

## *Intercultural Religious Education (Bursa Sample)*

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The European Conference on Ethics, Religion & Philosophy 2016  
Official Conference Proceedings

### **Abstract**

In this paper, it is discussed the attitude of intercultural religious education in Turkey. All religions have set some promises for human beings and the promise of a happier life. Shared values play a significant role in establishing close ties and good relations with the people of various intellectual and religious backgrounds. Programs of religious education and religious educators have roles in ensuring peace and tolerance between the followers of different religions and contributing to universal peace. These roles are, in general, to take into consideration the values of different religions, to introduce them objectively and to be respectful to different faiths. Pre service religious educators are experiencing different cultures. There are several international companies and their workers, international students and immigrants especially from Syria in Bursa. They have courses theoretically about intercultural education. Since religious educators has important role intercultural understanding, this article has been prepared. Students were interviewed, observed. Datas were analysed by descriptive analysis method.

**Keywords:** intercultural religious education, higher education, Turkey

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By the cause of accelerated globalization process and changing nature of modern technology, no societies can hold themselves from external influences; with this, funds, technology, people and ideas are passing and changing between country's borders freely and creating new thoughts and new ways of lives on the last quarter of this century. In this process, with the rapid increasing of informatics and skill of moving, versatile relations between human ended for them in being nested with so many cultures more. This situation has also affected the education and religious education too. Every society aims to channel their accumulations to their new generations and to prepare their kids and teenagers to the life. In this context, they utilise formal and non-formal education. Also, societies engaged in to learn and teach the religion, morals, ethic values and the other culture elements to their individuals. (Erakkuş, 2015) On the other hand, the opinion of "people from different religious traditions and beliefs should be in the effort of building dialogs with each other" started to spread out in every corner of the world. All religions have set some promises for human beings and the promise of a happier life. Shared values had played a significant role in establishing close ties and good relations with the people of various intellectual and religious backgrounds. It can be said that, people who are coming from different backgrounds of societies' multi-cultured environments need to know and understand each other in order to live live in peace, tolerance and dialogue. According to this new perspective, religion education and one of it's branch, inter-religious education, serve people to know each other and contribute an environment of peace, tolerance and dialogue Many countries are making an effort in order to establish and run more effective and fruitful religion educations by revising religion education programs for establishing a peace, tolerance and dialogue environment between societies. (Bahçekapılı, 2011). Some regulations about the syllabus of religious culture and moral knowledge have started in Turkey to give more opportunities to acknowledge various belief systems. The role of educators who will take part in education of religious education is also important. Programs of religious education and religious educators have role in ensuring peace and tolerance between the followers of different religions and contributing to universal peace. In general, these roles are to take into consideration the values of different religions to introduce them objectively and to be respectful to different faiths.

The city of Bursa locates at southaest of Marmara Sea, at the west of Turkey. The region where Bursa locates is being called "Marmara Province". The province of Marmara is the most developed region of Turkey. In 2015, Bursa's overall population was 2.847.547. (T.C. Bursa Valiliği, <http://www.bursa.gov.tr/icerik/240/nufus.html>, Date of access: 25 May 2016). There are so many international companies located in Bursa. As there are settled foreigners there are also who comes for tourism to Bursa. Foreign "quest students" are having their education at some universities and high schools in Bursa. Refugees from Syria and Iraq are living in Bursa especially for last five years. Higher education staff-student, student-student, student-society, student-living world interactions are highly important. (Sarıtuñ, 2016). Pre-service religious educators are experiencing different cultures in Bursa. Students at Faculty of Theology have courses theoratically about intercultural education. The reflection of these educations is a point of wonder.

## Method

In this study;

- It is done with a total 152 participants at Teaching Certification Course and at Faculty of Theology, Uludağ University in 2016.
- A nine questioned survey applied to participants.

**Table 1:** Numbers of participants and their departments.

DEPARTMENT	NUMBERS
Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge Teaching Department	55
Theology Department	95
Others	2

- 55 people from primary level of from religious culture and moral knowledge teaching department,
- 95 people from Theology department,
- 2 people from other departments joined to this study.

**Table 2:** Number of students and graduates who joined in this study

GRADES	NUMBERS
3rd Grades	59
4th Grades	58
Graduates	35

- 59 people from 3rd grade and 58 people from 4th grade and 35 people as graduated joined in this study.

**Table 3:** Gender of participants and their numbers in this study

GENDER	NUMBERS
Male	57
Female	95

- These students were as 95 female and 57 male.

**Table 4:** Places of where participants joined from and their numbers

PLACES	NUMBERS
Turkey	121
Caucas Region	4
Cental Asia Region	5
Indian Region	1
Far East and Southeast Asia Region	2
Middle East Region	2
Northern Africa Region	2
Central and South Africa Region	5
Balkan Countries	10

There were;

- 121 people from Turkey,
- 5 people from Central Asia region,
- 2 people from Far East and Southeast Asia region,
- 2 people from Middle East region,
- 2 people from Northern Africa region,
- 4 people from Caucasus region,
- 1 person from Indian region,
- 10 people from Balkan countries,
- 5 people from Central and South Africa region.

## Findings

**Table 5:** Answers to “Have you ever had any education on Intercultural religious education, Multi-Culture Education etc. areas? Question

ANSWERS	NUMBERS
Yes	65
No	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>

- To the question of “**Have you ever had any education on Intercultural religious education, Multi-Culture Education etc. areas?**”, 65 people gave answer as **YES** and 85 people gave answer as **NO**. The “Intercultural Religion Teaching” lesson locates in Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge Teaching for primary schools program. There is no such a lesson in Theology curriculum. But those who answered to this question as **YES** from Theology department, mentioned that they this lesson within History of Religions.

**Table 6:** Answers to “Should teachers or chaplain applicants know other cultures and believes?” question

ANSWERS	NUMBERS
Yes	151
No	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>

- To the question of “**Should teachers or chaplain applicants know other cultures and believes?**”, 151 people gave answer as **YES** and 1 person gave answer as **NO**.

**Table 7:** Answers to “Should kids on school age and teenagers know other cultures and believes?” question

ANSWERS	NUMBERS
Yes	128
No	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>

- To the question of “**Should kids on school age and teenagers know other cultures and believes?**”, 128 people gave answer as **YES** and 22 people gave answer as **NO**. It’s important to see while for teachers and chaplains the negative answer was 1, but for kids and students is 22.

**Table 8:** Chart about “Religion and moral teaching practices of different cultures and religions at a school or in a common religious education institution” view

<b>VIEW</b>	<b>NUMBERS</b>
Should be focused on common points. Distinctions should be on the second plan	13
Should be focused on moral and ethic topics	9
Should show respect to distinctions	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

- There are some results about “*Religion and moral teaching practices of different cultures and religions at a school or in a common religious education institution*”;

- 13 people indicated as “Should be focused on common points. Distinctions should be on the second plan”.

- 9 people indicated as “Should be focused on moral and ethic topics.”

- 5 people indicated as “Should show respect to distinctions.”

As it mentioned before, all religions focused on to make people happier and to have a better social life.” In multi-culture lifetime, people are in a situation of to live together and to interact with each other. With this, having a common point and showing respect to other believes are important. Belief systems already making a point to “being a human”, “having humanitarian values” and showing respect to basic rights of all individuals. But member of these belief systems/religions could lose their tolerance.

**Table 9:** Indications about lessons

<b>INDICATION</b>	<b>NUMBERS</b>
About belief systems, unbiased informations should be given. It has to cover all belief systems	55
There should be a general religious/moral education, it should be also given to anyone who requires	24
Students should have education according to his religion/belief, should know other religions/beliefs	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>

- 55 people indicated as “About belief systems, unbaised informations should be given. It has to cover all belief systems”.

- 36 percent of participants indicated as “Students at schools and other addressee should be unbaised and should know other beliefs”.

- 24 people indicated as “There should be a general religios/moral education, it should be also given to anyone who requires”. These two groups implied the importance of to know their religion as a culture. In the second group also implied to “people can get information about his belief”.

- 19 people indicated that “Students should have education according to his religion/belief, should know other religions/beliefs”. Those who picked this answer suggested a

education/teaching model which gives priority to society's beliefs but also covers other belief systems too. But there can be a problem about whether the common belief system will be based on or will be there lessons whatever the student numbers on any belief system. These issues can cause problems on practice.

- Only 1 person answered as "I am against to teaching of a different belief system".

**Table 10:** Views about teaching of lessons and methods

VIEW	NUMBERS
There should be interaction with people from different beliefs	2
Every single view should be expressed easily in lessons	3
Appropriate teaching materials should be prepared	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

Highlighters about teaching of lessons and methods;

- 2 people indicated as "There should be interaction with people from different beliefs".
  - 3 people indicated as "Every single view should be expressed easily in lessons".
  - 1 person indicated as "Appropriate teaching materials should be prepared".
  - 3 people indicated as "Lessons should be taught appropriate to region's belief specialities".
- Those who gave this answer are graduated students who are working as chaplains. Shafii sect is common at the region where these chaplains perform their duty and education materials and sources which they use are for Hanafi sect. In this situation, chaplains and teachers indicated to learn the region's belief system.

## Result

The responses that was given by the respondents for the question of "Have you ever communicate with other cultures / societies / individuals?" is to decisive on the outcome of the subject.

**Table 11:** Answers to "Have you ever communicate with other cultures / societies / individuals?" question

ANSWERS	NUMBERS
Yes	119
No	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>

- To the question of "**Have you ever communicate with other cultures / societies / individuals?**", out of 152 people, 119 people gave answer as **YES** and 32 people gave answer as **NO**. Actually, Uludağ University and especially Faculty of Theology has a multi-cultural social circle. They might have answered the question according to their past lives or their social circle of their families. Large majority of students who is studying in Bursa where they have a great opportunity to come together with different cultures, are looking positive to intercultural religious education.

## References

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