

Integration Strategies for Islamic Education into the Educational Systems of Ukraine and Russia: Comparative Analysis

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Introduction

Today many states are facing the problem of integration of religious minorities which more loudly declare their rights and their identity. Mostly in all European countries, including Ukraine and Russia, the minorities are represented by Muslims. Obviously, the most effective initiatives for integration are those which include the educational system. In the cases of religious minorities, religious education plays highly important role. Not accidentally that in most European countries today there are state programs connected with Islamic education. One of the latest were Ukraine and Russia, who started to develop the sphere as well, mostly because of Atheistic past. In current time both countries are highly involved in the problematic of religious education, especially Islamic. In my research I will analyze the strategies, aimed at organizing and integrating the system of high Islamic education into the general educational space in two post-soviet countries – Russia and Ukraine. I will demonstrate how those strategies are working, and what are the difficulties encountered by Islamic educational institutions on this path. I will analyze the differences in the approach to integration in both states. I will demonstrate that Ukraine went by the path of recognizing religious diplomas and academic degrees by government (including Islamic ones). Russia

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chose another way of integration – through recognition by the state theology as academic discipline and its involvement in secular educational institutions. Unlike in Ukraine, where government distances itself from the support of Muslims communities, Russia has governmental program of support for Islamic education and science.

Islamic Education under the Recognition by the State: Ukrainian case

Under the globalization of the information space, growth of migration streams, that lead to the enhanced pluralism in Islam interpretations (radical and Jihadi ones as well), an essential question rises concerning the relations between a Muslim community and a non-Muslim neighbourhood. In a states with a dominant non-Muslim population a certain control upon the Islamic education becomes an important part of public policy. Primarily it concerns the training of imams as preachers that represent a certain interpretation of Islam. For example, in the Russian Empire to become a mullah, a madrasah teacher or a judge (*qadi*) one had not only to graduate from madrasah, but also to pass an exam by ‘ulamā’s in the presence of a Russian public officer. Another example is current Austrian policy in Islamic education. There a faculty for imams training is created at the Vienna University, and several research programs in the Islamic education are funded inter alia by the Internal Affairs Ministry. The similar situation can be observed in the post-Soviet countries, e.g. in Russia with its 20 million Muslim population, and in Ukraine, not so populous with Muslims that are nevertheless socially active and undergo active transformation (Brylov, 2016: 38).

It is an educational system that forms and reproduces various interpretations of Islam, regarded as “true” or “genuine” Islam by a certain Muslim community, within new generations of Muslims. Being directed at creating the notions about “right” or “orthodox” Islam, an educational system in Islam becomed inevitably intertwined with political or - in broader sense - sociopolitical context. For instance, the founders of the first madrasahs (Nizam al-Mulk in Baghdad, Hafside in Ifriqiyah, Tunisia) needed a uniform idea to cement the state, as well as its preachers, those able to interpret the Law according to the highest interests of the power. That could be within the Shafi’i madhhab framework, as it was in Al-Nizamiyya, or within the Maliki madhhab framework, like in Al-Zaytuna. Training the Sharia interpreters madrasahs thus became an instrument that solved political problems within

certain territorial and state units of that time. Hence from the very beginning of Islamic education institutionalization the position of the state becomes crucial, as it requires the interpretation of Islam, consistent with the current social and political system (Brylov, 2013: 207).

Thereby one can distinguish two primary ways of state legitimation of the higher Islamic education:

1. foundation of an autonomous educational establishment (university) that cooperates with a secular university (for example, like it is done in Ukraine by the Islamic University, or the Russian Islamic institutes, involved in Islamic education and science development programs);
2. establishment of a theological faculty at the secular university. This option can be implemented as an opening of an essentially confessional faculty or a theological faculty that trains Islamic theologians according to the secular university curriculum (like it is organized at the Kazan University).

Talking about legitimation, a state acknowledgment of the Islamic education in Ukraine one should mention a number of important notions. Firstly, during the almost whole period of the Ukrainian independence the legislation was generally quite liberal towards religious educational establishments. But since the 6th of September, 2014, the state has taken even a more liberal stance towards the religious educational establishments. Then the new Ukrainian law "On higher education" came into force, allowing higher theological educational institutions of Ukraine (HTEIU) to be certified and accredited while preserving their subordination to the religious organizations, thus paving the way for the latter to the state higher education system. Moreover the law allows the state recognition of the educational certificates, academic degrees and ranks issued by the religious educational establishments, Ukrainian as well as foreign, until coming into force of the new law.

New legislation in the area of theological education in higher theological educational institutions has resolved several problems and set the course of development for the nearest future:

- The law maintains their autonomy from the Ministry of Education and Science;

- The law gives the right to, though does not require, to accomplish the process of licensing and accreditation. However, upon completion of accreditation, an HTEIU can grant a state-recognized diploma;
- The law allows a religious organization to influence the process of determining educational policy, principles, and the activities of student self-governing bodies directly;
- The state does not determine the process of election and does not influence the appointment of an HTEIU administration;
- Upon licensing and accreditation, significant concessions are provided by the law for establishment of graduate and doctoral programs, as well as dissertation commissions in the "Theology" specialization, since all the documents of the faculty of an HTEIU are acknowledged as the equivalent of state documents. This simplifies significantly the procedure of the state legalization of educational and research programs of an HTEIU;
- The legislation corrects the historic injustice of depriving the rights of persons who have received education certificates, academic degrees and titles in an HTEIU, and their documents, if they were granted prior to 6 September 2014, they might be recognized by the state according to a corresponding procedure. This allows such persons to work in state institutions as clerks, instructors, teachers, as well as to enroll in master, graduate, and doctoral programs of state and foreign HTEIU (Kotliarova & Khromets, 2015).

Upon coming into force of the aforementioned law Ministry of Education and Science created two commissions basing on the suggestions coming from the religious centres, represented in the Public Council on Cooperation with Churches and Religious Organizations at the Ministry of Education and Science, as well as educational establishments that train in theology. The first commission is going to examine the issue of recognition higher education certificates, i.e. BA and MA diplomas. The second one will deal with documents to certify academic degrees and titles.

Under given circumstances the Islamic University is to face a hard choice: either to undergo state certification and accreditation so that to later issue state-recognized diplomas to its alumni; or to stay out of state higher education system. In this situation the choice was made in favor of the state license and accreditation though such choice was not obvious since certifica-

tion procedures require that the whole educational system in the University was to be changed according to state standards. Having begun the certification and accreditation process by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Islamic University faced the requirement to add candidates and doctors of science with a state-recognized diplomas to the faculty staff - new members should be specialists exactly in Islamic Theology, MAs in Islamic Theology are also to be hired.

Partially the problem of lacking instructors in Islamic subjects was solved through the recognition of BA diplomas, issued by the Islamic University itself. On the 4th of April, 2017, an award ceremony was held - the participants were given the certificates of the state recognition for their higher theological education, academic degrees and titles, issued by the higher theological educational institutions. Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine held an award ceremony, attended also by the Islamic University alumni. 11 BAs in Islamic Theology received a recognition certificate from the first deputy Minister of education and science. The importance of this event was emphasized by the fact that the mufti of Ukraine, Sheikh Akhmed Tamim attended the ceremony. He stressed that the Islamic University had a great importance in Ukraine at state as well as international level since it showed practically that Ukraine was a multinational and multicultural, though united state, whereas the Muslims constituted an integral part of the Ukrainian society that works for the prosperity of the homeland (The Islamic University alumni, 2017).

The Islamic University intensified its cooperation with the secular universities, sending its alumni to master and postgraduate programs. That speaks for the reliance upon its own staff and a desire to accommodate Islamic education to the Ukrainian realities with no definite inclination towards the educational gravity centers of the Islamic world.

The situation with high-qualified faculty staff is still difficult since in Ukraine (as well as in the neighbouring countries such as Russia) there are no candidates and doctors of science in Islamic Theology. There are two ways to solve the existing problem. 1) recognition through nostrification procedures of an academic degree in Islamic Theology obtained in another state; 2) thesis defense in Islamic Theology in the Ukrainian university, licensed and accredited by the state. The latter takes longer as it needs more time to prepare a thesis according to the state standards. Nevertheless the Islamic University

administration is currently studying both alternatives - nostrification of a foreign academic degree diploma as well as thesis defense in Islamic Theology in Ukraine. Moreover, at the time of writing there is information, that the first thesis in Islamic Theology in Ukraine is prepared to be defended.

The strategy chosen by the Islamic University gives rise to hope for serious changes in the sphere of Islamic education in the next 3-4 years. Additionally, there are all reasons to believe that the state readiness to recognize the educational level of the Islamic University, provided that the state educational standards remains, will encourage the development of Islamic Theology in Ukraine, and will promote higher educational level for Ukrainian Muslims as well as their adaptation within the non-Muslim neighbourhood.

Integration of Islamic education in the Russian context

Completely other situation is observed in Russia, though the number of problems is common because of shared history while being a part of atheistic Soviet Union. The establishment of Islamic higher education was developing similar to the Orthodox structures. Theological departments in Russian universities had been opening since the middle 90's. the first was Omsk State University where theological department opened in 1994. Then was Altai University and after that – Tver University in 1997 and Far Eastern University in 1999. The main fighter for the idea was St. Tykhon Orthodox Humanitarian University, established in 1992 (*PSTGU – Pravoslavonii Svyato-Tikhonovskii Gumanitarnii Universitet*), earlier St. Tykhon Orthodox Theological Institute, one of the first educational organizations in post-Soviet Russia where everyone had chance to get theological education. At that period of time there were almost no normative rules in educational governmental system, which could give the opportunity to evaluate religious knowledge, to give licenses to such organizations and to provide governmental diplomas. However, in 1993 the Ministry of education of Russia gave official place for “theology” in new classifier of educational specialities and specialities on their own initiative. As the result there was accepted the educational standard for bachelors of theology. Because the procedure was done without religious organizations, the standard was with character of Religious studies.

In 1994 Patriarch Alexey II together with some members of Russian Academy of Science (RAN – *Rossiyskaya Akademia Nauk*) and head of Moscow State University (MGU – *Moskovskii Gosudarstvennii Universitet*) appealed to

the Committee of Sciences in Russia, asking to create the standard on specialty "theology" (because bachelor degree is not a full higher education). There was no positive decision, renouncement was motivated by norm of secularity of the state in Russian Constitution. The progress was reached during the work of minister Vladimir Filipov (1998-2004), especially when the President became Vladimir Putin. Were created and accepted all the needed standards: renewed standard of specialty "Theology", more dedicated to the religious research "from within" (2000), standards of Bachelor and MA degrees (2001) and specialty "Theology" (2002). "Theological standard" from 1993 was behind any confession (which is not real, because theology cannot be non-confessional), the new one was projected as multi-confessional – there is some general part for all religions (for those which are taken as traditional in Russia) and confessional part for every of them personally. Except Orthodox, only Muslims had chance to use the standard from other traditional religions in Russia (Solodovnik, 2015).

In February 2007 there were 36 theological departments (21 among them in state universities), according the data of Theological Council Educational Methodical Union, created in 2000 on the basis of Historical department MGU and PSTGU (Solodovnik, 2007).

However, the most typical for Russian model of Islamic education integration in educational context is the striving of the State to keep this process under its complete control. It must be admitted, that it took some time that the will to control the Islamic education in Russia appeared, and the reasons for that were a) the armed conflict in Chechnya (1994), b) the number of clamorous terroristic acts, sponsored by various Arab foundations according to security services. From that moment the Islamic religious educational institutions with Arab teachers, as well as alumni of international Muslim educational institutions, appeared under the radar of security agencies. The participation of some of the students of Islamic educational institutions in illegal actions in Caucasus brought to the question the legitimate functioning of such higher and middle educational institutions, educational programs for future religious leaders, and the lack of license (Akhunov, 2016: 181).

The main coordinating function is carried out by the Foundation for Support of Islamic Culture, Science and Education, which is also the main channel for financing various educational projects.

This Foundation was established on December 12, 2006 (registered on January 31, 2007) by the largest Islamic religious organizations with the support of the Office of the President of the Russian Federation for Internal Affairs. The declared objectives of the Foundation:

- support of traditional Muslim religious organizations in Russia and their projects aimed at the development of Islamic culture, science and education;
- promotion of tolerance, religious tolerance, prevention of Islamophobia and separation of Russian society on national and religious grounds;
- spiritual and moral education of children and youth;
- educational activities to counter the spread of extremism and terrorism;
- strengthening the role of the family in society and the State.

Founders of the Foundation consider it as a public association, an open, honest instrument of cooperation between the State and Islamic religious organizations of Russia, all interested parties, including abroad, for the development of Islamic culture, science and education in Russia. The Foundation actively cooperates with the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, the Government of Russia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. As Russian President Vladimir Putin noted:

With the assistance of the State and with your direct participation (R. Gaynutdin, T. Tajuddin, I. Berdiyev), the Foundation for the Support of Islamic Culture, Science and Education was recently established ... I am pleased to note that we have finally taken the first step in this direction ... And I strongly expect that our joint efforts will bring the expected results in this educational and enlightening direction (About the Foundation, 2017).

With the help of the Foundation, educational projects aimed at the development of Islamic education are supported, primarily in Islamic educational institutions. At the same time, in most cases, State universities are partners of Islamic educational institutions.

In parallel with the support of the system of confessional (Islamic) education, training programs for Islamic theologians are being implemented in secular universities. A vivid example is the Department of Religious Studies of the Kazan Federal University, where Islamic theologians are being trained.

Except the Department of Religious Studies which takes general capacity on education for Islamic theologians according to governmental standards,

there is also Resource Center on development of Islamic and Islamological education, working from 2014 in Kazan University, doing additional functions. The goal of this Center was to unite educational, scientific and methodical resources in the field of Islamic Studies in one informational and educational field, to provide interaction between religious and civil institutions and academic schools for effective realization of policy in the field of inter-confessional and inter-ethnic relations.

The tasks of the Center are:

- Organization and providing of professional preparation and advanced training for specialists in the field of religious (Islamic) education, for those who work in multi-confessional communities, representatives of governmental authorities and local power;
- Development and approbation, implantation and academic-methodical expertise of educational programs for civil and confessional educational institutions, educational-methodical complexes and set for Islamic education organizations;
- Research and monitoring current and perspective needs of the religious (Islamic) educational system, market of additional educational services and tendencies in the field of advanced and secondary education for those who work in religious (Islamic) education (Resource Center, 2017).

Today we have to talk about the numerous problems that hinder the building of a full-fledged system of Muslim education in Russia. First of all, there is no coordination between Islamic educational institutions, so each educational institution independently forms educational programs, curricula, etc. As a result, today Muslim educational institutions of Russia are represented by diverse madrasahs that carry out the educational process at 2-, 3-, 4, 5-year programs, and universities – at 4 and 5-year. Due to the vagueness of the Imam's competence, training in different madrasahs can take from 2 to 5 years, while their graduates do not differ in status. As a result, educational institutions graduate imams, which are educated only basing on the possibilities of the educational institution itself, but this level of education rarely meet the requirements of the Spiritual Administrations of Muslims and other Islamic structures (Mukhametshin, 2015, 38).

On the other hand, the training of Islamic theologians in a secular institution provides problems of a different kind. Unlike the Islamic educational

institution, where people who have chosen a religious future are going, a secular high school is open to all comers, regardless of their beliefs, as well as the level of religious knowledge. As a result, it often turns out that the level of students-theologians on namely religious topics is lower than that of their colleagues studying in religious institutions. In such a situation, the most promising is the cooperation and interaction of religious schools with a secular university, when first a student is enrolled in a religious educational institution, and senior courses graduate from the secular university. Either the educational process is distributed between a religious institution and a university (Brylov, 2016, 38).

As Rafik Mukhametshin, the Rector of the Russian Islamic Institute and the Bulgar Islamic Academy, said,

On the one hand, we must train people who do not violate the canons of Islam that have existed for many centuries, which they must present to the Muslim ummah in order to become the authority. On the other hand, Islamic education should be kept away from the same processes that occur in science and in the world. We are criticized that we have fallen into some dense Middle Ages, but I fully understand that we can do nothing without it. Because this is the classical basis of Islam. At the same time, they are trying to make some very new programs in Islamic educational institutions, stuffed with conflictology, sociology and so on. Today it is very important to build some middle way. To obtain a fundamental classical Islamic education so that students could obtain the tools of modern Islamic, theological and other science (We need to democratize the discussion, 2017).

Conclusions

Summarizing, we can say that the general in the integration strategies of Ukraine and Russia is the emphasis on the training of Islamic figures (imams, imams, hatybas, etc.) on their own territory. According to government officials, as well as many representatives of religious organizations themselves, the education of a future religious figure outside the state of residence can lead to the assimilation of those interpretations of Islam that are not accepted in his country of residence. Sometimes these interpretations are radical, extremist in nature. Therefore, it is very important to create the Islamic education system adapted to local conditions and mentality, and the reproduction

of personnel for the needs of a State with a Muslim population.

Another common feature is the desire to integrate Islamic education into the existing educational system by bringing (at least - at a formal level) Islamic educational institutions to state requirements.

The key difference between Ukraine and Russia in integration strategies is the extent to which the State interferes in the processes listed above, the desire of the State structures to control and influence the processes taking place in the Muslim community and the actual system of reproduction of Islamic knowledge.

In both countries, the cooperation of secular and Islamic educational institutions has broad and optimistic prospects, although at the same time it entails many serious problems and issues that require both secular education and religious figures the ability and willingness to seek and find compromises.

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