

What Do Turkish History Teachers Think About Edutainment?¹

Türk Tarih Öğretmenleri Eğitici Eğlence Hakkında Ne Düşünmektedirler?

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to elicit the views of Turkish history teachers about edutainment in history lessons. The research was carried out in Trabzon, and data was secured through semi-structured interviews. Ten history teachers teaching at well-established high schools in the center of Trabzon the largest city in the East Black Sea region, were interviewed. These teachers were chosen through purposive sampling. The data derived from the study would seem to suggest that the history teachers who participated in the study did not have adequate education, knowledge or skills enabling them to carry out activities based on edutainment.

Keywords: Edutainment, History Education in Turkey, Turkish History Teacher

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türk tarih öğretmenlerinin eğitici eğlence hakkındaki görüşlerini ortaya koymaktır. Araştırma Trabzon'da yürütülmüş olup, veriler yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Veriler Doğu Karadeniz Bölgesi'nin en büyük şehri olan Trabzon merkezde alt yapısı iyi olan okullarda görev yapan ve deneyim sahibi 10 tarih öğretmeniyle gerçekleştirilen mülakatlar aracılığıyla elde edilmiştir. Araştırmaya katılan tarih öğretmenleri amaçlı örneklem yoluyla seçilmiştir. Çalışmadan elde edilen verilere dayalı olarak Türk tarih öğretmenlerinin eğitici eğlenceler konusunda eğitim almadıkları ve bunun yanında yeterli bilgi ve becerilerinin olmadığı anlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitici eğlence, Türkiye'de Tarih Öğretimi, Türk Tarih Öğretmenleri

1. This paper was presented as an oral presentation in September of 2014 in the annual conference of ISHD in Wrocław, Poland.

1. Introduction

History education has come under criticism in Turkey for a long time (Demircioğlu, 2001). According to some history teachers and students, history education is dull and boring because history teachers use traditional teaching approaches (Demircioğlu, 2012; 2014). Traditional history education is mainly based on teacher-centered and out of date teaching methods in classrooms, such as talk and chalk. In the process, students are seen as passive listeners and receivers of historical knowledge. They are not expected to develop high level thinking skills (analysis-synthesis-evaluation). Besides this, students are not expected to develop skills in examining evidence, problem solving, critical thinking, historical literacy, or communication and empathy in traditional history classrooms in Turkey.

There are different ways of making history lessons more interesting, enjoyable and beneficial for students, one of which is using edutainment, which combines education and entertainment (Addis, 2005; Bilotta, Gabriele, Servidio, and Tavernise, 2009, cited in Bertacchini, Bilotta, Pantano and Tavernise, 2012). Edutainment 'refers to things such as computer games which are designed to be entertaining and educational at the same time' (Collins Cobuild, 1997, p. 529). The aim of edutainment is to attract and hold the attention of learners by engaging their emotions (Yeşilyurt and Kara, 2007) through the use of different materials such as computers, board games, books, movies etc. Besides this, it 'involves an interactive pedagogy and, totally depends on an obsessive insistence that learning is inevitably "fun"' (Yeşilyurt and Kara, 2007, p.11). In other words, it is a kind of education which is designed to be entertaining, make lessons more interesting and engage students (<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-edutainment.htm>).

One of the aims of edutainment is to entertain its audience, but also serves to include educational information (Edutainment, 2015). Besides this, it suggests entertaining learning materials containing messages addressed to both parents and children (Okan, 2003). Teachers can use different tools and materials in their lessons based on edutainment, some of which are as follows:

- › Computers
- › Board Games
- › Film Productions
- › Historical Museums
- › Historical Magazines
- › TV Programs
- › Books
- › Television Shows

- › Movies
- › Video Games
- › Games
- › Reconstruction of Battles from the Past

The above materials and tools can help history teachers to make history lessons more interesting and enjoyable. Furthermore, through activities based on edutainment, history lessons can be designed around active learning, which helps students attain permanent learning.

Benefits of Edutainment

Edutainment provides opportunities to make history lessons more beneficial and interesting for students in history classrooms. For this reason, teachers should understand the benefits of edutainment in teaching activities. Some of the benefits of edutainment can be listed as follows:

- › Motivating students
- › Providing detailed historical knowledge
- › Increasing the quality of learning
- › Making history education interesting and enjoyable
- › Developing some crucial skills, such as historical thinking and problem solving
- › Learning by doing

Although edutainment supports educational activities, it has also been criticized by some educators. The main justification for such criticism is that edutainment sometimes focuses more on amusing people than teaching them (<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-edutainment.htm>). Furthermore, it is also criticized for supporting a superficial and problematic construction of learning (Nielsen, 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to elicit views of Turkish history teachers about edutainment in history lessons.

Research context, participants and data collection

The research project was a small-scale case study that used a qualitative approach for data collection. An initial literature review regarding edutainment was surveyed. The research was involved a semi-structured interview to gather data about history teachers' views towards the edutainment in history lessons. Semi-structured interviews which chosen as the data-collection tool because of their capacity to generate high-quality, detailed and rich information about views, attitudes and orientation (Bell, 2007; Cohen and Manion, 2007) were used to gather data about history teachers' views. The intervi-

ews followed protocols for the use of appropriate language and wording and the avoidance of leading questions (Drever, 1997). The questions used in the interview, based on the related literature, were developed by the researcher.

This study was carried out with 10 experienced history teachers in the city of Trabzon from May 2014 to August of 2014. Two of the teachers (%20) were female and eight of them (%80) were male. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants from six different high-schools in the city center of Trabzon. The criteria for choosing teachers were as follows. First of all, schools, which history teachers teaching are well-established, are seen to offer high-quality teaching in the region. Besides this, teachers at these schools are experienced in teaching history, because it is impossible to teach at these schools without at least 10 years' experience. Teaching experience was important when choosing teachers, and in fact all of the teachers who participated in the study had at least 14 years' teaching experience.

The interviews, with ten history teachers in Trabzon, Turkey, were taped and then transcribed. The responses to the semi-structured questions were summarized and classified into specific categories, in order to facilitate a systematic analysis of the data. In this research, the data analysis was based on inductive analysis (Miles and Hubermas, 1994).

Data Analysis

First of all, the interviews were analyzed and checked. Second, the responses to the semi-structured questions were summarized and classified into specific categories of answers in order to create a systematic analysis of the data. Finally, the following categories were composed.

2. Findings and Discussion

Turkish history teachers' views about edutainment in history lessons were investigated by way of semi-structured interviews in this research. In the light of the data, it seems that the history teachers who participated in the study did not use edutainment in their history lessons. The interviews revealed that the teachers shared the following attributes.

Turkish history teachers have adequate knowledge about definition of edutainment

First of all, Turkish history teachers were asked what the edutainment is. When the responses of teachers concerning definition of edutainment are examined it seems that all history teachers have adequate information about definition of edutainment. A male teacher said that "*Edutainment is a combination of education and entertainment to transmit historical knowledge to students*". A female teacher stated that "*Edutainment is using both education and entertainment in teaching activities*". Furthermore, another male teacher stated that "*History teachers can organize teaching activities based on edutainment*". At this point, it should be noted that translation of edutainment from English to Turkish is quite clear and gave main features of edutainment.

Turkish history teachers know some benefits of edutainment in history classroom

History teachers were also asked what the benefits of edutainment in history education are. In the light of the data, it seems that majority of history teachers have knowledge about some benefits of edutainment in history education. Eight history teachers stated that students like history and history teachers through activities based on edutainment. For example a male teacher said that *“Edutainment is important for history education because history is an abstract subject. For this reason, we have to make history concrete by different teaching activities one of which is using edutainment. Students can like history and history teacher when activities based on edutainment used in history classroom”*. Another male teacher gave a similar answer and stated that *“The topics of history are about the past and some student do not like history if a teacher teach history without edutainment. For this reason, history teachers should use different active teaching approaches and edutainment in history lessons”*.

The majority of history teachers (7) believe that another benefits of using edutainment is providing permanent learning in history teaching. For example, a female teacher remarked that: *“One of the main problems of teaching history is memorizing the past in history education. Students do not remember facts and concepts after history exams. Teachers should use different teaching activities to solve this problem. They can use edutainment for permanent learning in history lessons”*. Another, male, teacher made a similar statement, and said that: *“Some students do not like history lessons because of the memorization. There is a tradition in Turkish history classrooms that history teaching should be based on memorization of names, dates and events of the past. As a result of this, there is no permanent learning in history lessons. If we use activities based on edutainment we can solve this problem and make a contribution to permanent learning in history lessons”*.

In addition to the above answers, Turkish history teachers indicated other benefits of using edutainment in history teaching, which are as follows: help learning by doing (6) and making history lessons enjoyable, interesting and concrete (4). The above explanations show that Turkish history teachers have information regarding some of the benefits of using edutainment in history education.

Turkish history teachers do not have adequate information about activities and materials used in edutainment

The history teachers who participated in the interviews did not have adequate information about the activities and materials used in edutainment in history classrooms. For example, one male teacher said that *“Students do not like history lessons because of abstract teaching. For this reason, history teachers should be supported by the activities and materials of edutainment. For example, educational visits and music can be used in history lessons, which motivate students”*. Another, female, student said that: *“The*

majority of students are not happy with history lessons. When we examine why they do not like history lessons, it seems that students are asked to be passive in history lessons. If we want to make history lessons interesting, we have to use different activities, one of which is edutainment". In addition, one male teacher stated that: "Actually I do not know what kinds of activities and materials can be used in history classrooms for edutainment. The education which we were given in the education faculty was not adequate, and we were educated like historians. For this reason, we do not have an adequate education in pedagogy". The above explanations indicate that Turkish history teachers do not have adequate information regarding what kinds of materials and activities can be used in teaching activities based on edutainment.

The Turkish history teachers have not been taught about edutainment in their history education

When the history teachers were asked whether or not they were taught about edutainment in education, it seems that all of them were not given any education regarding this topic. For example, one male teacher said: "We were not given any education about edutainment in education, nor the relationship between edutainment and history education, in the education faculty. The topics we were taught were mainly based on wars and agreements between the Turks and other states. In other words, the education which we received in university was mainly based on political history". A female teacher made a similar statement: "We were not given adequate pedagogical knowledge and skills in university. We were mainly given education about the political history of the Turks and other Middle Eastern states. For this reason, we do not have adequate knowledge or the skills to know how to use edutainment activities in history classrooms". In addition to above explanations, another male teacher said that: "... honestly I see myself as a historian rather than a history teacher, because were not given a detailed education in pedagogy. The education which we were given was mainly based on history, and we were not given any education in how to teach history. As a result of this, I do not have information about edutainment". These explanations show that teachers who agreed to the interviews were not given adequate education about edutainment. Furthermore, it also seems that teachers thought of themselves as historians rather than history teachers.

The great majority of Turkish history teachers do not use edutainment in history education

As history teachers were asked what kinds of teaching activities and materials based on edutainment they use in history lessons, it seems that the great majority of history teachers (8) do not use activities based on edutainment. A male teacher explained that: "We do not use activities and materials based on edutainment because we have a big curriculum to teach. If we were to use edutainment in history lessons, we would not complete the content of the curriculum". A female teacher made a similar statement: "Actually we do not have enough information or skills to know how to use edutainment activities in history lessons. Besides this, our history curriculum has many topics to teach. For this reason, we do not use edutainment in history lessons and mainly use 'chalk and talk". Another teacher said: "I use drama and traditional Ottoman music in my lessons to engage students. This music increases their motivation and makes history

lessons enjoyable in the eyes of the students". The data gathered from the semi-structured interviews shows that Turkish history teachers do not use teaching activities based on edutainment in history classrooms.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the semi-structured interviews, the major outcomes of this study can be summarized as follows. First, history teachers are not given any education about edutainment and the ways in which edutainment supports the teaching of history. Second, history teachers have adequate knowledge about the concept of edutainment, and they have information about the benefits of edutainment to some extent. Besides this, the great majority of history teachers do not have information about what kind of activities and materials based on edutainment can be used in history education. Finally, the great majority of history teachers do not implement edutainment activities in their teaching.

Although case studies do suffer from the problem of over-generalization, the results of this particular study suggest that the following recommendations can be made:

- Turkish history student teachers should be instructed about edutainment in education faculties.
- Turkish history teachers should be taught how edutainment supports history lessons through in-service education.
- Turkish history teachers should be required to carry out teaching activities based on edutainment.
- History teachers should be taught about the benefits of edutainment through in-service education.
- History teachers should be taught what kinds of teaching materials and activities based on edutainment can be used in history education.

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