

## Comparative Evaluation of Education in Türkiye and the Netherlands from a Religious and Sociological Perspective

*İsmail Demir<sup>1</sup>*

**Abstract:** This study aims to provide a comparative assessment of Islamic religious education in Türkiye and the Netherlands. Türkiye, a predominantly Muslim country, has integrated Islamic religious courses under state control into its curriculum. On the other hand, the Netherlands, a predominantly Christian country with a significant Muslim population, has a pluralistic and libertarian approach to religious education. This study aims to examine Islamic religious education in the two countries from a historical, structural and pedagogical perspective using literature review and comparative analysis methods. The results of the study show that a state-focused religious education model is prominent in Türkiye, while a pluralistic and libertarian approach is adopted in the Netherlands. Data were collected through academic articles, official reports and educational policy documents. The aim of the study is to help understand the impact of religious education policy on social inclusion, identity formation and the preservation of cultural heritage. As a result, the Religious Education models of both countries face similar challenges and opportunities, albeit in different socio-political contexts. Data were collected through academic articles, official reports and educational policy documents.

**Keywords:** islamic religious education, comparative education, religious education policies.

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### INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education plays a central role in teaching the religious identity, Culture and values of Muslim societies. Religious education not only allows the individual to acquire religious knowledge, but also assumes important functions such as the formation of social identity, the protection of cultural heritage and social harmony (Akgügüz, 2010). In this context, it is important to understand how Islamic religious education is designed in different countries, both to evaluate the effectiveness of educational policy and to understand social dynamics. As two countries that apply different models in Islamic religious education, Türkiye and the Netherlands offer ideal examples for a comparative analysis in this regard. Türkiye, a Muslim-

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<sup>1</sup> **İsmail Demir**, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Divinity, ORCID: 0000-0001-9756-1901. Email: ismail.demir@comu.edu.tr

majority country, has integrated Islamic religion courses into its curriculum under state control. Since the establishment of the Republic, the religious education policy has been shaped according to the principle of secularism and has been the subject of various reforms over time (Yılmaz, 2015). Especially since the 1980s, the inclusion of compulsory religious courses in the curriculum has led to the restructuring of Islamic religious education in public schools (Kaymakcan, 2006). However, in this process, discussions about the content of religious education, the quality of teachers and the social effects of teaching continue (Gözaydin, 2009).

On the other hand, the Netherlands, a predominantly Christian country with a large Muslim population, is considering religious education with a pluralist and libertarian approach. Religious education in the Netherlands is based on the principle of religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution (Shadid and Van Koningsveld, 2002). In this context, Muslim communities have the right to create and manage their own religious educational institutions. However, this freedom has been confronted with a number of challenges, in particular the quality of religious education, teacher training and social inclusion (Driessen and Merry, 2006). In addition, the growing Islamophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric of recent years have raised concerns about the future of Islamic religious education in the Netherlands (Vellenga, 2008).

This study aims to provide a comparative assessment of Islamic religious education in Türkiye and the Netherlands from a historical, structural and pedagogical point of view. Literature search and comparative analysis were used as a method. In this context, religious education policies, curricula, teacher training models and their social effects in both countries are examined. The aim is to show the similarities and differences of Islamic religious education in the two countries and to evaluate the impact of these models on social inclusion and identity formation. It is important that this study helps to understand how religious education policy is shaped in global and local contexts. The results show that a state-oriented religious education model is maintained in Türkiye, while a pluralist and libertarian approach is maintained in the Netherlands. Moreover, the religious education models of the two countries face similar challenges and opportunities in October, although in different socio-political contexts.

### **Purpose and Method of the Study**

The aim of the study is a comparative assessment of Islamic religious education in Türkiye and the Netherlands from a historical, structural and pedagogical point of view. The similarities and differences in the religious education models of the two countries are shown and their effects on social inclusion and identity formation are analyzed. This study uses

documentary research and comparative analysis methods to compare Islamic religion courses in Türkiye and the Netherlands. The data were collected through academic articles, official reports and educational policy documents.

### **Findings, Significance and Limitations of the Study**

Islamic religious education in Türkiye is provided under the control of the state and according to a model integrated into the curriculum. Islamic religious education in the Netherlands is managed with a pluralistic and libertarian approach. Religious education in both countries is facing similar challenges such as social inclusion, teacher training and updating the curriculum. This study makes an important contribution to the understanding of how religious education policy is shaped in global and local contexts. Using the examples of Türkiye and the Netherlands, it highlights the role of religious education in issues such as social cohesion, the protection of cultural heritage and individual freedoms. This study is limited only to the Comparison of Islamic religious teachings in Türkiye and the Netherlands. The data are based on the available literature and official documents; no field research has been conducted. -The study focuses in particular on the developments of the last 20 years.

### **Historical Background of Islamic Religious Education in Türkiye**

In the Ottoman Empire, Islamic religious education was taught in Madrasas. Madrasas were institutions where not only religious knowledge was taught, but also secular sciences such as philosophy, mathematics, medicine and Astronomy (Akgüz, 2010). Madrasas were the center of the intellectual and religious life of Ottoman society. Sanhn-ı Seman madrasas, especially the madrasas established during the reign of Fatih Sultan Mehmet, were important educational institutions where religion and positive sciences were taught. However, 19. over the course of the century, the quality of the madrasas decreased, and modern educational institutions were needed. During the Tanzimat period, various attempts were made to reform the madrasas, but these efforts were insufficient. With the proclamation of the republic, the madrasas were closed and modern educational institutions took their place. With the establishment of the Republic, religious education was placed under state control within the framework of the principle of secularization and madrasas were closed (Yılmaz, 2015).

At that time, religious education was mainly conducted in mosques and as part of special courses. The principle of secularization led to the abolition of religious education in public schools and the restriction of the role of religion in public life. However, this situation did not make religious lessons useless.; on the contrary, it continued to be carried out by private

organizations. With the Tawhid-I Tedrisat Law, the educational system was secularized in 1924 and religious education was placed under state control. During this time, Imam Hatip schools were closed and limited religious education was provided in mosques and special classes. the inclusion of compulsory religious courses in the school curriculum in the 1980s led to the restructuring of Islamic religious education in public schools (Kaymakcan, 2006). During this period, Imam Hatip high schools were revived and religious education became an important element of state policy. With the Constitution of 1982, religious culture and ethics courses became mandatory. The purpose of these courses was to provide basic religious knowledge to public school students. This change allowed religious teaching to regain importance in social life. with the transition to an eight-year continuous school system in 1997, the intermediate levels of Imam Hatip high schools were closed, but this did not reduce interest in religious education. with him in 2012 4+4+4- Education system Imam Hatip secondary schools have been reopened and religious education has become an important element of state policy. Religious education in Türkiye is provided within the framework of the curriculum determined by the Ministry of National Education (MONE). The purpose of this program is to teach basic religious knowledge (Gözaydın, 2009).

Religious culture and ethics courses are part of the compulsory subjects from primary school to high school. However, the content of such courses and the qualifications of teachers are often controversial. In particular, the participation of the different religious communities in these courses and the design of the content of the courses are an important topic of discussion. Moreover, the compatibility of religious teaching with the principle of secularism is often questioned. The MONE program aims to teach students the basic principles of Islam, worship and moral values. However, it is questionable whether the content of these courses is sufficiently inclusive, especially from the point of view of different faith groups. Imam Hatip High schools are institutions that offer both religious and secular education (Yılmaz, 2015). These schools are the cornerstones of Islamic religious education in Türkiye. The purpose of Imam Hatip high schools is to provide students with both religious knowledge and modern science. The purpose of Theological Faculties is to train specialists in the field of religious education. These institutions contribute to the modernization of religious education by offering both academic and religious education. The Faculties of Theology provide education in disciplines such as Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology, as well as in disciplines such as Islamic studies. These faculties provide students with both theoretical and practical information, allowing religious education to play a more active role in social life. The electives in religion

are aimed at providing basic religious knowledge to public school students. However, the content and necessity of these courses are generally controversial (Kaymakcan, 2006).

In particular, the participation of the different religious communities in these courses and the design of the content of the courses are an important topic of discussion. In addition, one wonders to what extent electives on religion are effective in expanding students' religious knowledge. Religion electives teach students the Noble Qur'an, the Prophet. The objective is to provide teaching on topics such as the life of Muhammad and basic religious knowledge. However, it is questionable whether the content of these courses is sufficiently inclusive, especially from the point of view of different faith groups. Special courses and non-governmental Organizations play an important role in the field of religious education in Türkiye. These institutions offer a more traditional religious education as an alternative to the state curriculum (Gözaydın, 2009).

In particular, the educational activities of religious orders and communities increase the social effects of religious education. These institutions are usually operated in mosques or special educational centers and provide students with both religious knowledge and spiritual education. However, the supervision of these institutions and the quality of teaching are constantly discussed. In particular, the fact that these institutions are not subject to state control raises doubts about the quality and content of education.

### **Historical Background of Islamic Religious Education in the Netherlands**

In terms of migration flows and multiculturalism policies that deeply affect the cultural and social fabric of Europe, the Netherlands is a unique country. Over the past half century, especially since the 1960s and 1970s, labor migration and immigrants from different geographical regions such as Türkiye, Morocco, Indonesia and the Arabs have radically changed the demographic structure of Dutch society. This process has also led to a reassessment of religious identities and belief systems. Islam, in particular, was at the center of this change. Islamic religious education in the Netherlands has been shaped by both state policies, non-governmental organizations and mosques. This situation led to discussions about the formation of religious education. In order for Islamic religious education to reflect the fundamental values of Islam and meet the needs of today's society, it is necessary to critically examine the current dynamics and practices developed in the historical process from the point of view of an Islamic scholar.

This study; firstly, the origins and development of Islamic religious education in the Netherlands are discussed in the context of history. Subsequently, the balance between religious education and secularism will be examined based on an analysis of the role played by the state, private schools and civil society in current practice. If we look at the modern history of the Netherlands, we can see radical changes in the demographic structure of the country with the labor migration that began in the 1960s. The first groups of immigrants were made up of workers who came to provide for their economic needs and settled with their families. However, over time, this situation has led to an increase in the immigrant population and a restructuring of cultural diversity and religious identities (Verhoeven, 2015). The majority of immigrants continue the long tradition of religious education in their country of origin and in particular wish to teach their children religious values and belief systems. This added a new dimension to the traditional educational approach of Dutch society; in addition to official institutions, mosques and non-governmental organizations also play an important role in the dissemination of religious education. In their efforts to preserve and protect their own identity, immigrant communities had to structure their educational systems on the basis of the Islamic religion. In this context, mosques and local associations have begun to organize courses, seminars and special Education programs to teach basic religious knowledge. These developments show that the religious education system in the Netherlands is not limited to the curriculum determined by the state, but can evolve according to the needs of society (Kaya, 2008). At the same time, the educational activities that emerged in this process have become an important tool for the social integration of immigrant communities. The official recognition of Islam in the Netherlands in the 1980s began with the spread of religious freedom and the policy of multiculturalism.

In the early 1980s, the Dutch government recognized that Islam, like other religions, was part of the country's cultural structure. This situation has led to the demand of Islamic society for rights and institutionalization efforts (Lemstra, 2003). Official recognition has given people belonging to the Islamic faith the opportunity to express themselves more freely in government institutions and the educational system. During this period, especially with the increase in the immigrant population, the problem of structuring and organizing religious education also arose. The state recognized that religious education was not limited only to Christianity, but also that Islam should be considered in a similar structural framework. In this context, studies have been launched to review the religious education programs in some public schools and to include basic information about Islam in the curriculum. At the same time,

mosques and non-governmental organizations have developed various educational materials and programs to improve the quality of Islamic religious education. These efforts have contributed to the increase in religious consciousness in society following the official recognition of Islam (Van Der Veen, 2009). The process of official recognition has led to significant changes not only in the field of education, but also in social life. Followers of the Islamic faith can live their religious identity more freely by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the state. This situation has paved the way for greater religious diversity and greater tolerance in society as a whole. However, this process has led to certain difficulties. In particular, the intensification of discussions on the content and implementation of religious education has revealed disagreements in the interpretation of historical and cultural differences (Özcan, 2007).

Today, religious education in the Netherlands is shaped within the framework of the state's understanding of secularism and the policy of social pluralism. While religious education in public schools aims to maintain an equal distance from all religions, Islam is also an important part of this curriculum. As part of religious education, the state aims not only to provide basic religious information, but also to develop students' critical thinking skills and promote tolerance towards other religions and belief systems (Essack, 2012). In this context, the following topics are discussed in public schools: the fundamental beliefs of Islam include elements such as its historical development, its cultural influences and the way it deals with contemporary problems. However, religious education policies in public schools are sometimes controversial in large sections of society. Opinions differ on the content and methods of religious education, in particular on the idea that the principle of secularism should be maintained. Some critics claim that religious education in public schools is too superficial and is limited to general education rather than providing more in-depth knowledge. However, advocates claim that this approach is effective in preventing conflicts between students of different religions and cultures (Kaya, 2008).

The emergence of private Islamic schools in the Netherlands is an expression of efforts to preserve the religious and cultural values of immigrant communities. These schools are usually supported by mosques or Islamic associations and aim to combine traditional Islamic educational approaches with modern teaching methods. In private Islamic schools, subjects such as Quran lessons, hadith studies, Islamic history and ethics form the basis of the curriculum; in addition, modern and technical science courses are also offered. The curriculum

of these schools aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to compete in both the religious and modern world (Dirik, 2005). The deconstruction of private Islamic schools serves as a bridge between traditional Islamic educational institutions and public schools. These schools allow immigrant families to educate their children in accordance with religious values and at the same time integrate into the modern educational system of the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the debate about the supervision of private Islamic schools and compliance with the curriculum is at the forefront of the public agenda from time to time. The state takes certain measures to ensure that the curriculum of these schools is compatible with the secular and democratic values of the country (Van Der Veen, 2009). This situation reflects both efforts to improve the quality of education and the search for a balance between the different educational models. In the Netherlands, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and mosques have played an important role in the historical and contemporary process of Islamic religious education. While mosques traditionally act as a central institution for the transmission of religious information, NGOs carry out activities to increase social awareness by organizing various educational programs, seminars and workshops. These institutions serve as a bridge between the state and the private sector, in particular to meet the educational needs of immigrant communities (Özcan, 2007).

NGOs and mosques are developing innovative educational models to ensure that younger generations get to know Islam from a correct and modern point of view. At the same time, it organizes information and integration activities for large segments of society. The role of these institutions is of great importance not only from the point of view of the transmission of religious knowledge, but also from the point of view of social peace and integration. As regional centers, mosques promote the gathering of community members, social solidarity and cultural exchanges. On the other hand, NGOs facilitate access to religious and scientific information by developing projects aimed at educating the younger generations. In this context, the coordinated activities of these institutions make it possible to reinforce the importance of Islamic religious education in Dutch society (Essack, 2012). Religious education in the Netherlands is a complex structure considered in the context of the Secular Principles of the state. The concept of secularism is interpreted in such a way as to minimize the impact of religion on individual and social life and at the same time to protect religious freedom. While state policy aims to provide impartial religious education in the public sphere, this can sometimes cause tension, especially among communities belonging to minority religions.



The principle of secularism is also manifested in the Dutch educational system. Religious education in public schools requires equal representation of students of different religions. However, the existence of private religious schools allows communities to meet their own religious educational needs. This double structure reflects the state's search for a balance decoupling secularism and social pluralism. In order to achieve this balance, Muslim scholars emphasize the importance of both the impartial practice of state religious education and private school structures that protect religious identity (Kaya, 2008). Today, the debate on religious education in the Netherlands is also continuing in terms of social inclusion and democratic values. Secularism is understood here not only as a state dissociating itself from religious issues, but also as a principle that promotes a tolerant coexistence of different religions and beliefs in society. In this context, it is expected that the educational policy will allow the younger generations to understand the different religious identities and to meet on a common cultural basis. Thus, religious education becomes an important tool that contributes both to the development of individual identity and to social peace. Islamic religious education in the Netherlands represents a dynamic field that has been shaped by the increase in the immigrant population, official recognition and cultural changes throughout the historical process. Since the 1980s, the official recognition of Islam has made it possible to restructure religious education programs at the state and civil society levels.; Given the religious education policy implemented in public schools today, the structure of private Islamic schools and the active role of mosques and NGOs in education, religious education in the Netherlands is interpreted within the framework of the principle of secularism. From the point of view of a Muslim scientist, this process is of great importance in terms of social integration, protection of cultural identity and adherence to democratic values, as well as the transfer of religious knowledge. In particular, the religious education policy in public schools contributes significantly to the equal representation of different faith groups and to the development of the capacity for critical reflection. Private Islamic schools reflect the efforts of immigrant families to offer their children an education that transmits both religious and contemporary knowledge.

Educational activities organized by mosques and non-governmental organizations are proving to be effective methods for strengthening social solidarity and cultural exchanges. The reflection on the concept of secularism in the Dutch educational system shows the attempt of the state to establish a balance between the principle of decoupling religious issues and the Promotion of social pluralism. This situation shows that religious education is an important tool not only for transmitting knowledge, but also for ensuring social harmony and peace. In

summary, Islamic religious education in the Netherlands should be approached with a holistic approach both in terms of historical roots and current practices in order to protect religious identities and ensure social integration.

#### Comparison of Islamic Religious Education in Türkiye and the Netherlands

Religious education is an important field that is shaped according to the understanding of secularization, social values and educational policy of the state. Islamic religious education has become an important issue in the context of the preservation of cultural identity and social harmony, especially for immigrant communities and the Muslim population in Europe. Despite their different historical, political and legal backgrounds, Türkiye and the Netherlands offer important possibilities for comparison in terms of religious education policies. The policies of Islamic religious education in Türkiye and the Netherlands differ according to the understanding of secularism, constitutional provisions and educational systems of the two countries.

While a model of compulsory religious education is implemented under state supervision in Türkiye, pluralism and individual choice are more important in the Netherlands. 24 of the Constitution. According to the article, religious education was compulsory in Türkiye in 1982. Although Türkiye is a constitutionally secular state, religious education is provided under the supervision of the state and the Presidency of Religious Affairs (DİB) plays an important role in this process (Gür & birinci Day, 2019). The state understanding of secularism in Türkiye is based on the model of "controlled religious education". This model does not envisage the complete prohibition of religious education, but its implementation within the framework and under the supervision of the state (Kuru, 2009). In this context, religion, culture and ethics (REC) courses are mandatory from primary school onwards. However, the fact that these courses are mainly based on the teachings of Sunni-Hanafi Islam has been criticized by various faith groups (Turkmen, 2014). At this stage, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has taken decisions declaring that the religious education system in Türkiye should be endowed with a pluralistic and impartial structure (ECHR, 2007; Kaya, 2015). However, despite these criticisms, religious education in Türkiye continues to be subject to the principles determined by the state. The Netherlands is one of the countries with the strongest multiculturalism policy in Europe and constitutionally guarantees freedom of religious education (Vermeulen, 2019).

23 of the Constitution of the Netherlands. the article gives individuals and communities the right to establish their own religious educational institutions (Maussen, 2007). In this context, Muslim communities can open Islamic schools with the support of the state. However, the sustainability of these schools is associated with certain challenges. These schools are exposed to social and political pressures, in particular due to financial problems, lack of teachers and Islamophobia (Joppke, 2018). Although religious education in the Netherlands is left to the freedom of the individual, Islamic religious education is not compulsory in public schools.

Muslim students can receive religious education by attending private Islamic schools or by participating in educational programs based on mosques (Gümüş, 2021). Türkiye and the Netherlands have different approaches to education systems. While religious education has a central structure in Türkiye, a more autonomous and liberal model stands out in the Netherlands. Religious education is centralized in Türkiye. The religious Education program is determined by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) and the Presidency of Religious Affairs and is subject to strict control (Zengin, 2015). The most important institutions for religious education in Türkiye: In the Netherlands, Islamic schools can act independently, since the educational system is based on autonomy and individual rights (Maussen, 2007).

Although these schools are supported by the state, they can largely determine their curriculum themselves. The religious education program in Türkiye focuses on the principles of the Islamic faith, worship, morality and knowledge of the Qur'an. However, the Alevis and other faith groups criticize the fact that the teachings are mainly aimed at the Sunni-Hanafi sect (Turkmen, 2014). In the Netherlands, Islamic courses are designed to take into account different sectarian and cultural perspectives. The course content is oriented towards a secular education approach and focuses more on interreligious dialogue, tolerance and moral values (Vermeulen, 2019).

The impact of religious education on society is manifested in different ways in Türkiye and the Netherlands. Religious education in Türkiye is considered as a way of establishing a balance between secularization and conservatism, while in the Netherlands it is associated with an integration policy. Religious education plays an important role in Türkiye in terms of social identity and political orientation. The spread of Imam Hatip high schools and the continuation of religious education under state supervision are perceived by some groups as a factor strengthening conservatism (Bula'a, 2014). Religious education in the Netherlands is directly related to the integration process of Muslim immigrants. Some researchers claim that Islamic

education helps preserve the identity of immigrant communities, while others claim that it makes integration difficult (Joppke, 2018). Religious education systems in Türkiye and the Netherlands, centralism, etc. Autonomy, necessity, etc. freedom, social identity, etc. it is based on various dynamics, such as integration. New models should be developed for both countries that promote pluralism, critical thinking and social peace.

### **Challenges Encountered Today and Solution Proposals for the Two Countries**

Religious education is an important issue for an individual to develop his religious identity, live in harmony with social values and protect his cultural heritage. However, globalization, secularization, multiculturalism and technological changes are challenging the traditional structure of religious education in many ways. In countries with different historical and socio-political contexts, such as Türkiye and the Netherlands, there are differences in religious education practices and emerging problems. Religious education in Türkiye has been determined by efforts to reshape religious lessons dating from the Ottoman period into the modern nation-state process (Kuru, 2009). On the other hand, the Netherlands has adopted a model that protects the secular education system, but at the same time has left room for religious educational institutions within the constitutional framework (Vermeulen, 2019). However, there are serious problems with religious education in both countries. While the principle of secularism and the relationship between compulsory religious education and different faith groups are being discussed in Türkiye, issues such as the right of Muslim immigrants to receive religious education and the compatibility of this process with social inclusion are highlighted in the Netherlands (Maussen, December 2, 2007; Gümüş, 2021).

In this section, the main problems of the religious education systems in Türkiye and the Netherlands are discussed in detail and proposals for joint solutions are presented for both countries. Religious education in Türkiye is provided at different levels, from primary school to higher education. In the official educational system, religious culture and ethics (REC) courses are mandatory, and a more complete religious education is provided in institutions such as Imam Hatip high schools (IHL) and Theological Faculties (Gür & birthday, 2019). However, this system gives rise to a large number of controversies, both pedagogical and political. 24 of the Constitution. according to the article, religious education was compulsory in Türkiye in 1982. However, the effects of this practice on different faith groups are the subject of considerable debate. The criticism that the compulsory DKAB courses are largely based on the

Sunni-Hanafi understanding of Islam is expressed in particular by Alevi, Christian and secular groups (Turkmen, 2014).

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in its 2007 decision of Hasan and Eylem Zengin against Türkiye, concluded that religious education in Türkiye is focused on a single sect and that this situation is contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR, 2007). Another decision of the ECHR in 2014 concerning the request of the Alevis to get rid of the religious classes showed that the Turkish policy of religious education should be made more pluralistic (Kaya, 2015). Proponents argue that religious education strengthens the moral structure of society and plays an important role in the transmission of cultural heritage (Kafadar, 2016). Its opponents claim that the individual's freedom of belief has been restricted and that the educational system has taken on a structure contrary to the principle of secularism (Arslan, 2018). The relationship between the understanding of modern education and traditional Islamic education in Türkiye is still an unresolved problem today. With the establishment of the republic, the madrasa system was liquidated and modern educational institutions appeared. However, there are significant gaps in the integration of modern science and traditional Islamic education, especially with institutions providing religious education, such as Imam Hatip high schools and theological Faculties (Zengin, 2015).

While the modern education system emphasizes critical thinking, scientific methods and contemporary pedagogical approaches, traditional Islamic education is more based on memorization and authority-based learning models (Köse, 2019). This situation leads students to weaken their religious identity in the secular education system or to lose their connection with the modern world in the traditional education system (Göle, 2017). Although religious education has become more institutionalized due to the expansion of Imam Hatip high schools in Türkiye in the 2000s, discussions about education in these schools continue. It is criticized that the academic performance of Imam Hatip schools, especially those providing education in the fields of natural sciences and social sciences, is low (Bula, 2014). The Netherlands is a country where freedom of religious education is guaranteed by the constitution. However, the religious education of Muslim immigrant communities in the country is linked to many challenges. Since Islam is a religion introduced to the Netherlands by immigrants, the formation of institutional structures for religious education has been delayed (Joppke, 2018). Muslim communities can open religious schools with financial support from the state, but this process

is linked to bureaucratic obstacles, lack of teachers and problems of social acceptance (Maussen, 2007).

Muslim immigrant families want their children to integrate into Dutch society and protect their religious identity. However, the insufficient number of Islamic schools and the fact that existing schools are struggling with financial difficulties make it difficult for Muslim students to access religious education (Gümüř, 2021). The growing Islamophobia throughout Europe is leading to an increase in reactions against Islamic educational institutions in the Netherlands. Muslim schools are often criticized for their radicalization and lack of integration into society and are strictly controlled by the state (Vermeulen, 2019). A more pluralistic religious education: Religious education in both countries should be more inclusive and pluralistic (Türkmen, 2014).

Religious education integrates critical thinking and science: the integration of traditional and modern educational models must be ensured (Bula, 2014). Educational policy to support social inclusion: Religious education must be encouraged so that immigrants adapt to society, but it must also be compatible with secular education (Joppke, 2018). As a result, although the religious education systems in Türkiye and the Netherlands are designed in different contexts, solutions to common problems such as pluralism, integration and compatibility with science education must be found.

## **CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study examines the historical development, the current structure and the difficulties of Islamic religious education in Türkiye and the Netherlands from a comparative point of view. The results obtained during the research process show that there are important legal, educational and social differences in the religious education policies of the two countries, but that they also face similar challenges. While religious education in Türkiye has a centralized structure and is managed within the framework of the understanding of secularization by the state, there is a fairly autonomous system based on pluralism and individual freedom of education in the Netherlands.

We can say that both models have advantages and disadvantages. Although religious education in Türkiye enjoys institutional security due to its official control, there are restrictions on pluralism and respect for other faiths. On the other hand, Islamic religious education in the Netherlands is subject to a more free model based on the principle of multiculturalism, but is

subject to certain restrictions due to hostility to Islam, integration problems and lack of financial viability.

Within this framework, the policy of religious education should be focused not only on ideological approaches to the state, but also on social needs and individual rights. The current religious education systems in Türkiye and the Netherlands should be improved by adopting more inclusive, modern and democratic approaches. Looking at the models of Islamic religious education in Türkiye and the Netherlands, it can be seen that, although they are based on different legal and political foundations, they face similar structural difficulties. Although religious education is compulsory and centralized in Türkiye, an autonomous and optional model is being implemented in the Netherlands. The problems posed by these two approaches can be summarized as follows: Religious education in Türkiye is provided within the framework of compulsory religious culture and ethics (Rec) courses. However, since the content of these courses is mainly based on the Sunni-Hanafi understanding of Islam, they cannot fully meet the needs of different faith groups.

Alevis, Christians and other faith groups argue that this situation is contrary to the principle of religious freedom and the concept of a secular state (Kaya, 2015). The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has criticized the practice of compulsory religious education in Türkiye in its decisions and stated that the curriculum should be more impartial (ECHR, 2007). In addition, the expansion of Imam Hatip high schools in Türkiye is another topic of discussion. While Imam Hatip schools are encouraged in accordance with conservative policies, this is perceived by the secular segment as a tendency to religialize education. This orientation in education is criticized in terms of the process of secularization and understanding of secularism and leads to social polarization (Gür & Osteoporelik, 2019). Islamic religious education in the Netherlands has developed in accordance with an educational policy shaped by pluralism and individual rights. Muslim communities have the right to open private Islamic schools with state support and this is guaranteed by the Constitution (Vermeulen, 2019). However, these schools seem to face difficulties due to financial viability, lack of teachers and social acceptance (Joppke, 2018). In addition, the growing Islamophobia in Europe is negatively affecting the position of Muslim schools in the Netherlands in society. Some politicians and media organizations associate Islamic schools with radicalization and social fragmentation and advocate reducing public support for these schools (Maussen, 2007).

This is an important topic of discussion for the future of the multicultural education policy of the Netherlands. Recommendations: The Islamic religious education systems in Türkiye and the Netherlands should be re-evaluated to match the changing dynamics of modern societies. Below are suggestions that can be developed for both countries.: Make the DKAB curriculum more inclusive: The course content should not only focus on Sunni Islam, but also adopt an approach that includes other sects and religions. Compulsory religious education can become optional: if religious education is left to the discretion of the individual, this can contribute to a healthier application of the principle of religious freedom in education. Better integration of Imam Hatip high schools in scientific education: the development of these schools must be promoted not only as religious educational institutions, but also as schools promoting modern and scientific education.

The financial viability of Islamic schools should be ensured. Government support should be increased and the private sector and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to contribute to education. The program must be developed in such a way as to protect both religious identity and promote social integration. It is important to make Islamic education more compatible with the secular approach to education. Education policy should make the fight against Islamophobia more active. Religious education should proceed along the axis of tolerance and dialogue and develop a framework to reduce social polarization.

As a result, the religious education policy in Türkiye and the Netherlands is shaped by two different concepts of secularism, state policy and social structure. While a centralized religious education model is implemented under state control in Türkiye, a system based on pluralism and freedom has developed in the Netherlands. However, there are some difficulties with both models. Religious education in Türkiye lacks pluralism and there are debates about secularism, and in the Netherlands there are problems of Islamophobia and financial viability. In the future, the religious education policies of both countries should be reformed to support individual rights, contemporary educational values and social peace.

The progress of educational policy towards a more inclusive structure that encourages critical thinking and strengthens social peace is a very important requirement to protect both the religious freedom of the individual and social stability.



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