

Analysis of Religious Education Program in terms of Secularism and Multiculturalism

Din Eğitim Programının Laiklik ve Çokkültürlülük Açısından İncelenmesi

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Abstract

In this study, the researcher examined the legal background of religious education in Turkey and the philosophy, principles and objectives of Religious and Moral Course Program implemented in formal elementary schools in Turkey with regard to secularism and multiculturalism. In the study, the Constitution of the Turkish Republic, the Basic Law of National Education numbered 1739 and the Religious and Moral Course Program as records were examined. The results of the study showed that the Elementary School Religious and Moral Course Program consists of many objectives related to the secular and multicultural education. However, the results showed that there are same contradictions between the philosophy, principles and objectives of the program and legal bases of secularism and multiculturalism. The Religious and Moral Course Program in Turkey should be revised by considering students with different religious beliefs.

Keywords: Secularism, Multiculturalism, religious education, elementary school program

Öz

Bu çalışmada araştırmacı Türkiye’de din eğitiminin yasal temelleri ve resmi ilköğretim okullarında uygulanan Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi Ders Programının felsefesi, ilkeleri ve hedefleri laiklik ve çok kültürlülük açısından incelemiştir. Araştırmada kayıtlar olarak Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, 1739 sayılı Milli Eğitim Temel Kanunu ve İlköğretim Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi Dersi Öğretim Programı incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları, Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi Ders Programının laik ve çok kültürlü din eğitimi ile ilgili birçok hedef içerdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ancak, araştırma sonuçları programın felsefesini, ilkelerini ve hedeflerini ile laik ve çok kültürlülüğün yasal temelleri arasında bazı çelişkiler bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Türkiye’deki Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi programı farklı dini inançları olan öğrenciler dikkate alınarak yenilenmelidir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Laiklik, Çok kültürlülük, Din eğitimi, İlköğretim programı

Introduction

The European Union’s policies are designed to support different religious beliefs in European countries. Religious communities and churches can participate in the project of the European unification. However, differences in state-church relations, various sects and religious groups, and self-identification as “no religion,” create an increase in the number of minorities who have different religious affiliations. Moreover, reasons such as anti-Semitism and Islamophobia make it difficult to create a common approach to religious education in Europe (Jackson, 2000). The problem is to find some social cement to

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ensure that people with different moral religious and ethical values can live together with a degree of harmony (Gokulsing, 2006).

European Union countries differ by religious education. It is possible to classify religious education in European countries into countries that have the confessional system and those that have the non-confessional system (Jackson, 2000). In the confessional system, religious education is under the responsibility of religious institutions. For instance, in Germany, and based on the constitution and a non-discrimination principle, churches provide consultancy for religious education within the framework of equal rights. In the non-confessional system, religious institutions have no role related to public education. For example, in France, there is no subject about religion in the curricula and religious education included in such courses as history and philosophy must be purely informational (Estivalez, 2006). While there are different religions and religious practices in European countries, there is consensus that religious education should be offered in state-funded schools. The basic problem lies in identifying a common religious education approach and standard that ensures social integration by respecting religious differences. The Constitution of the European Union establishes a framework for religious education in EU states and can be used as a reference for a common approach to religious education. The following articles of the Constitution of the European Union are related to religious education practices and cover certain standards to which member states should adhere.

Article II-10: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

Article II-21: Non-discrimination

1. Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

Article II-22: Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity

The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

(Constitution for Europe, 2003, p.49-51).

In Recommendation 1720, adopted on 4 October 2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe declared:

“Education is essential to combat ignorance, stereotyping, and incomprehension of religions. Governments must also do more to guarantee freedom of conscience and religious expression, to encourage religious instruction, to promote dialogue with and between religions, and to further the cultural and social expression of religions.” “The understanding of religion is an integral part of understanding the history of humanity and its civilizations. It is entirely different from belief in one particular religion or its practice. Even the countries in which one confession largely predominates must teach the origins of all religions rather than privilege one or promote proselytizing.” (Parliamentary Assembly, 2005).

It is evident that the articles of the EU Constitution and the Declaration of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe are supportive of religious tolerance. Religious tolerance is among the most fundamental human rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 2, Article 26). Religious tolerance is a universal supported in the home and at school (Almond, 2010). Multicultural religious education and secularism plays an important role in gaining religious tolerance. Secularism and multiculturalism can aid individuals by familiarizing themselves with different cultural backgrounds, to be tolerant of them and to be able to live entirely in peace (Gundara, 2000).

Multicultural Education and Secularism

Grant (1994) defined multicultural education as an educational process and philosophical concept based on the ideals of “justice, freedom, equality, and dignity”. Banks (1998) states that “multicultural education brings equality of opportunity in education to those students with a different gender; ethnic and cultural origin.” One of the most important aims of multicultural education is to eliminate prejudice and discrimination against different cultures and to establish social justice and equality among all social groups (Sleeter and Grant, 1987). Multicultural education helps to foster appreciation of cultural differences and a positive attitude towards those with a different cultural past (Solomon, 1982). In line with the definitions and aims of multicultural education, the principles to be considered by philosophy of multicultural education should be as follows:

- Multicultural education has to help students to get to know, respect and tolerate different religious beliefs and ideas (Gundara, 2000; Portera, 2008).
- Multicultural education has to enable students to develop a religious identity in the light of their own religious culture (Miedema and Bertran-Troost, 2008).
- Multicultural education has to help contribute to the solution of such social problems as religious prejudice, discrimination and abuse (Coulby and Zambeta, 2008).
- Multicultural education has to take secularism as its basis (Modood, 2007).
- Multicultural education has to contribute to people with different religious beliefs and ideas, thus allowing them to live united in peace (Banks, 1994; Gundara, 2000).

The adaptation of the principles of multicultural education into the religious education brings to mind secularism. In other words, multicultural religious education means secular religious education. Secularism and multiculturalism include the same philosophical purposes. Overall, secularism and multiculturalism play as a tandem role in an opposing force (Bhandar, 2009). Modood (2007) stated that secularism is one of the ways to implement this structure. Secularism is defined as “indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion or religious considerations” (Mitchell, 1987). Gulalp (2003) reported that secularism is associated with enlightenment and the freedom of thought. According to Berger (1967:107) secularization is “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.” Secularism is commonly thought of as a separation of religious from secular institutions. More specifically the regulation of religious belief out of the public and into the private sphere must be considered. However, it is not true that religious beliefs are not important for secularism. It is accepted that religious beliefs are main part of the social life of people who believe a religion according to secularism (Marty, 1964). Secularism rejects the advocacy of specific religious beliefs while supporting to philosophical aspects of different forms of religious beliefs. According to Taylor, secularism means religious freedom and a state does not have the authority on any religious beliefs and ideas (Bhandar, 2009).

Mahmood (2006) reported that secularism has commonly been interpreted as securing the principle of freedom of conscience, and the toleration of religious expression as a private matter. Brown (2006) emphasized that a secular state has to be tolerant towards cultural and historical differences. Schools must teach democratic values as respecting other students’ religious beliefs, race, culture and sexual orientation and avoid discrimination (Blum, 2010). A moderate secularism recognizes pluralistic societies. Overall, school curriculum must include themes such as plurality, equality, inquiry and authenticity.

Secularism in Turkey

The Constitution of Turkish Republic defines Turkish Republic as a secular state (Constitution of Turkish Republic, 2011). Secularism was a modernization project designed by Atatürk (Erdogan, 1999; Yavuz 2009). In 1924 the Caliphate and the Ministry of Religion Affairs were abolished. In 1925 religion orders were prohibited. A civil Code in the western style was introduced in 1928. In 1928 constitution was amended and the articles stating that “the state’s religion is Islam” were deleted. Finally the principles of secularism were formally introduced into the Turkish Constitution by the amendment

carried out in 1937 (Daver, 1988). The secularism that was adopted in Turkey has often been related to the French *laïcité* tradition. While in some senses it may be accurate that some elements were borrowed, in actual practice the Turkish brand of secularism has taken its own character (Barker, 2012). Secular religious education is important for Turkey which has a rich historical and cultural past harboring various religions and religious ideas (Çelebi, 2009). In line with the law of harmonization code of the European Union, Turkey as a nation must apply EU mandates. This perspective requires that religious education in Turkey must be configured in accordance with the secular and multicultural education principles. As previously mentioned, there is no common practice in Europe in relation to religious education. It is important to implement religious education practices in line within the context of secularism and multiculturalism. This study may blaze a trail to ensure that EU member states evaluate their legal arrangements and practices and program related to religious education in terms of multiculturalism and secularism. Besides, this study may provide a reference for the European Union Commission to evaluate Turkey's attempts with regards to the human rights issues that arose during in the accession period. In this study, the researcher examined the legal background of religious education at elementary schools in Turkey and objectives of the Religion and Moral Course program provided in formal elementary schools with regard to multiculturalism and secularism.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the legal bases of secular and multicultural religious education, and philosophy, principles and objectives of Religious and Moral Course Program implemented in elementary schools in Turkey with regard to multiculturalism and secularism. The present study was guided by the following main questions:

What is the legal basis for a secular and multicultural religious education at elementary schools in Turkey?

What are the philosophy, principles and objectives of Religious and Moral Course Program implemented at elementary schools with regard to secular and multicultural education?

Method

Research Design

The study was designed as a qualitative research by using records. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 277) defined records as "any written or recorded statement prepared by or for individual or organization for the purpose of attesting to an event or providing an accounting." In this study, the researcher examined the Constitution of the Turkish Republic, the Basic Law of National Education numbered 1739 and the Moral and Religious Course Program as records.

Data Collection

In the study, the researcher examined the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Basic Law of National Education numbered 1739 in order to determine the legal bases of secular and multicultural religious education. Moreover, the researcher examined the Moral and Religious Course Program implemented in the elementary schools in Turkey to evaluate the philosophy, principles of religious education, and objectives related to the secular and multicultural education.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was carried out to examine the records used as the sources of data of the study. Content analysis involves interpreting, theorizing or making sense of data by categorizing and coding, and then establishing a pattern for the entire data set by relating the categorizes to another (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). In the study, the researcher determined and used 4 criteria based on secularism and multicultural education literature (Banks, 1994; Bhandar, 2009; Blum, 2010; Coulby and Zambeta, 2008;

Gundara, 2000; Gokulsing, 2006; Modood, 2007; Portera, 2008) for the content analysis. 4 criteria used in the analysis were following: *Criteria 1 (Respect to different religion beliefs and ideas)*: Secular and multicultural education has to help students to get to know and respect different religious beliefs and ideas.

Criteria 2 (No prejudice and discrimination and abuse): Secular and multicultural education has to help contribute to the solution of such social problems as religious prejudice, discrimination and abuse.

Criteria 3 (Secularism): Multicultural education has to accept secularism as its basis.

Criteria 4 (Living together peacefully): Secular and multicultural education has to contribute to people with different religious beliefs and ideas for living together peacefully.

At the first stage of analysis, the researcher determined the articles of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Basic Law of National Education, the philosophy, principles and objectives of the program on secular and multicultural education. Then, two researchers interested in religious and multicultural education reviewed the results of analysis by considering 4 criteria on secularism and multiculturalism. After the consensus, the researcher determined and interpreted the findings of the study according to criteria based on secular and multicultural education literature.

Findings

What is the legal basis for a secular and multicultural religious education at elementary schools in Turkey?

One of the first main legal bases of secular and multicultural moral and religious education in Turkey is the Constitution of the Turkish Republic. The articles 2, 10, 24, and 42, which are related to education, of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic are the basis of secular and multicultural religious education in Turkey.

Article 2. The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular and social state governed by the rule of law; bearing in mind the concepts of public peace, national solidarity and justice; respecting human rights; loyal to the nationalism of Atatürk, and based on the fundamental tenets set forth in the Preamble (Constitution of Turkish Republic, 2011).

The Article 2, which defines the characteristics of the Turkish Republic, describes the Turkish Republic as a secular, social and constitutional state. The secular characteristic of the Turkish Republic calls for a secular and multicultural moral and religious education.

Article 10. All individuals are equal without any discrimination before the law, irrespective of language, race, color, gender, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such considerations (Constitution of Turkish Republic, 2011).

The Article 10 of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic states that every citizen is equal before law regardless of their mother language, race, color, sex, political opinion, philosophical worldview, religion, sect...etc. A secular and multicultural religious education is a *sine qua non* for the Article 10 to be fully put into practice.

Article 24. Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction. Acts of worship, religious services, and ceremonies shall be conducted freely, provided that they do not violate the provisions of Article 14. No one shall be compelled to worship, or to participate in religious ceremonies and rites, to reveal religious beliefs and convictions, or be blamed or accused because of his religious beliefs and convictions. Education and instruction in religion and ethics shall be conducted under state supervision and control. Instruction in religious culture and moral education shall be compulsory in the curricula of elementary and secondary schools. Other religious education and instruction shall be subject to the individual's own desire, and in the case of minors, to the request of their legal representatives. No one shall be allowed to exploit

or abuse religion or religious feelings, or things held sacred by religion, in any manner whatsoever, for the purpose of personal or political influence, or for even partially basing the fundamental, social, economic, political, and legal order of the state on religious tenets (Constitution of Turkish Republic, 2011).

The Article 24 of the Constitution indicates that every citizen has the freedom of thought and faith and that no individual can be forced or accused in this respect. Therefore, it is a constitutional obligation that religious education program administered at the formal and informal schools in Turkey adopt the philosophy of a secular and multicultural education in order to ensure freedom of thought and faith.

The other legal base of secular and multicultural religious education in Turkey is the Basic Law of National Education. The Articles 4, 8 and 12 of the Basic Law of National Education are the basis of secular and multicultural religious education in Turkey.

Article 4 – Educational institutions are open to all regardless of race, gender, or religion.

Article 8 – The equal opportunities shall be provided to every woman and man in education. Special measures shall be taken in order to support children in need of protection and special education.

Article 12 – Secularism is one of the bases of National Education (Basic Law of National Education, 1973).

The Articles 4 and 8 of the Basic Law of National Education state that educational institutions are available to all citizens underlining the principle of equal opportunity. Thus, they are direct references for a secular and multicultural moral and religious education. The Article 12 maintains that secularism forms the basis of the Turkish national education and therefore can be adopted when achieved through such system.

As a result, the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Basic Law of Turkish National Education implied that religious education programs in Turkey have to be planned and implemented according to the principles of secularism and multicultural education.

What are the philosophy, principles and objectives of Religious and Moral Course Program implemented at elementary schools with regard to secular and multicultural education?

The Religious and Moral Course in the Elementary School Program in Turkey is related to religious education and compulsory for all of the elementary school students. The philosophy of the Religious and Moral Course Program at elementary schools is stated as follows:

“To train contemporary students who have adopted Atatürk’s principles and revolutions; who are equipped with basic democratic values; who have the qualifications required by the present age; who are respectful of human rights; who are sensitive to their environment; who know, protect and improve themselves, the society, their cultural heritage and the nature; who take into consideration the influence of Islam on culture, language, art, traditions and ethics; who treat those that are of the same religion as themselves and those that are not both tolerantly; and who are familiar with other religions” (MEB, 2006, p. 8).

The program’s philosophy directs itself to secular and multicultural religious education. It is believed that the philosophy of the program is consistent with the legal basis of secular and multicultural education. In line with the philosophy and basic principles of the program, it is expected that the objectives of program will be designed with the perspectives of the principles of secular and multicultural religious education. The objectives of the Moral and Religious Course Program that are directly related to the principles of a secular and multicultural religious education are given as follows:

The objectives related to Criteria 1, secular and multicultural education has to help students to get to know and respect different religious beliefs and ideas, were following:

Unit: Beliefs in Holy Scriptures and Prophets (Grade 6)

Objective 1. To know the prophets in the Quran.

Objective 2. To explain the meaning of Holy Scripture.

Objective 3. To know which Holy Scriptures and their pages were sent to which prophets
 Objective 4. To know the common characteristics of the way in which it was sent to the prophets.

Objective 5. To explain the characteristics of prophets (MEB, 2006, p.47).

Unit: Different Beliefs in Islam (Grade 8)

Objective 6. To classify the different beliefs in Islam.

Unit: Religions and Universal Advice

Objective 7. To discuss the reasons of emergence of different religions.

Objective 8. To know the basic characteristics of The Main Religions that exist today (MEB, 2006, p.64).

Unit: Our Culture and Religion (Grade 7)

Objective 9. To care to preserve cultural values..

Unit: Religions and Their Universal Advice (Grade 7)

Objective 10. To be tolerant of different religions and beliefs (MEB, 2006, p.58).

The objectives in the Belief in Holy Scriptures and Prophets Unit imply the importance of knowing about different religious beliefs for secular and multicultural religion education. For instance, the elementary school objectives for students in grade 6 will be to educate them about the prophets in the Quran as well as their characteristics, and the meaning of the Holy Scriptures and know their prophets (e.g. Mohammad-Islam, Christ- Christianity and Moses-Judaism). Moreover, the students in grade 6 will have knowledge and be able to explain common characteristics of the inspirations and prophets of other religions. The objective 6, which is essential for secularism, indicates that the student in grade 8 will be educated about other religions (other than Islam) but also different beliefs in Islam. The elementary school students will know other religion such as Christianity and Judaism by means of discussing their reasons of existence. In the 7th grade course program, there are two objectives that are directly related to respecting different religious beliefs and ideas. As a result, the students will know and respect the different religious beliefs and ideas such as Christianity and Judaism and their Holy Scriptures, inspirations and prophets. Respect, knowledge and tolerance towards different religious beliefs and ideas are essential for secular and multicultural religious education (Almond, 2010; Britt, 2006; Gundara, 2000; Portera, 2008).

The objectives on Criteria 2, secular and multicultural education has to help contribute to the solution of such social problems as religious prejudice, discrimination and abuse, were following:

Unit: Comments in Islam (Grade 8)

Objective 18. To recognize the different comments in Religion.

Objective 19. To classify the different beliefs and ideas in Islam.

Objective 20. To explain why different beliefs and ideas in Religion is a richness.

Objective 21. To be aware of different insights in different Religious.

Objective 22. To explain that there is no coercion in religion by verses from Quran and Hadith.

Unit: Religions and their Universal Advice (Grade 8)

Objective 23. To be aware that religion is a universal fact.

(MEB, 2006, p.62).

The elementary school students in grade 8 will learn the different comments, beliefs and ideas of the Religions and Islam (Objective 18 and 19). The objectives indicate that Muslim students will learn that there is no pressure placed upon religion (from the verses in Quran and hadiths) (objective 20). Moreover, the objective 18 and objective 22 show that students will understand the universal facts of other religions and be able to give examples of universal advice of religions and Islam. The program objectives emphasize that there is no obligation in Islam when adopting acceptance and belief. The students will understand the meaning of religion as a universal fact, learn the different interpretations in religions and

their value. As a result, the program will contribute to secularism and the solution of social problems such as religious prejudice, discrimination and abuse.

The objectives on Criteria 3, multicultural education has to accept secularism as its basis, were following:

Unit: Culture and Religious (Grade 7)

Objective 25. To know the meaning of secularism and understand that it is a security in selecting a religion and expressing religious beliefs and ideas (MEB, 2006, p.58).

The objective 25 indicates that students will learn the meaning of secularism and its importance for selecting and expressing their religious beliefs. Although in the program there is only one objective on secularism, it can be assumed that the objectives on “knowing and respecting different religious beliefs” and “social problems as religious prejudice, discrimination and abuse” are directly related to secularism in the program. As a result the elementary school students will understand secularism and its importance for selecting and expressing religious beliefs.

The objectives on Criteria 4, secular and multicultural education has to contribute to people - people with different religious beliefs and ideas - living together peacefully, were following:

Unit: Morals (Grade 4)

Objective 26. Providing examples to explain the importance of love and peace in Islam.

Objective 27. To sympathies and exist together peacefully and friendly.

Unit: Loving One's Country and Nation (Grade 5)

Objective 28. To explain the meaning of “Peace at home and peace in the world” declared by Atatürk (MEB, 2006, p.35).

The Objective 26 and Objective 27 indicate that the students will learn the importance of love and peace in Islam and exist peacefully together with people from different religious beliefs. As well, the students will understand the meaning of Atatürk's statement “Peace at home and peace in the world” (Objective 28). These objectives will contribute to the understanding of secularism. As a result, the elementary school students will be secular and contribute to peace in the world.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the analysis of records showed that the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Basic Law of Turkish National Education include many articles related to multicultural and secular religious education. According to Erdogan (1999) secularism is the most significant elements of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic. Moreover, Vural (2014) stated that the Constitution of the Turkish Republic consists of many norms related to the protection of freedom of religion with regard to multiculturalism and secularism. The Constitutions of EU member states which have confessional religious education system include articles on religious education and emphasize a dominant religion in the society (Willaime, 2006). The legal background of those countries that provide religious education in the confessional system does not comply with the multicultural and secular religious education principles emphasized in the EU Constitution. However, articles included in the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey as well as the laws concerning religious education are not associated with a single religion and cover multicultural and secular religious education principles. It can be stated that Turkey, which is a EU candidate country, does not need to make legal arrangements within its Constitution and laws on education to comply with the standards of the EU Constitution. The Constitution of Republic of Turkey and the Basic Law of Turkish National Education may set a model for other EU countries in relation to secular and multicultural education. This is the most interesting implication of the present study.

According to the articles of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Basic Law of Turkish National Education, religious education at elementary schools in Turkey has to be planned and implemented according to the nature and principles of secularism and multiculturalism. The philosophical base of the Religious and Moral Course Program implemented at elementary schools reflects the multicultural and secular religious education, parallel with the articles of the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Basic Law of Turkish National Education. The philosophy of the program implies that the students will be respectful of human rights, other religions, cultures and democratic values. Also, the principles of the program states that the students will respect to thought, freedom, ethnic and cultural heritage, and learn about other religions, and thus be tolerant of people with different opinions and religious beliefs.

The Religious and Moral Course Program at elementary school level in Turkey consist of many objectives directly related to the secular and multicultural religious education. For example, the objectives on knowing, respecting and tolerating different religions; solving social problems such as religious prejudice, discrimination and abuse, secularism, living together peacefully are all directly related to the secular and multicultural religious education in Turkey. However, there are some objectives in the program which contradict with multicultural education and secularism emphasized in the Articles of the Constitution of Turkey and Basic Law of Turkish National Education. The Program includes many objectives on learning Islam; however it does not consist of enough objectives for students with different religious beliefs and ideas. Erdogan (1999) emphasized that secular state does not support only one religious belief but rather all religions in society and it should be equally considered by the state. The students with different religious beliefs will not have the opportunities to learn about their religion in elementary school. The Muslim elementary school students in Turkey will be able to have religious identity in the light of their own religious culture. However, the students with different religions will not have equal opportunity.

The Religious and Moral Course Program implemented at the elementary schools in Turkey is compulsory for every student except for minorities living in Turkey (MEB, 2006). It is criticized that students with different religious beliefs in Islam will be obliged to learn Islam and the Sunni sect which is the broadly accepted belief system in Turkey (Bilici, 2007). At an institutional level, the state should be neutral toward all of its citizens both religious and non-religious (Hurd, 2008). The implementation of such compulsory religious education program contradicts with the articles of the Constitution of Turkish Republic and Basic Law of National Education on secularism. For example, Article 24 of the Constitution of Turkish Republic states that every citizen has the freedom of thought and faith and that nobody can be forced or accused in this respect. Furthermore, the Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights states "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. In accordance with the Article 24 and Article 9, Turkish National Education has to take into consideration the applications of the parents of students with different religious beliefs for the right to religious education and thus provide their children with educational opportunities through programs. The Religious and Moral Course Program in Turkey should be revised by considering students with different religious beliefs. Subprograms or support programs in the Religious and Moral Course Program for different religious beliefs or differentiated religious education programs should be designed and implemented in the elementary school system in Turkey.

As a conclusion, it is understood that Turkey, an EU candidate country, has legal arrangements which comply with the standards included in the EU Constitution and may set a model for the other EU countries. Although the philosophy and certain objectives of religion education comply with the multicultural and secular religious education principles, some objectives of the curriculum appear to be inappropriate for the multicultural and secular religious education principle. Program planners who are interested in religious education in Turkey should design program objectives, content, learning experiences according to the multicultural and secular education defined in the Articles of Constitution of EU and Turkish Republic. Considering that there is no common standard on religious education in the laws and curricula of EU member states and that EU member states with a

confessional system experience difficulties in terms of a multicultural education and secularism in the constitution and religious education practices, EU member states and candidate countries should create common curriculum standards by making constitutional and legal arrangements based on the EU Constitution concerning religious education. Program planners in Turkey and EU countries should organize cooperative curriculum planning studies. The current study is limited with religious education program implemented at the elementary schools in Turkey. Researcher should investigate religious program implemented in high schools in Turkey in terms of multicultural and secular religious education principles. In this study, the religious education program was examined; researchers should examine Social Studies and History Course programs implemented in elementary and high schools in terms of multicultural education. This study also is limited with religious education elementary school program in Turkey. Researchers who are interested in religious education in Europe should investigate the legal bases and program objectives of religious education in European Countries by considering multicultural and secular principles of European Constitution.

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Geniř Özet

Din Eđitim Programının Laiklik ve Çokkültürlölük Açısından İncelenmesi

Avrupa Birliđi ölkeleri arasındaki dini farklılıklar olumlu bir deđer olarak kabul edilmekte ve din eđitimine büyük önem verilmektedir. Ancak temel problem, farklı dini ve etnik deđerleri olan insanların bir uyum içinde nasıl bir araya getirileceđidir. Avrupa Birliđi Anayasası Avrupa Birliđine üye olan ölkelerde din eđitimi için bir referanstır ve genel çerçeveyi çizmektedir. Avrupa Birliđi Anayasası üye ölkelerdeki din eđitim uygulamaları için belirli standartları içermektedir. Bu standartlarda herkesin din ve düşünce özgürlüğüne sahip olduđu ve hiç kimseye veya gruba ayırimcılık yapılamayacağı vurgulanmaktadır. Bir başka ifade ile Avrupa Birliđi Anayasası laik ve çok kültürlü din eđitiminin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Türkiye Avrupa Birliđine aday ölkelerden biridir. Türkiye üyelik sürecinde demokrasi, insan hakları ve azınlık hakları konusunda birçok reformlar yapmıştır. Ancak demokrasi ve insan hakları konusunda eksikler olduđu belirtilmektedir (Hughes, 2004). Aday ölkeler olarak Türkiye'deki resmi okullarda yapılan din eđitimi, Avrupa Birliđi Anayasasında belirtilen standartlara uygun olmalı, laik ve çok kültürlü eđitim ilkelerini temele almalıdır. Bu çalışmada, öncelikle laik ve çok kültürlü din eđitiminin yasal temelleri incelenmiştir. Daha sonra ise Türkiye'de ilköğretim okullarında uygulanan resmi Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi Ders Programının felsefesi, ilkeleri ve hedefleri laiklik ve çok kültürlölük açısından deđerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden kayıtlar kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada nitel veri kaynağı olarak Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, 1739 sayılı Milli Eđitim Temel Kanunu ve Türkiye'de resmi ilköğretim okullarında uygulanan Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi Ders Programı incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın verileri içerik analizi ile çözümlenmiştir. Verilerin analizinde laik ve çok kültürlü eđitim literatüründen yararlanılarak belirlenen 4 temel kriter kullanılmıştır. Analiz ve deđerlendirmede kullanılan kriterler farklı dinlere ve inançlara saygılı ve hoşgörölü olma, önyargı ve ayırimcılık yapmama, laikliđi benimseme ve farklı din ve inançtan olan insanlarla barış içinde yaşamayı içermektedir. Araştırma sonuçları laik ve çok kültürlü din eđitimin yasal temelleri olarak Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası ve Milli Eđitim Temel Kanununun birçok madde içerdini göstermektedir. Anayasanın 2, 10, 24 ve 42. Maddeleri laik ve çok kültürlü din eđitiminin yasal temellerini oluşturmaktadır. Özellikle Anayasanın 2. Maddesinde Türkiye Cumhuriyetinin demokratik ve laik bir ölkeler olduđu belirtilmektedir. Milli Eđitim Temel Kanunun 12. Maddesi ulusal eđitimin laik temellere dayanması gerektiđi belirtilmektedir. Resmi ilköğretim okullarında uygulanan Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi Dersi Programının felsefesi ve ilkelerinin laik ve çok kültürlü din eđitimi yansıttını belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, araştırma bulguları, programın laik ve çok kültürlü din eđitimi ile ilgili birçok hedef içerdini ortaya koymaktadır. Programın felsefesi, ilkeleri ve çok kültürlü eđitim ile ilgili hedefleri Avrupa Birliđi ölkeleri için model olabilir Ancak, programın felsefesi, ilkeleri ve hedefleri ile laik ve çok kültürlölüğün yasal temelleri arasında bazı çelişkiler bulunduđu belirlenmiştir. Örneğin, Türkiye'de ilköğretim okullarında uygulanan Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi Dersi Programının tüm öğrenciler için zorunlu olması laik ve çok kültürlü din eđitim ilkeleri ile çelişen bir durum olduđu söylenebilir. Ayrıca programın bir dini inancı temele aldığı farklı dini inanç ve görüşleri olan öğrencilerin kendi inançlarını öğrenerek dini bir kimlik geliştirmeye yönelik hedefleri ve olanakları içermediđi söylenebilir. Türkiye'de resmi ilköğretim okullarında uygulanan Din ve Ahlak Bilgisi Ders Programının farklı dini inanç ve görüşleri olan öğrencilere eđitim imkânı sağlayacak biçimde yenilenmeli veya bu öğrenciler için ek programlar hazırlanmalıdır.