Lecturing Notes and a READER for Intercultural Education

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Re-thinking Religious Education in Turkish Schools in the Light of the Contribution by John M. Hull to the Turkish Experience

1. Introduction

Schools are platforms where the expectations, claims and disagreements of various groups come together. They are modified and influenced by the demands of school administration, families, political bodies, religious institutions, social and economic conditions and environments.

Religion is taught as a subject among others in the schools in which the perspectives are revised, the values are transformed from one generation to the next, new behaviours are learned, and the way to a happy life is achieved. Religion, like other school subjects, may contribute to the achievement of desired knowledge, skills and understanding, and to the development of identity on the part of young people. In collaboration with other school subjects RE may contribute to children and young people in their understanding of the cultural heritage. Through interactions in RE and similar subjects they get the sense of being members of a society and the wisdom of predecessors is passed on to the coming generations. Through giving young people an opportunity of discussing the matters of identity, the meaning of being and existing in the world, schools, by means of religious interpretations, may play an important role in expanding their perspectives, deepening their understanding and enriching their thoughts.

Although the potential contributions of RE can be enumerated further, the problems with regard to connections between RE and the school context are far from being easily solved:

- What kind of RE? Why should RE be taught in the schools?
- What kind of contributions can RE make to the general aims of the schools?
- To what extent is the contribution by RE necessary and unavoidable?
- When RE is taught in the schools, what kind of interpretation of it should be preferred?
- With which method it should be taught?
- Is there a place for diversity of faith in the same classroom?

1 I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Üzeyir Ok for his contribution to this paper. Üzeyir Ok had the privilege to be John Hull’s PhD student during the years 1998-2003. Üzeyir Ok is an associate Professor at the Divinity School of Cumhuriyet University in Turkey.
These questions have always been around and have intensely been discussed. It is not possible to cover these issues in this contribution and, of course, they are beyond my capacity. What I intend to do here, as an educator and theologian, is to take a glance over the venture of RE in Turkish schools. I will start by sharing briefly my professional and personal experience in religious education since the 1980's. This autobiographical approach will include my reflections on religious education with special reference to the impact generated by the vision, work and thought proposed by John Hull for Turkish educators and, in particular, on my own train of thought when I encountered his views. I will focus here on his original ideas about the justifications of RE as a school subject and his interpretation of the concepts originally coined by Grimmitt (see 2000, p. 34) that students with various faith backgrounds should learn about religion and from religion in the same classroom context. The latter form of learning will be emphasized by using the concept of encounter.

Looking after original ideas and new approaches is an embedded drive in human nature and this is not always gained by mere theoretical thinking or other means but also by observing and following leading figures. Nevertheless, speaking about an important figure in order to emphasize his/her unique contributions in a particular context is somewhat risky because of the possibility that blind spots in drawing the right picture may cast shadows on the accuracy of the situation at stake.

Needless to say, John Hull is one of those eminent religious educators with wide-ranging international and intercultural impact and reputation in the field of religious education. For instance, he elaborated on such concepts like liberation, personal autonomy, morality, responsibility, spirituality, secularism, encounter and so on, in such a way that they have not provoked new horizons only in his own country but also abroad. As such, the propositions by John Hull about the meaning of the activities in RE classes, the directions in which RE will move, and how it will be shaped in the future, planted new germs in the innovative orientations in Turkey (Hull 2003; Selçuk 2005). In the very foundations of theoretical reflections by John Hull as well as in his suggestions for the practice of RE in the schools, it is possible to find a variety of suggestions for concretizing universal peace. He is a thinker, a field veteran as well as a trainer with widespread convincing influences. He represents a very significant model for how the themes of a local religious value system can be applied in a global context too.

I like to start by pointing at an episode with regard to him. We can learn from his international students, that in addition to his seriousness in his professional work, discipline, excellence, humility, he is also an activist model for the people around him in working for global peace. When the grim attack on innocent people in the US took place on 11th of September 2001, followed-up by the declaration of war on Afghanistan, Hull initiated such an agenda and prepared such a discourse that nobody from any faith tradition could deny it. A long quotation from the text written by him for the press release called 'declaration on Afghanistan: religious
educators condemn bombing' clearly indicates how he thinks and acts as a citizen of the world prior to be a citizen of a nation-state:

A group of Christian and Muslim religious educators at British universities today issued a statement condemning both the terrorist actions of 11 September and the subsequent bombing of Afghanistan. "Both these actions are inconsistent with the principles of the religions we represent and teach," "We believe that violence produces more violence, and that terrorism cannot be eliminated by violence, but only by the pursuit of justice with the structure of international law." The statement calls for an immediate end to the bombing, and for governments to work together against injustice, poverty and inequality instead. We believe that it is blasphemous to drop bombs on human beings, who are made in the image of God and who are the representatives of God... At the same time, we call upon our fellow Christians and Muslims to abandon the competition which has defined our mutual relations for centuries. We confess that this spirit of competition has contributed to the climate in which extremism and fanaticism appears in both Christianity and Islam. We invite our fellow Christians and Muslims to enter into a new partnership in which we will work together for the good of humanity. (see web: http://www.johnmhall.biz/Declaration%20on%20Afghanistan.html)

Both Muslim and Christian educators and researchers put their names under this declaration without hesitation, perhaps because of the fact that his standpoint is without doubt supra-cultural and due to the fact that the concept of humanity has priority above being Christian or Muslim. Justice is called upon replacing the place of destructive competition and arrogant aggressive manner.

In the next parts you will find some of his ideas which invigorated new visions in Turkish context.

2. Justifications for Religious Education to Become a School Subject in Turkey

In 1980's after Turkish legislation was re-arranged, RE turned out to be a compulsory school subject in the schools and every student was expected to attend RE lessons; formerly Re had an elective status. As an implication of this new regulation, the RE syllabus was updated and new RE books were published. That RE became a compulsory subject in a secular society caused contradictory views to emerge and many questions were raised. Among these were:

- Why should the school in a secular and plural society take the responsibility of the Mosques?
- How about the children of those who do not want their children to study religion? Is it acceptable to make these children to a believer of a certain religion without the consent of their parents?
Can RE be open to those children who have no religious background next to those who have various religious interpretations of life?

- Can children with differing faith orientations be taught in the same classroom? For whom is RE meant in a secular state?

- What can be done to change the nature of RE into a new mode with which it would be able to address every member of a plural society in the schools of a secular society?

- What should be taught in these lessons and for what purpose? And so on

After the legislation was confirmed by the public in a referendum, the discussion turned around the question of how RE should be taught. One of the common arguments put forward in this regard was that bearing the modern society and its needs in mind, RE in the schools should not be shaped around faith and religiosity. Being pious or not should be regarded as the preference of the students with their free minds personally and is not an issue for the school. Thus, the aim of the school cannot be defined as teaching students how to be a religious person or how to become members of a faith group. Schools should only provide information which may enable students to choose what they themselves might prefer. Schools, rather than aiming religiosity on the part of students, should better teach religion as individual, social and historical reality. I like to draw attention to the fact that this approach is a mixture of what Grimmitt has so adequately labelled 'learning about religion' and 'learning from religion' as opposed to 'learning into religion' approach.

Amidst these questions and discussions, the present author, then a RE teacher, left the school and started in the Faculty of Divinity of Ankara University as a research assistant in the department of RE. I started my PhD research under the supervision of a leading figure in RE in Turkey, Professor Beyza Bilgin. Bilgin exhibited great effort to establish the department of Religious Education in the university and played an important role in making RE a compulsory subject in the schools. When returning back to Turkey from a visit to England in 1987, Professor Bilgin brought a dictionary of RE edited by John M. Sutcliffe, which could be regarded as one of the most valuable gifts for a PhD student.

I took the dictionary with great excitement and started turning over its pages. As a student working on the strategies of how religion should be presented to children, the article “The Nature of Religious Education” in it attracted my attention. It was as if a serious quandary was explained by distinguishing between RE as a religious activity and RE as an educational activity. It was John Hull who pointed out that particular article to the necessity of drawing this distinction between RE as educational activity and RE as theological self-fulfilment to justify these two positions. He was arguing:

Conceptions of the nature of RE may be divided into those which emphasize religious education as religious activity and those which emphasize it as an educational activity. The former is the traditional view, and it is probably safe to say that in all past socie-
ties religious education has been understood as that process of teaching and learning by means of which religions have sought for their transmission and self-perpetuation (Hull 1984, p. 284)

When I first read these lines they affected me, being a research assistant with a number of years of teaching experience in RE, deeply. What was the precise context when I read this? In the tradition of Islamic education in Turkey the classical understanding was in general that teaching the verses of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet, that is the Hadith/Tradition, were enough in themselves to learn and teach religion. The common belief for many years had been that the verses and the sayings of the prophet — being the only and ultimate references — were enough to learn about what faith and good behaviour were and how these should be taught to children. Nevertheless, it was obvious for many years that instructing children in behavioural models, commandments and prohibitions was falling short in order to be able to cope with enduring social and pedagogical problems in modern times.

With new visions in mind, I ask one day a question to RE teacher trainees in the lecture room in order to ease the feeling of quandary between the two poles of tension-loaded thinking models, one based on the authority of revelation and preference of narration over reason and the other favouring reason and social change over the revelation: “Assume that you tell your students about the prophet when he was praying: “O my Lord teach me the real nature of things” Then I continued commenting. In addition to a piece of information that you pass to your students, you would also help them meet such key concepts as “truth” “reality”, “the nature of things” in addition to a tacit message that the prophet was also a truth-seeker. Then I put the question: “Well, what kind of contributions can this type of analysis make to your students? Do you think this way of approaching the narration/Tradition may provide a new perspective in their evaluation of their environment and in their overcoming the challenges of life, and, more importantly, in their becoming “truth-seekers”?”

Among those who commented, some acknowledged that the traditional approach is insufficient and a new approach is needed. Others claimed that there is a need for change, but we do not know how this might happen. Still others proposed that even though new approaches are developed, it would be difficult for senior teachers to use them. However, the sound of those who were in favour of the ‘teaching into religion’ approach, namely, teaching religion because of the intrinsic value of that religion was rising higher. Hull was coming close to this in his article in the following lines:

Is there something about the nature of each school subject such that the teaching of that subject should exhibit characteristics of the subject? Should the teaching of geography itself be geographical in some sense? Should the teaching of history itself be historical and the teaching of music musical? Should the teaching of religion itself be religious? Or do all these teaching areas have something in common which enables us to speak of a logic of education? There is a sense in which the nature of RE will continue to be religious in so far as it will deal with religion as a subject matter, and there
is a related sense in which it will continue to be religious in that it will seek to offer pupils at least some of the values and challenges which religions offer mankind. But it will continue to be vital for RE in the state school that these senses in which the nature of the subject may still be conceived of as being religious should be qualified and limited by the nature of education (p. 286).

In his reference list, John M. Hull was referring to another resource, a book, of which he was the editor: *New Directions in Religious Education* published in 1982. I was interested in reading that book as well. Because there was no opportunity in those years, to order a book via internet, I bought the book by writing a letter to the publisher. The book was covering some selected articles articulating new perspectives on RE. In its introduction section, Hull was arguing for his stance in respect to the place of RE by discussing its qualifying features:

But what is it to learn from religion? It is not difficult to see why religious education has been facing questions of curriculum development at least as severe as those encountered by any other subject today. But religious education is no different in this respect from any other branch of education or indeed any of the social sciences in a time of rapid social change. It may once have been possible for critics of religious education to describe it as indoctrination, the apex of compulsion in a compulsory system, and as being uneducational through its lack of enquiry and criticism. It would be more accurate today to see in this subject a crucial focus for the examination of those beliefs and values without which education could not be true to itself and as a classroom example of that meeting between religions, and between the religious and the secular outlooks, which is changing the consciousness of humanity today (Hull 1982, pp. xiv-xv).

Reflecting upon these and similar ideas, which widened and enriched my perspective, I completed my PhD research in 1989 with the book titled *Religious Motifs in the Education of Children*. The main focus of the dissertation was on how children should be related to religious and cultural heritage. I present now some notes from the sections of the conclusions and suggestions.

The result of the research revealed that while introducing RE according to the level of understanding of children, it was suggested that the developmental process of children, the features of various developmental stages, should always be taken into consideration. It was advocated that in order to give children a sense of responsibility, RE should establish a link between the religious/theological knowledge, events and thoughts and the daily experience of children. The main aim was to help children enhance their faith primarily based on their own efforts and activities.

The second point was that establishing a balance between the level of knowledge to be introduced to children and their developmental stage is not only a psychological necessity but also a theological one. This was in line with the insight that it has been known theologically that the divine revelation was announced at such a level that people could understand and interpret it. Religious education especially in the early years does not mean to transmit religious knowledge into children, but to prepare them to understand it through fostering their emotional and
rational capacities. If their capacities are proliferated in the early years, they, as adults, may profit from their education and understand what it means to be a Muslim in the later periods of their lives.

As a result, according to the findings of the survey, it was suggested that some preparations are needed when developing RE syllabi that should fit with the needs and concerns of children and that have the potentiality to be integrated with their capacities. These were determined as follows:

- First of all we have to develop an understanding of the developmental level of children by observation and empirical research.
- With regard to the theological materials, we need to transform the 'raw' material, namely, teaching, of Islam into a level that is suitable for the particular developmental stages of children, so that they can make sense out of it.
- We have to disseminate the developed theories and suggestions to families, teachers and to all those who work with children in the area of religious education. If those who are educators would possess the knowledge about the developmental level of their students, they would be able to choose the convenient material needed for that particular level. (Selçuk 1991, pp. 173-174)

3. Advances in Religious Education in Turkey

The 1990's were the years in which researchers were in search for new methods and, since a long time, different approaches were introduced in the field of religious education; both in theory and practice. In particular, a group of scholars in the Faculty of Divinity of Ankara University, pointed to Islamic movements and interpretations in the history of Islam and in modern times in favour of individual authenticity, an emphasis on reason, discussing the relation of reason with faith. Researchers started to deal with the issues of encountering different cultural heritages, with the methods to understand and explain these, and with the ways to accommodate these insights with modern conditions. It was argued that considering relations with the "other", imposing the teachings of a certain religious belief system might not be really functional and could be even considered as oppressive. In order to develop a "culture of living together and of reconciliation", it is methodologically essential, to refer to the common principles which are shared by all the religious traditions.

The result of this new orientation in understanding and methodology was soon reflected in theological interpretations. Some key concepts from the Qur'an were re-interpreted creatively. For instance the word "Maarifah" which was formerly simply translated as knowledge was re-translated as "trusted knowledge" or "mutual encounter", the concept of "amal-as salih" as "decent work and peace-producing activities", and finally the core notion of the "taqwa" as "the consciousness of divine responsibility".
Professor Bilgin characterized this movement as a "re-understanding and re-interpretation of Islam" (Bilgin 1999, p. 9). This movement was approaching the historical material with criticisms, trying to distinguish between what should be regarded as religious and what not and bringing the critical and liberal feature of Islamic tradition—which was often left aside as immature in the past—to the forefront. Students were invited to questioning and to critical thinking and were encouraged to compare the views on religion and religious orientations.

The nucleus of the philosophy of new Islamic pedagogy was that every human being is worth respect and dignity because they bear essence from the "spirit" of the Creator. The general aim of religious education inspired from this approach was formulated in teaching programs in the following way: "Inspiring from the Qur'an to create an epistemological ground on which students may develop a sense of individuality and resolve the challenges of life through producing moral solutions."

Turkey entered 2002 by revising RE programs for the Imam Training Secondary Schools and Primary schools. Professor Cemal Tosun, who discussed the scientific foundations of the program and the nature of the relations between theory and practice, made the following remarks which also summarize the venture of RE in the schools mentioned so far:

I strongly emphasize on science and the concept of being scientific. Since, until very recently, the discussions have been on marginal topics in the field of religious education with poor scientific aims, knowledge and discourse. We wanted to discuss how RE can be rendered more scientific and new steps could be taken forward. In fact, since 1980, we have expected that the scientific studies taking place under the chair of the Department of Religious Education, trying to be compatible with the scientific level of leading countries, were put into practice. I would like to see these programs as corresponding with this expectancy (Tosun 2003, p. 753).

These remarks were made in the International Symposium on Search for New Methods in RE arranged by The Ministry of Turkish National Education in 2001 and John Hull was among the participants. The paper presented by Hull in that symposium titled "Religious Education in Democratic Plural Societies: Some General Considerations" has a special bearing on our study and triggered our search for new approaches. It led many Turkish educators—including myself—to new research lines and discussions related to the topic.

The paper presented by John Hull in 2001 (Hull 2003) covering his considerations on approaches in RE in contemporary societies prompted new research areas for the future. His main arguments can be summarised that ‘learning from religion approach’ among others (learning into religion, learning about religion and faith-based approach) is the most compatible position for the future of member states of the European Union. The implications of this are that religions do abandon the competition between themselves, because the history showed that it defied the process of humanization. Secondly, it is more liable for plural societies or the societies in which tolerance for diversity is acknowledged. Third, in a world in which
financial competition and the values of idolatrous money-God prevailed, there is a need to revive the human values which have been nurtured by faith traditions. Briefly, we need to learn, as we have done so far, from religious values for the humanization project through educational activity.

Taking all global and local considerations into account, the remarks by Hull encourage us to reflect upon the strategy in religious education in Turkey with its unique secular and Islamic heritage and to find ways for encouraging on a non-competitive base for living together. It is Hull's view that, along these lines, Islam, along with other Abrahamic traditions, may provide a new inspiration for Europe.

One of the results of the integration of Turkish society with secularism has its influence on the perceptions of religion. Because of the secularism, religion occupied its central place in individual life and it is understood that religion should not be misused as a means for patriotism, domination and power over the population. This process of secularization led theologians to be conscious of the need for reinterpretation of Islam under modern conditions and of the sociology of religious knowledge, namely, the process of producing religious thoughts, its transformation and practice. Of course, new interpretations of religion have not been assimilated by all groups of the public in such a short time. It apparently requires a longer period. However, it is my opinion that the views developed by Turkish academics on the interpretation of religion and Islam in particular, are worth to be discussed on a larger scale and by scholars in wider contexts.

4. Summary with Concluding Remarks

What we derived from Hull's reflections is, among other things, that religion as a means should be distinguished from religion as a goal in itself. Religion is a complementary and effective source for one's self-actualization, critical awareness, psychological, social and moral development. Religious teachings can be perceived as one of the sources, among others, which may contribute to one's personal growth, interpreting life and solving life problems, rather than being understood as a collection of rules to which individuals are urged to adapt their lives. This approach gives a central place and priority to the experience of students over theology based on the inherent value of theology.

Should one of the functions of RE in the schools be regarded as contributing to pupil's development in their diversity rather than being guard of their theological convictions, as a requirement of student-centred approach, the themes common to those faith and to the concerns of students constitute the agenda for RE. By turning to our commonly shared experiences as human beings, such shared experiences as birth, death, gender, love and hatred, friendship, struggle for life, success and failure, happiness and sadness, power and weakness, health and sickness, war and peace, we establish a basis for understanding "others" in any part of the world. In this respect, as Hull often emphasizes, the aim of spirituality, by which he means...
transcending the biological side of our existence, is humanization rather than being stuck at the level of confirming one’s identity within a certain faith group.

In this way, understanding the scriptures becomes closely related to understanding the conditions of human beings who are thinking, judging, listening and living together. Therefore, in order to understand the scriptures, it is essential that we understand human beings; and in order to understand the whole human experience we need a universal hermeneutics. As a consequence, in this approach the starting point becomes ‘students’ themselves and religious texts are reinterpreted and brought to the world of the students in the light of the history of “human cultural heritage and successes”. In this way, the world of the pupil is respected and the theological traditions become the accumulated sources of wisdom to learn from (Hull 1991; Selçuk 2005).

After taking students into the centre of the educational activity, we have to think about ways to relate them to other fellow students with different faith backgrounds. This can be adequately conceptualized with the word “encounter”.

RE with its multi-dimensions is basically considered as an encounter in Hull’s perception of education. To Hull, the reason for students taking part in the same classroom context is that nobody has the right to prevent students from learning about the wisdom and richness of each other’s faith. By encounter, a dialogical relationship is meant which contains mutuality in its very nature. Whether we take the meaning of encounter as one’s relationship with his/her religious heritage or with the “other”, we need a wider theoretical framework to express what we mean by encounter in detail. Otherwise, it would be difficult to utilize it as a practical concept in RE in order to overcome the problems created by the challenges of plural societies.

Finally, I will deal with some theological considerations about the concept of encounter in Islam. Meeting with other religious traditions on a non-competitive and equal basis, namely without power struggle, will enrich new learning in RE. Islam put this with the concept of ta’aruf (which may literally be translated as mutual understanding) (Chapter XLIX/13). The scholars of the Qur’an usually reach a consensus in the interpretation of this verse stating that the differences in language, culture and race are built by divine will and these differences are regarded as the signs indicating towards the Creator. The differences are not justification for being superior or being blamed but bear a pedagogical function of arising self-awareness about the existence of God.

When the concept of ta’aruf is analyzed from an educational perspective, it can be noticed that it embraces the meaning of enriching the “other” and developing the sense of existence. It also refers to the sensitivity towards the “other”, respect for difference, and to a moral responsibilities of mutual helping relationship. If the thirteenth verse of the Chapter XLIX is analyzed in its holistic context, the following two points which are related to the principles in the process of humanization and living together in a civilized way, come into mind.

All humankind is created from a common essence. We all share this communality and there is this creation in our relating to others. The fact that humankind has
been created differently is a divine gift to them in order that they should recognize each other, rather than using the other as a means for oppressing strategies.

In a world in which the differences are emphasized and thousands of people die in indecent wars or are colonized in some way or another, it is not easy to find the courage to know each other and to create values together. Looking for opportunities to know each other better and putting into practice ways of creating values together are today more needed than before, and there is a special task reserved here for religious educators.

To establish a peaceful world in which individuals may sustain their dignity, we need to work on paving the way for the development of mutual understanding, for a sense of living together with diversity, and for uniting on the basis of a universal ethics nurtured by religions. A theoretical typology of the notion of encounter from a Muslim perspective can be put forward in the following way:

- First, we have to deal with or encounter our own theological stances. In order to pass the stage of "tribalism" and "religionism", in Hull's words, to the level of encounter and living together we ought to be able and reflect upon our theological premises from different perspectives.
- Second, we have to be able to encounter with ourselves. As most theologies state, without knowing ourself it is hard to know others, including God.
- Third, we have to be able to encounter with the society and culture in which we live. Escaping from the responsibility of working for the welfare of the society in which we live by avoiding the fellow citizens should be the easiest way of being pious.
- Fourth, we have to be able to encounter with the "other". The other covers all the members of the human family. Through interactions with other members of human family we get the feeling of self and identity.
- Fifth, we have to be able to encounter with our future responsibilities. Because humankind is evolving both at psychological and sociological levels, the present is imagined as connected to the future as it was the future of the past. Imagination about the future of our existence may be tension-loaded for some but is creative because our present responsibilities can be motivated by our conceived future plans.

I would like to complete this presentation by summarizing the main points put forward by John Hull that contributed to the development of new perspectives in the field of Religious Education in Turkey:

- Religions should be taught to children faithfully, descriptively, and critically
- In RE, young people are encouraged to encounter the spiritual and religious values of several traditions, in order to enrich and deepen their own human development.
- Young people are considered not as believers or unbelievers, but as students.
RE should be educational in its character and should be professional in its presentation.
RE should make a contribution to mutual understanding and for universal peace.
RE, like other sciences and humanities, is never value-free but it is secular when it is part of the school curriculum for all pupils.

Maybe Religious Education should gradually re-invent itself as a diverse religious activity, based upon a philosophy of secular education enriched by religious and theological interpretations from the church, the mosque and the synagogue.

References

Religious Diversity
and Education in Europe

Wilma A.J. Meijer, Siebren Miedema,
Alma Lanser-van der Velde (Eds.)

Religious Education
in a World of
Religious Diversity
Mualla Selçuk

Developing an Interfaith Dimension in RE: Theological Foundations and Educational Framework with Special Reference to Turkish Experience

1. Religious education and tradition

What is Islamic perspective towards others? The answer to this question can be searched within the Quran, the Holy Book of Islam, since the basic source of Islam is the Qur’an and it describes itself as “the guide leading to the straightest way.” As to come to the Islamic perspective towards the members of other faith, we find the following passages:

“The Religion before God is Islam.” (Al-i Imān, 3:19)

Do they seek for other than the Religion of God? While all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willingly or unwillingly bowed to His will. And to Him shall they all be brought back. Say: We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma’il, Isaac, Jacob, and his descendants, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord. We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to God do we bow our will. If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him, and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost.” (Al-i Imān, 3:83,84,85; Al-Baqara, 2:136)

“The Apostle believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the man of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in God, His angels, His books, and His apostles. ‘We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles.” (Al-Baqara, 2:285)

“O ye who believe! Believe in God and His apostle and the scripture which He hath sent to His apostle and the scriptures which He sent to those before him. And who denieth God, His angels, His books, His apostles and the day of judgement hath gone far, far away.” (Al-Nisa, 4:136)

“Those who believe (in the Qur’an) and those who follow the Jewish(Scriptures) and Christians and the Sabains and who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.” (Al-Baqara, 2:62)

Given the verses above, Muslim scholars formulated the principles of faith (al-iman) in Islam. This formulation of faith which was named as Ammaṭu’lcreeds involves six tenets of faith, the first five of which were derived from the verses presented above. These tenets are proclaimed by Muslims in the following way:

“I believed in God, and His angels, and His scriptures, and His messengers, and the last day.”
When this formula is introduced in RE classrooms, students often feel such a cognitive contradiction and uncertainty: While they understand, on the one hand, that they firmly believe in the uniqueness and superiority of Islam as being the only true religion which should be protected from arguments against it, on the other, they gradually become aware that other religions may also equally be true, at least to their members, and their members believe in them hoping to be redeemed through them.

RE teachers frequently are faced with the following questions: Are all of the religions true? Or is only one religion (Islam) is true/truest among them? Beside Islam, can a non-Muslim be redeemed, for example, through the Abrahamic traditions (namely, Christianity and Judaism)? Is it possible to question the authenticity of such religions as Hinduism and Buddhism?

In understanding and expressing Islam, we need new methods fitting with the needs of pluralist society. An in-depth investigation may reveal that in the course of time some attempts were made by the companions of the prophet and by the succeeding generations to develop new understandings and re-interpretations of the message of Islam. Many Islamic disciplines, particularly Islamic Theology (Kalam) and Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh) became the main fields in which religious knowledge has been generated in the light of the Qur'an. We can easily find a pluralist feature in the interpretations of Islamic Tradition which does not require a monopoly particularly in interpreting the religious knowledge. This has been confirmed by the emergence of numerous schools of thought in the history. But within this pluralist structure, the expressions of the Qur'an such as “Surely, the true religion in the sight of Allah is Islam” (3:19), “God has chosen Islam as the way of life for you” (5:3) have been reduced to the Islamic understanding which in time has been dogmatized in the historical contexts, and those who stayed outside of these steady movements have been excluded (exclusive interpretation). In this framework, the salvation has been assigned only to a certain type of interpretation, perception and school of thought (nazhab) and those who stayed outside of this group have been accused with infidelity (kadif). On the other hand, some inclusive interpretations indicated that the term Islam, in addition to its being a proper name for the religion of Islam, also meant in general “to submit” not only to the God of Islam but any submission to one God. These liberating advances gradually lost their popularity and significance in public. Thus, the dogmatic version of understanding Islam prevailed with its exclusivist interpretation in the history.

In this chapter I will focus on the relationship between Islam and other religions in terms of education. By doing so, I will try to point to the extent the school and religious education can contribute to “the experience of living together”. When doing this, first, I am going to describe the current state of RE in Turkish schools, and secondly, I will refer to the theoretical foundations of religious education. The theoretical foundation is important, because only a scholarly framework which guides the processes of teaching and learning can determine whether all what has been said on behalf of religion is worthy of being regarded as accurate and dependable knowledge or not. I also will point to the relevance of RE syllabus with an in-
ter-religious dimension to the attitudes of students and teacher, school curriculum and policy of education

2. The present state: possibilities and problems

With the establishment of Turkish Republic, the religious education and teaching was reorganized within the new education system in line with the historical experience of Turkey and the principle of secularism. One of the results of integration of Turkish society with secularism has its influence on the perceptions of religion. Because of the secularism, religion occupied its central place in individual lives and it is understood that religion should not be misused as a means for patriotism, domination and power over the population. A law was introduced providing for a newly unified education system (Tawhid Tadrisat). Within this frame, with the Law of Integration of Education (Tawhid Tadrisat) issued in 1924, the religious education and teaching was given place within the general education. The Law of Integration of Education is of unchangeable laws and one of the first constitutional basis for religious education. To the law dated 1924, while the religious education in formal education institutions is under the segis of Ministry of National Education, the non-formal education could be provided by the Directorate of Religious Affairs. The religious education of minorities in Turkey is performed in line with Lausanne Treaty. The adherents of other religions can open their schools and give religious education/teaching there.

Today, the religious education and teaching in Turkey is executed under the guarantee of Constitution and laws. The article 24 of Constitution defines as follows:

"Teaching of religion and ethics is performed under the control of the State. Religion and ethics are among the compulsory courses taught in the primary and secondary education institutions. Any other teaching of religion depends on the person’s free will and on the legal custodian’s wishes in the case of small children."

On the other hand, the article 12 of the Basic Law of National Education no. 1739 year, 1983 defines the religious courses in formal education institutions as follows: Secularism is the fundamental feature of Turkish National Education. Religious Culture and Ethics Teaching is among the compulsory courses taught in the primary, secondary and high schools. The articles 24 of Constitution and the 12 of the Basic Law of National Education are in effect and are the legal bases of religious teaching. As per the related article of 1982 Constitution, today the Religious Culture and Ethics Course from the forth class of primary education to the 12th class of secondary education is compulsory. While it is taught two hours in a week in primary school (from year 4 to 8), it is instructed an hour weekly in the secondary schools. In that manner, every student who graduates from secondary school means to have attended RE classes for eight years. The full name for RE in Turkey
is roughly "The Religious Culture and Ethics." As it is understood in its name, RE is not only about religion, but also about ethics. The schools are secular schools, they have no religious identity.

The syllabus of RE course which has taken place among compulsory subjects since 1982 has been rearranged and put into practice in 2000. The syllabus for Religious Culture and Ethics Course is prepared by the Ministry of National Education. But in preparing the teaching programme of the course representatives from all parts participate in the programme development process and the programmes are prepared on the basis of consensus. The student's book, teacher's guide and other materials, are prepared both by the Ministry and private publishers. Therefore, a lot of textbooks can be found for teaching programme. Schools are free to choose and teach from any set of teaching materials. However sets of teaching material prepared by private publishers can be used only after they have been approved by the Board of Education and Discipline.

The new arrangement in RE syllabus allowed educators to include the modern advancements in perceptions and the new theological interpretations in religion. For instance, Prof. Cemal Tosun, who discussed the scientific ground of the program and the nature of the relations between theory and practice, made the following remarks which also summarize the venture of the RE in the schools mentioned so far:

I strongly emphasize on science and the concept of being scientific. Since, until very recently, the discussions have been on marginal topics in the field of religious education with poor scientific aims, knowledge and discourse. We wanted to discuss on how RE can be rendered more scientific and new steps are taken forward. In fact, since 1980, we have expected that the science studies taking place under the chair of Department of Religious Education and trying to be compatible with the scientific level of leading countries were put into practice. I would like to see these programs as corresponding to this expectancy (Tosun 2003, 753)

With regard to Religious Pluralism and Pluralism in Islam, the RE programme can be labelled as: "RE syllabus with non-confessional/ultra-denominational and multi-religious dimension". The term of "non-confessional/ultra-denominational" refers to the method of transferring the Islamic perspective of pluralism into a subject of RE in the classroom and in general it can be stated as follows: non-confessional/ultra-denominational RE refers to a descriptive teaching of beliefs, rituals and ethics of Islam without being bound to an understanding and interpretations of a certain Islamic school of thought (mazhab). However, this never means to disregard the schools of thought, or misrepresent, transform or change them. On the contrary, they are introduced as enriching cultural and intellectual accumulations. The non-

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1 The Ministry of Education has a specific department under the title, "The General Directory of Education of Religion". This department is involved with the implementation and development of the content of the course. The author of the article was the General Director of this department during the development process of the syllabus.
Developing an Interfaith Dimension in RE

confessional approach aims at teaching the basic values of Islam which is common to all Islamic movements considering the Qur'an as their main source. In addition, this approach also fits well with the expectation of state schools which observe to be open to every Turkish citizen and it is not shaped with the concerns of making pupil believer or pious (confessional). On the contrary, it teaches the phenomenon of religion from its main sources and equips all students equally with knowledge about religion and culture. After teaching basic “ultra-denominational” values of Islam with “the random learning experience” in the first years, the more various and specific interpretations of Islam are included in the coming years. Especially in primary school, an attention is paid not to reduce Islam to a single historical interpretation. The schools of thoughts (sects/mazahab) and their understanding of Islam, which emerged as the institutionalized forms of different religious understandings, are presented as mere interpretations developed by the Muslims which should not be equated and identified with Islam.

The main topic of my paper deals with the question of how to add an “inter-religious dimension to RE.” This issue which I saw as a new opportunity in the teaching and learning processes has some problematic aspects both in theory and practice.

The new aims of the school

The syllabus includes knowledge about Islam in particular and about other major religions in general including Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. As for aim and scope, it is intended to give students an understanding of religion as a fact that makes life meaningful, helps people live humanly, includes the main communicative codes necessary for people to understand each other, and defines the relationship between God and man. It has also been the aim to raise individuals who are able to:

- unite the faith with reason,
- consider the scientific information,
- learn how to learn,
- adopt lifelong learning including the skill to search, ask, inquire, internalize democracy,
- have a culture of living together
- know and appreciate the beliefs, traditions and customs of other religions in respect and tolerance, as well as their own religion, traditions and customs.

What sort of approach has been adopted in integrating other religions into RE syllabus which is overwhelmingly Islamic? RE has two parallel aims (a) Students will learn and understand Islam in a comprehensive way. In other words, RE will ensure the development of students within their own tradition (b) RE will teach about other beliefs, religions and traditions so that students relate to “other” in a constructive manner. This new responsibility of schools can not be defined merely from a
Theological perspective. Theological method must embrace the pedagogical, psychological and didactic approaches. The theological position of the curricula is determined by the choice of using the experiences of children as a starting point. Religious education should adjust to the individual’s growing ability. The information’s suitability to the child or adolescent is a religious responsibility as well as a psychological necessity. Divine inspiration descends upon human beings, it is for human beings to understand and interpret it. The first step in religious education and training is not to provide the child with all the relevant information, but to prepare the child to understand the divine inspiration by activating her/his spiritual and intellectual talents. If the child’s talents are improved in the early childhood, in the future as an adult s/he will be able to continue to learn on her/his own and understand what to be a believer is (Selçuk 2004, 143–144). When considered from this general framework, the overall aim of RE can be introduced as follows:

The RE syllabus aims to enhance students to develop an authentic cognitive, emotional, and skillful learning, so that they are expected to be able

From the perspective of self-development:
1. to respond to basic religious and moral questions of their tradition,
2. to be aware of their freedom of expressing their belief and thought,
3. to express their religious beliefs and perform the required prayers without encountering intimidation by others,
4. to understand that religion plays an important role in the life of humanity as serving the source of constructive meaning-making activity
5. to develop an accurate understanding of religion distinguishing between authentic religious knowledge and those which are superstitions
6. to comprehend that they can learn about Islam and other religions from their main original sources
7. to distinguish the original tenets of religion from the fabricated customs and habits emerged
8. to learn the principles of beliefs, prayers and ethics in Islam,
9. to develop a possibility that Islam never contradicts reason and science, and that religion and science are not alternatives to each other.
10. to perceive that the capacity of reasoning is the precondition of taking religious responsibility and that religion encourages using reason and supports scientific investigation.
11. to live in peace and happiness with religious framework.

From the perspective of society:
12. to be aware of the religious and moral behaviour presented by the culture and society,
13. to be aware that different religious understandings and lifestyles in the society are part of societal life which should not be equated with the authentic essentials of religion
14. to exhibit tolerance towards others, their beliefs and their ways of life.
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15 to be cautious against false and superstitious religious consciousness,
16 to derive message from religion to become sensitive and protective of the
physical and social environment.

From the perspective of subject:
17 to be virtuous individuals knowing moral values and respecting others,
18 to internalize the moral values
19 to comprehend the positive effect of beliefs and prayers and their contribu-
tions to developing wise behaviour
20 to comprehend that the religion is one of the crucial elements constituting
culture,
21 to recognize the effects of religion on other cultural components,
22 to tolerate, through the accurate religious knowledge, the intergenerational
differences in understanding,

From the perspective of Universal Values:
23 to participate in universal values with their own religious knowledge and
consciousness,
24 to know about the fundamental messages of other religions in order to treat
their members with respect,
25 to be aware of that the modern and universal human values are consistent
with the essence of Islam

Approaches towards Islamic theology in the context of “other”

These new regulations in RE programme have attracted the attention of religious
educators and they studied and discussed them” But, there is not much research on
the practical application of Islamic Theology in educational and school practice 2 In
“The International Seminar on Religious Education and Values, Session XIV”, Dr.
Recep Kaymakcan, a Turkish religious educator, presented a paper entitled “A shift
From Confessional RE Towards the Pluralistic RE in Turkey: Presentation of
Christianity in RE Textbooks” In this paper Kaymakcan stated that in the new RE
textbooks Christianity is presented in a more “sympathetic” way compared to the
old version and the common points between Christianity and Islam and moral
themes were emphasized instead of focusing on theological divergences or differ-
ences in Islamic and Christian theology. When Kaymakcan finished his presenta-
tion Dr. Wilna A. J. Meijer asked a crucial question: What is the reason for coming
to this point? Has something changed in Islamic theology?

It is true that a rapid shift and transformation has occurred in the perspective of
theologians in relatively short period of time in Turkey. This paradigm shift was

2 As an example; Lienemann, J., Bartsch, P. & Reiss, W. (2004) Christianity in Islamic Text-
described by Turkish theologians with such names as “Re-thinking Islam”, “Re-construction in religious field”, and “Re-understanding and re-explanation of Islam”

Within this, in a sense, enlightenment process the Muslim cultural heritage has been re-interpreted in a scholarly and critical approach. Another positive dimension of this movement is that the academics can express their critical views in this regard without feeling any social pressure such as inhibition and intimidation of being labelled as apostate or infidel. The major Hadith/Tradition compilations (sayings of the Prophet) such as al-Bukhari and al-Mustansir, have been exposed to critical analysis. References to the historicity of the Qur’an have been raised, and studies on hermeneutical aspect of the Qur’an have increased. More currently, new attempts present the relationship between Islam and other religions investigated within a holistic approach in the Qur’an taking into consideration the historical raison d’être of the revelation of the verses (asbab al-ma’ani).

Several theological challenges have emerged with the meeting of world religions in modern times. These have been verbalised with such statements by certain groups as “Islam and other religions can not come together”, “What makes ourselves as ourselves is the difference between us and them”. The counter-arguments were expressed with such questions as “God is universal to all humankind, so, how on earth, does He disclose himself to a certain society in a full and absolute way, and leave the others in darkness?” The discussions between leading Muslim theologians about the matter of “salvation of the members of other religions” in the late 1980s are important indications about the nature of developments in Islamic theology. Süleyman Ateş, a theology professor who was also the president of Religious Affairs in Turkey, wrote an article entitled “Nobody has the Monopoly of Heaven”. A response to this article came from Tatlı, Kocyiğit, another theology professor with an article entitled “Muslims Have the Monopoly of Heaven”. The level of discussion and counter discussion continued. In his thesis “Nobody has a Monopoly of Heaven”, Ateş reminded the limitless and all-embracing feature of God’s mercy and universality of His message. By quoting from the Qur’an He supported his thesis in the following way:

“Do we have a right to narrow God’s mercy arguing that no one will enter Heaven other than the adherents of last religion?, while the Holy Qur’an presented God’s wide mercy to those who believe in the oneness of God, the Qur’an also makes no distinction between any of the prophets and divine religions. The last religion is the same as the first religion. The mission of prophet is not to invent a new religion, but to bring the religion of oneness (tawhid) back to its original purity; not to subordinate them to himself, but to follow Abraham and the prophets from his descendants.”

Ateş was interpreting the word of Islam as the shared name for all religions and as “the submission to God”.

3 Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi (Review of the Faculty of Divinity) Özel Sayı Cumhuriyetin 75 Yıldönümü Armağan, Ankara 1999
The Qur'an brought a universal message and put certain conditions necessary for the happiness in the hereafter. These are to believe in God without attributing a partner to Him and in the hereafter without doubt and to perform good deeds (useful for this and next world). According to the Qur'an, Islam means to worship only to one God. In this meaning of the word, the religions advised by all prophets are named as Islam. The word of Islam in the Qur'an is not used only for the religion propagated by Mohammad, but also for the religions to which all are invited by all prophets, since the nature of message given by the prophets is the same. All people are invited to worship only to one God, to believe in the hereafter and to do good deeds. For this reason, no distinction can be made among the prophets whose missions were the same (Ateş 1989, 7, 9)

Ateş points out that the encounter with other religions must not happen on a competitive level but on an equal base, namely, no side will claim superiority over the other:

"The Holy Qur'an which is coherent within itself in every respect has never described Islam as a religion alternative to Judaism and Christianity and wished to dictate its own truth-claim. To be Muslim means also to believe in Moses, Jesus, and all prophets since the beginning of mankind and in their traditions/Shari'as without making any discrimination among them. In other words, submitting to God and to follow the divine will has been conveyed by all prophets one by one. If that is the case, let's bring the disputes into an end (Ateş 1989, 17)

The perspective of those who put forward argument against Ateş's views represented conventional perception of superiority of one's religion over others. This view regarded Ateş's views as contrary to Islam and even harmful for Islam. In their opinion, the mission of prophet would be by-passed with this view because, they claim, it is essential in Islam to obey the prophet Mohammad. As for the word of Islam, they proposed that it is a name for Muslims but not a name for all religions. Islam is the last religion and students are given such a message that when a new, completed and perfect version of something is acquired, it would not be feasible for them to content with the "incomplete and distorted" ones.

Truth-claim and religious education

The problem of salvation in religions has always been a matter of debate in theologies since the beginning and seems to be continuing into the future. The problem is this how the fruits of the discussions taking place between theologians being reflected into classroom context? Should this matter be remaining at the process of "disagreement" and "conflict"? One thing is certain; this fundamental theological problem will not be solved in a short time. There is no religion on earth which does not have propositions about truth. Although almost all religions claim the authenticity of their own truth-claims, in every religion there have been some possibilities of being open to dialogue with others. I wonder if these possibilities can be the sub-
ject matter of religious education. A salvation-centred approach especially when dealing with inter-religious attitudes does not necessarily need to be emphasized in RE. God did not authorize any person or text to decide who will be prosecuted in heaven or hell. Every religion may be treated as the greatest and truest for its adherents, but does not necessarily need to be greater and truer than other religions. In religious education, we don’t refer to the religions’ claim of truth about other faiths, and do not make comparisons between them, but we can suggest that the members of other religions be accepted unconditionally and with respect. An RE syllabus with interreligious dimensions is expected to provide objective information about religions and suggests some ways to live together.

In religious education, parallel to rethinking Islam and other religions, we have to find new ways of teaching them. In my opinion, the following three matters do not only point out to our current shortcomings, but they also indicate the issues to further reflection:

1. We are in need of being clear when employing terminology in RE (Islam, Islam and Other, Religion, Shariah etc.)
2. In order to transform the results of the theological discussions produced in academic circles into the classroom, we need new narrative styles.
3. We need a new approach to be able to present other religions from their own perspectives, not from an Islamic perspective.

The above points should not be dealt with; only the problem of producing new knowledge needs to be addressed. While producing new knowledge and participating in education and teaching processes, one must surely consider “the semantic codes” and “semantic systems” found in the mind of individuals and groups.

The problem in teaching other religions is not only the production of new interpretations and their introduction to the students, but also the prejudices and the level of dogmatism among believers when they meet with new approaches. When I was a general director of religious education in Turkey, a symposium was arranged in Istanbul with my initiative with the title “New Methodological Approaches in Religious Education” (28-30th March 2001). The aim of the symposium was to learn about new developments in the World and to share our Turkish experiences with our colleagues coming from other parts of the world. In the symposium, 17 papers were presented; 14 were from outside of Turkey, while 3 were from Turkey. New developments in approaches and methods in RE were discussed by theologians and educators. In order to let the RE teachers become aware of the results of this symposium, we organized an in-service training entitled “Inter-religious Relations in Globlizing World” (May 21-25, 2001) for teachers. In addition to Muslim RE teachers, teachers from Greek, Jewish and Armenian schools in Istanbul were also invited to this seminar. In the course, such matters as respecting different religions, the common points between religions, moral values proposed by religions were discussed. At the end of course, the teachers expressed their satisfaction from taking part in this meeting which was the first of its type (although at the beginning of the course the number of teachers who articulated their worries and concerns.
was high) After the meeting the teachers pointed to the importance of such seminars and decided to plan a working group with the name “Group for developing Inter-religious Principles in RE.” This working group intended to prepare projects for a working inter-religious communication and to collect cases from their practice.

While this attempt received positive reactions by the public in general, some groups expressed their doubts. A press announcement was released to clear the hesitations. In the press release it was declared that some misinterpretations are made about the works aiming for an activity of RE which is performed in the framework of modern and scholarly methods. The message put in the press was as follows: Group for Developing Inter-religious Principles of Education did not aim to develop a new religious understanding by counting all religions as one, or to advocate a certain religion over the other.

3. A starting point in inter-religious education: a believing mind

*The East and the West belong to Allah. Wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah. For Allah is All-Embracing. All-Knowing*” (Al-Baqara, 2. 115)

In my opinion, one of the ways to be followed in the inter-religious education is to take “the believing mind” as the starting point in education. We can ask the following questions in this respect: What kind of attitude may a believer develop towards others? How may a person who believes in the power of love think about others? What kind of attitude promotes building mutual understanding? And, finally, what kind of conditions drives a person to develop an inconsistent attitude towards his/her belief? I assume that the persons who exhibit a coherent mental attitude and mature identity may confront others with respect without being in need of questioning the truth-claim of the other. He/she acknowledges that there are many ways to explain life.

What kind of approach for religious education?

We are in favour of a religious education which enhances in its very essence showing respect for humankind, to his/her thought, to anything moral, to freedom and to cultural heritage (Selçuk 1997, 145-159). What does it mean to be respectful towards thought, human being, freedom, the moral and cultural heritage? For many years, in our education system, starting from our childhood onward we have been suggested to show respect for quite a few phenomena including family, school, environment, elderly, society etc. but we were hardly told why we should do so. In other words, the importance of respect in daily life has been stressed upon, whereas the meaning of the respectful behaviour has not been studied enough. A number of rules have
been put before us, but their practical meanings have not been shown in practice. Life is perceived as being surrounded by the rules of “do this, do not do that.”

However, the skills imposed under pressure in the name of respect do not broaden one’s horizon and rationally groundless ideas do not play a developing, enriching and nurturing role over personality. The false or distorted perceptions of respect do not help persons put these into action, understand the meaning of events in the world, and realize the direction life and the possible shapes it will take. Such understanding of respect gradually turns into fear of authorities or into a passive submission.

I use the word “respect” here to mean a combination of such words as consideration, knowing, comprehension, questioning and evaluation. Respect refers mainly to a state of emotion like the feeling of love. However, respect has an external dimension as activity shown in one’s behaviour. I define respect as a type of activity. Respect has a connotation of thinking, knowing and understanding, questioning and making decisions. For instance, an educational approach which bears in its essence the idea of respect for humankind focuses on the nature of persons and considers their existential circumstances. Respect for a person also signifies an inclination to consider human beings in a holistic way. Respect for people further includes attempts to know about their activities, to explain them and to be familiar with their physical capacities, thought and psyche. Human beings have a biological side; they eat, defend themselves, become ill and live in a cultural, social and historical environment with their memories, hopes and anxieties about future. They experience continuous change when developing across the life span. In addition, they need also to fulfill adaptations to a changing world. With their fears, loves, emotions, detestations and wishes, beliefs, value judgements and attitudes, human kind keeps discovering new things. All divine messages and human approaches and explanations about the nature of humankind enrich the methods of knowing, understanding and interpreting the human person. Despite all developments in scientific disciplines we are still not able to claim that the human being has been fully, to a great extent, discovered.

Being able to practice respect towards others means to be coherent although it is hard to catch this equilibrium according to the Qur’an:

‘Surely man was created very impatient, fretful when evil touches him niggardly when good touches him” (al-Ma’arif, 70: 19-21). Man does not weary of asking good, when an evil befalls him he loses hope and becomes desperate. But when We let him taste Our mercy after distress, he says “I deserve this” And when We show favour to the man, he turns away and withdraws himself: but when evil befalls him, he makes lengthy supplications” (Fussilet, 41: 49-51) “... but as soon as We relieve his affliction he behaves as if he had never prayed for our help” (Yunus, 10: 12)

This oscillating nature of human beings leads them to go from one extreme point to the other. As for to be equilibrated or in a moderate way which we can describe as man’s being in a secure progress.
With these considerations in mind, students may be taught the importance of possessing a sense of consciousness of being together with God at all times to protect their personality. They may be encouraged to see the possibility that remembering God may help them to overcome tensions in their life perhaps with a reference to the verse “He is with you, wherever you are” (Al-Hadid, 57:4) The meaning of being in a “moderate path”, to use an Islamic word, may be taught students by informing them about the solutions offered by the Qur’an to the problems of life.

If we focus on the notion of “attitudes of a believing mind”, we can develop from this a model of people with whom we are in contact and, of a state in which we are involved. If that is the case, we seek a religious education which will enable one to develop “attitudes of a believing mind.” I would like to state that I have taken my starting point from Gazālī’s (D. 505/1111) work called Kitāb el-Maktaba al-Esnā Ġarh Esnā Allah al-Husrā. The aim of Gazālī is to explain the meaning and the importance of hadith expressing “Be moral by the morality of God” and to discuss the wisdom of the saying “God has many attributes, the one who realizes one of them will go to Heaven” (Gazālī: 72)

The title of the fourth part of the first chapter of the book is “The maturity and happiness of human depends on being moral by the morality of God and being equipped with the meanings of God’s attributes and names according to her/his capacity.”

In his work Gazālī states that hearing the words of God, learning their meanings and usages from the dictionaries, and knowing them as a belief is not sufficient. Gazālī defines this kind of limited relation between the believer and God as unluckiness in the name of the believer.

According to Gazālī, hearing is a function of ear, and animals also have such ability. As regards knowing the meaning and usage of words, this is a quality, which can be possessed by a philologist or even a bedouin with a deficient understanding. The ones who have not discovered the meanings of God’s names and attributes, and keep this knowledge only on the faith level are like ordinary people and children. When a child begins to understand the things talked around her/him, s/he learns, accepts and loves these things. Such a situation is a clear deficiency in respect of maturity. In his book el-Maktabā Gazālī, who categorizes people according to imitating the attributes of God, puts emphasize on the ones who are close to God (Mukarrabān) and indicates that the knowledge of the ones close to God passes from three phases:

I. Comprehending the knowledge of God’s names and attributes clearly. Such a comprehension can be achieved by “mukāṣef” (discovering) and “miṣyāḥ” (exploring). This is a phase of learning the names of God by discovery and internalizing them. This kind of comprehension is different from the sincere belief learned by imitating the ancestors and teachers.

II. Mukarrabān (the ones close to God) comprehending God’s names and attributes desire to obtain the known. They feel the greatness of God deeply and want to be moral by God’s morality. Maturity cannot be gained without
strong desire. The weakness of desire stems from the lack of knowledge, suspicion or the heart full of other desires. When a student sees his teacher's perfect level of knowledge, s/he feels a strong desire to be like the teacher. Yet if the student is hungry and if the motive of eating grasps away at the student, such a situation prevents her/his desire of learning. Therefore, heart should be refined from other desires. The seed of desire is knowledge. Heart desires God and wants to be close to God when it is refined from other desires.

III. Showing activity needed to be moral by the morality of God, namely to realize the appearance of God's attributes within the limits of human capacity. During this phase believer tries to obtain what is possible, be moral by it, and equip her/his "ego" with its beauty. In short, we can call these three phases as knowing, desiring, and acting.

Here, I am going to search the possibilities of activities in which the phase of "knowing" pointed out by Gazâlî can be realized in school education. One of the specific aims determined for the students in religious and ethic education is the their comprehension of the relationship between "God and human". How a teacher can achieve this? In the present practices there is such an emphasis on the "religion" fact that the concept of God is almost forgotten. What's more, the education about God is limited to the learning of God's names and attributes. Sometimes students are kept busy with the debates over the essence and attributes of God which occur in the History of Islamic Thought, but are improper for their development level.

The point that should not be neglected with respect to religious education is to teach about the character of the dialogue found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah between God and human being. The interpretation of this relationship in terms of a proper religiousness, the responsibilities it gives to a believer are the points on which a religious educator must stress. Using religious texts as a source in education, making students to think about the statements in these and developing and changing behaviours by means of these are among the practices of religious educators. RE should show the students how to manage to treat and to be treated humanistic because of the reason that everybody belongs to God.

Towards a global awareness

As we pointed out earlier, a respectful attitude leads man to understand things, nature/environment, society and current problems of modern time, then to question them and to make an assessment about them. We also proposed that such an attitude will help believers to find a consistent and coherent stand or, as it was stated in Islam, a moderate way. Now I will explain, briefly, my opinion regarding the implications of respect towards human beings, to thought, to freedom, to anything moral and to cultural heritage in an RE model, which enhances mental development.
1. Teaching about Respect for Humankind

In addition to the above mentioned points, I would like to draw attention to following two points which represent two important principles of respect for humanity
(1) “To acknowledge the value of human dignity” and “to try to understand the meaning of a person’s own beliefs for herself/himself”

2. Teaching about Respect for Thought

Respect for ideas also means to give up one’s desire that “my truth is the only unique truth, those of others are totally wrong.” It is an ambition which reduces the gains of human intellectual heritage to a single truth-claim and exclusive attitude. My truth may not be the only the straightest path, but may make the whole of reality meaningful. But, unless I show tolerance to the objections raised to my propositions about truth or unless I question them, my commitment to them turns out to be dogmatic or biased. This may lead my commitments or truth claims to become inadequate, to lose their effects in my life, even to their disappearance. My commitments gradually may turn into habits or superficial repetitions. To accept an opinion because it stands firm against all criticisms and objections is something different than to being closed towards criticisms by others to your opinion in order to protect it.

Our beliefs and thoughts may have been open or closed to criticisms depending on our personality, the style of being raised, history and culture. It is possible for a person to be aware of them, to interpret them, to learn what is right and what is wrong, to make selections among them only through learning how to be respectful. Constructive thinking has a close link to education, to the ability of questing and inquiring. Skills in thinking, listening, tolerating differences and having the courage of expressing opinions are actualised in educational process. In RE a student can develop the ability of listening without oppressing those who oppose, of reflecting on thoughts and questioning them.

3. Teaching about Respect for Freedom

After remarking on the uniqueness of human beings, and presuming that a coherent personality can be developed in an atmosphere of pluralism, I would like to point out that any attitude which imposes restrictions on individuals’ growth is regarded as disrespect for human freedom. No matter whether this negative tendency is attempted to be justified by such a statement as “I want to fulfil God’s will or commands and so on. Any sign of pressure oppression, aggression, tyranny over freedom means disrespect for humanity. A person has a right of making his/her choice of selecting “truth” in their own way which is actualized through secured mental health and skill of selection.

In RE a teacher can teach students to distinguish the delicate line between doing something “for the sake of” God and doing it “in the name of” God. Acting in name of God is not the same acting for God i.e. for the consent of God. Doing for the consent of Allah is performing an action with an awareness of doing it together with God. This action may be true, wrong or incomplete. In contrast, acting in the name of God is the delusion of possessing the right and authority of acting as
in the name of God or representing God. As it has been known, many factors may play role between a principle or a moral code (whether it is a religious or non-religious) and the process of its practice. The moral code itself can not be identified with the way of it is practiced. For example, the Qur’an is believed to be a divinely revealed text, but its practice is actualised by human; therefore it is human-made. Every believer will understand and interpret the message of God within their capacity and according to the conditions of their time. No body has a right to impose his own viewpoint by force alleging “I am acting in the name of God”.

In religious education, and imposing and tyrannical approach must be replaced by an analytic and interpretive approach. No matter whether we agree or not, we are in need of new interpretations and new ideas. The motive to understand, explain and interpret things in our environment observing God’s will would be a viable alternative to a dogmatic interpretations of divine text and imposing it to be accepted. In a milieu where diversity and richness in thinking increases, the power of reasoning and the freedom of selection will be encouraged.

4 Teaching about Respect for Anything Moral

When we need to discuss the relation between RE and ethics, first of all it is possible to argue that at this stage of civilizations the models for moral developments is less sophisticated than the level of technology. Despite developments in artifacts, humanity is more in need of peace of mind and heart. Although technologically we have extraordinary opportunities, we can say that we have not reached to a satisfactory level in moral applications.

We observe in our own relations and experiences that although individuals acquired ability of distinguishing what is good and bad, or true and false they do not reflect this in actual life. This is one of the acute topics in RE to be investigated by religious educators. Words, lectures, advices, exceptionally good models are not enough unless they are completed with applications in the actions of students. If such concepts as honesty, human love, work habits, generosity, respect for life and property become popular as components of ethics at a certain epoch, then, the leading figures representing these values become trendy. In contrast, if non-moral concepts begin dominating in thinking and action, then those who demonstrate such attitudes and behaviours become the most attracted ones in the eyes of students. What affects children and young people is the life itself. No matter how admired the examples introduced from history are or how wise the principles presented to students, they, with their cognitive apparatus, probably turn out to be like living in a dreamland and isolated from the realities of life, unless they learn how to criticize the values to which they were exposed.

Here, I would like to draw attention to the distinction between “moral ideas” and “ideas set forth in the name of morality”. Everybody may unite around moral values such as uprightness, human rights, dignity etc. These are the virtues which both religious and non-religious or secular families would like to see in their children, but when putting these concepts into practice such factors as personal interests, society and groups, various political-ideological concerns play important role in affecting young people’s ideas and behaviours. These factors play a decisive role.
in making moral decisions, and in most circumstances these moral ideas are accomplished just as habits to fulfil the traditional procedure of morality. Therefore, we favour a concept of morality well-established through religion in the moral education of children and young people.

To add the religious concepts of “sawab/reward” and “gunah/sin” to commonly employed concepts “good”, and “evil” will add a new dimension to the concept of morality. We regard the love of God and fear of God as a protective power against every kind of anxiety laden and immoral practice which may leave a person in despair, helpless, confused and aimless. The love of God and fear of God motivates a person at any moment to give an explanation to her/his conscience, that is, may lead moral ideas to turn into motive-forces in guiding behaviour.

5. Teaching about Respect for Cultural Heritage

Respect for cultural heritage means to be able to understand the historical experience then to analyse and determine the place, importance and function of the past in terms of present day. To be able to fully understand or decode the message embeded in the history, surely demands sound intellectual and scholarly effort. We regard both a blind fatalistic submission to, and/or denial of, the heritage of the past and the authorities lived in the past as obstacles in the process of appreciating and understanding the cultural heritage. Respect for cultural heritage means neither to identify with it as it is nor to escape from it.

Another barrier with regard to cultural heritage is our tendency to indoctrinate students with what we subjectively attribute as noteworthy and remarkable historical material. When selecting important educational tools from historical material to teach students we may necessarily need to have some criteria. By this proposition, I am faced with the answer to the question asked at the beginning of this paper as: “Which content do the students need in religious education?” The answer would be: “The worthy content for students is the content which will solve the problems encountered in life.” A keen approach in this regard would be not to overload students’ mind with raw historical data. Historical heritage is worth teaching not only because it is interesting and it is filled with attractive and guiding narratives. Cultural heritage is to be transformed with enough critical reflection to the present generation as a means to help and give inspiration to organize their contacts with God, with themselves and with the rest of the world. This notion of historical heritage may lead us to revise and modify our method to allow students thinking critically, to understand, to compare and to assess. It will be student-centred which requires them to discover, rather than being teacher-centred which often orient to load fresh brains with theoretical information. Religious education should foster attitudes of a believing mind of the pupils’ own tradition. A believing mind matures enough to build curiosity, openness and appreciation towards “other”.
Let a metaphor speak

For religious education with inter-religious dimensions, I will use a metaphor inspired by Mawlana, a well-known mystic who lived in Anatolia: The metaphor of the two legs of a compass, while talking to the adherents of other religions, Mawlana said as follows: “I represent the two legs of a compass; one of my legs is on the shariah, the other is on all religions.”

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Religious Education in Europe

Situation and survey trends in schools
Religious Education in Turkey

Mualla Selçuk and Recai Doğan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of government</th>
<th>Parliamentary Democratic Republic</th>
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<td>Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious Adherence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>99.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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The education system in Turkey was organized on the basis of the Basic Law of National Education no 1739, which was put into effect in 1973. According to this law, the education system consists of two main parts, formal and non-formal education.

Formal education

This includes pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education and higher education institutions. According to the Basic Law of National Education, pre-primary education includes the optional education of children between 3-5 years old who are under the age of compulsory primary education. In Pre-Primary educational institutions, independent nurseries are opened as nursery classes and practical classes within formal and non-formal education institutions with suitable physical capacity.

Primary education includes the education of children between 6-14 years. Primary education is compulsory for all citizens, boys or girls, and is given free of charge in public schools. According to the law no 4306 the period of compulsory education was increased from five years to eight in 1998. Primary education institutions are schools that provide eight years of compulsory education and the graduates receive a primary education diploma.

Secondary education, while formerly consisted of three semesters of education, from the 2004-2005 academic year onward it now includes a four semester general, vocational and technical education institutions. The majority of secondary education schools consist of general high schools. Under the head of general high schools are High Schools, Foreign Language Schools, Anatolian Schools, Science Schools, Anatolian Teacher Training Schools, Anatolian Fine Arts Schools, Night Education Schools, Private High Schools, Multi-Program (Purpose) High Schools and Open Education High Schools. Under the head of Vocational and Technical Schools are Technical Schools for Boys, Technical Schools for Girls, Anatolian Vocational Schools for Hotel Management and Tourism and Religious Education High Schools. In addition, there are Private Education Schools for those with physical or mental disability. Besides, in accordance with the Law no 625 on the Private Educa-
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In Turkey, national institutions, schools at all levels can be opened, and the teaching courses can be opened by private and juridical persons. In Turkey, apart from the official education institutions, the private education institutions opened by private and juridical persons perform their activities under the inspection and monitory of Ministry of National Education. The private education institutions consist of private Turkish schools, private minority schools, schools for specific nationalities and private international schools.

Higher Education
This includes all of the education institutions at least giving two semesters of higher education on the basis of secondary education. Within the frame of National Education System, higher education is organized within as wholeness as much to raise the students in pre-graduate, graduate and post-graduate levels. Apart from the state universities, there are also private foundation universities. The student selection and placement at the universities is based on the results of examinations conducted by Higher Education Council Student Selection and Placement Centre.

Non Formal education
This consists of two parts, general and vocational education. Today Public Training Centres, Apprenticeship Training Centres, Practical Schools of Art for Girls, Vocational Education Centres and Open High Schools are among the major institutions where non-formal education is performed under the control and monitoring of Ministry of National Education. Various activities to raise the adults, beside that of the Ministry of National Education, are performed by both official institutions and private sector and voluntary institutions.

Legal and Historical Basis
The philosophical advancement of education system in Turkey and the formation of its institutional structure are well-connected with the historical-social dynamics of Turkish people to develop and evolve. Apart from the classic Ottoman education organisation, which historically consisted of Mekteb, Madrasa and Andarun, the opening of schools similar to the modern schools established in West Europe began with the developments within the State in the 19th century. The foundations of present education system were laid in the beginning of 1920s with the establishment of the Republic. The Republic aimed to create a modern, democratic, equal and participant social order. The Republic had a vision of a citizen being able to:
- participate actively in the economic and social life,
- undertake a responsibility,
- be an enterprising person,
- be able to solve problems.
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- internalize the principles of Republic
- protect the Republic

The Republic aimed to nurture individuals who were making plans for their future, participating and improving, not the fatalist, content individuals living in the past. The main target was to furnish the society with new ideas, new thoughts and new values, in order to change their viewpoint in general. In this process of modernization, it was necessary to reconstruct the society and to provide a new viewpoint, and in this enterprise the education system assumed the very important responsibilities. Thus the adoption of a secular education system became the cornerstone of Republican education. The principles the education system were based upon meeting the social needs of society and requirements of the time, to be scientific, applicable, domestic, universal and for everyone.

With the establishment of Turkish Republic, the religious education and teaching was reorganized within the new education system in line with the historical experience of Turkey and the principle of secularism. In this reorganization, it was aimed to provide a religious education taught by experts under the inspection and monitoring of the government. The subject would be taught through the medium of the individual's own language in a way to help their moral characters develop, without doing damage to the principle of secularism and without politicizing religion. Within this frame, with the Law of Integration of Education (Tawhid Tadbiras) issued in 1924, the religious education and teaching was given place within the general education. The Law of Integration of Education is of the unchangeable laws and one of the first constitutional basis for religious education. To the law dated 1924, while the religious education in formal education institutions is under the aegis of Ministry of National Education, the non-formal education could be provided by the Directorate of Religious Affairs.

In course of time, the Imam and Preacher Schools opened to raise the imams and Hattis (preacher) were closed in 1932, and also the Faculty of Divinity in 1933. And in 1939, the religious courses were no longer given a place in any formal education level. In 1945, the religious schools were opened once again to raise the personnel to undertake the office of public religious affairs, and currently these schools do their works as the secondary education institutions. Most of the graduates of these schools attend the faculties of divinity. In 1949, a Faculty of Divinity was opened under Ankara University. In 1959, High Islamic Institutes began to be opened in order to raise the teachers to work in the Religious Schools. In 1982, these institutes were turned into faculties attached to the Universities in their regions. Currently, there are 23 Faculties of Divinity within various universities in Turkey.

In 1948, the religious courses were given again in the 4th and 5th classes of primary education as voluntarily, but not included in the formal programme and assessment. Various changes were made during the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's until in 1982 the religious courses were taught beginning from the 4th class voluntarily in
Turkey

primary education institutions as two hours per week, and in secondary education as one hour.

The religious education of minorities in Turkey is performed in line with the Lausanne Treaty. The adherents of other religions can open their schools and give religious education/teaching there.

Today, the religious education and teaching in Turkey is executed under the guarantee of Constitution and laws. The article 24 of Constitution defines as follows:

"Teaching of religion and ethics is performed under the control of the State. Religion and ethics are among the compulsory courses taught in the primary and secondary education institutions. Any other teaching of religion depends on a person's free will and on the legal custodian's wishes in the case of small children."

On the other hand, the article 12 of the Basic Law of National Education no. 1739 (1983) defines the religious courses in formal education institutions as follows: Secularism is the fundamental feature of Turkish National Education. Religious Culture and Ethics Teaching is among the compulsory courses taught in the primary, secondary and high schools. "The articles 24 of Constitution and the 12 of the Basic Law of National Education are in effect and are the legal bases of religious teaching. In accordance with the related article of 1982 Constitution, today the Religious Culture and Ethics Course from the fourth class of primary education to the 12th class of secondary education is compulsory.

Religious Education in the School System

Subject

In Turkey today the full name of religious courses taught in the primary and secondary education institutions is "Religious Culture and Ethics Course." As has been seen from the aforesaid explanations, Turkey has not come at once to the phase "Religious Culture and Ethics Course" given in the primary and secondary education institutions as compulsory in programme and effective in promotion, but with its experiences and scientific knowledge. In the first years of the Republic, the name was "the Holy Quran a Religious Knowledge." When it was taught as voluntary, its name was only "Religious Knowledge." In 1982, it was changed to "Religious and Ethics Course," and four years later to "Religious Culture and Ethics Course" by adding "cultural."

The course being made compulsory depends on some important historical and scholarly reasons. This course is a course of culture and knowledge, not a religious education but religious teaching. The school as the common locality of individuals with different expectations and worldviews coming from different economic and cultural environments cannot give the teaching of a certain religion, and it is not its responsibility to make them devout persons. However the school, as a place where
Turkey

the critical education occurs, must give a place to religious courses as part of social science. It is individual's own decision how to use the information being learned in the course. One another reason for "Religious Culture and Ethics Courses" being made compulsory is to attain the general aims of education. The religious education delivered through this approach helps schools achieve their function in respect of these three aims:

1. Human aim - to interpret and clarify the existence of man in the world in terms of ontological understanding of religion.
2. Cultural aim - to introduce to the new generations the historical heritage, which contributes to modern culture and religion as a maker of a vital part of this culture.
3. Social aim - to know about the social environment to which we are responsible for our behaviour and to integrate with it.

Today, in order to understand any matter taught in the courses such as History, Literature etc. placed in school programmes the impact of religion on culture must be known. We must provide information about the religion and religions in order to understand why the people with whom we live have different beliefs and views. In short, the Religious Culture and Ethics Course, as a compulsory course in primary and secondary education schools, is a course considered within the general philosophy of education and intended to help individuals understand the life as a whole. Thus, within the course, connections with other fields have been always made, and other religions and beliefs have also been given place.

There exists no other alternative course in primary and secondary education institutions. It is not compulsory for the students who are being educated in the schools and belong to Christianity, Judaism or to other religions, except for those in the schools of minorities, to attend the Religious Course and Ethics Course, but if they wish to attend this course, they must have the approval of their parents.

The Approach to Teaching RE

The Religious Culture and Ethics Course has been prepared to reflect the "Metaaxiological and Expandable to Other Religions" approach. In course of programme development, both on Islam and other religions, the scholarly and academic information was given priority, and the baseless and superstitious information was avoided. On Islam, in adopting a Quran centred, inclusive and, as metadoxical approach, it has been interpreted to give priority to those core values that surround all of the Islam based religious formations, and take much care of these values, related to belief, worship and ethics, that draw all Muslims together. This approach can be called a non-confessional approach. The aim was not inculcate one of the interpretations, thus transforming others, but merely to introduce individuals to accurate information about religious culture and moral values. Nevertheless, the denominations and religious formations defined as the ways of religious understanding have not been neglected. The aim, as a
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first step, to give information about the common denominators of religion, and then to describe the different schools of thought that appeared throughout history, as well as their religious and cultural aspects. All religious and moral values in line with this approach have been made the subject of teaching, yet care has been taken to avoid it turning into a doctrine based or denomination based religious education.

As for aim and scope, it is intended to give students an understanding of religion as a fact that makes life meaningful, helps man live humanly, includes the main communicative codes necessary for men to understand each other, and defines the relationship between God and man. It has also been the aim to raise individuals who are able to:

- unite the faith with reason;
- know and appreciate the beliefs, traditions and customs of other religions in respect and tolerance, as well as their own religion, traditions and customs;
- consider the scientific information;
- learn how to learn;
- adopt lifelong learning including the skill to search, ask, inquire, internalize democracy;
- have a culture of living together

In terms of education, the constructive approach, multiple intelligence theory, student centered learning have been taken into consideration in the preparation of teaching programme for the Religious Culture and Ethics Course. The teaching fields composed of concepts and conceptual relations are at the focus of the programme. The conceptual approach requires more time to be spent establishing the conceptual bases of religious and moral concepts and thus making connections between conceptual and operational information. With this approach, it is intended to help students to establish a religious and moral sense and be able to develop abstract ideas from their concrete experience and intuitions. With this approach it has been also aimed to develop important skills (such as to problem solving, reasoning etc.), as well as to developing religious and moral concepts. While learning religion and ethics in an active way, the students also learn how to solve problems, to share, explain and defend their solutions and opinions, to connect the religion and ethics both with itself and with other fields. Consequently, they can establish sound and rich religious and moral concepts.

The teaching programme for Religious Culture and Ethics Course which has been taught in the primary and secondary education institutions in Turkey is prepared by the Board of Education and Discipline of the Ministry of National Education. But in preparing the teaching programme of the course representatives from all parts participate in the programme development process and the programmes are prepared on the basis of consensus. The student's book, teacher's guide and other materials, are prepared both by the Ministry and private publishers. Therefore, a lot of textbooks can be found for teaching programme. Schools are free to choose and
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teach from any set of teaching materials. However, sets of teaching materials prepared by private publishers can be used only after they have been approved by the Board of Education and Discipline.

Teachers
The teachers of Religious Culture and Ethics Course in primary and secondary education are appointed by Ministry of National Education from among those passing the examination. However, in order to enter the examination, the candidates for religious teaching course must meet certain criteria. Teachers for Religious Culture and Ethics Course graduate from the Faculties of Divinity. In the eleven Faculties of Divinity, two programmes have been developed. Teachers who wish to teach the Religious Culture and ethics course in primary schools must complete four semesters and qualify for a diploma in Theology. Those who wish to teach the subject at Secondary level must complete the undergraduate divinity programme and also a masters degree (without thesis). Within this programme there are two options, which are chosen depending on whether the student wishes to teach in secondary schools or on vocational courses for the Imam-Hatip schools.

From the beginning of their appointment, teachers of Religious Courses work a year as junior teacher/probationer teacher. If they complete this one year successfully, they are appointed to the permanent staff. However in recent years, the Ministry of National Education has also appointed provisional personnel. The salaries of teachers are paid by Ministry.

Public Examinations
In order that the students become successful in Religious Cultures and Ethics Courses taught in primary and secondary education for one semester, they must obtain the minimum degree of success. In the examination progress into the secondary schools which accept the students by examination, 5% of questions are from religious culture. Religious questions are placed in the examinations to enter university in the social science field, particularly within the historical area, but these questions are not directly related to the religious course teaching programme.

Private Sector
There is no constitutional obstacle but no schools or courses etc giving religious education exist in the private sector in Turkey.

Regional Variations
Because Turkey is a big country, there exists a variety of lifestyle and understanding throughout the country. This variety may require the different approaches to learning. Here the flexibility in the programme makes it possible to prepare a religious course in accordance with these differences, but the framework ensures that the differences can be made without deviating from the essence of the programme.
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in the process of learning/teaching, this framework and flexibility in relation to the contents of religious course have been established, the teaching programme confirmed by Ministry of National Education has been fulfilled, for the course's model being thoroughly metadosical in Turkey.

Current Developments and Challenges

The principal development for education is the religious courses being treated as a social science and the teaching programme is being developed again, from 2000 onwards, in the frame of new approaches in the education and teaching. And the discussions in Turkey on religious courses are still continuing. Discussions may be classified in the most general sense as follows:

-- The first approach argues that the religious course should not be given in the schools. The main thesis of those holding this approach depends on the fact that Turkey is a secular state and, as such, the religious courses should not be taught in the schools; religious courses should be left to the religious communities. No expense concerning religious affairs should be met from state budget.

-- The second approach argues that in line with the article 24 in Constitution a course related to religion must be placed in schools. But this course, in line with the letter and spirit of Constitution, must be teaching about religion(s), not 'religious education'. The programme must be compulsory and the salary of teachers must be paid by state and the course material must be prepared by state.

-- The third approach argues that the model of religious course with Metadoxical and Expandable to the 'Other Religions' approach must be maintained as compulsory, but an elective religious course ('religious education'), in which individuals will be able to learn their own religion and denomination practically, must be also included in the programme. For the teachers of this course no appropriation must be assigned by government.

Every group may have an element of truth in their proposals as to which model for religious course must be executed in Turkey. But it must not be forgotten that Turkey has arrived at this situation through its long historical experience, its secular conditions and its scholarly studies in this field. However, we can assume that the discussions in this field now reached a certain point. Today the discussion have focused for the most part on 'what kind of religious education', rather than on 'why religious education in the schools?"
Turkey

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Academic Expertise, Public Knowledge, and the Identity of Islamic Religious Education

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ACADEMIC EXPERTISE, PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, AND THE IDENTITY OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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My conviction is that the task of Islamic religious education is to enable each pupil to discover the individual whom God intended him or her to become. Therefore, I have always advocated an education that nurtures the pupils' minds and hearts in God's wisdom; so they can grow in what we call musalama (i.e., a peaceful relationship with God, with oneself, with others, and the creation).

When my academic studies began at Ankara University Divinity Faculty in October 1983, religious education was a very young discipline in Turkey. Just one year before, it had been established as a compulsory subject with its content defined in public documents. In addition to their theological education, in order to qualify as teachers for religious education, our students now had courses in learning theory, educational policy, educational psychology, and sociology. The first class I held was comparative education. I was only two or three years older than my students; but it was crucial for me to be thrown so quickly into teaching, and I still remember my delight and enthusiasm.

As my lecturing went on, however, I could not help saying to myself, "I wonder just how many of these courses my students will remember? And moreover, will they be able to integrate their pedagogical formation with their theological background when they teach Islam in schools?"

What I discovered was a lack of cooperation between religious and secular pedagogy. How to transmit received doctrines of a particular understanding of Islam to the next generation? That was religious pedagogy's main question, and the reason of its isolation; but religious education had now started to be part of our schools' core curriculum. So it needed to contribute to personality development of pupils, just like the secular subjects. Therefore I became interested in the mentality of secular pedagogy, which puts the development of human abilities in the center. I do not see why science may not have an authority as general public commitment in teaching religion as it has in other subjects. The role of science is, here, to shed light on our attempts at
teaching and learning religion. Only thus we can liberate us from our traditional “You Sit Still and I Tell” approach. The students were expected to follow the beliefs and practices simply because they are told to do so; questioning, critical examination, personal involvement, and independent appropriation had no place. If students inquired, their questions were taken as an act of protest. The impression children got was that Islam is information you memorize.

While education had been reduced to learning of specific codes of Muslim structures, Islam in reality praises and honors faith inquiry (ta’ṣīl fi l-mān). The Holy Qur’an highlights the importance of scientific thought and condemns the unquestioning imitation of one’s forefathers (taqlid fi l-mān).

Consequently, I focused my Ph.D. research on religion in the service of individual formation. The development of the human person and social science took a central place. I presented religious education according to the developmental stages and experiences of children. Thus they can be encouraged to use their full potential to question and understand the meaning of being a Muslim. When my thesis was published in the late eighties by the Foundation of Religious Affairs, it caused a public debate.

For the first time (but not the last) I found myself in the middle of the tensions between religious and secular worldviews. Those who see theology as a method and criterion in itself condemned any usage of procedures and principles from secular disciplines. According to them, theology alone should determine the structure of education and its content. From another side, I was criticized for not restricting myself to traditional context but rather using the findings of research from different religions and cultures as a point of reference.

Some expressed their concern that Islam might lose the control of religious instruction, which could no longer serve for deepening the faith but might be used for cultural formation or simply pragmatic purposes such as making good citizens or even nationalists. Others understood my thesis as a kind of indoctrination against secularism.

I have always tried to take those reactions seriously, even those that may have been a questioning of my sincerity in belief. Those critics were for me like “signs of the time,” the time in need of adequate attention and constructive efforts in scholarly understanding of religion. My approach was different from many traditional Muslims; not, however, my loving devotion to God and my sincere commitment to Islam.
The debates around my Ph.D. thesis only clarified my hope to be a great lecturer, respected for my dedication to the enhancement of student-centered learning in religion.

The following years were highly active: teaching, learning, and researching on the foundations, the scope, and the methodology of Islamic religious education. This phase of grounding became the catalyst for my subsequent change of career. In 1998, I was appointed a General Director responsible for religious education in public schools in the Ministry of National Education. A few years later, I also became a Board member of the High Religious Council. I was the first female ever to take on those administrative positions. At that time, all I wanted was to get the chance to contribute to the layout of religious education from a scientific perspective; but now I come to understand what an honor it was to be selected.

Up to 2002, I worked for the development of the religious education curricula of all Turkish school types, including the specialized high schools for imams and preachers. There were great expectations around the curricula updating, which had remained unchanged for almost 18 years. This created a huge public pressure by media, religious groups, and secular institutions.

Academic experts in basic Islamic disciplines, religious education, and social sciences joined me in the updating process, which thus became an interdisciplinary venture. Both theology and social sciences had foundational authority in it. We saw that theology and social sciences were able to enter into a reciprocal relationship of listening, informing, and transforming each other. I dare say it was a revolutionary movement in the identity of religious education from learning in religion to learning about and from religion.

Of course, many school teachers did not even want to consider the revised curriculum, the materials and teaching aids, although the changes would speed up the pupils’ learning and broaden their understanding of Islam.

A symposium on search for new approaches, with distinguished colleagues from abroad, was organized under my initiative in 2001. It was meant to open a debate regarding religious education in Turkey and to show a perspective for future action. The symposium served as a platform for a kind of self-testing and judging of religious education efforts put on so far; but it also functioned as a vital reminder that there is a place not only for the best of social sciences but also for critical reasoning in religious education.
After some other innovative projects that involved the partners of
education, religious educators gradually came to realize that the tradi-
tional approach was no longer sufficient. Most of the researches done
at the universities refused to build merely on a transmissive model;
rather, they favored a dialectical response, which paves the way to
the usage of critical reasoning and contemporary academic expertise.

Still, however, a lot remains unaccomplished. A major issue is the
role of religion in the public sphere. Here, the implementation pro-
cess did not succeed in answering a core question: how can people
with different understandings of religion hold to their beliefs, and still
participate in public life together? Obviously, this continues to be a big
challenge in a democratic and secular society with a Muslims majority.
So far, this challenge has been taken merely by educational efforts.
The researches place emphasis on teaching techniques of social co-
hesion rather than content. Although some theological researches are
attempting to fill in the gap, they were so far not able to transform the
teaching and learning settings; what is needed is a language by which
one can enter the public sphere religiously. Polarizing faith-based
claims are still prevalent, irrespective of the plurality within religion.
The sociopolitical and cultural basis of such simplistic closures is evi-
dent, and poses another educational challenge.

If religious education is to emerge as an academically respectable
field, as scientific in its own right, it needs to be more than educational
efforts. I see a promising future in hermeneutical religious pedagogy.
What I mean is a pedagogy that cooperates with social sciences and
critical reason to examine our religious sources, cultural heritage and
lived-life of the tradition in order to serve the identity formation of
each person today. I am writing this while turning the pages of my last
book, co-authored with two experts of critical Islamic theology. The
Quran and the Individual: A Response to the Radical Discourse (2010).

My journey to find a room for science in religious education con-
tinues with curiosity, gratitude, and with trust in the God of Mercy
(ar-Rahmân ar-Rahîm).

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DIFFERENT FACETS OF THE ISLAMIC UMMAH IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

Edited by
Naveed Ahmad Tahir
Ta’aruf: A Qur’anic Concept and its Implications for Religious Education

Mualla Selçuk

Q 49.13 O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he/she who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

The basic aims of Islamic teaching in schools in Turkey are

- A greater understanding of Islam
  Providing pupils with the means to increase their knowledge and understanding of Islam. This requires new approaches about understanding the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the Islamic heritage

- Education based on “good-deeds” (Amal-i Saleh)
  To help pupils to develop good relations with other people and the world around them. (What you wish done to yourself do to others).

- Contribution to the development of the pupils
  To help the young to become mature people with an understanding of themselves so that they can make rational decisions.

Thus we provide the opportunity to our students in the Faculty of Divinity, in Ankara, to develop critical thinking during
their studies and enrich their religious perspective through comparative religious studies and analyses. We believe that a broad approach to religion will inculcate in pupils the inclusive spirit, based on the principle that every human being is created by God, and thus, everyone is worthy of respect. We believe that the main aim in our effort to promote this broad approach to religion and culture is to help students to advance their self-consciousness as individuals through their understanding of Islam which would enable them to manage problems in their practical life.

**Analysis of the concept: Ta'aruf**

The term Ta'aruf can be interpreted as to how the Qur'an sees “the other” in the context of “co-existence”. In the contemporary world promotion of the concept of peaceful coexistence has become very important, owing to increasing intolerance of “the other”. A positive approach on pluralism, diversity and equality is essential for co-existence between people with different ethnic and religious identities. The concept of Ta'aruf in the Qur'an in the chapter on Hujurat is particularly relevant to the issue under discussion. The full translation of the relevant Qur'anic verse, reads:

“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).” (Q: 49 Al Hujurat, 13)

‘A-r-f’ as the root word of Ta’aruf, the key word in the aforementioned Qur'anic verse, means ‘to know, to recognise, to explore’, but when ‘a-r-f’ is used in ‘ta’-a-ruf’ the meaning of the word becomes ‘to know/recognise/understand each other’. This encourages acquaintanceship between people of different
backgrounds and this, in a sense, leads to a culture of pluralism and
tolerance in societies.¹

An interpretation in the historical context of the above-
mentioned Qur'anic verse on 'ta'aruf' is given below.²

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male
and a female"; i.e. each human is created by the same formula

In other words humans are equal in terms of the biological
procedure of creation. "And made you into nations and tribes that
ye may know each other"; i.e. human beings though created by one
God have developed different cultural identities which enriches
the world, while it at the same time provides them the opportunity
to know each other, communicate and cooperate with one another for
the betterment of all mankind. In line with the Islamic values of
equality and pluralism, the concept of 'ta'aruf' implies the
rejection of all prejudices based on tribalism or racism in society.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is reported to have
warned against the idea of superiority of a particular tribe. He
pointed out that 'everyone is from Adam and Adam is from clay'
(See Abu Hurayrah's tradition in Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud); i.e.
no one has any reason for claiming superiority against another, for
everyone is equal, as the process of creation proves. The following
part of the Qur'anic verse promoting 'ta'aruf' completes earlier
parts of the same verse regarding equality and pluralism:

"Verily the most honored of you in the sight of
Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And
Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted
(with all things) " (Q: 49 Al Hujurat, 13).

In other words, the racial and cultural differences only prove the richness of God's creation. Some like Elmalili Hamdi Yazır, adds that the differences between human beings, in fact, provide the opportunity for people to compete with one another in promoting the betterment of mankind.  

It is imperative to promote mutual respect and support pluralism and tolerance in our world in line with the Qur'anic concept of 'ta'aruf'. It is necessary to work against prejudices and ignorance. Ibn Ashur, in his interpretation of 'ta'aruf', goes beyond the idea of recognition of 'the other' and adds that the idea of 'ta'aruf' should ensure that mutual understanding and mutual respect between different people prevail. Also, there are interpretations of 'ta'aruf' which emphasise that yearning for peace and understanding of each other are inherent in human nature (fitrah), and thus, the Qur'anic concept of 'ta'aruf' means that human beings are following their natural instincts when they seek to live in peace and amity with each other.  

Thus we can discern the following in the Qur'anic concept of 'ta'aruf':  

• Human beings are created from one and the same source; thus everyone is essentially equal.  
• That every human being has different qualities is God's grace, enabling everyone to enrich humanity.  

Promoting equality, mutual respect and pluralism is a particularly significant task for those who are imparting religious education for it can contribute immensely to the prevalence of peace and stability in our world.
Educational Implications
Religious education based on the accurate interpretation of the Holy Qur'an can promote consciousness in individuals and encourage a pluralistic attitude towards issues related to religion and culture. It is certain that narrow or bigoted interpretations of religious or non-religious issues in educational curricula sharply arrests the development of individual consciousness. If a narrow approach is employed in religious education this can lead to a superficial knowledge of religious texts, without an understanding of the broad context of history and society and to a rote learning of religious injunctions, merely as divine commands or prohibitions, without analysing them rationally. Such a negative approach destroys intellect and creativity in individuals.  

A consciousness-raising approach
Islam conveys its message to human beings in a logical manner. The Qur'an offers human beings the right to freely choose their religion. The Qur'an categorically states “there is no compulsion in religion” (Q: Al Baqara, 256). In line with this Qur'anic approach, Shatibi (d.790 A.H./1388 A.D.) says: "The real aim of religion is to free human being from the level of compulsory servitude to God and elevate him/her to the level of choosing to obey God by his/her own free will". Surely, the scope of Shatibi’s contention of obeying God without coercion goes beyond the rituals of Islam and covers many different aspects of personal and social life. In fact, the significance of religious rituals, in a sense, lies in their positive contribution to the quality of life (see Q: Surah Al Ma’‘un).

The Holy Qur’an does not praise actions that are not based on the free will. The Qur’an guides the believers as to the ways of

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7 I. Shatibi, El- Manafakat Fi Usuli el-Serai, Sarh ve tahkik: Seyh Abdullah Diraz, Misir, Vol. 11, p 168

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obtaining knowledge, before translating it into actions. Knowledge is evidently necessary for choosing the right options.

We are also responsible for testing the reliability of what we hear or what we see; the Qur'an says: "And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)" (Q: 17 Al Isra', 36). The Qur'an also encourages us to listen to each other without prejudice, and to follow the path of knowledge, as it says:

"Those who listen to the Word and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom Allah has guided and those are the ones endowed with understanding." (Q: 39 Zumar, 18), and "but why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge?" (Q: 3 Al-i-imran, 66).

The Qur'an also says: "Nay they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass, even before the elucidation thereof hath reached them..." (Q: 10 Yumus, 39).

The Qur'an attaches great significance to use of the human capacity of thinking and the use of reason before making a choice or decision. The Qur'an says: "Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an or are their hearts locked up by them?" (Q: 47 Muhammad, 24, 42) "And among them are some who (pretend to) listen to thee: but canst thou make the deaf to hear even though they are without understanding? And among them are some who look at thee: but can't thou guide the blind even though they will not see?" (Q: 10 Yumus, 42, 43)

In Islam, even the Prophet Muhammad is not given the authority to compel a non-believer to become a Muslim, as the Qur'an says: "thine duty is to reach them (convey the Message); it is Our part to call them to account" (Q: 13 Al-Ra’d, 40); "Therefore
do thou give admonition for thou art one to admonish Thou art not one to manage (men's) affairs” (Q: 88 Al-Ghāshiyah, 21-22); “We know best what they say; and thou art not one to ever awe them by force. So admonish with the Qur'an such as fear My Warning!” (Q: 50 Qāf, 45) Other Qur'anic verses say: “It is true thou will not be able to guide everyone whom thou lovest; but Allah guides those whom He will and He knows best those who receive guidance” (Q: 28 Qasas, 56) “If thy Lord had so willed He could have made mankind one People” (Q: 11 Hūd, 118).

According to the Qur'an, the duty of the Prophet is to offer the truth to the people in a plain way (Q: 5 Al Ma'ida, 92, 99; 16 Al Nahl, 35, 82; 24 Al Nūr, 54; 29 Al Ankabūt, 18; 42 Al Shūrā, 48). The Qur'an itself defines the aim of the revelation as helping humankind distinguish between the right and the wrong path. By doing so, the Qur'an leaves the individual free to choose his/her own path, though it holds him/her responsible for the results of the choice made by his/her free will. The Qur'an says: “And shown him the two highways?” (Q: 90 Al Balad, 10); “We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)” (Q: 76 Al Insān or Al Dahar, 3); “This is the Book; in it is guidance sure without doubt to those who fear Allah” (Q: 2 Al Baqarah, 2); “Say, The Truth is from your Lord: let him who will believe and let him who will reject (it).” (Q: 18 Al Kahf, 29); “Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds” (Q: 74 Al Muddaththir, 38).

The Qur'an confers on human beings freedom of action, but subject to the limits imposed by God's aim in creating them. Human beings are expected to fulfill their role of perfecting themselves, while also contributing to the betterment of the world they live in. The human being, according to the Qur'an has undertaken the amanah/trust/responsibility. Amanah is described as a heavy responsibility that no other creature—other than a human being—would be able to undertake. The Qur'an says: “We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains: but they refused to undertake it being afraid thereof.
but man undertook it he was indeed unjust and foolish” (Q: 33 Al Ahzāb, 72). Life is, in a sense, the challenge of fulfilling the amanah/trust. To enable him to fulfill his responsibility the Qur’an says, the human being is equipped with the capacities of reasoning and understanding, etc. The Qur’an says: “By the Soul and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; Truly he succeeds that purifies it; And he fails that corrupts it” (Q: 91 Al Shams, 7-10).

Freedom matters only when there is the chance and capacity to choose. As the above-mentioned Qur’anic verses state, the human being has the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong and to choose by free will. The Qur’an says:

Verily (the ends) ye strive for are diverse; So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah); And (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best; We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss; But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient; And gives the lie to the Best; We will indeed make smooth for him the Path to Misery (Q: 92 Al Layl, 4-10).

Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls). (Q:13 Al Ra’d, 11).

" Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls..." (Q: 8 Al Anfal, 53)

The Qur’an reminds the human being of his/her responsibility and the fact that every human will account for his/her actions; as it says that man can have nothing but what he strives for; “That (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight” (Q: 53 Al Najm, 39) The Qur’an criticises those who do
not follow moral values in their actions, as it says: "They are like cattle: they are heedless of warning" (Q: 7 Al A'raf, 179). According to the Qur'an, human beings are bound by an eternal undertaking of being obedient to God. This injunction is mentioned in the Qur'an as follows:

When thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam from their loins their descendants and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): "Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?"

They said: "Yea! we do testify!" (This) lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: "of this we were never mindful." "Or lest ye should say: "Our fathers before us may have taken false gods but we are (their) descendants after them: wilt thou then destroy us because of the deeds of men who were futile?" (Q: 7 Al A'raf, 172-173)

The above-mentioned verses of the Qur'an plainly state that human beings must acknowledge the authority of God and they are warned against the risk of blindly following the wrong choices in their faith. The Qur'anic concept of amanah/trust may lead us to prepare two separate criteria concerning religious education: one that is uniting and the other that is liberating. Students may share the idea that amanah/trust is the responsibility of everyone, and, on the other hand, each student may develop his/her individual consciousness and his/her own personal capacity for fulfilling duties concerning amanah/trust. A positive and lasting contribution of a human being to his/her own moral upliftment, to the betterment of society and the world is considered very essential in terms of religious education. The Qur'an describes the lasting effect of good, and the temporary and misleading nature of evil as follows:

Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? a goodly Word like a goodly tree whose root is firmly fixed and its
branches (reach) to the heavens; It brings forth its fruit at all times by the leave of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men in order that they may receive admonition; And the parable of an evil Word is that of an evil tree. It is torn up by the root from the surface of the earth: it has no stability (Q: 14 Ibrahim, 24-26)
International Handbook of the Religious, Moral and Spiritual Dimensions in Education

Part two
A QUR'ANIC APPROACH TO THE CONCEPT OF ‘LIVING TOGETHER’: TA’ARUF

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Introduction

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things) (Qur’an 49:13).

In her article, called ‘Aruşa’ya Bir Ruh Vermek, Anadolu’dan Bir Mülümman Kadin’ (Giving a soul to Europe, A Muslim Woman from Anatolia), Professor Beyza Bilgin (1998) says:

When people see one another as strangers they can easily think that those who do not belong to their Faith might deserve going to Hell, or they can easily think of cleansing them from the world. However, when they start knowing each other and becoming friends their thoughts and behaviors change. Perhaps they could first think: ‘he/she is a human being as everyone of us, he/she also deserves to have guidance and to enter Paradise; I may be able to help and mediate for this to happen’. But when they realise that the same thought exists mutually in both sides, they feel surprised ‘What should they do now? Should they stop contacting each other and re-allocate one another? Should they ignore each other? Or should they, rather, realise that they are different people who strive to reach the same destination from different ways, and thus, having respect for one another? (p 46)

Bilgin gives an example about how children belonging to different Faiths and cultures in Germany express their concerns: ‘the number of children who speak in the following manner after returning to their houses [from the school] is not so small: ‘Mum! Hans, my friend, is Christian. So will he go to Hell? But he is a very

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nice person I do not want to see him going to Hell’, or ‘Mehmet is Muslim is this a reason why he will go to Hell? But he is a very nice person. He should not be punished because of his religion’ (Bilgin 1998, p. 46)

This paper will put forward an analysis of a Qur’anic concept, Ta’aruf, from the viewpoint of religious education in order to negate the inter-religious prejudices and contribute to tolerance and understanding between different faiths and cultures. The main source of Islam as religion is the Qur’an and, thus, any major work of religious education in Islam may take its roots from the Qur’an. But I would like to make a few points about how the role of the Qur’an is understood in Muslim tradition. There have been important questions in this context that need to be addressed.

The information value of the Qur’an, the binding authority of the Qur’an for the Muslims and its influence upon Muslims’ individual and social lives, its contribution to humanity in addressing the challenges of modern times are some main points that engage the attention of Muslim intellectuals. There are two major points of view among Muslim intellectuals with respect to the issues mentioned. One point of view is that since the Qur’an is the word of God it is absolute, universal and is not time-bound. For example, according to this viewpoint, legal rulings of the Qur’an are fixed forever, and cannot be re-interpreted. The other point of view is that the Qur’an is the word of God but it also records the cultures and practices of the Prophet and of Arab society of the time when it was revealed. For example, in this viewpoint, the political, military and legal arrangements in the Qur’an are firstly related to the needs of the society that it directly addresses in history. Thus, such arrangements could be re-interpreted in different times and conditions in order to adapt to the changing needs of Muslim society at different times (Albayrak, 2002, p. 227–228). Of the two viewpoints, I see the latter more appealing for studies of religious education in Islam.

In fact, this second line of approach differentiates what is essentially religious and what is a part of historical tradition, and sheds light upon a liberal understanding of religion and tradition, which has always existed at differing levels in the history of Muslims. Thus, we invite our students in our Faculty of Divinity, in Ankara, to develop critical thinking during their studies and enrich their religious perspective by paying attention to comparative religious studies and analyses. We believe that a broad approach to religion will contribute to the development of an inclusive understanding that since every human person is created by God, everyone is worthy of respect. We believe that the main goal in our effort of promoting this liberal and broad approach to the study of religion and culture will help students to advance their self-consciousness as individuals through their broad knowledge of the Qur’an and will enable them to manage problems which they may face in the practice of their life.

Before proceeding into the discussion on the concept of Ta’aruf, I would like to mention the Qur’anic bases of a religious education which can provide ground for the development of further individual consciousness and pluralistic interpretation of issues related to religion and culture. It is certain that if absolutism in any kind of interpretation in religious or non-religious issues is used in education it will sharply
hinder the development of individual consciousness if absolutism is employed in religious education this can lead to an understanding of religious texts without the broad context of history and society and to a memorisation of religious rules as mere commands or prohibitions without analysing and rationally understanding them. Such a negative approach eventually deprives the individuals of the opportunity to be creative in understanding and re-establishing themselves (Aydn, 1996, p. 168).

**Qur'anic Bases of A Religions Education which Contributes to Individual Consciousness**

Islam addresses human beings on the basis of reason and freedom. Qur'anic language and perspective offer the right to free choice based on free will. The Qur'an says 'there is no compulsion in religion' (Qur'an 2:256). In line with this Qur'anic approach, Shatibi (d. 790 A.H./1388 C.E.) says: "The real aim of religion is to free human beings from the level of compulsory servitude to God and elevate him/her to the level of choosing to obey God by his/her own free will" (Shatibi, p. 168). Surely, the scope of Shatibi's point of obeying God by a free will goes beyond the basic rituals in Islam and covers many different aspects of personal and social life. In fact, the significance of religious rituals rests in a sense in their positive contribution to the quality of life (see Qur'an: chapter of Maun).

The Holy Qur'an does not praise the behaviors that are not based on the free will. The Qur'an shows the ways of obtaining knowledge before deciding to act in practice, as knowledge is necessary to find the right way and the right option.

We are also responsible for testing the reliability of what we hear or what we see; the Qur'an says: "And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)" (Qur'an 17:36). The Qur'an also encourages us to listen to each other without prejudice, and follow the path of knowledge, as it says: "Those who listen to the Word and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom Allah has guided and those are the ones ended with understanding" (Qur'an 39:18), and "but why dispute ye in matters of which ye have no knowledge?" (Qur'an 3:66). The Qur'an also says: "Nay they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass even before the elucidation thereof hath reached them" (Qur'an 10:39). The Qur'an attaches great significance to the use of human capacity of thinking and the use of reason before making a choice or decision. The Qur'an says, 'Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'an or are their hearts locked up by them?' (Qur'an 47:24). Among them are some who (pretend to) listen to thee: but canst thou make the deaf to hear even though they are without understanding? And among them are some who look at thee: but can't thou guide the blind even though they will not see? (Qur'an 10:42–43)

In Islam, even the Prophet Muhammad is not given the authority to compel a non-believer to become a Muslim, as the Qur'an says 'thy duty is to (make the Message) reach them: it is Our part to call them to account' (Qur'an 13:40);
'Therefore do thou give admonition for thou art one to admonish thou art not one to manage men's affairs' (Qur'an 88:21-22). We know best what they say; and thou art not one to even awe them by force So admonish with the Qur'an such as fear My Warning! (Qur'an 50:45) 'It is true thou wilt not be able to guide everyone whom thou loves: but Allah guides those whom He will and He knows best those who receive guidance (Qur'an 28:56). 'If thy Lord had so willed He could have made mankind one People' (Qur'an 11:118).

According to the Qur'an, the duty of the Prophet is to offer the truth to the people in a plain way (Qur'an 5:92, 99, Qur'an 16:35-87, Qur'an 24:54; Qur'an 29:18; Qur'an 42:48). The Qur'an shows the aim of revelation as guidance to the right path and showing the difference between the right and wrong path. By doing so, the Qur'an leaves the individual free to choose his/her own path, though it holds him/her responsible for the results of the choice made by his/her free will. The Qur'an says: "And shown him the two highways?" (Qur'an 90:10); 'We showed him the way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will) (Qur'an 76:3-4); 'This is the Book: in it is guidance sure without doubt to those who fear Allah' (Qur'an 2:2); 'Say 'The Truth is from your Lord': let him who will believe and let him who will reject (it)'. . . .' (Qur'an 18:29); 'Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds' (Qur'an 74:38).

The Qur'an presents the freedom of human beings in their actions as subject to the limits in accordance to the aim of their creation by God. Human beings are expected to fulfill their role of being useful to themselves and also contribute to the world they live in. The human being, to put it in a Qur'anic term, 'has undertaken the amanah/Trust/responsibility'. Amanah is described as a heavy responsibility to the extent that no other creature—other than a human being—could dare to accept. The Qur'an says: 'We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains: but they refused to undertake it being afraid thereof: but man undertook it he was indeed unjust and foolish' (Qur'an 35:72). The life is, in a sense, the challenge of taking the amanah/Trust. To fulfill this responsibility that the Qur'an describes, the human person is equipped by capacities of reason, free will, understanding, etc.

The Qur'an says: 'By the Soul and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; Truly he succeeds that purifies it; And he fails that corrupts it' (Qur'an 91:7-10).

Freedom matters only when there is the chance and capacity to choose. As the above-mentioned Qur'anic verses put forward, the human person has the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong and to choose by a free will. The Qur'an says (Qur'an 92:4-10):

Verily (the ends) ye strive for are diverse; So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah); And (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best; We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss; But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient; And gives the lie to the Best; We will indeed make smooth for him the Path to Misery.
Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls) (Qur'an 13:11)

Allah will never change the grace which He hath bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls. (Qur'an 8:33)

The Qur'an reminds the human person of his/her self-responsibility and accounting for his/her actions; as it says: That man can have nothing but what he strives for; That (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight (Qur'an 53:39); The Qur'an criticises those who do not follow moral values in their actions, as it says: 'They are like cattle nay more misguided; for they are heedless (of warning)' (Qur'an 7:179).

According to the Qur'an, human beings are bound by an eternal agreement of being obedient to God. This point is mentioned in the Qur'an as follows (Qur'an 7:172-173):

When thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam from their loins their descendants and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): 'Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?' They said: 'Yeaf we do testify!' (This) lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: 'Of this we were never mindful.' Or lest ye should say: 'Our fathers before us may have taken false gods but we are (their) descendants after them: wilt thou then destroy us because of the deeds of men who were futile?'

The above mentioned statements of the Qur'an plainly put forward that human beings are under the responsibility of recognising the authority of God as their own choice, and they are warned against the risk of blindly following the wrong choices of the previous generations in their Faiths.

The Qur'anic concept of amanah/Trust may lead us to reach separate criteria concerning religious education: one that is uniting and the other that is liberating. Students may share the idea that amanah/Trust is the responsibility of everyone, and, on the other hand, each student may develop his/her individual consciousness and liberate his/her own personal capacity in playing a positive role to fulfill his duty concerning amanah/Trust. A positive and lasting contribution of a human being to his/her personal world, to the society and the world he/she lives in is considered very essential in terms of religious education. The Qur'an describes the lasting effect of good, and the temporary and misleading image of evil as follows (Qur'an 14:24-26):

Seest thou not how Allah sets forth a parable? a goodly Word like a goodly tree whose root is firmly fixed and its branches (reach) to the heavens; It beholds forth its fruit at all times by the leave of its Lord. So Allah sets forth parables for men in order that they may receive admonition; And the parable of an evil Word is that of an evil tree. It is torn up by the root from the surface of the earth; it has no stability.
Human Beings are Created in Differing Individual and Social Identities in Order to Know Each Other Via Understanding Their Differences: Ta’aruf (Knowing Each Other)

I would like to interpret the term Ta’aruf in the sense of how the Qur’an sees ‘the other’ in relation to the issue of ‘co-existence’ which is popular in modern times since there are problems around the world caused by intolerance between different social identities. Thus, learning how to live together with the ‘other’ or ‘the others’ is significant. A positive approach to the terms of pluralism, dialogue, diversity, equality is essential for peace and co-existence between people of different social identities. The concept of Ta’aruf put forward by the Qur’an in the chapter of Hijrat is particularly relevant to the issue under discussion and is elaborated below. The full translation of the Qur’anic verse, in hand, which will be the focus of the remaining part of this speech reads (Qur’an, 49.13):

‘O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).’

‘A-c-f’ as the root form of Ta’aruf, the key word presented by the aforementioned Qur’anic verse, means ‘to know, to recognise, to explore’; but when ‘a-c-f is used in the form of ‘ta-‘a-ruf’ the meaning of the word becomes ‘to know/recognise/understand each other’. This encourages a partnership role between different people in knowing each other and sharing the knowledge and recognition of each other, and this, in a sense, leads to a culture of pluralism and tolerance in societies (see Ortürk, 1998, p.570).

An interpretation of the Qur’anic verse promoting ‘ta’aruf’ with regard to historical Islamic context may be put forward as ‘O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other’ (Isted, 1998, p. 854). This means that each person is created by the same formula; that human persons are equal in terms of their biological procedure of creation; and that human persons are equal in terms of their social value, since their equality in the process of creation is essential. As well, the social affiliations and identities which are gained later are provided as different ways or channels of knowledge and cultures in order to make them know each other and find better ways of communication and cooperation with one another for the good of everyone. In line with the idea of equality and pluralism, the concept of ‘ta’aruf’ requires the condemnation of all prejudices based on the basis of tribalism or racism since the main point is the equality and pluralism in human society.

The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have warned against the idea of superiority of a particular tribe by saying that ‘everyone is from Adam and Adam is from clay’ i.e. no one has any reason for claiming superiority against another, and everyone is equal as the process of creation proves. The following part of the Qur’anic verse
promoting 'ta'aruf' is, in fact, a conclusion of the earlier parts of the same verse in terms of equality and pluralism (Qur'an 49:13):

Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)

As generally the exegetes of the Qur'an offers the conclusion that the differences between different peoples can only prove the richness of God's creation; some like Emlalili Hamdi Yazır, add that the differences between human beings, in fact, provide good ways for people to compete with each other and promoting good and providing solidarity amongst themselves (Yazı, 1979, p. 4478)

It is imperative to promote mutual respect and recognition of one another, and support pluralism and tolerance in our world of humanity, in line with the Qur'anic concept of 'ta'aruf', it is necessary to work against prejudices and ignorance. Ibn Aslır (Ibn Asıl, p. 260–261) in his interpretation of 'ta'aruf' goes beyond the idea of recognition of 'the others' and adds that the idea of 'ta'aruf' should ensure that mutual understanding and mutual respect between different people prevail. Also, there are interpretations of 'ta'aruf' which see that a spiritual element of peace and understanding of each other is essentially inherent by the very nature or creation of human beings (iflāh), and thus, the Qur'anic concept of 'ta'aruf' should mean human beings shall follow the requirement of their nature, that is to be in peaceful terms with respect for each other (Kutub, 1980, p. 9333–9334)

In conclusion of our understanding of the Qur'anic concept of 'ta'aruf', we may see that:

1. Human beings are created from one and the same source; thus everyone is essentially equal.
2. That every human person has different qualities is God's grace, which enables everyone to enrich the humanity with his/her difference.

Promoting equality and pluralism is a particularly significant task to which the students in the field of religious education should pay attention, since religious education which has a particular focus on the issue of equality and pluralism, mutual respect and solidarity between peoples of different faiths and cultures can contribute immensely to the prevalence of peace and co-existence in our world.

(*) All translations of the Qur'ānic verses mentioned in English throughout the text of this paper are taken from A. Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an

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The Use of Metaphorical Language in Islamic Education

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Seeest thou not how
God sets forth a parable?
A goodly word
like a goodly tree,
Whose root is firmly fixed,
And its branches (reach)
To the heavens,
It brings forth its fruit
At all times, by the leave
of its Lord
So God sets forth parables
For men, in order that
They may receive admonition.
(Sura 14/1Ybrahîm, 24-25)

Talking about God

I talking about God, that is, trying to explain the nature of God and the relationship which exists between God and human beings, God and the world, is the main subject of Islamic theology. Such discussions as the debate over the essence and attributes of God essentially arise from this “talking about God”.

Generally speaking, talking about God means acting within the content of religious language by using some propositions [Herein, statements made with the use of “religious language” vary. Some instances of these include: prayers, repentance, petitions, praise, thanks, recommendations, stories, explanations about the world, sayings of the prophets, religious experiences and behaviour, ethical rules, etc. Most of these statements are directly or indirectly concerned with God. In the Holy Scriptures, which are the deposit of self-revelation by
God is the unique speaker about himself. Human beings who are to learn, understand and grasp the inner meaning of the Holy Scriptures, also use a language about God.

What is of importance in religious education is this: to disclose the meaning stemming from the full framework of the language in which God is always referred to, and hence to improve the behaviour of individuals. For instance, the nature of the dialogue between God and humankind, the problem of acting upon this dialogue to develop a true piety and accepting the responsibility of teaching the faithful, are the main subjects which religious educators tackle. To use religious texts as sources in education, to think about the content and to implement it in practice in this way, are some subjects on which religious educators place emphasis.

As is known, it is impossible to talk about God without using anthropomorphic statements. In speaking about God, we use words from our everyday speech. And when we want to talk about a religion with a conception of a transcendent deity we come face to face with many problems. Most of the problems with regard to the deity are related to matters which are impossible to perceive with the senses. By definition, God is beyond every perceptual sense, but our language is limited by the perceivable things.

When we investigate this problem from the Qur'anic perspective, that is the revelation and Book of God, we find the same reality. The Qur'an likewise addresses us through our own language. For instance, the Qur'an uses terms like 'knowing', 'hearing', 'seeing', etc. The Qur'an attributes features to God such as 'sitting on a throne', 'face', 'hand', etc., which essentially belong only to human beings. Is it possible for us to say that these terms are used in the same meaning both for God and human kind? To say 'yes' leads us to 'anthropomorphism'. On the other hand, the Qur'an says again and again that 'nothing resembles Him.' Then to keep quiet about God makes 'religion dumb'. When we deal with this problem, we may either put God on the same level as other creatures or present Him as 'an unknown object' both of which are not desirable. So, metaphors, parables, models, stories, symbolic explanations used about God take on great importance.

What we will emphasise in this contribution are the meanings of the metaphorical references about the concept of a transcendent deity. We will analyse the metaphorical statements with regard to God. Our study relies on the thesis that the Qur'anic mode of expression has the function of expanding our imaginations and conceptions on God's existence. As Fazlur Rahman has pointed out: Heavenly books inspire a mode which commands on the one hand
and pleases hearts on the other and which is impossible to be reduced to anything. 

It is very important to know the mode of communication used by the text in order to form a true context. The question of what the holy text says and how it says it are intertwined. Those who lay emphasis on the importance of the message need to remember that the content is always shaped by the way it is expressed. Our contribution is an essay to show the possibility of "reading the Qur'an by the Qur'anic techniques and teaching Islam in this way." It seems that the Qur'an, while presenting some instances of metaphorical uses, shows us the true usage of language, as well.

Teaching About God

It is now time to talk about some problems arising from talking about God outlined above that we come across in educational life.

Those who are concerned with children, like parents and teachers, recognise that replying to children's questions about God is very difficult. This problem arises from both the inadequacy of children in terms of mental maturity and the inadequacy of parents' language which they use about God. Children are not able to conceive of the nature of God by using the means of perception which they use for ordinary beings. They have no way of finding out for themselves what God is like. He is invisible; he can not be perceived like a tangible thing.

We, adults, cannot explain where he lives or what he looks like, we can not point to him as we point to our next-door neighbour. Yet we talk about Him as if we know Him very intimately. We are speaking of his love, mercy, justice and even his punishment: "Where is God? — Why don't we see him? — But we want to see him? — Where is his home? — Who are his parents?..." These questions of young children reflect their bewilderment about "God", who has no similarity to anyone they know.

Quite a few children grow up without any understanding of religious vocabulary in general and the word 'God' in particular. Religious concepts are handed down to children through socio-cultural heritage. According to the findings of developmental psychology, religious concepts are also driven by the cognitive reasoning process. Questions about the beginning and the end of the universe, about the meaning of life, are asked by young children and 'God-laden' responses are often found in this connection. These answers are gained
both from the adults they live with and from conversations which take place
with their peers.

Healthy children are concerned with and question everything around
themselves. The more they experience, the more they ask questions about
what bewilders them. All who are with children — parents, friends, relatives,
teachers — are continually educating them as they respond to their questions.

A five-year-old asked his mother, as she was preparing supper, this
question:

Child: What does God eat for supper?
Mother: God doesn’t have any supper.
Child: Well, if he doesn’t have any supper, does he have any breakfast?
(Child likes breakfast)
Mother: (Not knowing how to explain) Err... God doesn’t have any breakfast
either dear. He doesn’t need to eat.
Child: How surprising! How does He manage to be so strong without eating
anything?

Adults generally give responses to children’s questions about God as follows:
He is everywhere, knows everything, i.e. He is omniscient, sees everything. He
is invisible, He is uncreated, there is nothing comparable to Him. In this way,
they aim to instil a conception of God that is free from all time and space, pre-
ternal and everlasting, absolute, etc.

These explanations, which show the ‘otherness’ of God, are not state-
ments giving a direct description of God, but statements which refer to his
existence and reality. As such, these are not enough to form children’s concepts
of God.

The above dialogue which took place between the mother and her child
reveals, at the same time, the characteristics of the child’s thinking, perceiving
and commenting on objects, which is particular to young children. Children
acquire different world views in their minds in their different developmental
stages.

Cognitive development is the life-long process by which people
appropriate knowledge through thinking, discussing and expressing ideas. In
the early years of life, cognitive development is experienced through the senses.
During the years from five to twelve, children are in the concrete operational
period. The most visible characteristics of a child’s thinking at this stage are
making concepts tangible and conceiving the concepts literally. From age five
onwards, children are aware of logical classification, seriation, hierarchical
arrangement and schema of reversibility. However children’s reasoning on
tangible objects is more successful. At least until their teens, children have a
problem with abstraction. They have some difficulties in understanding abstract
concepts, proverbs, idioms and myths. These are conceived in their literal meanings. The characteristic of personification in thinking shows itself in depicting God. Children imagine God like a big person.\(^8\)

The intellectual immaturity of children does not mean that we simply postpone the introduction of abstract concepts to later years. Children’s conceptions become better and better as long as we help them. And progress is possible only by education. Some religious truths may be known without a young person achieving a high level of abstract reasoning.\(^9\) Correct usage of language in the developmental stages will reveal every obstacle which hinders understanding.

In some parts of Turkey the religious vocabulary of children is increased while they are still quite young. Here is a recollection of one of my students at the University:

My grandfather would gather us (my brothers and cousins) and ask, “How many gods are there?” We all would reply: “One!” He would go on, “Whose servant are you?” We would reply, “We are God’s servants.” “Whose religion do you belong to?” “The Prophet!” “Whose community do you belong to?” “Abraham’s.” “Where is God?” “Neither on earth, nor in the sky, but everywhere when you mention Him!” “Who created you and your parents?” “God.” Our education was given in a group. Now we teach my three-year-old brother, in the same way.

To learn religious knowledge by heart through the question and answer method will help children to improve themselves in this field and will provide them with a religious vocabulary. That resembles a multiplication chart which provides us with much information about numbers. We must be careful not to allow that vocabulary to remain on the level of imitation, but to continue the learning process. The vocabulary children learn only by heart can be risky if they misunderstand or misuse it.

One of the ways of describing the concept of God, in Islamic educational tradition is teaching about God’s beautiful names. These names (al-Asma al-Husna) are present in the verses of the Holy Qur’an:

*The Holy Qur’an says:*

“God there is no god
But He! To Him belongs
The Most Beautiful Names (20/Isha, 8)

Say, Call upon God, or
Call upon Rahman:
By whatever name ye call
Upon Him, (it is well):
For to Him belong
The Most Beautiful Names (17/Isra, 111)
Almost a hundred of God’s names are mentioned in the Qur’an. A list of 99 names is made out of Hadith Literature, such as in Tirmizi. These names are as follows:

The Most Beautiful Names (Asma al-Husna)

the Merciful (al-Rahman) the Truth (al-Haqq)
the Compassionate (al-Rahim) the Guardian (al-Wali)
the Ruler (al-Malik) the Strong (al-Qawwiyy)
the Holy (al-Qudus) the Firm (al-Mumti)
the Peace (al-Salam) the Patron (al-Waliiyy)
the Protector (al-Mu'min) the Laudable (al-Hamid)
the Virtuous (al-Mu'minin) the Conqueror (al-Mu'allal)
the Mighty (al-Aziiz) the Beginner (al-Mukhtal)
the Repairer (al-Jabbar) the Restorer (al-Mu'akil)
the Great (al-Mustokabhar) the Quickener (al-Mu'ahyil)
the Creator (al-Khaliq) the Killer (al-Mumit)
the Creator (al-Ba'ii) the Living (al-Hayy)
the Fashioner (al-Mussawwir) the Self-Subsisting (al-Qayyumin)
the Forgiver (al-Ghaffar) the Existing (al-Wajih)
the Dominant (al-Qahaar) the Glorious (al-Majid)
the Bestower (al-Wathab) the One (al-Wahid)
the Provider (al-Razzooq) the Eternal (al-Samaad)
the Opener (al-Fattah) the Powerful (al-Qadir)
the Knowledge (al-Imam) the Prevailing (al-Muqaddim)
the Restrainer (al-Qabid) the Deferrer (al-Muakkabir)
the Spreader (al-Basit) the Bringer-forward (al-Muqaddim)
the Guardian (al-Hafiz) the First (al-Awwal)
the Exalter (al-Rafi') the Last (al-Adh)
the Honourer (al-Ma'izz) the Apparent (al-Zohir)
the Destroyer (al-Muzzil) the Innermost (al-Batin)
the Hearer (al-Samii') the Governor (al-Wali)
the Seer (al-Bair) the Exalted (al-Muta'ali)
the Judge (al-Hakim) the Righteous (al-Barr)
Justice (al-'Adl) the Relenting (al-Tawwaab)
the Subtle (al-Lafi) the Avenger (al-Mustaghfiri)
the Averse (al-Khabir) the Pardoner (al-‘Afuw)
the Clement (al-Halim) the Ruler of the Kingdom (al-Malik al-Mulk)
the Grand (al-'Azim) the Equitable (al-Muqaf)
the Forgiving (al-Ghafur) the Collector (al-Jami)
the Grateful (al-Shakir) the Independent (al-Ghami)
the Exalted (al-'Ali) the Enricher (al-Mughili)
the Great (al-Kabir) the Giver (al-Mu'af) the Withholder (al-Mam')
the Guardian (al-Hafiz) the Distresser (al-Darr)
the Strengthened (al-Ma’qith) the Profiter (al-Na’f)
the Reckoner (al-Hasib) the Light (al-Nasir)
the Majestic (al-Jalil) the Guide (al-Hadi)
the Generous (al-Karim) the Watcher (al-Muhab)
the Most Beautiful Names (Asma al-Husna)
the Answerer of Prayer (al-Majid)
the Comprehensive (al-Wasi)
the Wise (al-Hakim)
the Loving (al-Wazhi)
the Glorious (al-Majid)
the Raiser (al-Rahim)
the Witness (al-Shahid)
the Kind (al-Ra'a')

the Incomparable (al-Basit)
the Enduring (al-Baqi)
the Inheritor (al-Wasi)
the Rightly-directing (al-Rahim)
the Patient (al-Sabur)
the Lord of Majesty and Glory
(Dhu'l Jadal wa'l Thummi)

Each of these names describes and qualifies God. “Allah” is the special name, which involves all these meanings.

Knowing these beautiful names and being familiar with the metaphorical expressions in religious language will provide a “readiness for religion” in the students. It is necessary to build up a clear understanding of God’s nature by utilising this “readiness” in religious education. Religious educators should make students aware of the expressions borrowed from ordinary language and used metaphorically to refer to God’s nature. As religious educators’ primary purpose is to teach about God and God’s revelation in the Qur’an, a proper understanding about metaphorical language is essential.

The first step towards the understanding of metaphorical language used about God is to lay down a true understanding of God and human being relationship.

From the believer’s point of view, the relationship between God and human beings can be classified into three categories: Ontological Relationship, Epistemological Relationship, and Existential Relationship.

The Ontological Relationship. The questions about “being” and “the source of existence” such as “What is a human being? What does it mean to be human? Who am I?” are questions which human beings have been always engaged in.

According to the Qur’an, the answer to these questions is: “The source of existence is God.” The real creative force is in God. God created human beings. There are many verses in the Qur’an which refer to God’s Creation, here I will mention one of the often-quoted verses:

But does not man
Call to mind that we
Created him before
Out of nothing? (19/Maryam, 67)

The Ontological Relationship is the relationship between God the Creator and human being the created. The humankind came into being by God. Human beings must realise that God is the One and the Only Reality, His greatness and
glory are above anything. Humans have the capacity to conceive this reality because God breathed into him of His Spirit during the Creation:

When I have fashioned him
(In due proportion) and breathed
Into him of My Spirit,
Fell ye down in obeisance
Unto him. (13/Hijr, 29)

But He fashioned him
In due proportion, and breathed
Into him something of
His spirit. And He gave
You (the faculties of) hearing
And sight and feeling (and understanding)
Little thanks do ye give! (32/Sajda, 9)

All the blessings to humans are gifts from God. If someone becomes aware of his/her ontological relationship with God, his/her faith (fitra) produces works of righteousness. Righteousness comes from a secure faith and sincere devotion to God:

So set thou thy face
Steadily and truly to the Faith:
(Establish) God's handiwork according
To the pattern on which
He has made mankind:
No change (let there be)
In the work (wrought) (30/Rum, 30)

The Epistemological Relationship: God also has an epistemological relationship with humankind. This relationship was initiated by the transfer of information to humankind by God. In this relationship two beings different in nature i.e. God and Man Communicated by means of revelation (wahy). The Revelation comes from God, and its is one of the greatest signs of his grace and favour. God has aided humankind through prophets and apostles.

The Existential Relationship: Humankind has another kind of relationship with God, called the existential relationship, which is the result of the ethical position of someone in relation to God.

In fact, the relationship between God and humans is a whole with its ontological, epistemological and existential aspects. The Holy Qur'an's main concern is the relationship between God and humankind. The Qur'an is the word of God. The Qur'an wants to be read,12 to be contemplated upon,13 to be understood14 and to be explained sincerely, both intellectually and practically.15
For a proper interpretation of the metaphorical expressions about God the three aspects of the relationship between God and human beings should be taken into account. I will come to this point toward the end of this contribution.

Developing an Understanding Through Metaphors

Human language is not adequate to express God’s attributes which are beyond description. We can only form some idea of these by means of metaphors. This contribution, however, will not deal with which specific metaphors should be included in religious education for different age levels. This is a matter for curriculum development. Rather, the primary question for the following comments is a more general and more fundamental one: What kind of objectives do the teachers have to take into consideration about metaphorical teaching?

In the framework of this study, we put forward two cognitive objectives. As a result of these objectives, we expect that some affective learning will take place on the students’ part.

Cognitive Objectives

1. To make the students aware of the significative features of the Qur’an concerning natural events
2. To help the students understand the educational and ethical dimensions of the Qur’an, which has a theocentric mode.

Affective Objectives

3. Students may develop sensitivity to the dialogue between God and humankind, taking place in the Qur’an, with respect to the ethical dimension
4. They may feel that the continuity of this dialogue relies on their striving.

The process as a whole might be represented as follows:

Cognitive Objectives → Affective Objectives → Programme

Now let us deal with this process in detail.

1. To make the students aware of the significative features of the Qur’an concerning natural events

We can say that the language used in the Qur’an is somehow metaphorical. It takes many objects and events into the religious field and gives them a new
meaning in order to convey the notion of God more vividly. The Qur'an refers
to rain as a sign of mercy from Him. This is one example of taking a physical
event into the religious field and giving it a new meaning.

At the same time, the Qur'an never contradicts the physical formation of
the rain. But according to the Qur'an, the rain is not only a process in which
evaporated water ascends to the cold air layer and falls back, but also refers to a
grace from God, who is the owner of the balance present in the world
(Sunnahullah). When it mentions these physical events, the Qur'an primarily is
interested in the religious aspects of these phenomena.16

The sun is also a ‘sign’ in the Qur'anic language.17 It is a signpost which
leads human beings to the transcendentals being. Its raison d'etre is not just to
light and heat and making plants grow. Since all natural objects in the world are
the signs of God, it is possible to understand them in the same way we
understand the sun and the rain. The Qur'an says: “Seest thou not that to God
bow down in worship, all things that are in the heavens and on earth”18
According to the Qur'an, all creation, animate and inanimate, declares God's
glory and celebrates His praise.19

All these statements reveal that these events entail different aspects
beyond their literal scope.

The human being conceives that every being in the world is meaningful
and all creation is for a wise and just purpose.20 After perceiving the things in
this way, it is easier to be a moral person and to bring a moral community into
existence in a convenient environment.

2. To help the students to understand the educational and ethical dimensions of
the Qur'an, which has a theocentric mode

The characteristic feature of the Qur'an is that it is in a way theocentric. At the
centre of every event in the Qur'an is God, the Omnipotent, and the Willing. It
is God who is the real agent in all events, on macro and micro levels. He is the
governor of the stars21 and “It is He that brought you forth from the womb of
your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and
intelligence and affections.”22

As a result of this mode, God is presented in the Qur'an as the
“Sovereign”23. He has a throne24. He has no partner in his power.25 He gives all
sustenance, He is lord of power, steadfast (forever)26 However the Qur'an is
not just a book about God and His attributes. The main subject of the Qur'an is
humankind27. We are right in putting man as the word second only to God.28 So
great importance was given to human beings above all other creatures.29
According to the Qur'an man is a unique creation.
To use the terminology of the holy scripture, the Qur'an is a "guide to mankind." The Qur'an, in the first place, concerns itself with human beings and their behaviour. In the Qur'anic concept of God, we find His attributes, which find their first reference in relation to humankind. God is the Creator, the Sustainer of people and the world, and particularly the Guide for humankind.

The Qur'an frequently defines the Prophet and itself as reminders. The Qur'an shows human beings the way leading to God. What the Qur'an wants from us is to find God. In our view, the adventure of Abraham in searching for God is a good example of this context. There Abraham seeks a being to worship with sincerity. So he turns his gaze to the stars and afterwards says "I love not those that set." Abraham places the word love at the base of his worship.

Religious educators ought to keep this feeling alive. God becomes a friend (Wall) of those who seek him and help them. There is a friendship model between God and believers. 'Friend' (Wall) is a Qur'anic concept. God is a friend of the believers, gives them his grace, mercy and guidance. He accepts their prayers and defends them, gives them a beautiful life. He forgives them, gives them the "criterion" to judge between right and wrong. Above all, He loves them. These are only some aspects of God's grace to the faithful.

From beginning to end, the Qur'an stresses the nature of friendship between God and human beings. In this context, the Qur'an uses the concept of 'good deed' (Amel-i Salih). The concept of good deed is the principle in the relationship of the human being with God and with fellow human beings and with the world. This involves prayer, worship and seeking His forgiveness, also, turning to God, praising him, loving and being always conscious of Him, relying on Him, doing favours for neighbours and parents, not lying or gossiping etc.

Both for the sake of its message and its modes of communication, the Qur'an is the central part of religious education for Muslims. There is an explicit language (clear, fundamental) and a metaphorical language (allegorical, figurative) in the Qur'an:

He it is Who has sent down
To thee the Book:
In it are verses
Basic or fundamental
(of established meaning):
They are the foundation
Of the Book: others
Are allegorical (3/Al-i Imran, 7)
The Qur'an contains many symbols (mithal), signs (ravez), similitudes (amithal). In all these expressions a transference from the literal (lajazi) meaning to a metaphorical (majazi) meaning takes place.

By addressing people through metaphorical (figurative or allegorical) verses, God guides them to discover the meaning of these verses and understand them as properly as they can.

The Qur'an says: “such are the similitudes, which we propound to men that they may reflect” (59/Haz, 21) In other verses: “He does propound to you a similitude from your own experience” (30/Rum, 28); “We have put forth for men, in this Qur'an every kind of parable, in order that they may receive admonition” (39/Zumer, 27)

Religious educators must bear in mind that Qur'anic metaphors prevent God's knowledge from being merely abstract and makes it active in a way which stimulates the faithful. They must help children to advance in their knowledge and understanding of God. In order to make the issue in hand more tangible let us take the metaphor ‘Samad—Absolute, Eternal’ as an example and explain it.

In Islamic tradition, a the short but very important Qur'anic Sura, Iblis (Purity), known as the summary of the Qur'an, calls God ‘Samad’. ‘Samad’ in daily usage means very large rocks on the hills, on mountains and also rocks providing shelter to protect humankind from outbreaks of flood or disasters. Certainly, God can not be understood as a piece of rock. Here the word ‘Samad’ has taken on another meaning from our phenomenological world. Considering this point through our experiences, it becomes a concept about Transcendent Being. There we turn to Him. The direction of movement is, so to speak, from below to above, from phenomena to noumenon. Thus we try to conceive that God, the transcendent, is the only shelter in whom everyone desperate for hope can seek refuge, to whom every needy person may apply.

Thus using our experimental knowledge about 'Samad' we move on to another point and try to understand what kind of being God is. This metaphor is likewise current in our existential relationship with God. The Qur'an highlights that if a human being relies upon anything else, other than God and puts something in lieu of God, he/she will be a loser. Hence, it is only God that makes one's life meaningful, that gives a unity and integrity to one's life.

To understand how God renders one's life meaningful and to see the situations of those who do not have such a shelter, i.e. God, we need to consider these illustrations given by the Qur'anic verses:
The parable of those who take protectors other than God is that of the spider (Ankabut), who builds (to itself) a house; but truly the flimsiest of houses is the spider’s house; if they but knew (29/Ankabut, 41).

The parable of those who reject their Lord is that: Their works are as ashes on which the wind blows, furiously on a tempestuous day: No power have they over ought that they have earned: That is the straying far from the goal (14/Ybrahim, 18).

These above mentioned verses are just examples of how God presents the ethical dimensions of existential relations of those who believe and those who do not believe in Him in many metaphorical explanations. In fact, if we want the students to attribute a value to these examples, we have to correlate them to their experiences. In this situation we take students’ experiences into account, and correlate the subject to their feelings and tangible experiences. Teachers could ask this question: What life experience shall the student have with regard to this metaphor? To which experiences of the student do these words and concepts relate?

This way of teaching, which we may call correlating the teaching to the experiences of the student, has two stages: a stage of affective preparation and a stage of correlating the experience to the religious concepts.

a Affective Preparation

Here, though religious explanations have not been tackled directly, religious concepts may find a fertile field in which to prosper. Before a religious explanation, the emotional aspect of students must be addressed. Teachers could ask about students’ tangible experiences. Students can help teachers in correlating knowledge to their experiences. At this stage, the foreknowledge and customs of students about their community should be gathered first.

b Correlating the Experience to the Religious Concepts

In this stage we correlate religious texts, which have been chosen in accordance with the intellectual development of the pupils, to their experiences and discuss and argue about them. To correlate the world spoken about by the Qur’an and the world of today, students’ experiences will help the teacher. Thus, students can gain an awareness of the world recommended by the Holy Qur’an and the world in which they live. Without doubt, some students have not enough experience, but they could share that of others.

The whole experience of the students, their family environment, daily life and information taught before can be taken as a beginning in perceiving and
commenting on the Qur'anic principles. From places of worship we can move
to what worship is. From stories of caring and forgiveness one can move to
beliefs about God and the meaning of life, from socially-approved manners one
can move to the concept of good deeds.

To set a bridge between religious concepts and students' own experi-
ences, we may try different activities. Our aim here is to make known the
differences and similarities between the meaning of the language used by the
student and the language used by the Qur'an. Moreover, the students will come
to learn and express the information they receive in a meaningful pattern of
religious thought. Now the objectives and the programme may be represented
as in the following pattern:

Cognitive Objectives → Affective Objectives

Bridge Building Activities → Programme

Conclusion

To make metaphors understandable, religious educators must take the charac-
teristics of Qur'anic language into account. In the framework of this brief
survey we have paid attention to the two important features of Qur'anic
language: the Qur'an's attaching meaning to the phenomena and its being
theocentric. Teaching students these two features with appropriate methods will
prevent them from understanding the metaphors literally or perceiving them as
scientific and historical propositions.

Metaphorical language is used as a means of expressing the aims of the
Qur'an. It represents a world view. Metaphors give people clues to help them in
choosing a life-style. Education about metaphors without neglecting Qur'anic
integrity, will prevent students from taking the meaning of the Qur'an literally.
Educators should search for the best ways to build bridges between what is
visible and what is invisible, what is concrete and what is abstract. Otherwise,
the children will continue to think of religious concepts in material terms, and
in spite of developing abstract concepts in many other areas they will not be
able to achieve abstraction in religion.

Understanding metaphors from the intellectual view has a close relation
with moral values. Our morality is not only our choices but also our vision.
This vision is often sustained by extensive explanations. Metaphorical state-
ments include ethical proposals. The Qur'an teaches us what is to be learned
and how this learning is to happen as well. Metaphors satisfy both the
intellectual and emotional needs of the individual and offer guidance for his or her relationship with God.

Notes

1 Cf Aydın (1983: 24-44).
2 The concept of 'religious language' refers to the usage of language in religious beliefs and deeds rather than referring to a certain kind of language. Cf Donovan (1976: 1).
3 42/Sura, 11.
5 Al-Allâmah, 1925: 258-259. (Different categories of language: comparison and personalisation are different appearances of language. The word metaphor (tâbi‘) is an higher category comprehending all: In those patterns, words are kept as 'loans' For the use of metaphor, cf. Saruhan (1994)).
10 The translation of the "Most Beautiful Names" is taken from Rahlar (1960: 9-10).
12 66/Alâ, 1, 2; 2/Bakârah, 121; 73/Müminîn, 20
13 2/Bakârah, 219, 266; 47/Muhammed, 24
14 4/Nisa, 82; 23/Mu’minun, 68-70
15 16/Nahl, 44; 57/Hadîl, 17
16 7/Anf, 57; 25/Furqan, 48; 27/Naml, 63; 30/Rum, 46; 42/Sura, 28
17 Cf. 13/Ra’d 2; 16/Nahl, 12; 21/Ibda, 30-33; 22/Hace, 18; 29/Antebût, 61; 41/Fussilat, 37 etc.
18 2/İuss, 18
19 7/Izra, 44.
21 7/Anf, 5-9; 16/Nahl, 12
22 16/Nahl, 73; 23/Mu’mînîn, 12-14 etc
23 50/Har, 23; 62/Cîrma: 1; 114/Nisa, 2
24 7/A’raf, 54; 10/Yunus, 3; 40/Mu’mînîn, 15
25 17/Izra, 111; 25/Furqan, 2
26 51/Żarîya, 38
27 Cf. Mevlâni (1986, I/16)
28 Cf. İs'as (1975: 70)
29 7/Izra, 70.
30 2/Bakârah, 185
31 -Reminder-:'tezîk' is mentioned in these verses 7/A’raf, 3; 44/Duha, 17; 29/Tâha, 3; 69/Hakîme, 48; 73/Mu’mînîn, 19; 76/Yunus, 29
32 6/İnâm, 76-79.
33 2/Bakârah, 237; 4/Nisa, 45; 22/Hace, 38
34 16/Nahl, 30, 97
35 5/Enâl, 29.
36 2/Bakârah, 195; 3/All İmran 76, 134, 146, 148 and 159; 5/Mâide 13, 93; 9/Tavbe, 7, 108; 60/Muntahîbe, 8
37 39/Zûn, 15
References


MUALLA SÜÇÜK

6  How Can Islamic Pedagogy Promote an Understanding of ‘Individualized Religion’?

Introduction

Religions, including Islam, understandably endorse unalterable basic theological principles and beliefs. However, the believers of any religion also carry a religious culture, which includes social and historical contexts. Religion and culture are therefore inevitably interrelated. In particular, the view that arises from the fundamental sources of Islam and the common understanding formed within history calls for a religion that is present in all spheres of social life. In our day, however, what belongs to the religious domain and what may be left to the individual are matters of controversy. Islamic pedagogy faces the tension between preserving religious identity, on the one hand, and responding to the demands of modernity, on the other. Claims over the inflexibility and universality of Islam with regard to its contextual, indigenous, and ephemeral dimensions confront educators as challenges that must be dealt with in Islamic pedagogy. Will these challenges continue to suppress religious education, or will the field be able to open up new thinking within contemporary pedagogy?

In the process of answering this central question I will explore the relationship between Rabb-abd (God-human being), as well as the Islam-sharia (Islam-Islamic law) relationship. I shall introduce the Qur’anic term hilman (Wisdom) as a working element of individualized religion. I also offer the messages of the Qur’anic Meccan verses for shaping the content of religious education.

I hope this chapter will contribute to an understanding of Islam not only as a matter of communal affiliation but also as an aspect of individual choice.
The contribution of RE to the life journey with regard to individualized religion

What I mean by individualized religion is the unique relationship between the individual and Allah (Abd and Rabb) I also mean that individuals have the freedom and responsibility to contemplate and to argue over religious matters, and to choose any religious interpretation from their religious tradition. Here, individuals do not see themselves as passive recipients of the past; rather, they put themselves in charge of questioning and improving the intellectual legacy of the past. An individualistic perception of religion requires a form of education that leads towards a reason-based faith for which individuals are responsible for their choices.

Towards the end of the 1990s, I was preparing an article dealing with the question whether religious education can be a libertarian process. I formulated my expectations of religious education as follows:

Religious education should be allowed to be an intellectual education. It must teach the individual how to use his/her mind in order to live a humane life. Religious education is not indoctrination; it must not be seen only as catechetical knowledge. It must also be interested in the personal development of the individual. Critical thinking, discovering the meaning of life, making decisions, solving problems, and self-expression must be among the aims and content of religious education. Religious education must put a person into such contact with our holy sources (the Qur'an and Sunnah) that the person must be able to understand both what God and the Prophet said in history, and what these words mean in the present.

A young person whom I interviewed objected. He found my expectations extremely theoretical, even impossible. 'If you can't organize your own life, if you don't have power over your fate, what freedom are you talking about?' He added:

Let me, first, tell you something. I have never felt any sympathy for religion and religious matters. I yearned in my heart for a life that is entirely contrary to the religious one: that is, a free life in which no power will have control over me. But fate always kept me in this environment.
I never knew my father. He died when I was only one year old. My mother suffered serious difficulties and was mistreated by her relatives. She saw religion as a way to get rid of her problems, and promised God and herself that she would educate me in line with the rules of religious life. I am exactly 33 years old. That is why I am attached to God who from that day forth has had control over all my behaviour.

But now I resent living in accordance with religion. As I think of all that has happened to me, I began to suspect the wisdom of God and his justice (Selçuk, 1998, 81)

As a teacher, my first impression from these statements was that it was of great importance to bring theology and educational theory into dialogue.

Such statements reflect a widespread understanding among young people. Despite the risk of generalization, I would like to make the following claim. The young hold two understandings of belief, almost side by side: one of them they articulate but cannot put into practice, the other is what they put into practice but of which they have no knowledge (practice without theory)

Empirical study is helpful in clarifying the nature of these understandings. In a study examining the role of belief about ‘freedom of choice’ on the behaviour of high school students, it has been found that most of the students held a fatalistic understanding with a Jabri/fatalistic inclination, which may be described as classical (Jabriyya refers to a school of thought according to which acts of human beings in fact belong to God. As they are determined by God, human beings have no choice other than to engage in these acts.) Others, however, held to a Mutazilite view, which brings free will to the fore, and rejects ideas of the ‘appointment’ and ‘determination’ of one’s behaviour. (According to the Mutazila, the individual is the creator of his/her own acts and is completely free in doing them. Unless the individual is free, he/she could not be held responsible for his/her acts. Yet God is just and merciful towards his servants.) However, when the dimensions of their belief in and understanding of fate are considered, there appears to be no harmony, cohesion, and consistency between the participants’ understanding of fate and their attitudes towards fate and related behaviour (Özarslan, 1994, 100). For example, most of the participants who held that people’s acts and behaviours are determined by God also said that the calamities and troubles that happened to people stemmed from their
own mistakes. These same participants also believed that people should be free in choosing their partners; whereas those participants who held a contrary understanding reported that in times of trouble they recalled fate and blamed it for what was happening to them.

In a questionnaire study conducted in 2004, similar problems were found. The researcher stated that education could not find a solution between the fabri/fatalistic understanding received from the cultural environment and the Mutazilite one which appears in the academic milieu. In this context, the researcher draws attention to the following questions raised by the participants:

Why am I not rich? Why am I not a single child? What do the concepts of divine decree (qadd) and fate (qadar) mean? What does it mean to believe in divine decree and fate? If God knows everything, why are we being tested? Is it God who causes earthquakes, if so, why? Does fate restrict our freedom? Can fate be changed? Is there any relation between events in nature and religion, and between increasing immorality and earthquakes? Does fate depend on man, or does God determine it? Who really determines our fate? What is the crime of a child born disabled? Why did God create evils, disasters and diseases? Why does not God prevent everybody with equal conditions? Why do people suffer? If God helps the good, why are the good always oppressed? Why was I born from this particular mother and father without my will? If I had been born in America, I would be a Christian; what crime did they commit that they are damned? (A1a, 2004, 174)

So features of a strong belief in fate have not been consistently observed among young people. Rather, uncertainty, confusion, and distortion are all present, together with a lack of clarity.

We cannot say that the beliefs of adolescents and young adults have any strong base. Hence we cannot talk about their belief-action consistency; their knowledge has developed from childhood onwards largely through imitations and suggestions by the parents. Young people's beliefs are mostly characterized by uncertainty and error. And yet, are there not many books about religion? Are students not being taught during their religious education courses? Are the publications of theologians, who choose religion as their profession, and the attempts of the university faculties of divinity being ignored? Sermons are regularly delivered in our mosques; the number of journals is increasing day by day; many organized religious
panels and lectures exist. Are these all ignored? Do not the TV and radio broadcasts on religion and morals, and newspaper columns assigned to religious matters and their supplements in Ramadan, provide adequate information in this area?

These various channels meet certain needs, of course. But we are talking about the lack of provision that impacts on the learner’s life, explains, and interprets it; and which thus connects us with the past and allows us to reach out towards the future. The question facing us is the future of religious education itself, and with it the future of the individual.

The complexity of content knowledge in religious education: the religion-sharia relation

While one of the two main sources of Islam is the Holy Qur'an, the other is the Sunnah that comprises the sayings and acts of Prophet Muhammad. In Muslim societies many areas of life are shaped in the light of these two sources. As we learn from the Qur'an and Sunnah, Islam consists of believing in God, worshipping God, and moral principles. Faith, worship, and morals, as the three fundamental elements, constitute the principal values of Islam – the unchangeables that are beyond the ages. Islam also provides judgements organizing interpersonal relations. These judgements are related to our human environment and consist of social, political, cultural, economic, and historic factors, and include law.

The principles of Islam concerning faith, worship, and morals have not been much discussed, since they contain universal values. However, in the case of sharia, which is also called Islamic jurisprudence and *muamalât*, different considerations have been proposed. Treating these judgements as unchangeable despite the changing nature of life leads to theoretical and

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1 I first discussed this complexity in Selçuk (2007). Some paragraphs here are from this paper.
practical difficulties. Questions concerning the unchangeable, universal
dimensions of Islam, and its judgements in relation to history, place, and
time confront us as important challenges to religious education. Will these
challenges continue to constrain religious education, or will the field be
open to new ideas?

In general, there are three understandings regarding the universal and
historical message of Islam:

- a literal understanding;
- an interpretative understanding;
- a progressive understanding

On a literal understanding, the legal arrangements of Islam about social
life are regarded as unchangeable and beyond history; hence life must be
adapted to them. All judgements found within sharia regarding marriage,
divorce, bequests, trading, shopping, military matters, politics, etc., are
included in the nature of religion. This understanding defends the claim
that judgements of sharia must be carried out in every time and every place.
Yet they are absolute and universal, not time bound. This understanding
brings form rather than principle and goals to the fore. It does not give way
to common approval and public participation. Thus it has an oppressive,
dogmatic, and authoritarian nature.

The interpretative understanding also holds that the judgements of
sharia constitute the unchangeable and constant values of religion. However,
as it is an order of religion that no authority has a right to impose any
judgement to disturb the considerations of public interest (maslahah),
this approach holds that the sharia can be interpreted. From time to time
it qualifies the sharia, saying that practice should depend on the develop-
ment and progress of society. Thus the Qur'an 'abolished' slavery when the
source of slavery dried up. Comments such as 'Islam comes to an agreement
with democracy,' 'Islam is in harmony with secularism,' and 'Monogamy is
essential in Islam' all stem from attempts to adapt Islam to the age.

According to the progressive understanding, such arrangements are not
included in the essence and nature of religion, but are the model solutions
offered in line with the main principles and aims of religion in a certain
Islam and society. They change and develop with the growing and changing circumstances of the age; that is, they take shape or are cancelled. Islam's statements on political, military, and legal matters are related to Muslims' concrete historical needs. In different cultural milieus, it is possible to rearrange these statements in accordance with the scientific and intellectual experience of human society. This viewpoint emphasizes that from the very beginning such terms as reason (ahl) and science (ilm) became the dominant terms in the religion-life relationship in Islam.

A Turkish professor of theology comments on locally-bounded legislation in the Qur'an as follows:

Apart from the examples I gave so far, there are many examples in the Qur'an concerning the legal situation of society; acceptance of these seems almost impossible in developed countries. For example, you cannot expect the modern woman with higher education to be regarded as an eye witness who only carries half the weight of her uneducated brother just because it has been stated to be so in the Qur'an. For example, you cannot persuade a Muslim woman who became a doctor, engineer, or manager of a firm to accept the verse in the Qur'an that gives daughters a half share compared with that of their brothers. If asked whether there is any revolt on behalf of justice against the Qur'an, we have to say No! While keeping the Qur'an's local values as expressed fourteen centuries ago as historical facts, we must be able to validate its universal principles. (Hatiboğlu, 2004, 12, my translation)

The same scholar addresses the researchers of Islam as follows: 'Without some objective consideration of the sources of Islamic culture over the centuries, and without distinguishing the changeable from the unchangeable, to speak definitely on behalf of Islam is unscholarly behavior' (Hatiboğlu, 1986, 24).

Although it seems difficult for Islamic scholars to adopt the view stated above, there are many attempts in Turkey to realize this goal. Scholars in the faculty where I work approach historical experience through a critical method, trying to distinguish the historical from the universal, and bringing into the light the libertarian approach that for many reasons has remained obscured in history. The main motivation for these studies is as follows: Faith, worship, and moral principles are unchangeable and binding as al-Islam. But the sharia as a solution to the problems caused by
social change is historical. The sharia is renewable, changeable, and abol-
ishable. We must distinguish ‘the fact of religion’ from ‘thinking about
the fact of religion.’ Thus, it is the thought that must be explained and
reinterpreted in the face of new circumstances, not the main principles of
religion. As each generation has its own problems, each generation must
solve these problems in accordance with the concepts of their own time,
their own forms of thinking, and the practical problems they meet. It is
only possible by way of such an attempt to show that Islam will be able to
live across the ages.

However, the information produced in academic circles is not yet
sufficient to constitute the theological bases of religious education, nor
to develop reflection on religious education in the context of individual
and social facts of a democratic society. It is an open question how much
progress in terms of individualized religion these new theological ideas
has really produced.

From tension to opportunity: a vision

I suggest here some opportunities in religious education, inspired by the
hadith of the Prophet Muhammad: ‘Wisdom (hikmah) is the lost prop-
erty of the believer; he is the most rightful person to take it wherever he
finds it.”

The concept of hikmah has a very important place in Islamic tradition.
The search for hikmah is strongly commended by the Prophet through any
decent means possible. Words derivative of the root b-k-m are mentioned
210 times in the Qur’an, in both predicative and substantive forms. The
primary meaning of the root b-k-m is ‘to restrain’ in English. The restraint
in question could be from injustice (zulm), ignorance (jabr), or foolishness
(safab). Accordingly, hikmah can be defined as justice (adl), knowledge

2 In this context ‘be’ is interpreted as including ‘she’.
(ilm), or forbearance (hilah), respectively. In this context, everything that prevents a person from acting in a corrupt manner, or from committing a blameworthy deed, can be described by the verbs derived from the root h-k-m. Hikmah, therefore, has epistemological as well as practical components (Yaman, 2008, 3-4). In other words, it is a combination of knowledge and action.

The Qur'an employs the term hikmah in passages where it expounds the place of the individual in the cosmos, the aim of creation, and the core of the prophets' message; and gives various warnings about the past and future of humankind, and the positive and negative results of individual preferences. According to the Qur'an, God is the ultimate possessor of hikmah. He is called al-Hakim, one of the Most Beautiful Names of God (al-asma' al-husna). The Qur'an states that God has given hikmah to the prophets in general:

God took a pledge from the prophets, saying, 'If, after I have bestowed Scripture and wisdom upon you, a messenger comes confirming what you have been given, you must believe in him and support him. Do you affirm this and accept My pledge as binding on you?' They said, 'We do.' He said, 'Then bear witness and I too will bear witness.' (Al-Inzir 3:81)

The Qur'an mentions the name of prophets such as David, Jesus, and Muhammad as those who are given hikmah:

ABRAHAM: Do they enquire (other) people for the bounty God has granted them? We gave the descendants of Abraham the scripture and wisdom. "(Nisa:4:14)

DAVID: ‘...and God gave him (David) sovereignty and wisdom and taught him what He pleased!" (Bukara 2:251) "We strengthened his kingdom; We gave him wisdom and a decisive way of speaking" (Sad:38:23)

JESUS: 'He will teach them (Jesus) the Scripture and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel! (Al-Inzir 3:48). 'Then God will say 'Jesus, son of Mary! Remember my favour to you and to your mother: How I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit, so that you spoke to people in your infancy and as a grown man: How I taught you the scripture and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel'" (Maide 5:110).

"When Jesus came with clear signs he said, 'I have brought you wisdom: I have come to clear up some of your differences for you. Be mindful of God and obey me'" (Zukhruf 43:63).
MUHAMMAD: Just as We have sent among you a messenger of your own to recite Our revelations to you, purify you and teach you the Scripture, wisdom, and (other) things you did not know' (Baqara 2:155) ‘God has been truly gracious to the believers in sending them a Messenger from among their own, to recite His revelations to them, to make them grow in purity, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom – before that they were clearly astray' (Al-Imran 3:160)

Hikmah is the foundation of moral behaviour, and the purpose and the meaning of life. The Qur’an gives Luqman as an example of one who internalized hikmah in this sense: ‘We endowed Luqman with wisdom; Be thankful to God: whoever gives thanks benefits his own soul, and as for those who are thankless – God is self-sufficient, worthy of all praise’ (Luqman 31:12).

In the Qur’an, the term hikmah has a close affiliation with the concepts of knowledge, gnosis, intellect, heart, and comprehension. Hikmah does not contain only intellectual cognizance, however; it also consists of ‘being’ and ‘producing value’. According to Islamic scholars, hikmah is the most prestigious success that a human being can obtain, independently of any kind of cultural and religious background. It goes beyond conceptual boundaries, tracing a direction of intellectual and ethical progress, and opening a way for an empathetic relation with the cosmos. It is to do the best word and deed, to be aware of what should happen and to grasp reality with science and reason. In their view hikmah is not a matter of rational ‘knowing’ only, but also of existential ‘being’ (Özutürk, 1991, 182–183; Tan, 2000, 250).

Hikmah has not been confined to Islam: it is the common name of all the creative-awareness powers in all the divine books. The Qur’an presents this view: ‘He will teach him the Book, the hikmah, the Torah and the Gospel’ (Al-Imran 3:48; Maida, 5:110).

To pronounce on the principles of religious education based on hikmah, or to defend them adequately, would exceed the limits of this chapter. What I want to do here is to introduce hikmah as a theological basis for individualized religion. This basis comprises knowledge, good deeds, and reason-based understanding.

What I am talking about is the possibility of an approach to the question of how I should live with my knowledge, in the learning which religious education provides, in order to feed my recognition of the whole
self, of creativity, and of emotional and mental maturity. This is a matter of interpretation and a matter of theological perception.

Islamic pedagogy needs a theological framework for the relationship between the individual and Allah, the relationship between the individual and the substances in the cosmos, and rights and freedoms. I will put forward here a proposal based on the Qur'an for teachers of religious education. This is obviously not a solution to the challenge brought about by an individualistic perception of religion. However, my aim is to deepen the perception of this individualistic religious conception.

I presume that the process of learning that portrays the dimensions of creed, worship, and morality in Islam might be actualized in the light of the Qur'an's Meccan verses. Through my proposal, I believe not only that religious education might benefit most by this means from the modalities of education, but it will also produce a positive contribution to the whole development of students and bring forward the essence of religion.

The call of Muhammad's egalitarian and universal original religion, which put the taubah creed in the centre, appeared as a form of religion during the Meccan period, concerned only with the creed, worship, and morality. As a matter of fact, studies on the Qur'an's Meccan chapters recognize that the verses revealed at that period mostly emphasized the topics of the existence and unity of Allah, resurrection, the hereafter, judgement, creed, and doing useful deeds for humanity. In the Meccan verses persistent emphasis was placed on the creed and morality, and illustrations of ghayb, paradise, and hell appear very often. Fables also have a significant place in the Meccan verses.

Within the framework of such a call, religious and moral responsibility has been primarily placed upon the individual, who has already been addressed as the target group as 'O human beings!' In this period the strongest attribution is 'pious-ones, the mindful, the righteous' (al-muttaqin): 'It is the one who brings the truth and the one who accepts it as true who are mindful of God' (Zâmet 39:33) 'The righteous will live securely among gardens and rivers' (Kâmer 54:54). 'But would We treat those who believe and do good deeds and those who spread corruption on earth as equal? Would We treat those who are aware of God and those who recklessly break all bounds in the same way' (Sad 38:28).
The term 'pious-ones' was used for those who have an awareness of responsibility. It deserves comprehensive study from the standpoint of religious education.

My own studies on the Qur'anic Meccan verses, which constitute sixty to seventy per cent of the Qur'an, allows me to say that these verses provide the theological framework for religious education in Islam as a religion of conscience based on individualistic choice and responsibility.

In the dichotomy of individual-society while the priority had been with the individual, in the Madinan period the priority shifted to society. When we look at the Madanise verses, alongside the principles of creed and morality, we find expressions dealing with social order and politics. These verses handle concrete social topics.

The bewilderment of Islamic pedagogy results from the clash between the traditional approach and the needs of modern society; it faces considerable difficulties in providing a balance in the relationships among the triad of religion-individual-society. Hesitations and contradictions are both to be found among religious educators with regard to deciding what the limits of Islam should be in the lives of both individuals and society.

My thesis is that a pedagogy based on a theological conception which has been shaped by the principles of creed, worship, and morality in Islam, will provide a strong epistemological framework for individualized religion.5

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5 The translations of the Qur'anic verses are from Abdel Haleem, 2003.
Islamic Pedagogy and Understanding 'Individualized Religion'


KNOWING SELF AND OTHERS: A WORLDVIEW MODEL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN TURKEY

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Abstract

Turkish religious education's focus on religion from a social science and prescriptive Islamic perspective faces challenges today. This article presents a new model and approach that assists students in exploring their beliefs and values, those of others, and their Islamic heritage from an interdisciplinary worldview perspective.

Religious education has been problematic in the Turkish educational system ever since it became obligatory by the 1982 Constitution. Since its inception, many have debated its appropriateness for students of various religious and secular backgrounds. In 2000, the Ministry of National Education sought to end that debate by officially stipulating the nature and content of religious education.

The revised program stipulated that religious education was to be content oriented and non-confessional, resist indoctrinating students with any particular understanding of Islam and respond to issues of the day by making use of basic Islamic sources and most particularly the Quran (M.E.B. 2003). It was academic in nature and shaped by a collaboration of administrators, faculty members, teachers, families, and students. Theological and pedagogical experts considered the program an advance (Tosun 2003).

CHALLENGES

In spite of the advances, the new program became problematic in its implementation. Some saw disharmony between Islam and the principles described in the program. Some wondered whether it was the best approach to assist students in responding to the challenges of a
changing world. Some recognized potential tensions between personal meanings and values and the authoritative code of the culture. Others feared that students would learn the historical traditions of Islam but not develop their own Islamic faith and beliefs to assist them in coping with the larger world. Yet others questioned the possibility in being objective in teaching different versions of Islam or even other faiths.

Researchers expended much effort to assist both teachers and students in transforming the program's principles into concrete action to make it work. Some looked to the social sciences for theories best suited to the task. In large part it resulted in religious education embedding itself in an integration of social science theories regarding effective learning, developmental issues, and social behavior. In effect, religious education funneled Islamic content into a social science framework (Kurultay 2005).

Some educators linked traditional religion to new educational methods. They considered teaching the principal task of religious education and gave primacy to developing new teaching methods. Others felt it inappropriate to offer children miniature versions of adult religious understandings and advocated that instruction should assist students in making sense of their own religious beliefs. Yet others sought to instill virtue into the young by imposing moral truth or teaching moral values.

Clearly, religious educators in Turkey faced numerous challenges. A dominant theme emerging from many of these was the desire to encourage students to construct religious knowledge by means of a variety of activities. These activities, many believed, would assist students to discover their own religious beliefs and values as they engage many of life's challenges. Obvious to most was that teachers incorporated both social science and pedagogical theories and methods into religious education.

While all of this yielded important insight into teaching and learning, it sidestepped a more important issue: can religious education become a quest for truth? Searching for truth is an important aspect of the learning process; it seeks a systematic understanding of how things or ideas fit together. It undergirds the academic pursuit. It assists the process of thinking as it engages students in observation, reflection, questioning, and listening, all with academic rigor. It elicits meaningful understandings of principles and basic convictions that serve as general guides to behavior and in discerning between right and wrong. It teaches students the capacity to understand that values
embed themselves in belief systems. It enables them to see how people adopt both beliefs and values: how people come to believe what they do. It combines pedagogical and theological endeavors. Lastly, it reveals that religious education needs to undergo a major change; it requires new knowledge in a new form.

The challenge is not one of appropriating the best educational methods or implementing the best social science theory. The issue is more fundamental and reveals that the current system falls short and requires new approaches.

NEW APPROACHES

A Need for Meaningful Learning

The current system encourages students to learn numerous facts (knowing what) but makes little connection between the plethora of information that confronts them. Information presented remained largely unrelated to the basic concepts of a belief system (knowing how). Facts become disconnected pieces of information when they lack systematic connections. They lose the ability to influence the lives of students outside the classroom. For learning to be effective, students require a framework to realize that how we know is at least as important as what we know. Education is more than the passing of information; it is to assist students to create meaning (Palmer & Zajone 2010; Parks 2011).

Religious education needs to establish meaningful connections between content and the lives of students. Rather than prescribe answers or present information for memorization, it needs to challenge students how to think. Good teaching develops students’ ability to derive and articulate meanings from their own experiences. Meaningful learning raises for students difficult questions: How do we know what we know? Where do beliefs come from? Do beliefs change over time? Do our beliefs limit us? How can our beliefs enliven us? How do we know when something is true? What does it mean to participate in community?

Coping with Complex Human Problems

All too many Muslims today tend to see things in smaller details. They have difficulty seeing the larger picture—seeing the world
and life as a whole. They look exclusively to Islam for solutions to problems they face. Few access expertise outside Islamic theology, in areas such as science, culture, literature, art, politics, technology, and the economy. Issues such as democracy, the role of women in Islam, human rights, genetic research, interfaith marriage, abortion, homosexuality, suicide, and euthanasia all pertain to Islam to be sure. Nevertheless, the larger secular, democratic and modern Turkish society and culture also struggle with these, often with views contrary to that of Islam. Religious education teachers find it difficult to cope with the “hidden curricula” imposed by a secular society. They feel the burden of having to solve numerous problems with which society struggles. Furthermore, a disconnect surfaces between teachers and students. While both look for prescribed answers from Islam, it is the nonverbal judgments expressed by teachers that create difficulty for the students.

Many of the current challenges to religious education have their roots in the history of ilmihal-centered learning. This way of learning sees Islam as a body of truth and a way of life passed down from one generation to the next through instruction and study. Adherents discuss religious issues by referring to the body of knowledge of earlier great scholars of the past whom they assume have pronounced on all the issues. Their pronouncements become authoritative and students are expected to learn this prescribed knowledge without question (Kaymakcan 2008).

The ilmihal approach seeks to enlist the learner in discerning right and wrong. Formalistic ethics or juridical ethics characterize this approach. Principles, duties, justice, injustice, judgments, and justifications come to define moral issues. Yet, although instructors use terms such as convictions, meanings, responsibility, vision, and ways of being, students tend to search for prescribed answers. The following scenario bears this out:

My student rushed to me while I was leaving the class and asked me: “teacher I want to be a more religious person could you please tell me what I ought to do?” I stopped and looked at her and said “Okay but first we have to sort out what you mean by being a more religious person.” “How do you feel already and what are you looking for?” The student gazed at me and said in a disappointed voice “I see you are not going to help me. What I wanted from you was some simple hints!”

This dialogue speaks to the discrepancy between content and concerns of students. Most questions raised by students focus on what they are
expected to do rather than on a more primary notion of what it means to be Muslim, the implications of Tawhid (oneness of Allah) in life, or the meaning of La ilaha illa Allah (there is no god but Allah). There is disconnect between curriculum content and how beliefs permeate the daily life of a Muslim in a global age.

Current religious education inundates students with doctrines and creedal statements but fails to assist them in what to do with them. Content becomes meaningful only when linked to experiences with others, relationships, and life's circumstances and challenges. Being Muslim is all about living out daily relationships with family members, friends, and colleagues. Prescribed answers or ready-made solutions from past traditions are of little assistance; each person has his/her own unique journey. According to Felix Körner (2005, 205), “the art of dealing with traditions, should not be restricted to bringing certain content from past to present. Studying tradition should rather be seen as the attempt to understand ourselves and everything else, including our destination, in a new light again and again.”

Reshaping the questions that instructors and students direct to the traditions can increase understanding and assist in shaping the theological re-expression of Islamic creeds.

**A Scholarly View of Quranic Verses**

The current religious education program stipulates the use of Quranic verses for a proper understanding of Islam. Instructors generally fail, however, in grounding them on a sound pedagogical basis. This is apparent by the following statement from a teacher: “I believe that Quranic verses are sources of truth but they are only used selectively to furnish rational bases for authors’ preferences and this is the case in our text books!” This teacher voices a concern: “here are my own potentials and my own restrictions” when it comes to Quranic education. Her quest for new ways to engage students more deeply with the text becomes instructive.

Current Quranic education in Turkey includes three basic approaches. One, subjects are selected based on the support they receive from Quranic verses. Two, conclusions drawn stem from evaluations of verses related to the subjects. Three, students memorize groups of verses (Selçuk 2012a, 16). This approach to religious education, and especially the study of the Qur’an, cannot hope to meet the expectations of a curriculum seeking to assist students in responding to complex life situations. It may generate an appreciation of Quranic
values, which is important for teaching Islam, but it does not progress to "learning from Islam." It ignores a general principle of education: assisting students in making informed and responsible choices entails grounding their faith in a proper understanding of Islam.

Students learn little from an approach that is largely prescriptive and requires only the memorizing of the texts. Granted, students may be free to speak but their questions and concerns will center almost exclusively on the content. Any approach that fails to incorporate opportunities for students to reflect on the content remains incomplete and inadequate.

Theological Direction

There are many well-intentioned attempts to introduce active learning, visual activities, multiple intelligence theories, concept mapping, and constructivist approaches into the teaching and learning environment in religious education. Focus centers largely, however, on reshaping the act of teaching without altering content. Rarely considered is the underlying theology of education, which refers not simply to the content of education. Theology is a means by which one gains identity, interprets life, and constructs a worldview. Theology not only gives a historical description of religion but also offers an explanation: an account and experience of a relationship between God, human beings, and the world.

Different theological voices lead to different educational forms and different interpretations of religion. Depending on the nature of theological understanding, the dialogue established with religious content is either in a productive or submissive form (Selçuk 2009). Teaching methods ultimately link to theological convictions. In our teaching, we reflect, directly or indirectly, our theological assumptions, even as we implement common teaching methods and general educational objectives. Concretely this means focusing on both developing new techniques and searching for new theological perspectives, in seeking a Muslim theology that sheds light on the questions and lives of the students.

Integrally connected to developing a new approach to religious education is the recognition that we live in a world characterized by religious and cultural diversity. Schools have a responsibility to assist students in developing attitudes that contribute to a culture of peace, conflict resolution, human rights, and freedom of religion and
thought, all essential to a modern, democratic, and secular state. Religious education must contribute to religious and cultural diversity by encouraging dialogue and mutual understanding without defense of one particular faith, fear of discrimination, or exclusion of others. Crucial then is devising a pedagogical method that encourages students to look at reality through the eyes of others instead of having them process everything through only one perspective. It allows them the opportunity to construct their own worldview.

A new approach that explores with students new knowledge in a new form is a pressing need in religious education. Such an approach ought to incorporate the following six proposals:

1. Assist students to view the Islamic heritage and the world as a meaningful whole rather than as isolated and unrelated pieces of information.
2. Validate the importance of asking basic questions such as what it means to be human as well as what it means to be Muslim.
3. Teach students how to internalize the information they have about Islam into new frameworks of meaning (that will help them with the integration of social science theories and theology).
4. Impress on students that everyone has a worldview.
5. Assist students to increase knowledge of self and others.
6. Assist students to understand the nature of their own beliefs and become more aware of others so that true dialogue can ensue.

A new model for religious education that incorporates these proposals might be a worldview model. This model has the primary goal of assisting students to explore their worldview as they increase their knowledge of self and others. Such a model would introduce students to a framework that would encourage them to develop a sense of who they are and how they relate to the world. That framework would also assist Muslim students in mapping their own Islamic worldview. It would encompass new knowledge in a new form.

**A WORLDVIEWS APPROACH: NEW KNOWLEDGE IN A NEW FORM**

Mapping a worldview is not an easy task. Describing a particular worldview, whether one's own or that of another, is an even greater
task. Wide diversity exists within each worldview as it does across
worldviews. Mapping a worldview also comes with risk of being
perceived as definitive or prescriptive. Yet heuristically it serves to il-
minate and demarcate particular beliefs, values, principles, and at times
even behaviors. It may also be a helpful pursuit in a post-modern or
even post-sectarian era filled with religious and secular beliefs of various
kinds that hold sway today in the public realm.

There are a number of frameworks or models that assist in enhanc-
ing our understanding of worldviews. Tillich (1957) and others focused
on worldviews as responses to life’s larger concerns or questions that
in turn become the foundation for beliefs and actions (Valk 2010; Valk
2008; Eagleton 2007; Sire 2004; Naugle 2002; Olthuis 1985). McKen-
zie developed a model that incorporates questions of ultimate meaning
but adds to these penultimate concerns that “shape the currents of
ordinary life” and immediate personal concerns which arise from “the
context of life goals, life activities, and interpersonal relationships”
helpful in identifying and describing aspects and rituals common to
both religious and secular worldviews. Wright (1992) and others fo-
cus on stories or narratives that define human reality, are often ex-
pressed in powerful symbols, and come to include ways of being in the
world.

Figure 1 attempts to give sufficient breadth, depth and distinc-
tiveness to any particular worldview as one among others that make up
the rich diversity of beliefs and values we see in our plural societies
today.

MAPPING AN ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW

Mapping an Islamic worldview using the above worldview frame-
work can assist students in delineating certain of its parameters but in
a manner that resists oversimplification, reductionism, or harmoniz-
ing it with other worldviews (Prothero 2007). It is not intended to be
definitive, exhaustive, or prescriptive, yet comparatively and heuristi-
cally it is valuable in characterizing the fundamental beliefs of Islam.
Mapping that worldview is not primarily through grounding it in au-
thoritative scriptures, theological tunes, or philosophical treatises, al-
though it relies heavily on them. Rather, it comes more so from critical
reflection, comparisons, and even some audacious assertions (Selçuk
2012b).
FIGURE 1. Worldview framework
Due to space constraints, it will be possible to focus only on the "ultimate/existential questions" framework in mapping an Islamic worldview, and at this point only brief responses can be given to each of the questions. Yet, responses can become as refined, elaborate, in depth, and expansive as students wish to give them. Figure 2 shows some broad parameters of an Islamic worldview, offered up for dialogue and discussion, and one that serves as an alternative to the Islamic fundamentalist often represented by the secular media.

CONCLUSION

The above allows some conclusions to be drawn. First, the Islamic worldview mapped by this framework, used here to explore some Islamic beliefs and values pertaining to the ultimate/existential questions, is not intended to be exhaustive, nor definitive. The beliefs and values are rooted in an understanding of Islam that finds support in its theological, philosophical, and historical traditions yet are dynamic in light of changing contexts and circumstances. In turn, they may serve as a mooring and orientation for a defined group of individuals.
Two, the worldview framework is inclusive of religious and secular worldviews and is interdisciplinary in nature. As such it increases critical thinking of one’s own beliefs, values, and principles, all of which is crucial for a human journey of understanding. It also serves as a means of comparison with other beliefs and values and as such an analysis and evaluation leading to enhanced understanding and articulation of one’s own.

Three, this approach to mapping a worldview invites individuals and groups of individuals to determine for themselves their particular beliefs and values, which may adhere to yet deviate from views prescribed by any particular institution. It does not tell students what they should believe or value, but challenges them to reflect on and articulate what they believe and value based on traditions with which they may identify. It serves as a pedagogical tool that challenges individuals or groups of individuals to take an active role in coming to grips with their beliefs and values. It also makes the process dynamic for understanding and articulating one’s beliefs and values in constantly changing contexts and circumstances.

Fourth, and finally, this dynamic process challenges all persons to a continuous process of understanding, reflection and articulation. It resists ossifying beliefs and values. It opens up possibilities for dialogue and discussion. It increases understanding of self and others. A modern, secular, and democratic state may well be assisted by this process. It should seek not to eliminate religious worldviews only to fall victim to unwittingly embracing another worldview. Rather, it should seek to create a public square that enables rich dialogue to occur between and among members embracing various worldviews, even if a majority embraces a particular worldview (Butler, Habermas, and Taylor 2011; Valk 2009; Habermas 2006; Audi and Wolterstorff 1997). A renewed or reformed (tajdid) Islam would work to that end because it firmly believes that individuals must be free to determine their own beliefs and values. Coercion has no place in Islam as it has no place in Christianity, or in humanism.

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15 The Contribution of Religious Education to Democratic Culture Challenges and Opportunities

Mualla Selçuk

INTRODUCTION

Among the aims of school education are strengthening democratic culture, improving social harmony, and enriching the experiences of living together. Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the primary goal of Turkish national education has been to ensure the active participation of young generations in society and to raise them as modern democratic citizens. The religious courses offered in schools have been designed with a view to contribute to this general goal.

The religious education program, which was revised in 2000, is based on two groups of principles. The first involves modern educational characteristics that individuals living in Turkey, a democratic, secular, and social state, should endorse. These principles are intended to enable individuals to participate in educational processes and transfer the skills acquired in these processes into life; to take account of scientific data; to acquire the habit of "learning to learn" and learning throughout life; and to investigate, interrogate, and assimilate democracy and tolerance.

Principles in the second group concern the scientific content and aims of the course of religious culture and ethics taught in primary and secondary schools. These principles highlight religion's role of casting meaning onto human life; helping human beings lead a humane life; raising awareness that religion is a phenomenon that entails codes for mutual understanding among people; regulating divine-human relations; and creating a culture of peace, integrating faith with reason, and encouraging respect and tolerance of cultures and traditions different from one's own.

Religious education has been having difficulties in achieving these goals. These difficulties are mostly related to the nature and scope of religion. Religious education has been concerned with issues such as how religion determines individual and communal life and what kinds of solutions it offers to the challenges of the modern age. Historical Islam calls for an understanding of religion that is present in all spheres of society. Yet in
modern times, what belongs to the religious domain and what is left to the individual is a matter of controversy.

These discussions have been conducted on political grounds in terms of the relations between religion and state, rather than on the basis of research. Typical arguments include the following: Islam is not compatible with democracy, as it features both a religion and a community; Islam does not need to change and is capable of resolving all the issues that may emerge in all times; Islam is in accord with democracy, as it addresses the individual's reason and the individual's freedom is central to Islam; Islam does not propose a government model but concentrates on the ethics of governance, and its ethical principles are universal.

Inconsistent discourses of these sorts affect religious education and generate conflict. It is not easy for teachers to cope with the "hidden curriculum" imposed by the community. They feel as if they have to solve the "religious problems" for which society has difficulty finding a solution. Moreover, teachers experience communication problems with their students. In the classroom, there are students with varying religious backgrounds, as well as students who come from environments with no religious sensibilities. Religious education is expected to enable all of these students to participate in society as individuals who are active, knowledgeable, responsible, and capable of thinking critically. When religious education is expected to make such a contribution, we need to reconsider questions of how to interpret religion and which aspects of religion to transfer into the classroom setting.

It is not sufficient to give religious knowledge to students in a descriptive fashion, that is, the approach of teaching about religion, in order to achieve the "learning" envisioned in the program. New views and thoughts on both religion and education must be developed by working out a new kind of dialogue between the theology of religion and the understanding of education. In order for religion to function as a source of values within the democratic education of students, religious education must be reconceptualized. In this chapter, I discuss the possibility of such a conceptualization from an Islamic perspective.

At first glance, the title of this chapter, "The Contribution of Religious Education to Democratic Culture," raises a series of questions in the mind of the reader. These questions probably begin with what, where, why, how, when, and whom. What is the nature of religious education? What are its aims? Which are its teaching materials? What is its program model? Who will provide this education? What kind of teachers? What kind of content? What kind of methodological approach? When and in the context of which social relationships should this education be given? And so on.

The main goal of this chapter is not, however, to engage these questions. Rather, although such questions will be referred to now and again, the main goal of this chapter is to attract attention to the need for renovation of the theological fundamentals of Islamic religious education. There is a need for new theological perspectives in Islamic religious education, a need that reveals
The Contribution of Religious Education to Democratic Culture

The contribution of religious education to democratic culture is not simply the content of education. Through education, it is the way one gains an identity, interprets life, and constructs a world view. Theology defines relationships between God and the human being. The quality of this relationship teaches the individual how to explain his or her surroundings.

Theology not only provides a historical description of religion; it also puts forth an explanation, together with all accounts and experiences, of the relationships between God, human beings, and the universe. For example, in my religious tradition, according to Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, theology explains that Islam is the reconciliation (musālama, the word for of all peaceful relationships) between God and human being (Akseki 1943).

Thus, it functions as a source for people in putting their lives in order, and it gives them an opportunity to establish better relationships with God and their environment. Different theologies lead to different educational forms and different interpretations of religion. Different theologies introduce us to different examples of a dialogue to be established with religious authorities; depending on the theological understanding, this dialogue may have either a critical/productive form or a submissive nature.

If a goal of religious education, in terms of its processes and conclusions, is to contribute to establishing a democratic culture, the development of rational and critical thinking is a priority. Therefore, in order to produce a theory of religious education that will conform to the needs of a democratic society, it is essential to reconsider the reason-transmission (aql-naqil) relationship in Islam.

This chapter deals with the need to reconsider our traditional ways of gaining knowledge and to rethink our system of reference to knowledge. While doing this, I will give some examples of difficulties encountered with the young, and I will make references to the way the matter has been dealt with in the past and is dealt with in the present. My presentation, for this reason, may be considered in a way a personal, practical, and academic journey.

When working to develop Islamic religious education in the mosque and school, in my discussions with the teachers, students, and staff working in religious institutions, I particularly focus on the sources and effects of their beliefs, values and prejudices, and religious knowledge and practices. In my view, the gap between religious understanding developed in academic culture and that of the school and mosque in this context is the most important problem we encounter in religious education. I regard theological renewal as the bridge that needs to be built between the academicians and practitioners.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND INDOCTRINATION:
A STRUGGLE FOR A "THINKING FAITH"

Toward the end of the 1990s, I was working on an article dealing with the question of whether "religious education can be a liberal process"
(Selçuk 1998: 73–87). I had formulated my expectations of religious education as follows:

Religious education must be able to be an education of the intellect, it must teach individual how to use his/her mind and to live a life commensurate with human dignity. Religious education is not indoctrination; it must not be seen only as knowledge of catechism. It must be interested in the personal development of the individual. Critical thinking, discovering the meaning of life, making decision, solving a problem, self-expression must be among the aims and content of religious education. Religious education must put a person into such a contact with our holy sources (the Quran and Sunnah) that the person must be able to understand both what God and the Prophet said in history and what these mean in present day.

A young person I interviewed objected to my expectations. He found them extremely theoretical and impossible. “If you can’t organize your own life, if you don’t have a power over your fate, what freedom are you talking about?” he asked. He continued as follows:

Let me, first, tell you something. I have never felt sympathy for religion and religious matters. I missed in my heart a life which is entirely contrary to the religious one, that is, a free life which no power will have a control over me. But irony of fate always kept me in this environment.

I never knew my father. He died when I was one year of age, my mother had suffered serious troubles and was mistreated by her relatives. She saw religion as a way to get rid of her problems and promised God and herself she would educate me in line with the rules of religious life. I am 23 years old. That is why I am attached to God who from that day forth has had control over all my behaviors.

Even now I resent living in accordance with religion and as I think of what happened to me, I began to suspect the wisdom of God and his justice. (Selçuk 1998: 81)

These statements reflect a widespread understanding among the young, who generally suppose that they have two alternatives: either you believe without questioning, block your mind, and bind yourself; or do not believe in any way, and thus you get free. However, in my opinion, these alternatives are misleading. The real question is what kind of faith do we want to have?

For some people, the state of being faithful to religion is neither a matter of embracing the transcendent being nor coming into being, but only a matter of submission and obedience. Tradition has almost institutionalized an excessive anxiety regarding whether any statement or action poses a threat for what is considered “divine.” Many parents probably do not have a clear idea of the processes through which their children develop their
own beliefs and behaviors. They would like their children to be aware of their cultural heritage and to adopt its religious values. In this manner, they are well intentioned. They believe that if children learn their religion and practice it, they become decent people and contribute to the formation of a good generation. They do not consider whether their children perform the commands and prohibitions of religion of their own will or because of their submission to authority.

In terms of religion, I reject any educational attempt to raise people who are not able to decide for themselves and to implement their own decisions. For those who cannot use their minds, neither religion nor freedom may have any meaning. Such people are not even regarded as responsible for their own actions; considering the matter in terms of Quranic terminology and perspective, free choice (ikhtiyār) is the fundamental principle in religion. The Holy Quran states this principle as “there is no compulsion in religion” (Bakara: 2/256).

Educators must teach how to choose instead of imposing what will be chosen. They must develop one’s abilities to think, to reason, and to choose. Any effort that takes into account the ability to think on one’s own and that develops this ability cannot be called indoctrination. Once a person learns to think independently, it is always possible for that person to think differently than the way he or she was taught.

Thinking about religion and developing a critical attitude toward it is a crucial matter, the fulfillment of which is difficult in the course of daily life. We can adopt a critical perspective toward our beliefs, even when based on religion. A critical attitude, above all, requires having a clear view of the origin of religious beliefs, the nature of religion, and the production processes of religious knowledge. This does not change according to whether we define religion in terms of a relationship with the sacred or in terms of worship, or in terms of its moral, social, and emotional dimensions.

Our present religious education practices are not enough to teach the young to think critically, perform appropriate analyses, and make valid decisions. One of the most important reasons for this is our prevalent religious understanding. At present, our widespread religious understanding has not been shaped by the basic principles of the Holy Quran and a dynamic approach to the divine-human encounter. My argument is as follows: The Quran’s dynamism flowing into our life is insufficient because the Quran is not presently an epistemological source of knowledge for the modern human being. Once the Quran loses its epistemological importance, it becomes impossible to distinguish the religious from the nonreligious, and an uncertainty prevails in religion. Because the Quran is approached only to exalt, a distance is created between life and the Quran, according to which religion consists mostly of legends and tales.

We have very limited research concerning the development of religious thinking in adolescence and young adulthood. At the risk of generalizing, I would like to make the following observation: The young simultaneously have
two conflicting understandings concerning belief. One of them is what they articulate but cannot be put into practice (theory without practice); the other is what they put into practice but do not understand (practice without theory).

An empirical study examining the role of belief in freedom of choice on high school students’ behaviors illustrates the nature of these understandings. It found that most of the students had what may be called a classical understanding of fate, which entails a *jabri*fatalistic inclination. *Jabri*yya refers to a school of thought according to which acts of human beings, in fact, belong to God; they are determined by God, and human beings have no choice other than to engage in these acts. Fewer students followed a *Muta*zilite view, which brings free will to the fore and rejects determination. According to the *Muta*zilis, the individual is the creator of her or his own acts and is completely free in doing them. Unless the individual is free, he or she could not be held responsible for his or her acts. How then could God be considered just and merciful toward His servants?

However, when the dimensions of belief of fate and the understandings of fate are considered, no consistency between the participants’ attitudes and behaviors, which must appear in connection with their understanding of fate, was found (Ozaslan 1994). For example, most of the participants who held that people’s acts and behaviors are determined by God also said that calamities and troubles that happened to people stemmed from their own mistakes. Yet these same participants believed that people should be free in choosing their partners.

A study conducted in 2004 found similar problems (Altaş 2004). The researcher stated that education could not find a resolution to the conflict between the *jabri*fatalistic understanding absorbed from the environment and the *Muta*zilite one that appears in the academic milieu. The researcher noted the following questions raised by the participants: Why am I not rich? Why am I not a single child? What do the concepts of divine decree (*qadar*) and fate (*qadar*) mean? What does it mean to believe in divine decree and fate? If God knows everything, why are we being tested? Is it God who causes earthquakes; if so, why? Does fate restrict our freedom? Can fate be changed? Is there any relation between events in nature and religion—between increasing immorality and an earthquake? Does fate depend on human beings, or does God determine it? Who really determines our fate? What is the crime of child born as disabled? Why did God create evil, disasters, and diseases? Why does not God provide everybody equal conditions? Why do people suffer? If God helps the good, why are the good always oppressed? Why was I born from so-and-so mother and father without my will? If I had been born in America, I would be a Christian; what crime did they commit that they are damned? Instead of a consistent, strong belief in fate among young people, the study revealed uncertainty, confusion, distortion, and lack of clarity.

We cannot say that adolescents’ and young adults’ beliefs have strong bases. Hence we cannot talk about consistency between belief and action,
The Contribution of Religious Education to Democratic Culture

in which actions develop largely through imitations or suggestions by the parents from childhood onward. Young people's beliefs are characterized mostly by uncertainty. Of course, one might ask: Aren't there many books speaking of religion? Aren't the students being taught the religious education course? Are the publications of theologians, who chose religion as their profession, and the attempts of divinity faculties being ignored? Sermons are being delivered in our mosques. Are the journals whose number is increasing day by day, organized religious panels, and lectures being ignored? Do not television and radio broadcasts on religion and morals, newspaper columns about religious matters, and their supplements in Ramadan provide information in this field? Of course, all of these attempts meet certain needs. But we are talking about meeting the need to explain life, interpret life, connect us with the past, and allow us to reach out for the future.

This means that theology requires a new search—one that must aim to justify our belief based on sources, namely, the Quran and the Sunnah, and properly present students with the wisdom that has existed within the Islamic tradition for centuries. I introduce the idea of "a thinking faith" (tabbiki iman); that is, a faith informed by knowing, thinking, and questioning as a purpose for religious education. If education is to improve a young person's critical mind, it must also connect critical thought to cultural and theological authority.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: THE RELIGION SHARIAH RELATION

One of the two main sources of Islam is the Holy Quran; the other is the Sunnah, which consists of the sayings and acts of Prophet Muhammad. In Muslim societies, many areas of life are shaped in the light of these two sources. We learn from the Quran and Sunnah that Islam consists of believing in God, worshiping God, and following moral principles. Thus, the three fundamental elements of faith, worship, and morals constitute the principal values of Islam—the unchangeables that are beyond the ages. Islam also has some judgments that organize interpersonal relations through laws concerning social, political, cultural, economical, and historical factors.

The principles of Islam concerning faith, worship, and morals have not been discussed much because they contain universal values. But it is different for Shariah (also called Islamic jurisprudence) and muamalat. Treating these judgments as unchangeable, despite the changing nature of life, leads to some theoretical and practical difficulties. The questions concerning the unchangeable dimensions of Islam and those that involve judgments relating to history, place, and time pose an important challenge in religious education.

We can address this challenge by considering three sorts of understanding in relation to Islam: literal understanding, interpretative understanding, and progressive understanding.
According to the literal approach to understanding, the legal arrangements of Islam about social life are unchangeable. Thus, life must be adapted to them. All judgments found within Shariah regarding marriage, divorce, bequest, trading, shopping, military, politics, and so forth are included in religion. This approach to understanding argues that judgments of Shariah must be carried out in every time and every place. They are absolute, universal, and meta-historical—not bound by time. This view does not make room for the opinions and participation of people. It has an oppressive, dogmatic, and authoritarian nature.

The interpretative approach to understanding also holds that the judgments of Shariah are one of the unchangeable and constant values of religion. However, based on the principle that no authority has a right to impose judgments that disturb public opinion, this approach holds that the Shariah can be interpreted. And from time to time, it questions the Shariah, saying that practice should depend on the development and progress of society. The Quran abolished slavery, for example, because of changing times and circumstances. Hence, some authorities hold that Islam can coexist with democracy and live in harmony with secularism.

According to the progressive approach to understanding, such arrangements are not included in the essence and nature of religion but are the model solutions offered in line with the main principles and aims of religion at a certain time and in a particular society. They change and develop with the changing circumstances of the age. Statements of Islam in political, military, and legal matters are related to Muslims' concrete historical needs. In different cultural milieus, it is possible to rearrange these statements in accordance with the scientific and intellectual experience of human society. This viewpoint emphasizes that from the very beginning, such terms in Islam as reason (akl) and science (ilm) were the dominant terms in the relationship between religion and life.

A Turkish professor of theology, Mehmed Said Hatiboğlu states his thoughts concerning the actual value of the Quran's historical passages as follows:

Apart from examples I gave so far, there are many examples in the Quran regarding the legal situation of society; acceptance of these seems almost impossible in the developed countries. For example, you cannot expect the modern woman with high education to be regarded as eyewitness in half proportion of her uneducated brother just because it has been stated so in the Quran. For example, you cannot persuade a Muslim woman who became doctor, engineer, and boss of a firm to accept the verse of Quran which advises for daughters the half share of their brothers'. If asked whether their revolt on behalf of justice is against the Quran, we have to say that we are not of the same opinion. Keeping the Quran's local values expressed 14 centuries ago as the historical facts; we must be able to validate its universal principles. (Hatiboğlu 2004a: 12)
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He addresses the researchers of Islam as follows: "Without an objective consideration of the sources of Islamic culture embracing centuries and without distinguishing the changeable from unchangeable, to speak definitely on behalf of Islam is an unscholarly behavior" (Hatiboğlu 1986: 24).

Although it seems that it is difficult for researchers of Islam to adopt this view, there are many attempts in Turkey to realize this goal (Kušlu 2003; Altıntaş 2003; Evkuran 2005). The scholars in the faculty where I work as a dean approach historical experience with a critical method, trying to distinguish the historical from the universal that brings to light a liberal approach, which has, for some reason, been ignored in recent history. The main motivation for these researchers is as follows: Faith, worship, and moral principles are unchangeable and binding as al-Islam. But the Shariah as the solutions to the problems caused by social change is historical. The Shariah is renewable, changeable, and abolishable. We must distinguish "the fact of religion" from thinking over the fact of religion. It is the thought that must be explained and reinterpreted in the face of new circumstances, not main principles of religion. Each generation has its own problems and solves these problems in accordance with the concepts of their time, the forms of thinking and the practical problems met in practice. It is only possible by way of such an attempt that Islam will be able to live across ages (Güler 1999; Akbulut 1999).

However, the information produced in academic circles is not yet sufficient to constitute the theological basis of religious education or to develop reflections on religious education in the context of the individual and social facts of a democratic society. We are still at the early stages of a long journey. But this does not mean that nothing can be done in religious education. The experience I gained as head of institutions providing religious education taught me the vital importance of working with teachers. The steps to be taken in the theological field will be put into practice by the teachers who are ready to do so. In my opinion, the most important goal of education is to teach students to think critically about their culture. The teacher must do research together with students on the historical story as to how Islam was conceptualized. The teachers are key actors in education, not only in creating and maintaining culture, but also in interpreting culture outside of school. The teacher is the person who directly experiences what will be taught and how it will be taught in the school. Therefore, we must first encourage teachers to make a sound connection between Islam and modernity, so they can encourage their students to criticize their cultural heritage in order to clarify what the Shariah is.

Our work with religion teachers in our schools revealed that the cultural heritage has been presented in a way that is static, lifeless, and alien to the experience of students (SelçuK 1999). In particular, when the transmission of knowledge and memorization is seen as important, students may develop a dogmatic perspective in which everything that is heard is regarded as true; students try to fit statements into dichotomous categories such as halal/ permissible versus haram/forbidden, and thawâb/good deed versus sin.
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Here is a recollection of a teacher:

I gave an answer to my student who asked me whether wearing gold ornaments is forbidden for males as follows: “In the Quran, there is no clear statement that its use is forbidden. But there are some hadits/traditions stating that it was forbidden by religion. You must make your choice as to which you will take. Of course it is risky. If you like wearing gold, you can use it by thinking that the judgments in question do not depend on the Quran itself. Besides, this matter is also related to the economical circumstances of society.” No sooner had I finished my word than he stared at me angrily saying: —Teacher! Is it permissible or forbidden? (Selçuk 1999: 260)

In Hadith, theology, history of Islam, and jurisprudence classes in our schools, the aspect of *ditaya*, that is, the aspect of understanding, interpreting, judging, and learning from events, must be given more importance when cultural heritage is taught. Otherwise, children will come under the influence of people with insufficient knowledge and misconceptions. Thinking about their cultural heritage will prevent students from adopting literal understanding and dogmatic attitudes.

Theology of religious education must not depend only upon text and transmission. It must shift from a literal paradigm to a critical, even a formative one. Theology must be suitable to improve individual intellect and appropriate for the democratization process of society.

In order to explain this view, I offer the findings of a doctoral dissertation completed in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Ankara, which dealt with the Hadith as understood by Abu Hanifa and the Hadith method of Hanafism. The researcher (Unal 1994) explained the method used by Abu Hanifa and his disciples to interpret Hadiths with multidimensional and rich examples:

1. We have some examples indicating that Abu Hanifa had added new interpretations with a new approach to the traditions/hadiths he used as evidence in solving the legal matters. The Prophet Muhammad said in one of his traditions, “Whoever improves an empty land, he becomes the owner of that land.” Adding “the permission of ruler” to this statement, Abu Hanifa said that one can become the owner of the land only with the permission of the ruler. Abu Yusuf, though he does not agree with this decision of his teacher, explains the cause of this judgment as follows: “The evidence in this point is as follows: Improving is possible only with permission of the sultan. Otherwise, it causes discussions. If two men choose the same place and each of them prevents the other, in that case who will be right? If one wants to improve a land around other man’s house and the landowner says to him, ‘Don’t improve there, since it is my land. Your work will
cause damage to me,' what will happen in this case? At this point Abu Hanifa laid the permission of the sultan down as a condition to prevent the probable quarrel between both sides. Thinking of the probable disagreements as time passed, Abu Hanifa added a condition not found in the hadith. This attitude does not mean to reject the hadith. To the contrary, it shows that he gave importance to the view of 'authority,' which will facilitate the exercise of hadith and prevent the arbitrary practice.

2. Let's choose our example from the answer of Abu Hanifa to his disciple, who reports reprovingly the existence of those saying 'what is sufficient for the Prophet and his companions is also sufficient for you.' "When they asked you, 'Isn't it enough for you what is enough for the prophet's companions?' say to them, 'Yes, if I were them, what was enough for them would be enough for me, too. Whereas their conditions and ours are not the same.'" (Ünal 1994: 83–122)

These examples show that examining case studies with students will not mean canceling or rejecting the Prophet's practices. On the contrary, they prove that their aim is to provide students with an understanding as to what, where, when, and how to use these practices. To realize this goal, scholars of Islamic science must work collaboratively with scholars of religious education.

In this chapter, I have tried to show that religious education for democratic culture depends on what is understood by religion as well as on education. Islamic religious education has the opportunity to make a contribution to democratic culture if it creates its own theological body of knowledge—both theoretical and practical. The relationship between theology and education should be critical in method and informed by the Quran and the Sunnah in content.
A Definition of "Jihad" and Its Relationship to RE in a World of Religious Diversity

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Abstract

Since the tragic event, September Eleven, Jihad has become a household concept among those who are involved in the question of violence both scholarly and popularly.

This paper aims to provide inside into the issues currently debated around the concept of Jihad. One present Jihad as “the first obligation for Muslims that comes after Iman Billah (Belief in God)”. Another translates it as “Holy War”. One of the explanations is that “Jihad is the striving for the good and the struggling with the evil”. Another one is that “Jihad is the name of every attempt to purify one’s soul”.

What response should education make to those different definitions?

The proposed paper will consider the question by reference to the relevant verses of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophetic Tradition.

The paper will claim that in a world of religious diversity, researches on the main concepts of religions are of vital importance. Learning in inter-religious terms includes learning about the conceptual schema of your own and the other religion as well. Obviously more awareness about each other is needed in education and also more conceptual studies can help to improve the flow of information, analysis and guidance on the challenge of violent extremism.
A Definition of “Jihad” and Its Relationship to RE in a World of Religious Diversity

Introduction

One of my PhD students attended an international education seminar at the beginning of 2000s. He carried over his impressions after the seminar in the class. My student had made a speech in the meeting about the philosophy of tearuf in Islam. He had paid so much effort for preparing his speech according to the effective presentation techniques. However he was very disturbed of the ‘question-response’ part after the presentation. He was reminded by the audience that Islam includes principles such as umma, kalifat, jihad, ordering the good and forbidding the bad. My student was surprised and he told me and his friends in the classroom who were listening to his impressions that he was talking in a Muslim’s voice. He said ‘I have a sincere faithfulness for Islamic tradition but I can’t speak for all Muslims. No one was interested in who I am.

My student took the religious text form (Teearuf) which enables people to get to know each other and to deal correlatively as a base. He could comment on the mentioned forms according to this base but he didn’t do that. He wanted people to be interested in what he said. This experience of my student made us realize so many things. (Selçuk 2009,PP.511-517) One of these realizations is that it is important to consider not only the discourse itself but the acceptations and general ideas around this discourse.

Consequently I added jihad term to my doctorate course under the name Religious Concepts and Learning Environments. Throughout the years, I gave seminars about Jihad in Islam. I tried to form a theological framework about jihad. But some questions remained unanswered in the framework I formed. How should jihad be defined in religious education? How is knowledge of jihad to be represented? How is this interpreted? This paper aims to introduce the importance of conceptual researches in religious education with the jihad example. Conceptual researches are helpful for understanding religious facts and for effective thinking. Conceptual researches transfer several religious themes to us and we can arrange teaching process in a better way and make it more effective with the help of these themes.

The first part of this paper describes the findings of a qualitative patterned small action research made upon the definition of jihad with Religious Culture and Ethic Course teacher candidates.
The second part comes into being from the comments in the light of a theological framework which consists of Qur'anic verses and sayings and behaviours of prophet Muhammed (P.U.H.) (the Hadis and the Sunna).

Some theological and pedagogical reflections will take place in the closure discussion

1. Jihad In The Responses of Teacher Candidates

Research covers 66 teacher candidates who are students in the Religious Culture and Ethic Education Department. This teacher education programme in the Educational Science Faculty is a four-year programme and the graduates will be teaching religion in primary schools. Teacher candidates who took place in the research will be the first ones to graduate. This programme has been opened in Education Faculties as a result of a discussion occurred in Turkey in recent years. The main question of a discussion is whether R.E. teachers should be raised up in a Theology Faculty or in an Education Faculty. In fact a basic question lying under this discussion and was that if religious education is a religious matter? Or is it an educational matter?

High Commission which is responsible of High Education in Turkey decided to educate R.E. teachers in Education Faculties and the programme which for R.E. teachers has been opened under the name of Religious Culture and Ethic in Education Faculties in 2006. This programme used to be run in the responsibility of Theology Faculties. No matter which faculties' responsibility it is in, this is an inter-disciplinary programme and it is necessary to build cooperation between education and theology faculties. With regard to religious pluralism and pluralism within Islam the programme is “non-confessional” and it has multi-religious dimension. The programme aims to raise up teachers

1. Who adopt lifelong learning including the skill to search, ask and inquire.
2. Who promote a culture of living together
3. Who know and appreciate the beliefs, traditions and customs of other religions in respect and tolerance, as well as their own religion, traditions and customs.

I gave a course in the mentioned programme in 2009-2010 education year. The course was on inter-cultural and interreligious education. As a lecturer of the course I moved along with the aim of developing an awareness about theology of the main concepts of religions.

I think the skill of using the religious concepts with a raising caution and developing an advanced understanding upon concepts can be improved through the studies based on their own ideas, we worked on teaching sheets with students. This research is the analysis of teaching sheets which contain the question ‘How do you define Jihad in Islam?’ and the query to specify the resources (verse, hadith, historical event) that support their definitions.
The question was open-ended. The reason of this is to make them to convey themselves with their own words and to create their own themes. Very broad and rich data was obtained from students. Perhaps we can call it as ‘data sensitive’. Data analysis was made with the help of four themes.

These four themes are;
1. Jihad is the main duty of a Muslim.
2. Jihad is a holy war.
3. Jihad is the struggle with “self (nafs)”
4. Jihad is ordering the good and forbidding the bad.

Four themes above came out from my own experiences I had while trying to form a conceptual framework about jihad and my studies on jihad.

The responses of teacher candidates are coded with these themes and there occurred differences in the themes during the content analysis process.

Namely the theme of ‘Holy War’ didn’t come across in the responses.

Concepts such as exploitation, imperialism, capitalism, globalization, modernization, westernize that are used for the reasons which cause jihad were not mentioned in the responses.

The definition of Jihad’s being a kind of war is divided into two themes.
1. Fighting for God.
2. Fighting for Land.

It should be stressed that the theme fighting for God was not used in sense of “fighting in the name of God”. But it is used to refer to the hard struggle of the faithful for ‘pleas sake of God’. The comprehensive nature of the concept of Jihad is a familiar problem for students.

As it is seen in Table 1, teacher candidates generally tried to define Jihad via more than one theme. A composition was made by using themes of fighting for Allah, struggle with self, spreading out Islam in number 15 of the learning sheet. In the number 12 only ordering the good and forbidding the bad which is the 4th theme was defined as a content of jihad.

From the teaching sheets number 15

“Jihad in Islam the struggle of the Muslims together with their whole entity-life, possessions, time and mind in the way of Allah In other words, employing their whole possibilities in the way of Allah. It is the usage of what they own for Allah’s pleasure, acceptance of Islam religion in all hearts, maintaining its attendance throughout the world. It’s not just making war in battlefield by taking sword or gun in hand but it is done when it is needed. Anyway until
arriving at this point Muslims should try their best to spread and protect their religion and use their possibilities for this aim. Our lord called this 'little jihad.' The big jihad is the jihad against peoples' self. That's to say not to be defeated by their some kind of internal desires and wills.

From the teaching sheets number 12

"Jihad in Islam is ordering the good and forbidding the bad. Even though different meanings are attributed to it in our culture, this is what I understand of it. Jihad that is blessed by Islam finds a wider meaning. For example, we can interpret a lot of behavior as jihad those are from giving your seat to the old to warning a mother who treats her child in a badly manner."

Quotations from responses to question: How do you define Jihad in Islam?

"Fighting for peace."

"Establishing peace in the battlefield is jihad; too."

"Working for peace, goodness, happiness of all human beings whether they are Muslim or not, fighting against errors, trying to fix them."

"I don't see the ones who harmed innocent people under the name of Jihad in the holy circle."

"To compete for charity."

"To scratch up human beings with Islam."

"Struggling against starvation, epidemic sicknesses and misfortunes."

"It is not right to reduce jihad to politics of nations."

"Spreading God's religion."

"Improving yourself and reaching better stages in order to defend Muslims' benefits."

"Leading to the good and fronting to the good."

"Defending the truth against evil."

"To become conscious and struggling against ignorance."

"Not to be defeated by some kind of internal desires and wills that interfere realization of responsibilities."

"To cognize and define all of the foundations, firms and individuals that serve internal and external abuses."

"To struggle against all kind of focuses that head human beings to mischief."

"To seek for even and never saying 'I'm done.'
We should consider our prophet’s life before his prophethood. He got the title of ‘el-emin (trustworthy)’ before he became a prophet.

There is a war instructions but there are commands like avoiding injustice, plunder, defeatism and adjustment to moral principles in it.

Generally it is defined as protection with hardwares and struggle for spreading Islam even though I don’t agree with that.

You don’t attack unless someone attacks you.

I think that verses were focused on jihad term in order to encourage Muslims about war against the attackers in the first periods. I think meaning of the term has been changed recently.

The vision of jihad is a kind of war ethic. People to fight-slaves-pillages etc.’

There are conquests with swords but people are not forced to accept this religion.

If they give importance to whole human beings for Allah then it is a kind of Jihad for me.

Jihad is reflective thinking. It is devising through the definition of Quran.

You fight with non-Muslims. You fight for your land, your decency, and country. Muhammad who said ‘your religion is for you, my religion is for me’ had no matter to push people into Islam. ‘He just told what it is. However he fought’

Islam is the religion of peace. Muslims have to protect their lives, possessions and their decency like the rest of the humanity.

The aim in jihad is to bond people on moral based Islam.

According to the conditions of the age we should realize jihad with our words, behaviours and tolerance.

Serving in the way of the Creator.

The ones who comment on it in a wrong way, leads to terrorism. They suppose that they fight under the name of jihad. I am pretty disturbed of this situation because Islam and terror cannot be put next to each other. A regard like this is an aspersions and a sin. It is a action that harms Islamic civilization.

Peace is the main theme in our Prophet’s life. He tried his best not to kill anybody as much as possible and he advised the same thing to his friends.

Teacher candidates made definitions of Jihad with what and against what, in the research.

**Jihad by means of what**
World vision, possession, life, knowledge, sword, power, mind, being a model, monetary, morality, communication possibilities, science, technology, world vision, pen, time, love and dialogue, idea and thought, scientific studies, patience, mass communication vehicles.

**Jihad Against What**

Abuse, cruelty, injustice, disasters, corruption, defect, failure, evil, focuses of evil, fallacious, wars, darkness, ignorance, epidemic sicknesses, badness, immorality.

Claims about what is not jihad is like the following.

**WHAT IS NOT JIHAD**

Not to start war against other religions

Not to obtain earth richness.

Not to force people to the religion.

Not to use swords and guns

Not just fighting in battlefield.

Not to force regions into the religion with swords.

Not to Islamize a place with sword by using force.

Not the terms like violence, killing, blood, being killed.

Not to involve into terrorism.

**The Theological References Mentioned**

The theological references in the responses are very limited and they are from those general references used popularly in culture.

For example;

...When you experience a badness, fix it by your hands...

...We are going to the big Jihad from the small Jihad...

...Don't call the ones who were killed in the way of Allah 'dead'.

...A society that commands goodness and holds back badness should exist in you...

**Why So Few References?**

A deep analysis of the reasons for the lack of religious sources cannot be done with this brief survey. But I can offer some thoughts here. One of the reason is that our methods and approaches using Quranic verses and hadiths of the Prophet in R. E. are very new as yet.

Traditional education is of three kinds with its main lines. Whether the subject is supported with Quranic verses and hadiths. Verses and hadiths are given in quotation marks in
this kind of education or conclusions are driven through evaluations of verses and hadiths. Another way of teaching is to make students memorize groups of verses and hadiths.

All of the three teaching ways are not enough to convert student’s relationship with the holy texts into an effective learning. Quran’s state of not being a text which you can study on and communicate with but a text which supports beliefs is a difficulty that should be leapfrogged over in education. This creates an obstacle in understanding and students are fell into a situation as if they are not allowed to think about anything other than what they are being told. They consider the Qur’an ‘beyond reflection’ and this lack of permission to reflect pave the way to historical and cultural authorities. Another factor is the difference between students’ language and text language (the spoken language is Turkish and religious language is Arabic in Turkey!). To raise the students’ skills of reading and studying on Quran translations is standing in front of us as a challenge. Students should be encouraged to encounter with the text with their background.

The second reason is the school type that teacher candidates come from. R. E. teachers graduate from a kind of high school which religion taught intensively (İmam-İ Hatip schools).

Teacher candidates are educated about educational theories, methods and teaching practices in Education Faculty and learning the theological content of the concept is left to the students or it is presumed that they already know it considering the school type they come from. The student who says ‘I thought that I knew this concept until you asked for a definition’ while giving back his teaching sheet, stands close to this comment. This situation is a challenge for students. Religious education is always across two subject: Religion and Education.

Create a Theological Framework to Teach Jihad

War in Quran is told through the words derived from the k-t-l roots and it has its own frame to be determined. War related subjects in Quran are defined through the words that come from a different root so it means that jihad is not directly related to war.

Analysis on the verses about war in Quran won’t be made due to the fact that the paper is limited with Jihad. However I should cite war in Quran is permitted in two main circumstances: Self defense and to maintaining the right of worship. In the following verse the technical term is yuqitelsene (those against whom war is made), which is passive voice. That means war can be waged only if a community is attacked:

“To those against whom war is made, permission is given to right, because they are wronged, and verily God is Most Powerful for their aid.” (Hajj 22:39)
And the following verse gives much more detail about the reasons of war:

“They are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, for no cause except that they say “Our Lord is God”. If God did not check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure.” (Hajj 22:40)

Quran forbids cruelty, unfairness, killing human beings. It defines killing someone without a reason as killing the whole human beings. War is contingent and temporary and peace is actual and stable. Peace is put in front of Muslims as an aim.

C-h-d and their derivations in Quran are mentioned in 36 verses The term Jihad is derived from the Arabic root Jhd, to “strive”. The same Jhd serves as the root for other verbs emphasizing effort and struggle to achieve perfection in difficult tasks.

Jihad certainly represents a sense of totalizing effort. In the Qur’an there are many examples in which such effort (eg. economic, psychological and has been required by the new born Muslim community, (Surah 2/218, 4/95,22/78,25/53)

Jihad is often in correctly translated as “holy war”, this meaning symbolize Islam as a religion of violence. This kind of translation also creates an obstacle in the critical task, namely that of building bridges of understanding between religions.

At a purely linguistic level we should recognize that holy war in Arabic would sound like harb al- mukaddasah rather than Jihad. Neither in the Qur’an nor in the Hadith, we can find such an expression.

Reading the verses according to their being Meccan or Madanise is proposed as a method. My own studies on the Qur’an Meccan verses, which constitute sixty to seventy percent of the Qur’an, allows me to say that these verses provide the theological framework in the religious education of Islam as a religion of conscience based on individualistic choice and responsibility.

In the dichotomy of individual-society, while the priority has been with the individual in the Medinan period the priority has shifted to society. When we look at the Madanise verses, we find expression dealing with social order and politics. These verses handle concrete social topics. And they need to be interpreted according to their historical and timely context. Therefore I consider the Meccan verses as the very core of Islam as subject knowledge in R E.
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<td>&quot;...So do not give in to the disbelievers: strive hard against them with this Quran.&quot; (52)</td>
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<td>The Creator (Fatir)</td>
<td>&quot;...[the idolaters] swore their most solemn oath that, if someone came to warn them, they would be more rightly guided than any (other) community, but when someone did come they turned yet further away...&quot; (42)</td>
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<td>55/6</td>
<td>Livestock (Al-An'am)</td>
<td>&quot;They swear by God with their most solemn oath that if a miraculous sign came to them they would believe in it. Say (prophet), (believers) realize that even if a sign came to them they still would not believe?&quot; (109)</td>
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<tr>
<td>57/31</td>
<td>Luqman (Luqman)</td>
<td>&quot;If they strive to make you associate with Me anything about which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. Yet keep their company in this life according to what is right, and follow the path of those who turn to Me. You will all return to Me in the end, and I will tell you everything that you have done.&quot; (15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>70/16</td>
<td>The Bee (Al-Nahl)</td>
<td>&quot;They have sworn by God with their strongest oaths that he will not raise the dead to life. But he will it is his binding promise, though most people do not realize it-&quot; (38)</td>
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<tr>
<td>85/29</td>
<td>The Spider (Al-Ankabut)</td>
<td>&quot;Those who exert themselves do so for their own benefit-God does not need His creatures.&quot; (6) &quot;We have commanded people to be good to their parents, but do not obey them if they strive to make you serve, beside Me, anything of which you have no knowledge: you will all return to Me, and I shall inform you of what you have done.&quot; (8) &quot;But we shall be sure to guide to Our ways those who strive hard for Our cause: God is with those who do good.&quot; (69)</td>
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<tr>
<td>87/2</td>
<td>The Cow (al-Baqara)</td>
<td>&quot;But those who have believed migrated, and striven for God’s cause, it is they who can look forward to God’s mercy: God is most forgiving and merciful.&quot; (218)</td>
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</table>
| 88/8 Battle Gains (Al-Anfal) | “Those who believed and emigrated [to Medina] and struggled for God’s cause with their possessions and persons, and those who gave refuge and help, are all allies of one another. As for those who believed but did not emigrate, you are not responsible for their protection until they have done so. But if they seek help from you against persecution, it is your duty to assist them, except against people with whom you have a treaty: God sees all that you do.” (72)  
“Those who believed and emigrated, and struggled for God’s cause, and those who gave refuge and help—they are the true believers and they will have forgiveness and generous provision.” (74)  
“And those who came to believe afterwards, and emigrated and struggled alongside you, they are part of you, but relatives still have prior claim over one another in God’s Scripture: God has full knowledge of all things.” (75) |
| 89/3 The Family of Imran (Al-Imran) | “Did you think you would enter the Garden without God first proving which of you would struggle for His cause and remain steadfast?” (142)  
“You who believe, do not take My enemies and yours as your allies, showing them friendship when they have rejected the truth you have received, and have driven you and the Messenger out simply because you believe in God, your Lord—not if you truly emigrated in order to strive for My cause and seek My good pleasure. You secretly show them friendship—I know all you conceal and all you reveal—but any of you who do this are straying from the right path.” (1) |
| 92/4 Woman (al-Nisa) | “Those believers who stay at home, apart from those with an incapacity, are not equal to those who commit themselves and their possessions to striving in God’s way. God has raised such people to a rank above those who stay at home—although He has promised all believers a good reward, those who strive are favoured with a tremendous reward above those who stay at home.” (95) |
| 95/47 Muhammad (Muhammad) | “We shall test you to see which of you strive your hardest and are steadfast; We shall test the sincerity of your assertions.” (31) |
| 102/24 Light (Al-Nur) | “(the others) solemnly swear by God that if you (prophet) Commanded them, they would march out. Tell them, “Do not swear: it is reasonable..."
<table>
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<th>Page</th>
<th>Paragraph</th>
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<tr>
<td>103/22</td>
<td>&quot;Strive hard for God as is His due: He has chosen you and placed no hardship in your religion, the faith of your forefather Abraham. God has called you Muslims—both in the past and in this [message]—so that the Messenger can bear witness about you and so that you can bear witness about other people. So keep up the prayer, give the prescribed alms, and seek refuge in God: He is your protector—an excellent protector and an excellent helper.&quot; (78)</td>
</tr>
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<td>106/49</td>
<td>&quot;The True Believers are the ones who have faith in God and His Messenger and Leave all doubt behind, the ones who have struggled with their possessions and their persons in God’s way: they are the ones who are true.&quot; (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107/66</td>
<td>&quot;Prohibition—(Al-Tahrir)&quot; &quot;Prophet, strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites. Deal with them sternly. Hell will be their home, an evil destination.&quot; (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112/5</td>
<td>&quot;You who believe, be mindful of God, seek ways to come closer to Him and strive for His cause, so that you may prosper.&quot; (35) &quot;and the believers will say, ‘Are these the men who swore by God using their strongest oaths that they were with you? All they did was in vain: they have lost everything.” (53) &quot;You who believe, if any of you go back on your faith,’1 God will soon replace you with people He loves and who love Him, people who are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers, and who strive in God’s way without fearing anyone’s reproach. Such is God’s favour. He grants it to whoever He will. God has endless bounty and knowledge.&quot; (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113/9</td>
<td>&quot;Do you think that you will be left untested&quot; without God identifying which of you will strive for His cause and have no supporters apart from God, His Messenger, and other believers? God is fully aware of all your actions.&quot; (16) &quot;Do you consider giving water to pilgrims and tending the Sacred Mosque to be equal to the deeds of those who believe in God and the Last Day and who strive in God’s path? They are not equal in God’s eyes. God does not guide such benighted people.&quot; (19)</td>
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"Those who believe, who migrated and strove hard in God’s way with their possessions and their persons, are in God’s eyes much higher in rank; it is they who will triumph" (20)

"Say [Prophet], ‘If your fathers, sons, brothers, wives, tribes, the wealth you have acquired, the trade which you fear will decline, and the dwellings you love are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and the struggle in His cause, then wait until God brings about His punishment.’ God does not guide those who break away" (24)

"So go out, no matter whether you are lightly or heavily armed, and struggle in God’s way with your possessions and your persons: this is better for you, if you only knew.” (41)

"Those who have faith in God and the Last Day do not ask you for exemption from struggle with their possessions and their persons—God knows exactly who is mindful of Him.—” (44)

"Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be tough with them. Hell is their final home—an evil destination!" (73)

"It is they who criticize the believers who give freely and those who can only give a little with great effort: they scoff at such people, but it is God who scoffs at them—a painful punishment awaits them.” (79)

"Those who were left behind were happy to stay behind when God’s Messenger set out; they hated the thought of striving in God’s way with their possessions and their persons. They said to one another, ‘Do not go [to war] in this heat.’ Say, ‘Hellfire is hotter.’ If only they understood!” (81)

"When a sura is revealed [saying], ‘Believe in God and strive hard alongside His Messenger,’ their wealthy ask your permission [to be exempt], saying, ‘Allow us to stay behind with the others!’” (86)

"But the Messenger and those who believe with him strive hard with their possessions and their persons. The best things belong to them; it is they who will prosper” (88)

| The first 6 of these suras are Meccan and the rest are Madani. |
| In the widest meaning that connotes paying effort and struggling in a way that pushes the whole limits of human beings’, jihad covers all types of moral self-sacrifice and effort for |
human beings goodness in the sake of God. It is said in the Quran that none of the efforts on this issue will not be wasted and these roads will be opened to human beings.

(Ankebut/29,69) There occurs an intimate relationship between Jihad and meaning of existence of human beings in the world. It is necessary for human beings to do their best in using their all possibilities and skills properly for the purpose of their creation. The purpose of human creation is to know Allah, to recognize Him, to believe in Him and work for Him. During the realization of this purpose people should pay effort for their intentions to gain moral qualities. The most important issue that prophet Muhammad emphasized on the unity of intention and action. The Prophet reminds the importance of the ethic in intention. Nevermore Jihad’s attaining meaning of war is at stake only in temporary and special cases.

Conclusion

This brief overview highlight the necessity to do extensive conceptual studies on the Quran. Although there is a very common culture of tolerance, it seems that theological framework is deficient. I regard the Qur’an as “measurement” for teachings and teachers. I found rarely Qur’anic thoughts as background for the main religious concepts. I want to propose to use the Qur’an as measurement for the educators who instruct students about religious concepts, in Turkish R.E. If we give the students the skills of exploring the Qur’an by for themselves, and listen to their insights and encourage them to find their own responses, we shall begin to reach the conceptual clarity. Conceptual clarity will serve as a key to a better understanding. Picking up one or two sentences from tradition regardless the holy text can be misleading to any tradition.

Notes

1. “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)” (Hujurat 49:13)
WHO AM I BETWEEN “US” AND “THEM”? 

Mualla Selçuk
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He who knows himself knows his Lord.

The teachers’ task is not to convey their knowledge but to kindle their pupils’ minds. That has always been my view. Can there be greater education than making people realize that they are in a stream that is being created anew in every moment? Can there be greater education than showing them ways of contributing to that stream through the gifts the Creator has entrusted each of them? Is that not greater education than teaching to stick to the given forms without complaining?

I have also come to think that such an education would enable us to conceive of Islam as having the strength to adapt itself to different times and places.

This is why the teaching of the cultural heritage—the first subject of the course I produced with future religious educators—starts with this thought-provoking dialogue with my pupils:

“How do we see the cultural heritage? How do we approach the cultural heritage? Do we own the contents of our culture, or do we rather carry it around in our bags to distribute it to our pupils as information? Is cultural heritage a clear-cut designation? Or does it come together with certain choices and inclinations? Do we use the contents of our culture to wake up our pupils’ consciousness, to develop their ability to choose, to inspire their creativity? Or do we rather offer that content to bring the blind together with the blind?

How would you as teachers want your pupils to take their choices?

Do you want your pupils to be ready for a critical attitude, ready for an analytical approach, and ready for taking a risk? Or is it enough for you if they become passive recipients?

What are your pupils to do with the cultural heritage? Are they to evaluate, criticize and develop it, or simply to glorify it? Are your students to approach the cultural heritage in order to develop their personal thinking, to liberate them from clichés and prejudices, to enlighten their experience of life; or are they simply to imitate it?”

The answers I receive from my students allow me to unravel the background of their thoughts and possible underlying influences. In
this article I would like to pinpoint the three most prominent of those underlying influences; the first is the environment that surrounds them, the second is the world of the others, and the third is the students’ inner world (their concerns, hopes, imaginations, doubts, beliefs, etc.).

I am writing in my own name. I am sharing what I myself searched and found. I am writing to express what I learned from the small steps I made when trying to fulfill my job. In going ahead, I do not only teach my students, I also teach myself.

When my students speak about their own environment they normally say “we.” It is, of course, impossible to speak about the other without speaking about ourselves and about our identity, because the others are others always in the eyes of others. The word normally used when speaking about the other is “they.” They are made the subject of our discourse and put into categories; they are dealt with according to what we accept and reject—and, sometimes, they are judged. They are also mentioned as being different, but by presupposing the judgment that “we are we because we are different from them.” The students feel that this judgment is unjust, but that feeling is silenced by the common objection that “they wouldn’t know us better than we know them!” They are the others; and one tries to justify the view on the others through the authority of one’s holy texts. I should add, however, that quite often also those messages from the holy texts are used that advance human purity, morality, and maturity. (If the texts are used in that way, sentences tend to start with “we.”)

When my classes start, I can feel that some have drawn ideological or historical borders of understanding. These borders have to be overcome, and they can be overcome. But that can only happen if I clearly set before my eyes the goal of creating a learning and teaching atmosphere of mutual understanding and interaction.

The holy book of Islam, the Koran, calls that platform of mutual understanding and interaction ta’āruf. I would like to propose the ta’āruf approach as a way to solve the “clashes” that occur when “we” meet “them.” The Koran mentions ta’āruf in Sura 49:13. It reads: “O human beings, We have created you from one man and one woman, and We have divided you into peoples and tribes so that you come to know each other. God regards that one of you as the highest who minds divine responsibility the deepest. God is the one who knows and perceives.” The concept of ta’āruf has become the core of inter-religious education. When thinking about the relation to the other for many years, I profited from that concept. Here, I will briefly explain it,
hoping that my explanations will help to understand my interpretation of the other.

If one analyzes the concept of ta'āruf in an educational perspective, one sees that it understands "the other" as enriching and developing one's own existence. Thus Islam opens an important framework of understanding around this concept: The differences between human beings are willed by God, indeed, they are a sign of the Creator; and the differences are not to be judged as being good or bad—their function is, rather, to make us perceive the Creator. The educational approach I have pondered about and developed for inter-religious education is constructed upon ta'āruf.

The learning targets of my teaching can be expressed in these two statements:

1. Human beings have been created from a common essence. We all share this link as our humanity, and the root of our link with the other human beings is that we were thus created.

2. The fact that human beings were created different is God's divine gift for them. But this difference is not our most important designation. Difference is, rather, a chance to come to know each other and to create values.

I know well that in a world in which differences are stressed and human beings are lost and exploited in meaningless struggles and clashes, teachings like these will be hard to realize. Therefore, I cannot convey ta'āruf to my students as a duty. It is not enough for me to say at the beginning of my classes: "Ta'āruf is a Koranic commandment, so keep it!" Actually, the classical understanding of Islamic education and teaching contained the idea that it would suffice for Religious Education to teach the verses of the Koran and the words of the Prophet, that is, the hadît. This understanding was corroborated by the fact that in the Koranic verses and the hadîts examples concerning faith and behavior and methods to develop a behavior in harmony with the belief and relevant advice all come together. This is why Koranic verses and hadîts play an important role in Islamic religious education.

We must, however, not forget to convey the values of religious texts, because the abstract praise of virtues only works in a rather limited way. Because what I observe is this: When the behavioral models, the commandments and prohibitions that religion proposes are communicated to the young and presented as incomparable and unique,
they do not guide the young for their appropriate choices in their life challenges. I think that a value will only then become their own value if they discover it by themselves; this is true even if the whole world holds that value. A choice of action in accordance with the spirit of your religion requires a certain condition of your consciousness, and that cannot be made up only by rules, principles, commandments, and prohibitions; in short: only by claiming that “your religion says so.”

Rather than giving ethical advice or pointing out the moral lesson to be learned in each situation, it may perhaps be more efficient to provide opportunities for the students to get in touch with reality. My observation is that the youth, when given the opportunity to get in touch with reality, enter a more appropriate condition to develop their ethical choices. Therefore, I consider inter-religious “encounter” to be particularly valuable.

A student of mine participated in a seminar for inter-religious teaching some years ago, probably in 2002. Afterward, he shared in class what he had experienced in that seminar. My student had given there a talk on “The philosophy of ta’āruḍ.” He had prepared his talk according to impressive presentation techniques. But during the phase of discussion after his talk he was deeply surprised. They reminded him of the Islamic principles like umma, kalifate, cihād, ordering-the-good-and-forbidding-the-bad; and they said that his talk had not represented Islam!

My student was surprised and loudly said to me and his fellow students in my class: “I spoke with the voice of a Muslim. I am deeply committed to the Islamic tradition. But I cannot represent Islam. Nobody showed interest in who I am!”

My student had taken from the Koran a religious formula that enables people to come to know each other and to arrive at mutual understanding: ta’āruḍ. He could have interpreted the other principles mentioned by his audience on the basis of the same formula: ta’āruḍ. But he was unable to do that because they had charged him with the task “to speak in the name of Islam,” and that was perhaps why he felt himself under pressure when he answered. It may have been noticed that my student used an objection that refused to remain between the borders that had been drawn for him; he said: “Nobody showed interest in who I am!” My student was trying to create for himself an area beyond the logics of “we” and “they.” In the logics of “we” and “they” the question “Who am I?” might be neglected, sometimes even forgotten. I wonder whether this question can be a way to overcome
the separations between “us” and “them”? Might it not help us to put into question our prejudice, presuppositions, and borders?

Might knowledge not open a door? So that I can put my intensive “us” consciousness in its adequate place? So that I can diminish my fears concerning the “other”? So that I can come to know him or her?

Coming to know oneself is a process that shows us how to live with the other, that makes us mature and authentic In my view, sound interpersonal relations are closely related to personal growth and maturity To develop mature relations with other people comes from the respect that trusts, when answering the question “Who am I?” in one’s own tradition and hears the other’s answer: “I am this.” Because telling someone “you are this” or “that” without listening to his or her own answer about him- or herself is violence If one expects a result from inter-religious education, it is especially to believe in the importance of the answer to the question “Who am I?” The more Religious Education can teach the members of its own religion to come to know and find themselves in contact with members of other religions, the more it will be able to open up ways of mutual acquaintance.

Ta’āruf starts by coming to know oneself I call this the human being’s “coming to know oneself”; and I see the responsibility of Religious Education in this To help the human being in knowing him- or herself. Thus the process of individuation begins.

When I was writing this article, an academic colleague of mine returned from an inter-faith action that had taken place in the United States. What had she gained through her participation in the program? She summarized her gains as:

- To realize our mental and emotional traps.
- To open doors for mutual understanding.
- To develop our capacities to respond positively.
- To use our abilities to construct relations of trust.
- To develop a culture of conviviality in difference.
- To accept that every religion characterizes itself as the truest religion.
- To conduct exercises for empathy, patience, and sensitivity.

When I heard my colleague I thought: We learn from our religion “to know ourselves is to know our Lord”; but doesn’t knowing myself also enable me to know the other?

I try to examine the epistemic bases in Islam for the process of individuation, and I call it ma rifa. I point out the role of the text
in understanding the other, and I call it ta'āruf. And its capacity to produce mutual values I characterize as "competition in the good," tasabuq al-hayrāt. I do not know whether I will succeed. But that is my aim; for that I strive.

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Teaching for the Sky
Religious Education from Christian and Islamic Perspectives

Edited by Stella El Bouayadi-van de Wetering and Siebren Miedema
How Does the Qur’an See “The People of the Book”?  

An Example of the Communicative Model of Islamic Religious Education¹

Mualla Selçuk

Abstract

Within the pluralistic character of society and the modern school, students are seeking a different kind of understanding about the relationship between their religious traditions and life. This affects Islamic religious education in many aspects, including its aims, its programs, and approach to teaching in the classroom. Recently, religious education has not been an activity of faith transfer but a matter of passing on new perspectives into the context in which the individual stands. Therefore, the teachers should strive to teach their students to live with the demands of plurality and modernity present in their world today. This paper will advance some insights on the methodological problem of communicating the Qur’anic text by introducing a communicative model of teaching in teacher training. The communicative model of teaching is a kind of reflection on the text of the Qur’an within the subject in its historical and contemporary contexts. It starts from the question: What is textual and what is contextual? This paper aims to present a communicative model of teaching, taking the Qur’anic concept of “people of the book” as an example.

The Problem of Method

“Communication with the Qur’an” means the Muslim’s relationship with it. This relationship is compulsory for every Muslim in the sense that the Qur’an is the word of Allah. The commands of the Qur’an are obligatory for Muslims, which ulti-

¹ The arguments in this paper are more fully developed in Mualla Selçuk, Halis Albayrak Nahide Bozkurt, Kur'an ve Birey [The Qur’an and the Individual] (Ankara: Tıthan Kitabevi, 2010).
mately means that Muslims must examine how much of its content concerns them. They are in a relationship with the Qur'an either through the original text, its translations, its explications, the preaching of a sermon, the speeches of a teacher, the publications of a theologian, the information on the internet or through parents or family elders. Thus, they encounter quotations from the Qur'an and stand in a relationship with it.

The idea that people can have steady and regular information about Islam by only reading the Qur'an is open to question. Every reader makes use of the Qur'an within the scope of his or own interests, knowledge, and specialties and understands it in a distinct way. This understanding also plays a role in the Muslim individual's self-understanding. But we cannot ignore the difficulties that can be caused by reading the Qur'an for individuals who have not experienced a serious and regular enlightenment period regarding the kind of book the Qur'an is. The idea that everyone strives to create his own Islam does not comply with the character of the Qur'an and the ideal tradition of Muslims.

The Qur'an has characteristics that take into account the levels of perception, cultural codes, and living contexts of the people in a certain period of history. Thus, it may not match the mental and informational world of the modern reader in every statement it makes. Viewing the Qur'an as a source and communicating its meaning in a healthy environment requires academic and intellectual effort. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the need of intellectual contributions in the effective communication of the meaning of the Qur'an.

The Importance of Knowing the Relationship between the Divine Words and the First Addressees
The points above must be given consideration in connection with the importance and value of the method by which meaning is approached. In this respect, Qur'anic readings that grant it full authority as the major source of Islam will be explored. Before broaching that subject, we should ascertain the relationship between the first addressees and the Qur'an during the revelation period.

The Qur'an was a message that met the needs and concerns of its addressees, related the concrete facts of the world in which they lived and gave examples from that world. It com-
municated its message by using actual situations in which humans found themselves. For example, the addressees were polytheists, and the Qur'an spoke about the negatives of polytheism. Some people buried their daughters alive, and Allah told them that they would have to give an account of this after death. Some of them persecuted the Prophet, and the Qur'an cursed them. At a certain point, the prophet did not show appropriate interest in a visually handicapped person, and Allah drew his attention to this. In wartime, the Qur'an invited people to join the war. It presented a solution to a woman who was having problems with her husband. The polytheists talked pedantically to the prophet, and Allah criticized their behavior. The Qur'an described paradise by giving examples from worldly pleasures. Christians and Jews were their neighbors, and thus verses dealing with their relations to these groups were also sent down. The Qur'an said nothing about Hinduism and Buddhism.

One could go on listing examples. The first addressees were in living and personal contact with it, and thus language, culture, time, and place presented no handicap. In a sense, the text and its subject were in unison; the text and the context existed side by side. In this respect, the Qur'an's addressees did not have any difficulty understanding what Allah meant. They were aware of which verse was sent down for which reason and in which situation. The Sahaba (Companions of the Prophet) asked questions to which the answers were revealed in the Qur'an. Their questions were pertinent to them: menstruation, the situation of women, orphans, how plunder was to be distributed, even the movement of the moon. They received answers to all these questions.

The Method of Communication with the Text after the Prophet's Death

The first addressees were deprived of the Prophet's unparalleled leadership when the revelation ended and he died. They continued to live their religion with the help of the revealed verses, with the fresh memories of the Prophet's guidance and their understanding of the contexts of the verses. They were without the direct guidance of both God and the Prophet. Nevertheless, they carried for a time by means of this heritage since they were very familiar with the environment into which the
Qur'an had been sent down and with the character of the prophet.

In time, however, new generations arose who did not know the context in which the Qur'an and its revelation emerged, so their perception of the Qur'an and their understanding were not the same as that of the Sahaba. In this context, the second and third generations benefited from the Sahaba who knew the context of the Qur'an better. In other words, the people tried to fill the gaps that emerged as a result of not knowing the relationship between the text and its context through the help of what they learned from the Sahaba.

Incidentally, the first Muslims came into close contact with other cultures within a short time. This meant that people who did not know Arabic were becoming part of the Arab milieu. Knowledge and experience were being transferred in their own historical conditions under these circumstances.

For a balanced and accurate view of the Qur'an's revelatory purposes, the transfer of necessary information and observations was essential. So, preliminary information learned from the Sahaba and sometimes qualified complementary information were shared with the subsequent generations. This fact enables us at least to conclude that the next generations needed to enter into an enlightenment period in order to communicate the meaning of the Qur'an and the heritage of the prophet soundly. For example, they produced an original methodology called "Islamic law," which has an exceptional place in the history of religious traditions. In addition, the glossators revealed the meaning of the Qur'an in the context of its period of revelation with the help of historical and linguistic methods and information learned from the Sahaba.

Hadith scholars were working precisely and scientifically on the classification and criticism of the sayings of the Prophet, developing criteria for differentiating the trustworthy hadiths from the untrustworthy ones. Philosophers evaluated the ideas developed by the Greek philosophers in the areas of existence, knowledge, morality, and aesthetics especially and brought the Muslim world and philosophy together. That is to say, during the first centuries, the relationship of the Muslims with the Qur'an consisted of discreet, scholarly, and intellectual studies.
THE QUR'AN AND THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

Need for a New Search
As mentioned above, the attempt by every Muslim to understand the Qur’an is commendable. But the need for separate specialization and a period to deepen one’s understanding in both science and thinking should be emphasized. Such a need requires a proper esteem for the statement by God in the Yusuf sura (12), verse 76: “But over all endued with knowledge is one, the All-Knowing." We have seen that this is the content of knowledge and thinking when summarizing the historical process.

The appearance in Muslim history of different views by scribes, exegetes, theologians, sufis, and philosophers indicates that, historically speaking, it is virtually impossible to see Islam as imposing only one perception and only one view. As academics today, we can evaluate the comments offered in history and reach some conclusions. We can see the inconsistent arguments of the scholars and philosophers in history, but this knowledge does not open the way to valuable discussion because all of them thought within their own horizons, and, with the aid of scholarship and thinking, they transformed the information they received and produced values. Through their work, human structures and institutions were established, lifestyles were created, and new cities and new civilizations were founded. Therefore, we should make use of these contributions and build on them to reveal new scholarly and philosophical efforts.

Contemporary Islamologists and Muslim philosophers are supposed to produce methods while showing their own understanding and explanations instead of replicating previous methods. In order to establish realistic, compatible, and rational bridges between the Qur’an that will continue to guide humanity until the Day of Judgment, serious scholarly and philosophical work is needed. This task is impossible to ignore. Although scholars are attempting to fulfill this responsibility and are proposing methods, it is not yet possible to say that this search has

2 The texts from the Qur’an are taken from A. Yusuf Ali’s translation.
reached the point at which it can transform the teaching and learning culture in religious education.

The Communicative Model of Teaching

Learning about the Text and Learning from the Text

The methods and approaches for using Qur'anic texts in Islamic education are still very new. The current approach to Qur'anic education in Turkey includes three types: selected subjects are supported by Qur'anic verses, conclusions are drawn on the basis of the evaluation of the verses related to the subject, or students simply memorize the group of verses.

None of these methods are sufficient to transform the students' relationship with the holy texts into effective learning. That the Qur'an is not a text that can be studied and communicated with but a text that is to be memorized and that supports beliefs is a difficulty that should be surmounted in education. This creates an obstacle in understanding, and students fall into a situation where they are not allowed to think about anything other than what they are being told. They consider the Qur'an to be "beyond reflection," and this lack of permission to reflect paves the way for repeating the interpretation of historical and cultural authorities. This way of learning about the text lacks depth and does not enable the students to reflect on the aspect of the relationship between life and Islam. While these three existing avenues can be accepted in learning about the Qur'an in a "confessional context," the challenge today in a "pluralistic context" is the need to learn from the Qur'an and to broaden the students' understanding of the text.

Attitudes toward Contextualization

The model proposed for Islamic teaching in religious education encompasses two elements: epistemology and pedagogy.

1. Epistemology is the study of what is known and how what is known can be known. Any concept of learning from religion depends on being clear about what teachers know about it.

Teachers should have mastery of the content of their subject. In Islamic religious education, content seems to be an area that is not clear enough in teachers' minds. We need to develop an ex-
planetary theological framework to enable teachers to present
the content in an appropriate way so that pupils can learn about
it and from it.

Teachers should create a theological framework within a
chronological and historical context. To understand a Qur'anic
verse, there must be some who know the Arab Peninsula, the
context in which the Qur'an was revealed, in respect to its geo-
graphical, cultural, social, political, economic and religious as-
pects. The historical context must be known in order to under-
stand the Qur'an better, which was revealed to be understood
with facts and culture playing an obvious role in the formation
of the divine text. The sequence of events and dates are im-
portant in ascertaining the relationship between the events,
since the chronology is an important key for the interpretation
in determining the reasons and effects. The events in history
can be explained in the context of causality. The events have a
background. It is not possible to analyze any event, unless this
background is enlightened, and that can be achieved only by
following chronology. Although it is not easy to date the
Qur'an, a chronology can be accomplished largely in the light
of sources for the history of Islam.

When we look at the Qur'an chronologically, we see that
there are chapters and verses revealed in the Meccan and Me-
dinan periods. There are radical differences, as far as the con-
cepts are concerned, between the Meccan and Medinan suras,
and the teacher should be aware of this fact.

2. Pedagogy is the communication of and critical reflection
on what is known. Here theological foundations of the
content must be secured to provide the learners a base
on which to reflect.

The leading idea of the communicative model is, first, to get the
teachers to think about the historical context of the Qur'anic
verses and, second, to provide them with a universal theo-
logical vision of the text that will allow them to approach the
actual context in which the people stand in a broad perspective.

Thus, people will have the opportunity to encounter the
principles behind the literal meaning of the text and explore
what social position their faith attributes to itself in a pluralist
society. The advantage of this religious pedagogy is that plural-
ity is taken seriously and religious knowledge needs to be contextualized for transformation and change.

We will now turn to the implementation of the communicative model of teaching for teacher training by taking the Qur'anic concept of "the people of the book" (ahl’el-kitab) as an example.

What Does the Qur'an Say about "the People of the Book"?
Epistemological Framework

The Qur'an speaks about the religious groups known to the original addressees in the time in which the Qur'an was revealed. These groups of people are polytheists, people of the book (Jews and Christians), magians, and Sabians, and these groups are clearly mentioned in the Qur'an. Those mentioned most often are polytheists and the people of the book.

The person who supported Muhammad and understood that Muhammad was a prophet during the first period of revelation was a Christian named Varaka bin Nevfel. He said that the angel who appeared to Muhammad had also appeared to the previous prophets, pointing out that Muhammad had been visited by the same source. Information provided by the Qur'an shows us that, throughout history, Allah shared information with some select persons via a private and secret way. Verses 163-65 of the An-Nisa' sura (4) highlight this truth:

We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him; we sent inspiration to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms.

Of some messengers We have already told thee the story; of others We have not;—and to Moses Allah spoke direct;—

Messengers who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind, after (the coming) of the messengers, should have no plea against Allah. For Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.

As can be deduced from these verses, Allah gave privileges to Muhammad as He did to the other prophets previously. This is why Muhammad's prophethood is not an invention. In fact, this truth is clearly stated in verse 9 of the Ahqaf sura (46): "Say:
I am not an innovation among the messengers, nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow but that which is revealed to me by inspiration; I am but a Warner open and clear.”

The society Muhammad was sent to was a polytheistic one. This situation is pointed out in verse 6 of the Ya Sin sura (36): “In order that thou mayest warn a people, whose fathers were not warned, and who therefore remain heedless (of the Signs of Allah).” The Prophet Muhammad was sent to introduce Allah, who is also the source of the people of the book, with His true attributes revealed to them. Muhammad shared the information of the divine source with them.

Since the source is the same, the core and content of the message that prophets communicate to their societies would of course be similar. Within this context, the similarity between the Qur'an and the previous holy books is not surprising, since they are all words of Allah. This similarity naturally invited a close relationship. For instance, people of the book were categorized in the same group as Muslims in verse 31 of the Muddaththir sura (74). Such verses motivated Muslims to feel close to the people of the book.

Other examples include the beginning verses of the Al-Rum sura (30). The battles between the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires started and continued for decades before the prophethood of Muhammad. In 613, a war broke out between these two empires, with Iran emerging as the victor. When the news of this victory reached Mecca, the polytheists were very pleased because the pyromaniac Iranians (who, like themselves, were not people of the book) had won instead of the people of the book whose values were similar to those Muhammad endorsed and were from the same source. This event raised suspicions about the reality of the ground on which Muhammad stood. They boasted against the Muslims after this event and tried to decrease Muhammad’s effectiveness and force. The beginning verses of the Al-Rum sura were sent down at this:

Alif lam mim. The Romans have been defeated—In a land close by; but they, (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious—Within a few years. With Allah is the Command, in the past and in the Future; on that Day shall the Believers rejoice—With the help of Allah. He gives
victory to whom He will, and He is Exalted in Might, Most Merciful It is the promise of Allah. Never does Allah fail from His promise: but most men know not

These verses refer to the above-mentioned war and the good news that the Byzantines would win in the near future and that the Muslims would be pleased. As a matter of fact, this promise of Allah was fulfilled in 622. The above verses show that there are profound links between Muslims and the people of the book. The Qur'an viewed their sadness as Muslims' sadness and their happiness as Muslims' happiness.

One of the matters that reflect this warm relation is the relation between the Qur'an and the previous holy books and the complimentary statements about the previous holy books. It is appropriate to list the related verses.

Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord Most High, Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion; Who hath measured, and granted guidance; And Who bringeth out the (green and luscious) pasture, And then doth make it (but) swathy stubble. By degrees shall We teach thee (the Message), so thou shalt not forget, Except as Allah wills: for He knoweth what is manifest and what is hidden. And We will make it easy for thee (to follow) the simple (Path) Therefore give admonition in case the admonition profits (the hearer) He will heed who fears: But it will be avoided by the most unfortunate one, who will enter the Great Fire, in which he will then neither die nor live. But he will prosper who purify himself, and remembers the name of his Guardian-Lord, and prays Nay (behold), ye prefer the life of this world; But the Hereafter is better and more enduring. And this is in the Books of the earliest (Revelation).—The Books of Abraham and Moses (Al-A'la [87]: 1-19)

The verses above emphasize Allah's supremacy, internal purification, and belief in the afterlife. These issues are the values that were also highlighted in the previous holy books. Some of the complimentary words about the previous holy books are given below.

Those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures),—in
the Law and the Gospel—for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honor him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him,—it is they who will prosper. (Al-A'raf [7]: 157)

We did reveal to Moses the Book after We had destroyed the earlier generations, (to give) Insight to men, and Guidance and Mercy, that they might receive admonition: (Al-Qasas [28]: 43)

And before this, was the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy: and this Book confirms (it) in the Arabic tongue; to admonish the unjust, and as Glad Tidings to those who do right (Al-Ahqaf [46]: 12)

No just estimate of Allah do they make when they say: “Nothing doth Allah send down to man (by way of revelation)” Say: “Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought?—a light and guidance to man: But ye make it into (separate) sheets for show, while ye conceal much: (of its contents): therein were ye taught that which ye knew not—neither ye nor your fathers.” Say: “Allah (sent it down)”, then leave them to plunge in vain discourse and trifling. (Al-An'am [6]: 91)

In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the criterion (for judgment), and a Light and a Message for those who would do right (Al-Anbiya' [21]: 48)

And remember: We gave Moses the Scripture and the Criterion (Between right and wrong): There was a chance for you to be guided aright (Al-Baqara [2]: 53)

Can ye (O ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you? Seeing that a party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it (Al-Baqara [2]: 75)

It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down
the Torah (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgment between right and wrong). Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah will suffer the severest penalty, and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution. (Al-Iman [3]: 3-4)

As can be seen from these verses, the Qur'an defines the previous holy books as light illuminating humanity, providing mercy, counsel, and guidance for them. It considers them to be the words of Allah and sources distinguishing right from wrong. This indicates that Allah does not have a negative opinion of the sources of the people of the book. Within this context, the constructive relationship between the Qur'an and the people of the book is evident, which naturally led to better communication between Muslims and these people.

The Qur'an states that it confirms the previous holy books in the following verses:

Siy: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe (Al-Baqara [2]: 97)

(I have come to you), to attest the Torah which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear Allah, and obey me. (Al-Iman [3]: 50)

To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety. (Al-Ma'ida [5]: 48)

That which We have revealed to thee of the Book is the Truth—confirming what was (revealed) before it: for Allah is assuredly—with respect to His Servants—well acquainted and Fully Observant. (Fatih [35]: 31)

These verses point out that the people of the book and their scholars (the learned people) should be trusted. In other words, it is stated that not only their books but also the knowledge of some of their scholars are trustworthy.
Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds: With it came down the Truthful Spirit—I o thy heart, that thou mayest admonish. In the perspicuous Arabic tongue Without doubt it is (announced) in the revealed Books of former peoples. Is it not a Sign to them that the Learned of the Children of Israel knew it (as true)? (Ash-Shu'ara' [26]: 192-97)

If thou went in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee: the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in no wise of those in doubt. (Yunus [10]: 94)

Before thee also, the messengers We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration: If ye know this not, ask of those who possess the Message. (Al-Anbiya' [21]: 7)

And that those on whom knowledge has been bestowed may learn that the (Qu'ran) is the Truth from thy Lord, and that they may believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it: for verily Allah is the Guide of those who believe, to the Straight Way. (Al-Haj [22]: 54)

These verses advised that the people of the book be consulted in order to confirm some information. This supplies proofs from history against the polytheists. The Qur'an, since it gives similar information to the previous books, uses historical proofs rather than the inspiration to support its assertions subsequently.

In contrast to the above, however, the Qur'an later implies that some of the scholars of the people of the book cannot be trusted. The Qur'an also says that they interpret their books in an arbitrary way and that they manipulate the divine message. Some of these verses are as follows:

Of the Jews there are those who displace words from their (right) places, and say: “We hear and we disobey”; and “Hear, may you not hear”; and “Raina”; with a twist of their tongues and a slander to Faith. If only they had said: “We hear and we obey”; and “Do hear”; and “Do look at us”; it would have been better for them, and more proper; but Allah hath cursed them for their Unbelief; and but few of them will believe. (An-Nisa' [4]: 46)
But because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard: they change the words from their (right) places and forget a good part of the message that was sent them, nor will thou cease to find them—barring a few—ever bent on (new) deceits: but forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds): for Allah loveth those who are kind. (Al-Ma'ida [5]: 13)

O Messenger! let not those grieve thee, who race each other into unbelief: (whether it be) among those who say “We believe” with their lips but whose hearts have no faith; or it be among the Jews,—men who will listen to any lie,—will listen even to others who have never so much as come to thee. They change the words from their (right) places: they say, “If ye are given this, take it, but if not, beware!” If any one’s trial is intended by Allah, thou hast no authority in the least for him against Allah. For such—it is not Allah’s will to purify their hearts. For them there is disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter a heavy punishment. (Al-Ma'ida [5]: 41)

As can be seen from the above verses, some of the scholars of the people of the book attempted to interpret the information contained in their books wrongly for personal benefit. This reveals that some of them should not be trusted. This distrust and criticism is not directed at the books sent down by Allah but at those who interpret the books. The Qur'an mentions malicious and unreliable scholars among the people of the book along with the well-meaning and dependable ones. Further clarification is rendered by giving the translation of some related verses.

Those to whom We have given the Book rejoice at what hath been revealed unto thee: but there are among the clans those who reject a part thereof. Say: “I am commanded to worship Allah, and not to join partners with Him. Unto Him do I call, and unto Him is my return.” (Ar-Ra’d [13]: 36)

Not all of them are alike: Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (for the right): They rehearse the Signs of Allah all night long, and they prostrate themselves in ador-
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... They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works: They are in the ranks of the righteous. (Al-Imran [3]: 113-14)

Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say, "We are Christians": because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant. And when they listen to the revelation received by the Messenger, thou wilt see their eyes overflow with tears, for they recognize the truth: they pray: "O our Lord! We believe; write us down among the witnesses What cause can we have not to believe in Allah and the truth which has come to us, seeing that we long for our Lord to admit us to the company of the righteous? And for this their prayer hath Allah rewarded them with Gardens, with rivers flowing underneath,—their eternal home. Such is the recompense of those who do good." (Al-Ma'ida [5]: 82-85)

Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless thou constantly pressest demanding, because, they say, "there is no call on us (to keep faith) with these ignorant (people)." But they tell a lie against Allah, and (well) they know it. (Al-Imran [3]: 75)

These verses state that there are good-hearted, dependable people whose communication with Allah is sincere as well as undependable people among the people of the book. These verses emphasize that it would be shortsighted for Muslims to consider all people of the book in one category. They are not to be classified under one category. It would be a right choice to reflect this nuance in their relationship with them.

The Qur'an forsees debate with the people of the book. It is normal to have debate and disputes about belief between people of different religions. It happened both at the time Qur'an was sent down and later. At present as well, one can see that cultures compete and struggle among themselves, some-
times leading to war. At the time when the Qur'an was sent down, there were debates with the people of the book. The Qur'an emphasized the form of these debates. For instance, this issue was mentioned in verse 46 of the An kabut (29) sura:

And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except in the best way, unless it be with those of them who do wrong; but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you. Our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we submit (in Islam)."

It is advised that debates be conducted in a good way. In the end, the similarities and commonalities were highlighted since all people of the book believe in the same God. In verse 64 of the Al-'Imran (3) sura, it is said:

Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)."

In this verse, the commonalities with the people of the book were highlighted and they were called to refer to these common terms.

We should mention Muhammad's meeting with the Nencran Christians. In the ninth year of the Migration, a group of 60 Christians came to Medina from Nencran in Yemen and debated with Muhammad about Allah and Jesus. Muhammad talked with them at length and showed them hospitality. He allowed them to worship in the prayer room. The debate was conducted in an excellent fashion. It is well known that the beginning verses of the Al-'Imran (3) sura were sent down after this event. This first meeting of Muhammad with Christian ecclesiastics is a good example for Muslims.

In the Medina years, Muslims had political and social relations with the Jews in particular. After the Migration, three Jewish tribes living in Medina came to an agreement with Muslims. Within this context, Jews were an important part of the sociopolitical structure of Medina. They also participated in the polit-
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After a while, the Jews did not abide by the agreement and conspired against Muhammad and his friends by cooperating with the polytheists and the hypocrites among the Muslims. They carried out such attempts sometimes secretly and sometimes in an open way. This had an adverse effect on relations between the Jewish tribes and Muslims. In the end, Muhammad had to go to war against them and sent a tribe to exile.

On the other hand, Muslims had to battle the Christian Byzantines as well. Satisfactory explanations were made above when we evaluated the verses related to wars. Looking at the core explanations, it can be understood that these fights and battles were mainly the result of the struggles for political sovereignty. The reason for the battles was not because they were Christians or Jews but broke out as the result of the political and economic relations between different social and political groups. Islam does not propose going to war with people of different religions unless there is a security problem. The Qur'an even prohibits saying bad things about the holy elements of other religions. Verse 108 of the Al-An'am (6) sura says:

Revel not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord, and He shall then tell them the truth of all that they did.

On the other hand, as is emphasized above in verse 48 of the Al-Ma'idah (5) sura, Allah provides a way and law for all communities and uses this as a test. The important thing is the competition in doing good. Some of the verses advise against having Christian and Jewish friends because they are from a very different social and political group, rather than because they have a different faith. This kind of advice is related entirely to security and defense in history, and it does not anticipate a division between the believers.

Theological Foundations

First is respect for diversity (if Allah so willed, He could make you all one people). The Qur'an associates the different faiths and acceptance of the people with the desire of Allah because Allah desires that people accept and internalize His acceptance
and the moral and humanistic values with their free will. Having different faiths and acceptance is a natural result of Allah’s creation of humans with free will. In this respect, the main target for the faith groups is to compete in doing good. Let us now look at the verses in question.

Allah alone can show the right path, but there are ways that turn aside: if Allah Had willed, He could have guided all of you. (An-Nahl [16]: 9)

If Allah so willed, He could make you all one people: But He leaves straying whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases: but ye shall certainly be called to account for all your actions. (An-Nahl [16]: 93)

If their spinning is hard on thee, yet if thou wast able to seek a tunnel in the ground or a ladder to the skies and bring them a Sign,—(what good?) If it were Allah’s Will, He could gather them together unto true guidance: so be not thou amongst those who are a waysed by ignorance (and impatience)! (Al-An’am [6]: 35)

If it had been Allah’s will, they would not have taken false gods: but We made thee not one to watch over their doings, nor art thou set over them to dispose of their affairs. (Al-An’am [6]: 107)

Say: “With Allah is the argument that reaches home: if it had been His Will, He could indeed have guided you all.” (Al-An’am [6]: 149)

If it had been thy Lord’s Will, they would all have believed,—all who are on earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe? (Yunus [10]: 99)

If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one People: but they will not cease to differ. (Hud [11]: 118)

If Allah had so willed, He could have made them a single people: but He admits whom He will to His Mercy; and the Wrong-doers will have no protector nor helper. (Ash-Shura [42]: 8)

As can be seen from the above verses, the system Allah envisions for humankind is that they live a life based on their
choices. Possessing infinite power, Allah could have arranged it
so that all people would accept Him naturally and internalize
humanitarian and moral values. But He gave them the power to
make their own choices by giving them wisdom and will. Hu-
manity was created to have opinions on the nature of existence
based on created things. Furthermore, He facilitated the way for
people to find the truth by sending prophets and holy books as
well as the natural verses and signs found in nature. Under
these circumstances, people are set free to accept or deny the
existence of Allah. In fact, the reason of the divine carrot and
stick lies in this reality of humankind.

A human being is a responsible creature and will face the
results of the things she or he did. If she or he wishes, she or he
will believe and do good, or she or he will not believe and will
do evil. The above verses point out that the nature of human-
kind and environmental factors—in other words the historical
field of existence determines and affects factors in people’s
faith. People can have different faiths and beliefs through the
influence by the aforesaid factors. This is also what Allah wants
and that this state of affairs should not be viewed as strange.

Muslims, of course, since they regard the faith, worship,
and moral system of their religion as the most accurate, desire
that people of other faiths join them, and to this end they intro-
duce and teach their religion, trying to reach all people. But
they do not act against the will of Allah and do not compel peo-
ple regarding faith issues.

To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive
together (as in a race) towards all that is good. Wheresoever
ye are, Allah will bring you together. For Allah hath power
over all things. (Al-Baqara [The Cow]: 148)

To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the
scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so
judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and
follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that
hath come to thee. To each among you have we prescribed a
Law and Open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have
made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in
what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues.
The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you
the truth of the matters in which ye dispute. (Al-Ma‘ida [5]: 48)

Both of the above verses state that Allah gave a law and a way for each community and that each community has its own values and lifestyle. It is also emphasized that peoples’ having different ways and laws is a result of Allah’s will. It is said that the important thing is the success of doing good, and practicing virtues and values for the good of humanity. The resolutions in these verses were made particularly with respect to relations with the people of the book.

The opportunities and information based on the divine inspiration given by Allah is to test the people. They will be watched and followed as to the extent to which they are doing good, meaningful, and proper things. Therefore, it can be concluded from these verses that differences do not have to produce conflict; instead, differences may be the reason of a sweet competition of doing things for the good of humanity in the field of humanitarian and moral values.

Second is respect for human freedom (Let there be no compulsion in religion) The Qur’an does not endorse compelling people to believe in Islam, since it teaches that people have different faiths and values as a result of Allah’s will. There are many verses in the Qur’an on this issue. The following are some examples.

We know best what they say; and thou art not one to compel them by force. So admonish with the Qur’an such as fear My Warning! (Qaf [50]: 45)

Say: “Truly am I a Warner: no god is there but Allah, the One, Supreme and Irresistible” (Sad [38]: 65)

Only this has been revealed to me: that I am to give warning plainly and publicly. (Sad [38]: 70)

Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion to His servant, that it may be an admonition to all creatures... (Al-Furqan [25]: 1)

Thou art no other than a warner. Verily We have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner: and there never was a people,
without a warner having lived among them (in the past) (Fatir [35]: 23-24)

And to rehearse the Qur'an: and if any accept guidance, they do it for the good of their own souls, and if any stray, say: "I am only a Warner." (An-Naml [27]: 92)

Say: "O ye men! Now Truth hath reached you from your Lordl those who receive Guidance, do so for the good of their own souls; those who stray, do so to their own loss: and I am not (set) over you to arrange your affairs." (Yunus [10]: 108)

But if any reject Faith, let not his rejection grieve thee: to Us is their return, and We shall tell them the truth of their deeds: for Allah knows well all that is in (men's) hearts. (Lukman [31]: 23)

And those who take as protectors others besides Him,—Allah doth watch over them; and thou arst not the disposer of their affairs (Ash-Shura [42]: 6)

If then they run away, We have not sent thee as a guard over them. Thy duty is but to convey (the Message). And truly, when We give man a taste of a Mercy from Us, he doth exult thereat, but when some ill happens to him, on account of the deeds which his hands have sent forth, truly then is man ungrateful! (Ash-Shura [42]: 48)

Thou arst not one to manage (their) affairs (Al-Gashiyya [88]: 22)

The worshippers of false gods say: "If Allah had so willed, we should not have worshipped aught but Him—neither we nor our fathers,—nor should we have prescribed prohibitions other than His." So did those who went before them. But what is the mission of messengers but to preach the Clear Message? (An-Nahl [16]: 35)

And the Unbelievers say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" But thou art truly a warner, and to every people a guide. (At-Ra’d [13]: 7)

Say: "O men! I am (sent) to you only to give a Clear Warning." (Hajj [22]: 49)
Verily, We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner: But of thee no question shall be asked of the companions of the Blazing Fire. (Al-Baqara [2]: 119)

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects Taghut (evil) and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things. (Al-Baqara [2]: 256)

The above verses discuss primarily the duties of Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad's main duty is to communicate the verses he receives from Allah via revelation to addressees. In other words, his most important duty is to proclaim. He was sent to people as a Messenger and Warner. The Prophet Muhammad is not the agent and protector of the addressees. He is not responsible for their wrong choices. The truth was sent by Allah, and the addressees either believe or do not believe through their own free will. If they do not believe, Muhammad does not have to take responsibility for this; he is not to force them. He does not compel them to believe when he communicates the message because there is no compulsion in religion.

Religion cannot exist where freedom does not exist. Religion is the result of people choosing through their own free will. People choose different faiths on the basis of their will. At the present time, nobody is compelled to believe in Islam and nobody is compelled after they become Muslims because the final responsibility of the servant is to Allah, according to Islam. One of the strongest effects of the servant in fulfilling his/her responsibility to the community and other people is his or her faith in Allah. The responsibility of the individual living in a legal system is to obey the rules of that system under the political and administrative authorities. The same can be said for Islam in that Allah will reward and punish each human person in the afterlife after judging each person. Consequently, the results of the individual's choices should be based on his or her free will.
Conclusion

Effective learning does not occur by presenting the literal meaning of the Qur'anic verses nor by associating them with some definitions or prescribed information. The more active way of learning proposed here defines the education as a communicative activity. The nature of communication between the teacher and the Qur'anic text is central to this approach. This paper addressed two concerns regarding this communication. First, taking the historical context into consideration is of vital importance for reaching a broader understanding, and, second, there is the urgent need of contextualization of religious knowledge in the light of the universal principles of the Qur'an.

Following the proposed model, the conclusion about the people of the book is: the Qur'an, while it calls the humanity to tawhid, belief in an afterlife, justice, love, peace and moral beauties, does not exclude people from having different religions and faiths. The Qur'an does not propose fighting over religion but recognizes that the reason for war arises from a desire for political sovereignty. The Qur'an considers salvation to be a matter of faith in Allah and belief in life after death and doing good deeds. In this respect, the attitude of excluding people from having different faiths is not approved within the framework of the Qur'an. In fact, Muslims' historical experience contains multiculturalism and multifaith living. The Qur'an sees the differences as a means for a competition in doing things for the good of humanity in the area of humanitarian and moral values.