



TEVHID-I TEDRISAT AND THE POLICY OF ISLAMIC TEACHER'S DEVELOPMENT IN TÜRKIYE (1924-1948)

TEVHID-I TEDRISAT DAN KEBIJAKAN PENGEMBANGAN GURU PENDIDIKAN AGAMA ISLAM DI TURKI (1924-1948)

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law on the development of religious education and teacher training in Türkiye, focusing on the law's historical background, institutional restructuring, and influence on teacher development. Historically, Tevhid-i Tedrisat is a policy of "Educational Unification" in Türkiye that was inaugurated in 1924 to unite traditional Islamic education in madrasas and secular education in modern schools. This study addresses how Tevhid-i Tedrisat reshaped religious education, centralizing control under the Ministry of Education, and the resulting implications for religious education teachers' roles and competencies. Utilizing historical institutionalism as a theoretical framework, this research adopts a qualitative approach, examining primary and secondary sources including government documents, academic literature, and archival records. The study reveals that Tevhid-i Tedrisat marked a paradigm shift, as religious education was secularized and integrated into a unified curriculum. Teacher training institutions, such as İlahiyat (Islamic Theology) faculties, were restructured to emphasize pedagogical skill and secular state values, yet gaps persisted in reaching rural areas and adapting to diverse student needs. The findings highlight the complexities of integrating religious education within a secular framework, where curriculum adjustments were influenced by cultural and political shifts. This transformation created both opportunities and limitations for teacher development, underscoring challenges in

balancing secular pedagogy with cultural sensitivity. The study concludes that while Tevhid-i Tedrisat significantly shaped the foundation of Turkey's educational system, ongoing teacher training reforms could benefit from localized adaptations, inclusive pedagogy, and historical awareness.

Keywords: *Islamic Education; Religious Teacher Development; Tevhid-i Tedrisat*

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji pengaruh regulasi *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* terhadap pengembangan pelatihan pendidik agama Islam di Türkiye, dengan fokus pada latar belakang sejarah undang-undang tersebut, pengaruh restrukturisasi kelembagaan, dan pengaruhnya terhadap pengembangan pendidik. *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* adalah kebijakan “Unifikasi Pendidikan” yang diresmikan pada tahun 1924 untuk menyatukan pendidikan tradisional Islam di madrasah dan pendidikan sekuler di sekolah modern. Studi ini membahas bagaimana *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* mengubah pendidikan agama, memusatkan kendali di bawah Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional Türkiye, dan dampaknya terhadap peran serta kompetensi pendidik agama Islam. Dengan memanfaatkan institusionalisme sejarah sebagai kerangka teori, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan mengkaji sumber-sumber primer dan sekunder termasuk dokumen pemerintah dan literatur akademis. Studi ini mengungkapkan bahwa *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* menandai perubahan paradigma, ketika pendidikan agama disekularisasi dan diintegrasikan ke dalam kurikulum terpadu. Lembaga pelatihan pendidik, seperti fakultas *İlahiyat*, serta direstrukturisasinya untuk menekankan keterampilan pedagogis dan nilai-nilai negara sekuler, namun kesenjangan masih terjadi terkait adaptasi dengan beragam kebutuhan peserta didik. Temuan ini menyoroti kompleksitas dalam mengintegrasikan pendidikan agama ke dalam kerangka sekuler, di mana penyesuaian kurikulum dipengaruhi oleh pergeseran budaya dan politik. Transformasi ini menciptakan peluang dan keterbatasan bagi pengembangan guru, sehingga menggarisbawahi tantangan dalam menyeimbangkan pedagogi sekuler dengan kepekaan budaya. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* secara signifikan membentuk fondasi sistem pendidikan Turki, namun reformasi pelatihan pendidik yang telah berlangsung terjadi secara dinamik serta penuh kesadaran atas adaptasi lokal, pedagogi inklusif, dan kesadaran sejarah.

Kata kunci: *Pendidikan Agama Islam; Pengembangan Pendidik; Tevhid-i Tedrisat*

INTRODUCTION

The period from 1924 to 1948 laid the foundation for Türkiye's secular educational framework, reshaping religious education and teacher development in ways that continue to resonate today (M. Zengin, 2017). By analyzing this transformative phase, researchers display the understanding of the long-term effects of the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* (Unification of Education) Law and its impact on religious instruction within a secular state. This inquiry is especially relevant given the ongoing discussions in Türkiye about balancing secularism and religious identity in education. The Turkish experience of secularization in education presents a unique case in global studies of religion and secularism, as few countries have attempted such an extensive reorientation in such a short period (Yelaldi, 2023).

The shift from a religiously guided education system to a secular one provoked a strong reaction. Traditionalists viewed this as a threat to Türkiye's Islamic identity, fearing it would lead to the erosion of religious knowledge and Islamic values. Conversely, secular reformers argued that relegating religious instruction would pave the way for scientific, rational thought and bring Türkiye in line with Western models of progress (Yürük, 2015). As religious institutions were dismantled or repurposed, the state tightly controlled religious education, restricting it to very limited and standardized forms within secular schools. This restriction ignited debates over the role of religion in public life and education, a discourse that would evolve as part of the nation's modernization journey.

Based on the topic of regulating religious education policy during 1924-1948 in Türkiye, especially regarding the development of religious education teachers, this research proposes two research questions, namely: 1). How did the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law reshape the objectives of religious education in Türkiye? 2). How did the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law affect the training and role of religious education teachers in Türkiye between 1924 and 1948?

With an emphasis on secularization and the institutional changes in religious education, recent studies have frequently examined *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*'s educational reforms within the larger historical-political context (Alp, 2016; Korukçu, 2001; Yelaldi, 2023). These studies have generally examined the changes' structural and policy effects, though frequently within broad contexts related to Turkish educational or religious reforms. While there's a wealth of historical-political analysis, fewer studies delve into the specific implications of these reforms on teacher development models or on the training frameworks at the *İlahiyat* (Islamic Theology) Faculty and other institutions, particularly regarding the pedagogical formation and competency standards for religious educators. While recent studies have explored the broad impacts of the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* reforms on Türkiye's educational structure and secularization (Z. S. Zengin, 2002), this study addresses this gap by focusing on the nuanced interaction between the reforms and teacher development during 1924-1948, contributing new insights into the intersection of religious education, secularization, and policy reform in Türkiye.

The study of religious education policy during the formative years of the Turkish Republic (1924-1948) holds significant urgency for two reasons, 1). Understanding the Legacy of Secularization in Modern Türkiye; 2). Re-examining Teacher Development Models in Religious Education. Examining the

evolution of religious education teachers in the early republic reveals how these educators navigated conflicting expectations.

This research uses historical institutionalism as the basis for analyzing the research questions. In order to explain why some institutional pathways and policy decisions remain so durable even when the underlying settings that gave rise to them have altered, historical institutionalism was developed (Pierson, 2016; Sorensen, 2015). The historical dimension as well as the background of educational policy behind Türkiye educational transformation would be analyzed through historical institutionalism's perspective. By utilizing this framework of thinking, this research can contribute to the broader comparative studies of secularism and religious education by showcasing Türkiye's experience as a model of state-driven secular education reform. The findings contribute to ongoing discussions in other nations where religious and secular education converge, especially in those where religious presence in public education is a contentious issue.

The study of historical institutionalism looks at how historical events have shaped institutions, such as educational systems, and how these institutions have influenced behaviors, norms, and practices across time. The theory highlights the concept of "path dependence," which states that choices taken at one point in time influence subsequent events and are hard to remove (Sorensen, 2015). Understanding how the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law influenced Turkey's educational policy and the training of religious teachers over many years is made easier with the help of this framework. Analyzing how the policies of 1924–1948 solidified secular ideas in education and set a precedent that continues to influence contemporary Turkish educational norms and teacher development standards is made possible by historical institutionalism. Lessons from the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* era offer critical insights for current policymaking, where debates over curriculum content, and the balance of religious and secular instruction remain pressing issues.

METHOD

A qualitative historical research approach would be suitable for this study because of the historical emphasis on institutional consequences, teacher development, and policy changes in Türkiye's religious education from 1924 to 1948 (Ahmet, 2020; Arifin, 2018; Khan, 2014a). Using a historical case study design, this research focuses on the years 1924–1948. Examining and

interpreting the effects of the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law's implementation on religious education policy and teacher development in Türkiye is the main goal. The study will look into how educational policies, institutional changes, and ideological movements affect religious educators. This will entail examining the ways in which the law influenced efforts at secularization, teacher preparation, and the long-term effects on religious education in Türkiye.

Capturing the complicated socio-political and ideological aspects of policy change is best accomplished through a qualitative method (Khan, 2014b; Tenny et al., 2017). It enables a thorough examination of government records, archival data, primary historical documents, and pertinent secondary sources. Historical Institutionalism will serve as the study's framework and direct the examination of route dependency, institutional continuity, and the effects of significant policy changes on religious education. This research used the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law article 2 as the primary research resource as well as the academic analyses, books, and journal articles on Türkiye education reforms, religious education, and secularization policies, as well as historical analyses by Turkish historians as the secondary research resources.

Two techniques for data analysis are used in this study, namely document analysis and chronological mapping (Nielsen et al., 2017). Since qualitative document analysis entails analyzing written materials considering the historical context, it is suitable for this study. This contains thematic coding, which finds recurrent themes about state control, religious education, teacher preparation, and secularization. The ideological foundations of the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law and its effects on teacher preparation will also be made clear by discourse analysis, which looks at the language and rhetoric employed in official publications, policy documents, and archival archives. Chronological mapping is the process of arranging historical data in a chronological fashion to show how policies have changed over time, highlighting significant policy shifts and their effects on religious education and teacher preparation.

DISCUSSION

The experience of *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* in Türkiye offers a unique lens to analyze how secular reforms reshape religious education. Comparative perspectives from France and Tunisia reveal both the challenges and opportunities of integrating religious instruction within a secular framework. France's principle of *laïcité* (secularism) enshrines a strict separation of church and state. Religious

content in public schools is limited to cultural and historical perspectives, with little space for faith-based Islamic education (Ibişi, 2022). Teachers in France are trained to emphasize civic values and secular ethics, often at the expense of religious knowledge (Squicciarini, 2020), like the pedagogical focus under Türkiye's *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*. Meanwhile, Tunisia's education system introduced secular reforms aimed at modernizing education. Historically, religious education was reframed to align with civic values (Kırmacı, 2021; McCarthy, 2024), mirroring Türkiye's emphasis on secular ethics. Similarly in Türkiye, educators were reoriented to adopt a secular pedagogical approach, though resistance from religious communities persisted. By situating Türkiye's *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* reforms within a global context, this comparative discussion highlights intersected by the historical institutionalism.

Through the lens of historical institutionalism, this chapter examine the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law's existence, its impact on changing the goals and structure of religious education in Turkey, and its implications for the hiring, training, and role of religious education teachers in Turkey between 1924 and 1948. In political science and sociology, historical institutionalism is a subfield of institutional theory that examines how institutions evolve over time and how past legacies influence contemporary societal norms and practices (Blyth et al., 2016; Fioretos et al., 2016). According to historical institutionalism, institutions are more than just formal structures; they also consist of cultural practices, conventions, and rules that are continuously perpetuated by social norms and laws (Sorensen, 2015).

Historical institutionalism is also used in this study to explain how institutions endure while undergoing progressive adaptation through "layering" processes (Sorensen, 2015). Although religious education continued to exist under a secular system in Türkiye, legislative adjustments (such as the introduction of limited religious teaching) reflect efforts to balance popular demand with the formalized secular framework. As a result, religious educators had to adjust to a framework that demanded that they teach religion from a secular, state-approved standpoint, which presented special difficulties. The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*, which represented the unification of the Turkish educational system, influenced this concept.

This section will divide by three sections: firstly, the historical background of *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*; secondly, *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* and reshaping the structure of religious education in Türkiye; and thirdly, the role of *Tevhid-I Tedrisat* in teacher development

Historical Background: The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*

Bir milletin efradı ancak bir terbiye görebilir. İki türlü terbiye, bir memlekette iki türlü insan yetiştirir. Bu işe, vahdet-i his fikir ve tesanüt gayelirini külliyyen muhildir (Yücel, 1994: 23)

The members of a nation can only receive one form of education. Two types of education will raise two types of people in a country. This is entirely incompatible with the goal of unity in sentiment, thought, and solidarity. (Yücel, 1994: 23)

The foundational urgency and rationale behind the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* (Unification of Education) emphasizes the necessity of a single, unified educational approach to cultivate a cohesive national identity. By advocating for “one form of education,” the idea is that educational unity is essential to build a unified citizenry, which was urgently needed in the early Republic to reinforce national identity following the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Turan, 2019). For the newly founded Republic of Türkiye, which aimed to establish a secular and modern nation-state, maintaining a single educational system was critical to avoid societal fragmentation and to promote a unified understanding of national values and loyalty (Taş, 2019). It was part of broader measures to establish a secular, nationalistic identity for Türkiye following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Şimşek et al., 2012).

The unification policy effectively reduced the influence of religious institutions in education, leading to the closure of many religious schools. Consequently, religious education was limited to certain primary, secondary and tertiary schools and became more regulated within a secular curriculum framework. With the abolition of *madrasas*, traditional pathways for training religious educators were disrupted. The state introduced a new, secular approach to teacher training, leading religious education teachers to navigate a transformed educational landscape where secular norms dominated (Şimşek et al., 2012; Yelaldi, 2023). The aim was to unify all educational institutions under a single, state-controlled system regulated by the Ministry of National Education (*Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı*).

Historically, The Ottoman Empire's education system reflected its religious foundation, namely *medrese* (*madrasa*). *Madrasas* were central institutions for religious and legal education, producing scholars, imams, and judges (Öcal, 2008). However, alongside *madrasas*, secular schools (*mekteps*) also existed, especially during the *Tanzimat* period, which introduced modern educational institutions influenced by European models. The dual system, however, created

educational disparities, where madrasa students were often insulated from the modern subjects introduced in *mekteps*, leading to a split between religious and secular fields of knowledge. By 1923, the Turkish Republic faced the need to bridge this gap in pursuit of a unified, modern nation-state (Öcal, 2008).

In the earlier period of the Republic of Türkiye, they formulate the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law reflected the ideological stance of the republican leadership, which saw secular education as essential to fostering a modern, progressive society (Menküç, 2019). The separation of religious and state affairs was considered critical to ensuring national development without interference from religious authorities (Kul, 2014). The Republican elite envisioned a modernized Türkiye in which education played a key role in cultivating a secular, scientifically minded citizenry loyal to the new state rather than to religious authority. The integration policy for *mektep* and madrasa written in the Article 2:

Madde 2 – Şer'iye ve Evkaf Vekaleti veyahut hususi vakıflar tarafından idare olunan bilcümle medrese ve mektepler Maarif Vekaletine devir ve raptedilmiştir.

Article 2 – All madrasahs and schools administered by the Ministry of Sharia and Foundations or private foundations have been transferred and attached to the Ministry of Education.

The article mandated the transfer of all religious schools and institutions, previously administered by the *Şerriye ve Evkaf Vekaleti* (Ministry of Sharia and Foundations) or private religious foundations, to the central authority of the *Milli Egitim Bakanligi* (Kul, 2014). This policy effectively unified the educational system under a secular administration, reshaping the purpose and training of religious educators within a framework aligned with the Republic's secular and nationalist values. With all religious schools under the *Milli Egitim Bakanligi*, the state gained complete control over religious education and its curriculum, teacher qualifications, and pedagogical methods (Yelaldı, 2023).

On the other hand, the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law* was implied to the secularization of religious education and teacher identity (Yelaldı, 2023). Transferring *madrasa* to the *Milli Egitim Bakanligi* symbolized a major ideological shift in Turkish society, as teachers of religious subjects now operated within a secular educational system. Teachers were no longer seen as religious figures only but as civil servants tasked with delivering education that aligned with the state's secular and nationalist ideals (Korukçu, 2001). This secularization influenced the identity and role of teachers, who had to adopt a more secular professional identity. Religious education teachers were thus

positioned as state representatives rather than community religious leaders, which impacted how they perceived their teaching roles and responsibilities. This shift often required a reorientation of their professional values, as they had to align more closely with state ideologies than with traditional religious instruction (Koç, 2010).

Furthermore, the implementation of Article 2. also transformed the curriculum that religious teachers were expected to deliver. Religious topics, if retained, were reframed to support civic and nationalistic values rather than traditional religious doctrines. As a result, teacher training programs adapted to these new requirements by focusing more on civic education, ethics, and social sciences rather than classical religious studies. This is evidenced by the changing of lesson name toward the Türkiye's culture, such as *Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi* (Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge) (Kiral & Kiral, 2021; Koç, 2010).

Pedagogically, the radical shift created challenges for teachers who were previously trained in traditional madrasahs or by private foundations (Kara, 2017; Kesgin, 2011). Many faced a professional identity crisis, as they had to adapt from being religious instructors with a moral and spiritual focus to becoming secular teachers with a focus on civic and nationalistic ideals. Furthermore, The *Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı* oversight led to a standardized curriculum that promoted the state's values, reducing the influence of religious or private foundations on teacher preparation and classroom content (Kesgin, 2011).

This new approach necessitated a professional reorientation for many religious educators. Redefining their function in the educational system, implementing state-approved curricula, and adjusting to secular training regimens (Kesgin, 2011). Since it required adapting to a radically different conception of education and the function of religious knowledge, this was frequently a challenging shift. To sum up, the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law's Article 2 was crucial in rethinking teacher preparation for religious education in Turkey. The state consolidated authority secularized the curriculum and changed the credentials and identity of religious educators by putting all religious schools under the Ministry of Education.

***Tevhid-i Tedrisat* and Reshaping the Structure of Religious Education in Türkiye**

The government kept limiting religious instruction in the years after the law was passed, especially in the 1930s, when there was no chance for religious content to be included in elementary and secondary school curricula. However, the public's continued demand for religious instruction eventually forced the state to reconsider its policies by the late 1940s (Bilgin, 1996). In order to meet social expectations without undermining the secular framework, restricted religious education classes were reintroduced into secondary schools. The state's position changed significantly with this reintroduction, recognizing the difficulty of balancing secularism in a society with strong religious ties (Döğen, 1992).

The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*'s immediate result was the closing of madrasas, so putting an end to the conventional methods of educating religious scholars and instructors. Previously, these establishments had been the mainstay of religious education, offering the legal and theological instruction required for religious positions in society (Demirbaş, 2021; Demirel, 2009). After these schools closed, a new generation of educators had to figure out how to get training in a system that had become more secularized. It was necessary to reconsider how religious knowledge could be taught in light of the breakdown of old educational infrastructure, particularly to new teachers who were supposed to adhere to the secular paradigm.

Due to the restructuring, religious educators had to assume a new position that involved striking a balance between limited religious instruction and secular pedagogical norms. The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*'s policies established a standard for subsequent educational changes, preserving secularism as a characteristic of the Turkish educational system (Aslan, 2010). The legacy of these reforms, however, also brought attention to the persistent public desire for religious instruction and the ongoing development of laws that might take into account Turkey's dual identity. This time frame shed light on the continuous struggle between secular and religious forces in Turkish society, influencing laws that would shape education in the decades that followed (Alp, 2016).

In 1924, religious education was included in primary school curricula under the title “*Kur'an-ı Kerim ve Din* (Qur'an and Religion Lessons),” but by 1930, the Ministry of National Education introduced a new primary school curriculum without religious education (Aydın, 2000). This gradual phase-out signified a significant shift away from religious instruction in the state's vision

for education, which would have direct implications for teachers who specialized in religious education. For religious teachers, the removal of religion from the curriculum implied that their roles and expertise were increasingly less valued within the official educational system.

The critique that these religious teachers “did not even graduate from *madrasahs*” suggests a perceived inadequacy in their religious qualifications, potentially due to incomplete or inconsistent education in traditional religious institutions (Aydın, 2000). This perception reflects a broader view within the early Republic that religious education and its teachers were outdated or even detrimental to the national goals of modernization (Aydın, 2000). This perception contributed to the declining social status and legitimacy of religious educators. Teachers with incomplete or inadequate religious training were deemed ineffective or even “*harmful in the name of religion*,” which reveals a deep institutional and societal skepticism toward the traditional religious education system and its educators (Menküç, 2019). Given the deficiencies in general culture and pedagogical training, religious teachers who had been trained in the old system faced serious challenges in transitioning to the secularized educational framework (Coşkun, 2012).

Through the historical institutionalism’s lens, the legacy *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* law, especially Article 2 illustrates the complex, path-dependent nature of education reform and its profound effects on teacher development in Türkiye. The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law established the groundwork for secular, state-run education, transforming religious education and teacher preparation in ways that would have long-lasting effects. Historical institutionalism offers a framework for analyzing these changes (Blyth, 2016; Blyth et al., 2016).

The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law was a transformative policy initiated shortly after the founding of the Turkish Republic, as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and other leaders sought to centralize and secularize education to promote a unified, secular Turkish identity (Alp, 2016; Bilgin, 1996). This strategy, which was based on the intention of keeping religion apart from state functions, produced a “path-dependent” trajectory for religious education that had an impact on Turkish education long after it was first implemented. This can be explained by historical institutionalism. These teachers were trained not just in religious subjects but also within a secular pedagogical framework, effectively “locking in” a secular approach to religious education that became difficult to reverse, even as societal demands for religious education continued.

The Role of *Tevhid-I Tedrisat* in Shaping Teacher Development

However, *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* reforms aimed to unify and secularize education, these statements indicate that there was a significant gap between the state's goals and the practical implementation of teacher training. While the goal was to modernize education, the process left many religious teachers without clear professional development pathways, reflecting the struggles and misalignments in early Republic teacher policies.

Historically, In 1915, the program at *Darulmuallimin-i Iptidai* (Acar, 2020), a four-year teacher training institution, offered only minimal pedagogical training — two hours of “*Fenn-i Terbiye*” (pedagogical sciences) in the first three years (Acar, 2020). This limited focus on pedagogy reveals that teacher preparation at the time was insufficient in equipping teachers with modern teaching skills, even as the Empire was undergoing educational reforms. Such minimal pedagogical training contributed to a broader challenge which many teachers entered the profession without adequate formal training in educational methods, leading to a lack of qualified educators in both general and religious education fields. This gap became especially evident when the Republic took over and prioritized a modern, secular education system requiring well-prepared teachers (Aydın, 2000).

During the early republic (1924-1925), religious education was conducted by “unqualified teachers,” indicating a lack of structured qualifications or proper credentials among those responsible for religious instruction (Aydın, 2000). This shortfall points to a lingering influence of Ottoman-era teacher preparation, which did not prioritize comprehensive pedagogical training for religious teachers. This transition created a vacuum in teacher qualifications, as many teachers continued to lack appropriate training or certification. The poor quality of religious instruction may have contributed to the perception that religious education was less effective or even detrimental to the secular goals of the state.

In 1924-1937, related to the transformation of teacher training institutions, there was *Muallim Mektebi* (Teacher School), established during the early Republic, was later renamed *Öğretmen Okulu* (Teacher School) in 1935 (Bilgin, 1996). These schools aimed to centralize and professionalize teacher training, aligning it with the Republic's secular ideals. However, the focus was on producing generalist teachers rather than specialists in religious education. In 1927, the establishment of *Köy Öğretmen Okulu* (Village Teacher Schools) and their transformation into *Köy Enstitüleri* (Village Institutes) in 1937

emphasized preparing teachers to educate rural communities (Acar, 2020; Coşkun, 2012). This institution was essential for expanding access to education across Türkiye and fostering practical, community-oriented teaching. However, religious education was largely absent from these schools, reflecting a state policy to minimize religious influence and promote secularism in rural areas, where religious traditions were strong.

From 1939 onward, no religious education courses were included in the curricula for primary schools or teacher training programs (Aydın, 2000). This complete exclusion of religious instruction from educational institutions reflected the state's prioritization of secular values, but it also left a generation of teachers unprepared to handle religious topics in any formal way. By removing religious education from teacher training, the state effectively secularized the teacher workforce, aiming to reinforce a unified, secular curriculum. This absence of religious education in teacher training programs lasted until 1949, meaning that teachers trained during this decade had no formal preparation in religious subjects (Aydın, 2000). This condition impacted on teacher competence and the role of pedagogy. The lack of pedagogical and religious training left many teachers underprepared to engage with the full spectrum of educational needs in society, especially in communities where religious values remained integral. However, the absence of religious training likely created challenges in meeting the diverse needs of a predominantly Muslim population, where religion played an important social role (Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017; Buyruk, 2021).

The transformation of teacher training from 1924 to 1949 in Türkiye reveals the complex relationship between state ideology and teacher development. Limited pedagogical training in the late Ottoman period left many teachers without adequate preparation, a gap the Republic initially tried to fill with secular, generalized teacher training (Aydın, 2000). By completely removing religious education from teacher training programs from 1939 to 1949, the state sought to secularize education fully, but this decision also marginalized religious educators and limited teachers' abilities to connect with religious values still present in society. The long-term impact of these policies contributed to a professional teaching cadre shaped predominantly by secular principles, creating a lasting legacy in the educational system of Türkiye (Buyruk, 2021; Dag, 2018). Arising discourse about the dynamic of Islamic education in early Republic of Türkiye, the existence of *Imam Hatip* schools become unforgettable issues to be discussed (Altintas, 2020; Junaedi, 2016, 2016). The historical

development of *Imam Hatip* schools and the broader trend of religious education policy changes during Türkiye's early Republic period reveal significant shifts in teacher training and the role of religious educators. According to The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law's fourth article explicitly aimed to open schools that could train civil servants for religious roles, such as imams and preachers. As stated by the fourth article of *Tevhid-i Tedrisat*:

4. madde uyarınca Eğitim Bakanlığı, yüksek din uzmanları yetiştirmek için üniversite bünyesinde bir İlahiyat Fakültesi kuracaktı. Ayrıca, imamlık, hatiplik gibi dinsel hizmetleri görececek memurların yetişmesi için de okullar açılacaktı.

In accordance with Article 4, the Ministry of Education would establish a Faculty of Theology within the university to train high religious experts. In addition, schools would be opened to train civil servants who would perform religious services such as imams and preachers.

This program included the conversion of several *madrasahs* into four-year Imam Hatip Schools, which provided elementary-level Islamic instruction along with more extensive educational changes. In order to bring religious education into line with the Republic's secular values and prepare students for official positions in religious services, this structural shift aimed to modernize and standardize it.

Due to the new Imam Hatip Schools' departure from the Ottoman era's classically trained religious experts, there was a need for educators who could teach a secularized curriculum in addition to being informed about Islamic subjects (Çakmak, 2009; Nor & Ibrahim, 2020). An early attempt to professionalize religious instruction in a contemporary setting was made when these requirements changed, requiring educators to adjust to teaching both religious and secular subjects.

But by 1930, the Imam Hatip Schools were closed, a sign of the public's disinterest and the government's insufficient backing for religious instruction (Dag, 2018; Zahoor & Mustafa, 2021). Reasons for this waning interest may include societal pressure toward secularization and a lack of career opportunities in religious fields. This closure points to a challenge in developing a pool of qualified teachers for religious education. The lack of a formalized career path for religious educators within the public school system and the diminishing role of religious education within state institutions contributed to a decrease in the prestige and appeal of religious teaching as a profession, thereby impacting the development of religious educators. The absence of ethics or religious studies in middle school programs until 1957 and the removal of

religious studies from high school curricula after 1924 illustrate a trend towards secularization in Türkiye's educational policies (Aydın, 2000). The reduction and ultimate elimination of religious education from curricula underscored a broader policy that marginalized religious instruction, contributing to a lack of demand for specialized religious teachers. As a result, teacher training programs increasingly emphasized secular pedagogical methods and subjects, sidelining religious instruction.

In the tertiary level, the first *İlahiyat* (Islamic Theology) Faculty was established namely *Darülfünun* in 1900 as a precursor to institutional religious education in a modernized academic context (Aydın, 2000; Kul, 2014). This faculty, however, was later affected by secular reforms that shifted the focus of education away from religious studies, which were perceived as less relevant in the Republic's national educational mission. While *Darülfünun* offered a foundation for the academic study of theology, its later closure and the redirection of resources toward secular sciences limited the development and formalization of teacher training programs in religious education. This lack of formal theological institutions meant that, for many years, religious teacher development was inconsistent and often undervalued within the broader educational landscape.

In the early 1910s, *Darülfünun* (Istanbul University) reintroduced an *İlahiyat* (Islamic Theology) Faculty, aiming to provide structured religious education at a higher level (Aydın, 2000). However, significant gaps in general education and pedagogical formation were evident in the faculty's program. Without including enough general culture knowledge—which is essential for students hoping to become well-rounded educators in a modernizing society—the curriculum mostly concentrated on religious issues. Graduates' efficacy as teachers was further restricted by their lack of pedagogical training, which left them inadequate to handle the more general duties of teaching and classroom management.

According to this study, the early attempts to create and maintain a strong religious teacher education program in Türkiye encountered several challenges, such as uneven support for the *İlahiyat* Faculty and a lack of focus on general and pedagogical formation. The faculty's re-establishment in 1924 represented a major reform in line with Turkey's secular educational objectives; nonetheless, there were still difficulties in creating a comprehensive curriculum that would equip religious educators to address both contemporary academic and spiritual demands.

The closure of *İlahiyat* Faculty in 1914 highlighted the institutional instability that religious education in Türkiye was experiencing at the time due to the political and social unrest (Buyruk, 2021; Zahoor & Mustafa, 2021). The lack of skilled teachers was made worse by the disruption in training, which left prospective religious educators with few options for formal study. This volatility highlighted the need for a stable, well-organized program that could maintain a pipeline of qualified educators and contributed to a lack of professional development for religious instructors. However, after raising the awareness about how to educate and train the religious teacher of the *İlahiyat* Faculty was reopening at Istanbul *Darülfünun* in 1924 was a critical step in addressing the shortage of qualified religious educators (Nor & Ibrahim, 2020). This faculty was established as part of the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law's broader educational reform, which aimed to modernize and standardize education in Türkiye. According to Coşkun, the program emerged with the "idea of a modern university", indicating a shift toward an approach that valued both religious and secular learning as part of a comprehensive education model (Coşkun, 2012).

Even with the 1924 re-establishment, the *İlahiyat* Faculty continued to face challenges, particularly in the areas of general education and pedagogical skills (Aydın, 2000; Doğan, 1999). Graduates' efficacy and flexibility in teaching positions were constrained by their lack of exposure to contemporary teaching methods and classroom management abilities. The focus on subject matter expertise without sufficient training in educational theory or pedagogy limited their potential as powerful teachers within a contemporary school system.

The founding of the *Darülfünun* provide important insights into Türkiye evolving approach to religious teacher development after *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* from the standpoint of historical institutionalism. With the goal of incorporating religious teacher preparation into a larger, secular educational framework, this institution was essential in the early Republican attempt to modernize religious education (Fioretos et al., 2016; Keohane & Fioretos, 2017). Examining the historical record brings to light the difficulties as well as the developments in religious teacher education. Training religious educators who could support the Republic's secular objectives became imperative after the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* Law was passed in 1924, centralizing and secularizing the educational system. As part of this endeavor, *İlahiyat Fakültesi* was established with the goal of preparing religious education instructors in a manner that was very different from the conventional madrasah system of the Ottoman era (Sorensen, 2015).

The closing of *Darülfünun* in 1933 and the subsequent establishment of Istanbul University represented a significant turning point over time. This choice was a component of the Republic’s larger educational reforms, which sought to modernize established establishments and further integrate secular principles into the curriculum (Blyth et al., 2016; Roberts & Geels, 2019). The Republic further diminished the status and importance of religious education programs in higher education by substituting a university structure that valued secular sciences over theology for *Darülfünun*, which had an impact on the career path for aspiring religious educators.

From the standpoint of historical institutionalism, examining teacher development in the context of religious education in Türkiye, particularly after the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* reform of 1924, shows how the ideological and structural changes in education policy had a major impact on the role, training, and credentials of teachers. Historically, religious education in the Ottoman Empire relied heavily on the *madrassa* system to prepare religious scholars, who would also serve as teachers. This traditional framework influenced early Republic-era religious education, where path dependency—the persistence of legacy structures—limited initial changes to teacher preparation (Blyth et al., 2016; Sonntag & Cardinal, 2015).

Based on the finding above, it can be divided into three periodical phases that reflect significant shifts in policies and practices concerning Islamic education and teacher development in Türkiye during 1924–1948 (table 1).

Table 1.
Tevhid-i Tedrisat’s Implementation on Islamic Education during 1924-1948

No	Year	Phase	Key changes	Impact
1.	1924–1930	The Implementation Phase	a) Introduction of the <i>Tevhid-i Tedrisat</i> Law, centralizing all educational institutions under the Ministry of Education. b) Closure of <i>madrassas</i> and integration of religious education into secular institutions. c) Initial teacher training programs emphasizing secular pedagogical frameworks.	a) This phase marked the dismantling of traditional Islamic educational structures and their replacement with a state-controlled secular system. b) Teachers faced an identity shift, moving from religious figures to state educators delivering secularized religious content.

No	Year	Phase	Key changes	Impact
2.	1930–1939	The Restrictive Phase	a) Removal of religious education from primary school curricula. b) Limited institutional support for religious educators, leading to a decline in the status of religious education. c) Imam Hatip schools, initially introduced to train religious functionaries, were discontinued.	a) This phase saw a near-total exclusion of religious content from the public education system, marginalizing Islamic educators. b) The absence of pathways for retraining or adapting religious educators exacerbated professional challenges.
3.	1940–1948	The Reintroduction Phase	a) Gradual reintroduction of restricted religious education in response to societal demands. b) Renewed attention to training religious educators within a secular framework, with a focus on aligning Islamic education with state values. c) Continued struggle to balance secular and religious influences in education.	a) The state acknowledged the need for religious instruction while maintaining a secular framework, creating opportunities for a hybrid educational model. b) This phase highlighted ongoing tensions between societal expectations and state policies.

The division is based on critical policy changes and the socio-political contexts during the early Republic. Each phase represents a distinct approach to managing religious education within a secular framework, such as 1924–1930 captures the foundational efforts to secularize education and establish state control. Meanwhile, 1930–1939 reflects a period of heightened secularization and the marginalization of religious education. Furthermore, 1940–1948 illustrates the state’s pragmatic response to public demand for religious education and attempts to reconcile secular goals with cultural realities. These phases provide a clear chronological narrative, showcasing the evolution of educational reforms and their implications for religious education and teacher development.

Despite these reforms, there were substantial challenges in fully modernizing teacher training within religious education, such as by retention of traditional

teachers. Many religious teachers who transitioned to the new system were products of the madrasa system and often struggled to adapt to the pedagogical expectations of a secularized education system (Demirel, 2009). On the other hand, this faculty faced declining enrollment and teacher shortages as secular-oriented curricula deterred students, highlighting the difficulty of institutionalizing a hybrid form of religious education that diverged from both traditional and purely secular expectations.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the analysis and findings presented in this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the application of educational reforms inspired by the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* policy, particularly regarding Islamic education development in Indonesia. Three key recommendations are proposed:

1. The importance of designing a balanced educational curriculum that harmonizes religious education with modern scientific knowledge. In Indonesia context, this integration ensures that students develop critical thinking skills while retaining cultural and religious values. Such an approach is suitable for establishing a unified and standardized education system that bridges religious and “secular” education, eliminating disparities between the two.
2. The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* policy contributes to the development of comprehensive teacher training programs that equip educators with pedagogical competencies and in-depth knowledge of both religious and secular subjects. In Indonesia, these programs aim to provide pathways for requalifying teachers, enabling them to adapt to evolving educational needs and contexts. Although in Indonesia, the unification of dual education systems as experienced in Türkiye became difficult to be realized, but the spirit to eliminating gaps and disparities between the religious and “secular” lesson, fostering equality in the quality of education and the competencies of educators across both frameworks, become the priority discourses.
3. The implementation of *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* serves as a valuable case study for global discussions on integrating secular and religious education. Türkiye’s experience can be leveraged to encourage cross-cultural exchanges and collaborations, enabling the adoption of best practices for modernizing Islamic education systems. By sharing insights, the policy offers practical

lessons for other nations navigating similar challenges, especially Indonesia. Teacher training programs in Islamic educational institutions should encompass mastery of both religious and “secular” knowledge. Well-trained educators will play a crucial role in supporting the goals of curriculum integration.

With appropriate adaptation, the reformative spirit of *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* can serve as an inspiration for the development of a progressive, and contextually relevant Islamic education system in Indonesia.

CLOSING

The *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* represents a significant milestone in Türkiye's educational history, bringing the nation's disparate religious and secular schools under a unified Ministry of Education. This centralization was aimed at reinforcing a modern, secular state identity in the early Republic era, seeking to replace religious instruction's dominance with a more holistic, secular education that would foster national unity. The creation of teacher training as well as modernized *İlahiyat* programs emphasized pedagogical competency and secular ethics, although gaps persisted, particularly in adapting to diverse learner backgrounds.

This study acknowledges limitations in archival access, diversity of perspectives, and a primary focus on central policies rather than their local applications. Insights into how the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* reforms impacted teachers' practices may be gained via more investigation into personal narratives. All things considered, *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* was a revolutionary policy that reshaped religious education and teacher preparation in addition to uniting and secularizing education in Türkiye. This law created avenues for teacher development that sought to be in line with the changing demands of the Türkiye government while also laying the foundation for a distinctively approach to secularized religion education through its centralized efforts and reforms.

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