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## **A GENERAL LOOK AT THE MADRASAS IN OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN TERMS OF TEACHING METHODS, ASSESSMENT, EVALUATING AND EXPERTISING IN TEACHING**

Madrasa is the name given to the buildings which are assigned for teaching activities and which provide necessary equipment for teaching activities. We are not sure as to when and where the first madrasa was built in the History of Islam Education. (Sanal, 1999:123) We, however, know that the first madrasas were seen in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century A.D in Horasan and Turkhistan. Researches made so far show that madrasas in the Moslem countries were founded at different times and under different circumstances (Taşdemirci, 1989:269; Sanal, 2002:78).

In this study, we have tried to analyse Ottoman madrasas in terms of teaching methods, assessment and evaluating, and expertising in teaching; therefore, we have determined three subject headings. The subjects headings are as follows:

a-The Teaching Methods in Madrasas

b-The Applications of Assessment and Evaluating in Madrasas' Teaching Activities

c-Expertising in Teaching

### **A-The Teaching Methods in Madrasas**

The teaching method applied in Ottoman madrasas was deductive. This method was based on dogmas and authorities. At first, this deductive method required memorization, in the first instance the students were to memorize Koran and as many hadiths as possible (Taşdemirci, 1984:64; Unat, 1864:8) Later dictation method was developed. This method required students to sit around the teacher in circles and take notes (Zengin, 1993:71). This method was applied in almost all courses except Koran courses, in the course time another method, which was developed in addition to dictation method, was commentary and explanation method. After the number of the copies of the books taught at the madrasas had increased, the dictation method was abandoned gradually. Instead of taking notes, one of the students would read the book aloud and the teacher would comment on the text. Teachers, also, dictated their comments to the

students. Madrasa teachers sometimes had the students discuss on a topic taught, and they also refereed between discussion groups and gave their judgements (Uzunçarşılı, 1988:57) The students of the madrasas taught people in the masjids and mosques near the madrasa (Baltacı, 1976:45) or during holiday they visited various parts of the country and taught people whereby they conducted a kind of probation (Akyüz, 1994:66).

Question-answer method was also applied in the madrasas. Either the teacher asked questions to the students or the students asked the teacher. During the classes the students were allowed to talk and teachers made the necessary explanations. On certain days meetings open to people were held, too. Although the classes were held at the madrasa's own buildings, classes in mosques were held and everybody was allowed to attend those classes. The famous teachers called "ders-i amn" (professor) gave lessons titled "mosque classes" to common people in the large mosques of the towns and villages. The congregation sat around the teacher and listened to what he had to say. There were regular audience attending those classes. Since those classes were held after the afternoon prayer they were called "afternoon prayer classes". The methods applied in those classes were explanation and question-answer methods. In this question-answer method deductive principles were obeyed; that is, the questions asked by the congregation were answered referring to the dogmas and the authorities (Akyüz, 1994:91).

Under the light of our current knowledge we could not know in which order the courses of the curriculum were taught in Ottoman madrasas. We, however, could say that the courses of the madrasas in all Moslem countries were taught in the same order using the same method and the holiday days were similar. In Ottoman madrasas the first years students were taught introductory courses whereas senior students were taught advanced courses (Ergün, 1981:56). So, it is clear that "gradual" style was applied in the teaching activities of Ottoman madrasas. Approvingly, Muallim Cevdet pointed that the courses in Ottoman madrasas were arranged from easy to difficult, and recommended that the students have much spare time in order to study various topics other than their courses (Muallim Cevdet, 1978:35-37).

Later the methods applied in the madrasas were transformed into a kind of method, which did not allow observation, experiment, analysis or criticism and put emphasis on the commentary and interpretation of verses of the Koran and hadiths according to Aristotle logic. This new method gave importance to memorization instead of meaning and acquired a scholastic quality, which did not give place to teaching writing (Taşdemirci, 1984:65). The teachers of the madrasas preferred to be satisfied with the present knowledge to discussing and answering philosophical and theological problems. Thus madrasas turned into a kind of education institution which did not allow students to think, research, question; they taught the students to be satisfied with the present knowledge and not to question anything. This vicious circle resulted in students' learning unnecessary knowledge and losing time. In report written in 1876 by 15 madrasa teachers, it was claimed that students were dealing with unnecessary comments and annotations whereby losing time, in the same report the teachers were advised to begin the class by reviewing the last class so that students could be more active during the classes and to teach the courses by giving examples (Zengin, 1993:72)

### **B- The Applications of Assessment and Evaluating in Madrasas' Teaching Activities**

In madrasas' teaching activities the most interesting point is that the teachers did not only grade the students' cognitive behaviours but also they graded the students' talents and moral behaviours. Clearly, this kind of assessment and evaluating application is teacher centred. There was not a classroom system in madrasas' teaching activities and individual teaching model was the prevailing model in the madrasas; therefore, assessment and evaluating

application date was determined in the context of teacher-student relationship and the result of such kind of evaluating was the "icazetname"(diploma) given to the student (Akgündüz, 1997:427-430). Actually, in Turk-Islam tradition education was of primary importance and all the needs of the education were supplied but education system did give importance to the exams, the system did not assign a place to the exams (Ergün, 1996:333) Exams were held when more than one candidates who graduated from madrasa and had similar qualities applied the same position (Ergün, 1982:69). According to Zengin exams were held because they forced the students to study lesson, allowed them to win the admiration of the teacher, caused rivalry among the students and education was obligatory according to our religion. Yet, in the course of time exams lost importance an unpleasant scene appeared in teaching activities (Zengin, 1993:93).

In Ottoman madrasas, the novice teachers (mülazım) to be appointed teachers (müderri) of the madrasa took "Rüüs-Theological Diploma" exam after they had worked as mülazım for seven years. The ones who passed the exam got the title "Ders-i Amn"(professor), and "İstanbul Rüüsü", which allowed them to teach at İptida-i Hariç Madrasas. The madrasa teachers who began their jobs at the lowest level madrasa could gradually become a teacher at the highest-level madrasa. After the year 1592 teaching at a madrasa was a rank and the children of high-grade teacher were given this rank. From then on promotion, assessment and evaluating regardless of scholarly hierarchy were common. Hence ignorance and knowledge, and ignorant and scholar were considered same which resulted in less people study and ignorance become widespread (Atay, 1983:159).

In short, in Ottoman madrasas exams were held only when graduates applied for a position. Students did not take exams from the courses they were taught. Students, however, taking an exam called "kur'a sınavı (lottery exam)" which lasted for six years. The first kur'a exam was administered in 1853. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century a lot of students wanted to study at madrasa because madrasa students were exempted from military service. Kur'a exam was administered to decrease the number of madrasa students. The students who were to be recruited were given the Kur'a exam; the ones who passed the exam remained student but the ones who failed exam were recruited. Exams were held at the end of the year or at the end of the quarter. Even at the beginning of a quarter the students whose names were drawn in the lottery were given a general exam; the ones who passed the exam were exempted from military service. Mehmet Fatih lists the deficiencies of kur'a exams:

1-Exams were not held according to a schedule, students were asked questions either from the courses they were taught or from the courses they were not taught.

2-Exams should have been held at the end of year, but in madrasas exams were held at the beginning or in the middle of the quarter, which gave harms to the integrity of the courses.

3-Students were allowed to take the exam only once, the ones who failed the exam were recruited immediately.

So if a successful student failed the exam for some reason, he had to leave school and risk his future life; therefore, students should have been given a second chance to take the exam (Zengin, 1993:93). Kur'a exams were administered for several years and in 1892 they were abolished. After 1892 madrasa students were never given any exam, which caused a big decrease in students' proficiency. Since madrasa students were exempted from military service, after 1892 madrasas were the refuge for people who did not want to do military service. There were more students than madrasas could accommodate, which is the cause of another difficult problem.

During the II.Meşrutiyet (Constitution) Period madrasas were subject to reform; madrasa students would have to take an exam like the exams administered in primary schools and kur'a and rüüs exams, which were peculiar to madrasas, were to be reformed as well. Ergün informs us that Mehmet Fatih suggested the exams of madrasas copy the exams of other schools and kur'a exam be administered again after being rehabilitated. Hoca Muhyiddin recommended that students should be given exam every year and asked science questions; successful students should be rewarded but if a student could not pass his exams for three years he should be asked to leave the school. During II.Meşrutiyet Period, *Beyanü 7 Hakk* journal dwelt on the exam system; advised to give students exams at certain periods and advised to give exams either written or oral (Ergün, 1996:334).

In Medaris-i ilmiye Nizamnamesi (Medaris-i ilmiye Regulation) prepared in 1910, it was declared that students were to be given exam every year before the holiday. The date, place and the style of the exam were to be determined by the commission chaired by Meclis-i Mesalih-i Talebe (The Parliament of the Students) in Istanbul, and by Müftü (provincial director of religious affairs) in the province. Students who failed more than two courses had to repeat his class; if a student failed two or less than two courses he was allowed to take a make-up exam. The students who failed three consecutive years were to be asked to leave the school and the successful students were to be given certificates as a confirmation of their success (Medaris-i ilmiye Regulation: Articles: 32-35). 1914 İslah-ı Medaris Nizamnamesi did not dwell on assessment and evaluating. This regulation only required an exam to be held if the number of the students applying the school was higher than the quota; the students to enrol at the intermediary classes in secondary school and high schools should be given exams from the courses of the previous classes and they should allow to enrol only if they could pass those exams. According to same regulation only graduates of high level madrasas (external students who graduated from these madrasas) could apply for a position in Madrasa of the Specialists (Madrasatü'l Mütessisin) and if there were more applications than the position offered an election exam was to be administered (İslah-ı Medaris Regulation: Articles: 10,21; Zengin, 1993:93)

During II.Meşrutiyet Eşrefefendizade Mehmet Şevketi was one of the people who declared detailed opinions on assessment and evaluating applications in madrasa (Sanal, 1998:83) Şevketi explains what he understands from the word "exam" (Şevketi, 1329:35:

"Our usual exams aim at both to display the knowledge gained during education and to foster rivalry among students who are to be educated and become preachers, yet in order to be fair questions the numbers of the questions asked should be limited and certain."

Şevketi suggested the secondary schools quit classes one month before the exams, and during that month teachers what they had taught so far, then the students be given exams. Exams should be administered by examining officials who were appointed by madrasa teachers and Sheik-ul Islam. The students passed those exams were to be given a certificate confirmed by the executive board. If a boarding student had failed the exam, he would have been a day student. If the same student had failed for the second time he would have been asked to leave the school. Şevketi recommended that the students demanding to enrol at the high level madrasas should be given a written and an oral exam. For the written exam they should prepare a thesis on the subject determined by the board. If his thesis were satisfactory then the students would be allowed to take the oral exam. If a high-level madrasa student failed his classes three consecutive years he would be asked to leave the school. (Şevketi, 1329:32-37).

Şevketi has a distinctive feature among his contemporaries who offered suggestions to reform the madrasas because Şevketi was the first to offer that students' success in the exams be graded in numbers. Our education system, which ignored the importance of exam, considered Şevketi's this offer appropriate and adopted his style. According to Şevketi students should be graded as follows (Şevketi, 1329:37):

1. Much knowledge, less ignorance
2. Much knowledge, not less ignorance
3. Much ignorance, not less knowledge

#### **C-EXPERTISING IN TEACHING**

Madrasas are the general education institutions contributed to the Islamic culture by Turks. The followers of the Shiah sect founded "Dar'al ilimler" and the Sunnis founded the madrasas. Therefore, the Shiites could not have access to the madrasas, and Persian was not taught in madrasas until a certain time. The Sunnis founded madrasas for each of the four sects of Sunnis or sometimes two or three Sunni sects were taught in one madrasa (Çelebi, 1983:111-120). In addition to madrasas Dar'al Hadith where hadiths were taught were founded and those madrasas were a kind of expertising madrasas (Akyüz, 1994: 64) The first Dar'al hadith in Ottoman Country was built in Iznik by Çandarlı Hayrettin Paşa during the reign of Murat II (Kazıcı, 1995:20). Later Murat II built another Dar'al Hadith in Edime. In Istanbul the first Dar'al Hadith was built by Kanuni Sultan Süleyman. Kanuni placed the Dar'al Hadith he built to the top level in madrasa system.

In Süleymaniye Madrasas founded by Kanuni Sultan Süleyman there were four madrasas assigned for Medicine and Mathematics the graduates of which were employed in the army. There was also Dar'al Hadith to teach graduate courses. During the reign of Kanuni madrasas were divided into two: first, Sahn-i Seman Madrasas in which Law, Theology and Literature were taught. Atay, however, disagrees with this idea and claims that in Süleymaniye madrasas only hadiths and medicine were taught; courses like "Mathematics and Nature" were not taught (Atay, 1983:89). Ergin, too, stresses that there were not any expertising madrasas like Mathematics and Nature madrasas among Süleymaniye madrasas.

On the contrary Unat believes Mathematics was taught in Süleymaniye madrasas and ophthalmology education was given as well in those madrasas (Unat, 1964:4).

With the regression of madrasas the expertising education given education regressed, too. In 1914 a report was written on the situation of madrasas in Istanbul, which stated that nine of the Dar'al Hadith madrasas had been demolished, two of them needed to be repaired, two of them were used for different aims and only in one of them hadith was taught (Zengin, 1993:302-308).

When the madrasas were subject to reform in Meşrutiyet Period, the reformers dwelt on the issue of expertising seriously and founded separate madrasas. In 1854, for instance, Mekteb-i Nuwab was founded to teach judges and judge-substitutes to be employed at canonical courts, and in 1910 its name was changed into Mekteb-i Kuzat. In the curriculum of Madrasa-i Kuzat were not only canonical law courses but also modern law courses. In 1912 in Istanbul Madrasatu'l Vaizin (Preacher School) was founded to educate preachers who would expand and propagandise Islam. The students were to be educated for four years in Madrasatu'l Vaizin. Not only religious lessons but also social sciences were taught at those madrasas (Taşdemirci, 1984:139). In 1913 another madrasa called Madrasatu'l Eimme ve'l-Huteba was founded to educate imams, orators, and muezzins. However, students were not enthusiastic to enrol at these madrasas, so these two madrasas were united under the name "Madrasatu'l Irşad". In this new madrasa preachers were to take a three-year education, and imams and orators were to take a two-year education. Madrasatu'l Irşad is believed to be the prototype of Imam and Orator Schools, which were founded, in the Republican period, according to the Act of Unity in Teaching. Besides these madrasas, in 1915 Madrasatu'l Hattatın (Calligrapher School) was founded to teach Islamic fine arts calligraphy and chrysography. This madrasa was the source of inspiration to open "Eastern Adorning Arts Department" in Fine Arts Academy in Republican period. In 1917 Madrasatu'l Mütéhassisin (Madrasa of the Specialists), the foundation of which had been determined in the 1914 Islah-i Medaris Regulation, was founded, in this regulation, it was stated that experts to teach at the advanced section of Dar'al Hilafatu'l-Aliye Madrasa were needed. According to the regulation Sheik-ul Islam would open the departments needed in this madrasa and the education period would be two years. The students demanding to enrol at these new departments were required to have knowledge not less than the graduates of Dar'al-Hilafatu'l-Aliye Madrasa. The departments Sheik-ul Islam considered necessary could be opened in 1917 (Ergün, 1996:349; Taşdemirci, 1984:139).

Under the light of the information above, it could be said that during II.Meşrutiyet Period in the reform struggles, expirtising had a central importance, and a few new madrasas were founded for the purpose of expirtising. The reasons which led Ottoman intellectuals and scholars to reform the madrasas were: a) the madrasas were unsatisfactory in terms of buildings and programs, b) scholastic thought had been prevailing in madrasas, which caused negative effects on the education of the madrasas.

During II.Meşrutiyet Period, Şevketi was one of the intellectuals who wrote a book on the reform of the madrasas, which affected the rulers of the age. He also expounded his views on the importance of vocational expirtising. According to Şevketi after a certain time in history Ottomans did not give importance to vocational expirtising. He supported his views with the following sentences (Şevketi, 1329:4):

Actually, famous scholars such as Fenari, Molla Hüsrev, Ibn-i Kemal, and Ebussuut took their education at our madrasas. The courses taught at our madrasa were not like the courses al-Buhari, al-Ghazali, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Avicenna and al-Tusi had taken; therefore, our scholars could not excel their predecessor. Our scholars were experienced in only one discipline but their predecessor had been experienced in almost all the sciences during their time. As a matter of fact a life devoted to only one science could not compete with another which is devoted because if one deals with a number of sciences s/he will surely gain much knowledge than the one who is focussed on one subject.

Şevketi pointed that because of some reasons besides traditional madrasas, which taught only one branch or science were also founded in Ottoman country. Yet, since the intellectuals and the common people were not interested in the subjects taught at the madrasas and could not make use of the madrasas, madrasas fell into a regression process. Another reason causing regression was that the madrasas were not successful in teaching the courses and they even did not try to overcome their faults. According to Şevketi İniam-Azam's vocational expirtising subject was **Fıkıh**, al-Buhari was experienced in Hadith and Avicenna in Philosophy, which showed the importance of vocational expirtising to get the maximum benefit from education.

### CONCLUSION

Madrasas, which were general education institutions in Ottoman Government, were subject to change in terms of teaching methods, assessment and evaluation and expirtising in education. In this we analysed the changes, which took place in madrasas' teaching methods, assessment and evaluation, and expirtising in education in the course of history and supplied detail information about these issues. After Turkish War of Independence, The Act of Unity in Education passed the parliament on March 03,1924. According to the first article of the 430 numbered Unity in Education Act "All of the education institution in Turkey are under the control of Ministry of National Education", so madrasas were from then on under the control of Ministry of National Education. The Minister of National Education Vasıf Bey abolished the madrasas with the 13.03.1924-dated GENELGE he issued.

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