NEGLECTED ASPECT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: SEARCH FOR MEANING

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Abstract

According to the studies in the field, modern people are inclined to move away from traditional religion tenets in the process of sense-making. For this reason, if educators aim to help modern people in the course of their meaning search, a religious education approach encompassing cognitive and experimental aspects of sense-making needs to be developed and philosophical and Sufi attitudes play paramount roles in the process of establishing this approach. The current study, which is based on a body of related literature, relies on four main theories and conceptual frames within the boundaries of psychology and pedagogy. Hence, the article firstly deals with the necessity of cognitive consistency and experimental tranquillity in the course of building sense-making as it is considered to be a special issue in logotherapy. Then, the meaningful learning concept in cognitive phase of sense-making and peak experience concept in experimental phase are examined. Within the boundary of this study, some concepts of Islamic Sufism and Kelam (Islamic Theology) such as tahqiq (faith by verify), taqlid (faith through imitation), hikmah (wisdom) and ma'rifat (knowledge), inabe (turn to God with sincere repentance), sakeenah (tranquillity) and khushu (sincerity) are explored from the perspectives of their potential contributions to Sufism and philosophical attitudes in religious education.

Anahtar kelimeler: Religious Education, Search for meaning, Sufi and Philosophical Attitude in Religious Education, Islamic concepts of sense-making

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DİN EĞİTİMİNDE İHMAL EDİLEN BOYUT: İNSANIN ANLAM ARAYIŞI

Öz

Din ile insanın anlam arayışı arasındaki güçlü ilişkiye rağmen günümüz din eğitiminin insanın anlamlandırma süreçlerinde yeterince yer bulmadığı çeşitli araştırmacılar tarafından dile getirilmektedir. Bunda din eğitimcilerinin insanın

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anlamlandırma süreçlerine ilişkin geleneksel ve modern psikolojik birikimi ve insanın anlam inşasında bilişsel ve duyuşsal güçleri birlikte değerlendiren perspektif eksikliği göz ardı edilemez. Bu makalenin amacı "din eğitimi süreçlerinde insanın anlam arayışına cevap vermede anlamlı öğrenme ve bireysel tecrübeyi dikkate almanın önemini ve yöntemini incelemektir." Yöntem olarak alan yazın incelemesinin kullanıldığı araştırmada, psikoloji ve eğitim-bilimsel açıdan dört temel kuram ve kavramsal çerçeveye dayanılarak düşünsel arkaplan yapılandırılmıştır. İnsanın anlam ihtiyacı, bu ihtiyacın karşılanma süreçleri ve anlam inşası konularında Wiktor Frankl'ın "logoterapi kuramı" referans alınmıştır. İnsanın anlam inşasında bilişsel süreçlerin rolünü anlamak için David Ausubel'in "anlamlı öğrenme"; psikolojik süreçleri anlamak için ise Abraham Maslow'un "doruk deneyim" ve Charles Glok'un "dini tecrübe" kavramsallaştırmalarından yararlanılmıştır.

[Genişletilmiş özet makalenin sonundadır.]

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Introduction

It is possible to consider, as a phenomenon, the history of education and the history of humanity to be equal. Since its existence, man has both educated and received education in a formal or an informal way. As collective communities emerged and flourished, the need for systematic education processes which are run in accordance with certain aims has increased. Therefore, the aim of education mostly varied according to the related society's lifestyle, political structure, belief system, needs, aims and geography in which the society lives. For example, Huns and Gokturks, who lived in harsh environmental conditions, were determined to raise Alp (brave) warriors as their main purpose of child education. Doris, who were minority lords in Sparta, formed their education according to military purposes to protect the social structure in which indigenous dwellers were forced to work as slaves. On the other hand, in Athens, the city which experienced partial democracy, it became prominent to raise people who could maintain democratic dialogues and use the language effectively (See. Aytaç, 2012; Akyüz, 2013).

As Socrates attributes task to the education in terms of finding solutions for people's problems, throughout the Middle Ages in which a theocentric understanding influenced every aspect of life, man both in the East and the West had been educated primarily for the sake of God. Since 19th century, as a result of economic and political reflections of modernism, man has been educated as part of economic and political aims. The concepts of "Production" and "Good Citizen" dominantly shaped the aim of education. In this period, ironically, German idealists Fitche and Hegel couldn't avoid sacrificing individual for community and ideologies in terms of appointing an

aim for education even though they trace Kant who is the representative of an understanding of "human beings should be treated as an end in themselves and not as a means to something else" (Kant, 1999, p. 59-68).

After the Second World War, the idea of determining an aim for education by accepting the human being as a tool for economic and political expediencies had been seriously criticized (See. Fromm, n.d. p. 90-97). Yet, even in postmodern era it is hard to say that signs of a paradigm shift of determining an aim for education by evaluating man as a subject are strong. Moreover, at this point it has been asserted that humanity is in crisis as they sway between becoming meaningless and fundamentalist (Walach, 2015, p. 187-188). In the 1960s whereas it was emphasized on the unlimited freedom known as a reaction to moulder understanding of modernism, traditional meaning frames and senses of community were worn out. After 1980s, fundamentalist understandings which take simple directions as the baseline, push meaning into the background, prioritize monotony and categorize man has become apparent.

If, as Aristotle remarked (2012, p. 10), "the thing that is pursued only for its own sake is truly valuable", we have to educate human being according to his own needs to be able to claim that we value human being. Then we need to firstly ask this question: 'What does a human being as a subject really need?' There may be many possible answers to this question. Yet, the most accurate answer would be "search for meaning and need for constructing a meaningful frame for himself which are now neglected by most of the education systems". Meaning is the most important power that keeps man up in any condition. Human being can solely survive as long as he can make sense of himself, existence and things happening around the universe. For that reason, Viktor Frankl (2016) revealed "man is a being in search for meaning" (p. 174).

Schools as the heart of collective memory should guide children and youth on their journey in search for meaning. To construct the meaning together in terms of cognitive (philosophical) and affective (experimental) aspects by taking advantage of individual and social experiences should be one of the main aims of education. On the contrary, at the present time various theories' perceptions of human that belong to modern times, damaged the school's function of constructing meaning together and replaced it with an evolutionist and eliminative understanding that races student cruelly (Stern, 2009, p. 161). When we look at the issue from the point of religious education, the case is the same. Religious education is rather far away from being a field in which human being is able to ask his questions on his mind about the purpose and aim of life freely and seek for answers. More effort is put forward to accepting stereotyped answers in

order to reach success both in school and life. In fact, as Bahadır mentioned (2017), "to ask question about the purpose of life ultimately turns into asking question about God" (p. 46). Thus, it must be ideally the religion lesson that gives the youth the chance of constructing a frame of meaning.

There is an important, worthy-to-investigate relation between religion and search for meaning. This is because religion is "an expression, a manifestation, of not only man's will to meaning, but of man's longing for an ultimate meaning (Frankl, 2014, p. 114)". Throughout the time, religion functioned as a sense-making assistant for man. It served a methodology to humanity by dealing with existence entirely. Even though research does not give an explicit idea with respect to emergence of a positive relation between man's search for meaning, a meaningful life and religiousness, it is understood that there is a positive correlation between a meaningful life, search for meaning and inner religiousness (See. Bahadır, 2017, p. 84-85). It shows that a religious education approach that considers individual's cognitive and affective meaning frames during religious education and training processes may guide an individual's search for meaning.

With a contrary attitude, religious educators often miss the point that they can greatly contribute to humans' effort of search for meaning since they centre dogmatic and modal structures to the detriment of faith's aspect of meaning and experience. Therefore, lots of believers especially children and youth who are sensitive during their period of development alienate religious traditions; conceptualizations such as "believing without belonging, an ordinary god, and cultural believer" (Davie, 1990, Davie, 1993; Wright, 2000) arise. When the religious education doesn't help their efforts to make sense of world, the youth plunge into the quest on their own in which they act bravely and may waste their lives with temporary feelings. However, religious educators can contribute more to their search for meaning by recognizing the difference between the state of religion before it enters into human's life (objective religion) and the state of religion when it starts to come to life in human's life (subjective religion).

Frankl who admits man's search for meaning as his primary energy of existence, and upon this admittance, he forms a theory of mental health and asks the question of (2016, p. 164) " If life has a meaning or some people thinks that they found it, is it possible to transmit this meaning or mediate people to find their own meanings?" In this research, we want to ask this general question by adapting it into a special field and search for answers. Is it possible to transmit the experience of religion regarding the meaning of life to the people, which is the most deep-rooted experience of humanity, related to making sense of life or can religion contribute to mankind on

constituting their own meaning frames? On which aims does the religious education focus on and how does it do that?

Some researchers say that man's search for meaning as a primary aim of education is not considered often at today's education and religious education processes (Hay and Hunt, 2000; Wright, 2000; Davie, 1999, Davie, 2005). From this point of view the aim of the article is "to analyze the importance and the method of considering meaningful learning and individual experience in order to answer the man's search for meaning in religious education processes". The study, which will be carried out based on a body of literature, is relied on four main theories and conceptual frames in terms of psychology and pedagogy. Viktor Frankl's "theory of logotherapy" has been taken as a reference on the subjects of human being's need for meaning, processes in which this need is supplied and construction of meaning. In this study, it has been benefited from David Ausubel's theory of "meaningful learning" to understand role of cognitive processes on human being's construction of meaning, and from Abraham Maslow's theory of "peak experiences" and Charles Glock's concept of "religious experience" to comprehend psychological processes.

A. Man and Search for Meaning

In psychology, there are several arguments on how to explain the man's source of life energy. While Freud explains it with taking pleasure and Adler explains it with striving for superiority, Viktor Frankl, who criticized psychoanalysis cult despite coming from it, considers that man's source of life energy lies in search for meaning. According to Frankl (1992, p. 105-106) man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives. There are some authors who contend that meanings and values are nothing but defence mechanisms, reaction formations and sublimations. However, no one wants to live or die only for the sake of defence mechanisms. A human being who looks at the life from a dedicated meaning frame lives or even dies for the sake of this meaning.

According to Frankl (2016, p. 53), living is nothing but being questioned and trying to answer the questions of life with all of our being. Every human being who shoulders the responsibility of life is the object of this questioning and feels as if he has to answer it. On the other hand, human being who turns a deaf ear to life tries to run away from the questioning and get rid of his innate responsibility by giving evasive replies to those questions. For that reason, the expression of questioning the meaning of life is in fact wrong because it is not us who ask the questions. On the contrary, we are the ones who are questioned. It is us who has to answer those

questions. Trying to answer the questions related to the meaning of life is nothing but to shoulder the responsibility of life.

Searching for the meaning of life is neither arbitrary nor optional for man. It is an obligatory act. This obligation stems from two reasons: (i) Man is born as intended to do this and (ii) whether he wants or not he is objected to the questions concerning the meaning of life since the question of "what is the meaning of life?" is an existential question that is directed to man in every field of his life. As each situation in life represents a challenge to man and presents a problem for him to solve, the question of the meaning of life may actually be reversed (Frankl, 2016, p. 17; Frankl, 1992, p. 113). Therefore, it is the man himself who needs to answer the questions. No one else can answer them instead of him. Man can construct the meaning of his life as he gives his own answers to those questions he faced throughout his life.

The process of gaining meaning is not a simple structuring that is over and done instantly or accomplished by doing with some positive experiences. Each experience has either definite or indefinite effects on individuals (Bahadır, 2017, p. 61). Man constructs his subjective meaning as a pattern based on single events. Each situation which is experienced addresses a different question to him regarding the meaning of life. Each answer that is given by the person himself by benefitting from individual and social experience contributes to the subjective meaning frame related to the meaning of life. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning (Frankl, 1992, p. 106). Educator/religious educator can and should facilitate the process of recognize the questions asked by life and to find their answers. It is not possible to generate a general answer key for each question.

According to Frankl (2016, p. 16, 75), man has an opportunity to produce meaning in every situation he faces. In the most general sense, man's production of meaning reveals itself in 3 main levels. First, man gives meaning to his existence at that time and place by doing anything, acting, presenting a work or creating. Secondly, he can give meaning to his life when he experiences anything based on feelings, for example by loving god, nature, art, human being etc. Thirdly, in cases of destiny which are unalterable, irreversible - cases that are not possible to realize meaning by using first and second options - he can make sense of life by a struggle which stands to destiny and hope.

It is not possible to mention valid-for-all absolute pattern for the meaning of life. The meaning of life is a phenomenon that differs from person to person, case to case. It is not static. The meaning is reproduced by the man in every moment in relation to various situations. There is no such thing

accepted as the best move that is valid for all situations for a chess champion. Different moves function as the best one depending on a particular situation in a game, array of chess pieces and counter moves (Frankl, 1992). Man does not reach the meaning in every situation based on absolute laws of logic. He reaches the decision and feeling of meaning or meaninglessness considering his own existence, state of being (Frankl, 2016, p. 99). Hence, man's effort of sense-making is not a mere rational act but a process in which rational, affective and existential experiences, which are inherent in human being, operate together.

Two kinds of frameworks regarding the meaning of life can be mentioned. The first one is the normative meaning that is constructed on a social level. Those are relatively objective metanarratives regarding how the man understands himself and existence, beliefs, aims and purposes of human being. The second one is a sense-making that appears right after by the individuating the meaning on social level by an individual and applying it to special situations. The meaning on social level appears as situational meaning in life and in the case of crisis. Park (2011, p. 405-406) called the first as "global meaning" and the second one "situational". On the one hand, social sense-makings form relatively objective value pool of community. On the other hand, they are individuated by the man who explains the events and phenomenon, developing attitudes and behaviours by taking advantage of the value pool.

The ultimate meaning beyond social meaning for man could be mentioned. Ultimate meaning goes beyond the comprehension ability of single individuals (Frankl, 2016, p. 17). Cultural heritage has some answers based on transcendent experiences regarding the ultimate meaning. Those answers are carried forward via institutions like religion and education. Therefore, education supports effort of individual of with regard to constructing meaning based on social meaning. The critical point of this activity is to find a way in order to help an individual to find what meaningful indeed is without manipulating him (Meydan, 2015, p. 46-47). However, institutional sense-making never correspond the same thing in the personality of humankind and the community. Community and individual shape their own popular meaning (See. Crawford and Rossiter, 2006, p. 30-59). When considerate is taken into account that postmodernism makes the process of sense-making multi polar and difficult, it becomes harder to realise.

Meaning experience does not show up suddenly on human being. It can be acquired only after a tough struggle (Bahadır, 2017, p. 15). Contrary to what is believed, search for meaning presents to human being not a peaceful pool but a tough parkour which ends with a powerful existential

energy. As Frankl (1992) said: "...man's search for meaning may arouse inner tension rather than inner equilibrium. However, precisely such tension is an indispensable prerequisite of mental health. There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life. There is much wisdom in the words of Nietzsche: He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how" (p. 110). When the man cannot live this experience as required, there grows an increasing boredom against life and living (Bahadır, 2017, p. 137).

It can be understood that a person should do the act of constructing the meaning of live with his own being. Someone can help him to do that but cannot do it instead of him. As Frankl (2014) mentioned: "The meaning of life cannot be prescribed like a medicine" (p. 101). Phenomenon, based on intention like belief and love, could not be realized by external loadings or orders. The meaning of life cannot be found on order as love and belief do. This kind of phenomenon related to intention only come to existence together with a proper content and subject. The only thing one can do for a man who search for meaning is to make him comprehend that our life is meaningful in any condition and it is possible for it to remain meaningful until the end. Thus, education does not give the religious meaning of life like a medicine. It can help individual to recognize religious motives in his own construction of meaning or can show the individual how he may benefit from those motives.

B. The Position of Religious Education in Modern Man's Search for Meaning

Associated with secularization, attitudes of religious individuals or groups, who lost their influence on education against secularization, and counter attitudes determined positions regarding religious education. The ones who distinguish the gap between religious consciousness and modern world and who intend to live religion or make religion live in a ghettoized way directed towards a withdrawn, confessional, based on sect understanding of religious education oriented to protect existing one. Some others preferred to fictionalize a religious education which conflicts with community to acquire its own statue in a secular world or tries to produce alternatives for it. The third group intended to promote a religious education aimed at understanding and interpreting religious and secular community together (See. Stoeckl, 2015, p. 1-6). The first two tendencies in essence had a common weakness on guiding modern man for his search for meaning. On the one hand those tendencies tried to protect modern man from growing secular distracters by teaching him religion. On the other hand they

abstained from taking into consideration the current paradigm that shapes world of thought and sense of him (Meydan, 2016: p. 87).

Another weakness of relevant two tendencies as an extension of behaviourist paradigm both in psychology and pedagogy is to locate individual as a passive object against pedagogic interferences. Although not denying the influence of education on human being, it is also not possible to claim that he is a completely passive creature. Human beings by his will are an active recipient and participant of religious life. Because one of the main factors that direct him to religiousness is his inner search for meaning of life. As Bilgin (1986, p. 30, 31) remarks that man is a being who search for meaning, for secret in the body. This feature of him makes him a being searching for God. This spiritual side gains power by dominating organic structure and restraining it. The aspect which dissuades man from his material being for the sake of meaning and ideals is this spiritual aspect inside him.

Fundamental perspective of those two regarding making sense of life is their shared vision on making sense of religion as a fact that can be transferred to addressees by prescription. For that reason they evolved into a situation that increasingly turn in on it or conflict with outside world to open itself a realm of existence due to the fact that they tried to transfer religion without taking into consideration of individual's cognitive, affective and existential subjectivity. Ultimately, they were increasingly isolated from search for meaning processes of large masses that are out of them. However, the ones who constitute third group and looking for a religious education aimed at understanding and interpreting religious and secular communities together were able to inch along under the reciprocal challenges of both sides between which they intend to arbitrate. As a result, there occurred rather strong indications related to the inadequacy of productions offered by modern religious education to man on fulfilling his need of sense-making which is the most fundamental need of man.

Especially in developed communities, the number of people who once participated in religious institutions and religious education platforms, but then moved away from them and tried to make sense of life on their own has been increasing (See. Davie: 1990; Hay and Hunt, 2000; Wright, 2000; Davie, 2005; Mason et al. 2007; Büssing et al. 2010). Some studies (Hay, 2000, p. 21-25) which are conducted to find the reason why those people move away from religious structures and religious education institutions indicate the negative influence of religious institutions' approaches which are distant from supporting search of meaning and ignore individual and religious experience. To actualize religious education with an understanding that imposes meaning upon them instead of trying to understand people's mind

maps, world of senses and existential experiences and supporting their search for meaning move people increasingly away from world of religious meaning.

C. Two Fundamental Qualities of Religious Education that Support Search for Meaning

Although search for meaning as an existential act presents a universal characteristic, it also has a subjective nature in terms of content and orientation extent. Perception process which plays a fundamental role on mental and spiritual structuring depends on previous experiences. With this aspect, act of cognizance stands totally on personal basics (Cüceleoğlu 2015, p. 118-119; Bahadır, 2017, p. 37). As a reflection of this humanistic reality on the field of faith, there is a difference between being religious and belonging to a religion. Being religious is to live inner religiousness. In inner religiousness it is essential for man to experience values that he is believed, attached, surrendered and embraced from the heart (Kayıklık, 2011, p. 47-48). Even though religious education is able to perform its function of making a person belong to religion as an identity with superficial teachings, it cannot realise its aim to be religious without taking into consideration individual's sense-making processes and structures and spiritual experiences.

1. Prioritizing Meaningful Learning

The main function of man's cognitive structures is to define being and make it comprehensible. Thus, uncertainties that have strained man's psychological structures have disappeared. Man does not perceive nature and life as apart and independent pieces in which objects and events are lined up or gather randomly. On the contrary, each input is perceived as organisations linked to each other by meaning and values (Bahadır, 2017, p. 20-23). A religious education that will support individual's sense-making process has to consider individual's mental organisation and relation of this organisation with psychological processes. This situation stated as meaningful learning in education literature is also valid for the search of individual concerning the meaning of life.

An individual can only form his idiosyncratic semantic world in consequence of meaningful learnings (Meydan, 2016b, 228). Meaningful learning as a concept defined by Ausubel (2000) reveals that an individual can construct his own cognitive structures and semantic world via associating issues and concepts he learned previously with new concepts. The individual continues to learn in accordance with his own cognitive structures and to construct his own semantic world only by establishing relationships. Learnings that are not associated with individual's cognitive structures strongly by himself are superficial and easy to manipulate

learnings. This is because this kind of a teaching does not allow individual to form his fundamental way of sense-making of life on his own by interiorising.

In terms of religious terminology, meaningful learning evokes the concepts of hikmah (wisdom) and ma'rifat (knowledge). In religious education processes, seeking for the real meanings beyond the material and form is the effort to reach hikmah and ma'rifat. Man is unable to understand the reality of the one who is transcendent. He reaches hikmah and ma'rifat by contemplating on the visible world (İbn Fürek, 2014, p. 112). In reality religious knowledge which is appointed as the subject of education without considering or trying to understand is useless for search for meaning. There is no difference between reading or transferring religious knowledge without trying to understand it and taking of a positivist what he saw on the nature without interpreting its background (Tosun, 2014, 85). A religious educator should guide his student to explore, comprehend and absorb the religious learning himself instead of making him memorise the religious learning and behavioural patterns to keep his student's search for meaning alive (Akyürek, 2009).

Religious education should ask questions to keep search for meaning alive. However, these questions should not be limited with the questions gathered from the tradition. These must be the questions arose from today's problems of people. It has been considered that one of the reasons why students want to be exempt from religion lesson is an understanding of religious education which does not gain inspiration from their problems and dictates stereotyped answer to stereotyped questions (See. Willems, 2015: 33-34). From the frame of logotherapy, this result is rather natural because according to Frankl (1992) "one should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfilment. Therein, he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it" (p. 114).

It may be necessary to look at the opportunity of meaningful learning in terms of religion education with a critical attitude since each religion has doctrines and principles that have to be believed and implemented. Yet, we need to notice the difference between having doctrines and accepting and imposing doctrines without comprehending them. For instance; for Islam as a religion believing in God, due to the necessity of behaving ethically, some worships as a fardh/religious duties are the doctrines. Yet, Islam demands from believers to practise these doctrines by understanding, interiorising, feeling and even loving them. It does not count insincere behaviours as acceptable. To implement them sincerely, they should be well understood

and connected with the semantic world of the individual (Meydan, 2016, p. 96).

Is it possible for an individual to understand religious doctrines? If it is the case, how does it happen? In fact, religious doctrines are formulas which rely on deep philosophical backgrounds or religious experiences of either the text founder or figure of the religion or the followers who come after him. There lie thousand-of-years interpretation, discussion, thought and experience behind the religious doctrines. However, next generations who did not experience this semantic world lie behind the doctrines and perceive these doctrines as solid objects. The task of religious education is to make its addressee feel the extensive semantic world which is immanent inside the religious doctrines and individual experiences of prophet and his followers regarding these doctrines. This is because the statements which are formed in order to transfer the experiences and semantic world which is immanent inside the religion turn into doctrines soon after their core becomes forgotten. The same fact can also be seen on the scientific matters like law, formula etc. There are also several experiences, determinations, discussions and actions behind them. Yet, the result is coded as formula in a few words by skipping all of them (Walach, 2015, p. 29-33).

Just as the main task of a mathematician or a naturalist in an education which is not based on rote learning is to bring together the extensive experiences behind the scientific laws with their addressee, so the task of a religious educator should be removing the obstacles between extensive experiences and feeling worlds behind the religious doctrines and their addressee (Meydan, 2016, p. 96-97). Mentally, this is possible by showing different alternatives, making the student notice the relations between alternatives, introducing him opportunities and methods of carrying out evaluations on those alternatives. If the student finds out a balance, a consistency between thoughts and experiences as a result of his evaluations, then learnings contribute to make sense of life.

2. Considering Individual Spiritual Experience

Even though cognitive structures have important functions in the process of man's construction of meaning, cognitive processes are not the only means of sense-making for humans. Affective structures as well as cognitive functions are powerfully effective on the man's processes of learning and sense-making. As an emotion-intensive field, learnings and sense-makings in the field of religion have strong ties with affective aspect of human's personality. As Frankl (2014, p. 107) mentioned, man intellectually may not find satisfactory answers in relation to the fact that whether everything is meaningless or not, or whether there is an underlying deep meaning in everything or not. Although these questions cannot be answered

intellectually, an existential decision is still possible. The existential decision relies on existential experiences stemming from human being's affective abilities.

Existential experience is a state of being affected, satisfied. The moments in which love, self-commitment and even fear are deeply felt are the moments in which the man realizes existential experiences. These kinds of experiences are special to human in terms of how they are lived and what their consequences are. It is hardly difficult for anyone to feel or understand this experience identically or to identify the effects of them on man's life, his decisions, his ways of making sense of life. There are two conceptualizations which help us to understand individual experience with regard to the contribution of religious education processes into making sense of life: Peak experience and religious experience.

Peak experiences which were described by Maslow (1964, 2015) as the moments in which human being experiences happiness and satisfaction on maximum level, offer an important frame to understand the individual religious experience. A person who has this kind of experience sees features that others cannot see inside the being he loves. The basis of religiousness is mostly this kind of peak experiences. A person has unique experiences hard to be understood by others in the processes of worship and pray and he constructs his religiousness upon these experiences. Occasionally, these experiences can also cause to develop negative attitude on the person towards religion. In every situation, religious educator should know that he cannot create an impact on his addressees without listening their experiences respectfully and trying to understand them.

The conceptualization of religious experience in the theory of C. Glock in which he explains the aspects of religiousness enlightens understanding of spiritual experience in religious education. According to Glock (1962: p. 98-99) no matter how religious traditions define facts, the individual lives and feels them uniquely. This direct understanding and feeling of the individual form religious experience. The most important feature of religious experience is the fact that it pertains to the one who experience it and cannot be shared with others. For the individual, his own religious experience - even though religious educator does not accept it - is inarguably true. Hence, educator in religious education should not assume that his addressees experience religious experiences as he does or they will reach the level of his religious experience by taking a short cut (Meydan, 2016, p. 105).

In Quran, there are various events and facts regarding religious experience. Foremost among them, there are inabe (turn to God with sincere repentance), repentance, sakeenah(tranquillity), khushu (sincerity), mohabbat (love) and istiane (ask for help). For instance, in Quran inabe, one

of the types of experience, is used in the context of directing towards being faithful from faithfulness, directing towards God in the case of inability and despair, orientation towards God by seeing grandiosities in the nature and ask for forgiveness. The appearance of inabe in a Muslim identity is possible with his own effort. (Kasapoğlu, 2017, p. 46). The meaning which is attributed to the concept of inabe in Islamic literature, points out the difference between religious experience and spiritual experience. Whereas religious experience is described within a certain religious tradition, it is acknowledged that spiritual experience is universal as a feature belongs to man (See. Adams, Hyde and Woolley, 2008; Walach, 2015; Meydan, 2015).

When a human being encounters with traumatic situations like death, illness, deprivation; moments of happiness or ordinary daily events, most of these situations arouse religious-spiritual individual experiences on him. Religious educator has to well listen and understand the effects occurred on him as a result of encountered situation, their reflections on his method of making sense of life. Trying to ascribe stereotypes of religious tradition without doing that causes isolation of the religious education from individual sense-making processes. This is because individual religious-spiritual experiences have an important position for making sense of life. The individual naturally tends to alienate to environments in which his experiences are not taken into consideration. Religious educator should act in an empathetic attitude in order to understand the experiences of the individual. Empathetic attitude in education means trying to understand what students think and feel sincerely and to discuss the core of their individual experiences respectfully (OSCE, 2007, p. 46).

To share the various religious events and facts which are joined or observed by the child in daily life, to focus on what he feels as doing this allow for taking into consideration of individual religious experience in the classroom. It is necessary to listen heartfeltly his observations about religious environments, deduced or witnessed interpretations, forms of religious explanations that he develops in relation to events he experienced, his developing religious attitude towards the emotions of happiness, joy or being aggrieved. Likewise, a teacher with a good preliminary preparation and working together can carry a great deal of techniques used in education, individual spiritual experiences, or spiritual aspects of religious learnings and practices into the classroom in order to make them subject of study. For example; red hat gives teacher great opportunities to deal with a kind of worship or religious learning with a technique of six thinking hats.

Religious experiences which shall be determined as a subject for share may not only be related with religious practices. An interpretation of a verse, the fact that how having faith in God, afterlife, fate is perceived is a part of

individual experience. An individual can achieve true faith after he thinks questions that he asks himself over within his own world of thought and emotion. Therefore he needs to gain a spiritual awareness about what he does truly believe, which emotions come to life in his heart when it is mentioned about having faith in God and afterlife. Thus, it is necessary to carry out studies on self-observation of student and recognition of his emotions, recognition of the effect of worship and pray in accordance with directing the basis of emotion and his feelings and making him able to speak about his beliefs (Meydan, 2015).

The fundamental point that shall force the effort of making individual religious experience considered during the process of religious education is the finitude of insider and outsider points of view used in social studies. Whereas insider point of view has the restriction of subjectivity, outsider perspective has restriction for remaining incapable to comprehend reality. The restriction complicates teacher's understanding of individual's religious experience. However, some researchers indicate that we can understand the function of religion to construct the semantic world of individual and meet his needs by using insider and outsider perspectives together (Fabretti, 2015). Yet, to do that, religious education environments in which the individual reveals his insider observation sincerely are required.

The offer of considering individual spiritual experiences in religion education shall inevitably be criticized as it causes a reductive methodology. This criticism relies on the supposition that taking into consideration of man's subjective experiences even though religion does not consist of perceptions and experiences of individuals, legitimates corruption of religious learning. However when we accept the criticism, we miss the truth that religion is began to be individualised at the same time it is began to be experienced by any person. On the contrary, when we attempt to make religion subject of education from a theological perspective, we are supposed to do religious education with compeller generalizations (See. Jackson, 2005, p. 190-200). Hence, as religious education deals with individual, it cannot ignore the fact that he grounds on "subjective based certainty" (See. Mehmedoğlu, 2015, p. 13) in the matters of faith.

Conclusion and Evaluation

Throughout centuries, humankind has asked existential questions and tried to answer them via reason in philosophy and experience in the mystic dimensions of religions (Kayıklık, 2011). All evaluations we made until the point show that an understanding of religious education, which helps man for his search for meaning, has been required to pay regard to the methods of these two ancient searches for wisdom. We may conceptualize reflections of the two traditions in religious education processes as maintenance of

philosophical and Sufi attitudes. Philosophical attitude is possible when methods like asking question, improving critical thinking, and search for wisdom continuously are regarded whereas Sufi attitude is possible by considering methods as introspection, self-inspection, inner struggle, thinking within universal integrity.

Religious education does not make anyone reach to the absolute truth without his own mental and emotional effort. The mental effort of the individual should be supported by philosophical attitude whereas his affective effort should be promoted by Sufi attitude. Philosophical attitude in religious education expresses a will and an approach in which all knowledge and data obtained from social sciences and knowledge taken from religion are combined and come into effect with a shared decision. In other words, philosophical attitude is a mental stance based on knowledge obtained from every field with reference to non-religious and religious knowledge. The stance points out having a critical attitude to understand, observe thinking processes, to make systematic questioning and evaluation (Öner, 2014; Demir, 2015). Whereas for a disbeliever this attitude expresses search for wisdom, for a believer philosophical attitude is a means in order to experience the achieved truth more sincerely.

Philosophical attitude in religious education should be comprehended as a humanitarian effort in which all mental processes can be used like sense making and evaluation in the presence of truth. The objective here is to prepare a learning atmosphere in which students can reach correct results in their religious and ethical opinions and decisions by means of independent reasoning (Demir, 2015, p. 202). If religious education provides this, it can guide man's search for meaning and thanks to philosophical attitude it can elevate the level of faith of a believer into tahqiq (faith by verify) from taqlid (faith through imitation). By means of philosophical attitude, religious education can mediate to find religion-based answers for the questions related to the meaning of life. Yet, whether these answers are directly found in the revelation or reaches to man by means of another human interpretation, the important thing is to find answers of these questions within the self-cognitive world of the man and philosophical attitude can help the human being in order to interiorise them (Demir, 2015, p. 218).

Philosophical attitude shows man how to be consistent in his search for meaning. Man's process of sense-making cannot make progress without he reaches consistent results after intellectualising different alternatives. Besides, it is philosophical attitude that shows man most valid methods on rational consideration ways and testing consistency. On the other hand, sense-making is not a process which is fulfilled when cognitive processes

reach consistency. His heart and conscience[1] supposed to be satisfied and he supposed to experience state of tranquillity stems from the coherence of achieved results with inner experiences. At this point, Sufi attitude becomes a part of the activity. Sufism (Islamic mysticism) has hundred-year experience on understanding the inner world. Religious educator can benefit from Sufi attitude in two ways: (i) to understand, follow inner world of its addressee, (ii) to make deductions regarding getting religious knowledge and practices into inner world, transformation of them into religious experience.

Sufism shows how to acquire conscientious knowledge based on intuition rather than search for meaning based on reason. Some of the ways to acquire this knowledge are to hold our ties tight with the one transcendent, to restrain body from dominating the spirit by empowering spirit, to struggle with bad emotions and traits that cover self-awareness, self-assessment and conscious (Özköse, 2008, p. 7). In this processes, man takes support from a mentor who teaches him how to look at his inner world with a mirror, to carefully watch and control his affective activations. By means of sufi attitude, the heart of the servant turns into a light that shall sort out memoirs that he experienced related to all of the truth and superstitious, whispers(waswasa) of himself(nafs) and things worth worshipping from each other (İbn Fürek, 2014, p. 288). Religious education should benefit from this experience in order to get man gain awareness related to the things he accomplished, things that happen in his inner world during his search for meaning. Only then religious educator can make him search for meanings behind the religious or ethical activities or ordinary events and make him live a conscious life.

Heart becomes satisfied, feels at peace when it feels that it found the truth. It finds the truth by means of inner experience. It finds peace by inner experience and then realises that it has found the truth. For that reason, heart can be persuaded by inner experience. What is meant by inner experience is according to C. Glock man's special perception of religious content and as a result of this perception; he lives experiences what are called by A. Maslow as peak experiences, state of love and peace. On the other hand, reason can be persuaded by means of evidence, consistency. Reason is persuaded as it recognizes arguments offered to it with their evidences and explores the consistency among them. Persuasion of reason has to go hand in hand with persuasion of heart in order to make religion effective on man's act of making

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[1] At this point, it is necessary to remember that Frankl defines conscience as the meaning organ. According to him, the way to make sense of man passes through the conscience because he is the approval authority with the veto right.

sense of life. Therefore, religious education has to be relied on/open to both Sufi experience and philosophical methodology.

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DİN EĞİTİMİNDE İHMAL EDİLEN BOYUT: İNSANIN ANLAM ARAYIŞI

 Hasan MEYDAN[a]

Genişletilmiş Özet

Din ile insanın anlam arayışı arasındaki güçlü ilişkiye rağmen günümüz din eğitiminin insanın anlamlandırma süreçlerinde yeterince yer bulmadığı çeşitli araştırmacılar tarafından dile getirilmektedir. Bunda din eğitimcilerinin insanın anlamlandırma süreçlerine ilişkin geleneksel ve modern psikolojik birikimi ve insanın anlam inşasında bilişsel ve duyuşsal güçleri birlikte değerlendiren perspektif eksikliği göz ardı edilemez. Bu makalenin amacı "din eğitimi süreçlerinde insanın anlam arayışına cevap vermede anlamlı öğrenme ve bireysel tecrübeyi dikkate almanın önemini ve yöntemini incelemektir." Yöntem olarak alan yazın incelemesinin kullanıldığı araştırmada, psikoloji ve eğitim-bilimsel açıdan dört temel kuram ve kavramsal çerçeveye dayanılarak düşünsel arkaplan yapılandırılmıştır. İnsanın anlam ihtiyacı, bu ihtiyacın karşılanma süreçleri ve anlam inşası konularında Wiktor Frankl'ın "logoterapi kuramı" referans alınmıştır. İnsanın anlam inşasında bilişsel süreçlerin rolünü anlamak için David Ausubel'in "anlamlı öğrenme"; psikolojik süreçleri anlamak için ise Abraham Maslow'un "doruk deneyim" ve Charles Glok'un "dini tecrübe" kavramsallaştırmalarından yararlanılmıştır.

Logoterapi kuramına göre herkes için geçerli olan mutlak bir anlamlandırma kalıbından bahsetmek mümkün değildir. Hayatın anlamı statik değil, kişiden kişiye ve durumdan duruma değişebilen bir olgudur. An be an çeşitli durumlar karşısında insan tarafından anlam yeniden üretilir. Öte yandan anlam reçete veya komutla verilen, kişiden kişiye olduğu gibi devredilebilen bir olgu da değildir. İnsan komutla sevemediği, komutla iman etmediği gibi komut veya manipülasyonla hayatın anlamı da bulamaz. İnsanın anlam arayışında başkalarının onun için yapabileceği şey, hayatımızın her koşulda anlamlı olduğunu ve sonuna kadar anlamlı kalma imkanının bulunduğunu kavratabilmektir. Dolayısıyla eğitim, hayatın dini anlamını hap gibi vermez.

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Bireyin kendi anlam inşasında dini motifleri görmesini sağlayabilir veya bu motiflerden faydalanmanın yollarını ve metotlarını gösterebilir.

Varoluşsal bir eylem olarak anlam arayışı ne kadar evrensel bir karakter arz etse de; muhteva ve yöneliş boyutları açısından o ölçüde öznel bir tabiata sahiptir. İnsanın anlam inşasında bilişsel ve duyuşsal süreçler birlikte işlev görür. Zihinsel ve ruhsal yapılanmada temel rol oynayan algılama süreci, daha önce kazanılan değer tecrübelerine bağlıdır. Bireyin geçmiş yaşantı ve tecrübelerini dikkate almayan bir din eğitiminin hayatın anlamına ilişkin bireye sunduğu önermeleri anlaşılır kılmasının imkanı yoktur. Bireye sunulan önermeler onun zihnindeki belirsizlikleri ortadan kaldırabilirse ancak tutarlılık gerçekleşir ve önermeler birey tarafından kabul edilebilir olur. Bu ise modern eğitim literatürde anlamlı öğrenme kuramını gündeme taşımaktadır. Bu kuram bireyin kendine özgü bir anlam dünyasını, ancak anlamlı öğrenmeler sonucunda oluşturabileceğini belirtir ve buna ilişkin öğrenme yaşantılarının özelliklerini tartışır. Dini terminoloji açısından ise anlamlı öğrenme "hikmet" ve "marifet" kavramları çerçevesinde ele alınması gereken özellikler içermektedir.

Dini anlamlandırmanın kaynağını oluşturan dini doktrinlerin ardında binlerce yıllık yorum, tartışma, düşünüş ve tecrübe vardır. Fakat doktrinlerin ardında yatan derin anlam dünyasını tecrübe etmemiş, yaşamamış sonraki kuşaklar bu doktrinleri katı birer obje olarak algılarlar. Din eğitiminin işi dini doktrinlerin özünde barındırdığı geniş anlam dünyasını ve bu doktrinlere ilişkin peygamber ve takipçilerinin yaşadıkları bireysel tecrübeleri muhataplarına hissettirebilmektir. Bunun için din eğitimcisi dini öğretiyi ve davranış kalıplarını ezberletmek yerine, dini öğretinin bizzat öğrenci tarafından keşfedilmesi, anlamlandırılması ve özümsenmesini kılavuzlamalıdır. Din eğitimi, anlam arayışını canlı tutabilmek için sorular sormalıdır. Sorular sorarak ancak bilişsel tutarlılığa ulaşılabilir ki sorular sormaya dayalı bir din eğitimi eğitim süreçlerinde felsefi tutumu işe koşmayı gerektirir.

Bilişsel yapılar insanın anlam inşa sürecinde önemli fonksiyonlara sahip olsa da insan için anlamlandırmanın tek aracı zihinsel süreçler değildir. Bilişsel fonksiyonlarla birlikte duyuşsal yapılar da insanın öğrenme, anlamlandırma süreçlerinde güçlü bir şekilde etkindir. Duygu yoğunluklu bir alan olarak din alanındaki öğrenme ve anlamlandırmaların insan kişiliğinin duyuşsal boyutu ile ilişkisi oldukça güçlüdür. Varoluşsal tecrübe derin bir duygulanma, mutmain olma halidir. Sevginin, kendini adamanın hatta korkunun en derinden hissedildiği anlar insanın varoluşsal tecrübeleri yaşadığı anlardır. Bu tür tecrübeler hem yaşanış hem de sonuçlar itibariyle insana özgüdür. Başkasının bu tecrübeyi aynen hissetmesi, anlaması veya insanın hayatına, kararlarına, hayatı anlamlandırma biçimlerine etkisine ilişkin belirlemeler

yapması oldukça zordur. Din eğitimi süreçlerinin hayatı anlamlandırmaya katkısı açısından bireysel tecrübeyi anlamamızı sağlayacak iki kavramsallaştırma önemlidir: doruk deneyim ve dini tecrübe. Geleneksel İslam literatürü içerisinde insanın içsel yönünü anlamada önemli bir tecrübeye sahip olan tasavvuf imana ilişkin doruk deneyim ve dini tecrübede önemli bir birikime sahiptir. Dolayısıyla din eğitiminde tasavvufun bu birikimi ihmal edilerek insanın anlam arayışına katkı verme potansiyeli istenen düzeye taşınamaz.

Din eğitimi süreçlerinde felsefi tutum insana anlam arayışında tutarlılığa ulaşmanın yollarını gösterir. Farklı alternatifleri akıl süzgecinden geçirip tutarlı sonuçlara ulaşmadan kişinin anlamlandırma süreci aşama kaydedemez. Akli değerlendirme yolları ve tutarlılığı test etme konusunda ise insana en geçerli yöntemleri felsefi tutum gösterebilir. Öte yandan anlamlandırma bilişsel süreçlerin tutarlılığa ulaşması ile tamamlanan bir süreç de değildir. Kalp ve vicdanın da mutmain olması, ulaşılan sonuçların içsel tecrübelerle uyumlu olmasından kaynaklanan bir huzur halinin yaşanması beklenir. İşte bu noktada tasavvufi tutum devreye girer. Tasavvuf içsel olanı anlama noktasında yüzlerce yıllık bir tecrübeye sahiptir. Din eğitimcisi iki açıdan tasavvufi tutumdan istifade edebilir: (i) muhatapların içsel dünyasını anlamak, takip edebilmek, (ii) dini bilgi ve uygulamaların içsel dünyaya inmesine – dini tecrübeye dönüşmesine yönelik sonuçlar çıkartmak.

Keywords: Din Eğitimi, Anlam Arayışı, Din Eğitiminde Tasavvufi ve Felsefi Tutum, Anlam İnşasında İslami Perspektif

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