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Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS IN TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

November 2017

# Historical Background(1)

- Turkish republic established in **1923**.
- A modern education system was envisioned to reach youngsters at nationwide with the principles of comprehensive education.
- The earlier attempts to **modernize educational practice** relied heavily on the transmission of knowledge through schooling.
- This was particularly the case until **1960s**.

# Historical Background(2)

Earlier curricula documents, though concerned with knowledge transmission, nonetheless made passing-by citations to the several important thinking skills including

- **the development of aesthetic senses,**
- **problem solving** (from real life contexts), original solutions,
- **relational understanding,**
- **written and verbal communication** of subject specific contents and **reasoning.**

# Historical Background(3)

The main difficulties involved in the earlier documents were they did not;

- **prescribe practices** to develop such **skills**
- **integrate** such skills with **instruction**
- **devise ways** to **assess the development** of these skills
- there was **not a suitable learning environment** supporting the development of such skills.

# Historical Background(4)

- Especially after **mid-1960s** a need for a **“real” reform was felt** and hence new curricula documents were issued in **almost all subject areas at all levels of schooling.**
- The new focus was on the **development of thinking skills** along with **subject specific contents.**

# Historical Background(5)

- The documents developed during the period of **1960s to late 1990s envisioned an instruction** with/for,
  - ▣ Investigative learning
  - ▣ Scientific experiments
  - ▣ Developing an awareness on social affairs and civic relations
  - ▣ Psycho-motor developments required in every walk of life
  - ▣ Assessment and evaluation to improve learning.

# Historical Background(6)

Through such an **instruction students were expected;**

- to be **better prepared** to the requirements of the **societal life** after school.
- to **develop subject specific thinking skills** that were expected to eventually led students to use acquired knowledge in daily exchange of societal practice.

# Historical Background(7)

The **difficulties experienced** with the reform attempt of that time were;

- ❑ Teachers were not prepared
- ❑ Societal pressure for traditional practice
- ❑ Unsuitable conditions for reform practice
- ❑ Non-alignment of textbooks
- ❑ Lack of innovative resources
- ❑ Budget constraints
- ❑ Unsystematic approach to the development of desired skills



# Historical Background(8)

- With the appearance of **TIMSS** and **PISA** exams, there emerged a **nationwide concern** (for almost all the stakeholders) with **the education of future generations**.
- With the **dissatisfaction of TIMSS** and **PISA** exams, **since the early 2000**, we have witnessed **three major curricula changes** (2005, 2013, 2017) **in all subject areas at all levels** (from pre-school to K12) and **system changes introduced**.
- The changes, among other things, **focused on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills** for students of all levels.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills In The Official Policy Documents (1)

Since **the early 2000**, the **official policy documents** (curriculum, guide-books, issued regulations, teacher proficiency codes etc.) along with subject specific knowledge growth, consistently **focused on** and **emphasized the development of** such skills as;

- ▣ Creative thinking,
- ▣ Critical thinking,
- ▣ Questioning,
- ▣ ICT literacy,
- ▣ Communication skills,
- ▣ Problem solving,
- ▣ Collaboration,
- ▣ Flexibility,
- ▣ Initiation
- ▣ Social & Cross cultural skills.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Support Systems in Turkish Context

- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Standards**
- **Assessment of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**
- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Curriculum and Instruction**
- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Professional Development**
- **21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Environments**

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Standards

- The last **curriculum change** took place in this year (**2017**).
- The new curriculum documents, regardless of the instructional subjects, **focus on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills** along with **deep content understanding** and **development of student expertise** with the relevant subject.
- **Interdisciplinary work** is encouraged.
- Teachers are advised to **use real world data** and students are expected to **engage in meaningful problems**, that might be encountered in real life (or on job) situations.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Standards of the 2017 Curricula

- Communication in mother tongue
- Communication in multi-lingual environments
- Learning to learn
- Mathematical competence
- Scientific and technologic competence
- Digital competence
- Cultural awareness and expression
- Social and civic competence
- Initiation and entrepreneurship

# Assessment of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

Traditionally Turkish education system heavily relied on classical assessment tools such as multiple-choice exams or testing.

Along with high-quality standardized testing, teacher are now expected to employ a variety of formative and summative assessment tools, including:

- ❑ The use authentic tasks
- ❑ Portfolio assessment
- ❑ Structured grids
- ❑ Diagnostic trees
- ❑ Projects
- ❑ Performance tasks
- ❑ In and out of classroom observations
- ❑ Interviews

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in Curriculum & Instruction(1)

- The curricula documents issued **since 2005**, have had a particular reference to the **development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills**.
- **2017 curricula documents** ask teachers to create opportunities to apply 21<sup>st</sup> century skills across content areas with a performance based approach to learning.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in Curriculum & Instruction(2)

- Curricula documents prescribe the **use of supportive technologies** of any kind to develop higher-order thinking skills.
- **Inquiry- and problem-based approaches** to learning are attempted to be integrated into classroom instruction.
- Regardless of the key content areas or subjects at hand, (since 2005) teachers are **encouraged to link practice with the community resources** beyond school walls. Hence, in some instances, visits to out of school sites including museums, science-parks, university laboratories, civic engagement areas, cultural and historical places became places for instructional practices.



# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Professional Development(1)

- A **key component** for the success of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is certainly the **teacher**.
- Starting from 2006, Department of Teacher Development (DTP), **worked on qualifications** required for “**competency**” with input from *teachers, education experts, headmasters, and parents*.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Professional Development(2)

DTP came up with **6 main competent areas** with;

1. Personal and professional values – professional development
2. Knowledge of students
3. Teaching and learning process
4. Monitoring and evaluation of learning and development
5. Relationship with school, family and society
6. Knowledge of curriculum and content

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Professional Development(3)

- On the basis of growth areas, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey opens special calls to hold **professional development programs for teachers**.
- Many **research studies** are also **funded at nationwide** to support teachers in helping students gain 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.
- Many online sites are established by MoNE to establish communities of practitioners for teachers to share their ideas and experiences as well as reach to **educational (electronic) resources**.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Environments(1)

- Nationwide high-budget projects are put into practice to **Create Technologically Rich Teaching-learning Environments** (called FATIH Project).
- Students are given **textbooks free-of-charge** at all school levels for every subjects
- **Tablets** are distributed to students of secondary levels.
- MoNE adopted a policy towards equitable access to quality **learning tools, technologies and resources** for all students, teachers and schools.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Environments(2)

- **R&D departments** were established for every provincial directorate of national education. These departments help schools and teachers to develop national and international projects to share and gain experiences towards the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.
- **Teacher mobilities** of international levels are particularly encouraged.
- **Student projects** are being supported by many governmental and non-governmental organizations to encourage students to work real world 21<sup>st</sup> century contexts.

# Thanks for Paying Attention

