

4. Media Education in Turkey: Toward a Multi-Stakeholder Framework

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ABSTRACT

Starting with the 1990s, private radios and televisions were the primary steps in Turkish media's new structure. At that time, there was no interest in media literacy or media education for people, especially for children. In the past, the emphasis of media literacy education was to protect children and young people from possible harmful effects of media, which was later followed by critical thinking and development of media messages production skills. This application emphasizes the political, social, and economic implications of media messages and stresses the importance of using media effectively. Media literacy and education in Turkey has started with an agreement between the Ministry of National Education and the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) in 2006-07 school period. Media literacy courses respectively consist of these topics: Introduction to communication; mass communication; media; television; family, children and television; radio, newspapers magazine, and Internet. This study uses a critical approach to reflect what has been done so far in Turkey in terms of media literacy and media education, and what needs to be accomplished in the future. There is still great need for critical understanding and questioning through media literacy and education. Some important issues, such as democracy, citizenship, human rights, freedom of expression, identity, the special needs population, and women, are essential to consider within media literacy and education.

KEY WORDS

Media literacy, critical thinking, media education, media, children, regulator, school curriculum, democracy, citizenship, human rights.

1. Introduction

This analysis is a contribution that intends to show how media literacy and education are being organized by media regulation authorities and other organizations, against the background of today's media structures in Turkey. Accordingly, it will first focus on the movements in media in Turkey after the 1980s to establish the basis for today's media structure, and then it will move to the articulations between this structure and media literacy and education. It will finally suggest some lessons for policy-makers in the region interested in developing dialogue and peace via media education.

In Turkey, the 1980s had significant implications in the daily lives of people. Especially, the military coup on 12 September 1980 created a new scene in contemporary Turkish history. Besides, ending the political upheavals and the atmosphere of terror in Turkey, civil politics had to be inactive for almost three years until the elections of 6 November 1983. Starting from 1983, the period can be called as Özal period – some scholars refer to it as «Özalism years» (Turgut Özal's Prime Ministry years). With the politics and practices of Özal governments, major changes have occurred in the structure of the Turkish state that have allowed for new issues and discussions to appear in the cultural and social life of Turkey. In the economic sector, Turkey experienced and underwent significant structural changes during this period, following the economic decisions of 24th of January 1980 that allowed for the transition to market economy privatization (Sarısu, 2003). In the political domain, the liberalization movement in Turkey had its main results also during the 1980s. Prime Minister Turgut Özal, the leader of the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi, ANAP) from 1983 to 1988, exercised policies of liberalization and implemented privatization. During Özal's post-military term, there were major changes in the economic indicators, the national wealth grew and Turkey quickly became a consumption society, turned towards Europe, all the more so as it was applying for entrance in the European Union.

Especially, the 1980s were the years the private sector started to make increasing investments in various areas, such as banking, energy and media. Many different holdings and large corporations directed their resources to industries, particularly in communications and telecommunications, which also had its significant outcomes (new infrastructure for communications, digitalization, new technology transfer, connection to outside world through advanced technologies, etc.) on the establishment of private media in Turkey in the early 1990s. Until that time, there was a limited investment in telecommunications. During Özal years, it became one of the most important areas for investors and it carried additional strength for media and communications.

In Turkey, after the 1980s, along with the transition to liberal-market economy and globalization, telecommunications and media became one of the main interest areas of those who wanted to invest in different sectors. They did not have only economic interests but also political interests related to their attachments to political groups. One of the most important examples refers to Turgut Özal's son. During Özal's prime ministry, his son, Ahmet Özal, established the first private television station –also the first «pirate» television station according to the laws enforced at the

time. It mainly served for the interest of his father's party. At the same time, some other investor groups in relation to political parties also started establishing other television stations. These first television stations used European countries as their base for broadcasting. Simply, they send broadcast signals from Europe to Turkey because of the state's monopoly on broadcasting. Later on, some television stations were established with the assistance of political parties. The political parties' relation to these television stations was apparent but it was almost impossible to prove it on official paper. During that same period, some municipalities and opinion newspapers established their own television stations. But most of them could not last because of political and financial reasons.

2. Media in Turkey

As a result of the developments in Turkey's economy, the late 1980s can be considered as the basis of the first movements in private media establishments besides already existing private print media outlets. September 1990 is the starting point for private televisions. A commercial television station, STAR 1, «benefiting from a loophole in the monopoly law, began broadcasting its programmes in Turkish via satellite from Germany. Inside Turkey the channel was officially forbidden to preserve Turkish Radio & Television's (TRT) monopoly, but it was relayed terrestrially by local municipalities as a symbol of political opposition to the government. Until it was granted terrestrial status, STAR 1's progress was slow. Once a privately owned television channel had been established, to compete with TRT, a whole host of new private television and radio channels began to reach Turkish viewers. As a result, the broadcasting system experienced a series of rapid and radical changes. By the beginning of 1993, there were almost 500 local commercial radio stations and 100 local television stations operating without licences. The government was faced with little choice: as the private radio and television channels had won the hearts of the nation, there was little else that could be done but to legalise the de facto pirates» (Çaplı, 1998).

As a result of the increasing number of private television stations, radios and print media, content aspects came under the public eye and their quality was questioned. Today, poor content of media is still under discussion in Turkey, as tabloidization and infotainment became a major trend for those private media in a competitive environment. This was particularly the case of television, where very few programmes were considered to qualify as fine in terms of content quality. The print media followed very similar developments. Issues around women were the major «material», with some sections in newspapers devoted to pictures of naked women.

There were various reasons behind such tabloidization in media. The 1980 military coup brought about a major «depolitization» process that ended almost all political activities and organizations, and restricted freedom of expression. The public was discouraged from discussing politics and encouraged to focus more on other issues, related to popular culture, such as fashion and especially religion. Another important issue was sports as football played a key role in keeping the masses busy.

They were all meant to be the antidote to leftist movements and their potential «danger». So tabloidization was intended for depolitization purposes and started a depolitization process still at work today in Turkish media.

Depolitization and its two way effect, resulting first in tabloidization, then in tabloidization producing a growing depolitization, found their meaning in disseminating the ideology of consumerism, propagated by Özal during the 1980s (Oktay, 1993). New tabloid television formats appeared in discussion platforms: «Infotainment», «A la Turca style Big Brother Shows», «Televole Shows» (paparazzi and celebrity gossip shows with very little sports), and «Pop Star Shows» became the new tools of tabloidization in Turkish media. Parallel to this, the last pages of newspapers became an arena of male gaze where pictures of celebrities, naked women and affairs started taking place. In most newspapers, the third page was dedicated to family affairs, rape and cheating stories.

Besides the increasing number of private television stations, radios, newspapers and Internet in today's media landscape, the regulating structures in Turkey are considerably new. During the early 1990s, the main problem was that there was neither a law to regulate newly emergent private radio and television stations, nor a regulatory body to assign frequencies to private operators and hold them to their responsibilities. As a result of these developments, the State monopoly over broadcasting, limited to public radios and televisions only, was abandoned in 8 August 1993. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) was established by the Radio and Television Law (law 3984) in 20 April 1994 in order to regulate private broadcasting and to ensure the compliance of the broadcast contents with the legal framework. «RTÜK is granted with the authority of giving penalties to the broadcasters for breaching the legal framework which may range from warning to the suspension of the TV and radio channels» (European Journalism Centre, 2008). The Supreme Council is composed of 9 members who are elected by the Grand National Assembly. According to the Directorate General of Press and Information, the main duties and powers of RTÜK can be listed as follows: «Granting license to the radio and television enterprises, allocation of channel and frequency bands, issuing licenses for the construction and operation of telecommunication facilities and monitoring the compliance of radio and television broadcasts with regard to the national and international legislation, deciding on the relevant sanctions in cases of violation of the provisions of the Law, conducting or commissioning public opinion surveys in order to determine the reactions of the public, representing the State at the organizations that have legal personality under international law, and are concerned with radio and television broadcasts» (BYEGM, 2008).

As can be seen from the definition of the responsibilities of RTÜK, it is a regulatory body with very limited educational purposes. It is only recently that activities related with media education and media literacy have been taking place, under the supervision of the institution.

Historically, media education has been limited to media professionals and can be equated to professional training, as well as education in schools of communications

at universities in Turkey that tend to produce professionals in public relations, journalism or marketing. The main national organizations providing training for media professionals, apart from the Directorate General of Press and Information as part of the Office of the Prime Minister, are the Turkish Sports Writers' Association, the Journalists Association of Turkey and, BYA-Independent Communication Network. In addition to them, the European Journalism Centre and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation have been active in training professionals for media. Especially, the Local Media Training Project, under the supervision of the Journalists Association of Turkey and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, between 1997 and 2002, has been very significant in helping journalists cover local news in almost all cities of Turkey. BYA-Independent Communication Network, an independent non governmental organization, has also been active in local media training in the last years. In addition to local media training, BYA provides programmes, projects and workshops on minorities, human rights, children rights, women, gay and lesbian issues, freedom of expression, identity, animal rights and other issues related with media. At the same time, BYA is very active in media monitoring and it serves also as a media watchdog. Because of the opening of the media sector and the increase in technological supplies, there is a great need for media training for professionals in Turkey. One of media education's task is to address the growing need for proper qualifications of those working for «252 television enterprises, including 23 national, 16 regional and 213 local channels; 1090 radio enterprises including 36 national, 102 regional and 952 local channels» (BYEGM, 2008). This need is increasingly being extended to news produced by Internet content providers, be it at local or national level.

Besides providing media training to professionals, the other major media education task is to address the media literacy needs of the population at large. According to a survey made in 2005 for Turkcell (a Turkish communication service company with 35.1 million subscribers as of 31 March 2008), 10% of the population has access to the Internet with an average use of 62 minutes. The main reason for using Internet is chatting, surfing, playing games and emailing. Average television viewing time length is 3 hours during weekdays and 3 hours and 23 minutes during weekends. The study also indicates that 23% of Turks never read newspapers, while 15% read them once a week or less. These indicators point to a great need for media literacy and media training of the public, as there seems to be a lack of concern for critical thinking and for quality news and focus on tabloid contents and entertainment services.

3. The Global Media Literacy Debate and How It Has Been Received in Turkey

Today, Turkey doesn't escape globalization via the media. Information about the world comes not only by words on a piece of paper but, increasingly, through the powerful images and sounds of global multimedia culture. Like many societies, Turkish society is exposed to hundreds –even thousands– of images and ideas not only from television but also from numerous websites, movies, radio, magazines, e-mails, video

games, music, cell phone messages, billboards, and more. Media no longer just shapes Turkish culture—they are actually full part of Turkish culture (Thoman & Jolls, 2004: 18) and Turkish culture doesn't resist it as much as other nations in the Middle East or the Arab world because of its lay tradition, inherited from Atatürk, that doesn't have a strict taboo about images and their attendant technologies. Especially, it can even be stated that there is a «Turkish wave» in the MENA region: some of the Arab and Middle East countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, use Turkish television productions. According to sources in those countries, those productions score the highest in ratings. Apparently, Turkey and its projected image are a kind of model for the public in those countries.

In Turkey, as elsewhere, the messages conveyed by media are time-consuming. These messages try to capture the public's attention to catch them in the media flow. This media flow has a vested interest in connection time, as it is the main means it has of paying for itself and making profits. So the increased time Turkish people spend with online and offline media is of interest to global media companies, as it places Turkey on a similar ranking to media-rich Western countries. In this context, the prime concern of policy-makers should be to ensure that Turkish society is well prepared for these messages that surround it, especially young people who are born into it. Can they read and understand the language of pictures, sounds, special effects, images of mass media, and create meanings from them and for themselves?

Within this environment of mass media, media literacy thus needs to be defined. It is defined in different ways in Turkey as elsewhere as this debate of definition is raging among scholars and policy-makers. Some scholars define media literacy from a «media» point of view while some others define it in a «literacy» perspective. At the same time, some scholars focus on the «process» aspect of media literacy compared to its «content» aspect while defining its purpose. But, all agree on one point, which is the necessity of media literacy, especially for children. Media literacy is related to verbal, oral and visual texts. As noted by Thoman and Jolls (2004), it is characterized by the principle of inquiry, which means internalizing and learning to ask important questions about what you see, hear, and read. Essentially, media literacy underlines the importance of critical thinking on problems. It is a mental structuring on identifying concepts, multi-modal thinking, questioning and formulating of causes and effects. These are all fundamental skills for exercising full citizenship in a democratic society (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). They are just as crucial for counterbalancing some of the potentially alienating dimensions of media culture, as denounced by Silverblatt (2004).

Rushkoff (1996) defines the youth generation surrounded by mass media, video games and Internet as «screen-agers» because their media use is not only determined with the way they consume contents and texts, it is also defined with how they (inter)act and establish contact via screens. This underscores why media literacy plays an important role in learning and questioning content and context in a global media environment. According to what Rushkoff defines, children are not necessarily passive in their interaction with the media surrounding them. They are passive as

consumers but they are actually active because they are the ones shaping new media and their culture according to their expectations. By this definition, children become the reproducers and shapers of media culture. They can be passive because they are not critical, but they are active because of their reproducer role. The awareness level of children in this new media culture is therefore the important point to focus upon, especially in Turkey, where children are receiving Turkish content and content coming from other cultures they don't necessarily understand (the United States, Europe, Japan and others). Turkish children, in this fast developing media environment, are usually not well prepared to question the elements of their ambient media culture (images, video, text, interactivity and more). For all these reasons, media literacy is not an issue to be postponed to tomorrow or the future. It is an immediate need, especially for children. With the growing demands of today's complex political conditions, rapidly changing cultures, identity and citizenship issues, media literacy has to be the prime focus of adults concerned with well-being and good development of today's children.

In response to the societal demands of adults and due to the pressure of all the national and international factors, the Turkish university researchers and practitioners in this field propose some opinions for shaping the common debate for moving ahead in media literacy. These opinions all come from preliminary basic tenets about the functioning of media. First, media are made of constructions. The sounds, pictures, words and visual effects that individuals see and hear are the bricks of those constructions. Accordingly, media content and context are always manufactured constructions. What society expects to see on screens as cultural products are not realities but versions of realities shaped by a certain viewpoint. So, the first, expected question is «Who created this message?» Looking at production values as the bricks of those constructions is not enough, however. There are also additional elements to attract audiences, as exemplified by today's infotainment, music, special effects and tabloid news. As part of cultural artefacts, these can also be considered as tools for manipulation. So the second expected question is «How are people attracted to this media construction in terms of content and context?». Media constructions are also commonly regarded as cultural artefacts that carry certain viewpoints according to experiences, ideologies, prejudices, etc. That is why media messages can be understood and interpreted differently within different cultures. Within a multicultural society like Turkey, this becomes an important concern. In relation to this concern, the third expected question has to be «How do different people from different cultures or from different backgrounds understand and interpret the same message?». All the varying viewpoints are the results of values. The messages individuals feel fine about because of their own values may not make other people feel the same way. As a result, the fourth expected question is «What kind of values are reinforced or challenged through this media construction?». The fifth question is related to the first one, and interrogates the characteristics of the source that produces the media construction. If the issue is media construction and its content, «What is the reason that motivates the source?». The reason can be educational, ideological, religious or commercial. One of the main discussions about media constructions is thus related to their attachment

to mainstream ideologies as they try to stimulate social reality (Aufderheide, 1993: 2). Constructions serving the interest of mainstream and majority groups apparently ignore diffuse minorities and different voices and identities. Raising awareness about the source, its motivation and its construction of contents is an important dimension of media education in a democratic society, as media should be addressing all citizens, not only the elites or mainstream majorities. As a result, the additional and last question should be «Why is this message sent to me?».

According to Varis (2005), the very first step to a critical approach of media constructions is to be able to access media and their productions. Analyzing these productions and evaluating them are the next steps. In terms of being critical to media, responding and communicating is also necessary. Most importantly, involving people in media is considered as the last step; it is necessary in terms of pluralism and representations. Varis significantly defines all these necessities as the «empowerment spiral» that stresses the importance of «participation».

The global debate in media education clearly calls for media literacy policies. According to Masterman (1997), media education focuses on representations in media constructions. «The central and unifying concept of media education is representation». It considers media constructions as representations, not as reflecting realities. Another important point for media education, according to Masterman, is the purpose of media education. It aims to «denaturalize the media» and «challenges the naturalness of media images» by questioning them. In terms of values attached to those constructions, «media education is investigative» and «it does not seek to impose specific cultural values». It can be also understood as «being for others, their values, and their identities». In terms of media education's use, it is not supposed to be planned for a certain period of time only. It should be, and actually it is, a lifelong process, a continuing process. Through this process, «the effectiveness of media education has to be evaluated» (Masterman, 1997).

Another aspect in media education is to determine the ways of teaching media literacy. According to Hobbs (1994), there are three possible ways to teach media literacy as part of media education. The first one is learning with media. It involves access to media, analyzing it, evaluating, communicating and responding, and participation. The second one is teaching about media. It includes constructivist and deconstructivist approaches, such as using semiotics to reflect on the potential influences of media. The third one is a more student-active method. Students produce media to evaluate and participate. They create workshop environments and gather experience on information technologies, video and audio elements.

4. Media Literacy within Media Education in Turkey

Within this global context and Turkey's own historical evolution in the last two decades, media literacy and media education can be considered as a fairly new field. The school year 2006-07 was the first time in the history of the Turkish educational system that, «media literacy» programmes were made apparent in the curriculum. As

part of this new step, media literacy courses for 6th, 7th and 8th graders became an elective course. If one analyzes the history of media literacy and related work in Turkey, the role of the regulatory body, the Supreme Council (RTÜK) is crucial. The first time RTÜK discussed the issue of media literacy was during the Communication Symposium of 20-21 February 2003. Besides this interest in media literacy, RTÜK, conducted research in the areas of media effects and the role of media in public opinion. Historically, RTÜK's research areas heavily focus on language use in TVs and radios, television watching habits of children, general public's television viewing habits, radio listening habits, television news, women and television, television watching habits of Turkish immigrants living in Germany, and television watching habits of the disabled (RTÜK, 2006). Historically thus, they mainly focused on the effects of media, but not on media literacy and media education. The shift from effects to media literacy was possible because one of the significant factors for these studies was the way they reflected on «use» of media and also, in some aspect, on the public's awareness level on media use.

Starting from year 2000, RTÜK finalized its work on «Smart Signs» for protecting children from negative effects of media, particularly from television. «Smart Signs» were meant to be a guidance system for parents who wanted to protect their children from harmful content on television. In addition to this new development, the more recent project of RTÜK was about Internet use. The project was called «Internet Security for Our Children». Similar to smart signs for television, a smart filter system was provided to parents on RTÜK Children's Web Site (www.rtukcocuk.org.tr). Within this site, there are also children friendly programmes, films, texts and animations. It aims to help children for media literacy. Some of the sections' names are «RTÜK», «Smart Signs», «Children Rights», «What to Watch» and «TV Reader». Most of the contents within these sections are aimed at children with limited media use and media knowledge. While RTÜK was producing these projects, some schools (Misak-ı Milli Primary School, Ýhsan Dođramacı Foundation Private Bilkent Primary School, Türkiye Emlak Bankası Primary School) from Ankara cooperated within the projects as partners.

Besides these developments, the first media literacy conference took place on 23-25 May 2005. Organized by the School of Communications in Marmara University, Istanbul, it produced a publication collecting 30 presented papers, «Medya Okuryazarlıđı» compiled by Nurçay Türkođlu, Melda Cinman Pimpek, Kalmeus Yayınları, in 2007. Interestingly, the publication shows that there are almost no empirical studies directly related to media literacy and media education in Turkey. The conference was mostly devoted to discussions about concepts in media literacy and education, and it was trying to reflect the importance and necessity of media literacy and media education for Turkey. Actually, as part of the closing remarks, the conference and attendant publication suggested the immediate need for media literacy courses for children in Turkey.

In addition to the conference's significant contribution, the Anti Violence Platform created by related government establishments, RTÜK, NGOs and universities, as

part of Ministry of State in 2004, also declared the necessity of media literacy courses in schools. According to these suggestions, the Ministry of Education prepared a draft course content and teacher's manuals (RTÜK, 2007). It also actively participated in the Council of Europe's conference on «Empowering Young People» in Armenia (Council of Europe, 2006), and completed the translation in Turkish of the Council of Europe's «Handbook on Internet Literacy» and of Unesco's «Media Education» kit (2007). Turkey thus has been developing its own tools but has also shown eagerness in connecting itself to similar evolutions happening in the enlarged Europe and in the world.

RTÜK also organized the International Media Literacy Panel in Ankara, on 24 November 2006. It may be considered as the last step before the RTÜK and the Ministry of Education's joint initiative for a media literacy programme in schools starting in the 2006-07 school year. «Media Literacy» courses made their appearance soon after. To attract the students, but also the parents, to this elective course, RTÜK prepared a promotional Media Literacy demo film. The film was shown on many national television channels. According to the Commission responsible for the preparation of the programme and the course book, the programme is designed from a constructivist viewpoint. Most importantly, the Commission's Report indicates that some other learning objectives of this programme involve gaining «new skills» and «new values» besides the main framework and objects of the programme (Komisyon, 2007). The general objectives of the media literacy programme are defined so that each child: «Reads the media from different angles while being sensitive to surrounding, knowing the problems of country, and gains conscious on what is presented in media. Accesses the messages in television, video, cinema, commercials, print media, Internet and etc; analyzes, evaluates and communicates these messages. Gains a critical viewpoint for print, visual and aural media. Brings an agenda of finding answers and providing questions as parallel to creating and analyzing messages. Becomes a conscious media literate. Actively participates in social life. Provides support for awareness on development of public and private broadcasting».

To reach such objectives, eight primary units take place within «Elective Media Literacy Course Teaching Programme». They are: «introduction to communication» «mass communication», «media», «television», «family, children and television», «radio», «newspapers and magazines», and «Internet». In order to put the programme in practice, five cities and one primary school from each city were selected as sample ones. Those schools were Seyhan Dumlupınar Primary School from Adana, Çankaya Ahmet Vefik Paşa Primary School from Ankara, Merkez Barbaros Hayrettin Paşa Primary School from Erzurum, Bakýrköy Behit Pilot Muzaffer Erdönmez Primary School from Istanbul, and Karþýyaka METAP Primary School from Izmir.

The choice of teachers responsible from Media Literacy courses is revealing of the challenges for decision-makers, especially as training courses for initial in-service training of teachers are not yet put in place. In these sample schools, social sciences teachers were selected to teach these courses. During four days (7-10 September 2006), 20 social sciences teachers from those schools took the «Training the Trainers»

programme in Ankara. According to the initial observations of the Ministry of Education and RTÜK experts (RTÜK, 2007), there was widespread interest for this Media Literacy course. There was a need for more detailed course programme in terms of providing more active and effective communication. It was suggested that teaching this course at the first level of primary education in relation to other courses would be better. It was observed that children were active in using RTÜK's website prepared for children. Establishing Media Clubs at schools would attract students to choose this elective course. It was also observed that children were sharing course content with their families and there was a significant change for families in the way they perceived reality and considered their media preferences. The course content was effective on their behaviour and it was observed that they were more selective in watching television programmes and aware of their choices. School children's visits to media organizations and use of role models for analyzing media products would also be effective ways of producing intended results. As an outcome of these observations and developments, the «Media Literacy Course Teacher's Manual» was produced by the Commission in 2007. However, one important missing point in the report is how the research was conducted and how the related observations were connected to the results in attitudinal change of the students and their families. Gathering data and analyzing data methods are not clear, and reports mainly seem to rely on unsystematic observation, which calls for more research on evaluation and effectiveness of impact.

Besides these important developments in media literacy, RTÜK's ongoing conferences play an important role to attract audiences and to help people related with this field to exchange information and build communities of practice. In 2008, several national and international conferences for media literacy and media education were planned in Turkey. Monitoring meetings of RTÜK also take place in different cities for the project. For RTÜK, these activities aim to monitor the projects developments and outcomes, and to see possible opportunities to apply new approaches.

All these positive aspects show a pro-active attitude in regulatory entities, in connection with other actors, like foundations, teachers and NGOs. Yet, one of the biggest problems for media in Turkey today remains the poor content. There is still considerable amount of tabloidization and «televoleism» (gossip and celebrity oriented paparazzi programmes) in media, both in print and visual formats. The Internet situation is even more ambiguous. On the one hand, most online content is without filter in most of the cases when harmful content can hurt young people, on the other hand, access to some Internet websites for public interest is impossible in some cases, as state censorship is applied to some issues because of their relation to «Anti-State» practices, «illegal organizations» and «attacks on the honour of Atatürk and Turkish nation». Today, there are ongoing protest movements, email chains and special campaigns on Internet for those kinds of practices. These are organized by web-based established groups, such as Facebook groups or Twitter groups.

At the same time, it is apparent that media literacy and media education projects are just starting. As it can be seen in local media trainings by Journalists Association of Turkey and Konrad Adenauer Foundation, professional cooperations at the

international level also need to be considered as a way for scaling up rapidly and for involving Turkey in the international community. There are very few university professors who had a chance to get media education outside Turkey. Historically, the Radio Netherlands Training Centre was one of the institutions providing media education to professionals from Turkey in the Netherlands.

Besides international cooperation for media professionals, there is no extension to children and school. At this point, media literacy relies on a school-based uni-dimensional programme. Another important dimension to consider for media literacy development is the way course contents and materials are created. In the existing manuals, some of the chapters do not have apparent or clear learning outcomes. Most of them are knowledge-based, which is understandable because of the level of school children. But considerations for competences and citizen-oriented outputs need to be introduced for children in higher grades. For them, the media roles in relation to human rights, minorities, religion, identities, culture, values, global and local, freedom of expression, accession to European Union, and current issues of the world can be considered as possible subjects.

Today, there is a growing need for critical understanding and critical questioning of media in Turkey. Also, there is also a need for deeper assessment of the outcomes of the existing media literacy and media education projects. As part of the first initiatives, 350.000 students (out of a total of 14.115.892, according to the Ministry of Education) benefited from media literacy projects (Çelik, 2008). It is apparent that there will be more and more school children demanding for the course and courses similar to this. Graduates from schools of communications can be considered as potential media literacy teachers at schools. Professional media, universities and non-governmental organizations can be more active in media literacy projects. These counterparts can be assigned responsibilities by the media regulating authorities.

5. Conclusion

Media literacy and media education in Turkey are still concepts in their developing stages. Only 2 years have elapsed since the very first media literacy course was included into educational system of primary school children. Compared to the progress of some other countries, there are still lessons to be learned and necessary changes to make. In these efforts, schools should not be the only sources for building bridges. Local authorities, non-governmental organizations, professional media organizations, universities and regulating bodies should be involved.

Efforts by the Ministry of Education and RTÜK are significant. At the same time, democratization, pluralism, diversity, identity, women, handicapped and other disadvantaged groups, and their relation to media should also be considered by content and programme providers. Media literacy and media education can be seen as a beneficial tool to discuss and question the ongoing media environment without creating havoc, mistrust and with peace, tolerance and civic agency in mind.

Media literacy and media education have recently become part of department programmes of communication schools in Turkey. They can be used in all schools of communications. At the same time, media literacy and media education can be also considered as a responsibility of curriculum development programmes in schools of education. These two sectors of education and communication should come together to put their communities of practice in common.

As last, Turkey, with its projects in media literacy and media practices, can be a significant example for countries around the region. As it was indicated, Arab and Middle East countries show a growing demand for Turkish media productions, especially television programmes. This kind of already established relationship can also be used for establishing cooperation towards international projects within media literacy and media education programmes.

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