

GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATION POLICY IN TURKEY:  
EDUCATION of WOMEN, RELIGIOUS EDUCATION and HIGHER EDUCATION

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## LET US GIVE THE WORLD TO THE CHILDREN

*by Nazim Hikmet Ran*

Let us give the world to the children at least for one day

Let them play with it as if it's a spangled balloon

Let them sing and dance among the stars

Let us give the world to the children

Like a huge apple or a warm loaf of bread

at least for one day

so that they'll have enough to eat

Let us give the world to the children

so that even if it's for one day

it will learn what friendship is

The children will take the world

out of our hands

and they will plant immortal trees

(Hikmet, 2006)

Born in 1902 in a part of Turkey that is now part of Greece, and dying in exile in Moscow in 1963, Nazim Hikmet was known as a sentimental and patriotic communist whose expansive poetry often expressed his love of all mankind, and of his homeland. The Turkish government acknowledged his patriotism by reinstating his Turkish citizenship 46 years after his death in January of this year. (Flood, 2009)

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper aims to investigate current trends in Turkish education policy within the wider context of globalization. In order to establish a better understanding, the paper starts with a brief explanation of the history of modern Turkey and current facts and figures followed by a description of the Turkish education system. Against this backdrop we look at three distinct but interrelated policy domains of Turkish education: education of women and girls, religious education, and higher education. In conclusion, the effects of global processes on these three domains of Turkish education policy is briefly discussed.

## **Part 1: TURKEY:**

### **A BRIEF HISTORY, BASIC FACTS AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

#### **A Brief History of Modern Turkey**

Although Turkey was established as a modern, secular, republican nation state in 1923, Turkish history goes back into its Ottoman past. Zürcher (1994) argues that “any modern history of Turkey really is a history of the Ottoman Empire ... Turkey cannot be understood without reference to its Ottoman past.” (p. 6).

According to Inalcik (2009) the Ottoman State was established in the Northwestern part of Anatolia after the Koyunhisar War in 1302. Starting from 1302 onwards, with the continuous conquering of land from all directions, the Ottoman State expanded at an exponential rate, leading to its multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-lingual empire. This was especially so after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, at the height of its power, the Ottoman Empire spanned three continents, controlling a large part of Southeastern Europe, Western Asia and North Africa. Although being a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious entity the empire was primarily organized around Islamic customs and laws. Starting from 1516, the Ottoman emperor (padişah) became also the caliph (religious leader) of the Islamic world which gave a great deal of power and authority to the empire. However, due to the developments in Europe such as Reformation, Renaissance, French Revolution and Industrial Revolution the Ottoman Empire from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards started losing power and land. Ottoman economy was based on agriculture, and its economic system was no more capable of “withstanding the challenge of Western mercantilism and industrialization.” (Ahmad, 2003, p.16). In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the empire began to decline and Europe began to gain power, attempts were made to modernize existing institutions, starting with the army, state

bureaucracy and the sector of education. It was at this time that some western types of schools were established as alternatives to Islamic schools. These schools were meant to educate officers for the military and state bureaucracy using a western - positivist mindset. In addition, many young officers were sent to Europe for education. However, these 'cosmetic' modernization and westernization attempts could not protect the empire from its collapse and dissolution after the First World War.

In light of this history, many historians (Ahmad, 2003; Inalcik, 2009; Karpas, 2004; Zürcher, 1994) view the establishment of the Turkish state as both a continuation and a break away from its Ottoman past. Since its establishment in 1923 with the leadership of Mustafa Kemal ATATURK, the Republic of Turkey used the western world as its prototype in trying to modernize, secularize, and democratize its institutions, but is also considered a continuation of the modernization project that began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Ottoman Empire. Its radical secularization from above, transformation of social life, and radical nationalistic discourse together with republican ideals is clearly a break away from its Islamic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and imperial past. Today, Turkey's and Turkish people's conflicted psyche is a result of these tensions between its Islamic, Eastern, cosmopolitan, traditional Ottoman past and its engineered western, secular, positivist/modern, and national present.

#### **Basic Facts and Numbers:**

- Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire Turkey is established in 1923 as a secular, democratic, constitutional modern nation state.
- Turkey is located in Middle East. Its neighbor countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq, and Syria.

- Turkey's Population according to estimations in July 2009 is 76,805,524 (CIA, 2009)
- Age Structure of the Population in Turkey: (CIA, 2009)
  - 0-14 years: 27.2% (male 10,701,631/female 10,223,260)
  - 15-64 years: 66.7% (male 25,896,326/female 25,327,403)
  - 65 years and over: 6.1% (male 2,130,360/female 2,526,544)
  - Median Age is 27.7
- Urbanization: (CIA, 2009)
  - Urban population: 69% of total population
- Ethnic Groups: (CIA, 2009)
  - Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 18%, other minorities 7-12% (2008 est.)
- Religions: (CIA, 2009)
  - Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christians and Jews)
- Literacy: (UNESCO, 2009)
  - Total population: 88.7%
  - Male: 96.2%
  - Female: 81.3%
- Participation in Education: (UNESCO, 2009)
  - 16% of children are enrolled in pre-primary school
  - 92% of girls and 95% of boys are in primary school (8 years)
  - 66% of girls and 77% of boys are in secondary school (4 years)
  - 37% of the population of tertiary age is in tertiary education

## **The Structure of Current Turkish Education System**

The Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey is the central authority in regards to decisions pertaining to primary and secondary education. This ministry has defined a general educational structure spanning the pre-primary through higher education years. It includes structures and policies encompassing pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher formal education, as well as non-formal education. (Ministry of National Education, 2002.)

Pre-primary education in Turkey is optional for children between 36 and 72 months old (Ministry of National Education, 2002). The stated purpose of Turkish pre-primary education is to ensure positive overall development and to teach good habits to very young children while preparing them for primary education (Ministry of National Education). Pre-primary attendance is increasing in Turkey, with 6% of children in the suggested age range attending in 1996, and 13% attending in 2006 (UNESCO, 2009).

Turkish primary education is free in public schools and compulsory for all boys and girls, usually commencing at the age of six or seven and continuing for eight years, when a primary education diploma is granted (Ministry of Education, 2002). Turkish primary education aims to inculcate the necessary “knowledge, skills, behaviors, and habits to become a good citizen. . . in line with the national moral concepts” (Ministry of National Education, 2002). It also prepares them for either general or vocational-technical secondary education “parallel to his/her interests and skills” (Ministry of National Education, 2002). Turkey’s primary education completion rate is fairly high, reported at 94% of students completed all eight years as of 2005 (UNESCO, 2009).

Turkish secondary education is optional, commencing at the age of 13 or 14 and continuing through age 17 or 18. It is free in public schools, although the better secondary schools



customarily expect an informal processing fee. The secondary level is the level at which students who are not yet entering the work force must choose to pursue a program that is either general higher education preparatory or vocational-technical. In 2006, 88% of Turkish youth completed lower secondary education; and 72% completed upper secondary education (UNESCO, 2009). Secondary school is considered the time for encouraging greater student awareness of the important contributions they have the potential to make “to the socioeconomic and cultural development of the country” (Ministry of National Education, 2002).

At about age 18 and upon the completion of their secondary education, Turkish students may enter higher education institutions, including “universities, faculties, institutes, higher education schools, conservatories, vocational higher education schools and application-research centers” (Ministry of National Education, 2002). At this stage, options include a two-year associates degree, or a four-year undergraduate degree. In 2006, 35% of Turkish students attained this level (UNESCO, 2009). Interested students may continue on for a two year master’s degree and a three-year doctorate. Medical training may include a six-year undergraduate diploma followed by a four year medical specialization degree. Another option is for a five-year undergraduate diploma followed by a three-year doctorate. (Ministry of National Education, 2002).

Non-formal education in Turkey includes continuing and adult education for such goals as basic literacy, the completion of an interrupted earlier education, healthy lifestyle choices, various kinds of professional development, the improvement of scientific and technological skills, and the encouragement of “national cultural values” (Ministry of National Education, 2002). It also includes apprenticeship training for those pursuing the various professions and trades where that may be appropriate (Ministry of National Education, 2002).

Each one of the three policy domains under discussion in this study pertain to different stages of the Turkish general education structure. The education of girls and women is emphasized at every stage, with nongovernmental organizations placing special emphasis on increasing pre-school enrollment and adult women's literacy, and a major government campaign emphasizing increased primary school enrollment for girls. Religious education is also involved at all stages, but religious secondary schools called "Imam Hatip Schools" are among the popular options which have been the subject of a heated debate. Transformation of higher education policy directly affects higher education students, but these shifts in policy also interact in complex and complicated ways throughout the web of the pre-school through graduate school structure of Turkish national education.

## **Part 2: TURKISH EDUCATION POLICY IN TRANSFORMATION:**

### **TURKISH INITIATIVES FOR EDUCATING GIRLS AND WOMEN**

#### **Girls' Institutes: From 1927 to the Mid-seventies – the ideal housewife**

Modern educational initiatives on behalf of Turkish girls date back to the early Republican era with the establishment of Girls' Institutes in Turkey in 1927 (Toktas, 2006). Two Girls' Institutes were established in the first year, by 1952 there were 52, and by 1994 there were 457. Until the 1970s, these were considered prestigious schools for urban middle class and provincial upper middle class girls, geared towards “the training of the ‘ideal woman’ who would be knowledgeable in every aspect of domestic life, and would take care of her home and family in a ‘civilized and modern’ manner” (Frangadouki and Keyder, 2006). The Girls' Institutes, charged with modernizing and Europeanizing the Turkish woman by inculcating her “with the dominant norms of the bourgeois ideology of domesticity,” were responsible for the establishment of such civil organizations as the “Home Economics Society” and the “Nutrition and Dietetics Society” in the 1950s and 1960s (Frangadouki and Keyder, 2006). The Girls' Institutes regularly published and disseminated newsletters in an effort to share modern information with the general public, and a short-lived but influential home-economics institute called the Girls Technical Education College in Ankara was founded in 1953. From the 1950s to the 1970s, many Girls' Institute teachers increased their knowledge of nutrition and home economics by attending international seminars funded by USAID, UNICEF, UNESCO and the U.S. Government. (Frangadouki and Keyder, 2006; OECD, 2007.) With extensive international interaction and sustained deliberate efforts by the Turkish government to help Turkish women meet international standards in caring for Turkish families, “these schools were seen as one of the main vehicles of

the Westernization and modernization of Turkish society after World War II” (Frangadouki and Keyder, 2006).

### **Girls’ Vocational High Schools: From the Mid-seventies to the present – the ideal worker**

In the 1970s, it became apparent that more women were needed to work in the food industry than in homes. Accordingly, in 1974, the name of these schools was changed from Girls’ Institutes to Girls Vocational High Schools, and the mission of the schools was also radically changed at that time. Home economics offerings were largely dropped, and courses in “food chemistry and microbiology, food technology, and food catering” were offered instead (Frangoudaki and Keyder, 2006). The role of state education changed from training girls for their household roles to training girls for their workplace roles (OECD, 2007). Both the Girls’ Institutes and the Girls’ Vocational High Schools aimed to socialize girls in particular historically appropriate gendered ways, and they also prepared girls for more successful integration into the increasingly modernizing and Westernizing Turkish society.

### **Current Turkish Goals for Female Education**

Continuing to respond to ever evolving globalizing pressures, the Turkish Ministry of National Education has more recently declared as among their highest objectives the equalization of the education level for males and females and the attainment of European Union indicators for gender equity in education (2002). These objectives are well aligned with the Education for All (EFA) campaign, an internationally coordinated effort under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2009). EFA supports and assesses equal educational opportunities for all people (UNESCO, 2009). Noting that “discrimination still persists against girls and women in education” (UNESCO, 2009), the EFA Global Monitoring

Report 2009 provides an EFA Development Index, or EDI, and other valuable data for assessing progress in educating girls in many countries, including Turkey.

With these gender equity goals in mind, we will present and evaluate two major Turkish girls' and women's educational initiatives currently underway in Turkey, one non-governmental, and one governmental.

### **A Turkish NGO plan for educating women and girls**

ACEV is the Turkish acronym for the Mother Child Education Foundation, a non-governmental organization currently celebrating its fifteenth year (ACEV, 2009). Dedicated to improving educational opportunities for girls and women, ongoing ACEV initiatives include the "7 is too late!" campaign to raise preschool enrollment; an international research center in partnership with Harvard University; the Young Women's Literacy Empowerment Project; the Functional Adult Literacy and Women's Support Program; and a commitment to support the Global Compact on Human Rights (ACEV, 2009). All of these initiatives are geared toward helping mothers and children, as the name of the organization suggests. They are also geared towards raising educational attainments for Turkish women, girls and preschoolers to the highest international benchmarks.

Converging with the international trend toward public/private partnership, "ACEV is Turkey's only NGO which is licensed by the Ministry of National Education to offer literacy certification to adults" (ACEV, 2009). ACEV also actively seeks to capitalize on global opportunities by forging partnerships with other NGOs worldwide, helping them to implement ACEV-endorsed programs in Turkish to Turkish diaspora "in Bahrain, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (ACEV, 2009). The NGO ACEV thus demonstrates a commitment to better

educational opportunities for Turkish women, girls and preschoolers around the world. It also represents what Appadurai termed a deparochialization of expertise (quoted in Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 48), with Turkish educational know-how being used widely to address Turkish and global challenges.

### **A Turkish government plan for educating women and girls**

Turkey's major government initiative on behalf of girls education also employs international partnerships in support of its goals. "Haydi Kizlar Okula!" which means "Let's Go to School, Girls!" a national campaign launched in 2003 by the Turkish Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF enrolled an additional 113,000 girls in primary school in its first two years alone. (Say Yes, 2005) Just like it sounds, the objective of this campaign is to actively encourage more primary school age girls to attend school. While UNICEF has warned that Turkey may not fully "achieve the Millenium Development Goal of gender parity in education by 2015" (Say Yes, 2005; UNICEF, 2009), this campaign is helping the Turkish people make significant progress in that direction.

The "Let's Go to School, Girls!" campaign strategies feature informational house-to-house visits by volunteers, and participation by public and private sector leaders and media representatives at the national and local level. NGOs such as the Willows Foundation have visited hundreds of thousands of homes to enroll thousands of girls in school. The Willows Foundation has lent fundraising skills and expertise to "Let's Go to School, Girls!" to support a special initiative to enroll illiterate girls in four Turkish towns. NGOs have also supplied school uniforms and school materials to help low-income families overcome what might otherwise be insurmountable barriers to entry. Local religious leaders have also been recruited to help persuade families that there are no religious prohibitions to female primary school attendance.

National businesses, too, are partnering in support of this program, with the Turkish telecommunications giant Turkcell a major player in this ongoing campaign. Turkcell has funded research in support of Let's Go to School Girls, along with thousands of girls "Snowdrops" scholarships (UNGEI, 2009; Turkcell, 2009).

The globalizing trends of standardization and public-private partnerships are readily apparent in both the non-governmental and governmental trends now underway on behalf of Turkish girls' education. Both ACEV and "Let's Go to School, Girls!" aim to raise Turkish girls' education to international standards as set by intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations, UNICEF, and UNGEI. Both employ the global trend towards public-private partnerships, with the government campaign extensively engaging NGO and business support, and the NGO campaign also engaging government, celebrity and other kinds of support. These trends can be also be considered within the neoliberal paradigm as encouraging Turkish women and girls in particular to better prepare themselves for the new knowledge economy.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN TURKEY:  
Tradition vs. Modernity... Secular vs. Religious**

Religious Education Policy in Turkey is a subject of great debate and controversy. This debate revolves around the appropriate role of religious education in a modern, secular, and democratic society. The policy reforms established by the state have been called into question by a multiplicity of voices, voices from within the nation and outside of its borders as well. In this brief discussion of religious education policy I hope to discuss some local and global processes that have affected such policies and how schools, such as the Imam Hatip High Schools play a significant role in these debates, by constantly negotiating and re-negotiating what is meant by secular and religious.

In the past 85 years the Turkish government has enacted a series of secularist driven educational reforms that have struggled to provide a balance between the push for Islamic education and the defining of a strong Turkish national identity. A brief overview of these contemporary reforms is necessary before discussing the controversy surrounding Imam Hatip Schools and how for some such schools go against a very well-defined conception of what it means to be Turkish, secular, and modern. Turkey struggles to free itself from the shadow of its Ottoman past, but at the same time is a continuation of it. In this very discussion on religious education this struggle comes to life and one is able to better understand the complicated relationship between tradition and modernity.

**Educational Reforms:**

In 1924, just one year after the establishment of Turkey as a modern, secular, republican nation-state, religious education was abolished (Pak, 2004). Until then there were both religious and secular schools in operation. With the abolishment of religious education the education



system became unified and centralized (Mabokela & Seggue, 2008). Soon after madrasas were closed and replaced with contemporary secular post-secondary institutions. This abolishment marked the beginning of a series of education reforms that would shape and re-shape the discourse on religious education in Turkey. The following are the major education reforms that provided those engaged in this debate with a national platform to discuss issues such as the Imam Hatip Schools.

- In the late 1940s there was a request for re-introduction of religious education as a part of the curriculum and in the early 1950s a course on religious education began as optional (Mabokela & Seggue, 2008).
- In 1982 this course became mandatory for all primary and secondary schools. Several years later (1987) the Higher Education Council (YOK) issued a new law that banned the headscarf<sup>1</sup> in post-secondary institutions (Mabokela & Seggue, 2008).
- In 1997, a military-dominated watchdog agency known as the National Security Council advised the government to extend compulsory education from five to eight years (Pak, 2004). On February 28, 1997 the government enacted this bill and as a result led to the closing of Imam Hatip Middle Schools.
- More recently, in 1999, YOK applied the “negative multiplier” system to vocational and technical high schools. Under this system “graduates of vocational high schools, including imam-hatip divinity schools, had points deducted from their admissions scores when they applied to a university department unrelated to their curriculum. This system made it more difficult for an Imam-Hatip high school graduate to gain

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<sup>1</sup> In February 2008 this ban was lifted

entrance to medical school than a student from a normal high school with the same ÖSS score<sup>2</sup>” (Kulu, 2009). The “negative multiplier” system was brought to an end in July of this year and this will take into effect in 2010.

How are these reforms affecting Imam Hatip Schools? How are these schools becoming central to the debate on religious education? Are these schools fulfilling their function? Are they a solution or have they exacerbated the issue?

### **Imam Hatip Schools**

Since the creation of Imam Hatip schools there has been great debate as to how they fit into the secular, modern, and democratic image of the nation that has been articulated by those in positions of power, whether it be the state, military, or other authoritative voices. These voices continue to re-emphasize these concepts as the very foundation of Turkish identity. It is now that we take a closer look at Imam Hatip schools and their function as institutions that provide religious education.

Imam Hatip Schools were established by the State in 1951 as public vocational high schools for the production of religious functionaries (Imams, Qur’an teachers, etc.) (OECD, 2006). However, the function of these schools has served a dual purpose and is not simply limited to this one function. The schools at the present have been transformed into more mainstream educational institutions that cater primarily to the children of conservative and religious parents (Pak, 2004). Until 1997 there were Imam Hatip middle schools, but with the passing of the eight year education bill these schools were closed down (Progler, 1998). At the present there are about 140,000 students in Imam Hatip schools, which is less than 10% of all students in vocational high schools (OECD, 2006). However, in 2010 it is anticipated that the

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<sup>2</sup> University entrance exams

number of students in these schools will increase due to the abolishment of the “negative multiplier” system (Kulu, 2009). The curriculum in these schools is heavily monitored by the state, specifically in regards to religious subjects that are taught. Religious subjects comprise of Islamic law (moral injunctions, five pillars of Islam, purification of the body), Islamic history (most importantly the life and times of Prophet Muhammad and the early caliphates), Qur’an/Tafsir (memorization and interpretation of the Holy Qur’an), Tawhid (knowledge of the unity of God), Fikih (learning the basic and underlying principles of Islam, including learning the ways and understanding the meaning of worship and prayer), Kelam (theology), Hadis (the prophetic tradition), calligraphy, *Hitabet* (oratory skill) and Sunnah (Islamic customs) (Pak, 2004).

### **Controversy**

The controversy surrounding Imam Hatip Schools stems from the very purpose of such schools within a secular society. Questions regarding the enrollment of female students have been posed (Pak, 2004) and the wearing of the headscarf (Mabokela & Seggue, 2008) (Gokarikel & Mitchell, 2005). If females cannot become Imams then why do they attend such schools? Some (Pak, 2004) have discussed the unannounced objectives of state policy makers in regards to Imam Hatip Schools as being:

1. Bureaucratizing religious functionaries and scholars so as to make them subservient to the state.
2. Managing and controlling the legitimacy and representative capability of public religious discourses by defining a ‘mainstream’ Islam.
3. Propagating uniform conventions of religious practices and standards of piety through standardized religious schooling.

The state policy makers are vying for control over religious education and the ability to define a ‘mainstream’ Islam that does not threaten the project of modernization that has become embedded in the national narratives. However, what the state fails to do with such schools is cater to the needs of the various sects within the religion of Islam itself. The curriculum at the Imam Hatip schools is centered on a Hanif-Sunni based model and is a standard throughout all the schools. This leaves minority sects such as the Alevi’s out of the picture. The Alevi community’s religious beliefs and practices are not taken into account by the state and the Islamists who are vying for control over religious education (Oktem, 2008). This standardization of Islam is something that the Imam Hatip Schools seem to promote and reinforce. This idea of a moderate Islam that is not radical and compatible with modernity, democracy, and Turkish notions of citizenship.

In a recent report published by the RAND corporation, (Rabasa, Benard, Schwartz, & Sickle, 2007) this idea of empowering and providing viable networks in which moderate Islam can take a firm holding is discussed in great detail in the context of a post-911 world. The report has been highlighted by the corporation as an important policy document for not just the United States, but the entire world. For many the threat of radical Islam has led to the search for some sort of uniform Islam that is in compliance with western notions of democracy and modernity. A press release issued by the corporation is most revealing and this small selection is helpful in understanding the underlining assumptions this report brings to the discussion:

“We cannot come in as outsiders, as a non-Muslim country, and discredit the radicals’ ideology,” Rabasa said. “Muslims have to do that themselves. What we can do is level the playing field by empowering the moderates.”

Rather than an afterthought, the building of moderate Muslim networks needs to become an explicit goal of U.S. government policy, with an international database of partners, a well-designed plan and “feedback loops” to keep it on track, according to the study.

The report by RAND, a nonprofit research organization, is intended to serve as a “road map” to build these networks and to serve as a practical guide for policymakers to implement.

Rabasa said the United States has a critical role to play in aiding moderate Muslims, and can learn much from the way it addressed the spread of Communism during the Cold War. The efforts of the United States and its allies to build free and democratic networks and institutions provided an organizational and ideological counter force to Communist groups seeking to come to power through political groups, labor unions, youth and student organizations and other groups. (CORPORATION, 2007)

Turkey is an example of one country that has seemed to pick up on the ideas expressed in the RAND report. In the Turkish context the Gulen movement (Aras & Caha, 2000) has been responsible for disseminating a moderate version of Islam that is compatible in today’s modern world. Although Fethuhullah Gulen (Woodhall, 2009), the leader of the movement, is regarded as an Islamist his position is in line with those from the state who are articulating an Islam that is uniform across the board.

In a world where the “war on terror” has become a central issue across the globe, Islam has become suspect in every context. The example of Imam Hatip Schools shows how the state is struggling to control Islam from “within” in order to establish a strong secular, modern, democratic nation. A nation that can proceed to move forward in this new global era. In this space where the sacred and the secular are constantly interacting it is apparent that it is not simply national context that is shaping the future of religious education in Turkey. Global processes have played a significant role in shaping the current discourse. Turkey’s bid for

membership into the European Union is something that cannot be left unsaid. How Turkey constructs its national identity is one that will affect this decision and will allow Turkey to set itself apart from the rest of the Muslim world.

## **TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION IN TRANSFORMATION:**

This section of the study tries to investigate, clarify and summarize main impacts and effects of globalization on Turkish higher education policy taking into consideration the effects of Turkey's European Union integration process on higher education policies.

### **Turkish Higher Education System - A Short History:**

Dating back to 12<sup>th</sup> century, the first Turkish higher education institution is considered to be the 'medrese', which was built on Islamic religious traditions (Ihsanoglu, 2005). Medreses until the establishment of modern Turkey (1923) were the main higher education institutions. In the context of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century modernization movements of the Ottoman Empire, one of the first attempts was to modernize the military which was then followed by the establishment of modern higher education institutions. These schools were mainly vocational and technical schools such as the Naval Engineering School (1773), the Army Engineering School (1795), the Imperial School of Medicine (1827), and the War Academy (1834). The first secular university, *Darulfünun* was established in 1863 with a modern structure, curriculum and teaching methods within the Empire's modernization project. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of Turkey, all religious medreses were closed down and then in 1933 *Darulfünun* was converted into Istanbul University which is still functioning today. Since 1981, 19 universities in total were established with about 240,000 students enrolled in various programs (UNESCO, 2009). In 1980 there was a military coup in Turkey which according to many scholars (Gurbilek, 1992; Onis & Webb, 1992; Ozbudun, 2000) is the starting point of Turkish integration into the global economy and the implementation of neoliberal economic policies. In 1981, with the passage of the basic *Law on Higher Education*, the Higher Education Council (HEC - YOK) was established and given the authority to plan and control all higher

education institutions in Turkey with the exception of military and police academies. With the establishment of HEC, student contribution fees at public universities were introduced, and non-profit foundations were allowed to establish private higher education institutions. Since then, both public and private universities have been controlled and supervised by the Higher Education Council. Today higher education institutions fall into three categories (OSYM, 2006) in Turkey.

These are:

- Universities
- Vocational schools affiliated with ministries
- Military and police colleges and academies.

#### **Turkish Higher Education System – Facts & Numbers:**

- Currently there are 94 public universities (YOK, 2009)
- Currently there are 45 private universities all established after 1984 (YOK, 2009)
- 2.532.622 Total number of students enrolled (1.440.000 male – 1.090.000 female) (EURYBASE, 2009)
- Since 1974 there is a central university entrance examination in Turkey
- In 2005 there has been 1.643.000 application to the university entrance exam and 607.994 of them were placed

#### **A New Discourse on Turkish Higher Education Policy:**

Recently the Turkish higher education system has been the subject of criticism and investigation by many different institutions from differing view points. These are some of the substantial reports published since 2006:

- In 2006 UNESCO-CEPES by Fatma MIZIKACI – Higher Education in Turkey



- In 2007 Higher Education Council – Higher Education Strategy of Turkey
- In 2008 Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) in collaboration with European University Association (EUA) – Higher Education in Turkey: Trends, Challenges, Opportunities
- In 2008 Istanbul Policy Center (IPC) – Why A New Higher Education Perspective?
- In 2008 Magna Charta Observatory of Fundamental University Values and Rights - Higher Education in Turkey: Institutional autonomy and responsibility in a modernizing society

The diversity of organizations publishing reports on Turkish higher education is noteworthy. However, what is more noteworthy is the similarity of the discourse created by these reports. Although their emphasis and focus is not exactly the same, there are a number of issues that all these reports seem to agree upon. In the following section each issue will be briefly discussed.

### **Increasing Interest in Higher Education**

According to HEC (2007) worldwide the demand for higher education has increased. In 1985, while there were about 20 million students in higher education institutions worldwide, in 2001 this number increased up to 85 million students enrolled in higher education institutions. This trend seems to also apply to the case of Turkey. While in 1980 there were about 467,000 students applying for the university entrance exam and only 41,574 of them being placed, the number of applicants in 2005 is more than 1,700,000 of which about 608,000 are placed in higher education institutions (OSYM, 2006). Below is the numbers of applications for central higher education entrance exam from 1980 to 2005 and also the numbers of those placed:

YEARS	NUMBER OF APPLICANTS	NUMBER OF THOSE PLACED
1980	466.963	41.574
1985	480.633	156.065
1990	892.975	196.253
1995	1.265.103	383.974
2000	1.414.872	414.647
2005	1.730.876	607.994

### **Marketization & Privatization**

According to the Turkish constitution getting free education at all levels is considered to be the basic right of being a citizen of the country. However, in practice especially in regards to higher education it is not available to every citizen for free. This capacity problem is used as the legitimatizing discourse of privatization of higher education in Turkey. In one of his speeches Yusuf Ziya OZCAN, the president of HEC, emphasizes the importance of private universities in Turkey and their positive contributions (Ozcan, 2008). While there were no private universities until 1984 there are 45 private universities currently in Turkey. It is also obvious that in the reports mentioned above the language of the market is very dominant: *flexibility, entrepreneurship, performance and quality assessment, new governance structures, the need for financial accountability, university and industry collaborations and active participation of the students in financing higher education*. In the name of economic development, these reports openly promote institutions of higher education to be in closer relations with the market.

## **The dominant discourse of globalization and knowledge economy**

The rhetoric of globalization and knowledge economy is very prominent in all of these reports, which creates the necessity for reform in the higher education system: a system that is said to be lacking the ability to respond to the requirements of the global knowledge economy. According to the IPC report (2008) globalization is a process which increases the importance of science and technology in the economy and social life. According to IPC this global trend makes it inevitable to diversify the higher education institutions in Turkey (IPC, 2008). In HEC's strategy paper (2007) the rhetoric of globalization and knowledge economy is very prominent. According to HEC the processes of globalization in relation with the passage from industrial economy to knowledge economy has to be noticed and Turkish higher education institutions should be reorganized accordingly. Within this knowledge economy discourse HEC also emphasizes the need be competitive and flexible. This competitiveness and flexibility is not important only for institutions of higher education, but also for students. Students must take on such characteristics as well, in addition to constantly updating their knowledge.

## **European Union and Integration of the Higher Education System**

Since 1963 Turkey is an associate member of the European Union and joined the Bologna Process in 2001 which started in 1999. The Bologna process aims to create a European higher education arena by making academic degrees and quality standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe. According to the Bologna Process the envisaged European higher education will:

- facilitate mobility of students, graduates and higher education staff;

- prepare students for their future careers and for life as active citizens in democratic societies, and support their personal development;
- offer broad access to high-quality higher education, based on democratic principles and academic freedom. (BOLOGNA PROCESS, 2009)

Currently, 46 European countries participate in the Bologna Process and the close cooperation between participating governments, higher education institutions, students, staff, employers and quality assurance agencies are encouraged. The anticipated reforms in regards to higher education are:

- Easily readable and comparable degrees organized in a three-cycle structure (e.g. bachelor-master-doctorate)
- Quality assurance in accordance with the set standards and guidelines by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- Fair recognition of foreign degrees and other higher education qualifications in accordance with the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention.

Implementation and coordination of the Bologna Process in Turkey is executed by the Higher Education Council. There are many consequences of the Bologna Process on Turkish higher education institutions but the most important one might be said to be the standardization of the structure and also the curriculum of the programs. Every year all participating countries are assessed according to the set standards regarding these anticipated reforms. In 2009 the Bologna Process Stocktaking Report made these comments:

“Turkey joined the Bologna Process in 2001. Key developments since 2007 include: internal QA processes in Turkish HEIs are well in place, and starting from 2007 all universities are preparing their annual strategic plans; several independent national QA agencies have started work on acquiring the status of accredited external QA agency; a commission and a working group have been

formed to work on the establishment of a NQF for HE and they have determined a clear timetable for each step, pilot implementation is foreseen in 2010 and full implementation by the end of 2012; flexible learning paths have been promoted via distance education programmes; a detailed national strategy on the social dimension has been prepared. Future challenges include: demand for higher education which is much higher than supply; improvement of the quality of education and full implementation of an internationally accepted national QA system; redesigning the financing model to ensure the diversity of resources and equal opportunities; improvement of the quality of vocational higher schools in order to meet labour market needs and expectations.”  
(Rauhvargers et al., 2009)

Another key issue in Turkish higher education regarding European Integration is increasing student mobility. The Erasmus program established in 1987 promotes the mobility of university students within Europe. The rapid increase in recent years in the mobility of not only students but also academics is noteworthy.

EU & Turkey Erasmus Mobility

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Outgoing Students</b>	<b>Incoming Students</b>	<b>Outgoing Academics</b>	<b>Incoming Academics</b>
<b>2004/05</b>	1142	299	339	218
<b>2005/06</b>	2860	900	585	350
<b>2006/07</b>	4900	1200	1450	418

(Okyik, 2007)

## CONCLUSION

Within the limits of this paper, in order to understand the effects of globalization on Turkish education policy, three different domains of education policy were investigated. In women and girls education, it is evident that Turkey has long viewed the education of women as an integral part of the country's modernization. It is also apparent that the Millennium Development Goals and European integration of Turkey are important in supporting women's and girls' education. Non-governmental organizations are taking very active roles and public-private partnership is promoted to reach those goals. Similarly, religious education policy in Turkey has been the result of both national and international voices.

Religious education in Turkey is a highly contested issue with many conflicting understandings and perceptions. From this brief study of religious education policy it was evident that there were dominating national and global discourses that set the stage for this particular debate. In a post 9/11 world the "war on terror" has taken a new shape and form. Such discourses are articulated and re-emphasized through projects, such as the mild Islam project published by the U.S. based RAND Corporation. This global discourse has affected the policies of nations around the world, including Turkey. Nationally, the Gulen Movement is one example of a voice that uses this global discourse in discussions regarding Religious Education Policy in the country. More and more it has become evident that issues related to education policy have adopted global discourses that have framed national debates/discussions. In the sector of higher education this has become evident as well.

Turkish higher education policy is radically being transformed by many national, regional, and international actors. These actors are all speaking from a dominant discourse that has framed these various discussions. The main discourse framing these discussions are taken

from a neo-liberal perspective on globalization and the knowledge economy. This focus on the knowledge economy can be read as embedding universities totally in the market needs. In addition, transformations within higher education policy are very much driven by the European Integration. The Bologna Process sets the rules and standards for participating countries and tries to establish a European higher education area in which Turkey became a part in 2001.

What can be concluded from this brief study of education policy in the context of Turkey is that global processes must be examined when trying to understand how policy is being implemented and reformed. Globalization has affected Turkish national education and has touched it at its very core. In our examination of these three domains of education policy, it is evident that just as important as the national context is the global context. It is no longer possible to study education policy in a way that bounds it to one region or territory. Education policy making in a global world is a highly complex process in which many actors, perspectives and processes play a role (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Turkey with its conflicted psyche between its Islamic, Eastern, cosmopolitan, traditional Ottoman past and socially engineered Western, secular, positivist/modern present is also trying to develop its national education policies with all its ambiguities and conflicts in a globally interconnected world.

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