

## Music Education Policy of Turkey Educators

Emine Kivanç Öztug

*Department of Music Education, Atatürk Education Faculty, Near East University,  
Lefkosa, Turkey 99138*

*Telephone: +905338609640, E-mail: ekivanc23@gmail.com*

**KEYWORDS** Teaching of Music. Formal Music Educator. History of Music Education. Opinion of Music Educators. Education Policy. Educators

**ABSTRACT** The aim of this study is to put forward music education policies in education policy followed by the establishment of the Republic in Turkey according to the music educators' opinions. This study was conducted as a descriptive research model by using the qualitative research approach and semi-structured interview questions were used for data collection. As a result of the research, music educators pointed out that music lesson hours in primary and secondary education should be increased and music lessons in high schools should be compulsory. They also explained the importance of the lessons taught by experts in the field of music, the necessity of the regulation of the government budget for international and contemporary music education, and that the authorities should have a holistic and sustainable approach for education in general and for private music education.

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a process that is part of a cultural existence. The level of individual development and the structure of the society in which she/he lives are measured by production and education. Valuable attitudes and behavior at a societal level also reveal the aims of education. The process in which behavior develops is referred to as the process of education (Fidan and Erden 2001). Ucan (1996: 9) describes the education process as follows:

*"Every human being as an individual is born with some "biopsychic" features as an organism or natural asset equipped in an environment consisting of natural, social, and cultural elements, living side-by-side with social and cultural elements that are in his/her birthplace. But they have a little or a lot of continuous interaction with the surrounding elements. Those around them help each human realize his/her own life activities during an interaction process and forms a culture and society, changes, and develops."*

Music education cannot be considered independent of other education variables, as it is part of the overall educational process. In this context, a general understanding of government policies reflects on education policies in general and music education in particular.

The policy, which, according to Aristotle, is defined as the path of the government administration of a political party (Yildiz 2003), includes all activities that society creates for the public. In

Turkey's history, one of the first areas affected by changes in government policies since the Administrative Reforms (1839) in the Ottoman Empire was education. Education policy can play a role in the direction of reducing income inequality in society. In this context, the government can reduce inequality by preventing education from becoming a monopoly controlled by certain hands, providing equality for everyone, developing education tools and related equipment, and increasing expenditure on education (Güven 2001). Government policies are seen as effective in education when it is thought that education is organized according to the principles that make individuals useful to society (Kuçukahmet 2000).

Given that education policies should be active in all areas of education, and music education in particular, amateur and professional music education is expected to create a common political attitude. The most obvious changes in music education policies have emerged along with the Republican era in Turkey. A number of appropriate arrangements were made in the social and cultural structure of society with the level of contemporary civilization, along with the Republic, and this case has brought new approaches to education policy. In the education policy of the Republican era the most distinctive policy opinions were Atatürk's and his friends, which determined the nature of music education specifically and in general education. These have been seen as a necessity of modern civilization, as the formation of the expected behavior of the individual were determined according to the values of the

Republic. As was stated in the Basic Law of Ministry of Education, music education was expected to be addressed as Atatürk envisioned. Therefore, Atatürk's views on contemporary Turkish music and music education played a decisive role in music education.

Atatürk made many improvements in the political, social, and cultural policies to raise the Turkish nation above contemporary civilization.

Applying these innovations to only the management of state and social life was not enough. To drive Turkish music to the international level by taking advantage of Western music, information and technique formed the objectives of Atatürk's music work.

The changes in educational programs that governments make according to their own ideas and interests negatively affect education. The development of society and the reflection on culture of the education policies, which have no continuity and sustainability, cannot be predicted. According to today's music education context, music education policies with continuity and sustainability are needed.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The main objectives of this research are to learn the opinions of music educators about education policies, which were applied during republic era, and then evaluate and develop proposals in this context. In order to meet the main aim, answers have been sought to the following questions:

1. What are the views of music teachers on music education in vocational education institutions in Turkey?
2. What are the views of music teachers on music education in formal education institutions in Turkey?
3. What are the views of music educators on the reconfiguration of music education policies in Turkey?
4. According to music educators, what are the pros and cons of the existing music education policy?

### **METHODOLOGY**

In the study, an interview form was used to compare the eras regarding the description of the existing situation related to the music education policies in the Republican era. The qualitative research approach used is a descriptive research model. Qualitative studies target a document review and involve the investigation and analysis

of written material containing information about facts and events (Yildirim and Simsek 2006: 187-189). The descriptive research model "approach is intended to describe a situation in a way that is in the past or at present" (Karatas 2006: 77).

### **Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews related to music education policy were used by taking insights from experts in the field. Data was collected with the semi-structured interview form, which offered the interviewees an opportunity to express themselves. The semi-structured interview form has the benefit of providing necessary in-depth knowledge (Buyukozturk 2008). Music educators were interviewed in accordance with the feedback received from experts. The experts consulted were grouped as the first generation (Turkish Five), the second generation (graduated by 1965), the third generation (graduated by 1985), and the fourth generation (graduated by 2010). However, due to the lack of experts from the first generation who were still alive, the researchers used written sources. 13 experts' opinions about music education policies in Turkey were taken from the second, third, and fourth generations. After the face-to-face meeting with the 13 experts the scope and validity was checked. The resulting data is depicted in accordance with the main purpose and sub-aims of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

In the study, data was analyzed in a historical and thematic way in accordance with the objectives and sub-objectives of the study. Data was formed by scanning the primary and secondary written sources, government policies, reports, development plans, reports on music education, training plans, and community music education plans that left their mark on historical institutional organizations and educational organizations. Music educators' responses to semi-structured interview questions were examined in accordance with the objectives and sub-objectives.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Opinions about Music Education in Formal Education Institutions in Turkey**

Experts said that the main informal music education institutions are community centers, public houses, TRT, the Presidential Symphony

Orchestra, the State Opera and Ballet, and the Ministry of Culture. They stated that community centers, which give music education, were “extraordinary” institutions, and spreading music was prevented after closing the centers. TRT, which worked effectively in music education in the early years of the Republic, gave great service to music education, particularly focusing on Hikmet Simsek’s programs. However, music education today has been reported to be far behind compared to the first years of the Republic. In their studies, Sengül and Karabulut (2016) emphasized that when recruitments were made for Turkish Radio and Television Corporation it was important to recruit professional music artists who had taken vocational music education. Highlighted was that the Presidential Symphony Orchestra concerts and the State Opera Ballet performances are the main institutions compared with informal education institutions. It was stated that that, since its establishment, the Ministry of Culture had duties in music education and orchestra numbers increased. However, this was still qualitatively and quantitatively insufficient.

#### **Music Education in Formal Educational Institutions in Turkey**

Some experts stated that the progress in music education in formal education has been positive since the establishment of the Republic. In addition to this view, music education was considered important, especially in preschool education. However, positive opinions were not given for primary and secondary education. The fact that when students were exposed to and trained in music in schools, they were more likely to participate in music as adults (Murray 2016). Music education was reported to be more planned in the early years of the Republic and the courses were done with good teachers. However, it is considered “chaos” today. The primary school teachers who taught music were not music teachers, and so the lessons were not fulfilling. All of the experts showed a lack of communication between the authorities in charge in formal educational institutions and government and conflict as the cause of these problems.

#### **Music Education in Vocational Education Institutions in Turkey**

The experts stated that rural institutions were “Ecoles” among the institutions of vocational

music education and they also said that there was a decline in art education after closing the music seminars, teacher academies and village institutions. In addition, they stated that this decline had increased and that there was an increase in the number of fine arts students because the entrance was easier into these schools. In addition to this it is observed that the number of those schools offering vocational music education has increased to 23 since 1924 (Egilmez 2010). Due to the unemployment problem, conservatory graduates tended to become music teachers, which negatively affected music education. Conversely, having music lessons in preschool and classroom teaching is emphasized as important in terms of professional music training.

#### **Evaluation of Structured Music Education in Turkey According to Music Education Policies**

It is important in the configuration process to transform educational institutions into educational facilities, increase the number of Anatolia Fine Arts High Schools, and create developments such as the establishment of new conservatories and increase the number of choruses. Experts put forward that ministers and ministries should be educated on the subject of music education in order to have music education policies. It was also stated that the Music Educators Association played an important role and should be supported. Job training courses and particularly music seminars should be regulated, and the music teachers in music education institutions should be checked. It was also said that the quality of written works was important so as not to forget the culture, and creativity in the art should be encouraged.

#### **Positive and Negative Side of Music Education Policy Between the Years 1923-2010**

According to the experts’ opinions, the positive aspects of Turkey’s musical education policy is stated as emphasis on music teacher training, the opening of the Music Teachers’ College, sending students to Europe, opening the conservatory, making the National Music and Representation Academy of Law, efforts to pass the Paul Hindemith’s reports, opening the Hasanoglu Institute of Fine Arts from the Village Institutes, and the opening of Anatolia Fine Arts High Schools all over the country.

### **Negative Aspects of Turkey's Musical Education Policies**

The negative aspects of Turkey's musical education policies based on the experts' opinions include separating music teacher training institutions from conservatories, starting music education at an early age at the music teacher training institutions, separating Turkish Music and Western Music in the conservatories, being unable to keep pace with changes in music education institutions, music teachers graduating without having the skills and adequate information needed, having an inadequate number of music teaching hours in primary and secondary education, music lessons not being taught by music teachers, control problems arising from a lack of music supervisors, lacking a choir conductor (music educators doing choral conducting), the small budget allocated by the government, first place given to popular music on television and radios in Turkey, and the people who determine music and musical education policies did not receive any music education.

### **Opinions on What Music Education Policies Should be in Turkey**

The views on music education policies since the beginning of the Republic received from the experts in the field are as follows.

The biggest problem in music education is the people determining the music education policies, and there is a lack of professional music education. Furthermore, music teachers should establish organized and professional associations, and must impose themselves on the state and the government. It is very important to have people who are educated in this field, who know the difficulties and can come face-to-face with the students to determine music education policies. This should happen in all education policies.

As stated in the 1739 National Education Basic Law, the Turkish society should grow in a balanced and multifaceted way, in both cognitive and cultural aspects. Artists and art educators should be able to give general art education. Only a government that gives special attention to this field can achieve this goal.

In advanced societies music illuminates people and gives them the strength to hold on in life, from the preschool period to postgraduate stud-

ies. Educational institutions should develop musical education from the point of taking a healthy perspective. It should be understood that there is music education in education policies.

Not on the basis of political views but from their own realities of a country, the world's art direction and development policies should be created in accordance with the real world of music. People need to develop art without any constraints in order to move forward in science and technology.

Some experts who participated in the research said that positive steps were taken in music education, but emphasized that the state should be more encouraging. It was especially underlined that arts education would be more effective in the Ministry of Culture.

Despite the serious problems experienced, improvements in professional music training were reported. Music of the Ottoman Imperial is holistic in nature and the training of both traditional and contemporary artists has even been revealed there. Turkey definitely needs a holistic and structured music university, music school, or academy. There is a need for a music high school covering all the main levels of the music culture and training artists.

Music education should be left to music educators. Opening music education institutions, such as preschools, secondary schools, and high schools at different levels and for different purposes is good, but it was stated that music educators should make all of these decisions. The responsibilities that music teachers have about singing together are the same as the media. Restructuring the vocational dimension of music education is very important and it has been shown that this new structure needs to join all professional institutions related to the field of music. It is important that the purpose of music education be training musicians, musicologists, music teachers, artist band members, and choir members.

The realization of formal music lessons should be made in a suitable environment in educational institutions and the creation of a common repertoire of songs has been proposed. It was also proposed that, in line with the trend, students should receive musical training in extracurricular activities and directed to play an instrument at school. Increasing the number of institutions like orchestras and operas, and the establishment of an orchestra in every province, as well as supporting, advertising, and adopting

these institutions with TRT's broadcasting, is important. It is also necessary to support Turkish composers.

Music education policies should primarily be able to adapt to the criteria of the European University because it is included in the Bologna process in higher education in Turkey. It was also proposed that the music education department, in other words, education facilities, should become accredited with world and European universities.

The quality of music teacher education departments needs to improve. It is important to train qualified teaching staff for these institutions and to improve the training conditions.

Appointing a sufficient number of music teachers, increasing music lessons hours, developing appropriate lesson programs according to daily conditions, providing on-the-job training services, and motivating teachers who implement these programs are all important steps in making music lessons effective in primary and secondary schools.

Music teachers should be trained and better equipped in many different areas in order to realize music education without discrimination of any music genres. Ali Uçan puts the seriousness of the issue in following words, *"Though we did not achieve serious developments, there are big problems in professional music training. During the Muzikay-i Humayin period both traditional and contemporary musicians were trained. Turkey definitely needs such musical structuring. We expect an effective step in this regard. Let's see who, what, when, where, and how to take that step. I am waiting impatiently."* The experts proposed developing programs to train music teachers who have strong skills, are not foreign to their own culture, are effective, can carry leadership qualities, and are good at using technology. It was emphasized that music educators should be trained to understand developments in the world and to cultivate an understanding of envisaging inter-disciplinary approaches.

It was also proposed that in addition to formal music education, informal education should be developed and music education should be supported. In the framework of corporate and social responsibility, professional music training institutions (universities), municipalities, non-governmental organizations, the business community, banks, corporations, and so on, should support music, art institutions, and training ac-

tivities. The need to create policies towards realizing contemporary projects in the context of socio-cultural changes was highlighted.

Visual and written media encouraging and supporting arts education need to be created. The necessary studies and arrangements for the management of alternative quality programs in the problematic publication concept to accelerate the degeneration of society should be supported.

## CONCLUSION

The views of experts on Turkey's music education are important in the formation of the government's education policies. State authorities should consider the recommendations and views of music teachers and academics in the field of music.

From the interviews with the experts in the field the following was revealed:

From the interviews with the experts in the field the following was revealed.

- The hours of music lessons in primary and secondary education are minimal.
- There is a lack of shared song repertoire courses in music lessons in formal education institutions.
- Despite providing professional development in music education in Turkey, serious problems though are still occurring.
- The Ministry of Culture does not work actively enough on amateur music education.
- Orchestras, choirs, operas, and artistic institutions are still not established in all provinces.
- There is not enough support for the development of new works by Turkish composers.
- The music education facilities cannot reach a level to compete with similar institutions around the world.
- Training conditions for music education experts need to be improved.
- Those who develop music education programs have not received professional music education.
- Those who determine Turkish music policies have not faced students.
- There is not enough written or visual media that supports music education.
- Music teachers cannot organize and impose themselves on the state and the government.

- Music education is not included in education policies, from preschool to university, in the Republic of Turkey, as it is in developed societies.
- Political opinions on art are formed and obtained on the basis of results.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is thought that the country's music education policies can be renewed and configured, and this configuration can be developed and sustained to improve and move Turkey to the international level in music education.

Field experts recommend the following:

- Increasing the hours of music lessons in primary and secondary education.
- Leading the students to the keyboard by creating a common repertoire of songs in music class in formal education institutions.
- Opening preschool, primary school, secondary school, and high school music facilities.
- The Ministry of Culture working more effectively on amateur music education.
- Establishing art institutions such as orchestras, choruses, and operas.
- Supporting Turkish composers to create new work.
- Music education facilities reaching a level that can compete with similar institutions around the world.
- Improving the training conditions of music education specialists.
- Developing music education programs with people who have received professional music education.
- Having educators determine Turkish Music policies and come face-to-face with students.
- Having written and visual media publish work to support music education and reorganize musical programs.
- Helping music teachers get organized to impose themselves on the state and the government.

- Including music education in education policies from the preschool to university periods in the Republic of Turkey, as it is in developed societies.
- Supporting the development of people and caring about the realities of the country and the world by not just looking at art from a political view.

The views of experts on Turkey's music education are important in the formation of the government's education policies. State authorities (in the period they select) should consider the recommendations and views of music teachers and academics in the field of music. It is thought that the country's music education policies can be renewed and configured, and this configuration can be developed and sustained to improve and move Turkey to the international level in music education.

### REFERENCES

- Buyukozturk S, Cakmak EK, Akgun OE, Karadeniz S, Demirel F 2008. *Scientific Research Methods*. Ankara: Pegem Publication.
- Egilmez HO 2010. Music teacher training institutions in Turkey and research about today's general condition of these institutions. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2: 3119-3128.
- Fidan N, Erden M 2001. *Introduction to Education*. Ankara: Alkim Publication.
- Güven S 2001. *Fundamentals of Social Policy*. Bursa: Ezgi Kitapevi Publication.
- Karasar N 1998. *Research Methods*. Ankara: Nobel Publication.
- Kuçukahmet L 2000. *Planning and Evaluation in Education*. Ankara: Nobel Publication.
- Murray C Brian 2016. Developing a personal philosophy of music education. *Choral Journal* 56: 9.
- Sengul C, Karabulut Y 2016. Evaluation of professional music training for TRT's artists. *Ataturk University Turkish Studies Journal*, 55: 543-555.
- Ucan A 1996. *Man and Music, Humanities and Art Education*. Ankara: Alf Publishin House.
- Yildirim A, Simsek H 2006. *Qualitative Research Methods in Social Sciences*. Ankara: Seckin Publication.
- Yildiz Z 2003. *Policy Glossary*. Istanbul: Timas Publication.