

The *gurbetçi* imams of Diyanet

An explorative research into the International Divinity Program of Diyanet within the context of diaspora relations between Turkey and the Netherlands.

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S1426176

24 July 2017

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Words: 22050

Table of contents

Chapter I	3
<i>Introduction</i>	
Chapter II	15
<i>Imam education in Turkey from a historical perspective</i>	
Chapter III	25
<i>Curriculum of the International Divinity Program in the University of Ankara</i>	
Chapter IV	31
<i>Thoughts of the Stakeholders about the International Divinity Program</i>	
Chapter V	37
<i>Students of the International Divinity Program in Ankara</i>	
Chapter VI	49
<i>An analysis of the International Divinity Program through the lens of the diaspora theory</i>	
Chapter VII	55
<i>Conclusion</i>	
Appendix	59
Bibliography	61

Chapter I: Introduction

The imam working in a mosque in the Netherlands constantly finds himself in a field of tension between expectations from the majority of society and expectations of the believers.

On the one hand this tension is towards all imams in the Netherlands. ‘Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam wants to revitalize imam training’. This was the headline of an item published on the website of *NOS* (Dutch Broadcasting Foundation) on 13 December 2016, following the meeting between the Muslim organizations and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. According to professor Wim Janse, the Free University would not start a new program for students who wanted to become an imam. Instead, it wanted to educate current imams in the mosques.¹ A couple of months earlier, the headline ‘Bussemaker² wants possibilities for imam training’ attracted attention.³

On the other hand there is also tension on Turkish imams. A recent example of this tension is the article ‘Imams are secret agents of Erdogan’ published by *Algemeen Dagblad* on 19 August 2016.⁴ In this article, Ahmet Taşkan, a follower of Fethullah Gülen, talked about the way he is threatened in the Netherlands due to the failed coup d’état in Turkey. He claimed that the imams from the Diyanet mosques were collecting names to send to the Turkish Government. Another claim is that the Turkish government hinders the integration of the Turkish children in the Netherlands.⁵ *ISN*, Islamitische Stichting Nederland, also known as the Dutch branch of Diyanet, published several press releases on their website about the failed coup d’état in Turkey and the following commotion in the Netherlands.⁶ Another recent example is the motion of the political parties *CDA* (Christian Democratic Appeal), *CU* (Christian Union) and *SGP* (Reformed Political Party). These parties want the government to put an end to the

¹ ‘VU wil imamopleiding nieuw leven inblazen’ *NOS*, 13 December 2016. <http://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2148222-vu-wil-imamopleiding-nieuw-leven-inblazen.html>,

‘Bussemaker wil geschrapte imamopleiding nieuw leven inblazen’, *NOS*, 18 February 2016. <http://nos.nl/artikel/2087608-bussemaker-wil-geschrapte-imamopleiding-nieuw-leven-inblazen.html>

² Jet Bussemaker is a Dutch politician of the Labour Party (PvdA). She has been the Minister for Education, Culture and Science in the second Rutte cabinet since 5 November 2012.

³ ‘Bussemaker wil mogelijkheden imamopleiding’ *NU*, 18 February 2016. <http://www.nu.nl/politiek/4216654-bussemaker-wil-mogelijkheden-imamopleiding.html>.

⁴ ‘Imams zijn geheim agenten van Erdogan’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 19 August 2017. <http://www.ad.nl/dossier-nieuws/imams-zijn-geheim-agenten-van-erdogan~aa6b76e8/>.

⁵ ‘Imams zijn geheim agenten van Erdogan’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 19 August 2017. <http://www.ad.nl/dossier-nieuws/imams-zijn-geheim-agenten-van-erdogan~aa6b76e8/>.

⁶ ‘Persbericht’, *Islamitische Stichting Nederland*, accessed on 10 May 2017. <http://islamitischestichtingnederland.nl/persbericht-2/>.

funding of mosques by the Turkish government. On 27 September 2016, 75 members of the parliament voted for and 67 voted against this proposal.⁷ Furthermore, the majority of the parliament members also argued that the Dutch government should condemn the ‘long arm of Ankara’.⁸

The imam-debate in the Netherlands

From the second half of the seventies, a family reunion process of the Muslim immigrants from Turkey and Morocco took place. These immigrants started to build their Islamic infrastructure with their own mosques. Due to this process, the need for imams grew. According to Boender, the tasks of the imams expanded with their arrival in the Netherlands.⁹ The imam was supposed to form a bridge between the Muslims and the Dutch society. As formulated during a speech in 2004 by the minister of Integration and Immigration, this demanded gaining a thorough knowledge of the Dutch language and society, as well as recognizing the Dutch norms and values.¹⁰ There were several imams between 2002 and 2004 in the Netherlands who did not fulfill that obligation. This led to a collision between the attitude of the imams and the Dutch norms and values. The Dutch government’s task was to prevent this collision as much as possible and it tried this among others thing, with the establishment of a Dutch imam training. According to Boender, the attempts to create imam training can be seen as an effort to appear ‘the Other’ more like ‘the Self’.¹¹ The Other here means the imam who is ‘different’ and from another country than the Self which is the Western society. One of the important causes for this policy was islamophobia. According to Van Koningsveld and Shadid, the fear of Islam has been present for centuries and has surely manifested itself in the Netherlands this last decade.¹²

The imam training attempts in the Netherlands can be linked to the imam debates. In 2005, the Dutch government helped universities with grants to start three imam educational studies at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, the Leiden University and the Inholland University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam. The aim was to educate ‘homegrown’ imams instead of imams from abroad, which in the long-term would stop external influences. A considerable

⁷ ‘Kabinet moet eind maken aan financiering moskeeën door Turkije’, *NOS*, 27 September 2017.

<http://nos.nl/artikel/2134722-kabinet-moet-eind-maken-aan-financiering-moskeeën-door-turkije.html>.

⁸ ‘Persbericht: Motie vraagt imams weg te sturen!’, *Islamitische Stichting Nederland*, accessed on 5 April 2017.

<http://islamitischestichtingnederland.nl/persbericht-motie-vraagt-imams-weg-sturen/>.

⁹ Welmoet Boender, *Imam in Nederland*, 15.

¹⁰ Welmoet Boender, *Imam in Nederland*, 88.

¹¹ Welmoet Boender, *Imam in Nederland*, 94.

¹² Welmoet Boender, *Imam in Nederland*, 92.

number of imams comes from Turkey to the Netherlands for a period of four or five years as Turkish civil servants. This has led to several political and public debates about the influences of Ankara through the Turkish imams on the Dutch Turks.¹³ For instance, Turkish Diyanet imams are from Turkey; the imams from Turkey have a Turkish civil servant status. The important question here is how imams transmit Islamic and Turkish norms and hand values to Muslims living in secular, non-Islamic societies.

The International Divinity Program

The Diyanet, also known as the Turkish Presidency of Religious Services, consulted with the Dutch government and universities about the options for an imam training but they never came to an agreement. Interestingly enough, Diyanet started its own program called the *Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı* (International Divinity Program) in 2006. This is a four year bachelor program in Turkey exclusively for students from abroad with Turkish roots. One of the important purposes of this program is to educate students from a country outside of Turkey who will return there after graduating to work as an imam.¹⁴ The International Divinity Program, which is a different educational program, could be important for the role of the imams within the non-Islamic societies. It is a program specifically meant for the *gurbetçi* students who do not live in Turkey but mostly in non-Islamic countries. This phenomenon is interesting, because Turkey and the Netherlands have a diaspora relation since the Turkish immigrants settled permanently in the Netherlands. The International Divinity Program aims to recruit students with a Turkish origin from mostly Europe. These students will study in Turkey and ideally become religious functionaries of Diyanet in the European country where they came from. The diaspora relation between Turkey and the Netherlands seems to continue with this Program. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze this Program within the diaspora relation theory.

¹³ The term Dutch Turks means in this research the Dutch people of Turkish descent.

¹⁴ Thijl Sunier en Nico Landman, *Turkse islam. Actualisatie van kennis over Turkse religieuze stromingen en organisaties in Nederland*, 68.

Özbunar, Özge. *De Turkse polderimam. Een beschrijvend-exploratieve studie naar het internationale theologieprogramma in Turkije*. (Leiden: Leiden University, 2016).

Research Question

The relevance and topicality of this subject has led to combining the diaspora relations theory with a research about the International Divinity Program. The research question is as follows: *What is the role of the International Divinity Program in forming diaspora relations between Turkey and the Netherlands?*

The following sub-questions will serve as support for answering the research question:

- What is the history of imam education in Turkey?
- What is the content of the program of the UIP?
- What are the motivations according to the stakeholders to start the International Divinity Program?
- What are the motivation of the students to study, to what extent are the students satisfied with the program and what are their expectations about their role after their graduation?

Research on imam education in the Netherlands and Turkey

In the Dutch public debate Diyanet's program was first mentioned by Thijl Sunier and Nico Landman in their report of 2014. Sunier and Landman indicated that this program was an interesting development which could eventually answer to the continuing criticism of the Turkish imams who are flown in from Ankara.¹⁵

Other important article about the International Divinity Program is İsmail Erşahin's article *Bir Diyanet Projesi Olarak Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı* (The International Divinity Program as Diyanet's project). This article provides descriptive information about the program, the student profile, the person model which the program intends to train, its adaptation process in Turkey, and the success of the program according to Diyanet.¹⁶ The other study concerned with the International Divinity Program is my own bachelor thesis *The Turkish polder imam. A descriptive-explorative study on the International Divinity Program in Turkey*.¹⁷

¹⁵ Thijl Sunier en Nico Landman, *Turkse islam. Actualisatie van kennis over Turkse religieuze stromingen en organisaties in Nederland*, 68.

Özbunar, Özge. *De Turkse polderimam. Een beschrijvend-exploratieve studie naar het internationale theologieprogramma in Turkije*. (Leiden: Leiden University, 2016).

¹⁶ İsmail Ersahin 'Bir Diyanet Projesi Olarak Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı', (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Yayınları, 2015), 125-146.

¹⁷ Özge Özbunar, *De Turkse polderimam*, 20-28.

As a result of the long existing debate, a lot has been written about the imam training attempts and the role of Diyanet in the Netherlands, but nothing concerning the International Divinity Program of Diyanet. An important book regarding imam training attempts in Europe is *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe*.¹⁸ These lectures provided a balanced consideration of developments in the training of imams in Europe.¹⁹ In the article *Embedding Islam in the 'Moral Covenants' of European States: The Case of a State Funded Imam Training in the Netherlands*, Welmoet Boender explores the example of the Dutch 'imam training debate', as a contribution to ongoing studies which focus on strategies of various actors involved in the institutionalization process of Muslim learning institutions in Europe.²⁰ In the research project '*Diyanet, the Turkish Directorate for Religious affairs in a changing environment*' commissioned by the Project Office IRP on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the policies, agendas and activities of the Directorate are examined after the coming to power of AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) in Turkey in 2003.²¹ A research team in Amsterdam, Utrecht and Istanbul studied to what extent the changing political environment in Turkey influences the political-religious agenda of Diyanet in general, but specifically in the Netherlands.

Another important research about the role of the imam within the Dutch public debate is the Ph.D. dissertation of Welmoet Boender. This dissertation describes and analyzes the internal and external perspectives of the views circulating in the public debate on imams between 1993 and 2004.²²

BA thesis as pilot study

The relevance to study this program is two-folded. On the one hand, it is an interesting development within the imam training debate in Western Europe especially viewed from a

¹⁸ Willem Drees en Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, *'The study of religion and the training of Muslim Clergy in Europe: Academic and Religious freedom in the 21st Century'*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008. This book offers most of the lectures that were given during the conference *Academic Freedom and Religious Freedom: Tensions and Compromises in the Coexistence of Two Fundamental Rights*, held on 27 and 28 February 2007 in Leiden.

¹⁹ Willem Drees en Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, *'The study of religion and the training of Muslim Clergy in Europe'*, 11.

²⁰ Welmoet Boender, *Embedding Islam in the 'Moral Covenants' of European States: The Case of a State Funded Imam Training in the Netherlands*. *Journal of muslims in Europe*, 2013, Vol.2(2), 227-247.

²¹ Thijl Sunier en Nico Landman, Heleen van der Linden, Nazli Bilgi en Alper Bilgi. *Diyanet. The Turkish Directorate for Religious affairs in a changing environment*. (Amsterdam/Utrecht: Vrije Universiteit/Universiteit Utrecht, 2011), 5.

²² Welmoet Boender, *Imam in Nederland: opvattingen over zijn religieuze rol in de samenleving*. (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2007).

diaspora relation between Turkey and the Netherlands, because it is a new Program which operates between the two countries. On the other hand, there is a clear literature gap regarding this topic. To somewhat fill this gap, I already studied the International Divinity Program in my descriptive-explorative bachelor's thesis. The central question of my thesis was: to what extent does the International Divinity Program in Turkey differ from the imam training attempts in the Netherlands, and how does this program prepare the students for a position as an imam in the Netherlands? During this research, I focused on the Marmara University in Istanbul, one of the six institutions where this program is offered. Thanks to some friends who were studying Istanbul at the Marmara University I had easy access to this university. The bachelor's thesis was a pilot research for my master's thesis. My final conclusion was that the aims of the International Divinity Program were not significantly different from the imam training attempts in the Netherlands in its intentions to train imams on an academic level and who also know the Dutch language and society. However, the curricula were contrastly different from each other, namely the Dutch imam training attempt focused more on the European context while the International Divinity Program's curriculum is almost similar to the regular curriculum in Turkey.²³

My bachelor's thesis led to an internship at Diyanet's head office in Ankara for 4 weeks in July 2016. This gave me the opportunity to connect with the employees of Diyanet in an informal way and to start a dialogue about my thesis topic. Another opportunity came in the form of an article I received from the Diyanet magazine. This article concerns the International Divinity Program and is not available online.²⁴ It is considered by Diyanet to be a state-of-the-art piece of work concerning this topic. Erşahin's article provides general information about the program and gives the readers a good insight of Diyanet's perspective.

During my first fieldwork, I came to an interesting notion through the interviews I conducted with the students in Istanbul. One of the students spoke about the similarities of the students who came from different countries to Istanbul to complete this program. He expressed his own experiences to the fellow students. He said: 'One way or another, we understand each other better. We are all *gurbetçiler*'. After my experiences during my short fieldwork in Istanbul, I concluded that the diaspora relation between Turkey and the Netherlands is an

²³ Özge Özbunar, *De Turkse polderimam*, 20-28.

²⁴ İsmail Erşahin 'Bir Diyanet Projesi Olarak Uluslararası İlahiyat Program', (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Yayınları, 2015).

important element within the context of the International Divinity Program. The students who are involved in this program continue finds themselves in a state of consciousness between Turkey and the Netherlands as a *gurbetçi*.

Gurbetçi is mostly defined as ‘a person who is living abroad or far away from his country’, or simply translated as an expatriate.²⁵ Nevertheless, the term *gurbetçi* is a more complex concept than this short and concise definition. In her book *shifting centres and identities: Turkey and Germany in the lives of Turkish Gastarbeiter*, Ruth Mandel describes the term *gurbetçi* more detailed. *Gurbetçi* here means ‘one who lives in exile, diaspora or away from the homeland – lives in the state of *gurbet*’.²⁶ In this case, the program’s students are the *gurbetçi*’s. Of one follows this definition the conclusion can be drawn that the term *gurbetçi* is closely linked to the diaspora relations theory.

Diaspora theory

It is increasingly difficult to distinguish between diasporic migrations and many other kinds of transnational migrations and movements.²⁷ Diaspora is provisionally used to indicate the belief that describes Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion. According to Tölölyan, diaspora includes words like immigrants, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile communities, overseas community, and ethnic community.²⁸ In my research, diaspora means people with a common origin who reside, more or less on a permanent basis, outside the border of their ethnic or religious homeland, whether that homeland is real or symbolic, independent or under foreign control.²⁹ The diaspora members identify themselves, or are identified by others – inside and outside their homeland- as part of the homeland’s national community, and as such are often called upon to participate, or are entangled, in homeland-related affairs. According to the theory of Shain, Yossi and Sherman, diasporas are increasingly able to promote transnational ties, to act as bridges or as mediators between their home and host societies. Moreover, diasporas have been posited as challenging traditional state institutions

²⁵ T.C. Basbakanlik Atatürk Kültür, dil ve tarih yüksek kurumu. Türk Dil Kurumu. http://www.tdk.gov.tr/index.php?option=com_gts&arama=gts&kelime=gurbetçi&uid=20693&guid=TDK.GTS.58c7d92ab559e7.18684065

²⁶ Ruth Mandel, *Turkish Challenges to Citizenship and Belonging in Germany, Cosmopolitan Anxieties* (Duke University Press, Durham and London 2008), 233-234.

²⁷ Donald M. Nonini, ‘Diasporas and Globalization in Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrants and Refugee Cultures Around the World, Volume II: Diaspora Communities (Dordrecht: Springer Science and Business Media Inc, 2005) 559. Encyclopedia

²⁸ Khaching Tölölyan, “The nation-state and its order: in lieu of a preface,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* (1991), 1-2.

²⁹ Khaching Tölölyan, “The nation-state and its order: in lieu of a preface.

of citizenship and loyalty.³⁰ In his work *Global Diasporas* Cohen mentions that Safran has made a huge step in the right direction by making a list of the main characteristics of diasporas. The expatriate minority community shares the following six features as mentioned in the *Global Diasporas*, which are in general also applicable to Turkish minorities in the Netherlands³¹:

- They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from an original 'centre' to two or more foreign regions;
- They retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland including its location, history and achievements;
- They believe they are not –and perhaps can never be– fully accepted in their host societies and so remain partly separate;
- Their ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favourable, either they, or their descendants should return;
- They believe all members of the diaspora should be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
- They continue in various ways to relate to that homeland and their ethno communal consciousness and solidarity are in an important way defined by the existence of such a relationship.³²

Vertovec takes things even further than Cohen. In his essay, he outlines three meanings of diaspora, exemplified through South Asian religions, which have emerged in recent literature.³³ Several features from Cohens list are also used within the three meanings. These meanings are diaspora as a social form, diaspora as a type of consciousness, and diaspora as a mode of cultural production. The social form includes specific kinds of social relationships cemented by special ties to history and geography. According to Vertovec these diasporas are seen as:

- consciously maintaining collective identities, which are sustained by reference to an 'ethnic myth' of common origin, historical experience;
- institutionalizing networks of exchange and communication which transcend states, the home as well as the host state;

³⁰ Diaspora relations: Shain, Yossi, and Martin Sherman. 1998. Dynamics of Disintegration: Diaspora, Secession and the Paradox of Nation-States. *Nations and Nationalism* 4 (3):321-46.

³¹ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas an introduction*, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 1-10.

³² Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas an introduction*, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2001), 1-10.

³³ Steven Vertovec, 'Three meanings of "diaspora," exemplified among South Asian religions,' *Diaspora* 7(2) (1999): 6.

- maintaining a variety of explicit and implicit ties with their homelands;
- developing solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement;
- and finally: inability or unwillingness to be fully accepted by the host society.³⁴

From a political orientation, the diasporic peoples are often confronted with divided loyalties to homelands and host countries. Finally, from an economic perspective the transnational groups are representing an important new source and force in international finance and commerce. The second approach, diaspora as a type of consciousness, puts greater emphasis on describing a variety of experiences, a state of mind and a sense of identity. Finally, diaspora is seen as the production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena.

Cohen also divides types of diasporas. He claims that labour diasporas also constituted North Africans and Turks who entered Europe in the period after the Second World War.³⁵ The definition and context of the diaspora and the relations of diasporas between their home and host societies plays an important role for the *gurbetçi*'s. In the case of Turkey, the guest workers who migrated around 1970 to Western-Europe became the first *gurbetçi*'s. With the first generation of immigrants, the diaspora relations between Turkey and the Netherlands started and still continues. The debate within this context is mostly based on the question to what extent the Dutch Turks are integrated in the Netherlands and/or how and why the Turkish government is influencing them in the Netherlands. The troubled relationship with the host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group, is another feature of diasporas.³⁶

Methodology

This thesis aims to investigate the International Theology Program within the diaspora relation theory. Qualitative research emphasizes the importance of the contextual understanding of social behavior. Therefore, a qualitative design fits within this thesis' research objective. This means that behavior and values must be understood in context.³⁷ Moreover, the qualitative design provides the ability for in-depth description of the current condition of the International Divinity Program and its place within the imam training debates

³⁴ Steven Vertovec, 'Three meanings of "diaspora," 3-4.

³⁵ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas an introduction*, 61.

³⁶ Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas an introduction*, 26.

³⁷ Alan Bryman, *Social Research Method, 4th edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 41.

and the diaspora theory. The research will be done by literature study, curriculum study and in-depth interviews. I conduct a case study at one of the universities which is the University of Ankara to answer the central question of this thesis.

By employing a literature based explorative research method, data will be collected by analyzing a wide variety of sources. Firstly, secondary sources will be used to identify the history of imam education in Turkey, the International Divinity Program and the imam training debates in the Netherlands. A variety of secondary sources has been used during the gathering of data: academic literature, publications on websites and research reports. The sources are selected based on their quality and accuracy for this thesis. Secondly, primary sources will be used to analyze the perspectives of the students and the stakeholders on the International Divinity Program. These primary sources include in-depth interviews with 5 International Divinity students studying at Ankara university and 4 stakeholders, whom I interviewed during my fieldwork in May 2017, the website of Diyanet and brochures of the International Divinity Program.

The in-depth interviews are useful, because it is necessary for this research to gain detailed information about the student's and stakeholder's thoughts. The in-depth interview will help to explore the several perspectives on the International Theology Program. The questionnaires for the interviews are semi-structured. The questions are divided into several sections: personal information, family migration history, thoughts about the program, curriculum and the ambitions of the students.³⁸

Position as researcher

My position as a researcher, a Turkish Dutch women, a *gurbetçi* myself, has ensured that I have come quickly into contact with various people within Diyanet Thanks to my connections in Istanbul which are my friends who are studying at the Marmara University, I had easy access to this university for my bachelor's thesis. During my bachelor's thesis I came in contact with Diyanet employees. The study coordinator who I interviewed in Istanbul helped me with contacting them. This resulted into a summer internship in 2016 at the headquarter of Diyanet in Ankara. During this internship I had the possibility to build a network with Diyanet employees and students of the International Divinity Program. This network helped

³⁸ Appendix 1

me with arranging interviews for this master's thesis. I am aware of my various roles during my interviews, roles that can be categorized as both an insider and an outsider.

Outline of the thesis

In the second chapter I will look at the International Divinity Program through a historical lens. To understand the program better, I will include a historical overview related to the imam training, for instance, the *Imam Hatip* school, which is a secondary educational institution. The aim of this chapter is to answer the first sub question: What is the history of imam education in Turkey?

Chapter 3 will provide more information about the content of the program based on a curriculum study. The sub-question: 'What is the content of the program of the International Divinity Program', will be answered. Furthermore, the chapter will show the opinions of several Diyanet experts in Ankara on the content and structure of the program. The content of the program will show the Diyanet approach, that is how the students are trained in Turkey for their function in the Netherlands.

Chapter 4 will examine the motivations of the stakeholders for starting the program. The most important stakeholder is of course Diyanet itself but I will also analyze afresh the interview from my bachelor's thesis which I conducted with Deniz Özkanlı, who is an active member of the Dutch branch of Diyanet.³⁹ This chapter also includes an interview with prof. dr. Ali Dere who is a Hadith teacher at the Divinity Faculty in Ankara but also one of the important key figures within the International Divinity Program. The different approaches will show the different opinions concerning the objectives of the program and the focus of each stakeholder on the role of the graduated students.

The next chapter will focus on the students from the Netherlands and Belgium. I will explore the motivations of the Dutch students in Ankara and to what extent they are satisfied with the program and the courses. This chapter is based on in-depth interviews with the students in Ankara. To understand their role as a 'bridge' and the link between the diaspora relation, I will ask them about their position between the two countries, how much they are involved with social and political issues in both countries. The aim of the interviews is to understand

³⁹ Deniz Özkanlı, board member ISN, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Den Bosch, 18 May 2015.

the following question: ‘What are the motivations of the students to study, to what extent are the students satisfied with the program and what are their expectations about their role after their graduation?’.

These chapters are mostly explorative and based on in-depth interviews with Turkish-Dutch students in Ankara, graduate students who returned to the Netherlands, and experts of Diyanet. With permission from Diyanet the interviews for the master’s thesis are conducted in May 2017 in Ankara.

Chapter 6 includes an analysis of the presented interviews in Chapter 5. I will try to analyze through the questions about the program, the motivations of the students and their ambitions to what extent the diaspora theory plays an role through the International Divinity Program. I will also analyze the relationship between different interviews and their connection with the theory of Vertovec.

Finally, in Chapter 7 I will make a conclusion based on the previous chapters and answer the central question.

Chapter II: The imam education in Turkey from a historical perspective

This chapter provides information about the history of the International Divinity Program of Diyanet. So far, not a lot has been written on this subject. To understand the historical background of this phenomenon this chapter will firstly provide information about the position of the Islam and the imam in Turkey, as well as in Europe. This information helps to understand the position of the International Divinity Program in a historical context. Secondly, the history of imam education in Turkey will be explored, notably the secondary education institution, the *Imam Hatip* schools. Finally, this chapter will present the newest imam educational model, the International Divinity Program, which is important for Turkey as well as for Europe.

Between the Sunni and the Shia there are differences in the interpretation of the imam. This research will only focus on the imam within the Sunni Muslim communities. The imam is the one who leads Islamic prayers, for instance the *salat* which is the obligatory prayer that Muslims should perform five times a day. The imam is also the one who gives the Friday sermon, the *kuthba*, and the one who provides the Muslim community with information about the regulations, norms and values of the Islam based on the *Quran* (Holy Book) and the *Hadith* (the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad).⁴⁰

Secularization in Turkey

The Republic of Turkey was founded on the 29th of October 1923. Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938) primarily called Atatürk, the Father of the Turks, became the first president and started several revolutionary changes to separate the new Republic from its Ottoman history. The changes were crucial in transforming the visible role of religion within the Turkish society. According to Zürcher the secularization of Turkey proceeded along three different lines.⁴¹ Firstly, the secularization of the state, meaning the education and legal system. Secondly, the attack on religious symbols and their replacement by Europeans. Finally, the secularization of the social life.

⁴⁰ Welmoet Boender, *Imam in Nederland*, 14.

⁴¹ Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Turkije, een moderne geschiedenis*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), 234.

In 1924, the educational system was completely secularized and with that the *medreses* (religious schools) were closed. Therefore, the preachers had to be educated at the newly opened theological faculty at the University of Istanbul. The same year, the *Seyhülislam* (honorific title for outstanding scholars of the Islamic sciences)⁴² was abolished and replaced by the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Presidency of Religious Services), as well as the *Evkaf Umum Müdürlüğü* (Directorate-General for Pious Foundations).⁴³ This made the conception of the Kemalists secularism clear. Secularism according to the Kemalists was not the separation of religion and state but rather a strengthening of the state control over religion.⁴⁴ Finally, several years later in 1928 the article that made Islam the state religion was removed from the Turkish constitution.

From its establishment until now, Diyanet is responsible for the appointments of the imams. It was formed to act as the ultimate authority on the knowledge and practice of Islam. The duties of Diyanet are defined as follows: “*İslam dininin inanç ve ibadete ilişkin işlerini yürütmek ve camilerle diğer İslam ibadethaneleri idare etme*” (To execute the works concerning the beliefs, worship, and ethics of Islam, to enlighten the public about the religion, and administer the sacred worshipping places).⁴⁵

As a result of the coup d'état in 1980, Turkish-Islamic synthesis became the new ideology in Turkey. According to this ideology, the Turkish ethnicity and the Islamic religious identity were inseparable and this should be propagated by Diyanet. In 1982, this idea was enshrined in the Turkish constitution. From that time onwards, Diyanet had to safeguard the national unity and togetherness, and respect the principle of secularism.⁴⁶ This regulation was also applied to the imams in Europe, who were sent to European countries from Turkey, for a period of four years.

⁴² J.H. Kramers- [R.W. Bulliet]; R.C. Repp (1997). "Skaykh al-Islam". In C.E. Bosworth; E. van Donzel; W.P. Heinrichs; G. Lecomte. *Encyclopaedia of Islam (New Edition)*. Volume IX (San-Sze). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

⁴³ Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Turkije, een moderne geschiedenis*, 234

⁴⁴ Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Turkije, een moderne geschiedenis*, 235

⁴⁵ Iştar Gözaydın, *Diyanet: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Dinin Tanzimi (Diyanet: de regelgeving van religie in de Turkse Republiek)*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 109.

⁴⁶ Thijl Sunier en Nico Landman, *Turkse islam. Actualisatie van kennis over Turkse religieuze stromingen en organisaties in Nederland*, 61-62.

Imam in the Netherlands

Moreover, religious education in Muslim countries, which became a significant topic for global security and stability especially after 9/11, was brought onto the agenda of international education policies. This international concept entailed a model search for the reformation of the *madrasa* and religious education in Muslim countries.⁴⁷ According to Aslamacı and Kaymacan, the experience of Imam-Hatip schools in Turkey, their institutional structure, curriculum and the educated student profile form the most notable and remarkable model among these.⁴⁸ These secondary schools are not entirely a republican project because it is possible to find the notion and practical traces of these schools in the pre-republican period. Even so, the Imam-Hatip schools have been at the center of the conflict between the secularist and Islamist forces in Turkey according to Aslamacı and Kaymacan. Certain governments have considered these schools a threat to the secularist order and have taken measures to weaken them, while others have viewed it as tools for controlling religious discourse.⁴⁹

The Imam-Hatip schools

As mentioned earlier the *medreses* were closed in 1924. In line with the new laws of the Kemalists, 479 *medreses* with 18,000 enrolled students were closed. With the closure of the *medreses*, no venue remained in which to educate students the basics of Islam or to train religious functionaries. To remedy this absence, the *Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı* (Ministry of National Education) established *İmam-Hatip Mektepleri* (Imam-Hatip schools). State officials intended to train prayer leaders and preachers who would disseminate Islamic knowledge that did not challenge the secular principles of the republic.⁵⁰ The schools were closed in the 1929–1930 academic year. This led to a halt of the training of religious functionaries between the closure of Imam-Hatip schools and the late 1940s. On May 29, 1973, the government enacted the Basic law on National education. This law contained a small provision with significant implications for Imam-Hatip schools.⁵¹

The Imam-Hatip schools were established by the MEB to train religious functionaries who perform religious services such as being imams, *hatips*, and teaching staff of Qur'anic

⁴⁷ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools,' *British Journal of Religious Education* (2016), 1-5.

⁴⁸ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools, 2.

⁴⁹ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools, 26.

⁵⁰ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools, 34.

⁵¹ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools, 3.

courses. These institutions implement a preparatory program for vocational training as well as for the higher education.⁵²

The Imam-Hatip schools began to function more as general high schools and the students were no longer limited to being religious functionaries. The graduates who wanted to further their religious studies had to attain a general high school diploma as well. The schools began to add more non-religious classes from the curriculum of general high schools into their own curriculum.⁵³

The AKP party realized a reform in 2012 and restructured the Turkish educational system. This means that the university entrance and placement have been reorganized and the Imam Hatip school graduates are now allowed to participate in all university fields without impediments.⁵⁴ The Imam Hatip schools are also popular beyond the Turkish borders. According to Aslamacı and Kaymakcan, after 9/11 the requests for cooperation and aid increased in order to benefit from the Islamic education model. For instance, Russia sent a delegation to Ankara in 2009 and expressed their desire to adopt the model of the Imam-Hatip schools and the *İlahiyat Fakülteleri* (Divinity Faculties). This desire sprang from the need for religious education of the increasing Muslim population in Russia.⁵⁵

Besides the Imam-Hatip schools, all schools, both private and public, offer compulsory religion classes within their curricula. Students may also take officially registered Qur'an courses outside their school curriculum which are organized by Diyanet. In addition, university faculties of Divinity offer high school graduates in-depth and specialized education on a range of religious topics.⁵⁶

The Divinity Faculties

Together with the *Imam-Hatip* schools, the Divinity Faculties opened on April, 21 1924 in accordance with Article 4 of the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law.⁵⁷ This law is enacted by the Grand

⁵² Article 32 of the 1973 "Basic Law on National Education," numbered 1739, *Resmi Gazete*, no. 14574, June 24, 1973. The Basic Law of National Education determines the general framework of the Turkish National Education System. And Imam-Hatip schools within a secular state, 45

⁵³ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools, 45.

⁵⁴ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools, 5.

⁵⁵ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools, 40-50.

⁵⁶ Aslamacı and Kaymacan, 'A model for Islamic education from Turkey: The Imam-Hatip schools, 27-28.

⁵⁷ Mustafa Öcal, 'Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye'de din eğitimi ve öğretimi,' *TC. Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi*, Sayı 7, Cilt: 7 (1998), 113.

National Assembly of Turkey on March 3, 1924 and it enforced all educational institutions in Turkey to be attached to the *Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı* (Ministry of National Education). The Turkish Divinity Faculty has its roots in the educational reforms of the late Ottoman Empire. The first divinity faculty in Turkey was established in 1864 at the *Darülfünun*, a university in Istanbul. It operated between 1924 and 1933.⁵⁸ From 1933 the Divinity Faculties were closed through the political discourse in Turkey. 16 years after the closure of the Divinity Faculty at the *Darülfünun*, the Ankara University opened a Divinity Faculty on November 21, 1949. They started with 85 students in Ankara. The Ankara faculty is still in operation and made its impact in Turkish society through its adoption by Diyanet. According to Dorrol, eight of the 14 directors of Diyanet have had some academic connection to the Ankara Divinity Faculty.⁵⁹ In 2006, there were 26 Divinity faculties in Turkey; in 2013, a Diyanet source clarified that there were 46 currently operating faculties, and 86 that have been opened in total.⁶⁰ Currently, the Divinity Faculty takes 4 or 5 years. This depends on the university. The difference between the 5 and 4 years is that 5 years' study includes an Arabic preparation year.

The International Divinity Program of Diyanet

In the final declaration of the 'Second Summit of African Muslims on Religion' of November 2011, Turkey was requested to take more initiative in meeting the urgent need for providing human resources for religious services in the world.⁶¹ Diyanet responded to these types of corporation and aid demands with two different activities. First of all, students were brought to Turkey from other countries to be educated. Secondly, Diyanet helped with the opening of *Imam Hatip* types of schools in various foreign countries. This was all financed and conducted by the Turkish Diyanet Foundation. The aim was 'to contribute to world peace by passing down a reasonable understanding of religion to the students and establishing a strong,

⁵⁸ Phill Dorrol, 'Institutionalizing Islamic modernism: The History of Divinity Faculty (İlahiyat Fakültesi) in Turkey, (paper presented at colloquium "The Transformation of Turkey" at the International Institute of Islamic Thought), 3.

https://www.academia.edu/9891000/Institutionalizing_Islamic_Modernism_The_History_of_the_Divinity_Faculty_%C4%B0lahiyat_Fak%C3%BCltesi_in_Turkey_paper_presented_at_colloquium_The_Transformation_of_Turkey_at_the_International_Institute_of_Islamic_Thought?auto=download

⁵⁹ Philip Dorrol, 'The Turkish Understanding of Religion': Rethinking Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Turkish Islamic Thought, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82:4 (Dec. 2014), 1040.

⁶⁰ Phill Dorrol, 'Institutionalizing Islamic modernism' 5-6, and "Türkiye'de kaç ilahiyat fakültesi var?" (How many Theology faculties are there in Turkey?), *Haber* 7, May 10, 2013. <http://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/1024883-turkiyede-kac-ilahiyat-fakultesi-var>.

⁶¹ 'II. Afrika Müslüman Ülke ve Toplulukları Dini Liderler Zirvesi Sonuç Bildirgesi,' *Diyanet Vakfı*, accessed on 5 May 2017. <http://arsiv.diyanetvakfi.org.tr/71/guncel/ii-afrika-musluman-ulke-ve-topluluklari-dini-liderler-zirvesi-sonuc-bildirgesi>.

persisting friendship and bridges between the related countries and Turkey, and finally meeting the needs of religious officers in various locations of the world'.⁶²

The International Divinity Program is included in this initiatives of Diyanet. This was highlighted by Mehmet Görmez, the head of Diyanet, during the graduation of the International Divinity Program students in 2015.⁶³ He mentioned that this project is not only in the interest of Turkey and Europe. According to Görmez, the International Divinity Program is an universal project because it is related to everyone's future.⁶⁴ Besides Görmez, Deniz Özkanlı, board member of ISN which is the Dutch branch of Diyanet, mentioned during an interview that this program is developed based on the need of Turkish Muslims in Europe. 'It is not a full top down policy of Diyanet'.⁶⁵ As mentioned earlier, Diyanet supported different requests by starting several programs where students from other countries were able to study at the Divinity Faculty. These programs started at the beginning of the 1990s. The growing support for Salafism, Islamic fundamentalism and the discourse against Islam after the events of 9/11 were important turning points for this program.⁶⁶

Students of the Program

In 2006, Diyanet started the International Divinity Program with only 19 students at the Ankara University.⁶⁷ According to the Hadith Professor Ali Dere, Ali Bardakoğlu requested on 20 May 2005 a quota to the Ankara University for 40 International Divinity Program students. Ali Bardakoğlu was the president of Diyanet between 2003 and 2010.⁶⁸ The following year the Marmara University got involved in this program and together with the students in Ankara the number of applications in 2007 rose to 46. According to Diyanet, there

⁶² 'II. Afrika Müslüman Ülke ve Toplulukları Dini Liderler Zirvesi Sonuç Bildirgesi,' *Diyanet Vakfı*, accessed on 5 May 2017. <http://arsiv.diyanetvakfi.org.tr/71/guncel/ii-afrika-musluman-ulke-ve-topluluklari-dini-liderler-zirvesi-sonuc-bildirgesi>.

⁶³ Diyanet Basın Merkezi, 'Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı Mezuniyet Töreni' (International Theology Program Graduation), YouTube video, 13:02. Posted July 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wj4p2oR7jKE>.

⁶⁴ Diyanet Basın Merkezi, 'Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı Mezuniyet Töreni' (International Theology Program Graduation).

⁶⁵ Deniz Özkanlı, board member ISN, interviewed by Özge Özbunar. Den Bosch, 18 May 2016.

⁶⁶ İsmail Ersahin 'Bir Diyanet Projesi Olarak Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı', 126.

⁶⁷ TC. Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanitim ve basvuru kilavuzu', 3 and TC. Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'Rapor: Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı 10. Yıl degerlendirme toplantisi,' 24-26 March 2017, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Ankara, 19.

⁶⁸ Ali Dere, 'Erfahrungen mit dem Unterrichtsprogramm für deutsche Studenten der islamischen Theologie an türkischen Universitäten: Internationale Theologie' in *Islam & Europa als Thema der Deuts-Türkischen Zusammenarbeit XXII*, (Deutsche Botschaft Ankara, Ankara, 2015), 142.

were 1326 applications for the International Theology Program between 2006 and 2016.⁶⁹

During the academic year of 2016-2017, Diyanet counted 671 students from 15 countries.⁷⁰ Table 1 shows the number of the current International Theology students in Turkey. I selected a few European countries to present a clear overview. As shown in Table 1, most students come from Germany. This has to do with the substantial Turkish population in Germany. The Turks are the largest minority group with 2.5 to 4 million residents in Germany.⁷¹ Another reason for the high number of students from Germany could be the good ties of Diyanet with several German universities, for instance the Goethe University in Frankfurt.⁷² The next largest group of students come from France. From the Netherlands, a total of 40 students are involved in the International Divinity Program, as can be seen in the table.

Table 1: International Theology student 2017

Country	Number of students
Germany	327
Austria	21
Belgium	47
Denmark	6
France	167
The Netherlands	40
Britain	2
Italy	17

Besides the current students in Turkey it is also important to emphasize the number of graduated students (Table 2) and some of their work areas (Table 3). This information is also available in the evaluation meeting report of Diyanet.⁷³

Table 2: Number of students graduated between 2010-2016

Country	Number of students
Germany	216
Austria	3
Belgium	46
Denmark	4
France	71

⁶⁹ TC. Baskanlik Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi, 'Rapor: Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı 10. Yıl değerlendirme toplantısı,' 24-26 March 2017, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Ankara, 20.

⁷⁰ TC. Baskanlik Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanıtım ve başvuru kılavuzu,' (International Theology Program introduction and application guide), Diyanet Vakfı, 2017, accessed 20 March 2017, 6. <http://uip.diyantevakfi.org.tr/indir/UIP-2017.pdf>.

⁷¹ Michael Curtis, *Jews, Antisemitism, and the Middle East* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2013), 69.

⁷² Ali Dere, Professor Hadith Science, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

⁷³ TC. Baskanlik Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi, 'Rapor: Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı 10. Yıl değerlendirme toplantısı,' 24-26 March 2017, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Ankara, 18.

The Netherlands	20
Britain	-
Italy	3

Again, Germany has the most graduated students. A relevant question here is the employment of the students after their graduation. Table 3 shows the work areas and the number of students who perform in that area.⁷⁴ The table contains only information about the 359 graduated students of which 149 are unknown (unspecified information and others). This could be because of a lack in the information system of Diyanet. Furthermore, it is also possible that the graduate students who return to Europe work for organizations that are not related to Diyanet.

Table 3: Work areas of students graduated between 2010-2016

Work area	Number of students
Academic staff (Turkey)	5
DITIB ⁷⁵ staff	3
Housewife	6
Postgraduate education (Europe)	26
Postgraduate education (Egypt)	1
Postgraduate education (Turkey)	61
Teacher (Europe)	8
Teacher (Turkey)	8
Contracted religious officer	86
TDV ⁷⁶ staff	4
Unspecified information	54
Others	95
Total	359

The most important employment in Table 3 is the contracted religious officer (*sözleşmeli din görevlisi*). Diyanet announced at the end of 2016 that they will accept 70 new contracted religious officers. These officers are mainly imams. I asked the Diyanet employees about the employment and the differences between men and women. The female graduated students who became contracted religious officers are mostly preachers in European countries. They give lectures, Qur'an lessons and Islamic preaches to Muslim women. Another field in which graduate female students are involved is Islamic pedagogy. They support the families from a

⁷⁴ TC. Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'Rapor: Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı 10. Yıl değerlendirme toplantısı,' 24-26 March 2017, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Ankara, 18.

⁷⁵ DITIB, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Germany.

⁷⁶ TDV is the Turkish Religious Foundation of Diyanet.

Islamic-pedagogic perspective especially when they also have a master's degree in Pedagogy besides their bachelor degree in Islamic Theology.⁷⁷ This gender perspective is not mentioned in the data and also not in the Diyanet's own sources.

Objectives of the Program

According to Diyanet the International Divinity Program is a scholarship program that offers religious higher education for students with Turkish roots who live abroad.⁷⁸ The main goal of the program is that the graduated students will be employed in religious services in the countries they originate from.⁷⁹ The graduates who want to become an imam in for instance the Netherlands, will be employed as contracted religious officials abroad after an examination of Diyanet.⁸⁰ There is no quota per country but in order to achieve the main goal, more men will have to be accepted for this program.

According to the program guide, the aim is to educate students who wish to be a guide for Muslims in non-Muslim societies, mainly Europe, and help them with the right religious knowledge and pedagogical skills.⁸¹ For instance, a Dutch graduate student who becomes an imam in the Netherlands knows the Dutch language and society better than an imam who stays in the Netherlands for only four years. According to Diyanet, the International Divinity Program students are able to respond better to social and religious issues because of their experience in the country and their language skills.⁸²

Another objective is that the graduated students are able to discuss religion and Islam in an international context and from a platform based on academic knowledge. This also means that the students must be able to get involved in and discuss current European debates on imam education and Islamic religious services. Diyanet wants to realize this with their courses, internships and guest lectures about dilemma's in Europe.⁸³

Diyanet offers the student free meals, accommodation and also pays the basic education expenses. In addition, it supports the students financially throughout the academic year. Transportation, educational materials (books) and health insurance are not covered by this

⁷⁷ H. Erdogan, Coördinator UIP students, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 3 May 2017.

⁷⁸ TC. Bakanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanitim ve basvuru kılavuzu', 5.

⁷⁹ TC. Bakanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanitim ve basvuru kılavuzu', 5.

⁸⁰ TC. Bakanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanitim ve basvuru kılavuzu', 5.

⁸¹ TC. Bakanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanitim ve basvuru kılavuzu', 6.

⁸² TC. Bakanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanitim ve basvuru kılavuzu', 5.

⁸³ TC. Bakanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'Rapor: Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı 10. Yıl değerlendirme toplantısı,' 24-26 March 2017, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Ankara, 4.

support. The program also offers internships and certificate programs, both in Turkey. The internships are diverse. It is possible to do an internship in a mosque or teach for instance Qur'an courses in the mosque. The program is equivalent to a bachelor study of three years with an extra Arabic preparation year. The courses are divided into three categories: Islamic sciences, philosophy and religious sciences, and Islamic history and arts. The curriculum and courses will be further discussed in chapter 3.

The prospective students must conduct an interview which will test them on reading and memorizing the Quran, religious knowledge, Turkish communication skills, general culture and finally, on academic interest.⁸⁴ Furthermore, students who want to enroll in this program from the Netherlands can only apply if they have a havo diploma (Secondary school), or a vwo diploma (pre-university education), both the equivalent of a high school diploma in Turkey.⁸⁵

Summary

Islamic education has always been a debated topic in Turkish history. On the one hand, there was the Republic based on secularist principles from 1923, while on the other hand the civilization, habits and needs of the people who had lived several years under the Islamic Ottoman regime were not secular as the new rules and legislation. Nevertheless, the Hatip schools continued to exist. According to Aslmacı and Kaymakcan, after 9/11 the requests from mostly European countries for cooperation and aid increased in order to benefit from the Islamic education model. This chapter has shown that the International Divinity Program can be seen as one of the reactions to these requests. The program is a part of a series of activities of Diyanet . The most important aims of these activities are meant to counteract the growing support for Salafism and Islamic fundamentalism, and the discourse against Islam. Diyanet wants to spread Islam correctly based on academic skills and knowledge.

⁸⁴ TC. Baskanlık Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanitim ve basvuru kilavuzu', 14.

⁸⁵ TC. Baskanlık Diyanet Isleri Baskanligi, 'UIP Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı tanitim ve basvuru kilavuzu', 16.

Chapter III: Curriculum of the International Divinity Program in the University of Ankara

This chapter will focus mainly on the curriculum of the International Divinity Program at the University of Ankara. Chapter 1 focused on the International Divinity Program's aim and student profile. This chapter will focus specifically on the curriculum of the program and the Divinity Faculty of Ankara. The curriculum is available online on the university's website.⁸⁶ During the bachelor thesis, I researched the curriculum of the International Divinity Program of the Marmara University in Istanbul. This research was a comparison between the curriculum of the program in Leiden University and the program in Marmara University. The attempt of this comparison was to understand the differentiation in the courses while the goals of both programs were substantially the same. Due to the comparison between two programs, the study of the curriculum itself was less profound. Therefore, this chapter will analyze the curriculum more deeply. Firstly, I will look at the definition and theoretical framework of the curriculum and the study of the curriculum, because it is important to understand the definition of curriculum before studying it. Secondly, I will look at the faculty of Divinity of the Ankara University. Finally, the courses of the UIP curriculum at the university of Ankara will be analyzed. An important notion here is that there are no syllabi available online. On 1 April, 2017, I sent an e-mail to one of the students concerning the availability of the syllabus and he replied as follows: 'There is just a general overview of the courses which a student gets during the program. There are no professional details. Some teachers might have a syllabus, but that is mostly an exception'.⁸⁷ So, I used for this study the curriculum of the International Divinity Program in Ankara, which is available. However, a syllabus of each course should give substantive information about and a better insight on the courses itself.

Definition of curriculum

The word curriculum is from New Latin, originally meaning 'a course of study'.⁸⁸ It is a term which is used with several meanings and different definitions. Curriculum has been defined as a course, a regular course of study or training, for instance at universities. Another definition is that curriculum is a plan or program for all experiences which the learner encounters under

⁸⁶ 'Uluslararası İlahiyat Dersleri', *Divinity Ankara*, accessed on 15 June 2017. http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=448.

⁸⁷ Student 1, e-mail message to author, 1 April 2017.

⁸⁸ Definition of Curriculum, *Meriam-Webster*, accessed on 20 February 2017. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/curriculum>

the direction of the school.⁸⁹ The definition of curriculum has been shifted throughout the history of the field. Jackson observes that Dewey implies that curriculum is a knowledge which, organized ordinarily along subject matters lines, ultimately must be mastered by students. He brings the concept of experience to the definition of curriculum in his work *The Child and the Curriculum*.⁹⁰ Another definition is that curriculum is a set of courses constituting an area of specialization and the courses which are offered by an educational institution.⁹¹ The term curriculum is mostly used for many different kinds of programs of teaching and instruction.⁹² Curriculum Studies has emerged from an attempt to study education and to explore educational problems in their own right and not as philosophical problems or as psychological phenomena.⁹³

There is a difference between the planned curriculum and the received curriculum. The planned or the official curriculum means what is laid down in syllabuses and prospectuses. The received curriculum also known as the actual curriculum is the reality of the pupils' experiences. The difference between them may be any mismatch being either a deliberate attempt by the teachers or others to deceive. This chapter will only provide information about the planned curriculum. The received curriculum, based on the experiences of the students, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The Faculty of Divinity in Ankara

As mentioned in chapter 2, the Faculty of Divinity at the Ankara University is the first Divinity school that was founded in Turkey after the *Darülfünûn İlahiyat Fakültesi* was closed during the Kemalist era in 1933. According to the Ankara University, the Faculty has played an important role in the academic teaching of Islamic and religious scholarly disciplines by integrating the traditional spirit of Islamic disciplines with modern developments in religious studies. The Faculty provides an opportunity to study Islam within a living Muslim society with professionals who are well-versed in both traditional and

⁸⁹ William F. Pinar, William M. Reynolds, Patrick Slattery and Peter M. Taubman, *Understanding Curriculum an introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourse*, (New York, Peter Lang, 1995), 26.

⁹⁰ John Dewey, *The child and the curriculum*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1902), 6.
William F. Pinar et al. *Understanding Curriculum an introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourse*, 26.

⁹¹ Definition of Curriculum, *Meriam-Webster*, accessed on 20 February 2017. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/curriculum>.

⁹² A. V. Kelly, *The Curriculum theory and practice fifth edition*, (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 7.

⁹³ A. V. Kelly, *The Curriculum theory and practice fifth edition*, 24.

modern academic methods. Moreover, the Faculty mentions on their website that it enhances intercultural and interreligious understanding.⁹⁴ By exploring the possibilities for incorporating their insights in the context of modern religious studies, the Faculty wants to build a deeper and broader of the histories and contemporary patterns of the world's religious communities.⁹⁵ The Divinity Faculty of the Ankara University is known for its focus on traditional Islamic values paired with the advantages of critical thinking in religious matters.⁹⁶

The Faculty has three academic departments. These are the Basic Islamic studies, Philosophy and Religious Studies and Islamic History and Arts. Each of these departments has several subdivisions. For instance, the department of basic Islamic studies is the overall term for the department of Qur'anic Exegesis, Hadith, Kalam, Islamic Jurisprudence, History of Islamic Sect, Sufism and so on. Besides the three major departments the university also provides public religious education and services and teacher training for the religion and ethics courses in primary schools. Furthermore, the website provides detailed information about internship opportunities for the students, as well as the journal of the faculty of divinity of Ankara University only in Turkish.⁹⁷

Structure of the International Divinity Program

Since 2010, one-year preparatory courses with Arabic have been established in all Theological Faculties in Turkey. Therefore, the study duration was increased from 4 to 5 years which is into 10 semesters.⁹⁸ Since 2010 all Divinity Faculties in Turkey are 5 years. At the Ankara University, one year consists of two semesters. The students are able to get 1,2,3 or 4 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) for each course.⁹⁹ There are no courses which are granted above 4 ECTS. One academic year corresponds with 60 ECTS that should be equivalent to 1500-1800 hours of total workload. That means 25-30 hours of workload for 1 ECTS. According to the curriculum, the lesson hours should not exceed 30

⁹⁴ 'History and Mission', *Divinity Ankara*, accessed on 10 March 2017, http://divinity.en.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=245.

⁹⁵ 'History and Mission', *Divinity Ankara*, accessed on 10 March 2017, http://divinity.en.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=245.

⁹⁶ 'History and Mission', *Divinity Ankara*, accessed on 10 March 2017, http://divinity.en.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=245.

⁹⁷ 'About AÜİFD', *Divinity Ankara*, accessed on 10 March 2017, http://ilahiyatdergi.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=105.

⁹⁸ Ali Dere, 'Erfahrungen mit dem Unterrichtsprogramm', 129.

⁹⁹ 'AKTS Kredisi Nedir?', *AKTS kurumsal*, accessed on 9 March 2017, <http://aktskurumsal.sdu.edu.tr/tr/aktsde-bilgileri/akts-kredisi-nedir-2672s.html>.

hours per week.¹⁰⁰ In total, the students take 158 courses and 24 electives spread over 4 years. The total ECTS after four years is 240. As mentioned in chapter I, the courses are according to the course catalog of Diyanet, divided into the three categories of Islamic sciences, philosophy and religious sciences, Islamic history and arts. This division can be traced from the curriculum of the Ankara University. At the same time, a provision has been issued under which 30% of the courses listed in the curriculum are to be taught in Arabic; the remaining 70% are taught in Turkish.¹⁰¹

The preparatory year of the program only consists of Arabic courses. According to Süleyman Derin, the program starts with a preparatory year wherein the students take 40 hours of Arabic courses per week.¹⁰² Following that, the students start their first year with the most Arabic lessons they will get within the whole program. In the first semester of the first year they take 4 Arabic courses, for instance about the life of the prophet, the history and methodology of the hadith and Qur'anic exegesis and the recitation of the Qur'an. Arabic is very important during the first year. Derin said that the knowledge of Arabic should be good enough to follow the courses which are based on Arabic sources, reading and writing skills.¹⁰³ The focus on Arabic is also reflected in the assigned ECTS for the courses. All the other courses, except the basic foreign language (English) courses in the first two years, are in Turkish.

Turkish Language I and Basic Foreign Language (English) are only equivalent to 1 ECTS while the Arabic courses are equal to 4 ECTS. This is also the year wherein the students struggle with Arabic. Besides Arabic, the students follow Islamic and language courses about Turkish history during their first-year. These are: Atatürk's principles and History of Turkish Revolution I and Atatürk's principles and History of Turkish Revolution II.

One main subject is mostly divided into two and sometimes three courses, for instance the recitation of the Qur'an and Tajwid. In the first year, the students study the Qur'an and Tajwid I, in the second year the second course and finally in the third year they complete the

¹⁰⁰ 'Uluslararası İlahiyat Dersleri', *Divinity Ankara*, accessed on 28 May 2017, http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=448.

¹⁰¹ Ali Dere, 'Erfahrungen mit dem Unterrichtsprogramm', 146.

¹⁰² Süleyman Derin, study coordinator Marmara University, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Istanbul, 31 April 2016.

¹⁰³ Süleyman Derin, study coordinator Marmara University, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Istanbul, 31 April 2016.

course. This continuity of the same courses during the whole program is a key feature of the program. This repeating ensures that the students improve themselves.

Curriculum

Comparing the courses of the Ankara University with the courses of the Marmara University which I analyzed for my bachelor's thesis, leads me to conclude a couple of things. First of all, the courses at both universities can be categorized into Islamic sciences, philosophy and religious sciences and Islamic history and arts. The compulsory courses are based on the courses which fall under one of these categories. Secondly, the universities shape the curriculum based on the existing courses within the major lines of the three categories. Therefore, there is not one fixed curriculum for all the programs at the universities. An example is the foreign language courses within the two universities. Within the program of Ankara, it is determined that the foreign language courses are for the English language. In Istanbul, the students have the opportunity to choose between English, French and German. Thus, the universities have the possibility to make their own choices regarding the curriculum within the boundaries set by Diyanet.

The courses that are related to 'the West' are elective courses. Examples of these courses are comparative Islamic and Western thoughts and Interreligious dialogue. These courses could be important for the future 'European' imams, because they allow students to gain more theoretical knowledge about Islam in the West and Interreligious dialogue, which are both very important issues in European society. However, they are not included as compulsory courses in the curriculum. In addition, courses like Islam, human rights and democracy, environment and religion or religious texts in foreign language, which could be important subjects within the Islamic debates in Europe are also not compulsory. Courses that are mentioned above or courses about the history of Islam in the Europe or Fatwa's for Muslims in the West¹⁰⁴ could give the students a better context based on academic knowledge about the society in which they will operate in the future. These are not included in the curriculum. The division of the compulsory and elective courses shows that the students who are future imams should be able to function within the European society based on their own experiences and less on academic knowledge about Islam within the European context.

¹⁰⁴ This was a course of the Islam studies at the Leiden University. I used this as an example because the program at the Leiden university was also an attempt to train future imams (polder imams).
https://studiegids.leidenuniv.nl/courses/show/27718/fatwas_voor_moslims_in_het_westen

The critique of the students toward the curriculum is the difficulty in the first year. The students who are high school graduated in Europe are not familiar with Arabic and could speak Turkish but they have the difficulty of writing in Turkish. Diyanet therefore intends to structure the preparatory in three parts wherein the first part will be focusing on Turkish and the other two on Arabic. Another critique regarding the content and method is mainly that the program is intensive with regard to the number of courses. The aim of the courses is mostly transferring intensively knowledge according to some students and sometimes even more than to promote individual research.¹⁰⁵

There is an important detail about the curriculum and the structure of it. The curriculum and the courses are fully determined by Diyanet. During my fieldwork in May 2017, I asked an expert why the European related courses are not compulsory but optional. She told me that YÖK is responsible for the curriculums. YÖK is the Council of Higher Education (*Yükseköğretim Kurulu*) in Turkey. ‘Changing the curriculum is not easy. If you change the curriculum of Islamic Theology it should be changed in every Theology Faculty in Turkey. According to the changing courses, professors and teaching staff must be employed in various Theology Faculties. There is a rooted and difficult system in Turkey. The changing process will take a lot of time. Therefore, Diyanet is trying to involve the curriculum with modules, internships and activities’.¹⁰⁶ Overall, YÖK is responsible for the supervision of universities in Turkey.¹⁰⁷ Changing the curriculum is a long and legal process in Turkey. Therefore, Diyanet is supporting the curriculum of a program with elective courses which are more based on International and European context of Islam and Society.

Summary

In short, the curriculum of the International Divinity program is rich in traditional knowledge regarding Islamic science, history and Qur’anic knowledge, mostly based on Arabic and Turkish knowledge. The curriculum of this program is not fixed. The elective courses and the year in which some courses are offered are different. It is notable that the courses that provide more context concerning European perspective and approach towards the Islam, are electives instead of compulsory courses because this program is intended for students who will be trained as future imams who will mainly be working in Europe.

¹⁰⁵ Ali Dere, ‘Erfahrungen mit dem Unterrichtsprogramm’, 130.

¹⁰⁶ T. Ü, expert Diyanet, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 3 May 2017.

¹⁰⁷ T. Ü, expert Diyanet, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 3 May 2017.

Chapter IV: Thoughts of the Stakeholders about the International Divinity Program

This chapter will examine the motivations of the stakeholders for starting the program. The most important stakeholder is Diyanet itself. Therefore, I will use three interviews which I held during my short fieldwork in May 2017 in Ankara. Firstly, the interview with Prof. Dr. Ali Dere, who is a professor in Hadith science at the Theology faculty of the Ankara University. Dere was also the general vice-president of the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) in Germany and after that the president. The second interview is with Prof. Dr. Halife Keskin. He is currently the general manager of Diyanet's external affairs department. This department is also responsible for the International Divinity Program. Finally, I interviewed Hatice Erdogan. She is the coordinator of the International Theology Students and also gives them reinforcement courses (*takviye dersleri*). Her course is about reciting the Quran. Besides that, I will also analyze afresh the interview from my bachelor's thesis which I conducted with Deniz Özkanlı, who is an active member of the Dutch branch of Diyanet.¹⁰⁸

The questionnaire for the stakeholders was semi-structured. All of the interviewees have different roles within Diyanet. Therefore, I started the interview with asking them about their role within Diyanet and their experiences. After that the questions were mostly about the motivations to start this program and its shortcomings. The location where the interviews took place was the headquarter of Diyanet in Ankara. Another location was the theology faculty of the Ankara University. I interviewed Prof. Dere at his office there. Furthermore, I received a report about the 10th year evaluation meeting of the International Divinity Program. This report involves a lot of tables with information about the International students, numbers of graduates and their careers following this program. The tables give a clear overview about the students of each country between 2006 and 2016.

As mentioned above, Keskin is the general manager of the external affairs department. He earned his PhD at the Strazburg University in Germany. After that, he worked at several universities in France doing research during 1988-1995. In 2008, he became Diyanet's religious services advisory of Belgium (*Belçika Din Hizmetleri Müşavirliği*) and attempted to

¹⁰⁸ Deniz Özkanlı, board member ISN, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Den Bosch, 18 May 2015.

start an imam educational program. Since 2014, he is working at the headquarter of Diyanet in Ankara. I met him at his office and he knew me from my internship in July 2016.

According to Keskin the International Divinity Program is not only an attempt to educate an imam but also a teacher and a social service attendant outside the mosque. Keskin mentions that the need of a program like the International Divinity must be understood from two perspectives. First of all, he mentions that there are no scientific institutions in Europe which represent and teach the Islamic traditional values. This has led the Muslims in Europe to adhere to the countries of origin and their services. The fact that Islam is only regarded as research, as an object in the academic world in Europe, has resulted in the need to do research into Islam from a traditional perspective. With the notion of ‘traditional’ perspective Keskin means that the Islam is educated from a faithful perspective.

Keskin mentions that after starting the International Divinity Program universities in Tübingen, Osnabrück, Erlangen and Frankfurt established/founded a Theology Faculty. Diyanet has a good relationship with these universities and the faculties. Moreover, some graduated International Divinity students are enrolled in a master’s program in one of these Theology Faculties. Keskin emphasizes that Diyanet’s aim is to have more partnerships with several European universities so they can work together to improve this International Divinity project.

Prof. Ali Dere highlights this also. Dere mentions that partnerships with European universities are important for the success of this program. ‘You could think of guest lectures of Professors from Europe here, exchange programs or a specific module with courses abroad’.

From the beginning of the International Divinity Program Ali Dere is an important key figure. He earned his Ph.D. in Germany during 1990-1994.¹⁰⁹ In 2003, Dere became an employee of Diyanet at the external relations department in Ankara. Dere experienced that there is gap between what the imams from Turkey are able to offer and the expectations of the second and third generation Turkish immigrants in Germany. He explains this experience as follows: ‘I lived in Germany and indicated a few things to Diyanet. Firstly, all of the imams should be educated on an academic level. Eventually, this should lead to more intellectuals within the

¹⁰⁹ The title of his PhD thesis is ‘The Hadith application with Imam Malik b. Anas (-179/795), in the mirror of the criticism addressed to him by es-Seybani (-189/804) and es-Safi’i’(204/819).

field of Islam who could be of service to the Muslim community in a non-Muslim society. Secondly, the imams who are sent to for instance Germany, should be from their own ranks to be able to understand and help the Turkish-German Muslims with their problems. An imam who does not speak fluent German is a problem nowadays, since children and students in Germany express and understand the German language overall better than Turkish'. According to Dere, some imams had difficulties with adapting to their new homes abroad. Therefore, a period of four years abroad, which is the current regulation within Diyanet, is not sufficient for some imams.

The wish to do something with the imams in Europe started around 2000. There were according to Dere two ways for Diyanet to start a program to educate. The first option according to him was to start a program at European universities. Therefore, Dere went with a couple colleagues of Diyanet to several universities. 'We (Dere and colleagues of HDV) went to Germany but also to Leiden and talked with Professor van Koningsveld¹¹⁰ about several opportunities. Van Koningsveld is an emeritus professor and he was involved in the imam education attempts in the Netherlands. We talked about the possibility to start a Theology Faculty in Leiden where they can educate imams. We differed with our opinions about the curriculum, expectations and the proficiency of teachers'. Dere mentions also that it is still important to have Theology Faculties in Europe where it is possible to educate future imams. However, this is difficult to realize in short term with a partnership of Diyanet because of the differences between the aims of Diyanet and the universities. Therefore, Diyanet had an alternative plan that could be implemented faster. Instead of discussing endlessly the opportunities with several universities in Europe, Diyanet wanted to use their own proficiency and started a scholarship program for students from Europe which is the International Divinity Program.

'Of course, we should be in contact with the universities in Europe to collaborate with each other, but opening several Theology faculties in Europe is not something you could realize in a short term. Financing these faculties, the regulations among employment and teachers is not easy. All of this takes a long time and we should set up together with the European universities and governments a system. In order to achieve something in short time we have

¹¹⁰ 'Pieter van Koningsveld', Universiteit Leiden, accessed on 30 June 2017, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/staffmembers/pieter-van-koningsveld#tab-1>.

chosen to bring the students to Turkey so they can take advantage of our faculties that exists for many years.’

Eventually, the International Divinity Program started in 2006. Dere mentions that the aim of this program is to educate intellectuals and experts. ‘It is not a very special program’, according to him but the motivation to start this program is to satisfy the need to cater for imams who are academically educated and who could speak the language and know the society well.

Some aspects within the program should be expanded according to Dere. The shortcoming is the lack of focus on Europe in the courses.. There is in Ankara a mixed system (*karma system*). This means that the International Theology students are mixed in classes with the regular Theology students from Ankara. Therefore, it is difficult to give extra attention to the International Theology students. On top of that, the International Theology students are not distributed across the faculties based on the countries where they came from. Consequently, the classes are sometimes mixed with students from 6 other countries. That’s why it is difficult for the teachers to focus specifically on German students or Italian students, because it is with every class different. Dere explains this further as follows: ‘Due to the *karma* system it is difficult to meet every wish of the students from different countries. I could speak German, Arabic, Turkish and English, but it is hard for me to find reliable Dutch sources about the Islam, because I am not familiar with it and I cannot read Dutch. Finding literature in the language of the students is not always easy. I cannot expect this from all the teachers.’ To solve this problem, Dere requested at Diyanet for a pilot practice. He wants to bring the students from one country at one Faculty in Turkey. An example is that all the German student’s study at the Faculty in Ankara. This setup will make it easier to focus on a country and sources from a language.

Another shortcoming which is mentioned by a stakeholder is the weak link between theory and practice. I spoke about this with the student coordinator H. Erdogan. She started with her function this year. We talked with her mostly about the extra activities for the students. Last year, Erdogan organized together with some colleague’s short modules for the students to practice more. She was critical about the link between theory and practice and she mentioned that Diyanet was aware of this. One of the activities Erdogan organized was visiting a funeral washer. During this activity, the students had also the opportunity to practice. Further, the

students visited a nursing home and children's in the mosque to practice preaching and communication with different age categories. These are a few examples. Another improvement is that Diyanet starts this year summer internships for the International Divinity students. These internships are during the months July and August. These internships are an opportunity for the students to learn and practice more at one of the Diyanet mosques in the country where they are from. For instance, a student from the Netherlands could do an internship in the Netherlands at one mosque and practice with teaching about the Islam in Dutch.

The final stakeholder is Deniz Özkanlı. He is as an volunteer active within the board of Dutch-branch of Diyanet (during the time of the interview). Özkanlı approaches the International Divinity Program through a different lens than the other stakeholders. He lives in the Netherlands and knows what the Turkish-Muslim community here needs. He mentions that the Turkish-Muslim community in Europe requested to start a program like this. 'People's request is leading in this project. The attempts here in the Netherlands could not respond to this I think. The programs did not take the ethnical backgrounds of the communities into account'. Özkanlı regards the International Theology Program as a 'transition model'. He explains this as follows: 'In the 1970s there was a Muslim-Turkish community in the Netherlands and they had certain needs. The community itself has asked Diyanet for mosques in Europe. That is what people sometimes forget. After that, there came other generations with other needs. The Turkish generation in the Netherlands wants imams who knows Dutch and knows the Dutch setting and society. We will see what the future generations want and how the future mosques will look like'. The program is according to him demand-oriented. For Özkanlı, the starting point for Diyanet should be 'what the community wants'. I asked him about the possible reactions towards the program and the 'Ankara's long arm' debate which is a metaphorical reference to the soft power government of Turkey in various European countries. With this question I asked if the International Theology Program could be seen by the Dutch government as a project of 'Ankara's long arm' to influence the Turkish diaspora in Europe. Özkanlı reacted as follows: 'I don't know what the reactions could be from Turkey. They are probably busy with the International Divinity Program. I understand Diyanet with the following point: If I ask as a Dutch citizen for 145 imams and the government could not deliver it to me, I do think that they could at least thank the organization or the country that regulates this, instead of only questioning

this.¹¹¹ Özkanlı does not gave a clear answer to what extent the Dutch government could criticize this project as the metaphoric reference of ‘long arm of Ankara’. He made his point clear by emphasizing that the intention of this project is clear and that Diyanet has taken more steps within the imam education attempts comparing with the Dutch government.

The three stakeholders are in general agree about the motivations to start the program. Even then, they argue this from their own experience. Keskin and Dere are two Diyanet experts who lived in Europe before. Both of them are aware of the need of imams who are more academically educated and could speak the language of the country where they function. Another important point they refer to is that the imams are knowledgeable of the society in which they will function. Keskin approaches the International Divinity Program more from a policy-making perspective while Dere is more aware of the difficulties to teach a group of students who are from 10 different countries. Özkanlı approaches the International Divinity Program as someone who lives in the Netherlands. He emphasizes that the program is demand-oriented and he sees it as a transition model. The program will change based on the needs. There is according to him a need for this program from the current Turkish-Muslim community in the Netherlands. Erdogan mentioned during the interview mostly connection between theory and practice. She indicated some things that need to be improved. One of that was the practical side of the program. To improve this, Erdogan organized several events for the students to improve their skills besides the theory. Finally, she also mentioned that Diyanet is aware of this and will organize internships and workshops more structurally in the future.

¹¹¹ Deniz Özkanlı, board member ISN, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Den Bosch, 18 May 2015.

Chapter V: Students of the International Divinity Program in Ankara

This chapter will provide information about the motivations of the students to study, their thoughts about the program and their expectations about their role after their graduation. Firstly, I will explain the structure of the questionnaire, my choice for these particular students and the circumstances I dealt with during my fieldwork. Then I will introduce the students by providing some background information and I will shed some light on their motivations. Finally, I will include the experience of Alexander Toom. He was one of the Dutch experts who was invited as a speaker to Istanbul for a symposium which was organized by Dutch speaking students of the International Divinity Program in May 2017.

Structure of the questionnaire

The questions of the questionnaire are divided into several sections.¹¹² The first section is concerned with general information about the interviewee. I asked the interviewee's name, gender, age, study year, nationality and marital status. The study year is important, because a student who has been involved in this program for a longer period of time may be able to give me more information based on his or her experiences. Other important information concerns 'the gender question'. Only male students are able to become an imam. The question towards the female students concerning their future perspectives is therefore an important one. The second section is about the family migration history. The aim here is to get more information about the family history of the interviewee and to what extent some family members are migrated to Turkey. Finally, the last part is about the students' thoughts concerning the program, their actual role and expectations about their role as a *gurbetçi* within the diaspora relations through the program. I tried to understand the position of the students between Turkey and the Netherlands and to what extent the students planned to act as bridges between these two countries with their functions and their position as graduate students.

In the first category, the religious aspects of acting as a bridge, the questions were about how the students wanted to act as a bridge between the two countries with their function as a religious functionary. Furthermore, I asked the students their ambition when they are graduated students and what they want to do in which country. The second category was

about politics. These questions were mostly about the political involvement of the students and to what extent they consider politics important within their function in the future. Finally, the societal questions were about the Dutch and Turkish language. Furthermore, I asked them also about which language they prefer to speak in the future with the children for instance when they are imams/back in the Netherlands.¹¹³

I interviewed six students. Three of them were from the Netherlands and the other three were from Belgium. As shown in Table 1, at this moment there are in total only five students from the Netherlands (*Hollanda*) studying at Ankara University. Four of them are male and one is female. The reason why there are only a few students from the Netherlands in Ankara is because all of the International Theology students are spread over six universities. There are as shown in table 4 in total 40 students from the Netherlands. Of those 40, 9 attend Istanbul Mayıs University, 7 attend Istanbul University, and 6 attend Marmara University, also situated in Istanbul. In Konya, 9 students attend the Necmettin Erbakan University and lastly, 9 students attend the Uludağ University in Bursa.¹¹⁴

AKTÜEL ÖĞRENCİ DURUMU							
ÜLKELERE GÖRE UİP ÖĞRENCİ DURUMU							
ÜLKE	Ankara Üniversitesi	İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi	İstanbul Üniversitesi	Marmara Üniversitesi	Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi	Uludağ Üniversitesi	GENEL TOPLAM
ABD		1	2			1	4
ALMANYA	81	29	64	51	43	59	327
AVUSTRALYA	4		2	3		2	11
AVUSTURYA	4	1	4	6	5	1	21
BELÇİKA	7	1	10	7	8	14	47
DANİMARKA	1		3	1		1	6
FRANSA	25	4	37	50	25	23	164
HOLLANDA	5	4	7	6	9	9	40
İNGİLTERE		1	1				2
İSVEÇ	1			1		1	3
İSVİÇRE			3	3	1		7
İTALYA	3		4	3	3	5	18
JAPONYA			1				1
KANADA			2	3		3	8
NORVEÇ			2	1			3
GENEL TOPLAM	131	41	142	135	94	119	662

Table 4:
Current student situation

I was not able to speak to all of the five students from the Netherlands, because one did not wish to participate and the second student was not in Ankara at that time. Instead of talking

¹¹⁴ TC. Başkanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, 'Rapor: Uluslararası İlahiyat Programı 10. Yıl değerlendirme toplantısı,' 24-26 March 2017, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Ankara, 6.

with only three students from the Netherlands I decided to interview two additional students from Belgium. The interviews were all held in Dutch except for one because one student preferred to communicate in Turkish. The names of the interviewees remain anonymous in this research. Information about the country, gender, study year and the age of the students are indicated in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5: General information interviewee

Student	Country	Gender	Study year	Age
Student 1	Netherlands	Male	3	23
Student 2	Netherlands	Male	3	23
Student 3	Netherlands	Female	1	20
Student 4	Belgium	Female	1	20
Student 5	Belgium	Female	Preparation year	20

As indicated in the table above, one interviewee from Belgium was in her preparation year. This means that she followed only Arabic courses and could not give answers about the curriculum because she had no experience with it. The other three female students were in their first year. From all students, the two male students from the Netherlands had the most experience with the program, because both of the students are the longest involved in the International Divinity Program. This diversity among the interviewees led to different answers.

Locations of the interviews

I interviewed the students at two different locations. I met the male students at the Theology Faculty of the Ankara University and interviewed them in a classroom. The location where I met with the female students was different. I was accompanied by a Diyanet employee H. Erdogan who is also the coordinator of the female student's dormitory. She was not present during the interviews. I interviewed all the students individually so they are not influenced by others. This dormitory is meant only for female students who are International Theology students or theology students from Kyrgyzstan who come to Turkey for a preparation year. With the permission of the students I used a tape recorder during the interviews.

Analyzing the data

In order to understand the data, I chose to analyze the interviews with open coding. The interviews have been read several times with provisional labels that may be applicable to the

analysis. The advantage of open coding is its consistency that provides structure for analysis.¹¹⁵ I categorized the important codes in table 6 which will be discussed.

Table 6: codes of the student's questionnaire

Categorization	Code in interviews
Religion	Teach the right Islam Children, youth Socially active within the society Working in Europe Bridge Diyanet employees
Political	Actuality Important Important in Turkey and the Netherlands/Belgium
Social	Turkish and Dutch language Communication

Information about the students

From the five students one had studied at a university in the Netherlands and had a bachelor degree (Student 1). The student mentions this foremost as a kind of certainty to have a job in the future. When I asked him this directly, he indicated that he was very interested in beta subjects and that at that time he had doubts about theology. He enjoyed his studies so much that he realized that theology was the field he wanted to continue studying in. This led to an enrollment in the International Theology program of Diyanet. The student's family has been active within Diyanet mosques for years. When I asked to what extent Diyanet played a role in his choice for studying in Turkey, he mentioned that studying somewhere outside of the Netherlands was the most important factor. 'I wanted to study somewhere outside of my comfort zone in an unknown place. Turkey for me was as unknown as all other places'. That is also the reason why he wants to follow his master program in another country. He feels London or an Arab country are an option.

¹¹⁵ John V. Seidel, 'Qualitative Data Analysis', 1988, accessed on 9 July 2017. <ftp://ftp.qualisresearch.com/pub/qda.pdf>.

Student 2 is 23 years old and married to someone from the Netherlands. They live together in Ankara. He studied International Wholesale which is intermediate vocational education (MBO) level 4 education. Compared to the student mentioned above, the levels of this student's background studies are very different. Together with his cousin, Student 2 has been involved with Diyanet and has been helping with different activities in the mosque in the Netherlands since his childhood. The International Theology program was announced through his friends. "We decided to participate in this program together. My cousin is now in his fourth year in Istanbul and I in Ankara".

Another student who has been involved with Diyanet through the mosque since childhood is the female student (Student 3) from the Netherlands. She was born in 1996 and studied Senior General Secondary Education (HAVO). Her parents live in Delft where she is born and raised. The International Theology Program started in 2006. She was inspired by an International Divinity student who went to Turkey from Delft. This was Bünyamin Yıldız. Yıldız, who is now a graduated International Theology student, was one of the first students who went to Turkey from Delft. Yıldız is a graduate student of the International Theology Program and the imam of the Mevlana mosque in Rotterdam.¹¹⁶ 'Since my childhood, I dreamt about studying theology. I was young when imam Bünyamin went to Ankara for the program and I really wanted to do the same. The imam of Diyanet in Delft always said that I could study the same program when I was old enough'. From that moment, for 6 or 7 years, this student dreamt about joining this program and her parents were aware of this. Another important reason for her to study theology is because of the way she is raised. Spirituality and Islam are important to her and her parents. She mentions that her parents raised her differently comparing with her elder sisters. After their Hajj to Mecca in 2008 they changed and became more spiritual. The strong sense of spirituality and religion led to a strong link with the mosque and the ambition to study theology.

The next student (Student 4) from Belgium is 20 years old. She wanted to study something with Islam following her high school graduation and went to an open day at the University of Gent to get acquainted with the study Arabic and Islam Studies. At the end, she did not choose to study this, because she had doubts. 'My first thought was that the teachers were Orientalists. They were all Belgians. In my view, they did not have the original sources and

¹¹⁶ Bünyamin Yıldız, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Mevlana mosque Rotterdam, 11 February 2016.

did not believe in the Islam. Besides, they saw the Islam as an object. The approach was different. I wanted to study the Islam from a more normative approach'. After searching for the right study, she saw the International Theology Program on internet and decided to enroll. Her main goal was to do something with Islam because of the current situation. She wanted to serve the society in Belgium with her academic knowledge. She wants to open a school care center where Muslim and non-Muslim children can come and where they can learn about the Islam and its norms and values. Another dream of hers is to be in a dialogue with Muslim as well as non-Muslims and non-believers, because according to her religion has many interfaces that connect people with each other.

The final student from Belgium (Student 5) is currently in her preparation year. As mentioned above she has a lack of experience with the curriculum of the International Divinity Program compared with the other students, because she follows only Arabic courses. This student heard something about the program from one of the Diyanet employees. She tried to find an equivalent study in Belgium but could not find it. For her, Turkey is not the main reason to study this program. The fact that she is studying theology is more important for her. She wants to graduate and show the people in Belgium that a Muslim woman with a headscarf is able to talk about and explain the Islam in a well-informed way. Overall, her aim is to provide quality service for the whole Muslim community in Belgium.

Similarities between the students

Despite the fact that the students were all different, they also had similarities. Firstly, their ambition. All students were ambitious. Some of them had dreamt about this program since childhood while other students tried other things first. The students whom I spoke to were aware of the goals of this program. The aim was according to them educating religious functionaries on academic level who could speak the Dutch language and know the society.. They mentioned this a couple of times during the interview, especially when I asked them to what extent they want to live in Turkey. This is also the second similarity. All of the five students want to continue with a master's degree to become more specialized. One student wants to study pedagogy or sociology in Belgium.¹¹⁷ Another wants to study something with

¹¹⁷ Student 2, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

Islam in the West in the Netherland¹¹⁸, while another one wants to study something with Quran exegeses.¹¹⁹ The rest does not exactly know yet which master's degree they want.

Focusing on their ambitions, some of them want to become an imam. When I asked them about it they answered me with a question, which was: 'What is your definition of imam?', and they started to describe their own definition as follows: 'What most people describe as what an imam does many people can do. Leading a prayer five times a day is not that difficult. For me, the definition of imam is broader. An imam to me should be socially active and in touch with the community and the Dutch society, but also for instance be in touch with the church. If you mean this, I would say yes, I want to become an imam, but if you mean only preaching and leading the prayer, then it is another story'.¹²⁰ This shows that the definition of an 'imam' is for some students more than only leading a prayer. For these students, being an imam means also being active within the Dutch/Belgium society.

Another similarity is that the female students want to combine theology with pedagogy or sociology. One of the female students (Student 5) wants to study philosophy and become a writer. Her main goal is to visit every mosque in Belgium as a *vaize* (female Islamic preacher). In this case, the mosque should not be a place for only Muslims but a meeting place for all the Dutch or Belgium people. This is something every student told me. They do not want to speak only with Muslims. Their ability to speak in Dutch should be an opportunity to speak with everyone about everything, which is not the case right now because the imams are mostly from Turkey and do not speak Dutch themselves. Furthermore, all of the students mentioned the difficulties to study in Turkey when I asked them about their experiences to study there. According to them, the city of Ankara can be compared to most cities in Belgium and the Netherlands, it is busy and chaotic. Besides that, the universities and the people itself in Turkey are less systematic and structured. A couple students found this difficult¹²¹.

¹¹⁸ Student 3, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

¹¹⁹ Student 1, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

¹²⁰ Student 1, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

¹²¹ Student 3, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara 2 May 2017, and Student 1 interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara 2 May 2017 and Student 2 interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017 and Student 5 interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 4 May 2017.

Diaspora relation: social aspect

As mentioned above, the students want to become active within the Dutch and Belgium society. They do not see their function in the future as only religious, but also more social. For the most students, their role as a religious functionary is not only for the Muslim community. In fact, they want to speak with more non-Muslims for a better inclusive society.

The other social aspect within the question who are related to diaspora relations is the choice between the Turkish or Dutch language. Most of the students except one find it important to teach and speak also in Turkish besides Dutch. One student mentioned that it was not that much important to speak in Turkish. Dutch should be the language she said if you want to approach Muslims and non-Muslims.¹²² According to other students, most of the first and second generations Turkish-Dutch people could not speak good Dutch. ‘The most important thing as a religious functionary is transferring the right knowledge about a religion. I think the conclusion is very simple if we talk about whether this should be in Turkish or Dutch. You should talk in the language that your community understands. In the case of the Netherlands, a lot of first and second generation Turkish-Dutch people speaks and understands better Turkish. It would be problematic for them if I should preach only in Dutch in the future. On the other hand, the new generation could speak and understand better Dutch than Turkish. A solution here could be that I should preach in both of the languages so that everyone could understand me.’¹²³ It is according to a lot of students a huge advantage that they could speak both of the languages. The language question could even be a choice of the parents instead of the mosque or the imam. ‘It is also possible that the parents of the students who come to the mosque could choose between the Turkish education and Dutch. It is for the religious functionary not difficult to teach the same course twice in different languages. It is probably better for the students to speak one language than speaking two different languages in one course.’¹²⁴

Diaspora relation: religious aspect

Another aspect of the diaspora relations is religious involvement of the students and to what extent this is important for them now and will be in the future. I asked the students how

¹²² Student 5, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 4 May 2017

¹²³ Student 4, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 4 May 2017 and Student 2, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

¹²⁴ Student 1, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

important political knowledge is and to what extent they are aware of the contemporary political developments. Two students were not interested in politics at all and they did not read newspapers or articles about this. Nevertheless, all of the students mentioned that being aware of today's political developments is important for them. 'As an imam for instance or a religious functionary of Diyanet, you are not allowed to speak about politics. But I do think that awareness about what is happening in the world is very important'.¹²⁵ Therefore all of the students were positive about including a course in the curriculum about 'contemporary political developments in the Netherlands/Belgium'. Besides this, they were also interested in a course like 'the history of Islam in the Netherlands/Belgium'. One student explained her interest as follows: 'If you do not know your history then you will not come further in the future. If we do not know the history of Muslims in Europe I think that we have miss important contextual information about a society in which we will function in the future'.¹²⁶

In general, all five students are satisfied with the program. As mentioned, they are all ambitious and interested in the courses. According to the students the focus on the Arabic language, especially in the preparation year, is relevant and important because the other courses are mostly based on Arabic sources. Some students mentioned a couple of times that they had learnt a lot of things from an academic perspective based on different types of sources (Western, non-Western etc.). This diversity in sources made it possible to approach topics from different perspectives. 'I have now learned that many things are not correct, which I thought was true. For instance, a couple of famous Hadiths are not reliable if you return to the chain of narrations'.¹²⁷

Critiques of the students

On the other hand, there are also some critiques towards the program. One of the important critiques is that the program does not focus enough on the practice and the work field. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Diyanet is aware of this and is trying to change this with several implementations. I asked the students some questions about courses that may be given in the future and asked about their thoughts on this. One of the questions was about a module or an internship in the Netherlands or Belgium at the end of their study where they practice to preach in Dutch. All of the students were enthusiastic about this idea. Firstly, because of their

¹²⁵ Student 4, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 4 May 2017 and Student 2, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

¹²⁶ Student 5 interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 4 May 2017.

¹²⁷ Student 3, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara 2 May 2017.

deteriorated practice in the Dutch language. While they live in Turkey they speak Turkish most of the time Turkish which effects their skillfulness in the Dutch language. Secondly, the students indicated that they would gain experience in the field. A student explained this as follows: ‘It is like studying medical science. After a couple years of theory, the students are obliged to do an internship of 2 years in the Netherlands to gain more experience in the work field. We should do the same’. Besides this, the students are also interested in the history of Islam in Europe, the political developments in the Netherlands/Belgium and recent developments. They would find such courses very interesting and relevant for them because they will be working in the Netherlands or Belgium after a couple years. According to the students, these courses could be given by Dutch or Belgian teachers because they revolve around the history and current events in a country and do not specifically concern the Islam or Islamic sources.

Seminar about the Netherlands

Together with one of their teachers, the Dutch speaking students from the Netherlands and Belgium organize a seminar every Thursday. Each seminar, one student prepares a presentation in Dutch. The topics are mostly related to Islam. One student mentioned that during the presentations they also focus on Islamic terms in Dutch because they learn these terms in Turkish or Arabic during the courses. Furthermore, on 5-6-7 May 2017, the students organized a symposium about Islam in Europe in Istanbul for Dutch speaking students. They invited a couple of speakers to talk about the work field in the Netherlands and share their experiences with the students. Despite these own initiatives, there is still a gap between theory and practice.

This gap is also mentioned by Alexander Toom, one of the speakers during the symposium in Istanbul.¹²⁸ Interestingly, Toom himself is a graduate student from one of the ‘imam trainings’ in the Netherlands. He followed the imam training at the Hogeschool Inholland with a specialization in pedagogy. The student described his part in the program as religious activism and social involvement (*religieus activisme en maatschappelijke betrokkenheid*). In an interview, Toom explained how he tried to give the students a brief introduction about the practice in the Netherlands. Toom explains his experience in Turkey as follows: ‘The intention of the program is that the students return to the Netherlands and I was there to

¹²⁸ Alexander Toom, speaker symposium Istanbul, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Den Haag, 24 May 2017.

emphasize this. I have indicated that the students are needed in the Netherlands, but the way they are needed is not the same as the current religious functionaries were needed in the Netherlands. The fact that these students have been in Turkey for 4 to 5 years does not mean that they have an added value to what we already have here in the Netherlands. They have to think more practically.

Toom mentioned that this event with -the according to him- ambitious students, gave him a lot of energy. According to him, the program should provide more guidance to the students in the form of internships or guest lectures from Dutch experts, or workshop in which real cases from the Netherlands are discussed. Toom discussed a real case during the symposium. When I asked him about an example of a case which he discussed with the students he explained one example. This case was about a mother that asked him for advice. Her daughter was 15 years old and had a relationship. Having a relationship is not *halal* and also according to that mother not good for that age. ‘She asked me what to do. It is important with mothers like this to approach the question from different perspectives instead of giving a preach about *haram* and *halal*. I told them that one option was that the mother could exert pressure so the daughter bans her relationship, because it is *haram*. The consequence of this is that the daughter walks away and lives with her elder boyfriend. Finally, the daughter gets pregnant and her boyfriend does not want her also anymore. This was something I once experienced with another family. Some of the students were shocked. I could see that in their faces but it was good to be able to discuss some difficult examples, because this is the real life. They should start to think about the difficult things in which they as imams or Islamic pedagogues will be asked to give advice and help people. Furthermore, I advised them to think about individual differences. Diyanet follows the Hanafi madhhab and most of the Muslims here are Turkish or Moroccan.’¹²⁹ According to Toom, the Muslim population in the Netherlands usually follow the Hanafi or the Maliki madhhab, but there are also people that follow a different movement within the Islam which is also important if you would become a religious functionary, an imam or a Islamic pedagogue who gives advice.

¹²⁹ Alexander Toom, speaker symposium Istanbul, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Den Haag, 24 May 2017.

Summary

This chapter provided information about the five students that I met and interviewed in Ankara. As mentioned the students are all different. Their ambition to study something related to Islam is, next to their own interest also formed by the way they are raised. Some students have had a strong relation with Diyanet since their childhood through the Diyanet mosques here in the Netherlands. This factor is an important one. In general, the aim of the students is to do something for the whole society, not only for the Turkish or the Muslim community. They want to become a bridge between the Dutch society and the Muslim community. This is very important if you look at the thoughts of the students from a diaspora relation perspective. This will be analyzed in the next chapter. The idea of acting as a bridge is possible in the future according to the students. This could be explained through the three categories. Firstly, the students will gain more Islamic knowledge through the academic education in Turkey. Secondly, the students consider politics important within their function in the future but they do not courses specifically about politics. Finally, if you look at this from a social perspective all of the students could speak Dutch and Turkish, they are born and live the Netherlands or Belgium so they know the society very well. Besides that, their aim is to be active within the Dutch or Belgium society. According the students, being an religious functionary of an imam (for the male students) is not only leading the prayer or give preaches or advice the Muslim community. They want to be more involved with the municipality and with non-believers. Some students mentioned that the mosque should be a place for everyone. Their contact with and within the society could be better and more personal because these students -perhaps future imams- are able to speak Dutch and are more familiar with the Dutch society, compared to the current imams.

Chapter VI: An analysis of the International Divinity Program through the lens of the diaspora theory

In this chapter, I will search for relationships between different factors based on the open coding system which I explained in the previous chapter. This will be based on an analyze of the interviews of the students through the diaspora theory (Chapter 1). Firstly, I will explain my own approach toward the International Divinity Program. Secondly, I will analyze the interviews through the diaspora theory and discuss the notable relationships. Each aspect of the diaspora theory will be discussed in one paragraph.

An important notion is that the students are reservedly in answering the questions. This could be because of my position as a researcher from the Netherlands. The current critics from Europe and the Netherlands towards the imams from Diyanet could be the reason of this. Another reason could be because I am a student of the Leiden University, which is known in Turkey as the ‘Orientalists’. So, the students might have the idea that I will write or conclude different things which could be interpret as ‘negative’ by them. Finally, it is also possible that the students do not have a clear reflection about their future role as a *gurbetçi*.

Traditional program with progressive efforts

The curriculum of the International Divinity Program is as mentioned not quite different from the regular Divinity Program in Ankara. The difference between the two curriculums are mostly the elective courses. Most of these elective courses are special available for the International Divinity Program. These courses focus more on the Islam in the European context and literature. I will define the International Divinity Program as a traditional one with progressive efforts instead of making a statement whether or not it is conservative or liberal. Tradition means an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action or behavior.¹³⁰ I call it more tradition because the idea of the program and the aim is to educate imams. The courses are based on the faithful perspective of the Islam, so the teachers are all Muslims. Keskin mentioned this also ‘the traditional perspective’ of educating about the Islam in Chapter 4. Unlike my notion of ‘traditional’ I believe that the program has also ‘progressive efforts’. This is because of the elective courses which focus more on the Islam

¹³⁰ ‘Definition tradition’, *Merriam webster*, accessed on 22 July 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tradition>.

in the European context based on European sources. Progressive means change, improvement, as opposed to wishing to maintain things as they are. It also means making progress toward better conditions.¹³¹

The idea to start a scholarship program for imams who should function in Europe could be seen as progressive with my definition as mentioned above. Diyanet wants to change the way imams who function in Europe are educated. I assume that the elective courses and internships should give the students a more academic knowledge and tools for their future career as imams or religious functionaries in Europe. All of the students whom I interviewed follow the electives which are about Islam in Europe. Besides, they also follow as much as possible seminars and organizes every Thursday. During the seminar on Thursday, all the Dutch speaking students have each week a presentation about Islam related subjects in the Netherlands.

The idea of being ‘here’ and ‘there’

Derin, the study coordinator of the International Divinity Program at the Marmara University in Istanbul, told me during the interview in 2016 that most of the International Divinity Program students wanted to stay in Turkey. In contrast, all of the five students in Ankara want to go back to Belgium or the Netherlands after their graduation. None of them wants to work and live in Turkey. According to the aim of the program, these students are the ideal examples. Some of the students experience that they are not fully ‘home’ in Turkey. One reason for that is that they are born and raised in the Netherlands. Secondly, the students left their family and friends in the Netherlands. And finally, some students mentioned that they are aware of this program’s aim which is according to them that the graduate students return to Europe and function there.

Even though, the students as well as Dering mentions during the interviews that there is the idea of ‘idealization of Turkey’ among some *gurbetci* students. This idea has a strong link with the diaspora relation theory. According to this theory, the ancestral home is idealized and it is thought that, when conditions are favorable, either they, or their descendants should return. Furthermore, the diaspora’s could believe that they are not- and perhaps can never be- fully accepted in their host societies. This could be an important reason why some students

¹³¹ ‘Progressive definition’, *Dictionary*, accessed on 2 July 2017, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/progressive>.

wants to stay in Turkey. The students have employment opportunities in Turkey when they are graduated even it is not the aim of the program. If most of the students would stay in Turkey, I will argue that the the International Divinity Program strengthen the diaspora relations between Turkey and the Netherlands. However, based on my interviews which is a small amount of students I am not able to conclude this. The students of Ankara whom I interviewed do not make the choice between ‘here’ or ‘there’. They see themselves as Dutch citizens who have also the Turkish nationality and Turkish roots.

Function as a bridge between home and host society

The fact that they are *gurbetci*'s is in the case of the International Divinity Program an advantage because they profit from their language skills and knowledge of both countries. This knowledge and the experience in both countries makes it easier for the students to become a bridge between two countries. More important, the bridge function is not between Turkey and the Netherlands but mainly between the Turkish-Muslim society and the non-Muslim society in the Netherlands or Belgium. The fact that these students are from the Netherlands and Belgium makes it for them sometimes difficult to adapt in Turkey. Some of the students are from small cities in the Netherlands or Belgium where it is more quiet comparing with Ankara, which is the capital of Turkey. Besides, the students are used to have more structure which is not always the case in Turkey. With structure they mean planning and structuring the everyday life in details.

Maintaining ties with homeland

Even though the students do not make a choice between ‘here’ or ‘there’ it is still possible to analyze to what extent the expectation of the student's role is strong linked with the diaspora relation. To understand this it is important to look again at the concept of Vertovec. According to Vertovec, diasporas are seen as a group that maintains implicit or explicit ties with their homelands. All of the students whom I spoke to are maintaining ties with their homelands because of their family members and friends. The homeland is in this case Turkey, because the parents and the family members of the students are from Turkey. All of them, want to live and work in Belgium or Netherlands, which is in this case the host land. If the students would become a Diyanet employee in the Netherlands or Belgium the ties between them, as a religious functionary and community leader and Turkey will be maintained and perhaps strengthened. Their function as a religious functionary could strengthen this tie. Even if it does not strengthen it will maintain the ties between Turkey and the Netherlands through

these ‘new’ religious functionaries. This relation could be explained through three categories in which the questionnaire is divided, namely religious, political and social.

Diaspora theory: religious perspective

Firstly the religious perspective. If the International Divinity students graduate and become an Diyanet employee they will work for the Directorate of Turkey. Although Diyanet and the students mentioned that they are ‘free’ in doing what they want, they will remain employees of Diyanet and should act according to the rules of Diyanet. One example is that Diyanet employees are not able to be active in politics or political parties. The notion of ‘acting free’ has been discussed in paragraph: ‘Diaspora theory social aspect’ during the question to what extent they will be free in determining the Friday sermon. The students expected that they will be free in doing that.¹³² Yildiz, who is a UIP graduate imam and functions currently in the Netherlands confirms this expectation as follows: ‘My aim is to transfer the Islam in a right and clear way. I decide what I preach on Friday’.¹³³ Although it is also stated that the students will act ‘free’ they will remain employees of Diyanet. It is difficult to claim from my limited research results that the ties between Turkey and the Netherlands will strengthen but it will maintain through these graduated International Divinity students if they would become Diyanet employees.

Diaspora theory: politics

Secondly, all of the students finds politics important. Some students do not like politics while others follow the news about it every day. One student mentions during the interview that she gave a family member permission to vote for her during the elections in the Netherlands.¹³⁴ Overall, according to the students political developments in Turkey and the Netherlands are important for the Turkish Muslim community in the Netherlands or Belgium because of their identity. Most of the Turkish people in both countries are aware of the political movements in Turkey. Due to the fact that Diyanet is a Directorate some political changes could also affect Diyanet itself, but the students did not talk about that. According to them, politics and political movements in a country is important, because reflects the actuality of a country. Voting for the elections in Turkey or the Netherlands means that the someone is engaging in transnational ways of being but not specifically belonging. The fact that all of these students

¹³² Student 1, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017 and Student 3, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara 2 May 2017,

¹³³ Bünyamin Yıldız, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Mevlana mosque Rotterdam, 11 February 2016.

¹³⁴ Student 2, interviewed by Özge Özbunar, Ankara, 2 May 2017.

finds politics important and vote for one or two countries illustrates that they are belonging to a transnational group. The International Divinity Program do not stimulate specifically the students to vote or become involved in Turkish politics. So from the religious concept, the Program does not strengthen the diaspora relation. More strongly, religious functionaries of Diyanet could not be political active, but being aware and having the knowledge about political developments is according to all of the students important.

Diaspora theory: social

Finally, the students mentions that they want to learn and teach the Islam in the right way mostly to children and young people. Therefore, they mention also that they have the ability to teach in both languages which is Dutch and Turkish. The role of the language because of the ability to institutionalize networks of exchange and communication is an important social aspect within the diaspora relation theory.¹³⁵ Speaking Turkish is for the students as important as speaking in Dutch. This is because of the Muslim Turkish community, mostly the elder ones, could not understand Dutch. Furthermore, language is an important phenomenon within the Turkish nationalism which could be the clarification of the importance for the students. This possible argumentation is not mentioned by the students at all. Further, the ability to speak in Dutch makes it for these students to become more active in the society comparing with the current imams who could not speak fluent Dutch.

Consciously maintaining collective identities

Another important element within the social aspect of the diaspora theory is the maintaining collective identities of the students, which are sustained by reference to an 'ethnic myth' of common origin, historical experience is an important element in the Turkish educational system. The International Divinity students follow several compulsory courses about the History of the Kemalist era (*inkilap tarihi*). Besides, the students of the International Divinity Program have a collective identity which is the fact that they are *gurbetçis*. This means that the students share the same identity of belonging to two countries. One student mentioned that the 'Dutch speaking' countries were also a separate group. As mentioned earlier these students organized a symposium together with guest lectures from the Netherlands. So there is a group of *gurbetçis* and within that group also a categorization of the countries. This means

¹³⁵ Vertovec, Steven, 'Three meanings of "diaspora," exemplified among South Asian religions,' *Diaspora* 7(2) (1999).

that the 'Dutch' students are also a group due to the fact that they have an collective identity as a Dutch Turk.

Finally, according to Toom, the students have a lack of critical engagement. According to him, the students do not know much about the social and socio-economic problems of the congregations. The students are according to him in the 'realization' that they have an advantaged position within the diaspora relation between Turkey and the Netherlands. However, the students must be critical about their role within the Dutch society, which is according to Toom not the case yet.

I analyzed the interviews with the students through the lens of the diaspora theory. I concluded that several features of the diaspora theory which I discussed in Chapter 1 are related with the ideas of the students. However, these links do not mean that the International Divinity Program strengthen the diaspora relations between Turkey and the Netherlands. Currently, the Diyanet imams are from Turkey and live in the Netherlands for a period of 4 or 5 years. If you compare the current imams with these students who could become an imam, it is possible to argue that there will be a continuity with the diaspora relation but not a reinforcement. Moreover, these students have a stronger relationship with the Netherlands than the current imams. The program could stimulate these students to engage more in the Dutch society, because Diyanet believes that the imams plays also an important role from a social perspective. Like the stakeholders of Diyanet the students believes that they could become the 'bridge' between the Muslim and Non-Muslims within the Dutch society. This does not mean that the only way of becoming a bridge is as an imam. The female students could not become an imam but some of them they have the ambition to support the Muslim families from a pedagogical expertise. Another female student wants to write as much as she could about the Islam and philosophy. Their aim is not to be useful for Muslims only but for everyone regardless the religion.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

This study tried to analyze the International Divinity Program of Diyanet through a lens of the diaspora relation. In the introduction I have argued that this program of Diyanet is relevant and topical. As mentioned, the imam working in a mosque in the Netherlands constantly finds himself in a field of tension between expectations from the majority of society and expectations of the believers. Besides, this program of Diyanet has been started in 2006 and mentioned in the Dutch public debate in 2014 for the first time. This all led to the following central question: *What is the role of the International Divinity Program in forming diaspora relations between Turkey and the Netherlands?*

According to Aslamacı and Kaymakcan, after 9/11 the requests from mostly European countries for cooperation and aid increased in order to benefit from the Islamic education model. Chapter 1 showed that the International Divinity Program is a part of a series of activities of Diyanet. The most important aims of these activities are meant to counteract the growing support for Salafism and Islamic fundamentalism, and the discourse against Islam. Diyanet aim with this program is to spread Islam correctly based on academic skills and knowledge. Furthermore, they want to answer the needs of the Turkish Muslim population in European countries with imams who could speak the language of that particular country and who know the society well. Therefore, this program could also be seen as demand-oriented.

I tried to answer the central question through several sub-questions. Chapter 2 outlined the history of imam education in Turkey to understand the position of the International Divinity Program in Turkey. Islamic education has always been a debated topic in the Turkish history. From 1923 with the establishment of the Turkish Republic secularism became more important. Nevertheless, the *Imam-Hatip* schools continued to exist. These schools were established by the Turkish Ministry of National Education to train religious functionaries who perform religious services such as being imams, *hatips*, and teaching staff of Qur'anic courses. Together with the *Imam-Hatip* schools, the Divinity Faculties opened in Turkey. These *Imam-Hatip* schools implement a preparatory program for vocational training as well as for the higher education. The Divinity Faculties opened together with the *Imam-Hatip* schools. The Faculty of Ankara is the operating since 1949 and made its impact in Turkish society through its adoption by Diyanet. These two institutions has a long history comparing

with the International Divinity Program. I concluded in Chapter 2 that the International Divinity Program is a scholarship program since 2006 within the Divinity Faculties and that these faculties has a strong link with Diyanet.

Chapter 3 provided information about the curriculum of the International Divinity Program. I argued that the curriculum of the International Divinity program is rich in traditional knowledge regarding Islamic science, history and Qur'anic knowledge, mostly based on Arabic and Turkish knowledge, sources and materials.. The courses that provide more context concerning European perspective and approach towards the Islam, are electives instead of compulsory courses. I argued that this is notable, because this program is intended for students who will be trained as future imams who will mainly be working in Europe. Later on during my fieldwork, one of the Diyanet employees explained that YÖK, the Council of Higher Education is responsible for curriculums in Turkey. That is the reason why Diyanet could not make these elective courses compulsory. Therefore, Diyanet tries to realize their aim with the support of the elective courses, guest lectures, seminars and internships.

In Chapter 4 I outlined my interviews with different stakeholders. The International Divinity Program is according to Keskin not only an attempt to educate an imam but also a teacher and a social service attendant outside the mosque. Another stakeholder, Dere mentioned that it is necessary to improve this program with partnerships and collaboration between the Turkish and European universities and governments. Özkanlı, the only stakeholder from the Netherlands, mentioned that the International Divinity Program is according to him a transition model which should change constantly based on the need of the Turkish Muslim community in Europe. One of the critiques towards the program is that there is a gap between theory and practice. The students should have more internships and support about the work field in the Netherlands. I argued that another critique towards the program is the lack of focus on Europe during the courses because of the mixed system. This results that the International Divinity students follow the compulsory courses together with the students who are involved in the regular Divinity Program. Therefore, the teachers could not give always extra attention to the European students or the European context and literature.

Chapter 5 provided information about the five students that I met and interviewed in Ankara. I interviewed students from the Netherlands and Belgium. I analyzed the interviews more

detailed in Chapter 6. As mentioned the student profiles are (widely) varied. In general, the aim of the students is to do something for the whole society, not only for the Turkish or the Muslim community. They want to become a bridge between the Dutch society and the Muslim community. The idea of acting as a bridge is possible in the future according to the students. I tried to explain their role as *gurbetci*'s within the diaspora relation and argued that the role of the International Divinity Program in forming diaspora relations between Turkey and the Netherlands could be understood through three concepts. Firstly, the students have a religious perspective which is the Islamic knowledge through the academic and in Turkey. The Turkish has an educational model/approach which is known as the 'non-confessional approach' (*mezhepler üstü yaklaşım*)¹³⁶. However, the Divinity courses are from a Hanafi approach. The teachers explain the different approaches from an academic perspective but they follow the Hanafi *madhab*, because most of the Turkish Muslims are Hanafi and so is Diyanet. Secondly, the students consider politics important within their function in the future but they do not follow courses specifically about politics. This is because there are no politics related courses within the curriculum. Finally, from the social perspective all of the students could speak Dutch and Turkish, they are born and live in the Netherlands or Belgium so they know the society better than the current imams who are from Turkey. Besides that, their aim is to be active within the Dutch or Belgium society. According to the students, being a religious functionary or an imam (for the male students) is not only leading the prayer or giving preaches or advice to the Muslim community. They want to be more involved with the municipality and with non-believers.

As already mentioned, I analyzed the interviews with the students through the lens of the diaspora theory and I concluded that several features of the diaspora theory which I discussed in Chapter 1 are related with the ideas of the students. However, these links do not mean that the International Divinity Program strengthens the diaspora relations between Turkey and the Netherlands. Currently, the Diyanet imams are from Turkey and live in the Netherlands for a period of 4 or 5 years. If you compare the current imams with these students who could become an imam, it is possible to argue that there will be a continuity with the diaspora relation but not a reinforcement. Moreover, these students have a stronger relationship with the Netherlands than the current imams. The program could stimulate these students to engage

¹³⁶ Michael Rechtenwald, Rochelle Almeida and George Levine, *Global Secularism in a Post-Secular Age*, (NSRN/De Gruyter, 2015), 199.

more in the Dutch society, because Diyanet believes that the imams plays also an important role from a social perspective.

Like Diyanet the students believes that they could become the ‘bridge’ between Muslim and non-Muslims within the Dutch society. However, this Program will not stop the imam education debates in the Netherlands because of one important point. The aim of the Dutch government and the imam training attempts was to educate ‘homegrown’ imams instead of imams from abroad, which in the long-term would stop external influences. So, the Dutch government wants to stop the ‘long arm of Ankara’, but these ‘new’ imams would still function in the future as Diyanet functionaries. Nevertheless, the International Divinity Program comes closer to the aims of imam training attempts in the Netherlands and ensures that the expectations of an imam in Europe becomes more in line with the offer of Diyanet. They try to realize this with the International Divinity Program by training imams on a academic level who could speak the language of the particular country in Europe and knows the society better than the current imams. The Program is an interesting and important contribution within the imam training attempts and could be seen as mentioned by one stakeholder as a ‘transition model’, which can be further developed by Diyanet or with partnerships between universities and governments.

Appendix

Questionnaire International Divinity Program students

Personal information

First name

Surname

Age

Gender

Marital status

Study Year

Place of Birth

Migration

Where do you live in the Netherlands?

Did your family (grandparents/ancestors) originally come from Turkey?

In which country are your parents born?

Are one of your family members migrated to Turkey?

If yes, who/ how long?

Would you consider migrating elsewhere?

Experiences in Turkey

Can you tell me about your experiences to live and study in Turkey?

What were your motives to participate in the International Divinity Program? Which factors played an important role?

Why this Program and not another one in another country?

If a similar program would be offered in the Netherlands, would you have come to Turkey for this Program?

Do you consider a master's degree program after you are graduated?

If yes, which program and where? Why in Turkey or why not?

Curriculum

What are your thoughts about the offer of the courses?

What is according to you the most interesting course? Why?

What is according to you the most relevant course? Why?

Would you like to follow a course about the (current) political developments in the Netherlands/Belgium? Why or Why not? Do you find it relevant?

Would you like to follow a course about the history of Islam in West-Europe? Why of Why not? Do you find it relevant?

Would you like to follow a module wherein you would be trained in the Netherlands to preach?

What would you think if a part of the Program would be offered in the Netherlands, where you would mainly get courses which are related to the Netherlands (politics, preaching in Dutch, History of Islam in the Netherlands)

Do you read news about Islam in the Netherlands? Why/Why not?

Ideas about your future

Would you like to become an imam (only for male students). Why or why not?

Could you tell me more about your ambitions after you are graduated?

Can you give one activity that you would like to organize as an example? Would you for instance preach during the Friday sermon in Dutch?

To what extent will you compose the Friday sermon by yourself?

Would you prefer teaching in Dutch or Turkish if you would give children courses about Islam in the mosque? Why?

Do you think it's important that the students get Turkish lessons in the mosque instead of Dutch?

What is your top 3 of book titles?

Has this Program changed your view of Islam in a broad sense?

Has this Program changed your view of Islam in Europe?

To what extent do you think the Dutch government needs to do something about this Program?

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