle, his Presidency, his ideas of National Sovereignty do not take place in the papers.

According to the result regarding this subject in the survey; the approaches of families towards lesson subjects are generally positive, whether literate or illiterate. The rate of 67,4%, who state that their family is very concerned and concerned is high. According to this rate; it could be concluded that student families are sensitive about Kemalism and they expect the lesson to be taught accurately. However, the answer of "No idea", which has a rate of 31,8%, shall be taken into consideration as well. As a matter of fact, this condition might be perceived as a deficiency on consciousness levels of families. In addition to this, lack of interest is also possible in the education of their children. This lack of interest might also be effective upon other lessons. However, leaving aside all possibilities and considering the importance of the lesson in terms of the country's future, families shall be informed about the subject, as well.

Table 3: The Results of The t-test on The Course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution According to The

Gender Factor								
Gender	n	$\overline{\overline{X}}$	S	df	t	P		
Girls	76	61,55	8,3080	146	-4.434	.164		
Boys	72	63,33	7,1008	140	-4,434	,104		

The results of the survey made in the frame of the sense of Nation-State about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution which aim to raise the next generations around the goals of the continuation of Turkish Republic, preserving its values, providing the unity and solidarity by increasing the sense of nationalism.

According to the gender variable among the students, there is a no meaningful difference between the girls and the boys  $[t(146) = -4,434; p \le .05]$ . The opinion average of the girls about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is found out to be  $(\overline{X}=61,55)$  and the opinion average of the boys is found out to be  $(\overline{X}=63,33)$  (Table 2.)

**Table 4:** The Results of The Anova Test about the Course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution According to The Schools The Students are Attending

	to The Scho	oois The Stu	idents are Attendin	ıg		
Variable	Category	n	X	S		
	1-X1	35	63,48	7,2532		
	2-X2	19	60,57	10,1615		
School	3-X3	18	60,27	6,0663		
	4-X4	36	65,36	5,3246		
	5-X5	40	60,67	8,7541		
The Situation of The Resource of The Variant	Sum of The Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P	Meaningful Difference
<b>Between Groups</b>	619,961	4	154,990			2-4
Within Groups	8254,066	143	57,721	2,685	,034	3-4
Total	8874,027	147				4-5

As seen Table 4, the results of the analysis suggest that there is a meaningful difference among the opinions of the students about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution according to the schools they are attending[F(4–143)= 2,685 P<0.05]. In the analysis made to discover among which groups the difference is present, it is found out that there are meaningful differences between (X4) and (X1) and among (X2), (X3) and (X5) Primary Schools. As a matter of fact, these two schools that have been mentioned are the schools that have the highest socioeconomic status. The other three schools are weaker from this aspect.

**Table 5:** The Results of The Anova Test about the Course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution According to The Educational Background of The Mothers of the Students

Variable		Category	n		S		
		Primary School	85	62,57	7,1453		
Educational Background of Mother	Secondary School	34	61,50	9,6679			
		High School	29	63,03	7,2184		
The Situation of The Varian	n of The Resourc nt	Sum of The Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Meaningful Difference
Between Gro	ups	41,809	2	20,904	,343	,710	
Within Grou	ps	8832,218	145	60,912			
Total		8874,027	147				

**Table 6:** The Anova Test about the Course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution According to The Educational Background of The Fathers of the Students

Variable	Category	n		$\boldsymbol{S}$		
	Primary School	50	61,92	7,9586		
Educational	Secondary School	37	61,78	7,6126		
Background of Father	High School	50	62,64	8,1909		
	University	11	65,81	4,8952		
The Situation of The Resource of The Variant	Sum of The Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Meaningful Difference
Between Groups	156,920	3	52,307	,864	,461	
Within Groups	8717,107	144	60,535			
Total	8874,027	147				

It is made out that there is a no meaningful difference between their opinions about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution according to the educational background of the mothers and fathers of the students (Table 5 and table 6). It is discovered that there are no university graduates among the mothers and most of the fathers are primary school and high school graduates while there are also some university graduates. However, with the results of the analysis, it is remarkable that there is no meaningful difference among the responses given to the question about the sensibility of the family of course (Table 6).

#### **Conclusions**

- 1. The lesson of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is one of the lessons embraced by students.
- 2. Even though the students find the teaching format of the lesson sufficient, they do not find it sufficient to teach the lesson only based on the school book and they require it to be supported by materials such as maps, CDs and films.
- 3. Students found the subjects taught during the lesson sufficient in general. Subjects regarding the post-Kemalist period were included in school books with the latest arrangements. However, as a result of the survey application; students displayed an attitude which implied that they did not understand this subject sufficiently and they wanted to have information about the incidents of the period after 1938.
- 4. Majority of students believes that this lesson is essential. They aware of the objective of the lesson
- 5. Students think that teaching the lesson of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution is important, in terms of the country's future.
- 6. Even though the students are interested in and responsive to the lesson, the rate of those who have difficulty in understanding is not limited.
- 7. Sensitivity levels of families are below the expected level.
- 8. According to the gender variable among the students, there is a no meaningful difference between the girls and the boys.
- 9. There is a meaningful difference among the opinions of the students about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution according to the schools they are attending.
- 10. There is a no meaningful difference between their opinions about the course of Atatürk's Principles and History of Revolution according to the educational background of the mothers and fathers of the students

If we try to make a general evaluation; according to the responses given to the questions of the questionary, the students show interest to their schools and the course and they have comprehended the aim of this course. However, the sources of the problems are well known, which can be summarized as; the inadequacy of teachers, the dullness of the course book, the methods of lecturing and lack of the usage of visual tools, socioeconomic and psychological problems, carelessness of the students and lastly the indifference of the family.

### **Discussion and Suggestions**

The teaching of the courses about national history in a lasting and accurate manner is extremely important in the aspect of shaping the future of the country. The course taught in every level of education in Turkey under the name of Atatürk's Principles and The History of Revolution since 1930s, is taken as an important element to shape the future of the country. Although the importance of this course is being emphasized in the introductions of the books, in syllabuses, in the daily speeches, in lectures and in the academic environments; it is not possible to say that it achieves its goals. The results of all the surveys made about this issue are not different than this one and the problems repeat themselves in the same way.

The mentioning of the problems like the course books, teachers, the teaching methods of the course, the sensitivity of families, the attention of students in all the surveys show that it is necessary to make urgent regulations about the matter. When we consider the problems of today in the world and in our country, it is necessary to realize the fact that the necessary importance is ought to be given to the courses of National history.

It is necessary to remove the methods of memorization and giving bare information from the courses and teach the subjects with a realistic approach by correlating them with facts, concepts and their relationship with the past, the outer world and the features of the time period. For sure, the most important issue is that, the teachers should be able to adopt the objective style instead of reflecting their own political views and above all, they should be able to meet the accuracies, goals and the expectations of the course.

Subjects should not be revealed as rules during the transfer of Kemalist Principles and thought system. If the sciences such as modern political science, economy, social psychology and sociology are examined and transferred through analysis tools, this will make a more long-lasting effect upon students (Kalaycioğlu, 1985). The lesson shall be taught in such a way to increase the knowledge level of students and raise a generation that will be capable of solving the problems of the country in the future. Additionally, it shall be transferred with an accurate and realistic approach between incidents, in a way to increase the judgement skills of the youth.

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