ATATÜRK IS THE PIONEER OF TURKISH SECULARISM: A STUDY ON THE SECULARIZATION OF EDUCATION IN THE ATATÜRK ERA

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ABSTRACT

Many studies have dealt with the Atatürk era from historical or critical perspectives, but important fields of the Atatürk era still need to be re-examined and read in-depth from the perspective of revision, re-reading the historical era and reveal the fact of importance. Thus, the Atatürk era is one of the problematic fields whose importance derives not only from a historical perspective but from a comparative epistemological perspective, which contributes to the comparative studies needed by the researcher to compare the great value shifts that accompanied the Turkish state structures and institutions during the Atatürk era.

Research Hypothesis: Secularization before Secularism

In General, The hypothesis research deal with an important "Problematic" related to the emergence of signs of secularization in the institutions of the Turkish state before the adoption of the concept of secularism in Constitution as the consistent principle, a year before the death of Atatürk (i.e., in 1937). Turkish state institutions (including educational institutions) have long been secularized and directly subjected to the principles of a new civil state since the emergence of the modern Turkish state in 1923. But, gradual secularization is what the Turkish state led by Atatürk needed to attract large sectors of people's in due to convincing them of the new ways of life; the field of education was one of the most prominent areas where secularization

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had been considered, where the patterns of education had changed from traditional to modern.

**The First Steps of Kemalist Visions - The Secularization of Education**

According to Mustafa Kemal, the main goal of education was to protect a nation’s existence and future. In order to maintain the independence of Turkey, originality and Turkish customs needed to be taught to new generations. In his mind, ‘the first duty of education is to raise individuals to function well in the society, educate them and furnish them with culture’. He also thought that a powerful and healthy society could only be established with healthy individuals\(^{(1)}\).

On 3rd March 1924 the law on the unification of education was passed\(^{(2)}\). This law placed all education under the control of the Ministry of Education\(^{(3)}\). Giving the Ministry control of all educational establishments paved the way for the later move to close the medreses\(^{(4)}\). The need to close the medreses can be illustrated by the fact that as late as 1921 they taught "almost exclusively by rote memorization of the Qur'an and Arabic texts learned by reading aloud before the teacher\(^{(5)}\). This method of education had proved satisfactory for the more traditional religious needs of Ottoman society. Clearly however they were unsuited for the development of a Western nation envisaged by Atatürk. Under the rule of the Ottoman theocracy "religious

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\(^{(3)}\) Reed, a.g.m., s. 327.


\(^{(5)}\) Howard A. Reed, “The Faculty of Divinity at Ankara I”, *The Muslim World*, Vol. 46, October 1956, s. 296.
schools and religious education in schools were unquestioned\(^{(6)}\). Certainly for the population at large. Atatürk, on the other hand, saw Islamic education as an integral part of the old order and as a stumbling block to modernization\(^{(7)}\).

It established the principle of the separation of religion from politics, state and social life\(^{(8)}\). The main objective of secularism was to evolve a non-religious consciousness in order to replace the traditional concepts of loyalty like Islam and Ottomanism. According to Bernard Lewis, the purpose of the Kemalist secularism "was not to destroy Islam, but to destabilize it to end the power of religion and its exponents in political, social and cultural affairs, and limit it to matters of belief and worship"\(^{(9)}\).

The development in the form of separation between religion and state took place throughout the Tanzimat, Young Ottomans and Meşhuruiyet (constitutional) periods, and that this development was not in the right direction. But the Kemalist approach to secularism differed radically from the approaches of the Tanzimat and the Meşhuruiyet. Moreover, the emphasis on rationality in the religious affairs became a deistic conviction of secular coloring in Turkey. In this context, the abolition of the caliphate was presented, as "liberating" Islam from its "unreasonable traditional associates" and preparing the ground for its emergence as a rational religion.\(^{(10)}\). It became clear that Atatürk did not want to establish a rupture with the Islamic heritage as the first step, but he establishes a rupture with the legacy of the

\(^{(6)}\) Andreas M. Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity in Turkey*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1966, s. 185.

\(^{(7)}\) Ibid., p. 185.

\(^{(8)}\) Yahya Armajani and Thomas M. Ricks, *Middle East past and present*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey 1986, s. 244.


\(^{(10)}\) Sherwani, a.g.m., s. 173.
religious alliance with feudal elites that do not fit the frameworks of modernity that he established in his New State.

**Sun Language Theory/ Education as Foundation of Transformation**

Among the most important ideological and institutional reforms of the Kemalist Era were the unification of education, abolition of the caliphate and the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Following the madrasah, Islamic monasteries- which presented a significant potential for resistance and organization- were also closed down in 1925. The adoption of the Latin alphabet on 1 November 1928 was presented as a step to improve literacy education; in reality it aimed to erode the most important link with the past\(^{(11)}\). On 1 January 1929, public schools were opened and the new alphabet and regime rituals started to spread from the centre to the periphery, even though the unification of education created a divinity faculty and religious schools and the education system was entirely cleared of religion. This imitation of France, which had been an Ottoman preference as well, continued in this era by “modeling high schools after the French education system and basing most course-books on their French counterparts regardless of Turkey’s needs”\(^{(12)}\).

This attitude on the part of the group urging modernization of the Turkish state and the following of a path to Westernization involved the teaching of religion in all state schools being proscribed\(^{(13)}\). This began in 1927 with the first stage of a two-part move against re-


\(^{(13)}\) Bisbee, a.g.m., s. 185.
ligious education. In this year religious classes in ordinary state schools became voluntary\(^{(14)}\). On 1 September 1929, Arabic and Persian courses were removed from curricula, and religious schools were closed in 1931. On 12 April 1931, the Turkish Historical Society was re-established to write a new history that satisfied the mentality and expectations of the day. The year 1931 saw the emergence of the Sun Language Theory to construct a “cultural and archeological nationalism”\(^{(15)}\).

The second stage in the removal of religious education began in primary schools where religious classes were dropped in 1930 in urban schools\(^{(16)}\). This measure did not apply to village schools until 1933. This difference in the year of implementation of the measure points to the urban-rural contrast which must always be kept in mind when looking at Turkey, particularly when looking at matters of development. Following this, in September 1931 religious classes were also abolished in middle schools\(^{(17)}\). This abolition of religious education was seen as necessary, but not necessarily as irreversible. As one leading figure in Turkish national education told Rom Landau in the late 1930s: "In twenty years or more there may be a religious education in Turkey once again. But we cannot possibly have it today. Within one or two generations we must try to absorb that spirit of the new age which most of the Western nations have evolved slowly through many generations. The word 'religion' must not even be mentioned. It would only create confusion in the minds of the people and open doors to the reactionaries"\(^{(18)}\). In fact, Atatürk's main concern was how to find a new form of education that would be far from the traditional educational systems that lacked modern science and had Persian and Arab influences. Therefore, the main objective was to create a new

\(^{(14)}\) Reed, Atatürk's Secularizing Legacy..., s. 330.


\(^{(16)}\) Reed, Atatürk's Secularizing Legacy..., s. 330.

\(^{(17)}\) Reed, a.g.m., s. 330.

Turkish intellectual structure and enhance confidence in it as a first step to formulate the concept of citizenship, while erasing the effects of the stereotype of the Ottoman citizen which had a negative impact in the previous era.

The Law 430 on “the Unification of Education” (Tevhid-i Tedrisat) in 1924 started the period of change in Turkish education system. This law has two characteristics: It democratizes education system and puts secularism into action. Maarif Institution (Maarif Teskilati) was founded with Law 789 enacted on 22 March 1926. During republican period educational meetings were held under the name of Heyet-i Ilmiye and Egitim Sûrasi (Council of Education) in order to improve education. Some educational issues were discussed and basic principles were laid down in these meetings. Four Heyet-i Ilmiye meetings were held. First one was in 1921, the second was in July 1923, the third was in April 1924 and the fourth was in December 1925-January 1926. However, after the Head Council of Education and Morality was founded in 1926, meetings began to be held under the name of National Education Councils under this council’s responsibility. Since the first National Education Council in 1939, 19 Councils have been held up to now. Various issues, including educational programs, teacher training, structural arrangement of education and functional arrangement have been discussed and resolved. Their influence on education has been observed.

In the first years of republic, Latin alphabet was adopted in 1928 so as to extend education in larger areas, increase literacy, make education easier and turn Turkish into a common language. Thus, with the adoption of new alphabet, literacy rate suddenly decreased from 10% (in terms of Ottoman Turkish) to zero. Therefore, Ministry of National Education struggled to improve education since the first years of republic\(^{(19)}\).

An additional measure may be noted here for the sake of completeness. On 7th February 1924 a law was passed banning religious symbols from the inside of foreign schools\(^\text{(20)}\). These foreign schools were of two types. Firstly, those providing a Western education to those wishing to acquire one. Secondly, denominational schools providing an education to members of specific religious groups. In April of the same year the government closed down all French and Italian schools in Turkey as those responsible for these schools refused to remove Roman Catholic symbols from their classrooms\(^\text{(21)}\). Generally, speaking Christian missionaries were allowed to continue their educational work though the government repeatedly made it clear to them that it would not tolerate any direct proselytizing. This may be illustrated by the incident at the American Girls Lycee in Bursa during 1928. In that year the school was closed down following changes being brought against it which alleged that three of its pupils had been converted to Christianity. Three teachers from the school were charged under legislation forbidding proselytizing and were convicted on 30th April 1928. Following an appeal the verdict was upheld by the Court of Cassation on 5th March, 1929. The school was later allowed to reopen without the offending teachers\(^\text{(22)}\). Atatürk's nationalization of education, albeit of a holistic nature, has helped curb sectarian teaching (in local and Western schools) Thus, it provided a supportive ground for emerging Turkish nationalism against sectarian religious tendencies.

In 1933, the secular Istanbul University was established in place of the previous Istanbul Ottoman University, which was blamed for “staying impartial to reforms”\(^\text{(23)}\) and new schools were opened on all
levels and in all varieties\(^{(24)}\). All school curricula were rewritten to construct a future society in accordance with the Kemalist principles\(^{(25)}\). By the end of 1938, there were 6700 primary schools, 13,500 teachers, 546 educators, and 864,590 students in Turkey\(^{(26)}\). All these developments were improved in the İnönü Era both quantitatively and qualitatively, and new institutions, projects and experiments were born\(^{(27)}\).

In 1923 Mustafa Kemal stated in Izmir that ‘our nation’s educational institutions must be similar. All Turkish citizens, women and men, must graduate from these’\(^{(28)}\). This statement highlighted the importance of educational unity to the founders of the Republic and has been used as evidence that the objective of the law was to forge an education system with a secular ideology\(^{(29)}\). ‘The Law of Unification of Instruction was concerned with the implementation of the policies of secularism’\(^{(30)}\). Indeed, this secularist ideology in education also had its roots in the Tanzimat. It has also been argued that secularist thought had much earlier origins among Ottoman intellectuals and governors\(^{(31)}\).

\(^{(24)}\) Kazamias, a.g.e., s. 185; Bernard Lewis, The Emergence of Modern Turkey, Oxford University Press, London 1961, s. 408; Bisbee, a.g.e., ss. 85-95.
\(^{(26)}\) Cumhuriyet’imizin 50. Yılında Rakam ve Grafiklerle Eğitimimiz, MEB Press, Ankara 1973, s. 70.
\(^{(27)}\) Gündüz, The radical transformations..., s. 235.
\(^{(28)}\) Atatürk’ün Maarife Ait Direktifleri, s. 15.
\(^{(31)}\) S. Mardin, “Turkish Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture and Reconstruction in Operational Codes”, Turkish Studies, Vol. 6, no. 2, 2005, s. 150.
Many and intricate were the influences that had their effects on Anatolian history, but none, probably, had the vigor of Islam. Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues, in replacing the Ottoman Islamic state with a secular republic, regarded the educational system as the most effective institution to break the restraints of Islamic institutions, beliefs, and outlook. The choice of formal educational institutions as the agency to transform the inherited Islamic Ottoman structure seems to have been derived from the definition of Turkish nationalisms (Türkçülük) formulated by Ziya Gökalp. The ‘Nation,’ he stated, ‘is not racial, ethnic, geographical, political, or voluntary group or association. the Nation is a group composed of men and women who have gone through the same education, who have received the same acquisition in language, morality, religion, and aesthetics.’ So important was the role Mustafa Kemal assigned to the school system in rushing Anatolia from the Middle Ages to modern times, that he declared himself the teacher of the Turks, and in his Message to the Turkish Youth he placed the future of the Republic in the hands of the schools and the younger generation, whom he advised ‘ever to preserve and defend the national independence of the Turkish Republic’.

The concept of the Turkish nation has merged with the new secular ideology. The most obvious example of this integration was in the educational institutions where the important revision of ethics and new instructional patterns has been practiced, especially since these institutions are the surest guarantors of practicing the required change through the long years of education spent by students.

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Pillars of Secular Change - Westernization and the Decline of Religious Schools/ Adoption of Scientific and Historical Revision

Shortly after the introduction of the Law on the Unification of Education, the famous American educationist, John Dewey, came to Turkey, being the first foreign educationist to visit Turkey after the proclamation of the Republic(33). Dewey had visited China before his visit to Turkey, and afterwards visited Mexico (1926), Russia (1928), and North Africa (1934), which contributed to his prominence in the international arena(34). Dewey played an important role in Turkish education history with his two reports intended specifically for the Turkish education system. After Dewey, many foreign educationists were invited to Turkey and asked to prepare reports on the Turkish education system’s weaknesses and to sound any precautions. Between the years described as the Atatürk period, the German Kühne (1925), Egyptian Omar Buyse (1927), Swiss specialist Albert Malche (1932), the committee under the presidency of American E. Walter Kemmerer (1933), and American education specialist Beryl Parker (1934) visited Turkey. These specialists researched and reported on Turkey’s education and school system(35).

The consequence of the French influence in textbooks was the realization of the close relationship between history education and nationalism and their importance in influencing mass psychology. There-

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fore, history began to be used for pragmatic educational purposes during the Second Constitutional Era. Citizenship education, upon which the intellectuals of the Second Constitutional Era laid great emphasis within the framework of the “new human-new society” project, constituted an important dimension of the nation building project of Turkey’s founding leaders in the period following the declaration of the republic. However, the French history oriented content of history textbooks did not uphold the nation-state that was now steering towards nationalism, while the legacy of the Second Constitutional Era was maintained at the point of the instrumentalization of history education. In terms of this instrumentalization, it was a very clear requirement to write compact and methodical textbooks. It was foreseen that this task would be done in a unique way by the Turks, and Turkish historians were asked to write history books with “scientific and contemporary rules.” There was only one group of historians upon whom the republican ideologues could rely to fulfill such a vital task: themselves. The New intellectuals in the Turkish secular state found that secular change and Westernization would not be effective without the adoption of scientific and historical revision from Turkish historians for all roots of old in learning institutions and tried to remove it and replaced by new methods of life and think.

In modern states since the early eighteenth century, “public or mass education” has become a significant activity area. The radical educational and cultural reforms that took place quickly in Turkey

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(38) Ersanlı, İktidar ve Tarih..., s. 115.
after 1923 were a full stop to the social and political changes that dated back to early Ottoman modernization. “The educational policies of the Atatürk regime, one of the most drastic nation-building and secularizing exercises ever, nevertheless built on the previous efforts of Ottoman reformers.” (41) Even though this process has been viewed by many researchers as a compulsory road to teleological secularism and Kemalism, (42) it was at the same time a must for the consolidation and continuation of the nation-state established in 1923.

"From 1934 to 1948 the only indigenous, legal Islamic religious training available to Turkish Muslims was either as a routine part of basic armed forces training for recruits, or in the very elementary courses for memorizers of the Qur'an and on the Qur'an" (43). This is remarkably strange as it is the army which is regarded as the guardian of Kemalism, and thus of secularism. So to have a situation in which these guardians of secularism are the only people providing a religious education is something of a surprise. Feyzioğlu points to a dual attitude towards the subject of religious education from the point of view of secularism in Turkey. As secularism "does not imply an anti-religious attitude", he tells us: "The faith of children being educated at state schools has to be respected, while, of course, it is imperative that no education in direct conflict with the scientific approach be given" (44). He sees, thus, the need to attempt to strike a balance between respect for individual beliefs and respect for the scientific outlook.

We are left in no doubt as to which element in the choice is to be given greater weight. Feyzioğlu tells us that it is "totally undesirable to have a religious 'establishment'" free from state control and regulation


(43) Reed, Ataturk's Secularizing Legacy..., s. 330.

(44) Feyzioğlu, Secularism: Cornerstone of Turkish..., s. 224.
"which conducts religious education completely outside of the supervision of the state"\(^{(45)}\). In essence, you may take the religion out of the state, but you cannot remove the state from religion. With regard to higher education two items need to be noted. Firstly, the increasing inability of the faculty of Theology at Istanbul University to attract students between 1924 and 1933\(^{(46)}\).

The Kemalist secularism was not "anti-religious" in the sense of liquidating religion systematically." Although the official formulation was content to separate the worldly from the divine, and to oppose the exploitation of religion for political purpose, in reality Kemalist "Laicism" became an instrument for control and supervision of Islam by the state\(^{(47)}\). Mustafa Kemal’s expectations of education were parallel to the ideas which were developed during European Educational History and ‘equivalent to international norms’\(^{(48)}\). Jean Jacques Rousseau was one of the basic sources of Mustafa Kemal’s views on civilization, culture, freedom, Republic and race. For instance, Mustafa Kemal’s view of freedom was affected by John Locke and Rousseau’s ‘nature rights’\(^{(49)}\). His definition of a nation was similar to that of Ernest Renan\(^{(50)}\). In the area of education, Mustafa Kemal was influenced by Rousseau\(^{(51)}\) and Dewey. In 1924 the Turkish Ministry of Education invited Dewey to Turkey to report on issues facing the Turkish educational system. The report was very influential\(^{(52)}\). Dewey advocated ‘doing and experiencing’ as a learning method and brought to attention the idea of constructivism. Mustafa Kemal was also influenced by other

\(^{(45)}\) Feyzioğlu, Secularism: Cornerstone of Turkish..., s. 188.
\(^{(46)}\) Reed, The Faculty of Divinity..., s. 298.
\(^{(47)}\) Berkes, The Development of Secularism..., ss. 480-483.
Western educational philosophies and intellectuals, such as Rousseau and Durkheim. ‘It can be said that the recommendations made by Dewey are historically significant in the development of an educational system’(53). Dewey’s philosophy of education continues to influence Turkish education policy and practice(54).

The declining student population of this establishment can be seen from the following statement of student numbers(55):

1924-1925 284
1926-1927 167
1927-1928 53
1929-1930 35
1932-1933 20

This probably simply reflects the fact that the professional and employment prospects which graduates of this institution could expect were declining in the new atmosphere of modernization and development. For the sake of completeness it may be noted that in 1949 a new faculty of Theology was opened at Ankara University(56). In 1924 there were over 29 of these imam-hatip schools(57). This number declined to only two in 1932 and in 1932-33 imam-hatip schools ceased operating(58). Yet it came to be recognized that it was: "Essential to train qualified men of religion capable of comprehending the fact that secularism does not imply antagonism toward religion"(59). The new in the Kemalist models was did not neglect the pairing between

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(55) Büyükdüvenci, a. g. m., s. 298.
(57) Reed, Ataturk's Secularizing Legacy..., s. 330.
(58) Reed, a. g. m., s. 330.
(59) Feyzioglu, Secularism: Cornerstone of Turkish..., s. 225.
the quote from the Western styles in educations and modernization, and the attempt to train qualified men of religion. Therefore, the aim was to show that the new secular model is not anti-religious.

In 1929 school history books were rewritten to place more emphasis upon the ethnic background of the Turks and with "exaggerated and dubious theories about their origins and influence in the world"\(^{60}\). Included in such efforts was the work of Turkish scholars to establish links between recent Turkish history and Hittite and Sumerian civilizations\(^{61}\). Considerable impetus was given to such work by Atatürk's belief in the antiquity and importance of Turkey. As he put it: "My whole work for Turkey, everything I have done, would be meaningless if I did not believe that this country is the cradle of civilization. My faith in the antiquity and in the special role which Turkey must play in the history of the world has been my guiding principle through all my activities"\(^{62}\).

At the same time, the rewriting of school books was part of the process, including the language reform, aimed at fostering national identity and at distancing the Turks from their Islamic neighbors with an Arabic and Persian based culture. This rewriting replaced the predominant Islamic emphasis in the earlier text books. We can also note the effects of Western education upon the native superstitions. Kazamias notes that: "as students acquire more formal education, they also change their attitudes concerning the role of Kismet in shaping their lives and their future"\(^{63}\). This would seem to justify the faith and emphasis which Atatürk placed on education as a means of fostering more Western and scientific attitudes which would assist the Westernization of Turkey. In fact, the most important tool was represented by efforts towards upholding Turkish nationalism through practically linking with the general cultural heritage of history, culture and folk customs.

\(^{60}\) Kazamias, Education and the Quest..., ss. 186- 187.

\(^{61}\) Landau, Search for Tomorrow..., s. 248.

\(^{62}\) Landau, a. g. m., s. 249.

\(^{63}\) Kazamias, Education and the Quest..., s. 195.
and through a system of new national discourse, in end, integrates all that elements into a single form of modern Turkish civil.

**Modernization of Educational curriculum- Adaptation of Secularism**

One of the important aims of the young Turkish republic was to disseminate the basic education to all of the citizens since the majority of people living in rural area were still illiterate. In 1924, the committee of science considering education made some important decisions that 1) the number of grades for elementary schools was five, 2) the duration of elementary teachers’ schools was increased from four years to five years, 3) their curriculum was mostly changed and revised based on the ideas of the young republic. The first educational congress of this period was held in Ankara, in July 16, 1921, inaugurated by Mustafa Kemal Paşa. In his speech, he mentioned: "A national education (millî terbiye) and establishment of principles to improve the efficiency or organization of education". This is a turn point of program since Selim III, starting a new are of nationalism together with western secularism. He continued saying that "the principles of education and learning, followed up to now, was one of the cause of historical declination. National educative program means, to stay far away from the foreign ideas and influences coming from east or west, which is not related to national qualities. I mean a culture compatible with historical national character".

Influenced by Durkheim’s sociology, the republican leaders and educators would have been expected to impose a secular, sociological morality instead of religious education and morality. However, there was a delay in this until the 1940s, and the Second Council created a

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(65) Sabahaddin Zaîm, “Development of the Educational System in Turkey (Influence of Westernization on Education) (VIII)”, Istanbul University, s. 500.
true wave of excitement with its focus on a new form of morality. Council members identified new moral principles in order to “optimize the life of the Turkish public and individuals”\(^{(66)}\). It is worth noting here that no classical works or moralists of Islamic and Turkish history were consulted. Instead, the moralists of Ancient Greece and medieval Europe were taken as models. The issue of “new history instruction” discussed during the Second Council was also important for a new identity and character engineering. At the same time, these debates necessarily produced an integrative mentality that redefined the Ottomans in its own way instead of the radical, secular nationalist history perception of the Kemalist Era. Subsequently, the teaching stage of the new history perception that started to emerge after 1939 was initiated\(^{(67)}\). The climax of secularism of Atatürk in the educational aspects was represented by giving a deep dimension to the Turkish personality through claims that both of the Ottoman civilization and the general Turkish history it's the cradle of civilization for all Turkish people.

The levels of these elementary (or sometimes they could be called primary) teachers’ schools could be classified as a combination of middle and secondary schools at that time. The majority of population was still living in rural area, especially in villages. During this time, the newly established republic was inviting some foreign educators to Turkey such as John Dewey in 1924. In Dewey’s report, it was mentioned that for rural areas or villages it was necessary to open another type of village teacher school to meet the needs of villagers. This fact led to another discussion to open a different elementary teacher school for village schools in 1925. As a result of this movement, with the minister of education, Mustafa Necati, in 1927 two village teacher schools were opened with a three-year instruction period after elementary school

\(^{(66)}\) İkinci Maârif Şûrası (15–21 Şubat 1943), İstanbul 1943, s. 118.
graduation. The new village teacher schools' curriculum showed some pragmatist approach in elementary teacher education. In 1938, elementary teachers' schools were reorganized that their education periods were three years after graduation from a middle school. Primary teacher school curriculum seems to be the most secular due to no courses affiliated to religion and the highest proportion of science related courses between 14% and 16%.

The fundamentals Atatürk determined on education appeared during his own educational life. Atatürk stated that truths of education must be based on scientific fundamentals getting rid of superstitions on every occasion. “The aim of education, the basics of education, the quality of education are great. If the followed way is a wrong one on this issue and this way drives nation into breakdown, does the crime belong to the leading ones rather than the wretched public who is virtuous, good-tempered, and unselfish, follows the way and trusts in persons responsible for them. Atatürk made one of the most important identifications in Turkish education history. This was associated with the education-teaching methods. “I am of opinion that education and discipline methods followed until now are the most important factor in our nation’s regression history. Every time Atatürk suggested that there was a common illiteracy in society, release and development would be possible when destroying this and spreading science, education in society. According to him, the fault in lack of information is not the public’s, results from the old methods applied without understanding Turkish characteristics, and these ones cause the public remained lack of information.

Kemalist education departed from the path of indoctrinating students with ideologies such as communism, socialism, Islamism and ethnic racism that would weaken and undermine national unity and order. It aimed to raise students able to administer their own affairs

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(68) Türkmen, a. g. e., ss. 331-332.
both within and out of school in a manner balancing liberty and order; education was considered the chief mechanism to prepare pupils for adult society so that they would be aware of the collective memory of Turkey’s past and of contemporary dangers to Turkey. Disorder was condemned by the Kemalist regime. For instance, ‘transforming religion (Islam) to a matter of the public sphere instead of keeping it as a private matter’ (or aiming to place Marxism as the founding philosophy, abusing cultural plurality for ethnic racist ideology etc.)\(^{70}\). One remarkable in education achievements was represented by the adoption of primary schools to a secular curriculum with a lack of religion courses (Sectarian or denomination). Atatürk succeeded in creating an educated generation at a time when he was able to convert religion (Islam) from the private to the public sphere.

**CONCLUSION**

Secularism has been one of the most important aspects of the modern Turkish state, especially in the field of education. Westernization (as Ziya Gökalp and John Dewey) have contributed to a qualitative and quantitative change, that has transformed and refined the curriculum from the influences of the traditional religious system which inherited from the Ottoman Empire into a closer civil order to modern European systems, and Western intellectual visions. During the Atatürk era, the Turkish state adopted important steps to modernize education. The most important of these was the adoption the fundamental science and applied sciences, modernization of historical curricula and other teaching materials. All these steps have contributed to the decline in the status of the religious topics in schools that have accumulated over many decades of the rule of the Ottoman Empire.

The most outstanding achievement in the Atatürk era was the construction of many institutes, schools, and colleges, which quickly became the main modernization front in the Turkish state.

The clash between traditional legacies and the attempts to change them gradually, especially in the educational field, was one of the most important features on which the Turkish state was based during Atatürk's reign. Therefore, we find that the steps of secularization in Turkish society have come on several levels; including changing the curricula of primary education, in conjunction with the development of staffs of teachers, and the adoption of laws on modernizing the educational system. On the other hand, the adoption of secularism as a "concept" in Turkish constitution- which came in conjunction with secularization- was the culmination for a series of radical transformations in the Turkish state.

- It became clear that Atatürk did not want to establish a rupture with the Islamic heritage as the first step, but he establishes a rupture with the legacy of the religious alliance with feudal elites that do not fit the frameworks of modernity that he established in his New State.
- In fact, Atatürk's main concern was how to find a new form of education that would be far from the traditional educational systems that lacked modern science and had Persian and Arab influences. Therefore, the main objective was to create a new Turkish intellectual structure and enhance confidence in it as a first step to formulate the concept of citizenship, while erasing the effects of the stereotype of the Ottoman citizen which had a negative impact in the previous era.
- Atatürk's nationalization of education, albeit of a holistic nature, has helped curb sectarian teaching (in local and Western schools) Thus, it provided a supportive ground for emerging Turkish nationalism against sectarian religious tendencies.
- The concept of the Turkish nation has merged with the new secular ideology. The most obvious example of this integration
was in the educational institutions where the important revision of ethics and new instructional patterns has been practiced, especially since these institutions are the surest guarantors of practicing the required change through the long years of education spent by students.

- The New intellectuals in the Turkish secular state found that secular change and Westernization would not be effective without the adoption of scientific and historical revision from Turkish historians for all roots of old in learning institutions and tried to remove it and replaced by new methods of life and think.

- The new in the Kemalist models was did not neglect the pairing between the quote from the Western styles in educations and modernization, and the attempt to train qualified men of religion. Therefore, the aim was to show that the new secular model is not anti-religious.

- In fact, the most important tool was represented by efforts towards upholding Turkish nationalism through practically linking with the general cultural heritage of history, culture and folk customs and through a system of new national discourse, in end, integrates all that elements into a single form of modern Turkish civil.

- The climax of secularism of Atatürk in the educational aspects was represented by giving a deep dimension to the Turkish personality through claims that both of the Ottoman civilization and the general Turkish history it's the cradle of civilization for all Turkish people.

- One remarkable in education achievements was represented by the adoption of primary schools to a secular curriculum with a lack of religion courses (Sectarian or denomination). Atatürk succeeded in creating an educated generation at a time when he was able to convert religion (Islam) from the private to the public sphere.
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