



## A BRITISH EXPERT IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MODERN PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN TURKEY: JOHN DUNCAN MCINTYRE

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### **Abstract:**

This research examines the role of British physical education expert John Duncan McIntyre in establishing a modern understanding of physical education in Turkey after the proclamation of the Republic. The study evaluates the innovations implemented in the field of physical education and sports in line with the modernization movements carried out in the early years of the Republic, and reveals that foreign experts were utilized, particularly to meet the need for trained physical education teachers. The research was prepared using the historical case study model, a qualitative research method; data obtained from the Presidential State Archives, periodicals, and various libraries were evaluated using content analysis. According to the research findings, physical education activities in the period from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic were mostly centered on gymnastics, but could not develop sufficiently due to a lack of teachers, facilities, and materials. In the Republican era, however, physical education became an important part of modern education policies, and foreign experts were invited to Turkey accordingly. Within this context, John Duncan McIntyre was appointed as a teacher in the Physical Education Department of Gazi Education Institute, under the influence of the British Council. It has been determined that McIntyre not only worked as a teacher but also contributed to the Turkish physical education system through his scientific studies. His works, particularly those on play education and team sports, have been translated into Turkish and used as teaching materials in institutions training physical education teachers. In conclusion, the research reveals that John Duncan McIntyre made significant contributions to the establishment of a modern understanding of physical education in Turkey and was one of the influential foreign experts in the early physical education policies of the Republic.

**Keywords:** physical education, Türkiye, John Duncan McIntyre, Republican period

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## 1. Introduction

The development of physical education and sports in the Ottoman Empire followed a similar trajectory to that in Europe. A concept and practice of physical education, identified with gymnastics, emerged through military schools. The first instance of physical education being included as a subject in the school curriculum in the Ottoman Empire was the inclusion of European-style gymnastics in the curriculum of the Military Academy (Mekteb-i Harbiye), opened by Mahmud II in 1835, under the name "Riyâzet-i Bedeniyye" (Physical Exercises) in 1863. The inclusion of gymnastics as a subject necessitated a textbook, leading to the translation of relevant books. When M. Martino, an Italian-born teacher at the Military Academy who was promoted to lieutenant and renamed Sadık a few months later, stated that classes could not be held without a textbook, Colonel Hacı Mustafa Hami translated and published a book titled "Gymnastics Instruction Manual" from French. In addition to this instruction manual, Mustafa Hami Pasha also translated the "Atlas of Gymnastic Instruction Manual," which included tables illustrating gymnastic apparatus, their measurements, and gymnastic movements, as well as Schrebber's book "Risale-i Riyazet-i Bedeniyye-i Tıbbiye" (Treatise on Medical Physical Exercise). Furthermore, Article 23 of the 1869 General Education Regulations made gymnastics lessons compulsory for all secondary schools (Güven, 2007).

Galatasaray High School, which opened in September 1868 and was then called "Mekteb-i Sultâni" (Sultan's School), modeled itself after French high schools. Gymnastics was a separate subject in the curriculum of those schools. Compulsory gymnastics classes were held twice a week in the mornings. Monsieur Curel was the gymnastics teacher at Galatasaray High School between 1868 and 1871. Later, other foreign and Turkish teachers also served at Galatasaray High School. The gymnastics practices at Galatasaray High School and the foreign and Turkish experts who taught there were pioneers in physical education during this period (Güven, 2007).

However, the inadequacy of sports facilities and qualified sports instructors necessary for the practice and spread of sports during this period prevented physical education activities from reaching the masses. While physical education and sports activities were created through private efforts, they remained limited to football matches played between a few sports clubs in large cities, sometimes with teams brought in from Europe. During this period, activities such as wrestling, tennis, boxing, rowing, equestrian javelin, horseback riding, horse racing, archery, gymnastics, fencing, and swimming were also included, albeit on a smaller scale. Sports organizations were not approached according to modern standards or as part of the state's nationalist policy. In general, sports were practiced haphazardly and without discipline during the late Ottoman period (Güven, 2007).

Although some measures have been taken to include physical education classes in schools, the necessary infrastructure has been insufficient. A school to train physical education teachers has not been established. Physical education and sports have been carried out both inside and outside schools amidst deficiencies. Especially with the

inclusion of gymnastics in school programs, the need for teachers was met by employing some non-Muslims (Akcan, 2015). In addition to gymnastics, some institutionalization efforts were made to expand scouting activities, and although their organization took on a military-oriented training form, a solid, well-established structure could not be achieved. To meet the need for printed materials, translations and original works related to gymnastics were produced (Kahraman, 1995).

The proclamation of the Republic had a significant impact on the existence and development of sports and athletes in Turkey (Güven, 2007). While the Republic represents a fundamental change in mentality, at its core it signifies modernization and a solid intellectual framework to achieve it. Following the proclamation of the Republic in Turkey, many innovations were implemented in line with Atatürk's principles and reforms to modernize Turkish society and the institutions of the new Turkey, and to bring them to the level of developed nations. The field of education was at the forefront of these innovations. Atatürk knew that a true revolution in Turkey's national education policy could not be achieved merely by opening schools and improving programs and methods. With the "Law on the Unification of Education," adopted on March 3, 1924, the day the Caliphate was abolished, educational institutions came under state control, were attached to the Ministry of National Education, and the way was paved for the establishment and strengthening of unity in education. With the same law, madrasahs were first attached to the Ministry of National Education and then completely closed. In order to bring the Turkish education system to the level of modern nations, the alphabet reform was carried out on November 1, 1923, replacing the Arabic script with the new Turkish alphabet, and the education and teaching system was established based on national, secular, rational, realistic, scientific, and empirical methods (Palazoğlu and Bircan, 1995).

As a result of these innovations, it was realized that one of the most important conditions for establishing a solid foundation for the education system is the necessity of training qualified teachers, and work has been done in this direction. While some Turkish educators were sent abroad, foreign education experts were also invited to Turkey, and their studies, conferences and seminars, reports and suggestions were taken into consideration, and work was carried out in this direction (Yıldız and Güven, 2018).

Experts invited to Turkey for this purpose were not only involved in education; many foreign experts, technical staff, and academics were also invited in the fields of physical education and sports. While some of these experts were invited to train physical education teachers, others were utilized in the development of sports branches, the construction of sports facilities, and preparation for international competitions and tournaments (Yıldız and Güven, 2018). This research, in particular, aims to identify how Turkish-British relations have shaped physical education and sports policies, offering a different perspective on Turkish-British relations.

## 2. Material and Methods

This research was primarily conducted using historical case studies, a qualitative research method. Historical case studies, through inductive methods, provide a holistic description and analysis of characteristics limited to a specific time and place, from a regional perspective (Meriam, 2009).

A case study is also a methodological approach that involves in-depth examination of a limited system using multiple data collection methods to systematically gather information about how that system operates and functions (Chmiliar, 2010). Merriam (2013) defines a case study as an in-depth description and examination of a limited system. On the other hand, according to Creswell (2007), a case study is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher examines one or more limited situations in depth over time using data collection tools (observations, interviews, audiovisuals, documents, reports) that include multiple sources, and identifies the situations and themes related to the situation. A case study is a method in which a single situation or event is examined in depth longitudinally, data is collected systematically, and what happened in the real environment is examined. The results reveal why the event occurred in that way and what should be focused on in future studies.

### 2.1 Data Collection Tools

This research employed multiple data collection methods and implemented them as follows:

- Relevant literature and archival documents were examined. For this purpose, relevant periodicals located in the National Library were reviewed.
- The research generally sought to access data through primary sources, and all data sources were meticulously examined. For this purpose, the General Directorate of State Archives of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, the Library of the Council of Education, the Library of the Turkish Revolution History Institute, the archives of the Prime Ministry and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, and university libraries were reviewed.

### 2.2 Analysis of Data

In light of the data obtained in the research, content analysis was conducted along with frequency and percentage distributions and oral history studies. Content analysis began with the examination of the transcribed data. The aspects deemed prominent and significant in the examined data were identified and noted, and categories and codes were also obtained. During the data collection and analysis processes, care was taken to ensure the data were internally meaningful. Accordingly, the consistency between the aim of the study, the data collection instrument, and the data analysis was continuously considered.

### 3. Results and Discussion

From the very beginning of the Republic of Turkey, Great Britain aimed to enlighten its own statesmen, to establish a roadmap for contacts with Turkish officials, to guide them, and to create a suitable environment for making forward-looking comments and analyses. To this end, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the British Council were established in Turkey (Karakuş, 2006; Yalman, 1943).

The British Council (BC) was established to promote Britain through cultural, educational, and technical cooperation. Its presence in Turkey dates back to 1939. The BC followed a different program for Turkey than its general approach. It should be noted that Turkey was one of the largest regional organizations within the BC's Middle East structure, and in November 1940, 28-year-old Michael Grant was appointed as its representative in Turkey (Istanbul office opened in 1940; 1994; Donaldson, 1984; British Council). The BC demonstrated sensitivity to natural disasters in Turkey. (BC, Republican People's Party Documents Catalog (CHPEK), Fund Code: 490.01, Location No: 1586.473.1).

BC sought to establish close relationships with administrators in Turkey. They communicated with Turkish officials at the organization's events in Ankara. In particular, the Minister of National Education, Hasan Ali Yücel, preferred to contact Michael Grant, a BC member with whom he had close relations, directly rather than through the embassy. Indeed, Yücel, at the opening of a book exhibition, did not want embassy representatives to attend and instead invited BC officials from Turkey (Donaldson, 1984).

Interest in BC and its officials was also shown by the Republican People's Party (CHP). The party's General Secretary invited BC staff to party ceremonies to which diplomats from no other nationalities could attend/were not invited (Donaldson, 1984). Following BC's proposal to appoint British professors to language education programs at Istanbul University, some members of the organization took up positions at universities in Turkey (Donaldson, 1984).

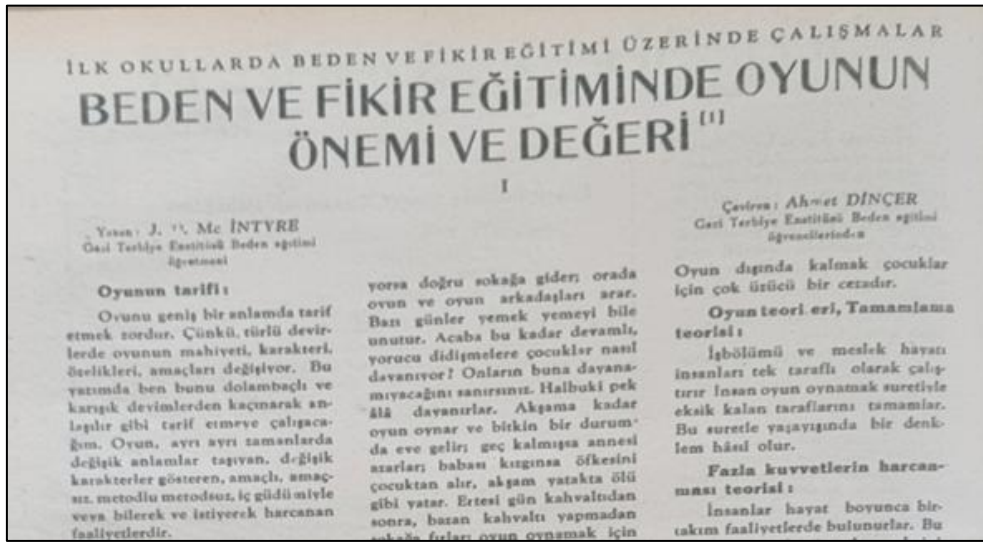
This communication was not limited to English language teaching, and during this period, the appointment of John Duncan McIntyre, a member of the British Council, as a physical education teacher in the Physical Education Department of Gazi Education Institute was also considered. For this purpose, an opinion was requested from the General Directorate of Higher Education of the Ministry of National Education, and as a result of the evaluation, a decision was sent to the Prime Ministry on February 14, 1947, stating that he could work (Presidential State Archives (CDA), Fund Code: 30.18.01.02 Location No: 113.25.5).

At the same time, the Ministry of Interior and the General Directorate of Security were consulted regarding John Duncan McIntyre's ability to serve in Turkey, and on March 26, 1947, approval was sent to the Prime Ministry stating that he could serve in Turkey (Presidential State Archives (CDA), Fund Code: 30.18.01.02 Location No: 113.25.5). Following the favorable opinions received from the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Interior, the Council of Ministers of the time deemed it

appropriate to appoint John Duncan McIntyre as a Physical Education Teacher in the Physical Education Department of Gazi Education Institute, and his appointment was made according to Law No. 788 (Presidential State Archives (CDA), Fund Code: 30.18.01.02 Location No: 113.25.5).

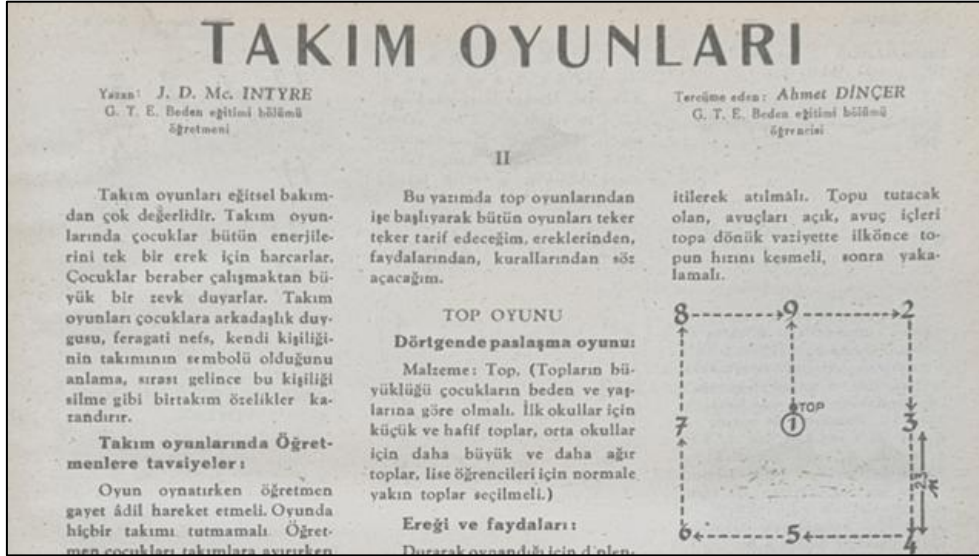
The Gazi University Faculty of Education, which forms the foundation of Gazi University, was established in 1926 under the leadership of Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the Middle Teacher Training School to train modern teachers. In 1929, it moved to the current Gazi University Rectorate building along with the Ankara Male Primary Teacher Training School, and its name was changed to "Gazi Middle Teacher Training School and Education Institute". Between 1929 and 1948, departments of Art, Physical Education, Music, Education (Pedagogy), French, English, and German were established. In 1947, its name, "Gazi Teacher Training School and Education Institute," was changed to "Gazi Education Institute" (History of Gazi University Faculty of Education, 2024). John Duncan McIntry is also seen as one of the foreign physical education experts who came to Turkey as a result of these modernization movements, and this is a reflection of the policies carried out to establish modern physical education in Turkey.

Bu amaçlarla Türkiye’de görev yapan John Duncan Mc Intry sadece Gazi Eğitim Enstitüsü Beden Eğitimi Şubesinde sadece beden eğitimi öğretmeni olarak görev almamış ayrıca yapmış olduğu bilimsel çalışmalarla modern beden eğitimi için gerekli olan bilgi, yöntem ve materyal eksikliklerinin giderilmesi içinde kullanılmıştır. John Duncan Mc Intry tarafından yazılmış ve Gazi Terbiye Enstitüsü Beden Eğitimi Şubesi öğrencilerinden Ahmet Dinçer tarafından Türkçeye çevrilen “İlkokullarda Beden ve Fikir Eğitiminde Oyunun Önemi ve Değeri” makalesinde oyunun tanımı, içeriği ve oyunun teorileri yer alırken, bu makale beden eğitimi öğretmeni yetiştirmek için ders materyali olarak kullanılmıştır (İlköğretim Dergisi, 1945, sayı, 178-180).



**Document 1:** Article titled "The Importance and Value of Play in Physical and Intellectual Education in Primary Schools," written by John Duncan McIntry and translated into Turkish by Ahmet Dinçer, a student of the Physical Education Department of Gazi Education Institute (İlköğretim Dergisi, 1945)

Furthermore, information about team games is included in the article "Team Games" written by John Duncan McIntyry and translated into Turkish by Ahmet Dinçer, and this article was also used as teaching material for training physical education teachers (Primary Education Journal, 1945, issue, 178-180).



**Document 2:** Article titled "Team Games" written by John Duncan McIntyry and translated into Turkish by Ahmet Dinçer (İlköğretim Dergisi, 1945)

John Duncan McIntyry was a significant figure in the establishment of modern physical education in Turkey, contributing both as a teacher and through his scientific work. While precise information regarding the duration of his involvement in physical education in Turkey is unavailable, his membership in the British Council before and after his official appointment in Turkey in 1947 ensured continuous communication with the region.

Although there is information suggesting that a physical education expert named "Mackie" also came from England during the same period, no details regarding this teacher's work, contributions, and impact could be found (Altunya, 2020).

#### 4. Recommendations

Future studies may focus on the contributions of foreign physical education experts invited to Türkiye during the Republican period through comparative historical analyses. In particular, the influence of British educational and cultural institutions such as the British Council on Turkish sports and physical education policies should be examined in greater detail. Archival studies concerning Gazi Education Institute and early Republican educational reforms may provide new findings regarding the institutionalization of modern physical education in Türkiye. Furthermore, John Duncan McIntyry's educational approaches and academic studies may be re-evaluated within the framework of contemporary physical education and sports pedagogy. It is also recommended that

digital archives and oral history studies be developed in order to preserve the historical memory of physical education in Türkiye and to contribute to future interdisciplinary research.

## 5. Conclusion

The modernization process of physical education and sports in Türkiye constituted an important part of the broader social transformation policies implemented following the proclamation of the Republic. The Republican administration identified modernization not only in political and legal fields but also in education, culture, and sports as one of its primary objectives. Within this framework, physical education was regarded not merely as a field contributing to physical development, but also as an essential educational component for raising disciplined, healthy, productive, and modern individuals. However, one of the major problems during the early Republican period was the shortage of qualified personnel, modern teaching materials, and expert instructors capable of implementing contemporary physical education approaches. Therefore, while the government sent Turkish students and educators abroad for professional training, it also invited foreign experts from developed countries in order to institutionalize modern physical education in Türkiye.

The findings of this study demonstrate that British experts played a significant role in the modernization of physical education in Türkiye. In particular, the cultural and educational activities carried out by the British Council contributed substantially to the arrival of British specialists, and these collaborations had direct effects on the Turkish educational system. In this context, the appointment of John Duncan McIntyre should not be considered merely as an individual assignment, but rather as a reflection of the early Republican educational policies and the broader framework of international cooperation.

According to the archival findings, John Duncan McIntyre's appointment to the Department of Physical Education at Gazi Education Institute was the product of a planned modernization policy implemented by the Ministry of Education and other state institutions. The detailed administrative and security procedures conducted prior to his appointment reveal the importance attached by the Republican administration to foreign expert recruitment. This situation also demonstrates that physical education was viewed not simply as a sporting activity but as a strategic component of national education policies.

An examination of McIntyre's contributions indicates that he was not only a physical education instructor but also an influential figure in establishing the academic and pedagogical foundations of modern physical education in Türkiye. His studies on play education and team games became important instructional resources in teacher training institutions after being translated into Turkish. The use of these materials in physical education teacher training programs illustrates that McIntyre was not only a practitioner but also a producer of knowledge and educational methodology. In this

respect, his contributions played an important role in transforming physical education in Türkiye from a practice-based activity into a scientific and pedagogical discipline.

The study also reveals the transformation of physical education from the Ottoman period to the Republican era. During the Ottoman period, physical education was largely limited to gymnastics practices in military schools and failed to spread widely due to deficiencies in teachers, facilities, and instructional materials. In the Republican era, however, physical education became a systematic state policy, was expanded throughout schools, and was reconstructed as an integral part of modern education. In this transformation process, the contributions of foreign experts played a critical role in the institutionalization of physical education in Türkiye.

Nevertheless, several limitations emerged during the research process. The limited availability of archival documents concerning foreign experts and the lack of detailed information about some individuals indicate the need for further comprehensive studies. In particular, the inability to obtain detailed information regarding the British expert referred to as “Mackie” in the sources demonstrates that some foreign specialists working in the early Republican period were not adequately documented. This situation highlights the necessity for more extensive archival research on the history of physical education in Türkiye.

In conclusion, John Duncan McIntyre was one of the significant foreign experts who contributed to the development of modern physical education in Türkiye. His activities in teacher training at Gazi Education Institute, his academic studies, and his efforts to introduce modern physical education methods significantly influenced the shaping of early Republican physical education policies. The international transfer of knowledge and expertise carried out within the framework of the Republic’s modernization goals made important contributions to the institutionalization of the Turkish physical education system and its adaptation to contemporary standards. Therefore, McIntyre’s contributions should be evaluated not merely as the activities of an individual educator, but as an important reflection of the modernization and educational policies of the early Turkish Republic.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Author(s)**

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