

## Historical Background of Foreign Schools in Turkey and Occupational Tendency of Their Graduates

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**Abstract:** In this article, the development of foreign schools during the Turkish history is briefly sketched. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail the Ottoman education system. Henceforth, throughout this article the following questions are discussed: How have foreign schools which generally reflect origin country's religion and culture (mainly Western ideology) developed in Ottoman Empire in which identified as an Islamic empire? why Turk sent their children to these schools and what was the impact of these schools on the Turkish Republic. 'Foreign schools' as a term means the schools that were started to be established at the beginning of the seventeenth century in the territory of Ottoman Empire by foreign religious groups from different states. Although foreign schools flourished very rapidly and are focus of some discussion, the issue has been underestimated in the academic literature. In this article, I aim to fill this theoretical gap. In that context, the development of these schools will be examined throughout the Turkish History. Two selected foreign schools' graduates (Deutsche-Schule-Istanbul (DSI) and De Saint Benoit (DSB) will be compared. Yet since both the DSI and De Saint Benoit were established in the nineteenth century, as one of the foreign schools established by non-Ottomans, particularly Westerners in the Ottoman Empire and today, still plays a significant role.

**Key words:** Foreign schools • Missionary Efforts • Turkish history • DSI • DSB

### INTRODUCTION

**Development of Foreign Schools Throughout the Turkish History:** Immediately after the conquest, Fatih Sultan Mehmed, the Conqueror, granted rights to the Genoese community of Galata, across the Golden Horn (1453) [1]. Because the Sultan granted some privileges to Catholics and Orthodox churches, they could continue to worship in their churches. Moreover, they could establish schools to train religious men and teach reading and writing to their children [2]. Later Venetians were also accorded commercial privileges in the Ottoman domains. During the sixteenth century the Ottoman sultans granted France and England capitulations, with the Habsburg following at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The eighteenth century witnessed a dramatic increase in

the number of foreign powers that applied for commercial privileges [3]. An important capitulatory privilege allowed foreigners to recruit Ottoman persons as interpreters.

Foreign religious groups<sup>1</sup> (missionaries) were allowed to establish schools in the Empire. The number of these schools particularly increased during Süleyman the Magnificent's era (1520-1566) [1] since he gave '*imtiyazat-ı ecnebiye*' (*Kapütülasyonlar*, capitulations)<sup>2</sup> to France (1535). Subsequently, a Capuchin missionary group comprised of three people came to Istanbul on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1626 and settled in a house next to St. Georges Church in Galata, July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1626. They began to teach the requirements of Christianity, administer the sacraments to patients, prisoners and the crew of French ships in the port. In addition to this, the number of Catholics increased and a school was established next to the church [4].

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<sup>1</sup>For the religious groups and their activities in the Ottoman Empire, [2, 8]

<sup>2</sup> *Imtiyazat* means commercial rights and privileges given to foreign people, class, institution or states [9].

The alliance of A.D. 1535 between Süleyman the Magnificent and Francis I against the Hapsburgs. The treaty consecrating this alliance paved the way for French predominance in commercial relations (14). Article 3 of the controversial first French capitulations of 1536 established the outlines of foreign consular jurisdiction. The French King was allowed to appoint an ambassador to the Porte and consuls in provincial Ottoman centers of trade. These officers had the authority of adjudicate all criminal and civil cases among French subjects in their place of residence according to their own customs [10].

Other foreign states gradually started to benefit from these capitulations in the eighteenth and earlier twentieth centuries as well [5]. These were the years of the great flowering of Protestant oversea missions, of Catholic reaction in kind and of the new imperialism which led governments and peoples of several European powers to support in the Near East schools purveying their own brand of culture [6]. Following, many religious groups financed by America, France, England, Italy, Prussia and Russia established their schools within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. Those schools were called ‘foreign schools’ (missionary schools)<sup>3</sup> and they were initially established as religious institutions that belonged to churches. However, as embassies gradually needed educational institutions for their staff’s children, they also launched to establish ‘*Elçilik Okulları*’ (missionary schools) next to these schools. As such, these schools remained foreign state institutions in the Empire [2]. As Allen [7] states, foreign schools are primarily thought to be connected with their nationality rather than with their religious denomination, despite the fact that the large majority of them are supported by religious groups. He also adds, “*this is explainable largely because secular governments frequently interfered on behalf of the schools from their own government and because the language used for the instruction in a foreign school was always that of the country from which the teachers came*” [7]. In this regard, these schools were established by religious groups from different countries and they gradually worked for the interest of those foreign countries<sup>4</sup>.

The first schools (Catholic) were organized by Jesuits. King Henry IV sent Jesuits to Istanbul to educate Catholic pupils as demanded by the church and the French envoy. Therefore, they established *De Saint Benoit* (1607) and gave courses in Latin and Greek grammar and mathematics. The school started to give French, Turkish and Modern Greek courses at the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century [11].

**Turks’ Reasons for Attending Foreign Schools:** As mentioned previously, educational institutions in the Ottoman Empire were institutionalized as Islamic institutions. Therefore, at first sight, one may think that

establishing such schools is not unusual for the Empire. However, one of the most important questions that should be answered is: *Why have Turks sent their children to foreign schools?*

The 19<sup>th</sup> century is an important period in the transformation of foreign schools throughout the Ottoman Empire. During the *Tanzimat* period, foreign schools mushroomed, particularly American missionary schools<sup>5</sup>. In 1840, there were only 6 schools with 84 students. By 1870 this number had increased to 233 schools and 5880 students [12]. Although these schools had Armenian, Bulgarian and Greek students initially, Turks began to be drawn to American schools because speaking English<sup>6</sup> resulted in good jobs [7]. Another reason for the increasing popularity of these schools among the Turks was the dissatisfaction of the people with the education offered in Turkish *mektep*<sup>7</sup>. Ba<sup>ç</sup>aran [13] argues in her dissertation that although the Ottoman government wanted to improve the state education system, it could not succeed. Therefore, due to the lack of good state schools, many people preferred the foreign schools, which contributed to their success.

According to Güven [14], as these foreign schools had become prominent, Turks preferred to send their children to these schools. These schools presented western ideology with their modern libraries, dormitories, courses and teaching styles. In addition, they became eligible educational institutions with financial aid and teacher support given by their countries [2].

The question of “what was the background of those Turkish parents” should also be raised as an attempt to find an answer to the question of why Turkish parents sent their children to these foreign schools. An analysis made in 1914 regarding the occupations of students in the French College St. Joseph in Istanbul shows that all came from upper-class groups. According to this analysis: Eight princes, 22 marshals and generals, 90 physicians, 20 lawyers, 20 engineers, 300 “possessors on income” [11] were among Turks who had been partly educated in foreign schools. Also, the parents had positions in the empire, either coming from heterodox religious backgrounds or elite families already considerably influenced by Western culture [6].

<sup>3</sup> Named also as ‘mission(ary) schools’ [6,8].

<sup>4</sup> See more information, Kentli, F. D. (2009) “Influence of Hidden Curriculum on Career Choice: The Deutsche Schule Istanbul”, VDM Verlag, Germany.

<sup>5</sup> [15, 16].

<sup>6</sup> Although French speaking was more popular in the 19th century, English gradually became important.

<sup>7</sup> This term was used later to simply mean ‘school’.

Table 1: Foreign schools in present Turkey

| Foundation year | Name of Foreign Schools in Turkey                  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1583            | Saint – Benoit French School                       |
| 1844            | Pangalaltı Notre Dame de Sion French Girls’ School |
| 1846            | Lycee Français Sainte Pulchérie                    |
| 1857            | Beyoğlu British Girls’ High School                 |
| 1863            | Robert College                                     |
| 1868            | Beyoğlu German School (DSI)                        |
| 1870            | Beyoğlu Saint Michel French School                 |
| 1870            | Istanbul Saint Joseph French School                |
| 1871            | Üsküdar American Girls’ College                    |
| 1878            | American Collegiate Institute (İzmir)              |
| 1880            | İzmir Saint Joseph French School                   |
| 1882            | Österreichisches St. Georgs-Kolleg Istanbul        |
| 1888            | Liceo Statale Italiano (Istanbul)                  |
| 1888            | Tarsus American College                            |
| 1934            | German School-Ankara                               |

**The Role of Foreign Schools in Turkish History:**

The second important question is: *What role did these schools play in Turkish history (from the late Ottoman till modern Turkish Republic)?* Although not having sufficient official statistics about the number of the schools, it is understood that foreign schools began to expand particularly by the 1700s and became widespread after 1850s in the whole Ottoman territory. By the eve of World War I, an official count put French Catholic schools in the

Ottoman Empire at 500, American schools at 675, British schools at 178 [6]. On the other hand, today, just fifteen schools (Table 1) are present in the region of Turkey.

According to Davison, foreign schools played a significant role in the westernization of Turkey. These schools continued their development with the help of their states. They became an example in terms of their method and system. Some prominent names that played an important role in Turkey’s political, social, economical and cultural life studied in these schools [18].

Foreign schools were also successful in presenting the importance of education to Ottoman statesmen and citizens. The statesmen started to focus on the schools. Foreign schools set a good example with their modern, qualified and improved educational level [2]. They provided foreign languages, history and technical sciences in their curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum of *Rushtiy*e and other schools established during the westernization of the Ottoman Empire was influenced [14].

Theologian Dr. James Barton [19] evaluates the effects of these schools as follows:

These modern educational institutions in Turkey are a mighty force in reshaping the life, thought, customs and practices of the people of that country. Men and women from these schools are taking leading positions there in the learned professions as well as in commerce and trade. Large numbers of former students in the mission schools are now prosperous merchants and businessmen in Europe and America. Through these men of modern ideas Western machinery and the products of our factories are finding their way into that part of the East in increasing quantities while the products of Turkey are in exchange brought to us. It is probably true, as has been frequently stated, that the money given from America for the establishment and support of American colleges in Turkey is far more than returned, with large interest, in the form of increased trade with that country.

The foreign schools had many tasks. One of them was to educate gifted and ambitious people who were needed to develop the relations between Europe and Ottoman Empire. Secondly, they wanted to educate groups who would be negotiators for the West in the East [20]. Although some foreign Catholic schools, in particular the French, had already existed for many years in the empire, the rapid growth of foreign schools came in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were the years of the great flowering of Protestant oversea missions, Catholic reaction in kind and the new imperialism which led governments and peoples of several European powers to support Near East schools purveying their own brand of culture [6].

**Background of German Schools:** When considering Germany’s attempts to establish German schools, one should examine German expansionist policies that were not as rapidly developed as that of England, France and the US. They gradually established schools after the middle of the nineteenth century. Lutheran missionaries<sup>8</sup> organized the schools that instructed in German. Yet their activities were not as extensive as that of other nations, since at that time (pre-1870) there was no political unification (a common nationality) in Prussia (Germany). After Germany was unified in 1870, it aspired to spread its influence mostly throughout Mesopotamia and Palestinian. According to Allen [7] Germany’s imperialistic schemes, which began toward the close of the nineteenth century, had made Turkish friendship and co-operation an important part of the “Berlin to Baghdad” [21] venture. The friendship bore fruit in a reorganization of the Turkish army along German lines and in concessions for various

<sup>8</sup>All German schools in the Ottoman Empire: Mutlu [8].

Table 2: Percentages of DSI's graduates' careers between 1950-89. (These data were obtained from the book "Who is who?" published by the DSI's graduates alumni (*Istanbul Alman Liseliler Derneği*) [26]. Title of 'Total' gives the number of both female and male graduates and title of 'Total %' gives the percentages of their career choice

|         | Engineer |      | Business |      | Medicine |      | Social |     | Art |     | Literature |     | Socot |     | Sciot |     | Not uni |   |
|---------|----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|--------|-----|-----|-----|------------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|---------|---|
|         | M        | F    | M        | F    | M        | F    | M      | F   | M   | F   | M          | F   | M     | F   | M     | F   | F       |   |
| 1950-54 | 8        | 3    | 4        |      | 2        |      | 1      |     |     | 3   | 1          | 3   | 2     | 1   |       |     |         | 1 |
| 1955-60 | 129      | 6    | 5        | 8    | 5        | 4    |        |     | 1   |     |            |     |       | 4   | 1     | 1   |         |   |
| 1960-64 | 32       | 5    | 15       | 5    | 5        | 4    |        | 1   | 1   | 2   | 1          | 6   |       | 2   | 1     | 1   | 2       |   |
| 1965-69 | 51       | 8    | 11       | 11   | 8        | 6    | 1      | 4   |     | 2   |            | 6   |       | 2   |       |     |         |   |
| 1970-74 | 32       | 7    | 15       | 7    | 12       | 7    | 1      | 1   |     |     |            | 1   | 2     | 2   |       |     |         | 1 |
| 1975-79 | 22       | 10   | 20       | 14   | 6        | 4    |        | 2   |     | 1   |            | 1   | 2     |     |       |     |         | 2 |
| 1980-84 | 29       | 7    | 16       | 9    | 1        | 4    | 1      |     | 1   | 1   |            | 1   | 4     |     | 1     |     |         |   |
| 1985-89 | 19       | 6    | 11       | 3    | 2        | 1    | 4      | 1   |     |     |            | 1   | 2     | 3   | 2     |     |         |   |
| TOTAL   | 322      | 52   | 97       | 57   | 41       | 30   | 8      | 9   | 3   | 9   | 2          | 19  | 12    | 14  | 5     | 2   | 6       |   |
| TOTAL % | 65.7     | 26.2 | 19.8     | 28.7 | 8.3      | 15.1 | 1.1    | 4.5 | 0.6 | 9.5 | 0.4        | 7.0 | 2.4   | 2.0 | 1.0   | 1.0 | 3.0     |   |

NOTE: 490 male and 198 female graduates of the DSI

enterprises, chief of which was the railroad from Istanbul destined for Baghdad. Lutheran missionaries also offered to establish schools especially in Bursa, Konya, Ankara, Sivas, Samsun, Trabzon, Adana, Mersin, Antep, Diyarbakir, Mardin, Musul, Basra, Damascus, Trablusgarp and Yafa [22]. It has already been elucidated that those centers that were targeted by Germany were those populous areas around the Baghdad railway line 'die Bagdadbahn' [23]. The abovementioned offer to establish schools was considered necessary to contribute to the interests of Germans in the Near East and would have been beneficial for financial institutions in this area (Near East).

According to Ortaylı [24], one of the prominent historians in Turkey, Germans did not consider those schools as a tool of religious propaganda; moreover, they rigorously abstained from such usage and considered them as institutions that serve for the expansion of financial and political interests. Active German Schools in Istanbul after 1914 were: Beyoglu German School, Bogazici Bebek German School, Yedikule German School, Haydarpasha German School.

The number of schools officially supported by the German government was two since the beginning of 1930. The number of students was 1.127 in 1931 and 1.007 in 1932-33 [25]. A second German School was also established in Ankara, May 1934 for the education of the German staff in the German Embassy.

As time passes, the demand for quality education at these schools increase. Moreover, most of them have

developed a unique, distinguishing feature. That is why it has become possible to surmise what the majority of the graduates of different schools do; what kind of careers they are likely to choose. For example, most of the graduates of the DSB become engineers; whereas graduates of the Saint Benoit become economists and so on. In short, each foreign school contributes to Turkey in a different manner and field.

**Historical Trends in Occupational Status of Foreign Schools' Graduates: the Case for DSI and DSB:**

Historical trends in occupational status of foreign schools' graduates have naturally differed. However, it is believed that it is vital to know whether we observe any identifiable pattern in the career choice of the graduates of foreign schools. If yes, why? For this study, DSB and DSI are chosen for evaluating the trends of foreign schools graduates. The reason for selecting these schools is that the former is the first established one and the latter, differs than the others from career choice perspective, which has a prominence that was established not for missionary reasons but financial.

When looking at the career choice of formal graduates of the DSI, it is seen that there is a trend over time for Engineering to be the preferred career choice<sup>9</sup>. In that context, Table 2 below gives the percentages of graduates' career choices for a five-year time interval. According to this data, engineering, economy, medicine, social, art, literature, social others, science others and not university (*not uni*) are selected as the main career choice

<sup>9</sup> The time periods of interviewees in the DSI: Four 1954-62, one 1955-69, one 1956-64, three 1959-66, one 1960-72, two 1965-74, one 1969-77, two 1973-82, one 1977-86, one 1982-90. Four of them are women because there is no difference with the others

topics. Similar occupations are united under one topic. Accordingly, ‘engineering’ topic represents engineering, architecture and informatics. ‘Economist’ topic represents marketing and management. ‘Medicine’ topic represents medicine doctors, pharmacy and dentist. ‘Social’ topic represents law, international relations and political science. ‘Art’ topic represents art. ‘Literature’ topic represents German language and literature, English language and literature. When similar occupations are not found, they are written under the topics of social others and science others. ‘Social others’ (*socot*) topic represents the careers like tourism, translation, education. ‘Science others’ (*sciot*) topic represents the careers like physics, chemistry. If one does not attend or complete university, they are written under ‘not uni’ topic. ‘Not uni’ topic represents the graduates who did not attend university.

As given in Table 2, engineering is the most selected career at each five-year interval. Also in these intervals, natural science oriented occupations (engineering, economist and medicine) cover the main part of career choice. When considering all graduates, the same characteristics are seen. Engineering, 47 percent, ranks first among the characteristics and 81 percent of the graduates chose natural science oriented occupations (engineering, economist and medicine).

Also in these intervals, natural science oriented occupations (engineering, economist and medicine) cover the main part of career choice. On the other hand, as given in Table 2.2, there is a difference between male and female graduates in choosing their career. While ‘engineering’ is the most selected career at each five-year interval among male graduates, it is difficult to say the same for female graduates because they prefer ‘business’ as much as ‘engineering’ and sometimes, even more than

‘engineering’. In other words, 65,7 percent of the male graduates prefer engineering; whereas 19,8 percent prefer business.

However, the percentage of business selection of female graduates (28,7 percentage) is more than males and engineering comes next with 26,2 percentage among female graduates’ choices. However, among female graduates’ choice, business is preferred (28,7%) over engineering (26,2%). In sum, it could be said that twice as many male graduates choose ‘engineering’ as a career than females. On the other hand, more female graduates choose ‘business’ than males. These findings also raise further questions, for example, as to the gender breakdown that will be shown by the statistics explored in greater detail in further studies.

The significance of this observation is further emphasized by comparison with career choice patterns of French school graduates. As one takes account of other foreign schools, the data given above becomes more important since the DSI’s graduates tend to choose ‘engineering’ as a career choice more often than the graduates of other foreign schools. DSB’s graduates’ career choice is given as an example for comparison with that of the DSB’s in Table 3. Unlike the Table 2, Table 3 gives the percentages of all graduates’ careers from 1950s until 1990s. When comparing male DSI’s graduates with de Saint Benoit’s, it is noticed that more than half of the DSI’s graduates (68,3) have chosen ‘engineering’ as a career, as compared with 25,1 percent of the French school’s graduates’ choice of engineering as a career. While 25,1 percent of the French school’s graduates have chosen ‘engineering’ as a career). It means, twice as many of DSI’s graduates have tended to choose ‘engineering’ as a career than the French school’s graduates. As a matter of fact, the French school’s

Table 3: Percentages of the DSI’s and a French school graduates’ career choice between 1950s-1990s. (These data were obtained from the book ‘Who is who?’ published by the DSI’s graduates alumni (*Istanbul Alman Liseliler Derneği*) 1950s-1990s and Association De Saint Benoit (French school) (Saint-Benoit’ İlar Derneği) 1950s-1990s [27]. The questions were asked immediately after their graduation from their high school. Title of ‘Total’ gives the number of both female and male graduates and title of ‘Percentage’ gives the percentages of their career choice

|                 | Engineer   |      | Business |      | Medicine |      | Social |     | Teacher |      | Housewife | TOTAL |
|-----------------|------------|------|----------|------|----------|------|--------|-----|---------|------|-----------|-------|
|                 | M          | F    | M        | F    | M        | F    | M      | F   | M       | F    | F         |       |
| DSI             | 322        | 52   | 97       | 57   | 41       | 30   | 8      | 9   | 3       | 9    | 6         | 634   |
| De Saint Benoit | 104        | 22   | 201      | 82   | 39       | 10   | 47     | 18  | 22      | 43   | 137       | 725   |
|                 | Percentage |      |          |      |          |      |        |     |         |      |           |       |
| DSI             | 68.3       | 31.9 | 20.5     | 34.9 | 8.7      | 18.4 | 1.7    | 5.5 | 0.6     | 5.5  | 3.6       | 100   |
| De Saint Benoit | 25.1       | 7.0  | 48.6     | 26.2 | 9.4      | 3.2  | 113    | 5.7 | 5.3     | 13.7 | 43.9      | 100   |

Note: 413 male and 312 female pupils from the De Saint Benoit

male graduates have mostly chosen 'business' as a career (48,6%). Also, when female DSI's graduates are compared with Saint Benoit's, there is a great difference between both graduates. While DSB's female graduates mostly prefer 'business' (34,9%) and 'engineering' (31,9%) as careers with almost the same percentage, DSB's female graduates mostly prefer 'housewife' (43,9%), then comes 'business' with 26,2 %.

## DISCUSSION

When the reasons for establishing the DSI are examined, indicated above by Ortaylı as "Germans did not consider those schools as a tool of religious propaganda; moreover, they did severely abstained from it and considered them as institutions that serve for the expansion of financial and political population", it is seen that there is a consistency between the aims and results of the DSI. Even so, particularly female graduates choose 'business' and 'engineering' more than DSB's female graduates. That means, graduates choose mostly labor-oriented professions and more attend the universities. Even the former -labor-oriented professions- are related to the Protestant (particularly Calvinist) ethic, the latter -attending university- can be also considered as one of the requirements for performing good works. On the other hand, it is hard to claim that religion ideas and values have divorced from their education mission because it inherently shaped the institutions.

This tendency relates to Weber (28) who wrote that capitalism evolved when the Protestant (particularly Calvinist) ethic influenced large numbers of people to engage in work in the secular world, developing their own enterprises and engaging in trade and the accumulation of wealth for investment. In other words, the Protestant work was a force behind an unplanned and uncoordinated mass that led to the development of capitalism. This idea is also known as "the Weber thesis".

On the other hand, male graduates' of DSB choose 'engineering' as a third choice and the percentage of female graduates who choose 'engineering' is slightly lower than becoming a 'housewife'. Within the context of this result, it can be concluded that studying 'engineering' is not as popular when comparing with DSI male graduates. And also, it can be said that, many female graduates of DSB do not prefer to attend university and would rather become housewife even if some of them choose 'business' as a career. However, 'engineering' is not as popular as other careers.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that each foreign school contributes to Turkey in a different manner and field. For example, while the DSB has a reputation to enable its graduates to be an engineer later, de Saint Benoit has mostly produced economists.

As mentioned previously, this study is a historical one that has been performed with the data found until 1990. It is not possible to reach current data. The received data present a determined period within the context of published book. It is recommended that due these kinds of books will be expanded and explained in detail, it would be easy to answer the question in which area(s) the graduates of these schools have been contributed to Turkey.

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