

Sexism in School Textbooks Prepared under Education Reform in Turkey

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the new textbooks prepared under the framework of the "curriculum reform" realized in Turkey, as part of the EU harmonization process, in terms of gender representation. For this purpose, illustrations in the new ABC, Life Studies and Social Studies textbooks prepared under the new program were analyzed with two different scanning formats which would allow qualitative and quantitative evaluation. The findings of the study demonstrated that new textbooks prepared under the curriculum reform are the carriers of the gender stereotypes just like the older edition textbooks. New textbooks perform the function of reproducing gender segregation which was internalized by Turkish culture and the patriarchal ideology, by portraying men and women within their traditional roles. In this context, the extent to which this gender blind "curriculum reform" constitute a real reform in fact is questionable.

Keywords: Textbooks, Sexism, Gender, Gender Stereotypes, Content Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Text books have always had a central and indispensable place in modern education systems. Through a functional point of view, text books are the cheapest and the most functional means of transmitting a series of knowledge and values. This is where the origin of the problem lies: "transmission of knowledge and values". We all know that only one section of the all thoughts, values and knowledge that exist in each culture is chosen to be used in the schools (Tan, 2000) and thus enters the text books. What is

important here is to determine the criteria of this choice and the groups benefiting from this choice. The set of knowledge and values in the text books are created within complicated cultural, economic and political processes that make up the social texture prevailing in that period (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991). The power that selects only some knowledge from the universe of knowledge and values, and integrates them to the text book after restructuring and sieving them is the education policy itself. In this sense, no education policy is innocent in political and ideological terms. All of the school knowledge, curriculum and text books are nested with issues of gender, culture and power (McLaren, 1989).

Text books are one of the most important mediums where the social realities are created from a certain aspect, through the knowledge and values that were included and excluded (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991). In other words, while text books confirm the correctness of the knowledge and values presented in them, they also invalidate those knowledge and values which they excluded. Thus, text books carries out its social control function by legitimizing the power relations established between classes, groups and sexes throughout the history and the dominating status of one class, group or sex, as well. This is why text books have a crucial function in analyzing the distribution of power and principles of social control. For example, when a text book focuses "good citizen" on one particular ethnic origin and religion (and sometimes a particular sect), it invalidates any other potential interpretation of "good citizen". Similarly, in the definitions of family, "the model of nucleus family including the mother, father and the children" is almost a changeless model. The families where one of the parents is absent (for reasons such as death or divorce) or the families without children are excluded from this model and thus they are ignored. Another universal example can be found in the context of gender relations. In the world presented by the text books, mothers are positioned mostly as the mother or the wife in the family design. The justification of their existence is defined as rearing children and doing housework. The real subjects of the social mechanisms, in other words, the subjects that work, produce bear a profession and status are the men. In the text books, generally men and women are strictly differentiated on the base of the gender stereotypes and defined even more rigidly than they are in recent social practices. This discriminatory approach which reproduces the patriarchy is one of the

primary problems in all text books used in the primary and secondary education in Turkey.

For the last five years, Turkey has been experiencing a reform process in the field of education, as well as in many other fields. As a result of a series of changes called as "Curriculum Reform", in the context of EU harmonization process, content of the primary education programs was revised and the text books have been revised accordingly. One of the objectives of this new curriculum is to arouse "respect for the human rights" in the new generations. Accordingly, it was stated that the new curriculum is against any kind of discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, nationality, political view, social class and physical/mental health of individuals, etc. (M.E.B. 2004-b). This study aims at determining whether the gender discrimination continues to exist in the new textbooks written under the new curriculum which is claimed to be sensitive and conscious about discriminative acts.

Sexism in the Text Books Before Reform

Recognition of women's studies as an academic area with its inter-disciplinary nature gave a start to the conduct of studies on the content of education received by women. In this context, these studies were inspired by the research tradition intensified in Europe and America in 1970s. The researchers treated stories, text books with illustrations and all kinds of text books as a unit of research, while offering a rich literature in the field. These studies aimed at determining the sexist components in the illustrated books prepared for pre-school children (Bereaud, 1975; Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada and Ross, 1972; Jenkins, Florjancic and Swadener, 1993; Allen, Allen and Sigler, 1993), stories (Hillman, 1974) and text books (Saario, Jaclin and Tittle, 1973; Kalia, 1980; O'Reilly and Borman, 1984; Bazler and Simonis, 1991). These studies generally depended on the social learning theory and investigated the illustrations in the text books, headings and number of the main characters in the stories in terms of their attitudes, behaviors and professions and domestic role distribution, by using content analysis technique.

Inspired by these studies, some researchers, like me, (Saktanber, 1988; Dökmen, 1995; Helvacioğlu, 1996; Gürkan and Hazır, 1997; Esen, 1998; Esen and Bağlı, 2003) attempted to analyze the text books in terms gender, by using similar methods and

techniques and obtained findings which are in line with those of the researches conducted at abroad. Common conclusions drawn by the researches can be summarized as follows: The number of male figures is higher than that of the female ones and they are presented in a wider variety of professions and activities, while female figures are locked in the role of mother and wife, most of the times, in the domestic sphere and in the role of a nurse or teacher which are traditionally women's jobs. Boys are portrayed as more active, independent, successful, skillful and brave figures, while girls are portrayed as more inactive, coward, unsuccessful and dependent figures. The attitude of patriarchy to position women either within the borders of the house or the professions related to caring for children or the people in need of care is reflected in all kinds of text books as well. Gender roles of the female and male characters are strictly distinguished from each other. In the books, men are treated with a focus on their features such as bravery, intelligence and success, while women were treated with a focus on their obedience, self- sacrifice and commitment. The studies reveal that the adults and children in the text books are strictly distinguished from each other through the use of gender stereotypes. Furthermore, the content of the thought and behavior codes that are the extensions of the patriarchal culture are described in these text books rigidly than they are in the daily social practices. In our study in which we analyzed the illustrations in ABC and Turkish language text books written in 1990s and being used in primary schools, we noted that the text books reproduce the sexist point of view and imprison the women and men within roles, places and actions appropriate for the gender stereotypes of the society, even only with their illustrations, independent from their content (Esen and Bađlı, 2003). Helvaciođlu (1996) who investigated the text books prepared between 1928 and 1995 chronologically as of the announcement of Republic in Turkey emphasized the function of text books to position and reinforce the particular ideologies of various ruling parties, through the image of women. According to this study, the text books prepared between 1930 and 1940 clearly serves to create the image of "Republic's Women" which would finally serve to the ultimate goal of detaching the people from the Ottoman and integrating them into the Turkish modern social life.

Unfortunately, the findings of this study which withdrew attention to the gender discrimination in the text books could not be disclosed to the concerned parties and the public. Only through various workshops and trainings organized under the body of

the Education Union (Eğitim-Sen), information was given to a limited number of teachers on the findings of the study. In this sense, the most comprehensive and updated research on text books used in Turkey is the one conducted under the Human's Rights in the Text Books Project implemented by History Foundation. This Project was financed by European Union Human Rights and Democracy Development Fund and Open Society Institute, coordinated by History Foundation, with the expertise of the Turkish Human Rights Foundation, under the umbrella of TÜBA. A Text Book Scanning Manual was prepared, with the objectives and strategies developed by academicians, teachers, education specialists and representatives of non-governmental organizations, on the basis of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The research was completed in 2003 and totally 190 text books used in the primary and secondary education were analyzed and reported by a volunteer group including teachers, students and parents who conducted a quantitative analysis on the text books. The findings of this quantitative analysis were interpreted by academicians.

Four thousand items of discrimination on the basis of religion, race and gender and against the universal declaration of human rights were found in the text books published in 2000s. The research concluded that all of the examined text books in any subject and grade lack the qualities required to donate children with the culture of human rights and democracy. To summarize the results of the analysis, the following points were found in the text books of primary education schools:

- The language used is unelaborate and careless.
- They include information pieces that conflict with each other and unscientific presentations.
- They produce a culture of obedience relying on praising the authority and even blessing the authority.
- They display a discourse that is discriminatory and exclusionary on the base of race, gender, social class, religion, language.
- The terms "internal enemies" and "external enemies" are continuously repeated.

- In the discourse of the texts, nationalism is shown as an obligatory and imperious ideology.
- Human rights are not seen as an objective, but a means to achieve respectability of the state before international organizations and communities.

Under the scope of the gender criteria, there were 68 discriminatory items in the primary education text books and 75 ones in the high school text books. The text books with the highest amount of sexist content are Turkish Language and Social Studies text books. There were 53 discriminatory items in Turkish course books and 18 items in Life Studies text books and 17 ones in the Social Studies text books. According to Tanrıöver (2003) who analyzed and interpreted the results of the scanning process, the areas where the sexist attitude is most felt, are the domestic role distribution and gender distribution of professions. Even in mathematic text books, gender discrimination practices were detected. For example, there was a sentence in a mathematic text book *"4% of a school of 400 students is girls. Please find the number of girls in this school"*. Here this book performs the function of normalization of the low schooling rate of girls which is a problem in Turkey. Similarly, the logo of a boy thinking on a question on the test pages of mathematics text book also represents the idea that the act of thinking and problem solving are peculiar to men (Tanrıöver, 2003).

Human Rights on Text Books Project offered very important information with its content and scope. The most crucial contribution of this Project to our country lies in that the sexism was analyzed in text books of all subjects and grades and its findings were announced to the public and the Ministry of Education and that it offered various recommendations concerning the problem. Ministry of Education, as it was also described in the 8th Five Year Development Plan, determined *"revision of teaching programs according to modern needs"* as a requirement for Turkey under its full membership application to European Union. Thus activities *"to revise the primary and secondary education programs in line with the developments at home and in the world"* were started (Ministry of National Education, 2004-a). *"Integration with the world, norms, objectives and education understanding of European Union"* was announced to be the reference points in the teaching programs. Human Rights in the Text Books Project, which was implemented simultaneously with these reform

activities, provided an important map which could have been used for the text books prepared under the reform, with its valuable recommendations on the text books.

It was seen that the information produced in this project, which was the most comprehensive project with volunteer participants from all concerned parties in the education history of Turkey, failed to create a transformation. However, it is not possible to say that a reform was achieved in expected terms with the new programs, despite all the recommendations and the opinions of the experts. Analyzing the new primary education programs with an objective of finding whether they are sensitive to gender equality, Tan (2005) reported that there was not a serious mentality change between the old and the new program as no initiative was taken to realize gender equality. According to Tan's findings, sensitivity concerning gender equality is not a fundamental regulating factor in the general provisions of the new program. These provisions do not offer any finding or recommendation reflecting the asymmetry concerning the gender equality in the participation of girls/ women in education. Contrary to the modern education approaches aiming at social transformation through individual transformation in education, this new program was designed to ensure "*the development of the individual in line with his/her traditions, customs and national values*" (Ministry of National Education, 2004-b), in other words to contribute to the survival of the patriarchal order. A coherent point of view concerning gender equality is missing in the sub-components of the program. Women are imprisoned to the ghettos of Science and Technology or Turkish language programs and they are invisible in other programs (Tan, 2005). Absence of gender sensitivity in education programs requires the revision of the text books prepared according to these programs again from this perspective. For this reason, this study aims at investigating whether there are sexist approaches in the new text books.

Background of the Study: Mystery of the New Text Books

A critical view of the content of the curriculum reform requires such a broad analysis that it should be the subject of a new study. However, it is necessary to repeat a clear reality concerning the objectives of the reform. Turkey 's candidacy for full EU membership has made it compulsory to make reforms in the field of education, as well as many other fields. Consequently, the curriculum package turned out to be an empty package prepared in an unplanned way, without responding to the urgent problems

(such as gender inequality in schooling, insufficient amount of teachers and classrooms, etc.) and dressed up with fashionable words, such as modernization and information society, etc.

Under the scope of the curriculum reform, content of the program was renewed and the process of preparing a textbook was changed with all of its processes including its content, acceptance policy, publication and distribution. Ministry of Education started to implement the Project of Free Text Books for Primary Education Students in the academic year of 2005- 2006. This meant that only the text book (for each course) which was prepared and published by the Ministry was going to be used in all schools in Turkey. These text books were distributed according to the number of students and teacher to all schools. Single text book practice abolished the freedom enjoyed by teachers to select text books¹. With this project, Ministry of Education imposed these text books whose selection criteria are controversial and distributed them to the students and teachers free of charge. As the Board of Education which used to be one of the crucial departments of the Ministry and was responsible for examining the content of the text books was abolished, text books were not inspected any more. Moreover, these text books became the means of disseminating the ideology of a political party for the first time in the history of the Republic. There was a letter on which the photo of Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan in these text books which were distributed free of charge to millions of students in the primary education over the country. Thus, new text books became even more interesting for us, the academicians. However, it was not easy to reach these text books, as it used to be. In the past, anybody could buy a text book (approved by the Ministry of Education) of any course, of any publishing house from any bookstore. For the first time in the history, it was so difficult to have access to a text book in Turkey.

During this process, I was delivering a course namely Text Book Analysis in the undergraduate program of Social Studies Teaching. When we started the course in the spring semester of 2005- 2006 academic year, curriculum reform and new text books were at the top of the agenda in Turkey. The fundamental objective of the course was to analyze the old and new text books theoretically and practically in terms of human rights. We experienced difficulty in obtaining the text books together with my students. This is why we had to limit our course with the analysis of old books. After

a very long effort, we managed to find some new text books, thanks to some school principals and parents who were opponents of these text books. However, we were faced with the fact that the semester was over, as well as the course.

This fight we experienced was instructive both for the participants of the course and myself. During the semester, we witnessed practices that were unique in the Turkish education history and found the opportunity to discuss on the education policies of the ruling government. This course turned into a laboratory where we tested education theories and interpretations with the realities we experienced. I believe that one of the most crucial outcomes of this experience is "the enlightenment of the interaction between social and historical experience and the personal experience" as expressed by Brock-Utne (1995). The semester was over, but the curiosity of the students in the new text books still continued. This group of 12 students had professional interest in the text books as the prospective teachers. In addition, the gender sensitivity they developed out of their personal experiences was a significant determining factor. This experience, combined with my academic curiosity concerning the text books that have been used since the early days of 1990s, made it indispensable to conduct a group work. On the other hand, conducting a study with my students on the subject in the context of critical and feminist pedagogy was going to be a very important opportunity and a valuable experience.

For this reason, we set out from the curiosity concerning whether there are still "sexist" components in the new text books prepared under the controversial curriculum reform. We formulated the objective of our study as follows: Analyzing the illustrations used in the ABC, Turkish, Life Studies and Social Studies text books, in terms of the indicators of sexist approach and compare our findings with those of the previous studies. The most important part was to determine the method to be applied in the study, as we had to apply the most convenient technique to ensure the systematic and objective conduct of the study by a group of 13 researchers, including me. For this purpose, we decided on the content analyzing technique, considering the constraining nature of the study. In order to eliminate this constraining nature, we decided to perform a secondary qualitative analysis.

METHODS

This study depends on a descriptive content analysis. In line with the objective of the study, only illustrations of 13 text books (ABC, Turkish language, Life Studies and Social Studies) were analyzed through the items of sexism of the qualitative and quantitative scanning formats developed and used under the Human Rights in Text Books Project.

Quantitative scanning was performed on the text books by a volunteer group including 11 students from the 4th Class of Social Studies Teaching Program in the Faculty of Education of Ankara University. The volunteer group¹ were who received a must course on Subject Field Text Book Analysis I gave in the academic year of 2006- 2007. The scope and the content of this course were based on the perspective of human rights in the text books. However, the course was given in line with the feminist pedagogical principles. The emphasis placed on the conceptual/ theoretical knowledge concerning gender was stronger than any other issue. This served to an increase in the consciousness developed by this volunteer group against gender equality. In addition, the knowledge and experience required for gender analysis constituting the focus point of this study had already been given to these students by means of the practices performed in the courses throughout the semester. There were only 2 male students in the volunteer group and this can be considered as a significant point in showing the abstention of male students to participate to the study.

In the first stage of the study, the students analyzed the illustrations according the quantitative scanning format and counted the items in the text books according to the categories to be described in the following and determined their frequency distribution. In the second stage of the study, the same scanning format was used by me on the same text books. By doing so, the findings of the study were obtained by taking the common judgments of two independent markers. In the third stage, qualitative scanning format was used by me on the illustrations of the same text books. However qualitative scanning format was applied only on adult female figures and adult male figures due to the fact that gender based domestic role distribution is reflected on adult figures more clearly than the children figures as it is reported in previous studies (Esen, 1998; Esen and Bađlı, 2003). Ataturk's photos and drawings were excluded from the analyses.

Categories Used for the Qualitative and Quantitative Analyses

Quantitative Scanning Format, which is one of two different scanning formats applied in the study, aims at counting the adult female and male figures in the illustrations and determining where they fall under the following categories. No statistical analysis was made on the data obtained from the quantitative scanning, but the frequency and percentage distributions were expressed in tables.

1. Women in traditional roles: The figure is seen doing domestic tasks (cooking, preparing the dinner table, ironing, etc) or mothering.
2. Male figure helping/paying attention to the child: The figure is portrayed indoors or outdoors, doing something with the child (such as in physical contact with the child, shopping with him/her, giving a present to him/her, helping him/her with homework, etc.)
3. Women/ Men working: The figure is seen performing a job at a place which can be called as workplace, except for the house (office, field, laboratory, etc).
4. Women outside the house and the workplace: The figure is seen at outdoor places and not performing any profession (for example, on the street, in the park, at the beach, forest, arts gallery, cinema, etc).
5. Men performing a task: The figure is seen while performing a task which is not among the roles attributed to men by the tradition, at places outside the home or at home, but not as a profession (cooking, washing the dishes, preparing the dinner table, etc)
6. Women/Men with authority: The figure is displayed in the role of a manager, decision-maker, inspector. In addition, the figures such as kings, rulers, sultans or the figures with important discoveries in science were treated in this category.

Qualitative Scanning Format was used firstly to evaluate the categories created for the purpose of revealing the gender discrimination and the illustrations in the text books with a holistic approach (all of the adults and children figures). Secondly it aimed at

determining some important points excluded from the quantitative scanning. These four categories and their descriptions are as follows:

1. **Inequality in Social Roles:** In places other than the house, the adult male figures are shown as active individuals acting as the authority, decision maker and active subject in any activity, while adult women are displayed in secondary roles as passive individuals ruled, directed, inspected by others.
2. **Patriarchal Family Description:** At home, the adult male figure is seen as a subject who is responsible for the finance of the household, gives the decisions concerning the budget and the children, represents the household in the public sphere and he is served by others.
3. **Sexist Approach in Clothes:** Adults and children are seen in clothes which does not reflect the realities of daily life and convey the emphasis on gender segregation (For example, woman and girl figures in skirts or dresses and man and boy figures with suit and tie).
4. **Sexist Approach in Games and Activities:** Girls and boys seem are portrayed in groups established on the basis of their sex, according to the games and game objects they play with (for example girls play with babies and house toys, such as cups, knives, etc. and boys play with balls or cars which require activity etc. In addition, there are only male figures in the sports activities).

FINDINGS

In this part, the most striking findings of the study will be presented in terms of the qualitative and quantitative scanning measures. The findings will be interpreted on the base of the categories of the qualitative scanning format and a comparison will be made with the findings of the previous studies. The results of the quantitative scanning will be presented as a summary, without detailed numerical data.

Results of the Quantitative Scanning

In terms of the numerical data, the first striking finding is that the number of the women and the girls in the illustrations is more than that of the men and boys. One

problem which can be easily solved from first hand is this numerical inequality continues in new text books, just like the text books used in 1990s (Arslan, 2000; Esen and Bağlı, 2003). In all of the text books examined, it was also interesting that the number of adults in the illustrations is higher than that of the girls and boys. In text books, social life realities are transmitted to the children through the images of the adult male or the adult male is portrayed as the primary subject of the social practices. There is no doubt that elimination of this numerical inequality between the adults and children of two sexes is not sufficient to eradicate the sexism in text books. What is important here is not how often the women and the girls are portrayed, but the way they are portrayed. However, provision of numerical equality of sexes in the text books is an important measure that requires attention.

Categories	ABC-Turkish	Life Studies	Social Studies	Total
Woman in traditional roles	71	75	23	169
Man with the child	37	28	5	70
Woman while working	40	59	73	172
Man while working	83	71	208	362
Woman outside the house and the workplace	32	37	56	125
Man outside the workplace	108	81	166	355
Woman with the authority	1	-	18	19
Man with the authority	22	50	76	148
Total number of woman	168	183	182	533
Total number of man	329	251	560	1140
Total number of girls	463	724	367	1554
Total number of boys	691	890	209	1790

TABLE 1

Frequency Distribution of the Female and Male Figures According to the Type of the Text Book

A general evaluation on the illustrations on all text books examined shows that adult males are mostly seen to be "working" (49.73 %) (Table 2). Domination of male figures conducting a profession is in line with the findings of the previous studies (Dökmen, 1995; Arslan, 2000; Esen and Bağlı, 2003). Secondly, male figures are seen "out of work" at a very high rate 31.15%. However, a qualitative scanning is

necessary in order to find out what kind of states or tasks (being at outside without performing a profession or being at home and performing a task which is not among the roles traditionally attributed to men) are covered by the definition of "being out of work". The rate of men with authority is 12,98 %. The category in which adult males are seen least is "caring/paying attention to child". However this bears similarities with the findings of the previous studies which were conducted with different categories. In the illustrations of ABC and Turkish language text books used in 1990s, the rate of adult male figures engaged in activities with children was very low (Esen and Bağlı, 2003). The respective definitions of the categories used in these two studies. In this context, there is a similarity between the text books of pre-reform and post-reform period in this sense.

Categories	FEMALE		MALE	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Woman in traditional roles/ Man with the child	185	34,72	70	6,14
Woman working/ Man working	188	35,27	567	49,73
Women outside the home and workplace/Man outside the workplace	141	26,45	355	31,15
Woman/ man with the authority	19	3,56	148	12,98
Total	533	100	1140	100

TABLE 2

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Adult Female and Male Figures According to the Types of Text Books

It was observed that distribution of adult females over categories is more balanced in comparison with adult males, except for the "women with authority" (3,56%) in which they were least seen. The adult females in the illustrations of all text books are respectively "working" (35,27 %), "in traditional roles" (34,72 %) and "out of house and work" (26,45%). The higher rate of adult female figures "working" is another finding that contradicts with the findings of the previous studies. However, as it mentioned above, the women are in the traditional roles, almost at the same rate. This finding which supports the previous studies is an indicator of the fact that female identity cannot be thought separately from their mother and wife roles.

Findings of the Qualitative Scanning

Inequality in Social Roles: The rate of illustrations showing the women in traditional roles as mother or housewife is very close to the rate of illustrations showing women "working". This is why it is necessary to evaluate these two categories together.

Another relevant finding is that the rate of illustrations showing women with authority is lower than that of the illustrations showing men with authority. Treating these three findings together would ensure the formation of a holistic point of view concerning the male and female figures. The analyses on the text books reveal that the men and the women are portrayed in different professions. For example, men are portrayed in executive, decision- maker and inspector roles, such as market manager, school principle, judge, mayor or governor. On the other hand, women are shown to be working as teacher and nurses (Dökmen, 1995; Arslan, 2000; Esen and Bağlı, 2003), or in low-status supportive jobs, such as sales staff and clerk working under the supervision of a male manager. For example, the municipal police inspecting the women working in the bakery are male. In few examples pointing to a higher status, most importantly a higher education level, women are shown in jobs that emphasize feminine feelings filling the inside of the mothering role in a hidden way. For example, the female figure may be dentist, but the patient is a child. It is very interesting that even in a case where there is one male doctor and female doctor, it is the male doctor performing the examination task.

Finally, the high rate of the female figures portrayed while "working" is due to the high number of the cases imprisoned into the teaching and nursing practices which are considered to be feminine jobs. For this reason, women are portrayed within the professional and social roles that constitute an extension of the traditional point of view and considered to be appropriate for them. The high frequency of female portrayal in teaching profession may be because of the fact that this profession is in harmony with the traditional gender roles and that it is a profession with low status and low income in Turkey. This is a common finding of various studies. When considered in this context, the finding concerning women's portrayal "while working" cannot be accepted as a positive change.

In their research which provides text book authors with concrete examples to refrain sexism, Bağlı and Esen (2003) noted on that women's imprisonment into the teaching

profession in text books served as a factor that reinforces sexism (Bağlı and Esen, 2003). Teaching, in addition to being a profession, is also a textual and figurative element that needs to be used very carefully due to this connotation. Frequent repetition of the framework combining the teaching profession with femininity does not only reinforce the stereotypes offering appropriate professions for women, it also marginalizes male teachers. For this reason, it should be born in mind that any determination (text or illustration) which limit or frame the women may create unwanted consequences for the men.

Description of Patriarchal Family: The illustrations offering a more clear sight of the patriarchal family description can be found in the text books of the Life Studies. In most of these illustrations, there is the father figure coming from shopping with hands full, a father figure watching television and holding the remote controller in his hand, while the mother is preparing the dinner table. In these illustrations, the man is presented as the person who is the recipient of the service and who is responsible for working outside and financing the living of the household. In the text book of Social Studies 4 where both men and women are portrayed as working individuals, emphasis is made on the idea that men have a higher status in his profession than the women and thus he earns more. The traditional understanding foresees that the head of the house is the man and thus he should earn more and keep the economic power in his hand. In an example, the mother of the child is a worker in a textile factory and the father is a civil servant. In this example and the others, the idea that men should be superior to women both in terms of education and income level clearly reproduces the idea of patriarchal family.

In addition to the illustrations portraying the traditional gender-based labor distribution, a small number of examples portraying the active participation of men to domestic tasks were reported as well. The illustration showing the domestic labor distribution in the text book of Social Studies 5 is out of the traditional understanding in this sense. Here all family members are getting ready to clean the house together. However, in the text book of Life Studies 3 has conflicting messages. In this book, there is an illustration where the mother is cleaning the windows, while the father is ironing. There is a poem named "Everybody Has A Duty" just under this illustration and its says "*Mum cooks the meals, I taste it, dad goes to work and I play games all*

day". The message of this poem conflicts with the message in the illustration above in the sense that it directly and clearly reflects the gender-based labor distribution. For this reason, this example draws our attention to the necessity for further researches to find out whether new text books carry sexist messages.

Considering the findings of quantitative analysis, the male figures were portrayed while working most of the times and they were portrayed while caring for their children less frequently. When these two findings are evaluated along with the observations made during the qualitative analysis, they can be considered as the extension of the patriarchal description of the family. This is because the definition of "being outside the work" has two dimensions. The male figure is seen to be conducting out of work acts/tasks (such as cooking, washing the dishes, preparing the dinner table) which are out of the roles traditionally attributed to men.

In the qualitative analysis process, the male figure is seen outside the house and not performing a profession, most of the times. When the male figure is portrayed while caring for the children, it is generally when he is outside the house and most of the times when he is shopping as the act of shopping is an indicator of purchase power of the men. This finding is in line with those of the previous studies (Arslan, 2000; Esen and Bağlı, 2003). Furthermore, when the conversation balloons placed in some illustrations are considered as an integrated part of the visual material, it can be seen that father is the person to whom the child consults or asks permission for something (for example to participate to a scouting activity or to join the basketball team of the school, etc). Besides, women are more likely to be portrayed in physical contact with the child than the men, in the new text books, just like the older edition of the books. Evaluating these factors, it can be claimed that patriarchal understanding and the traditional mother- father stereotypes are maintained through the text books analyzed.

Sexist approach in clothes: The clothes of the male and female figures in the text books analyzed were found to convey sexist messages. The female figures are portrayed in skirts and dresses and the number of female figures in trousers is very small. Most of the male figures wear suits and male figures are most of the times portrayed as soldiers. According to Bağlı and Esen (2003, p.135) who reported the same problem in the illustrations of the old text books, these illustrations carry features which over-visualizes and symbolizes the stereotypes of both sexes.

Furthermore, these illustrations which are not in line with daily life are far from offering various and different models with which children can identify themselves.

Another function of portraying women and girls in skirts and dresses so frequently is to distinguish between a woman and a girl, without displaying the body lines. An illustration in 5th Grade Turkish Language Text Book serves as evidence proving the validity of the concerns about the visibility of women's body. In this illustration, there is a beach and people are sunbathing on the beach. There is a boy with swimsuit, an adult male with a swimsuit who is sunbathing and an adult female figure sitting next to the male figure. She has a dress with buttons up to her neck, half sleeve and covering half of the legs down to the knees. In the same illustration, the girl figures are seen in pretty closed shorts and t-shirts. This effort aiming at hiding the female body as much as possible can be considered as an indicator of the reflection of middle Islamist conservative understanding which is in power in Turkey now (AK Party) to the text books. Another supportive example is a news article published in the national press at the beginning of the 2006- 2007 academic year. This article stated that Ministry of National Education banned the inclusion of Liberty Leading the People (1830) which was drawn by Eugene Delacroix and is one of the symbols of French Revolution into the text book of Citizenship and Human Rights Course given to the 7th Grade Primary School. The author of the text book had to delete this drawing from the book in order to obtain approval for publication of the book. The ban of this drawing on the grounds that the female figure was naked was reflected to the national press and withdrew reaction of the secular circles (Milliyet, 2006). These examples are important in that education institutions and text books are not independent of the ruling ideologies and pressures at any time in Turkey. For this reason, it is necessary to analyze all text books used in our country now in order to find out the extent to which they reflect the conservative and Islamist ideology.

Sexism in Games and Activities: Another significant finding of qualitative analysis on the illustrations is about the games and activities of girls and boys. Games are generally portrayed as an activity peculiar to boys and most of the times; it is displayed as a sports activity. This difference in the game activity is reflected to the game objects. Girls are generally portrayed with a doll, boys with ball or car. This observation supports the findings of previous studies conducted on text books

published and used in previous years (Esen, 1999). In fact, game is a gender-neutral subject that needs to be considered as a basic need and an activity of the daily life of a child. In the illustrations of the text books analyzed, there is not only a differentiation between games and game objects and but also an approach polarizing the sexes. In the text books, girls play with girls and boys. The number of illustrations where girls and boys play together is very few. In the photos and drawings which portray the classroom activities and group activities, students are separated into groups according to sexes. Polarization of sexes and establishment of "closed circle relation system" which breaks the relation and communication between sexes, which is also a problem generally observed in the older text books as well, may have a limiting effect on practices of communicating with peers who are actually very important in their socialization process (Bağlı and Esen, 2003, p.136).

The sexist approach distinguishing girls and boys through games, game tools and activities can be seen in the activities of the educational environments. For example, in a garden cleaning activity or plantation activity which is applied as an educational activity in schools, all students are girls. Similarly, it is the girls portrayed in the activities which are introvert or inactive, such as reading a book, writing, keeping diaries. On the other hand, it is boys who are engaged with computers, making observation with telescope or conducting experiments in the science laboratory. In this sense, it is not surprising to see that earthquake rescue operation illustrations uses girl figures to show the positions to be taken to survive during earthquake. All these illustrations reinforce the understanding that "women and men have different innate characteristic features" that constitute the fundamentals of the sexist approach. In this sense, it is obvious that there is no difference in the new text books and the older ones.

INTERPRETATION: SEXISM ATTACHED TO NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY

The findings of the study underline that the text books used under the new curriculum, which is said to have been restructured in line with the contemporary values and education principles following the "reform", do not have any sensitivity concerning the gender equality. The reform has a social justification which places emphasis on "*discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, language, religion, nation, political view, social class and physical/mental health situation of the individuals shall not be permitted*" (Ministry of National Education. 2004-b). However, it is

obvious that the current text books lack the qualifications to donate the children with this consciousness. Visual materials in the text books reflect the realities of the social life constructed and displayed from a sexist point of view. Accordingly, fundamental duties of the women are child raising and doing domestic work. In the world presented in these books, the female image who undertook responsibilities outside the home using her talents are presented in the professions of teaching and nursing which are perceived as feminized professions. It is the men who are active subjects working in the public sphere, with a profession and status. New text books differentiate men and women on the basis of gender stereotypes and continue to reproduce the unequal social role distribution and patriarchal ideology.

It is necessary to accept that the current focus of the new curriculum on the human rights and democracy is a very important development. We found the opportunity to see the concrete examples bearing this understanding to an extent while were analyzing the new text books. However we found out that there are excessive similarities between the old text books and the new ones in terms of the function of transmitting the sexist stereotypes. At this point, it is necessary to ask: What is the reason behind this effort to maintain these stereotypes? Who maintains the idea that sexist approach should be the unchangeable part of school knowledge? Here I would like to continue with the questions of McLaren (1989): Why and how did this knowledge become legitimate? Whose interests does it serve to? Undoubtedly, a broader historical analysis is needed to answer such questions. However, remaining within the borders of this study, I would like to give a broad picture of the cultural politics framework around which Turkish education system was structured and underline other important concepts of the sexism which is the subject matter of this study.

Cultural politics of education system in Turkey was determined around national objectives, national ideals and national values. When we consider the General Principles Regulating the Turkish National Educational System, the first Article under the heading of Overall Objectives of National Education is as follows: "*Overall objective of the national education is to raise citizens committed to (...) Ataturk's Nationalism as stated in the Ataturk's Principles and Turkish Constitution*" (www.meb.gov.tr). Obviously, this sentence was added to the Overall Objectives, in

line with the "Turkish- Islamist synthesis" of the nationalist- conservative ideology occurred following the 1980 military coup. 1980 coup was a crucial turning point in the education policies, as it was in many other fields in Turkey. In this period, when education was surrounded by extremely nationalist and Islamist ideologies, the word "national" was placed in front of the name of all courses (for example, national history, national geography, etc.). In addition, the objectives and the content of the courses were positioned around the axis of Atatürkism.³ The objectives and functions of primary education as determined under this approach clearly reflect the same ideology. *For example a citizen educated in primary education is proud of being the child of a great nation with an honorable history (...)* (Vural, 2002:10). To realize this objective "*(...) one of the primary objectives of the primary education should be inflicting national culture to the children (...) and the same national ideals and objectives (...)*." (Vural, 2002:10). As a natural extension of this, legitimate knowledge and values were clearly expressed for all courses: *"Each course offered in the school should be treated as a means that may help us reach national objectives"* (Vural, 2002:10). This universe of legitimate knowledge and values, which were selected, approved and compiled, (by whom???) surrounds the content of all courses and displays the qualities of the school knowledge. Even in mathematics course, the content refers to "national" issues artificially. Mathematics course; "*(...) is a live means that concerns the students with the numerical dimension of the national issues"* (Vural, 2002:11).

Narrow and propagating nationalism, which determines of the framework of the official ideology in Turkey, also determines the fundamental objectives of education, while drawing the limitations of the legitimate and valid school knowledge. Analyzing the text books in Turkey from this perspective, Bora (2003) states that class-related, gender-related, social and cultural identities of the individuals are reduced to national identity in the text books in general and thus the importance of their identities are minimized, even ignored totally. The nationalist approach prevailing in the text books moves between the racist or ethno-culturalist stance and political nationalism (focused on citizenship) (or patriotism). Most of the times, the concept "patriotism" is used instead of "nationalism". However the meaning of patriotism is mostly consumed in "being ready to die for the homeland". Particularly, the high frequency of the words such as "army", "war", "death" indicates the weight

of militarism in all social courses at school (Bora, 2003). Through "love for the country", "fighting for the country" and "being committed to die for the country", militarism is blessed at each opportunity.

Analyzing the militarist discourse in the text books, Altınay (2003) mentions that militarism constitutes the main subject of a course itself (National Security Course) in Turkey, while it has leaked into the content of other courses as well. The militarism was taken out of its political/legal framework and positioned on a social and cultural context in the text books. Militarism is shown as an unchangeable feature of Turkish "race" and a virtue carried by Turkish culture with honor. The expression "each Turk is born as a soldier" is repeated frequently to reinforce the army-public discourse. One of the findings of our study, which is that male figures in the illustrations of the text books are mostly seen in soldier uniforms, becomes meaningful in this context. Visualization of masculinity with army uniform is the reflection of the army-public understanding and military culture. This point of view, which praises the social value of the soldiership and blesses the militarism, thus reduces the measure of being a good citizen and an individual who is fruitful for the society down to soldiership. This discourse imprison primarily female students and men who cannot serve in the military service for various reasons (such as physical disability, health problems, sexual preference, etc) to a secondary citizenship status and decreases their value in some way (Altınay, 2003).

Nationalist and militarist approach dominating the text books also determines the way women's rights are treated in the books. Both in the old text books and the new text books, there is a section called "Ataturk and Women's Rights". This unit is compulsory due to the curriculum which requires the content of the all text books to be related to the Ataturkism. The content of this section can be summarized in three points: Firstly the sacrifices made by Turkish women during the War of Independence (carrying ammunition and fighting in the war when needed), secondly the rights provided by Ataturk to Turkish women (education, voting, political eligibility, getting a profession) and thirdly divinity of being a mother. According to the message given by the content of the section "Ataturk and Women's Rights", women were awarded by Ataturk, as they assisted the men during the war. This discourse is mostly enhanced with illustrations of women carrying ammunition in the war. In this content, it is

explained that women and men had equal rights in Turkish states in the history, however women lost most of their rights during Ottoman Empire. Then, it is mentioned that Turkish women have a historical importance as they "they carried food, cloth and ammunition to the soldiers fighting in the War of Independence" and "fought along with men on the war field when needed". Furthermore, with the sentences of Ataturk, "motherhood" of women is blessed and it is mentioned that the primary duty of women is to raise "good sons/daughters for the homeland". These historical/ national missions attributed to women serve as a means to justify the importance of women and their possession of rights that are equal with men's rights. Consequently, just like many of the contemporary and universal values, women's rights enter the text books only under the aegis of Ataturk. For this reason, women are subordinated, made valueless and ignored in any other context that is not related with Ataturk.

Under the framework of cultural politics of education in Turkey , we see that nationalist ideology, militarist discourse and sexist point of view are attached to each other in text books. Altınay (2004:15) claims that these three get along well only with each other. That is to say, gender relations need to be analyzed in order to understand nationalism, whereas nationalism, nationalization processes and militarism needs to be analyzed in order to understand gender relations. The author continues to say that identity policies determined by the nationalist ideology and militarist discourse both produce the gender-based labor distribution and also sustain their own dominance through it. Nagel (1998) mentions that nation-state is actually a male institution and nationalism has been restructured to underline the cultural male themes and be in harmony with them. Educational policy, curriculum and text books are the products of nation-state. It is not possible to withdraw a rough conclusion concerning "text books necessarily bear sexist approach" on the basis of this fact. It should be used in order to make a deeper analysis, instead of seeing this relation, normalizing the situation or justifying it. My personal conclusion is that analyzing the sexism in the text books without considering the nationalism and militarist discourse would not be very meaningful or functional. In order to see this complicated relation more clearly, it is necessary to treat each individual text in a book as a unit of analysis and develop techniques which would allow deeper analyses (for example discourse analysis) in decoding the sexism in the text books.

To summarize, the text books in Turkey, on one hand, inculcate nationalist ideology and militarist culture, on the other hand, enhance sexism and guarantee the social control to be imposed on the new generations. Universal values such as peace, democracy, human rights, women's rights, children's rights, equality and freedom, are treated in the context of Atatürkism which has lost its origin to an extent. Moreover, these values are reflected as values that are peculiar to Turkish nation. The knowledge and values which would empower women and men and improve participation to the democratic processes in the public life are sacrificed for the sake of inculcating nationalist ideology and militarist culture. Thus, the causes of failure of a curriculum which is claimed to be sensitive to human rights should be looked for in the cultural politics of education.

It should be born in mind that the schools are not only institutional places, but also cultural arenas where different groups, different values and conflicting thoughts compete with each other (McLaren, 1997). However, it is still the school whose transformative secret power we can rely on, despite all the shortcomings, now and in the future. In today's Turkey, where illiteracy rates and gender gap in schooling are still discussed, education is still the key of future for a large section of the population, especially for girls and women. Therefore, schools should become living spaces where individuals are empowered and liberalized in order to reach the ideal of just and equal society, instead of being institutions internalizing existing hierarchical social relations/practices and justifying asymmetrical power relations. One way of realizing this ideal is to continue the efforts to analyze how nationalism and militarism have been integrated with masculinity culture in Turkey. It is obvious that the Islamist conservative ideology, which is getting even stronger in Turkey, will create a struggle area for women advocating Atatürk's revolutions and secular republic (including me) in the following days, in addition to the nationalism and militarism. **For this reason, we need to start to think more deeply about the "new" masculinity/femininity culture and their special version in Turkey that was produced by the ideology defining itself as Islamist democrats. However, it is necessary to mention that the ideology of these democrats is integrated with neo-liberalism and global capitalism at such an extent that they conflict with the essentials of Islam religion.**

Notes

¹ In early 1990s, the right to prepare and publish text books was granted to the private sector. Thus, the text books published by the private sector and the text books prepared by the commissions assigned by the Ministry of Education used to be evaluated and approved by the Board of Education and then released to the market, under the same criteria. We need to underline that these criteria were controversial. However the teachers used to have the freedom of selecting the text books they were going to use in their courses among this variety of text books in the market.

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³ For a detailed study on the subject, please see Güven, İ. (2005). The Impact of Political Islam on Education: "The Revitalization of Islamic Education in the Turkish Educational Setting". *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25, pp. 193-208.

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