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DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD TO PLURALIST DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY*

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Abstract

By the republic era, it could be said that the most important reform, we may call "milestone in the field of education", is the law of Tawhēd -Tadrīsāt, enacted in the 3th of March, 1924 to remove the maktab - madrasah predicament from the system of education. After the date it was enacted, the fourth article of the mentioned law urging the officials to educate religious scholars in a divinity faculty and to separate schools for training Imams was a starting point for the discussions that were to be argued over the religious education. Although there was no such a direct enforcement within the text of the law regarding to the shutting down of the madrasah schools (schools which were once the touch stone of the Ottoman education system), they were still shut down and later a divinity faculty was established along with the religious vocational schools in different cities of Turkey. After this date, many regulations came into existence in regard to the religious education and religion classes. However, the institutions of religious education established according to the regulations until 1939 were shut down and the religion classes in the syllabus were gradually removed. For the state abandoned the religious education of its formal education system, a need for religious education emerged by time but

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the absence of it raised the tension of the society against the state. By the end of the Second World War and the transition process to the pluralist democracy in Turkey provided the environment to people to enunciate their desire for the state to take over the religious education and organize it under the formal education. In the light of this situation, many regulations were done from 1946 to 1960. Within the frame of this article, the period of time witnessed massive amount of developments in religious education is chronologically probed and summarized via descriptive method.

Keywords: Religious Education, Religious Lessons, Religious Teaching, Religious Education Institutions, Religious Education History.

Çoğulcu Demokrasiye Geçiş Sürecinde Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi Alanındaki Gelişmeler

Öz

3 Mart 1924 tarihinde ilan edilen Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu'nun uygulama boyutu Cumhuriyet Tarihi boyunca devam eden tartışmaların çıkış noktası olmuştur. Kanuna dayandırılarak medreselerin kaldırılması ardından açılan yeni din eğitimi kurumlarının da bir müddet sonra kapatılması ve din derslerinin de aşamalı olarak eğitim programlarının dışında bırakılması din derslerini uzun yıllar eğitimin bir parçası olmaktan çıkarmıştır. Çoğulcu demokrasi fikrinin ortaya çıkardığı ifade hürriyeti ve bunun sosyal ve siyasi hayattaki yansımalarının bir sonucu olarak din dersleri yeniden gündem konusu haline gelmiştir. Bu makalede Türkiye'de çok partili hayata geçişin sağlanmasıyla birlikte din dersleri konusunda yaşanan gelişmeler ve din eğitimi veren kurumların geçirdiği yeniden yapılanma süreci kronolojik bir yöntemle sunulmuştur. Makale çerçevesinde 1924'ten 1946 yılına kadar olan süreçte din dersleri konusunda yaşanan gelişmeler kısaca anlatılmış, ardından 1960 yılına kadar olan süreç incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Eğitimi, Din Öğretimi, Din Dersleri, Din Eğitimi Kurumları, Din Eğitimi Tarihi.

Summary

The Ottoman education system, grounded on the religion of Islam and Islamic culture, had got into a transformation in 17th century by the wake of military, political, and cultural reforms. Due to the understanding of

the integration of the religious courses with the natural sciences, modern educational institutions were established. However, for - as it was seen - the theoretical incompatibleness between the religious courses and the natural sciences, a predicament was brought on stage over the distinction between Maktab and Madrasah. Especially after the Tanzīmat period, this predicament gained power. By the republic era, it could be said that the most important reform, we may call "milestone in the field of education", is the law of Tawhēd - Tadrīsāt, enacted in the 3th of March 1924 to remove the maktab - madrasah predicament from the system of education. By the enactment of the law of Tawhēd - Tadrīsāt, the Minister of National Education of the period shut down the madrasah schools in 11th of March 1924. However, the closing of the madrasah schools all of a sudden, such an implementation was not actually something that the text of the law itself urged. This brought the execution branch of the time into question along with the discussions referring to the abuse of the law. From this date on, pursuant to the law, a divinity faculty was established under the University of Dārulfunūn and religious vocational high schools were opened in 29 cities. Along with the teacher's training schools, primary and secondary education schools attained courses of religion in their syllabus. However, the divinity faculty and these schools were shut down for various reasons and the courses of religion were removed from the syllabus of the formal education.

As of 1945, the Second World War ended. Pursuant to the developments in the national and global stage the policy of Turkey got into a transition process and influenced by the inclination seen in the global stage towards democratization. The single party regime, adopting a policy that left the religion out of the daily life kept the religious education out of the formal education for long years and this situation raised the reaction of the society. Benefiting from the democratic environment caused of the World War, the society started to enunciate that it had the certain wish to make the religious education a part of the formal education. While the establishment of Democrat Party (DP) in 1946 was a huge step on the way of democratization, this situation brought rivalry in the politics and the wishes of the society became more on the agenda of the country's policy. After the Second World War until 1950's, in order to gain the favor of the society, Republican People's Party (RPP) started to take reformist steps in regard to the religious education but in the election of May, 3, 1949 Democrat Party took most of the votes and thus the ruling of RPP was over.

At the time of DP, one of the first things done was to bring back the religion class into the syllabus of the primary schools. Imām Ḥatīb Courses launched in 1948 were brought into question for it was said to be inefficient though these courses continued their education. In 13 of September, 1951, for the mentioned problem, on the leadership Tevfik İleri, the minister of National Education, these Imām Hatīb Courses were transformed into the Imām Hatīb Schools of four years education. The education of religion in secondary schools was brought on the agenda of the country but for the media and the discussions in the assembly witnessed some objections the religion classes was delayed to be added in the syllabus of secondary schools. In V. Council of National Education dated on the 4th of February, 1953, teacher's training schools attained the class of religion for 9th and 10th grades as mandatory one hour in a week. The first graduated students of the divinity faculty (at the time from Ankara University) were to teach these classes. Religion classes were legislated for the secondary schools and added their syllabus by a circular letter in August 13, 1956, referring to the first and the second grades of the secondary and of this sort schools. The option of the parents to object to had these religion classes by a petition continued.

Before 1960's, Higher Islamic Institutions were established which could be accounted as a progress in religious education for higher education. In June of 19, 1959, Higher Islamic Institutions were legislated to be established and in November of 19, 1959 the first Higher Islamic Institution of four years education was founded in Istanbul.

Religious education becoming one of the subjects of pedagogy nowadays was seen to be of political concerns rather than pedagogical concerns in those years. The period that witnessed the abolishment of all the religion classes enabled Turkish society to cross checking of religious lectures which is justified in scientific way nowadays. The process gone through in religious education taking no place in formal education necessitated to seek a satisfactory answer to the question of "why religious education?".

Introduction

The Ottoman education system, grounded on the religion of Islam and Islamic culture, had got into a transformation in the 17th century by the wake of military, political, and cultural reforms. Due to the understanding of the integration of the religious courses with the natural sciences, modern educational institutions were established. However, for - as it was seen - the theoretical

incompatibleness between the religious courses and the natural sciences, a predicament was brought on stage over the distinction between Maktab and Madrasah. Especially after the Tanzīmat period, this predicament gained power (Doğan 1997). By the establishment of the republic, the traditional way of education left its place to the modern, secular education system and this new system supporting the reforms strived to get the society adapted to the reforms (Eskicumalı 2003). In this sense, by the republic era, it could be said that the most important reform is the law of Tawhēd - Tadrīsāt which removed the maktab - madrasah predicament from the system of education. After the date it was enacted, the fourth article of the mentioned law which urges the officials to educate religious scholars in a divinity faculty and to separate schools for educating Imams has been a starting point for the discussions that were to be argued over the religious education (Akyüz 2010: 330). From this date on, pursuant to the law, a divinity faculty was established under the University of Dārulfunūn and religious vocational high schools were opened in 29 cities. Along with the teacher's training schools, primary and secondary education schools attained courses of religion in their syllabus. However, the divinity faculty and these schools were shut down for various reasons and the courses of religion were removed from the syllabus of the formal education. This religious education and the religion class occurred in the time of singleparty regime. The breakage comes with the pluralist democracy and religious education, once again, takes place on the agenda of educational institutions (Öcal 1998).

Within the research, it is aimed to elucidate the presence of the religion class and its status between particular periods of time along with the developments bringing discussions through a descriptive method. The main reason of time period limitation within the frame of the research between 1946 and 1960 is that the most intensive discussions in regard to the religion class in Turkey correspond to such period. For the lack of comprehension of the past causes, the lack of comprehension of today, this period of time becomes more of an issue. Within this period of time, the world came out of a war and the outcome of this situation became rather a global impact. While the world states proceeded to more democratic orders, Turkey could not ignore the impact of this stream. The transition from single-party regime to pluralist democracy became a necessity for Turkey. By this transition, along with the discussions regarding the rights and liberty, the right for religious education was in the spotlight. The ongoing discussions, though it has been transformed, keep their foundations in the mentioned period of time. As a symbol of transition to the

pluralist democracy, Democratic Party ceases its actions in 1960 and this has become another main reason for determining the period of time.

The Method of the Research

For the research, the method of Documentation (Karasar 2010) was utilized scanning the written documents and the research is formed by the summarization technique of the qualitative contextual analysis. The purpose of the abstraction is to give a portrait of the main material showing the core of the documents (Mayring 2011).

An Overview towards the Religious Education in Turkey from 1924 to 1946

By the enactment of the law of Tawhēd - Tadrīsāt, the Minister of National Education of the period, has shut down the madrasah schools in 11th of March 1924 (Öcal 2011). However, the closing of the madrasah schools all of a sudden, such an implementation was not actually something that the text of the law itself urged. This has brought the executive branch of the time into question along with the discussions referring to the abuse of the law (Doğan 1999: 237). A lot of discussions were made in media on the law of Tawhēd $-Tadr\bar{\imath}s\bar{a}t$ propounding that it was enacted to eradicate the religious education and that the new system was against the religion. However, developments such as the establishment of divinity faculty and the religious vocational schools have shown a contradictory picture with the comments asserting that the state was developing a view against the religion. Vasıf Çınar, who was the person commended to shut down the madrasah schools says: "...In Turkey, as of now, there will only be one (system of) nurture, one maktab (school) and one education" (Doğan 1999). This statement has identified the central idea behind the policy of education of the era. The idea alleging that the Turkish National Education aimed to educate people urging them to have the same worldview and intended to do it through the modern educational institutions under one roof was considered as the main reason of the closing of the *madrasah* schools. Bringing the minority schools under the Ministry of National Education was another development supporting the monotype policy of education (Arı 2002: 189). At first, the purpose of the unification of the education was a subject that the members of Grand National Assembly of Turkey were unanimous on. However, the discussions emerged after the closing of the *madrasah* schools

showed that the members of the assembly had actually interpreted such unification in different ways. Some members of the assembly, possible to think that, assumed that the *madrasah* schools would be within the borders of this unification and that they continue to exist while some others were considering the removal of these institutions by the unification of the education (Bilgin 1996). After the closing of the madrasah schools, pursuant to the fourth article of the law of Tawhēd - Tadrīsāt, Dārulfunūn divinity faculty was established to train religious scholars. The syllabus of this newly founded faculty was prepared through a dynamic religious perspective adding various courses. However, pedagogical formation could not find a place in the syllabus. This new syllabus was criticized in different platforms in different senses (Doğan 1999: 261). In 1929, a reform project was created by *Diwan* Dārulfunūn but for it was considered as "insufficient", Ma'ārif Wakālah rejected the project. Thereupon, in order to produce reforms in this sense, Albert Malche, a Swiss educationist was invited to Turkey. Malche, in his 66 pages report, offered to transfer some of the courses of Divinity Faculty into the Faculty of Arts shutting down the Divinity Faculty (Doğan 1999: 267). The numbers of the students in the Divinity Faculty dropped away year by year starting from 1924 until 1933 and finally left its place (divinity faculty) to the institution of Islamic Sciences under the Faculty of Arts. This institution had the courses of History of Kalām, History of Mysticism, Literature of Iran, History of Islamic Sects and History of Religions but in 1936, the institution was shut down (Parmaksızoğlu 1996: 25).

By *Tawhēd - Tadrīsāt*, religious vocational schools (called *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools) were opened to train people who will fulfill the religious services in the society. In 29 cities, these imām ḥatīb schools were established. Initially, 29 schools were opened yet in the school year of 1924-25 Edirne, Ödemiş, Hopa, Şavşat and Niğde *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools were shut down and the number decreased to 26. In 1925-26, Erzurum, Eskişehir, Urfa, Amasya, Antep, Maraş, Artvin and Izmir *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools were also closed though Of and Akşehir *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools were put into service thus the total number of the schools decreased to 20. In 1926-27, except the *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools of Kütahya and Istanbul, all the schools were shut down. When we come to the school year of 1929-30, these two *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools were dissolved (Baltacı 1993). These institutions were closed due to the justification that there was a decrease of the society's interest and the number of the students participating in these institutions. There were different reasons for the decrease in the interest to these institutions. By the state newly established, new working fields were

opened and this situation took the attention of the youth decreasing the interest of them against the religious services. Besides, the support of the state to the schools giving general and technical education by means of scholarship, accommodation, and different opportunities attracted the youth and drew the young generation to these institutions (Parmaksızoğlu 1996: 25).

After the declaration of *Tawhēd - Tadrīsāt* Law in April 23 1924, Second Commission of Science decreased the length of mandatory education to five years from six years (Ergün 1982: 62) and in these schools, two hours long class "Qur'an and Religion Class" found place in the syllabus of primary schools (except the first grade). In 1926, the Religion Class was given starting from the third grade as an hour in a week (Akyüz 2010: 348). In December of 1929, the Board of *Tālim* and *Tarbiya* decided to remove the mandatory exams from the religion class. By October 1930, the religion classes were rearranged by a law and it became a selective class for only the fifth-grade students whose parents wished their children to take the class as 30 minutes in a week (on each Thursday afternoon). This class in which only the central schools could implement was totally abrogated from the syllabus in 1939 (Tavukçuoğlu 1996). The mandatory religion class in the country schools (Köy Okulları) was totally dissolved in 1939 (Parmaksızoğlu 1966: 61).

In secondary schools' syllabus the class of religion took place only one hour per week (for the first years), in the second years of high schools, the class did not take place at all. In the school year of 1927-28, the religion class was selective, chosen by the students' parents yet as for the year of 1930-31 this religion class was totally removed from the syllabus. According to the program dated 1924, religion class was added to the syllabus of the five years long Male Teachers' Training School and Female Teachers' Training School for the first and second grades as two hours in a week but in 1931 religion classes were removed out of the school programs (Yücel 1938).

The closing of the Divinity Faculty and the Imām Ḥatīb Schools also the dropping away of the hours of the religion classes in the syllabus finalized with the removal of these classes at the time of single- party regime. From that point up until the time of pluralist democracy, there was no religious education in Turkey. This situation caused variant discussions and quarrels in the following years of single- party regime.

The reforms executed by the new-established state in the religious education right after the tradition of Ottoman education lasted for centuries has brought the comments and discussions that the state perceiving the secularism was to be against the religion in general and Islam, in particular, being intolerable

against the religious references. But when the ideological basis of the era and the newly established state is considered, it could be seen that the reforms executed were to restrict the political and jurisdictional aspects of Islam rather than the Islamic belief (Duman 2015). The new regime took steps to reduce the religion into a more individual aspect and narrowed its field of influence interpreting secularism in such a sense. This mindset took place constituted the background of the actions taken.

The absence of the religious education and the educated religious people has created a blank felt by the society and the reflection of this absence in social term was to be seen throughout the long years. The society intended and tried to find an alternative to provide the need they possessed and this situation created a chaotic, uncontrollable area. In the following years, one of the reasons for religious education getting back to the agenda of the state was the effort to have the control of this chaotically proceeded progress (Uyanık 2013).

The Transformation in the Religious Education from 1946 to 1960

As of 1945, the Second World War ended. Pursuant to the developments in the national and global stage the policy of Turkey got into a transition process and influenced by the inclination seen in the global stage towards democratization. The single-party regime, adopting a policy that left the religion out of the daily life kept the religious education out of the formal education for long years and this situation raised the reaction of the society. Benefiting from the democratic environment caused of the World War, the society started to enunciate that it had the certain wish to make the religious education a part of the formal education. Following the discussions in which brought light into the moral crisis the young generation gone through by the time (as seen) due to the absence of religious classes (Ergin 1977: 1702), statements prioritizing the moral education to religious education were put on the agenda of the government and in the Second Council of National Education (done in February 15-21 1943) discussions on the necessity of the education of morality took place. In the council, the favored understanding of morality was discussed in a practical sense while the concept of religious morality was not mentioned neither in the sessions of the ethics commission nor plenary sessions thus no arrangements were executed in this regard (Parmaksızoğlu 1966: 26-27).

While the establishment of Democrat Party (DP) in 1946 was a huge step on the way of democratization, this situation brought rivalry in the

politics and the wishes of the society have become more on the agenda of the country's policy. One of the first steps taken in regard to religious education by Republican People's Party (RPP) is the declaration of "The guidelines of the religious education", published by Minister of National Education in July 1947. In this declaration, we saw that the private teaching institutions could add the religion class in their syllabus (Ulus Newspaper third of July 1947).

VII. Congress of Republican People's Party in November 17 1947, witnessed one of the most important discussions done until that day about religious education. This is of the fact that the implementations executed until that Congress was in question among the members of the party and a quarrel emerged within the party. Although the Congress was not concluded offering a progress, an enactment regarding the religious education in Turkey, it definitely played a role initiating the discussions came afterwards (Ayhan 2014: 107).

Following VII. Congress of RPP, in December 13 1948, Ministry of National Education opened *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools, six in total: Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara, Seyhan, Erzurum, and Diyarbakır (Ulus Newspaper 14 December 1948). The *imām ḥatīb* schools got modified into the courses rather than a school (as an institution) going opposite of the report of the commission of religious education.

After the opening of these courses, a circular letter was sent to the governorates about religious education by the minister of National Education Tahsin Banguoglu. In the circular letter, it was announced that in the schools the class of religion was to selectively be given as of February 15 1949 according to some stipulations. These stipulations: Religion classes were to be given in the schools and the teachers of each school were to teach but these classes should not drop away the hours of the other classes, it was selective and had no mandatory place whatsoever. The parents of the students are burdened with writing their decision in selecting the class to the management of the school (Ayhan 2014: 131).

In the government of RPP, the other progress in religious education is the establishment of Ankara Divinity Faculty under Ankara University. In third of May 1949, a legislative proposal was introduced in the assembly and in fourth of June 1949 the proposal was accepted and the decision to establish a divinity faculty under Ankara University was determined (Official Report Magazine of Grand National Assembly of Turkey 1949: 284).

After the long years of the rule of Republican People's Party when a clear attitude shown to religious education, the main reason behind the re-

evaluation of the religious education in formal sense, while not the only reason indeed, was the drawback to keep the rule in its party. Especially when we examine the discussions done in the media of the time, it is seen that within the party there were those who considered the formal religious education as a necessity. The legitimacy of the state was seen in danger due to the potential of the movements teaching religion in informal ways. This brought anxiety regarding to the future of the state. In addition to that, a generation in which had no religious education had an inclination towards communism, a political view that impacted the world from its core and this situation also drew the attention of the state (Uyanık 2013). This shows that the steps RPP took in religious education were not independent of the former view. It is seen and of possibility to say that in the background of the actions taken was the aim of preventing the religion to be politicized.

New Government and Religious Education

After the Second World War until 1950's, in order to gain the favor of the society, RPP started to take reformist steps in regard to the religious education but in the election of May 3 1949 Democrat Party took most of the votes and thus the rule of RPP was over (Feroz 2010: 54).

At the time of DP, one of the first things done was to bring back the religion class into the syllabus of the primary schools. After the opinion of the 98 percent of the parents who wished their children to have selective religious education demanded the class to be mandatory and in November 4 1950 Ministry of National Education announced that the parents who do not want their children to have religion class should write their opinion to the management of the schools at the beginning of the new school year. These children were freed from the religion classes and their exams. Taking one hour from Turkish classes, the religion class was put on the schedule (Zafer Newspaper November 5 1950). This new status of religion class was not fancied by different groups and variant discussions emerged.

Imām Ḥatīb Courses launched in 1948 were brought into question for it was said to be inefficient though these courses continued their education. In September 13 1951, for the mentioned problem, on the leadership Tevfik İleri who was the minister of National Education these *Imām Ḥatīb* Courses have been transformed into the *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools of four years education (Dinçer 1974: 97-98).

The education of religion in secondary schools was brought on the agenda of the country but for the media and the discussions in the assembly witnessed

some objections the class of religion was delayed to be added in the syllabus of secondary schools. In V. Council of National Education dated February four 1953, teacher's training schools attained the class of religion for 9th and 10th grades as mandatory one hour in a week. The first graduated students of the divinity faculty (at the time from Ankara University) were to teach these classes (Ulus Newspaper February 18 1953). Religion classes were legislated for the secondary schools and added their syllabus by a circular letter in August 13 1956, referring to the first and second grades of the secondary and of this sort schools. The option of the parents to object to have this religion class by a petition continued (Ayhan 2014:141; Kizilabdullah ve Kizilabdullah 2016: 424).

Before 1960's, Higher Islamic Institutions were established which could be accounted as a progress in religious education. Some groups in the society complained that the students of *Imām Ḥatīb* Schools had no place to apply (in the sense of higher education) after their graduation (Ulus Newspaper December 28 1958). Following this sort of discussions in June 19 1959, Higher Islamic Institutions were legislated to be established and in November 19 1959 the first Higher Islamic Institution of four years education was established in Istanbul (Ayhan 2014: 229).

Conclusion

After the proclamation of Republic, Turkey has got into a period which the policy did not change quite a long time. However, between 1946 and 1960 radical changes in the policy of the country took place. These changes in policy have brought transformations in the field of education, especially in religious education. After the enactment of the law of Tawhēd - Tadrīsāt, the gradual isolation of education programs from religion classes has brought many problems within the process. Social, psychological and spiritual needs were of the main reasons for the society to support the transition process to pluralist democracy. Transition to the pluralist democracy by the year of 1946 has brought a competitive environment in policy and the party in power began to seek solutions in a limited framework about the problem of religious education which was demanded by the society. Following the pluralist democracy, in 1950, the rule passed to a different group. Developments about religious education progressed at a large extent during ten years of office of the party came into power. Transformation process in the field of religious education between these years has been manifested in a panoramic form within the article.

The young generation of the republic age, for it experienced a system of education in which religious education found no place for long years has brought the problem of straying from the religious and spiritual values. While the education went in a more secular aspect, an important part of the new generation brought up generalized the secular attitude from the education to all aspects of life; the other group of people diverged totally into the radical point in religious sense. It is seen that the experiences the Turkish society - in which its religious identity played a major role in its sociological structure for centuries - had gone through in religion were rigid and it caused a rigid reaction as well. Today, it is possible to encounter with the tracks of the same mindset/view. The ideas and the approaches escalating around the main idea that the state has, since the declaration of the republic, always been against the religion have come today sometimes very harshly and sometimes digressively. This situation has brought the idea that the state could never provide a solid and reliable religious education being under the control of the state. People who have such a view, they are in favor of different religious references and this has been a fact we encounter today. It is also possible to say the same thing to those we can encounter with, those who advocate the idea that in a secular state the state should not get involved with religious education. Today, the addition of the selective religious classes to that of mandatory one into the syllabus had grounded this view and triggered new discussions.

Religious education which became one of the subjects of pedagogy nowadays was seen to be of political concerns rather than pedagogical concerns in those years. The period of time that witnessed the abolishment of all the religion classes enabled Turkish society to cross-checking of religious lectures which are justified in the scientific way nowadays. The process gone through in religious education taking no place in formal education necessitated to seek a satisfactory answer to the question of "why religious education" (Tosun 2005: 92). In this sense, it seems suitable to say that the politic developments done at the age on religious education make sense the nowadays pedagogical justification in religious education.

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