Extended Abstract

A Research Related to the Rhetoric and Professional Practices Courses in Terms of the Qualification of Religious Communication*

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Abstract

This study relates the rhetoric and professional practices courses taught at Imam Hatip High Schools with the qualification of religious communication, which students need to have them pass their course. While processing the topic, the introduction briefly focuses on Imam Hatip High Schools' individual and social implications in the religious and political fields, as well as the relationship these schools have through advances in the fields of religious education and religious services. In continuation, it focuses on the concept of religious communication. Additionally, evaluations have been included related to the rhetoric course. In this context, analyses have been performed on the historical process of the rhetoric course's nomenclature. The analyses that were made have focused on the approach of nomenclatures made in relation to the rhetoric course in the direction of the government's execution of religious education and religious services. The contents and course achievements of the rhetoric course have been examined while discussing how the class has competence gained. In addition, students' opinions related to the rhetoric course have also been included.

Keywords

Rhetoric • Religious services • Religious education • Imam-Hatip High School • Informal religious education

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Imam Hatip Schools are included in the center of the debate in political, social, cultural, and religious fields in recent history in terms of the role they play in Turkish society. The religious education and teaching processes of the period of the Republic become decipherable through imams and public speakers. The relationships between religion/state, religion/society, and religion/education in this period are explained through these schools.

Inhibiting the Imam Hatip Schools and their functionality in a short period of time has caused them to be included in the center of religious, political, and social debates. The debates often times are seen as an expression of the state's view on religion.

These schools found legal support for themselves together with the Law of Unity of Education, first issued in 1924. As identified related to this law, the aim of Imam Hatip Schools is to meet the needs of society for religious education.

The Imam Hatip Schools are desired to be schools where the management skills of the mihrab, minbar, and podium, which are included within the various religious services, are gained. For this, Imam Hatip Schools' curriculum includes a course on public speaking.

The Rhetoric Course in Imam Hatip Schools

The curriculum of Imam Hatip Schools consists of two main department courses, one being the vocational and the other the cultural courses. The vocational courses are where knowledge proficiency of a professional field is gained in accordance with the established purpose of the Imam Hatip Schools. These courses are The Holy Quran, Arabic, Commentary, Hadiths, Remarks, Islamic Historical Prophecy, Fiqh, and Rhetoric. These mainstream courses are taught with different credits, especially in the high school period.

The rhetoric course occurs with different names in the programs. Turkish Rhetoric, Rhetoric, Rhetoric and Professional Practices, and, lastly among the elective courses, Diction and Rhetoric are the names included in the Imam Hatip Schools' programs. Changes made on the topic of rhetoric course titles since the establishment of the Imam Hatip Schools follow.

The Contents of the Rhetoric Class

A portion of the content of the Rhetoric Course prepared by the Ministry of National Education and the General Directorate of Religious Education consists of the following (Sezikli, 2016):

- Religious Services & Religious Affairs
- Identifying Yourself and the Target Audience in Religious Services

- Issues That Hinder and Challenge Religious Services
- Communication in Religious Services
- Rhetoric and Its Types
- The Importance of Rhetoric Location in Religious Services
- Religious Rhetoric and Its Types
- The Principles of Religious Rhetoric
- Resource Selection in Religious Rhetoric
- Elocution and the Khutbah
- Religious Provisions Related to the Khutbah
- Matters Related to Preparing the Khutbah
- Khutbah Prayers
- Khutbah Examples
- Ministry and the Sermon
- The Sermon and Direction's Place in Religion
- Matters Related to Preparation and Presentation of the Sermon
- The Sermon and Its Prayers

When looking at the above-given contents for the rhetoric course taught at Imam Hatip High Schools and their related achievements, the following is directed at the students related to the course.

1. Having the ability gained to manage religious services much more as a professional inside the mosque is understood to be in the foreground. This situation has the nature of reinforcing the conviction that expectations related to the rhetoric course have hardly changed from the past until today.

2. The proficiency related to religious communication competence is understood to be limited to inside the mosque. Knowledge for having students gain religious communication competence is not given; introductory knowledge is provided. In the contents, the introductory information, by turning it into a behavior, will not enable students to be sufficient in terms of their own religious communication in the environments inside and outside the mosque.

3. The information provided in the content doesn't have the nature of providing the necessary qualifications for fulfilling community-centered religious services. Therefore, the inner content of the rhetoric course aimed at gaining the competence of religious communication in religious services is seen to not have the hardware for being able to fulfill community-centered religious services.

4. The rhetoric course is one that entertains applying on one's self. Therefore, the emphasis when forming content has needed to be on application. In the content of the course material at hand, information directed at application has been given much space. The information stands out in the echelon of more knowledge and comprehension.

The Purpose of the Study

The study intends to obtain information related to what state the state is of Rhetoric and Professional Practices courses taught in Imam Hatip High Schools on the matters of having students gain sufficient professional competence and communication/ expression skills.

Method

The scanning model and interview technique have been used in this research in line with the study's aim. The section performed in relation to the interviews forms the qualitative part of the research. In this framework, a focus-group study model has been made in terms of the characteristics of the study group.

The qualitative part of the study has been performed with 20 seniors formed from all males and four teachers of vocational courses who perform duties and give or have given the rhetoric class at the Imam Hatip High School. Open-ended questions were asked in the interviews, and in addition to the written answers the participants gave to the questions, necessary resolutions were performed by recording the participants verbal explanations made on the subject.

Data Collection

In explaining the place of Imam Hatip Schools and the rhetoric courses taught in these schools in the historical process, which constitutes the first section of the research, the status of Imam Hatip Schools is referenced in terms of clarifying the position of rhetoric classes that is taught in these schools on the resources that have been formed related to this topic. The second resource that forms the data to shape the research is the semi-structured interviews and meetings performed with the teachers and students. The method of structured and in-depth interviews has been used in collecting this data. The participants were asked the following questions in the interview:

1. One of the competences that those who will perform tasks in religious service need to have is effective religious communication and oratory techniques. Do you agree with this view? Why?
2. According to you, is the oratory course of the Rhetoric Course in Imam Hatip High Schools necessary? Why?

Participants were interviewed around these two questions in line with the aim of the research.

Data Collection Process

All interviews were performed by the researcher. Aside from the questions that had been prepared in advance, additional oral questions were also included. The consideration that is effective in deciding how the interviewing will happen is the current situation of the person who is consulted for the interview. Because sometimes the participants' answers to the questions are sometimes direct and sometimes indirect, response clarifiers and questions directed on the topic were asked, thus utilizing the flexibility of semi-structured interview techniques.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

By analyzing the interviews, written statements, and voice recordings made during the interviews, a protocol list was prepared for readying the semi-structured questions that will be directed at the subjects. Arrangements were made on the topic of questions found in this protocol with the quality of providing questions related to the aim of the research and revealing problems. Attempts were made to ensure the participants understand the questions and can respond easily. Aside from this, audio recordings made in line with the interviews were decoded. After organizing the data obtained (verbally and in writing) in line with the aim of the research and classifying the data among itself, the interpretation phase was passed to. In order to make the data meaningful, attempts were made to have the deficiencies in meaning that appeared in the speaking and writing to be understandable by adhering to the purpose of the statement.

Limitations of the Research

In forming the theoretical framework of the research, Imam Hatip Schools was searched from the literature performed under the keywords: Rhetoric Class, Rhetoric, Effective Communication, Communication, and Expression², which are taught in these schools. In the empirical part of the research, Anatolian Imam Hatip High School seniors and juniors were interviewed. For this reason, the research has been limited to Imam Hatip High School students from the 11th and 12th grades. Additionally, opinions were received from

2 Translator's note: Originally being a Turkish research article, these keywords were searched in Turkish.

those who have been administrators in these schools along with the vocational-course teachers that still work at the Imam Hatip High Schools who have entered the Rhetoric Class. The study was conducted during the 2016-2017 academic year.

Findings

A group of 30 high-school seniors participated in the study. All of the study participants were formed from male students. Creating a friendly and warm environment was attempted as much as possible with the assumption that it would contribute to students being able to explain their thoughts and feelings more comfortably.

Students' Opinions Related to the Rhetoric Course

The following was directed at the students:

One of the qualifications that must be possessed by those who perform tasks in the field of religious services is to have effective religious communication and oratory skills. Do you agree with this view and why?

Answers to this student-directed question are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Answers from Students Given to the First Question

Reason	<i>n</i>	%
It is effective at providing efficiency in religious services	10	33.3
It contributes to the improvement of human relations	3	10.0
The advantage of conveying religion	5	16.6
Contributes to personality development	5	16.6
Helpful in explaining religious authenticities	7	23.3
Total	30	100

As seen in Table 1, many of the interviewed participants (33%) commented that the Rhetoric Course will have a positive effect on enabling productivity in religious services. Apart from this, 10% of the interviewed participants commented that religious services is not the only occupational area that stands to gain in terms of the Rhetoric class's content; it will at the same time contribute to bettering human relations. From the perspective of rhetoric, the percentage of those who think it will be effective at sufficiency in describing religion and in having one understand religious truths is 23%. When the statements of what is necessary for the rhetoric course to explain religion properly are taken together with those who consider being a good orator to help convey religion, one will see that more than a third ($16\% + 23\% = 39\%$) of participants agree with the idea that the rhetoric course is necessary.

A second question was addressed to the students in terms of enabling them to have their expressions more crystallized: "According to you, is the public speaking class, Rhetoric

Course, necessary in Imam Hatip High Schools and why?” The reason for addressing this issue is to be able to learn the reasons for the students’ views related to the rhetoric course. The answers have been sweetened by classifying them together with their reasons.

Table 2
Answers from Students Given to the Second Question

Reason	<i>n</i>	%
The skills of the profession are gained	15	50
The course doesn’t work	6	18
Importance is not given to the course	9	32
TOTAL	30	100

As can be seen in Table 2, many of the students (50%) stated the rhetoric to be necessary for earning professional skills. The data received from the students’ answers to the questions is compatible with previous data. In students’ answers to the previous question, they see the rhetoric course as a competence that students will feel is needed in the field of religious services. In the answers students gave to this question, they also stated seeing the rhetoric course as a professional skills class.

Discussion and Result

The rhetoric course in Imam Hatip Schools, which has cultivating through tasks in religious services among their goals, is one lesson included among vocational courses. The aim of this course is to have those who will perform duties in the field of religious services gain the professional competency for these duties.

The different statements from the participant interviews, in an almost unanimous consensus, identified processing the rhetoric course as a discomfort for the students at the theoretical level, in spite of being necessary from their perspective. They stated looking at practicing not being included in the lesson process as a deficiency.

Not applying this course, which is directed at gaining the skill for meeting the community’s religious needs in the field of religious services, is the reason for the drop in efficiency of religious services and disruptions in meeting the expectations of the congregation (Kayadibi, 2005).

One of the most important reasons for establishing the rhetoric course is also the expectation of having students gain the competence of individual communication. In terms of both the content and functioning of the rhetoric course, this competence has not been gained according to the participants.

Another negative related to the rhetoric course is that this course is also usually taught in senior year.

These days, the focal point of religious services seems to have slipped out of the mosque. The rhetoric class that is given in Imam Hatip Schools, as such, seems

removed from the content and practice that will earn the competence required in conducting community-centered religious services.

In representation of the doctrine of the rhetoric course, the quality of having those who will perform in the field of religious services gain oratory competence has not been seen.

The need for Imam Hatip students of the rhetoric course to have social, cultural, and religious channels of expression has not yet been seen fully accepted.

Suggestions

1. The rhetoric course should function by integrating together with other classes.
2. The course location should be changed; that, or bring the place where it's found to a functional state.
3. The balance of theory and practice should be observed in the functioning of the rhetoric course. Weight should be given for this to in- and out-of-class activities that will have competency gained.
4. This course should be supplemented with diction training.
5. Contributions that the teachers who enter the Rhetoric Course will perform in class should be planned by having them be in common groups related to the Literature Course, Guidance Course, and other related vocational courses.
6. For the purpose of ensuring students have experiences directed at in-mosque religious services, the province should be brought into cooperation with the district mufti.
7. The principles of application should be determined and applications should be made complete in accordance with these principles by making mosque and non-mosque religious communication applications.
8. The students taking the rhetoric course who have effective rhetoric competence should be identified by creating annual performance portfolios related to the students. Measurement and evaluation systems should be developed that will provide having the identified students be directed to the field of religious services.
9. Students who are deemed appropriate for the aim of the rhetoric class should be given a certificate to prove this. Priority in employment within the Department of Religious Affairs should be given to students who have this certificate.
10. That the rhetoric course is aimed at mosque-centered religious education is understood from its contents. This needs to be re-addressed in a way that also includes community-centered religious education.