



*Abstract of a presentation presented at the International Conference on
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**Turkish National Identity and "Otherness" in Turkish Schoolbooks
(An Analysis of Humanities and Social Studies Textbooks published in 2005-2010)**

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The research question that will be addressed in this lecture is if, and how, Turkish schoolbooks foster a sense of national identity, while at the same time encouraging a critical and cosmopolitan world-view with recognition of ethnic, religious, language and gender-related diversity. The current study of IMPACT-SE's Turkey Research Group has examined over 70 textbooks for grades 1-12 of the Turkish state school curriculum. The textbooks were analyzed according to the IMPACT-SE's criteria, which are based on UNESCO guidelines concerning education for peace and tolerance.

Before the curriculum reform of 2005, schoolbooks were characterized by nationalist indoctrination that glorified the state and urged martyrdom for the nation; this approach was largely driven by the Turkish government's fear of internal divisions and external enemies. I will argue that although considerable changes were made with regards to the instructional methodologies in the textbooks, they were not sufficient enough to encourage critical thinking – since the content of the curriculum did not undergo a significant transformation.

Turkey developed curriculum reform according to its policy of seeking membership into the European Union, and preparing for the information age. Despite such aims, findings suggest that it is not easy to reinterpret national identity in the Turkish context. Ethnic, religious and language differences still receive no mention. Thus, the history of Kurds and non-Muslim minorities is excluded from the 'legitimate' knowledge. On the other hand, the importance of Turkish as the only legitimate language is emphasized in almost every book. For instance, one social studies textbook presents a multilingual society not as one of cultural richness but rather as one suffering from political problems.

Some schoolbooks contain a unit entitled 'The Individual and Identity: Everyone has an Identity.' However, what counts as identities in the Turkish case are social roles such as being a mother, a student or a shopkeeper. Acknowledging national diversity and ethnic difference is still unthinkable. The new textbooks are far from endorsing an inclusive national framework. This type of national identity and patriotism in current textbooks promotes solidarity among the Turkic-Islamic population, while paying little attention to the responsibilities and moral obligations to the non-Turkish and non-Muslim groups, both within Turkey and abroad. Therefore, patriotism is characterized by an explicit ethnocentrism.

My conclusion is that the difference-blind approach of the textbooks proves that a pluralist stance – in line with intercultural education principles and EU norms – is still perceived as a threat to Turkey's allegedly shared national identity.