

PRE-SCHOOL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN TURKEY DURING THE CHANGE PROCESS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICIES (Example of Quran Courses for 4-6 Years)

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Abstract

Quran Courses for 4-6-year-olds aim to contribute to children's mental development by supporting their religious and moral development. From 1923 to 2014, when the Republic was founded, preschool religious education was not provided in Turkey. Since 2014, these courses, opened under the Directorate of Religious Affairs, have gained widespread popularity throughout the country. There seem to

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be difficulties opening ways to such a field of courses, such as a lack of qualified teachers, curriculums, and physical spaces. To address these issues, changes are being made to bring the curriculum up to date and upgrade and improve teacher qualifications; additionally, there are ongoing discussions about improving the quality of preschool religious education in tandem with the growing number of students following the general curriculum. By scanning studies on 4-6 Age Quran Courses, which have emerged as a new field in religious education in Turkey, this study aims to reveal the problems that arise in terms of how to establish such courses, the competence of the teachers, the appropriateness of their curriculum, and physical spaces. As a result of the research, it was seen that the teachers working in these schools had pedagogical deficiencies. There were shortcomings in the curriculum, and the text, activity books, and schools were structurally inadequate. In this context, proposals have been presented to increase the quality of these schools.

Keywords: Religious Education, Religious Development, Quran Course, Child.

Din Eğitimi Politikalarının Değişim Sürecinde Türkiye’de Okul Öncesi Din Eğitimi (4-6 Yaş Kur’an Kursları Örneği)

Öz

Cumhuriyetin kurulduğu 1923’den 2014 yılına kadar Türkiye’de okul öncesi din eğitimi verilmemiştir. 2014 tarihinden itibaren, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı’na bağlı olarak açılmış olan bu kurslar, ülkenin her tarafında hızla yaygınlık kazanmıştır. 4-6 yaş Kur’an Kursları ile çocuklara din ve değerler eğitiminin yanı sıra çocukların dini, ahlaki gelişimlerini destekleyerek onların zihinsel gelişimine katkı sağlamak hedeflenmiştir. Bu kursların açılması öğretmen, müfredat, fiziki mekân gibi problemleri beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu problemlerin giderilmesi için müfredat güncellenmesi, öğretmen yeterliklerinin geliştirilmesi gibi çalışmalar yapılmış olsa da artan öğrenci sayısına paralel okul öncesi din eğitiminin kalitesi ülkemizde tartışılmaya devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma Türkiye’deki din eğitiminde yeni bir alan olarak ortaya çıkan 4-6 Yaş Kur’an Kursları hakkında yapılan çalışmaları tarayarak, bu kursların problemlerini, öğretmenlerinin yeterliklerini, müfredatının ve fiziki mekânlarının uygunluğunu ortaya koymaya çalışılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda bu okullarda görev yapan öğretmenlerin pedagojik yetersizlikleri olduğu, müfredat ile ders ve etkinlik kitaplarında eksiklikler bulunduğu ve okulların fiziki anlamda yetersiz kaldığı görülmüştür. Bu bağlamda bu okulların niteliğinin artmasına yönelik öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Eğitimi, Dinî Gelişim, Kur’an Kursu, Çocuk.

Introduction

Giving compulsory religious lessons in our country’s schools has been a subject that has been discussed since the end of the 1800s. During the Ottoman period, the foundation of the education system consisted entirely of madrasahs operating on religious education. As a result of the Ottoman Empire’s follow-up of the developments in the West, western-style schools began to be opened before the Tanzi-

mat period. With the declaration of the Tanzimat Fermanı, the number of these schools increased rapidly. In these schools, religious education was not at the program's center but was a part of the program like other courses. It is a known fact that the policies adopted by the state in administration will be reflected in the education system. In this context, the Ottoman Empire reflected theocratic administration policies on the education system. The establishment of the Republic of Turkey on "secular" foundations caused a change in the understanding of religious education. Secularism has been the determining factor in education policies; religious education was gradually removed from schools. Religious education and training were initially given only in schools; then, it was abolished and banned. After these prohibitions, the lessons on religion were eliminated, albeit due to society's need for religious education and fluctuations in political policies, which were once again included in the education programs.

Religious lessons in educational programs were optional and became compulsory as the "Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge" lesson of 1982. Between 2002 and 2012, there was no noticeable change in religious education policies. However, in 2012, the AK Party government initiated an education reform that included religious education. Then, Imam Hatip secondary schools were reopened, and in a matter of days, the number of these schools increased rapidly throughout the country. In addition, elective courses such as the Holy Qur'an, the Life of the Prophet, and Basic Religious Knowledge are also included in the education program. When the AK Party government came to power in 2002, the number of students in Imam Hatip schools was about 70,000, which escalated to 1 million 300 thousand today. All these developments were not limited to formal education but also accelerated the activities of foundations and communities that provided such religious education. The rapid increase in formal and non-formal religious education activities throughout the country was perceived as Islamization against the secular order and led to the discussion of adopting a single religious view (Sunni-Islam) instead of multicultural education.¹

When these discussions are examined, it is seen that "*preschool religious education*" does not take place as a primary factor in the line of educational criteria. Because in Turkey, religious education

¹ M. Fatih Genç, "Values Education or Religious Education? An Alternative View of Religious Education in the Secular Age, the case of Turkey, Educational Sciences", *Educational Sciences* 8 (2018), 220.

is given officially from the 4th grade of primary school till the last grade of high school.

In Turkey, it is possible to base pre-school religious education on institutional frameworks like “Kuttab” and primary schools, which kids can attend until they are six years old and which cover pre-school education as well as theoretical foundations of child education from the age of about three to four years.² In the “Kuttab”, the children see the Qur’an, prayer, reading, writing, and Arabic lessons as compulsory lessons, while they see mathematics, poetry, history, etc. lessons as optional.³ So, although the kuttab is an institution that appeals to different age groups and continues to be attended by children in different developmental stages, it has both assumed the function of today’s pre-school institutions, such as holding a pencil, drawing lines, and counting, and has been transformed into institutions where Qur’an education is given primarily.⁴

At the beginning of the 20th century, kindergartens came to the fore in the Ottoman Empire by enacting the Education Law during Emrullah Efendi’s ministry.⁵ With a regulation issued on March 15, 1915, the aims and purposes of the kindergartens were assigned, determined, and the necessary conditions for opening the kindergartens were specified. In line with these developments, many kindergartens were officially opened in Istanbul and big cities.⁶ While pre-school education was taken to the background of the Republican period, religious education, on the other hand, faced various restrictions and prohibitions. In 1974, pre-school education came to the agenda of Turkey again, and in 2006, in the XVII National Education Council, it was decided to make pre-school education compulsory. In our education system, preschool students’ cognitive, psychomotor and affective development areas.⁷ However, until recently, there have been no gains in the moral and values development field. However, religious and moral values are part of the field of affective development. While the preschool period is critical for religious and

² Bilal Yorulmaz, “Okul Öncesi Din Eğitimi ve Tarihsel Süreci”, *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Öğretici Kitabı 4- 6 Yaş Grubu* (Ankara: DİB Yayınları, 2014), 16.

³ Faruk Bayraktar, *İslam Eğitiminde Öğretmen Öğrenci Münasebetleri* (İstanbul: İFAV Yayınları, 2008), 90.

⁴ Yorulmaz, “Okul Öncesi Din Eğitimi ve Tarihsel Süreci”, 16.

⁵ Osman Ergin, *Türk Maarif Tarihi* (İstanbul: Osmanbey Matbaası, 1977), 1277, 1303.

⁶ See: İbrahim Caner Türk, “Osmanlı Devleti’nde Okul Öncesi Eğitim” *Millî Eğitim* 192 (2011), 165-168.

⁷ Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Temel Eğitim Genel Müdürlüğü, *Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı* (Ankara: MEB Yayınları, 2013).

moral development, it is determined as a goal to gain moral principles for the child's social development.⁸

The preschool period is a process of continuous change in which growth, maturation, and development are rapid. The knowledge and experiences gained in this process are fundamental in forming a child's personality and character, which is greatly important in later shaping attitudes and behaviors. Also, in this period, the foundations of moral values began to be laid.⁹ Religious feelings awaken children when the spiritual aspect develops in the preschool period. One of the influential elements in this awakening is the family. The religious behaviors observed by the child in his family feed his interest in religious matters and his desire to learn. For this interest not to fade, the religious questions asked by the child should be answered per the level of development.¹⁰ Again in this period, it has been determined that if the child's interest and curiosity are not fed, and explanations are not given to the child in a way that he can understand, the child's religious interest may fade away and even reach the level of denial.¹¹ Religious education in early childhood constitutes the determining framework of the individual's religiosity in later years.¹²

The *preschool* period is when moral foundations can be laid healthily. The child is not born with moral virtues and values, but the moral aspect of the child is open to development and maturation. Values learned throughout life can positively change an individual's life. However, acquiring these values in the early period increases the permanence of value gains and the level of influence in the subsequent periods. There are common moral values such as honesty, love, respect, responsibility, courage, benevolence, loyalty, hard work, and internal discipline. "Modelling" has an important effect on shaping behaviors in early childhood. For this reason, it is of great importance that the child's family and close environment provide good models

⁸ M. Fatih Genç, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'na Bağlı 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarında Din Eğitimi", *İhya Uluslararası İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5/2 (2019), 509.

⁹ Cemil Oruç, "Okul Öncesi Dönem Çocuğunda Ahlaki Değerler Eğitimi", *Eğitim ve İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi: Teori ve Uygulama* 2 (2010), 37-60.

¹⁰ Fatma Göçmen, *Okul Öncesi Çocuklarda Dramayla Ahlak Eğitimi: Yardımlaşma* (Konya: Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2019), 187-188.

¹¹ Mustafa Tavukçuoğlu, "Okul Öncesi Çocuğunun Eğitiminde Din Duygusu ve Din Eğitimi", *Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 14/14 (2002), 52-55.

¹² Zeynep Nazahat Cihandide, *Okul Öncesi Din ve Ahlak Eğitimi* (İstanbul: DEM Yayınları, 2014), 15.

that will reflect the child's moral values in the formation of the moral foundations of the child in a healthy way.¹³

As stated above, religious education in Turkey starts in the 4th grade of primary school, and pre-school religious education is not officially held in schools. In 2012, the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DIB) started the first official early childhood religious education studies. An advertisement as recorded in the official Newspaper dated 07.04.2012 and numbered 28257 with the title, "Regulation of the Directorate of Religious Affairs on Courses for Qur'an Education and Training, and Student Dormitory and Hostel" regarding this religious education, whereby an age limit of 15 was determined for children to receive education in mosques and Qur'an courses, which as abolished.¹⁴ Thus, the "Qur'an Courses Pre-School Religious Education Project," for which the legal basis was prepared, was developed, and the pilot application was carried out in 10 provinces in the 2013-2014 academic year, and it later spread throughout the country in the 2014-2015 academic year. The courses that provide religious education for the ages of 4-6, affiliated with the DIB, have become official within the scope of non-formal education. Thus, Qur'an courses covering the early childhood period, which could not find a place in formal education, later found a place in non-formal education under the roof of DIB, with the legal bases and projects listed earlier.¹⁵

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The general objectives of the curriculum prepared within the scope of non-formal education for children aged 4-6 (48-72 months) are listed as follows, following the developmental levels of the children:

- To gain the values of the religion of Islam as an element that gives meaning to life,
- To ensure that the acquired values can be reflected in life,
- To be able to introduce and teach the Qur'an according to the cognitive development levels of children,

¹³ Süleyman Gümrükçüoğlu, "Çocuğun Din Eğitiminde Ailenin Rolü", *KADEM Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3/1 (2017), 53-54; *Göçmen, Okul Öncesi Çocuklarda Dramayla Ahlâk Eğitimi: Yardımlaşma*, 34-42.

¹⁴ Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (DIB) Kur'an Eğitim ve Öğretimine Yönelik Kurslar ile Öğrenci Yurt ve Pansiyonları Yönetmeliği, *Resmî Gazete* 28257, md. 4/1. Erişim: 22 Ocak 2022.

¹⁵ Genç "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'na Bağlı 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarında Din Eğitimi", 509.

- To be able to place the belief in Allah based on love and to be able to realize the order in creation,
- To introduce our prophet as an example of good morals and to make them take a role model,
- It guides them to healthily reach religious and moral maturity by considering all developmental areas.¹⁶

The increase in the number of courses and students from the 2013-2014 academic year to the 2019-2020 academic year has been an indicator of the interest and need for religious and values education in our country. In the academic year when the courses were first opened, 4723 students with 260 instructors in 201 classes.¹⁷ In the 2018-2019 academic year, 170,513 students with 9,319 instructors in 7,963 courses.¹⁸ In the 2019-2020 academic year, 181,808 students benefited from religious education activities. Therefore, from the 20th National Education Council decision, “*Religion, morals, and values education should be included in the preschool curriculum, taking into account the child’s developmental level,*” emphasizing the importance of religion, morality, and values in preschool education.¹⁹

Although preschool religious education in Turkey is a relatively new project as of its inception, it is crucial because it is the first official application in its field offered by state institutions. In addition, in the context of the change in the religious education policies of the ruling party, it can be said that the opening of these schools carries the discussions mentioned earlier to a different dimension. For this reason, in this study, preschool religious education in Turkey has been discussed and evaluated within the framework of the reflections of these schools in the field, focusing on the teachers’ teaching competencies, program contents, and parental views.

Pedagogical Competencies of Educators Working in Religious Education of 4-6 Year-Old Children

The increasing interest in the Qur’an courses for the ages of 4-6, which started operating in 2013, has been reflected as a critical deficiency in the need for instructors. An estimated 250 Qur’an course

¹⁶ Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Eğitim Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü (DİBEHGM), “Kur’an Kursları Öğretim Programı (4-6 Yaş Grubu)”, 7. Erişim: 22 Ocak 2022.

¹⁷ DİB 2013 Faaliyet Raporu, (Erişim: 22 Ocak 2022).

¹⁸ DİB 2019 Faaliyet Raporu, (Erişim: 22 Ocak 2022).

¹⁹ MEB. “20. Milli Eğitim Şura Kararları” (Erişim: 22 Ocak 2022).

instructors for the age group of 4-6-year-olds who were initially interviewed were prepared for the curriculum by receiving special education/training. The number of students and the demand for courses from year to year caused a shortage of teachers. DIB has simplified the selection criteria for instructors to respond to student demands and fill the instructor gap. Consequently, the preschool education certificates given to the instructors by the public education, municipalities, and distance education centers have been accepted as a sufficient criterion for recruiting instructors.²⁰

Due to the increase in the number of Quran courses for the ages of 4-6, it has become essential for teachers who want to acquire certificates in subjects such as preschool child education and child development to participate in these courses. This way, many institutions, and organizations have started to provide certifications and distance education programs on this subject. While many people who received certificates from these training programs were questioned about the quality and significance of their credentials, DIB determined that the training provided by these institutions as of 2017 was not of the desired quality or competence and decided that these certificates would not be accepted.²¹

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When the application principles of the 2018-2019 Qur'an Courses are examined, it is seen that additional explanations and corrections have been made. However, some of the conditions in the previous period were repeated precisely in the instructors' assignments. It shows that DIB is making an effort to improve the qualifications of 4-6-year-old Quran Course instructors.²² This situation can be compared to DIB's 4-6-year-old education, which began without adequate preparation.²³

It has been seen that the in-service training organized by the DIB for instructors who will take part in the 4-6 age courses has made significant contributions to the development of the 4-6 age groups

²⁰ DİBEHGM, "Kur'an Kursu Öğretim Programı (4-6 Yaş)", (Ankara: DİB Yayınları, 2014), 25.

²¹ Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'nın 20.01.2017 tarihli ve 67567140-252.99-E.5722 sayılı yazı.

²² DİB, "2018-2019 Eğitim Öğretim Yılı Kur'an Kursları Uygulama Esasları" (Erişim: 05 Ocak 2022).

²³ Ayşegül Gün, "Veli ve Öğretici Görüşleri Doğrultusunda 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitimi: Samsun İli Örneği", *Amasya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/7 (2016), 41; Samet Yağcı, *Öğreticilere Göre Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursları (İzmir İli Örneği)*, (İzmir: İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2018), 71.

by giving them more qualified education. In addition, the content of the seminars should be determined in line with the needs and expectations of the participants, tagging along with their qualifications, which must be increased. According to a study conducted to measure the educational proficiency of 4-6-year-old Qur'an course instructors: approximately 83% of the participants stated that they needed training in various subjects. In particular, trainers need training in topics such as pedagogical formation, attention, motivation, and effective communication and guidance.²⁴ The educators stated that in-service seminars were held to meet the trainers' needs, mainly at the theoretical level. It would be more appropriate to give seminars with a predominant practical aspect. In the same study, the participants complained that the in-service training was not valuable enough. Moreover, they stated that the applied training would explicitly improve their teaching skills.²⁵

The quality of non-formal religious education is directly related to the field of knowledge, general cultural knowledge, teaching ability, and skills of the religious officials working in this field.²⁶ In the field of studies, regarding the subjects that instructors have the most inadequacy in, matters such as "student-centered methods and techniques, lack of pedagogical formation in general, inability to motivate children, classroom management, communication with children, methods of teaching the Qur'an, lack of experience and child psychology" come first. When the data obtained are evaluated, it is understood that most teachers working in Qur'an courses for the ages of 4-6 are insufficient in terms of the qualifications (education-teaching) required by preschool teaching.²⁷

As a result, in the field studies conducted in Turkey, the pedagogical inadequacies of religious educators in the 4-6 age group have

²⁴ Ahmet Koç, "Kur'an Kurslarında Din Eğitimi", *Din Eğitimi*, ed. Mustafa Köylü, Nurullah Altaş (İstanbul: Ensar Yay. 2015), 397; Mehmet Korkmaz, "4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Öğreticilerinin Eğitim-Öğretim Yeterlikleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma", *İlahiyat Tetkikleri Dergisi* 1/ 53 (2020), 249.

²⁵ Yağcı, Öğreticilere Göre Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursları, 88; Korkmaz, "4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Öğreticilerinin Eğitim-Öğretim Yeterlikleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma", 248.

²⁶ DIB, "Personel Yeterlikleri" (Erişim: 05 Ocak 2022).

²⁷ Korkmaz, "Kur'an Kurslarında Din Eğitimi ve Sorunlar", *Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi ve Sorunları*, ed. M. Köylü (İstanbul: DEM Yay., 2018), 268-319; Kevser Tüfekçi, *4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursları Eğitiminin Öğretici Ve Veli Görüşlerine Göre İncelenmesi* (Gaziantep: Gaziantep Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2020), 77-80; Gün. Veli ve Öğretici Görüşleri Doğrultusunda 4-6 yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitimi: Samsun İli Örneği, 33-66.

been identified. The teachers express that they lack enough knowledge and skills to affect children's mental, emotional and social development areas and are open to making improvements in these areas, which can be seen as a positive result of the study given above. It is understood that the instructors have solid theoretical foundations in theology. However, they need support and development in terms of practice in the learning environment and communication skills with students. This finding is an optimistic feature for the development and institutionalization of religious education for the 4-6 age group. The teacher is the essential element in the effective delivery of religious education in the preschool period, which is considered one of the critical periods in developing an individual. Since the teacher is an essential model in the development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills, at this point, teaching education can be considered as the primary basis for achieving the religious education goals of 4-6 years old at the desired level. The 4-6-year-old teacher training department or programs to be opened under the roof of theology faculties will increase teaching traits such as in-class effectiveness. Apart from this, taking specific courses from the department of preschool education for theology faculty students will help them gain effective education and teaching skills and improve the teaching environment.²⁸

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Evaluation of the Qur'an Course Education Program for the 4-6 Age Group

According to the principle of unity, one of the principles of development, development progresses in the integrity of all developmental areas that affect each other. From the examination of the preschool education program prepared for 36-72 month-old children in Turkey, it is seen that the development of children in the areas of motor, social and emotional, and language, in addition to cognitive development, is fundamental. Religious and moral development is understood to be overlooked. The program aims to ensure that children reach the highest level in these development areas, gain self-care skills and be ready for primary school.²⁹ As it can be understood from

²⁸ Büşra Kara, *Okul Öncesi Dönemi (4-6 Yaş Grubu) Çocukların Din Eğitiminde Görev Alan Eğitimcilerin/Din Görevlilerinin Pedagojik Yeterlilikleri* (Bursa: Uludağ Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2019), 118-121; Korkmaz, "4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Öğreticilerinin Eğitim-Öğretim Yeterlilikleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma", 258-259.

²⁹ MEB, "Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı", (Ankara: Devlet Kitapları Müdürlüğü, 2013), 14.

this purpose, religious and moral development is not accepted as a developmental area in the preschool education program prepared by the Ministry of National Education, where the program does not include purpose, achievement, and content information that supports these developmental areas.

The need for the religious and moral development of the child, which is ignored in the preschool education program, is officially met by the state institutions, with the Qur'an Courses that the DIB has opened for 4-6-year-olds since 2013. The Qur'an Courses' curriculum, prepared by the Presidency in 2013 and renewed in 2018, is implemented in these courses.³⁰

In the first period of the program, there are subjects and achievements in the "Qur'an 1 and Religious Studies 1" subject and achievements, and in the second term, in the learning area of the Qur'an 2 and Religious Studies 2". A framework focused on values education has been drawn in the field of Religious Studies learning. The program is arranged as 135 hours for the summer term. For the winter term, it is 162 hours of primary education. Religious studies course hours are 12 hours per week in primary education and 8 hours per week in the Qur'an. The supplementary curriculum was prepared in different courses, and for each course, the Qur'an was arranged as 2 hours and the religious studies course as 4 hours.³¹

In the curriculum, the instructor was given the initiative to implement the program and manage the process according to the available capacity of the students in the class. Topics in the program must consider children's interests and needs, individual differences, the principles of "from easy to difficult" and "from the known to the unknown," and provide activities that support their learning by doing and experiencing real-life situations. In addition, the books prepared at the point of implementation of the program will be used, and the teaching of the subjects will be strengthened with the activities related to the program.³²

³⁰ İbrahim Aşlamacı, "4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursu Öğretim Programının (2018) Eğitim Programı Temel Öğeleri Açısından Değerlendirilmesi", *Erken Çocukluk Dönemi Din-Ahlak-Değerler Eğitimi ve Sorunları-1*, ed. Mehmet Bayyigit vd. (Konya: Palet Yayınları, 2020), 161.

³¹ See: DB. *4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursları Öğretici Kitabı* (İzmir: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2018)

³² See: DIB, "Kur'an Kursları Öğretim Programı (4-6 Yaş Grubu)", (Ankara: DİBYayınları, 2018).

Considering the preparation process of the 4-6-year-old Qur'an Course Curriculum and the tutorial book, it is said that the student development characteristics of the program will be taken into account, and activities and stories, in addition to games, are used for this. Tosun and Çapçioğlu expressed these statements in the 4-6 Age Quran Course program with the words; "When the curriculum is examined in-depth, it can be said that the religious development characteristics of the students are not taken into account in some points that escaped our attention in the first place, where expectations above the level of the children are created among the achievements, and that the pressure of the tradition is felt in the construction of games and stories," described as a condemnation with a disapproving tone criticized.³³ Children in every age group of the preschool period show different religious development. For this reason, the standard preparation of the curriculum for each age group covered caused other problems. In this context, it is stated that the books on values/ethical education given to children aged between 4-6 are based on lectures and activities. However, it has been seen that some topics and expressions in the books remain abstract and are not suitable for the 4-6 age group.³⁴ Therefore, it is seen that the curriculum prepared can be rated to be above four years old and ideal for 5 and 6 years old in terms of age level.³⁵

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In terms of the distribution of the achievements of the curriculum over time, it is seen that there are problems in terms of conformity with the age and comprehension abilities of the students in the learning areas of the Qur'an and Religious Studies. To overcome this, necessary flexibility should be shown according to the age and individual pace, in line with the initiative of the Presidency because the gains in some units are difficult for the age group and should be spread over more time. It is necessary to review and revise the curriculum prepared for them in many respects, like increasing the

³³ Cemal Tosun ve Fatma Çapçioğlu, 4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursları Öğretim Programının Dini Gelişim Kuramları Çerçevesinde İncelenmesi, *Pegem Eğitim ve Öğretim Dergisi* 5/5 (2015), 716.

³⁴ Ayşe Sevede Karaca, *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı 4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursu Öğrencilerine Uygulanan Değerler Eğitiminin Öğretici Görüşleri Açısından İncelenmesi* (Konya: Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2020), 83.

³⁵ Teceli Karasu, Kur'an Kursu Öğreticilerine Göre Okul Öncesi Din Eğitimi: Muş ili Örneği. *İlahiyat Tetkikleri Dergisi* 1/51 (2019), 479-500; Tüfekçi, 4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursları Eğitiminin Öğretici ve Veli Görüşlerine Göre İncelenmesi, 77; Ayşegül Gün, "Veli ve Öğretici Görüşleri Doğrultusunda 4-6 yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitimi: Samsun İli Örneği", *Amasya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 4/7(2016), 62.

quality of education, preventing possible mistakes in practice, and reducing the instructors' problems in applying for the program.³⁶

In the detailed examination of the gains in the Qur'an course curriculum prepared in 2013, it was determined that the payments were written mainly on the knowledge level of the cognitive field, giving little appraisal to the area aimed at gaining religious knowledge-based behavior to the students, making them love and adopting religious knowledge more. On the other hand, when the purpose and acquisition sentences in the 4-6 age Qur'an course curriculum prepared in 2018 are examined, it is seen that many acquisitions in the form of "say" and "define" are transformed into "notices" following the effective level. In addition, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor level acquisition statements express horizontal objectives related to each course unit and subject in the program.

When the aims and achievements of the Qur'an course curriculum for the ages of 4-6 are examined in general, it is understood that these courses focus on the religious and moral development of the students. In this case, based on the curriculum, it is possible to say that the 4-6-year-old Qur'an courses focus on providing the students with the ability to read the Qur'an per their level, teaching basic religious information, and developing the child religiously and morally to adopt the fundamental values of the Islamic religion. This goal is the reflection of the experience of the Qur'an courses carried out by the Diyanet as a non-formal religious education activity during the Republic period, till the age of 4-6.³⁷ For this reason, it is essential to analyze the individual, society, and subject area, adding to their needs correctly and shaping the policies on this in determining the targets of this subject

The evaluation form in question includes the units and achievements of the Religious Studies-1, Quran1, Religious Studies-2, and Quran-2 courses and states that "reached, partially reached, not reached" options consist of tables.³⁸ In preschool education, on the other hand, measurement and evaluation activities are different from other education levels. For children who do not have basic skills such as literacy and numbers, the observation method is preferred

³⁶ Tüfekçi, 4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursları Eğitiminin Öğretici ve Veli Görüşlerine Göre İncelenmesi, 77.

³⁷ Aşlamacı, "4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursları Öğretim Programının (2018) Eğitim Programı Temel Öğeleri Açısından Değerlendirilmesi", 165.

³⁸ DİB. "Kur'an Kursları Öğretim Programı (4-6 Yaş Grubu)", 8, 39.

in this period. In particular, it is required to keep observation forms by looking at the situation of children in the classroom and their performance in the activities they participate in, collect them in development files, and thus monitor their status in all developmental areas.³⁹ This information reveals the necessity of an individual, observation-based process-based assessment approach, especially in preschool. When we look at the Qur'an course curriculum for the 4-6 age group, the statement about the evaluation under the heading of the basic approach of the program, "The level of achievement of the achievements determined in the program will be made within the framework of the "Evaluation Form" in Annex-1. This table has been prepared regarding the level of goals achieved at the end of the training process. This suggests that a result-oriented evaluation approach is preferred rather than a process. However, it is more appropriate to monitor the development of children at the preschool education level, not result-oriented, but to evaluate the observed changes by recording them in their development files. Considering the needs and developmental characteristics of preschool children, the evaluation approach in the current program is achievement or result-oriented shows that this program is not suitable for the 4-6 age group.⁴⁰

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When the teachers' thoughts on the teaching materials prepared for the Qur'an courses aged 4-6 are examined, it can be said that the narrative language of the sample stories in the textbooks needs to be upgraded for children at this age, and the number of stories must be increased. In addition, according to the majority of the instructors, Elif-Ba chapter books are insufficient and above the levels of the students. The study also emphasized that the DIB should prepare an education set that can be used in religious knowledge and Quran lessons for the 4-6 age group. Because the use of correct materials has an important place in the education and training aspect. Especially in the pre-school period, materials prepared with rich visual content, various methods and techniques, and plenty of activities are indispensable in the education of children between the 4-6 age group.

Although abstract concepts are intense in Religion and Values Education, materials suitable for age groups are needed so that these

³⁹ MEB. "Okul Öncesi Eğitim Programı", (Ankara: Devlet Kitapları Müdürlüğü, 2013), 53-54.

⁴⁰ Aşlamacı. "4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursları Öğretim Programının (2018) Eğitim Programı Temel Öğeleri Açısından Değerlendirilmesi", 167-168. Genç, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'na Bağlı 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarında Din Eğitimi», 518-520.

concepts can be understood and learned by children. At this point, the Presidency of Religious Affairs can prepare educational materials that can be used in Qur'an courses for the age group of 4-6 by taking advantage of the experiences of the teachers who provide this education, with the idea of a solution to the current problems. The materials prepared in this way will be used in Qur'an courses and in families who want to give religious education to their children.⁴¹

The curriculum prepared in 2018; was examined in terms of purpose, content, learning-teaching process, measurement, and evaluation. First of all, when we look at the general objectives and achievements of the program, it is understood that these courses are structured in an educational program to support the religious and moral development of children aged 4-6. The program did not sufficiently reflect the goals or achievements of the child's cognitive, social, language, and motor development. However, the principle that development as a whole is a fundamental principle. This principle must be considered in every educational effort presented to the child. This configuration also reflects the tradition of the Diyanet's own Qur'an course as a field of non-formal religious education. The concern of not being seen as an alternative to formal preschool education can be decisive in many aspects, considering the name of these courses to the program structure.⁴² The most crucial problem of this situation is how religious and moral education should be intricately/entangled in early childhood. The main issue with the form is that it forces it to be handled in a narrower framework. Besides this, some questions need to be answered, like, What are the child's developmental characteristics and pedagogical needs at this period/age? In line with these/ following up with these questions, more seem to arise, such as: what kind of education can be offered in a way that supports religious and moral development? These needs should be met by focusing on the questions mentioned earlier.⁴³

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Evaluation of the Qur'an Course Education for the 4-6 Age Group in the Line of Parents' Views

⁴¹ Tüfekçi, 4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursları Eğitiminin Öğretici Ve Veli Görüşlerine Göre İncelenmesi, 78.

⁴² Naciye Öztürk, *Okul Öncesi Din Eğitimi: "Kur'an Kursları Okul Öncesi Din Eğitimi Projesi" ve Öneriler* (Ankara: SETA Yay., 2018), 13.

⁴³ Aşlamaçlı, "4-6 Yaş Kur'an Kursları Öğretim Programının (2018) Eğitim Programı Temel Öğeleri Açısından Değerlendirilmesi", 168.

When the field studies on the evaluation of the Qur'an Course education for the 4-6 age group in line with the views of the parents are examined, most of the parents emphasized that "Religious education should start in the pre-school period because of the positive contribution of religious education to future life and the clear perception of children in this period."⁴⁴

In addition, they stated that "they feel inadequate in providing this education to their children at home, and need a supportive education since they cannot be effective in this regard." They further emphasized that both public and private kindergartens could not meet this need and that the official conduct of this education gave them confidence.⁴⁵ As a result, parents' expectations for the Qur'an Course for Children Ages 4-6 are that it will produce "individuals who can read the Qur'an at a good level, have a good level of prayer and surah memorization, show certain differentiation in terms of applying values and worship, and can acquire the achievements given in kindergarten through various activities."⁴⁶

They emphasized that the parents were satisfied with the education provided in the courses because it was appropriate for their children's level, and they had no learning difficulties. The teaching provided in the studies contributed to their children's moral development.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the parents expressed their satisfaction with the seminars organized by the instructors in fields such as family communication and child education. So, in later days increasing the contents of these seminars by arranging them according to the needs will significantly increase the efficiency by facilitating the parent-suppor-

⁴⁴ Yusuf Alpaydın, Hatice Ayar ve Arife Gümüş. *Çocukların Dinî Gelişiminde Ebeveynlerin Rolü: Beklentiler ve Zorlanma Alanları* (İstanbul: İLKE Yay., 2015), 8.

⁴⁵ See: Merve Akgül, *4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitiminin Veli Görüşleri Doğrultusunda Değerlendirilmesi (Amasya Örneği)*, (Amasya: Amasya Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2020); İbrahim Kurt, *Velilerin 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarından Memnuniyet Düzeyleri ve Beklentileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma (Ankara Örneği)*, (Ankara: Hitit Üniversitesi, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2017); Semiha Çakır, *4-6 Yaş Aralığındaki Çocuklara Mahremiyet Eğitimi Verilmesinde Din Eğitiminin Rolü (Sivas Örneği)*, (Sivas: Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2015).

⁴⁶ Akgül, *4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitiminin Veli Görüşleri Doğrultusunda Değerlendirilmesi (Amasya Örneği)*, 82.

⁴⁷ Akgül, *4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitiminin Veli Görüşleri Doğrultusunda Değerlendirilmesi (Amasya Örneği)*, 50.

ted conduct of the 4-6-year-old Qur'an Courses education.⁴⁸ The points that parents find missing in the Qur'an courses for 4-6 years old are situations such as the absence of auxiliary personnel, delays in implementation, service problems and lack of full-time alternatives in methods; an improvement in the physical/structural conditions of the training venues and providing opportunities to meet more demands.⁴⁹ Finally, it was emphasized by the parents that the value-oriented behaviors that are attempted to be taught to children in these courses are learned by the children to a large extent and are reflected in their daily lives.⁵⁰

Physical/structural Opportunities of Qur'an Courses for the 4-6 Age Group

The quality of the physical/structural facilities of the schools is significant for education. Studies on the productivity of education have concluded that the classroom and school environment positively affect the student's success. The physical condition of the schools directly affects both the student and the teacher, which directly affects the quality of education. As a result, the characteristics of the location where the education system should be of high quality to achieve the educational goals. Otherwise, getting the most out of education will be difficult.

The Qur'an Courses opened throughout Turkey for children aged 4-6 with a suitable physical space problems. Although the DIB determines the physical space and equipment features that should be found in these courses, most of the 4-6-year-old Qur'an courses currently operating do not meet these qualifications. Because most of these educational institutions use mosques or apartments in physically/structurally unsuitable conditions, it is seen that the anatomical spaces of the courses are far from meeting the needs and expectations in terms of indoor or outdoor features.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Akgül, *4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitiminin Veli Görüşleri Doğrultusunda Değerlendirilmesi (Amasya Örneği)*, 82.

⁴⁹ Akgül, *4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitiminin Veli Görüşleri Doğrultusunda Değerlendirilmesi (Amasya Örneği)*, 82; Kurt, *Velilerin 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarından Memnuniyet Düzeyleri ve Beklentileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma (Ankara Örneği)*, 83-85.

⁵⁰ Kurt, *Velilerin 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarından Memnuniyet Düzeyleri ve Beklentileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma (Ankara Örneği)*, 83-84; Ömer Demir, Rabiye Camadan, "4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursları Ebeveyn Memnuniyeti: Bayburt İli Örneği", *Bayburt Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 9 (2019), 36-37.

⁵¹ See: Yağcı, Öğreticilere göre Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı 4-6 yaş grubu Kur'an Kursları (İzmir ili örneği), 103-105. Akgül, *4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitiminin Veli Gö-*

In the field studies, 55.6% of the instructors believed that the Qur'an Courses are suitable for the education of the 4-6 age group in terms of physical space, but 33.3% stated that they were partially sufficient by stating the situations they had reservations about it. In addition, 11.1% of the instructors had an entirely negative opinion. 67.2% of the parents on the subject think that the place where their children are educated is physically sufficient. While 27.9% of the other parents thought it was partially enough, 4.9% said it was insufficient. The first place among the parents who gave negative opinions is that the teaching environment is humid and there is inadequate ventilation.⁵²

Similar results have been obtained from different studies regarding the physical inadequacy of the Qur'an courses. For example, the Istanbul Provincial Mufti conducted an inspection and guidance study between 2006-2010 to determine the physical condition of the Qur'an courses and to increase the quality of education by eliminating the deficiencies in this area. Although some weaknesses have been identified due to this study, it cannot be generalized that the same impossibilities are experienced in all courses. Therefore, course buildings differ from each other in terms of physical and technical opportunities.⁵³

For this reason, schools' physical facilities should be urgently corrected, and necessary arrangements should be made for the quality of pre-school religious education in Turkey.

Conclusion

With the rapid increase in the number of students and schools in institutions providing religious education in Turkey, debates about the quality of religious education in Turkey have come up more often than in the past. Pre-school religious education in Turkey is carried out through the Qur'an Courses for ages 4-6, which DIB opened.

rüşleri Doğrultusunda Değerlendirilmesi (Amasya Örneği), 82; Kurt, *Velilerin 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarından Memnuniyet Düzeyleri Ve Beklentileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma (Ankara Örneği)*, 83-85. Genç, "Diyaret İşleri Başkanlığı'na Bağlı 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarında Din Eğitimi", *İhya Uluslararası İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5/2 (2019), 519.

⁵² Ayşegül Gün, "Veli Ve Öğretici Görüşleri Doğrultusunda 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kursu Eğitimi: Samsun İli Örneği", *Amasya Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 7 (2016), 52-53.

⁵³ Ahmet Koç, "Kur'an Kurslarında Din Eğitimi", *Din Eğitimi*, ed. Mustafa Köylü, Nurullah Altaş (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2014), 395.

With these courses, religious education is given to children that aim to contribute to children's religious and moral development.

Based on these discussions, there are allegations that the religious education in schools in Turkey is based on one sect rather than pluralism, that the AK Party government reflects its political agenda on religious education, and that it tries to Islamize Turkey. Although the opening of Qur'an courses for the ages of 4-6 in 2014 seems to support these claims, they are separate from these discussions because these schools are independent schools affiliated to the Presidency of Religious Affairs instead of the Ministry of National Education, whereby the curriculum is shaped accordingly, and going to these schools is voluntary, which requires consideration from the people themselves. Because, From the establishment of the Republic in 1923 until 2014, when these Qur'an Courses were opened, there was no education for preschool religious education. The optimistic view of the people toward these schools since the opening of the schools can be said that these schools have eliminated an essential deficiency in religious education in Turkey. For this reason, the main point emphasized here is the quality of 4-6-grade-age schools.

Based on debates in preschool religious education, there is a shortage of "qualified teachers/instructors" in Turkey. While most of the educators working in these schools are graduates of theology faculty, some are Imam Hatip high school graduates, and some are two-year associate degree graduates. The remarkable point in the profile of teachers with different education levels and durations is that none have received preschool child pedagogy training at the undergraduate level. Therefore, it is not surprising that there are discussions both in academic environments and in the media about the professional qualifications of Imam Hatip Schools and Theology Faculties graduates, along with the adequacy and quality of the religious education curriculum applied in these institutions.⁵⁴ Because there is currently no preschool religious education course or activity within the faculties of theology. As a result of various ideological discussions in Turkey, theology faculties where religious teachers were trained were closed, and theology-based education was increased, with some pedagogy courses for primary education added to the new program. There are surplus debates over the quality of training religious teachers in Turkey, in a process where even further curriculum

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⁵⁴ M. Fatih Genç. "İmam Hatip Okulları ve İlahiyat Fakülteleri Örneğinde Din Eğitiminde Kalite Sorunu", *Türkiye Din Eğitimi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7 (2019), 149.

discussions are going on. Pre-service teachers start their careers by obtaining certificates of questionable quality after graduating from the faculty. They teach at 4-6, the most critical stage of a child's development.⁵⁵ Thus, it is necessary to increase the quality of theology faculties that meet the teaching needs of institutions providing preschool religious education and introduce courses for preschool religious education.

When the curriculum of the *4-6 Years Quran Courses* in Turkey is examined, there have been significant changes in 2018 compared to the curriculum in 2014. Despite these changes, it is seen that there are still subjects that are not suitable for the development level of children between the 4-6 age group, and the activities and course materials are insufficient. For example (such as in 8th and 9th units, *the use of numbers instead of dots in completing the letter presented in the sense of activity makes it difficult for the child who has not learned the numbers and will not be able to learn because they are not in the course curriculum. No activities belong to some units in the activity books.* Basic skills that students must learn in preschool in the 2018 program include activities such as small muscle development activities, cleaning rules, dramas, garden games, letters, numbers, and communication skills in the Qur'an Course program for ages 4-6, where there is an urgent need to determine the acquisitions related to these and prepare the necessary activity examples. In the new curriculum, preschool student activities are left to the knowledge and skills of 4-6-year-old Qur'an Course teachers. Again, numbers, colors, and days are included in the units' stories, number-shape-color-day-week, etc., in the program. The fact that the subjects are not included negatively affects the efficiency of the lessons. Immediate elimination of these deficiencies will positively impact the quality of preschool religious education.

Despite the deficiencies in preschool education in Turkey, it can be said from research that parents are satisfied with the education provided. However, it is seen that the parents' expectations of these courses are high compared to the seasonal characteristics of the children. This situation puts pressure on the teachers when the mufti offices do not give them sufficient support.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Genç, "İmam Hatip Okulları ve İlahiyat Fakülteleri Örneğinde Din Eğitiminde Kalite Sorunu", 155-157.

⁵⁶ Genç, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı'na Bağlı 4-6 Yaş Grubu Kur'an Kurslarında Din Eğitimi", 519.

- In this context, to increase the quality of pre-school religious education in Turkey,
- Opening a particular department on preschool religious education in theology faculties
- Organizing special education programs to increase the qualifications of teachers,
- Including activities and subjects in the curriculum in which the developmental characteristics of children aged 4-6 are taken into account and written in the textbooks,
- Preparing classrooms and spaces that will enable the physical, psychological, and spiritual development of children aged 4-6,
- It is essential to produce common materials and games for all schools in Turkey.

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DİN EĞİTİMİ POLİTİKALARININ DEĞİŞİM SÜRECİNDE TÜRKİYE’DE OKUL ÖNCESİ DİN EĞİTİMİ (4-6 Yaş Kur’an Kursları Örneği)

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Ülkemizde zorunlu din dersleri uzun yıllardan beri tartışılan bir konu olmuştur. Bu bağlamda Osmanlı Devleti, teokratik yönetim politikalarını eğitim sistemine yansıtması sonucu, eğitim sisteminin temelini bütünüyle din eğitimi üzerine faaliyet gösteren medreseler oluşturmaktaydı. Tarihi süreçte medrese eğitim sistemindeki bozulmalar, bu kurumların sorgulanmasını ve alternatif arayışları ortaya çıkarmıştır. Osmanlı Devleti’nin Batı’daki gelişmeleri takibi neticesinde Tanzimat dönemi öncesi batı tarzı okullar açılmaya başlanmıştır. Tanzimat Fermanı’nın ilanı ile da bu okulların sayısı hızla artmıştır. Bu okullarda din eğitimi, programın merkezinde değil, diğer dersler gibi programın bir parçası olmuştur.

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nin “laik” temeller üzerinde kurulması din eğitimi anlayışının değişmesine neden olmuştur. Laiklik, eğitim politikalarında belirleyici unsur olmuş; din eğitimi kademeli olarak okullardan arındırılmış ve yasaklanmıştır. Bu yasaklardan sonra toplumun din eğitimine olan ihtiyacı ve siyasi politikalarındaki dalgalanmalar neticesinde kademeli olarak kaldırılan din dersi yine kademeli olarak eğitim programlarına dâhil edilmiştir. Eğitim programlarında din dersleri önce isteğe bağlı olmuş, 1982 itibarıyla “Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi” dersi olarak zorunlu hale getirilmiştir. 2002 ve 2012 yılları arasında din eğitimi politikalarında fark edilir bir değişiklik yaşanmamıştır. Ancak 2012 yılında Ak parti hükümeti din eğitimi de kapsayan bir eğitim reformu başlatmıştır. Ardından ülkemizde imam hatip ortaokulları yeniden açılmış, imam hatip liselerinin sayısı artırılmış ve bu okullar ülke genelinde hızla çoğalmıştır. Bununla birlikte seçmeli Kur’an-ı Kerim, Peygamberimizin Hayatı, Temel Dini Bilgiler dersleri de eğitim programına dâhil edilmiştir. 2002 yılında Ak parti hükümeti iktidara geldiğinde sayısı 70 bin olan imam hatip okullarındaki öğrenci sayısı bugün 1 milyon 300 bine ulaşmıştır. Bütün bu gelişmeler örgün eğitimle sınırlı kalmayıp bu tarz dini eğitimler veren vakıf ve cemaatlerin de faaliyetlerini hızlandırmıştır. Örgün ve yaygın din eğitimi faaliyetlerinin ülke genelinde hızla artması; Türkiye’deki okullardaki din eğitiminin çoğulculuktan ziyade tek mezhebe dayalı olması, Ak parti iktidarının kendi siyasi gündemini din eğitimine yansıtması ve laik düzenin İslamlaşması olarak algılanmış ve tartışmaların zeminini oluşturmuştur.

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Bu tartışmalar bir bütün olarak incelendiğinde “*okul öncesi din eğitiminin*” yer almadığı görülmektedir. Çünkü Türkiye’de din eğitimi resmi olarak ilkokul 4. sınıftan lise son sınıfa kadar verilmektedir. Batı ülkelerinde olduğu gibi okul öncesi dönemde din eğitimi okullarda yer almamaktadır. 2006 yılına gelindiğinde XVII. Milli Eğitim Şurası’nda; okul öncesi eğitimin zorunlu hale getirilmesi kararı alınmıştır. Eğitim sistemimizde okul öncesi öğrencilerinin bilişsel, psikomotor ve duyuşsal gelişim alanları dikkate alınarak kazanımlar hazırlanmıştır. Fakat yakın zamana kadar ahlak ve değerler gelişim alanına yönelik kazanımlara rastlanmamıştır. 2012 yılına gelindiğinde, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (DİB) erken çocukluk dönemi din eğitimine yönelik ilk resmi çalışmaları başlatmıştır. 07/04/2012 tarihli ve 28257 sayılı resmi gazetede yayımlanan “Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Kur’an Eğitim ve Öğretimine Yönelik Kurslar ile Öğrenci Yurt ve Pansiyon Yönetmeliği” ile cami ve Kur’an kurslarında eğitim alabilmek için belirlenen 15 yaş sınırı kaldırılarak, “Kur’an Kursları Okul Öncesi Din Eğitimi Projesi” için yasal dayanak hazırlanmıştır. 2013-2014 eğitim-öğretim yılında pilot uygulama 10 ilde yapılmış, 2014-2015 eğitim-öğretim yılında ülke geneline yayılmıştır. DİB’e bağlı 4-6 yaş din eğitimi veren kurslar yaygın eğitim kapsamında resmiyet kazanmıştır. Böylece örgün eğitimde yer bulamayan erken çocukluk dönemini kapsayan Kur’an kursları saydığımız yasal dayanaklar ve projelerle DİB çatısı altında yaygın eğitimde yer bulmuştur.

Cumhuriyetin kurulduğu 1923 yılından bu kursların açıldığı 2014 yılına kadar okul öncesi din eğitimine yönelik herhangi bir eğitimin bulunmaması, okulların açılmasından günümüze halkın bu okullara yönelik olumlu bakışı, bu okulların Türkiye’de din eğitiminde görülen önemli bir eksikliği giderdiği söylenebilir. Bu sebeple burada üstünde durulması gereken ası nokta 4-6 yaş okullarının niteliğidir. Bu kurslar ile çocuklara din eğitimi verilmekte; çocukların dini, ahlaki gelişimlerini destekleyici katkı sağlamayı hedeflemektedir. Türkiye’deki okul öncesi eğitimdeki eksikliklere rağmen ebeveynler verilen eğitimden memnun olduğu yapılan araştırmalarda görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Eğitimi, Dinî Gelişim, Kur’an Kursu, Çocuk.

