

IMPACCT KICK-OFF MEETING 2

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND FACULTIES OF THEOLOGY IN TURKEY

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EDUCATION, RELIGION AND LAICISIM

- ▶ As far as religion is concerned, education is just a major area where a culture war between Islamic worldview and laicism in Turkey could not be avoided.
- ▶ The gradual integration of Islamic values into Turkey's laicist and Atatürkist curriculum began long before the current government. It was after the 1980 military coup, orchestrated by Atatürkist establishment.

IMAM-HATIP SCHOOLS

- ▶ In 1950s (in parallel with democratization and multi-party system), the education system was influenced by a resurgence of Islam which had significant implications for the education system.
- ▶ This led to the establishment and re-opening of and increase in the number of *Imam Hatip* Schools (Imam and Preacher Schools). Moreover, these schools were opened to girls (who could not become imams).
- ▶ A dual structured (secular and religious) education system resurfaced. For Kemalists, these schools were the backyard of Islamist conservatism and circles.
- ▶ In contrast, "Islamic segment of the populations (...) claimed that these schools offered opportunities for the non-elite of Anatolia: high quality education, the raising of honorable and morally principled people, the fact that conservative families could easily educate their daughters."
- ▶ Since the 1950s, education has become the scene of hegemonic struggles between the forces representing these two sides. Besides more and more Quran courses were established and religious courses became an optional subject in primary and secondary education during this period.

TURKISH-ISLAM SYNTHESIS

- ▶ With the post-1980 military coup's "Turkish-Islam Synthesis," the introduction of a greater degree of Islamic elements was aimed at enhancing Atatürk's laique-democratic vision into what became known as "Atatürkism."
- ▶ Following the 2002 rise to power of Mr. Erdoğan, now the president of the Republic, a more Islamic-enhanced version of the "Turkish-Islam Synthesis" was launched.

CHANGES IN SYSTEM

- ▶ In recent years, the Turkish education system went through a number of radical and rapid changes.
 - ▶ The important ones among these were the “4+4+4” system which changed the duration, structure and content of obligatory education;
 - ▶ the introduction of the TEOG exam which regulates the transition to high school;
 - ▶ changes to the categories of high schools;
 - ▶ abolition of the university preparation centers (dershane) ..these weekend study schools created inequalities and chaos...
 - ▶ and new rules governing the appointment of teachers and directors.
- ▶ These changes are accompanied by important recent developments and debates, such as the ones concerning electives on religion and values, as well as less recent ones such as the obligatory Religious Culture and Morality class or the discussion about the Imam-Hatip High Schools.

“LAICIST EDUCATION”

- ▶ Even as the focus on Atatürk’s philosophy continues to be a core guideline—his pictures and quotations are evident throughout the textbooks, even religious education textbooks has had Atatürk’s full picture on the cover—it is no longer the only guiding principle.
- ▶ Turkey’s education system, which has long provided a “laicist education” to religious and secular students alike, has come under scrutiny by the government following the attempted coup on July 15th, 2016.
- ▶ In the past, there were courses on Military Preparation, Principles of Atatürkist Revolution in secondary and high school curricula. These and similar courses, in fact, introduced strong laicist ideology alongside the science/biology courses with strong Darwinian approach.

'EVOLUTION' AND 'CREATIONISM'

- ▶ Following the new changes, a distinction between science and religion can be seen in the section that deals with the theory of evolution and creationism, and evolutionary (versus creationist) concepts have been removed from the high school curriculum, along with any mention of Darwin.
- ▶ Many muslims and religious conservatives in Turkey dismiss evolution as a reckless and unproven theory just like many Christians in the US or even in Europe.

4+4+4 SYSTEM (2012)

- ▶ In Turkey, we have witnessed in the last 10 years "the consolidation of Islamic content in pedagogy went hand in hand with the process of neoliberal deregulation and privatisation."
- ▶ The most significant of these changes was the introduction of what is commonly called the 4+4+4 system in education in 2012.

REOPENING OF IMAM-HATIP SECONDARY SCHOOLS

- ▶ With this new system, the compulsory primary schooling system was changed from a continuous Eight-Year system to an intermittent 4+4+4 system (4 years primary, 4 years lower secondary and 4 years upper secondary school compulsory education); and secondary schooling became compulsory with a distance education option.
- ▶ With this reform, lower secondary school sections (grades 6-8; ages 12-14) of Imam Hatip schools that were closed in 1997 along with other vocational lower secondary schools (because of the change into a continuous Eight-Year primary education) were re-opened (grades 5-8 today).

OPTIONAL ISLAM-SPECIFIC COURSES

- ▶ In 2012, two optional courses for years 6 to 8, Civic Education and Agriculture, were removed from the curriculum while three OPTIONAL Islam-specific courses were introduced: Quran (*Kuran-ı Kerim*), Life of Prophet Muhammad (*Hz. Muhammed'in Hayatı*), and Basic Religious Knowledge (*Temel Dini Bilgiler*).
- ▶ Thus, the religious education system expanded with the addition of new optional religious courses in secular schools and by reopening lower levels of Imam Hatip Schools after the introduction of the 4+4+4 system in 2012.

'VALUES EDUCATION'

- ▶ "Values education" in public and private schools is another important item in the new curriculum intended to strengthen national values and Islamic morality.
- ▶ "Values education" relies on the notions of "national unity and solidarity" as well as "national, moral and universal values".

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, SUNNI ISLAM AND NON-MUSLIMS

- ▶ **“The Religious Culture and Morality” curriculum, last renewed in 2011-12, includes more elements of “Islamic religious education,” that is, elements which uphold the principles and practices of the mainstream Sunni Islam which is the dominant religious orientation of the majority of Turkish people, Turks and Kurds all included... This curriculum also provides `learning about the non-muslim, alavite, and non-religious` faiths as well.**

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY IN TURKEY

ISLAMIC STUDIES

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES and PHILOSOPHY

BURSA FACULTY OF THEOLOGY ULUDAĞ UNIVERSITY IN NUMBERS

- ▶ 2889 undergraduate students (1725 female and 1164 male)
- ▶ 714 graduate students (348 female and 366 male)
- ▶ 186 students in International Theology Program

FACULTY OF THEOLOGY IN TURKEY

- ▶ Undergraduate Programs in a Faculty of Theology in Turkey
 - ▶ 1 year of Arabic preparatory study + 4 years of undergraduate studies
 - ▶ RE (Religious Education) Teacher Training
 - ▶ Imams training (also muftis, waidhs, Quran teachers, etc.)
 - ▶ International Theology Program (International Students – taught in Turkish)
 - ▶ Students who enroll in this program must have some affiliation with Turkey and Turkish people. They are either children of Turks living outside Turkey or citizens of East-European, Caucasian and Central Asian countries.
 - ▶ This program serves to students of Turkish origin living in various European countries.
 - ▶ Courses in Turkish, Arabic and English.

GRADUATE STUDIES IN THEOLOGY

▶ ***Department of Basic Islamic Sciences***

- ▶ This department encourages research and offers courses in areas such as, Interpretation of the Qur'an (tafsir), the Prophetic Tradition (Hadith), Islamic Law (Fiqh) Islamic Theology (Kalam).

▶ ***Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies***

- ▶ This department encourages research and offers courses in areas such as History of Philosophy Islamic Philosophy Philosophy of Religion Sociology of Religion Psychology of Religion History of Religions.

▶ ***Department of Islamic History and Islamic Arts***

- ▶ This department encourages research and offers courses on Islamic History, History of the Turkish Islamic Arts, Turkish Islamic Literature and Turkish Religious Music