

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS A SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT ANKARA UNIVERSITY DIVINITY FACULTY

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Abstract

In this article, the theoretical and practical contributions concerning the rise and development of religious education science, its basic characteristics, orientations and fields as an academic discipline in Turkey are discussed. Religious education made its first step into academic disciplines at the Ankara University Divinity Faculty. And first academicians in the field of religious education were taught at this faculty. Department of Religious Education, which was established after a long time, took the lead in educating religious education academicians in newly established divinity faculties. Moreover; the end of this article, information is given in relation to the general institutional appearance of religious education in nowadays Turkey.

During the research, in order to reveal the historical development of department of religious education, archives of Ankara University Divinity Faculty were examined. First-hand information was derived from decision books of Administrative, Professors and Faculty Board. When exploring the characteristic features, scientific orientations and contributions of Department of Religious Education, the scientific works carried out by department's academicians and their graduate and postgraduate students were referred to.

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Keywords: Religious Education in Turkey, Science of Religious Education, Department of Religious Education, Training RE (Religious Education) Teachers, Ankara University Divinity Faculty.

Summary

When thought education in Islamic world It came to mind religion-oriented training, it continued this until the establishment of modern educational institutions after the 18th century. *Madrasahs* were the center in Islamic education. Medicine, philosophy and maths were taught along with Basic Islamic Sciences in *Madrasahs*. On the contrary, there weren't any educational lessons regarding the teaching of teachers and professors in the curriculum of *Madrasahs*.

'Education science' was added to the curriculums of Second and Higher Stages of Secondary Schools as part of reforming *Madrasahs* in 1914, but this lesson couldn't find the position in the curriculums for a long time. In 1915, again in the first three classes of primary program of *Darulmuallimin* (Teacher's Training School) there were 2 hours education sciences *Fenn-i Terbiye* lessons per week. With the many changes made after this, religious institutions such as theology of religions etc., which these courses took place, were closed. In other words, there was no higher religious education in Turkey between 1933 and 1949.

The Grand National Assembly of Turkey made a decision to establish a Faculty of Theology at Ankara University whose primary aim of this faculty was to educate higher religious professionals, on 4 June 1949. This was the new begin in the context of both higher religious education and training of religious educator, scholars and staffs. Ankara University, Theology faculty was opened mainly for academic and scientific purposes and in addition to these purpose, the need for new higher education institution to educate religious education teachers was obvious. In order to respond this need, from 1958-1959 onwards Higher Islamic Institutes were opened.

When the Institutes' programs have been examined, it has been understood that lessons concerning teaching profession were included in the curriculum. In the curriculum which was put into practice in 1959 and sustained for a long time, there was lesson titled by 'Religious Pedagogy'. In 1982, it happened again a huge change in the higher religious education. The Higher Islamic Institutes and The Faculty of Islamic Sciences were transformed into Divinity Faculties and they started to be headed by the Universities. Thereby, then higher education of religion in Turkey started to be offered only by the divinity faculties of universities.

In the curriculum of the Divinity Faculty, founded in 1949 as part of Ankara University, moreover, there was not a lesson with the name of ‘religious education’. Nevertheless, *pedagogy* was taught 2 hours per week in the 4th years as part of the first curriculum of the Faculty. In 1977, two great changing happened for the progress from pedagogy towards religious education. First of these was the allocation of a professor and an associate professor positions for *teacher hood vocational training certificate* lessons as a part of Psychology of Religion Professorship (FBD 9.3.1977: 74/450-a) and the second was the decision agreed on pedagogy to be included among Basic Sciences of Theology as part of Doctorate Regulation of Theology. Subsequently, With the decision, dated 5.3.1980 and numbered 131/906, of the faculty board which was considered the report of the commission, pedagogy lesson was separated from psychology of religion and religious education professorship was established.

In 1991, The Higher Education Board considered the recommendations of the commission attended by the deans of Divinity Faculties and another representative from each faculty to review the academic classification and curriculums of Divinity Faculties. As a result of this, it was decided that the name of “Department of Education Sciences” to be changed to “Department of Religious Education”.

The Department of Religious Education’s development and transformation journey was quite long but it was unforgettable of Beyza Düşüngen’s (Bilgin) great effort. She was appointed in 1965 as the first research assistant of the professorship; She had became the first PhD of the field in 1970, first associate professor in 1979 and first professor in 1988; until she retired in 2002 and she chaired the department. As of 2018 year, the department maintains its function with 3 professors, 2 associate professors, 1 assistant professor, 1 lecturer and 2 researches assistant.

Nowadays, the field of religious education, which now has the qualification of science, owns a broad of research field. Any place where religion has been taught and learned is part of this field with its past, present and future and with its all elements that have gotten involved in the process of teaching and learning. Religious education in the family, formal and informal religious education in formal sphere and religious education constitute research field for education science with its all dimensions and elements.

Since the department was established at Ankara University, it can’t be wrong to say that the studies have carried out in other departments of religious education in whole Turkey have been affected and contributed by the department at Ankara University. Another area where the influence of Religious

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Education Department can be seen is program development and book studies. The theoretical and practical contributions of western religious education on the development process of religious education science are worth to consider. The formal and informal religious education need of Turks living in western countries, in particularly Germany and their problems have oriented Turkish religious educators towards these countries.

As a result, the Religious Education Department of Ankara University Divinity Faculty has made many contributions to the field of formal religious education. Since 2006, alongside the teachers of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge Lesson in Primary Schools starting to get trained in Education Faculties, the department has been contributing to the development of the departments of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge which are part of Education Faculties. In the subsequent periods, it will assume responsibility for training teachers for Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge lessons and for religious high schools vocational lessons.

Bilimsel Bir Disiplin Olarak Din Eğitimi: Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesinde Din Eğitimi Anabilim Dalının Kuruluşu

Öz

Türkiye'de din eğitimi bilimi, Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi'ndeki akademik disiplinler içinde doğmuş ve alanın ilk akademisyenleri bu fakültede yetişmiştir. Fakültenin açılışından uzun bir süre sonra kurulan Din Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, yeni kurulan ilahiyat fakültelerinin din eğitimi akademisyenlerini yetiştirmede öncü rol oynamıştır. Bu makalede, alanında ilk ve lider olmasından dolayı Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi üzerine yoğunlaşarak, din eğitiminin Türkiye'de bilimsel bir disiplin olarak gelişmesi tartışılmaktadır. Ayrıca, Türkiye'deki mevcut din eğitiminin genel kurumsal görünümü ile ilgili bilgi verilmektedir.

Araştırmada, din eğitimi bölümünün tarihsel gelişimini ortaya koymak amacıyla Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi arşivleri incelenmiştir. İlk elden bilgiler, Yönetim Kurulu, Profesörler ve Fakülte Kurulu karar defterlerinden alınmıştır. Din Eğitimi Bölümü'nün karakteristik özellikleri, bilimsel yönelimleri ve katkıları incelenirken, bölümün akademisyenleri tarafından yürütülen bilimsel çalışmalar ve onların lisans ve lisansüstü öğrencilerine atıfta bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi, Din Eğitimi Bilimi, Din Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, Din Eğitimi Öğretmeni Yetiştirme, Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi

INTRODUCTION

The relationships between religion and education in Islamic world had always been religion-oriented up until the establishment of modern educational institutions after the 18th century¹. The education that was given in *Madrasahs* had a religious character; its aims and content were determined in a religion-centric way. Alongside basic Islamic courses, some other courses such as medicine, philosophy and maths were taught in *Madrasahs*. Although the teachers and professors of both *Madrasahs* and other religious schools were trained in *Madrasahs*, educational lessons regarding the teaching of teachers and professors were not included in the curriculum of *Madrasahs*. In other words, education itself was not subject of teaching and learning science in *Madrasahs*.

With the establishment of schools apart from *Madrasahs* and ever increasing expansion of primary education, the need for ‘teacher education / training’ was felt more. *Darulmuallimin*, established to educate teachers, there was only a lesson delivering ‘teacher training’ “Giving Lectures and Method of Teaching” (Akyüz 2000: 162). However, there was no lesson about methods of teaching in the curriculum of school term 1882-83 (Akyüz 2000: 166-167). It was determined that from 1851 onwards, methods of teaching lesson, designed to deliver vocational knowledge and skills of teaching, was taught under the different names for teacher training. The emphasis put on this lesson varied depending on the administrators of *Darulmuallimin* and *Darulmuallimat* and/or the teaching staffs. Akyuz expresses that this lesson was further developed with the endeavors of Satı Bey after 1908 (Akyüz 2000: 168).

The following can be said when evaluating the aforementioned developments regarding that teacher training in terms of religious education: With modern schools, the religious character of education disappeared and Religious Education (RE) became only one of the lessons. Furthermore, no lessons regarding religious education were taught at schools established for teacher education/ training.

¹ In the preparation of this article, in particular the subject of historical development, it has been benefited from the article on Cemal Tosun (2009), “The Rising, Development of Religious Education as a department in Turkey and its contributions to the Field” *Türk Bilimsel Derlemeler Dergisi* (Journal of Turkish Scientific Compilations) C. 2, S. 1: 293-303.

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Although a lesson titled as ‘education science’ was added to the curriculums of Second and Higher Stages of Secondary Schools as part of reforming *Madrasahs* in 1914, this lesson was removed from the curriculum a year later as a result of changes in the curriculum (Atay 1983: 263-268). In 1915, in the first three classes of primary program of *Darulmuallimin* (Teacher's Training School) there were 2 hours education sciences *Fenn-i Terbiye* lessons per week.

To conclude, in the period leading up to the foundation of Republic although there had been some efforts for establishing institutions to train teachers from 1848 onwards. Teachers were taught under the logic of ‘those who know teach’ and adequate emphasis was not put on lessons related to education, training and also, such lessons were adequately not included in the curriculums. Consequently, the idea of being an educator was based on the principle of ‘knowing the subject that would taught’ as opposed to the need for “knowing how to teach”. The subject of knowing how to teach was left to individual capabilities and the experience was gained through the process of education. Similarly, the teaching of religious education was exposed to the same approach.

1. Science of Religious Education and Divinity Faculties as Higher Religious Education Institutions

Higher religious education within universities in Turkey commenced with the opening of the branch of *Ulum-u Aliye-i Diniye* (Divinity School) on 1 September 1900 at Dar-ul Funun (an institution of higher education-university) in Istanbul. In line with the Union of Education Law, it was turned into Faculty of Theology under *Dar-ül Fünun* (University) in May, 1924. With the university reforms in 1933, *Dar-ül Fünun* was closed and in lieu of it Istanbul University was established. However, Faculty of Theology was no longer a part of university. In lieu of this faculty, as part of the Faculty of Literature, Islamic Sciences Exploration Institute was founded. But, this institute was shut down in 1941 (Bilgin 1980; Ergin 1977; Koç 2000). There was no higher religious education in Turkey between 1933 – 1949.

The Grand National Assembly of Turkey made a decision to establish a Faculty of Theology at Ankara University on 4 June 1949. The primary aim of this faculty was to educate higher religious professionals. In the draft law concerning the establishment of this faculty following remarks were made; “... *opening theology faculty... in order to create necessary conditions to enable*

exploration of religious matters according to sound and scholarly principles and educate scholars whose religious knowledge and thought are sound..." (Aydın 2016: 128-132) When comments on its syllabus and education were examined, it is understood that the faculty, established in 1924, aimed for education approaching religion historically and factually instead of delivering theological education. As a matter of fact, Baltacıoğlu asserted: this faculty of being designed as a sociology or philosophy faculty and expressed that the faculty opened in 1949 should have been Islamic Theology (Ayhan 2014: 215). The faculty faced further similar criticisms.

When the faculties opened during 1924 -1949, have been assessed in terms of religious education, it is clear that both faculties have delivered higher religious education but neither of them has made religious education itself subject of science or teaching. Nevertheless, the graduates of the Ankara University Divinity Faculty have been employed as religious education teachers to teach lesson which has been included in the curriculum of year 9 and 10 as an hour per week since 1953. Since 1949, there was a need for the graduates of this faculty to teach RE in primary school in year 4 and 5. However, these graduates were neither adequate in number nor educated in terms of the delivery of religious education.

This faculty was opened for academic and scientific purposes and the need for new higher education institution to educate religious education teachers was obvious. In order to respond this need, from 1958-1959 onwards Higher Islamic Institutes were opened. The first of these Institutes was the 4-year long Higher Islamic Institute² which was opened in Istanbul on the beginning of academic year 1959-1960.³ Higher Islamic Institutes were not administered by Universities but The Ministry of National Education. The purposes of these institutes were to educate RE teachers out of the graduates of religious high

² The academician who put forward the idea of opening a higher religious education and teaching institution with the name of Higher Islamic Institute separate to the Faculty of Theology was Ord. Prof. Dr. A. Fuat Başgil. According to Başgil, the then administrators mixed the higher religious professional (mentioned in the the law of unification of education) up with the graduates of Faculty of Theolog who were known as higher theologists. Theologist is a professional or thinker who has learned philosophy, history and sociology of religion but he/she is not a scholar in the sense of being a man of God. ".....thousands of undergraduates, hundreds of thousands of Muslim Turks are in the dark about religion and science. There is need for scholars who have received higher religious education and believed in the religion which he belongs to." See. Ayhan 2014: 226-229.

³ After Istanbul Higher Islamic Institute respectively; Higher Islamic Institutes of Konya (1962), Kayseri (1965), İzmir (1966), Erzurum (1969), Bursa (1975), Samsun (1976) and Yozgat (1979) were opened. Ayhan 2014:224-229.

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schools as well as establishing ground for educating scholars hoped to protect the dignity of religion in order for an Islamic identity to be created (Ayhan 2014:224-241).

When the programs of Higher Islamic Institutes are analyzed, it can be clearly seen that lessons concerning teaching profession were included in the curriculum. In the curriculum which was put into practice in 1959 and sustained for a long time, there was lesson titled by ‘Religious Pedagogy’. Despite this, perhaps it would be too early to claim that religious education and teaching was carried out. In the curriculum of 1972-73, vocational lessons of teaching profession were included however religious education lesson was taken out of it (Cf. Ev 1999: 52-54). From the academic year 1983-1984 onwards, RE lesson had not involved in the curriculum of Higher Islamic Institutes until the curriculums of the Divinity Faculty were applied.

Until 1982, Divinity Faculty, Faculty of Islamic Sciences and Higher Islamic Institutes offered higher education of religion with different the purposes and curriculums. With general regulations carried out for higher education in 1982, Higher Islamic Institutes and Faculty of Islamic Sciences were transformed into Divinity Faculties and they started to be headed by the Universities. Thereby, then higher education of religion in Turkey started to be offered only by the divinity faculties of universities. Developments in this field since 1982 have assigned the duty of offering higher education of religion and performing in the areas of academia and science, religious education-teaching and religious services to the divinity faculties.

1.2. The Establishment and Development of Religious Education Department at Ankara University Divinity Faculty

1.2.1. Meaning and Ground Seeking of General Pedagogy at the Divinity Faculty: 1949-1980

In the curriculum of the Divinity Faculty, founded in 1949 as part of Ankara University, there was not a lesson with the name of ‘religious education’. Nevertheless, *pedagogy* was taught 2 hours per week in the 4th years as part of the first curriculum of the Faculty. Accordingly, RE was taught during the academic year 1952-53 for the first time.⁴ The content of this lesson

⁴ In some works it is stated that pedagogy lesson was first included in the curriculums of Theologies in 1953 as it was delivered in the 4th year of the faculty training and it gave its first graduates in 1953 and it is also stated that such a lesson was not available before. It would be more accurate to say that the lesson was first taught in the academic year of 1952-1953.

largely consisted of fundamental subjects concerning education science. It did not have the purpose or the content for religious education or training religious educators. The tutors delivering those lessons were not theologians or RE teachers. The first works that were written by the academicians of the Theology Faculty in the field of education did not focus on religious education. The doctorate dissertation that was prepared by Turhan Yörükán in 1954 with the title of "The Role of Culture in the Discipline of Individuals" and the book which published by Bedii Ziya Egemen under the title of 'Fundamental Issues of Moral Science' have been first works. Both books have focused on general education and education science rather than religious education. Especially the second one was taught at the Divinity Faculty as a pedagogy book for a long time (Aşikoğlu 1994:89).

Search for a religious education lesson apart from general pedagogy started in 1957-1958. During these years, the Faculty Board discussed the idea of setting a 'Spiritual Lesson' and to develop a program for this lesson, it was set up a commission. Subsequently, the developed program was accepted with the condition of deficiencies to be completed.⁵ However, this lesson was not put into action. Consequently, the first initiative for religious education was inconclusive. Nevertheless, important developments have been noticed in terms of general education and teaching profession from the academic year 1973-1974 up to now. And these developments have proved to be quite crucial for future developments regarding religious education. During this academic year, it has been decided that 'Teacher hood Vocational Certificate Training' would be given to the students of the Theology Faculty.⁶ In order to get this certificate, the followings have needed to be taken: Introduction to Education, The History of Turkish Education, The Organization of Turkish National Education, Comparative Education, Education Psychology, Education Sociology, General Education Knowledge and Practice of Teacher hood. These lessons were to be elective and independent from the curriculum. The duty of delivering the lesson of 'teacher hood vocational certificate training was given

⁵ The Faculty Board made a step in order for preparation of a program for Spiritual Lesson with its decision dated 4.12.1957 and numbered 569. With the decision dated 21.01.1958 and numbered 581, Hilmi Ziya Ülken and Bedii Ziya Egemen were delegated the responsibility of preparing the program of Spiritual Lesson. The draft program prepared by these two professors were accepted with Professors Board's decision dated 24.1.1958 and numbered 584. Prof. Dr. Sabri Şakir Ansay voted against the program.

⁶ In the text will be used by the *FBD* for the "Faculty Board Decision" and *PBD* for "Professors Board Decision" and *EBD* for "Executive Board Decision". For Example: "Faculty Board Decision dated 2.11.1973 and numbered 20-a" will be displayed as *FBD 2.11.1973:20-a*.

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to Systematic Philosophy of Professorship (FBD 17.10.1973: 3/12), because there was not education or religious education professorship and pedagogy lesson was at that time given to Systematic Philosophy of Professorship. It was impossible for these lessons to start the same year. As a result, the faculty board postponed 'Teacher hood Vocational Certificate Training' for a year (FBD 5.12. 1973: 8/50). Despite the decisions made before, this training could not be delivered at the Theology Faculty until 1977. (FBD 9.2.1977: 72/446) ⁷ The Theology Faculty students received lessons of the teacher hood from Faculties of Education. Beyza Bilgin has noted that during those years, she used to support the program by attending the Faculty of Education⁸. 'The Teacher hood Vocational Certificate Training' was added to the curriculum from 1983-84 onwards. In 1989, the Faculties of Theology were shown amongst the institutions which were officially raising teachers (See. Official Gazette, 4.07.1989, No: 20215).

Whilst the above was going on regarding teacher hood training lessons, there were ongoing changes and discussions regarding the place of pedagogy lessons in the academic restructuring. This lesson was firstly made as a part of Psychology of Religion and the professorship was changed to "Psychology of Religion and Pedagogy Professorship". As a part of a decision (FBD 3.11.1962: 192/1095) that was made at the Professors Board in 1962, pedagogy was added to the Systematic Philosophy Professorship. In 1964, it was removed from this professorship and re-added to Psychology of Religion Professorship. (FBD 28.4.1964:1234) Faculty Board decisions⁹ for the years 1967 and 1968 show pedagogy as part of Systematic Philosophy Professorship. It was 1974 when pedagogy was reconnected with Psychology of Religion Professorship (FBD 17.4.1974: 22/127 and 8.5.1974:25). Before it became an independent professorship in 1980, it had been still under Psychology of Religion Professorship. The reason behind this change was the lack of academicians in the field of Pedagogy of Religion. In fact, there were no academicians in the field of Psychology of Religion. It is not difficult to say that other potential

⁷ With the decision, it was agreed that Teacherhood Vocational Training Lessons would be delivered at the Divinity Faculty.

⁸ Interview on 30.09.2011.

⁹ In the academic year of 1967 "since there was no academician to teach the lesson of Pedagogy which was part of Systematic Philosophy Professorship, it was decided that this lesson will be taught by retired pedagogy lecturer, Hıfzırahman Raşit Öymen. (FBD 6. 11. 1967: 280/ 1697)

reasons for this could have been the personal and general negative attitudes towards pedagogy as a branch of science during those years.

Since pedagogy was not part of an independent professorship and its controversial journey in particularly, between Psychology of Religion Professorship and Systematic Philosophy Professorship negatively affected the employment and training of academicians. Following historical development was noted when the process of employing and training academicians with Psychology of Religion Professorship was checked:

In 1959 the first research assistant was appointed to the Psychology of Religion Professorship (EBD 10.08.1959:192). Neda Armaner continued her academic life in the field of Psychology of Religion despite the topic of her doctorate dissertation (PBD 15.12.1960: 161/937), titled by “*Religious Education In Terms Of Integrity of Belief and Movement*” was closer to the field of Religious Education. The same year (1959) as a second research assistant Hasan Ali Koçer was appointed to the Psychology of Religion and Pedagogy Professorship (EBD 8.12.1959:176). On 12.4.1967 Koçer, then transitioned to the Faculty of Education as a lecturer.

In the academic restructuring (1965), the first appointee for the pedagogy lesson was Beyza Dusungen (Bilgin). The first two employed research assistants before her were appointed to the Psychology of Religion and Pedagogy Professorship whereas Beyza Dusungen’s appointment was directly made for the position of research assistant for pedagogy department. In 1968, it was decided that the lecturers and faculty members would be employed for Pedagogy lesson. Hasan Ali Koçer, moving to the Faculty of Education in 1967 returned to his substantial post in 1970¹⁰, but couldn’t stay for a long time and went back again to his previous faculty. During these years, pedagogy lesson was taught by Bedii Ziya Egemen, Hıfzurrahman Raşit Öymen (PBD 6. 11. 1967: 280/ 1697) and Mehmet Karasan¹¹ who hadn’t have theology background.

¹⁰ With the decision dated 11.5.1970 and numbered 319/2063 Kocer was unanimously appointed to the position of associate professorship which was paid 70 liras to teach Pedagogy lesson and with the decision dated 8.6.1970 and numbered 320/2071 he was principally appointed to this position. The decision reads as follows: “Assoc. Prof. Hasan Ali Koçer, member of Faculty of Education Faculty of Sociology Professorship and was appointed for pedagogy lesson, as part of Systematic Philosophy Professorship as an additional duty, preferred the duty at our Faculty and thus, his request for being appointed to this position principally was discussed and accepted”

¹¹ With the decision dated 8.5.1969 and numbered 304/1902 it was agreed that Prof. Mehmet Karasan will deliver the pedagogy lesson which has not got a lecturer and Karasan was delegated fort his duty with the decision dated 9.1.1970 and numbered 311/1990.

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Beyza Bilgin, who started her doctorate work titled “*Love as the basis of Education in Islam*” in 1966, finished her dissertation in 1970 and started her work for associate professorship in the same year (FBD 8.7.1970: 323/2093). She was delegated the responsibility of teaching pedagogy lesson for the first time in 1975 (FBD 12.11.1975: 50/302-c and 21.6.1977: 82/508-g). She completed her associate professorship dissertation, titled “*Religious Education in Turkey and RE Lessons in High Schools*” in 1979.

Two important developments happened in 1977 to support the progress from pedagogy towards religious education. First of these was the allocation of a professor and an associate professor positions for *teacher hood vocational training certificate* lessons as a part of Psychology of Religion Professorship (FBD 9.3.1977: 74/450-a) and the second was the decision which agreed on pedagogy to be included amongst Basic Sciences of Theology as part of Doctorate Regulation of Theology. The fact that this decision was taken unanimously is of great importance when the historical process is considered (FBD 28.9.1977: 85/524).

1.2.2. From Pedagogy to Religious Education: Department and Professorship of Religious Education

In the academic restructuring of Theology and its lessons up until the academic year 1979-1980, apart from ‘spiritual lesson’ mentioned in 1957-58 but never put into practice, there was no discussion about “religious education”. The name of the lesson, taught under the title of pedagogy until then, was changed to *Religious Education* in the academic year 1979-1980. The process of change took place briefly as follows: firstly on 23.1.1980, a commission consisting of Neda Armaner, Necati Öner and Beyza Bilgin was established to prepare a justification for *Pedagogy* lesson to be separated from Psychology of Religion Professorship. The commission prepared a relevant report and made a recommendation to the Faculty Board for an independent religious education professorship to be established. The conclusion part of the report is as follows:

“In conclusion, we would like to inform you that it would be suitable for pedagogy lesson to be made into an independent professorship, teacher hood training lessons to be delegated to this professorship and for this professorship to be named as Religious Education Professorship”.

With the decision, dated 5.3.1980 and numbered 131/906, of the faculty board which was considered the report of the commission, pedagogy lesson was separated from psychology of religion and religious education professorship was established. The decision about establishing is as follows:

“The commission report, related to the separation of pedagogy lesson from Psychology of Religion Professorship was dealt and negotiated. With a two third majority of the board members’ vote, pedagogy lesson was decided to be separated from psychology of religion professorship, an independent professorship with the name of “Religious Education Professorship” to be founded, for pedagogy lesson to be taught as part of this professorship, for “Teacher hood Vocational Training Certificate Lessons”- which were part of a separate regulation- to be made part of Religious Education Professorship, for the read report to be accepted, for Assoc.Prof. Beyza Bilgin to be appointed to the Chairmanship of Religious Education Professorship; the relevant matter to be presented to the senate and to be submitted to rectorate’s information (907) and with the recommendation of Assoc.Prof. Beyza Bilgin a seminar or congress to be arranged about religious education”.

The faculty board decision was approved by the senate of Ankara University and on 13.05.1980; the Religious Education Professorship was established as part of Ankara University Divinity Faculty. Together with the new regulations in higher education in 1982, the term ‘Department’ replaced ‘Professorship’. Since the professorship of religious education incorporated teacher hood training lessons, too, the name was changed to “Department of Education Sciences”. In 1991, The Higher Education Board considered the recommendations of the commission attended by the deans of Divinity Faculties and another representative from each faculty to review the academic classification and curriculums of Divinity Faculties. As a result of this, it was decided that the name of “Department of Education Sciences” to be changed to “Department of Religious Education” and as part of this department two sub-departments, were created namely, “Discipline of Religious Education History” and “Discipline of Religious Education”.

Following the decision for “Discipline of Religious Education” to be created, there was another decision, namely the decision numbered 607, which entailed ‘a seminar or congress to be held about religious education’. Consequently, the 1st Religious Education Seminar was held on 23-25 April 1981. This seminar was the first one in terms of discussing the various topics of formal and informal religious education as well as discussing the education

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and religious education problems of Turkish children living abroad. It had lots of contributions and set an example for similar seminars and conferences (Türkiye Birinci Din Eğitimi Semineri 1981).

During the academic year 1983-84, *Special Teaching Methods Lesson* took its place amongst other lessons of vocational training of teacher hood. This lesson brought about some important developments in the field of religious education. The number of theoretical and practical scientific researches and publications increased rapidly in this field. With the regulation in 1997 distinguishing Teacher hood and Theology Departments, Theology department was deprived of Special Teaching Methods Lesson. This created a significant deficiency for those who did not receive teacher hood lessons after graduation. Because most of these graduates were becoming religious teachers in formal education. This deficiency is still proceeding.

When examined from the point of view of postgraduate education, the following historical development is in sight: On 26.11.1980, for the first time doctoral jury for religious education was set up (FBD 26.11.1980: 152/1016). On 17.12.1980, it was decided for religious education to be taken into the list of associate professorships (FBD 17.12 1980: 154/1034-1).

The historical developments in this field show that there were two fundamental needs which triggered the foundation of “Department of Religious Education”. The first of these two was to carry out scientific researches in the field of religious education in line with the faculty’s purposes. The second was to train a qualified RE teacher who could teach in formal and informal education. From 1973-1974 onwards, there were some efforts to make the lesson of vocational training in teacherhood elective. This accelerated the studies in the field of education and religious education in the faculty. These developments; moreover quickened the academical and scientific structuring in the field of Religious Education.

2. The Characteristic Features of Religious Education Department and Scientific Developments

2.1. The Position of Religious Education Department within Disciplines and Its Academics

At a Divinity Faculty, the department of Religious Education is part of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences. Currently, there are three academical departments in Divinity Faculties. These are: The Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences, The Basic Islamic Sciences and The

Department of Islamic History and Arts. The fact that the department of religious education is not part of the department of basic Islamic sciences is relevant to its characteristic feature. Religious Education has taken its place in academical structuring as a science of religion. Here, the impact of pedagogy being part of the Professorship of Philosophy and Psychology of Religion during the historical process can be unignorable. Perhaps, if in the beginning of the process, pedagogy lesson was included amongst Basic Islamic Sciences in the context of terms such as spirituality, invitation and conveying (Islamic teachings) there could have been different outcomes today.

In brief, the following information can be given about the academic staff of the department: Beyza Düşüngen (Bilgin) was appointed in 1965 as the first research assistant of the professorship; She had become the first Phd of the field in 1970, first associate professor in 1979 and first professor in 1988; until she retired in 2002 and she chaired the department. Since 2002, Cemal Tosun has been chairing the department. As of 2018 year, the department maintains its function with 3 professors, 2 associate professors, 1 assistant professor, 1 lecturer and 2 researches assistant.

2.2. Fundamental Approaches at the Department of Religious Education: Tradition and Scientificness

Theology disciplines have usually got powerful traditions. These traditions offer some pro and cons to today's people. Tradition can sometimes be facilitating when confronted with new problems and questions brought about for the changing time and conditions: It presents repartees/information or ways of producing solutions/approaches or methods of knowing. At times, tradition can be a reason getting in a way of the solution. Especially, if repartees/information or ways of producing solutions/approaches or methods of knowing break down to resolve the problem, a conflict is unavoidable. The approaches or methods preferred during these conflict situations can segregate scientists in terms of being traditional or contemporary etc. When preferences are made in an intense and systematic way, right categorical classifications emerge.

Religious education has got the most deep-rooted tradition among theology disciplines. Despite this, it took its place amongst theological sciences latter than the others and entered the process of institutionalization process at the latest. Religious Education starting with the practices of Prop. Mohammed (pbh), produced its own tradition in the historical process. The tradition presents substantial data on the content of religious education, its

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aims, methods, means, parties of education (such as teachers, students and parents). In fact, information is available about the resources and methods of these data. Issues such as determining the aim and necessity of education in line with the Quran and Sunnah (practices of prophet); grounding contents with religious texts, deciding about punishment and reward in accordance with the tradition can be given as examples.

Nowadays, the relevant sciences of religious education and its relationship with these sciences are an important matter/question. In fact, the closeness or belonging of religious education to theology and education sciences are also a significant area of debate. To stand close to tradition in the debates around this relationship, closeness and belonging, brings about the definition of traditionalist and/or narrative. On the other hand, standing close to the other relevant sciences, in particularly, education sciences, leads to a definition of scientific approach. In the narrative and traditionalist approach, resting on religion's fundamental texts and historical tradition is the basis issue. To put forward the other sciences in the subjects where Quran, Sunnah and tradition find their answers does not gain recognition. In a scientific approach, multidirectional research is accepted as basis. Learned centralism here is fundamental.

It should be discussed as to how much possible is pure traditionalism and pure scientificness. Approaches such as to stand close to tradition or to science on certain topics; to put science and tradition into a dialectic relationship are possible and available.

What feature is the department of religious education in Ankara University known for? In Turkey, there are people who divide religious education scientists into two groups, who have a tradition/narrative and scientific structure. Traditionalist can be split into two groups amongst themselves, namely those who approach Quran-centric and Sunnah-centric. For Quran-centric Approach, Religious Education Department of Marmara University and in particular, Bayraktar Bayraklı, is shown as examples whereas Ibrahim Canan in particular is the example for Sunnah-centric Approach Hadith Scientists (Cebeci 1996:89-101; Tosun 2011:49-51). The fundamental characteristic of this approach is that they get the information about education from Quran and/or Sunnah via narration. On the other hand, Religious Education Department of Ankara University Divinity Faculty is put forward more for its scientific approach. This characterization is correct to a certain extent; however I believe that the definition of pure scientificness is not correct. Because, as set out below narration and tradition, Quran and Sunnah maintain their significant importance in the department of religious education. Perhaps the difference is in

the approach. There might be two reasons for the definition used for Religious Education Department of Ankara University Divinity Faculty: The first reason could be that it pays attention to other relevant sciences, in particular education sciences. Sciences such as Education Sciences, Psychology, Sociology and History of Religions are seen as important as theological sciences in the religious education researches. In fact, whilst producing the knowledge of religious education falls within the remit of theology sciences, producing the knowledge as to whom, where, when and how it will be taught falls within the frame of religious education science. Based on this, a restriction is brought on the relationship with theology sciences. While trying to find answers to the questions of whom, what, when, where and how can we teach, it certainly refers to Quran and Sunnah; prioritize them according to the subject and aim but is not contended with narration. It uses collectively the facts of all relevant sciences, primarily of education sciences. When necessary, it considers the sciences and their data in a comparative way. While doing all this, it acts as an independent and interdisciplinary approach. This approach has resulted in the Theology Faculty of Ankara University seen as tending towards science rather than tradition and thus, has brought along the definition of scientific approach. The second reason, again associated with the first reason, can be the emphasis that is put on empirical researches. Pupil/Learner –centered approach entail researches in the field of religious education. As set out below, the field researches constitute a substantial part of researches which are carried out at the department of religious education.

Principally, Religious Education Department of Ankara University is not disconnected from tradition and narration. The founder of the department, Beyza Bilgin, has highlighted the importance of paying attention to narration/text and tradition. Nevertheless, her recommendation is not to suggest that tradition be narrated as it is. She says as follows in this regard:

“Without turning over the traditions and rendering them usable for themselves, generations aren’t able to resolve their problems simply by taking over traditions like mummies without changing them. With no doubt, they can’t find answers to their problems either by disregarding the tradition. The fine line here is that how the binding and historical nature of narrations, in other words the changelessness of Allah’s verses and the changeability of their interpretation and implementation throughout history can be accorded with one another ...” (Önder 1997:27)

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In her approach of religious education, Quran takes an important place. She has carried out some studies for learning, teaching Quran through understanding it and has named these studies “In Pursuit of New Method” (See. Önder 1997:27).

What she has meant by this title is to find methods to understand the Quran and to carry out educational studies with Quran. Trying to understand Quran with the names of Surahs and its basic topics was one of the recommended methods of hers. Bilgin’s book (1997), based on this method and compiled from the radio programs that she had broadcasted, is an important contribution to the field of religious education.

One of the reasons leading the religious education department of Ankara University Divinity Faculty to scientific approaches is the characteristic of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge lesson in the schools’ curriculum. This lesson, which is compulsory, is not an Islamic lesson although 80% / most of its content are related to Islam. It is a lesson about religion culture and includes education of ethics. The purpose of the lesson is to provide basis for common acculturation based on true knowledge on the phenomenon of religion, the religion of Islam, other religions and ethics. Common acculturation and contribution towards social peace are at the forefront of the lesson. Until 2006, the Divinity Faculty had been an institution which raised teachers. It prioritized formal education and religious culture and moral knowledge lessons in the field of religious education. Enough emphasis was put on training teachers for vocational lessons of religious high schools and training RE educators for non-formal education. The traditional Islamic education is mosque and madrasah based. The idea of school and religious education in school are new in contemporary terms. Therefore, whilst the need for new knowledge in the new field has brought along such a tendency, it seems that it has also weakened the relationship with tradition. In other words, there was more emphasis on the areas seen important as per tradition and the focus was on the teaching of religion at schools which did not have tradition. Beyza Bilgin’s associate professorship’s dissertation, titled as “Religious Education in Turkey and Religious Lesson in High Schools” constituted the core of this tendency.

2.3. Scientific Research Fields, Methodology and Terminology of Religious Education Department

Science of religious education possesses a broad of research field. Any place where religion has been taught and learned is part of this field with its

past, present and future and with its all elements that have gotten involved in the process of teaching and learning. Religious education in the family, formal and informal religious education in formal sphere and religious education constitute research field for education science with its all dimensions and elements.

The topics researched, the scientific methods and approaches preferred inside these researches which are carried out in the Religious Education Department of Ankara University can be determined by the lectures given by department's academicians and dissertations prepared under their supervision. The founder of the department, Beyza Bilgin has studied "*Love as the Basis of Education in Islam*" in her doctorate work. In some of her subsequent studies, she has put love theme at the forefront. Her book titled as *Child in Islam* (Bilgin 1997) and children stories titled as "Stories from Aunt Beyza 1-4" (Bilgin 1986) are examples of these. In her associate professorship dissertation, she is gravitated to field research. Her study (1980), entitled by *Religious Education in Turkey and Religious Lessons in High Schools* is also useful for developing curriculums. As the first professor of the field, she is directly or indirectly the teacher of all the academicians in the field of religious education in Turkey. She asked RE teachers to carry out a field research, especially those whom she was supervisor for heir dissertations and candidates of associate professorship and professorship who had her on their jury. The fact that doctorate dissertations of her first three assistants, Mualla Selçuk, Cemal Tosun and Nevzat Yasar Aşıkoğlu, field researchers is an indicator of her approach in this regard. Bilgin (1998) has studied on religious education as a science in her professorship presentation book. She has set out the fundamental concepts of education sciences and religious education field with its formal and informal dimension and its relevant sciences. Bilgin has encouraged her successor Cemal Tosun to concentrate on the scientificness of religious education. In line with this, since 1997, Tosun has been delivering doctorate-level lectures on the scientificness of religious education. His book titled *An Introduction to Science of Religious Education* (Tosun 2001) is an output of this concentration. Conceptual analysis of religious education science, the position of religious education amongst sciences, its methodology, terminology, foundations of religious education in formal education, curriculum of religious education and sort of lessons, religious education in the family and religious education of adults constitute the content of this book. Furthermore, Mualla Selçuk has carried out a field research on the religious education of pre-school children in her doctorate dissertation (Selçuk 1991). Accordingly, development and religious education are the areas that the department focuses on. Recai Doğan

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has got studies on the history of recent period of religious education (Doğan 1996). There are joint pieces of works written jointly by Beyza Bilgin-Mualla Selçuk (1999) and Cemal Tosun-Recai Doğan (2002; 2003) on special methods of religious education. In these pieces of works, the emphasis is on the approaches, methods and equipments to be used in religious education, especially in Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge.

Also, the field of intercultural and interfaith education is another area that the department does research on and deliver lectures both at graduate and postgraduate-levels. In this context, the academicians of the department have international experience and links. There are also some studies of Beyza Bilgin and Cemal Tosun about religious education in Germany and education of Muslim children both inside and outside of schools. Cemal Tosun carried out his doctorate dissertation¹² on religious education available to adults and children in the mosques in Germany.

Some of the graduate-level lectures are as follows: Religious Education, History of Islamic Education, Oratory, Religious Services in Social Institutions, Communication and Public Relations in Religious Services, Religious Education of Adults, Religious and Moral Development and Learning, Special Methods of Religious Teaching. Some of the postgraduate-level lectures: Basic Concepts in Religious Teaching, Scientificness of Religious Education, History of Islamic Education, Interfaith Education, Religious Education of Adults, Theology of Religious Education in Schools, Concept Teaching in Religious Teaching, Methods in Religious Education Researches etc.

With respect to postgraduate studies that have been carried out and scientific approaches and methods that have been adopted in these studies: Out of 132 postgraduate studies 26 of them are mainly upon Education History. The majority of history researches focus on recent period education and religious education (from 1836 to Republican Period). Some other researches largely concentrate on Religious Culture and Morale Knowledge Lessons. There are also field researches on informal religious education and history researches. Programs (Çapcıoğlu 2006; Gündüz 2008; Asri 2011; Yürük 2011), books (Ege 1997; Aybar 2008; Demirbağ 2008; Güner, 2010), methods (Zengin 2002; Kızılabdullah 2008) and material of religious education are mostly researched the dimensions in this field. There are also dissertations on informal religious education, especially on Quran Courses (See. Yaşar 1995; Keyifli 1997; Bulut 1997; Önder 2008; Ünal 2006).

¹² This thesis was published with the name of Din ve Kimlik (Religion and Identity) (Tosun 1996).

2.4. Scientific Contribution of Field of Religious Education in Turkey

Since the department was established at Ankara University, it can't be wrong to say that the studies carried out in other departments of religious education in whole Turkey are affected and contributed by the department at Ankara University. Below is a brief assessment of studies carried out in Turkey by departments of religious education.

When 216 master dissertations between 1980-2006, and 52 doctorate dissertations between 1989-2003 which have representation power if accepted as sample-, have been examined, following subject fields, which also indicates the methodology used in these studies, have been understood;

Approximately 30% of master studies have been obtained to be on education history. One third of these studies have been carried out on educational institutions whereas two third of them on individuals and works. The approximate proportion of history studies at the doctorate level has been investigated to be 24%. In these studies, the methods that are used in history researches have been enforced.

The rate of researches on religious education in Quran and its Surahs has been found to be around 7-8% at master level whereas it is now, under 1% in doctorate studies.

When studies on curriculum and analysis of course books are added, it can be suggested that study methods on texts are also used in the religious education's scientific researches.

As part of field researches; the proportion of master and doctorate researches carried out with teachers, students, religious educators, educators of Quran Courses and communion is approximately 30%. It would not be difficult to say that Beyza Bilgin's expectations and recommendations in associate professorship and professorship juries helped the field researches rise for this level.

Another area where the influence of Religious Education Department can be seen is program development and book studies. The Religious Education Department of Ankara University Divinity Faculty has played a leading role in the development and preparation of curriculums of religious schools in formal and non-formal education and content of relevant lessons. The programs of *Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge Lesson* in 1982 were prepared by a commission, a member of which was Beyza Bilgin. At other times, curriculums of Religious High Schools (Higher Religious Schools) and

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program of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge Lesson were prepared with the contributions of department's academicians. That Mualla Selçuk acted as the General Director of Religious Education of National Education Ministry has increased the cooperation and contribution in this regard. The department academicians have also contributed towards the preparation of curriculums of Quran Courses in non-formal education and curriculums of in-service courses.

3. Sources of Information and Openings of Religious Education Science

When the majority of studies carried out by religious education department are taken into account, it is clear that Islamic resources, tradition and resources of education sciences have been used. Those selections made in the researches can be seen as an advantage within this integrity in scientific terms.

The theoretical and practical contributions of western religious education on the development process of religious education science are worth to consider. The formal and informal religious education need of Turks living in western countries, in particular Germany and their problems have oriented Turkish religious educators towards these countries. The pioneer in this regard was yet again Beyza Bilgin and her students. Thus, amongst master and doctorate studies, the studies that have been carried out in various foreign countries stand out (Tosun 1992; Aşıkoğlu 1993; Zengin 2007). During the implementation of these studies, there has been a substantial level of knowledge and experience exchange in the field of religious education. When formal and informal education systems of relevant countries, their religious education, curriculums and books, etc, were studied on, a lot was found about and transferred to the field of religious education in Turkey. Similarly, in regards to Islamic classes, especially in formal education, some other important contributions were transferred in terms of teacher training and preparation of curriculums and books (Bilgin 2007). As a secular country, Turkey's administrative and educational attitude and practices of Islam were closely examined by all European countries which received Muslim migrants. In this process, the contributions of RE academicians in the field of formal and non-formal religious education cannot be underestimated (E.g. Selçuk 2006; Selçuk & Doğan 2007; Tosun, 2004a, 2004b, 2006a, 2006b, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Although the Department of Religious Education is the most recent department in Theology Faculties, many important progresses have been made

in terms of the number of taught academicians, postgraduate studies that have been undertaken and publications that have been made in Turkish and foreign languages. Moreover, it has made great contributions to the field of Religious Education Science in Turkey and all over the world.

Since its establishment, the department of religious education has assumed two important missions. Firstly, it is the development of religious education as a science and its institutionalization. Secondly, that is training RE teachers. Also, as it develops and institutionalizes as a department, it has produced its own field, method and terminology and it might continue to do so. Formal and informal religious education comes into prominence in the researches with its current development and history.

When uncovered areas are considered, it has been identified that there is almost no research on the religious education of disables and wunderkinds. Also, a lack of research about religious education in the family is noted. These areas are amongst important areas that religious education science needs to pay attention to.

The Religious Education Department of Ankara University Divinity Faculty has made many contributions to the field of formal religious education. Since 2006, alongside the teachers of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge Lesson in Primary Schools starting to get trained in Education Faculties, the department has been contributing to the development of the departments of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge which are part of Education Faculties. In the subsequent periods, it will assume responsibility for training teachers for Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge lessons and for religious high schools vocational lessons. However, primary tendency can be expected to be informal religious education. Religious education and moral care (hospital, prisons, elderly homes, residential units for looked after children, etc.) in social services institutions never been paid attention to so far and religious education for those in need of special education are areas which are counting on getting attention.

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