



## Teaching Usul-i Cedit (the New Method) to Primary School Teachers in Ottoman Provinces

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### Article Info

### ABSTRACT

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This research aims to uncover the activities undertaken to teach the new “usul-i cedit” teaching methods to sıbyan (primary) school teachers who continued providing traditional education during the modernization period. Modernization of education encompasses various practices, from curricula of usul-i cedit to school management, teachers’ personal rights, and health regulations in schools. Usul-i cedit focuses on teaching Turkish literacy and new methods developed for this purpose. Due to the failure of primary school reforms during the Tanzimat Period, the competence of school teachers was questioned. There was a push to gradually remove teachers unable to teach using usul-i cedit. However, training enough qualified teachers at Darülmüallimin-i Sıbyan would take time. Therefore, rapid courses were introduced to quickly train current primary school teachers in the new methods. Sample schools like iptidai, rüştiye, and provincial teacher training schools served as course centers. These courses primarily taught new methods for teaching Turkish literacy and included modern pedagogical methods for basic education subjects. The “usul-i tedris” (teaching method) lesson, central to teaching the new reading and writing methods, was a key component of all courses. The research employed document analysis, with data from Ottoman Archive documents forming the study’s backbone. Historical data were analyzed using content analysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education modernization in the Ottoman Empire exhibits a characteristic that expanded from the center to the periphery. The pilot region where education reforms were first tested was the capital, Istanbul. Along with the positive results obtained here, the reforms were implemented as a state policy in the provinces. Indeed, the forming and institutionalization efforts of modern education bureaucracy began at the capital, and after long efforts, extensions of the central organization were established in the provinces. It is surprising to see that this process, which can be considered natural for modern centralized states, is valid for almost all education reforms. For instance, modern secondary education institutions, rüştiye schools (junior high school), started education in Istanbul from 1838, while the first rüştiyes in the provinces were opened in 1852. Similarly, the first examples of the new methods and practices called *usul-i cedit* (the new method) in basic education began to be tested in schools operating in Istanbul from 1847, and it was only decided to be generalized throughout the country towards the end of the Tanzimat Period by formulating a program. The policy of gradually expanding the reforms might be preferred because it allowed for gaining experience through trial and finding the appropriate one with the accumulated knowledge. However, the delay in implementing even the fundamental reforms, which are extremely important and urgent for education modernization, in the provinces can be explained by the existence of some impossibilities/constraints beyond this utilitarian understanding. Apart from the inability to institutionalize the provincial bureaucracy, the lack of financial and human capital must have played a decisive role in the preference for this policy. Indeed, the decision to implement the *usul-i cedit* approach, which centered on teaching literacy in the mother tongue, in the provinces more than twenty years after it began to be tested in Istanbul schools is related to the state's apparatus starting to strengthen in the provinces. At the same time, with the issuing of the General Education Regulation (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi*) in 1869, leaving the costs of basic education to the people provided some of the necessary funding for the *usul-i cedit* practices (For the text of the General Education Regulation (MUN), see BOA, Y.E.E, 112/6, *Düstur*, I/2, 184-219, article: 4). Therefore, no obstacle was seen in starting the reform process.

The first developments in the *usul-i cedit* in basic education began in Istanbul in 1847 with the preparation of an instruction that the *sıbyan* schoolteachers in Istanbul would be obliged to implement to reform the traditional primary education institutions, *sıbyan* schools. Along with the instruction, which envisaged a common curriculum based on teaching Turkish literacy, it was desired to introduce some modern practices that would be valid in school management (Berker, 1945). However, due to the reluctance of *sıbyan* schoolteachers and other practical difficulties, the reform initiative could not succeed except for a few issues. However, the theoretical framework determined by the instruction found an opportunity to be implemented in 1863 (Öztürk, 2005). When successful results were obtained from the project tested in 36 schools identified in Istanbul, it was decided to generalize it and include all *Sıbyan* schools in the country. Accordingly, in 1868, with a ten-article regulation, compulsory basic education was introduced, and a curriculum including the lessons of the Quran, Morality, Writing, Catechism, Spelling, Tajweed, Useful Knowledge, Geography, and Arithmetic was made compulsory in *Sıbyan* schools (BOA İ.MVL 584/26278 appendix 1). The fact that the regulation mentions that reading and writing will be taught in the *usul-i cedit* in a way that will cover all *Sıbyan* schools shows that there is a will in the government to spread the *usul-i cedit*. So much so that this situation was confirmed in the General Education Regulation, written a year after this regulation, and it was definitively decided that the alphabet would be taught according to the *usul-i cedit* in *Sıbyan* schools (MUN article: 6).

Of course, it was the teachers who would implement the *usul-i cedit* in the existing *sıbyan* schools. In this case, the teachers working in *sıbyan* schools were expected to have the competence to implement the program. However, the *Darülmüallimin-i Sıbyan* (teacher training school for *sıbyan* schools), established to train teachers capable of teaching according to the *usul-i cedit*, had only started education in 1868 (*Takvîm-i Vekâyi* no: 1025 4 Şaban 1285). The examinations conducted in the Education

Council to determine the qualifications of the existing school teachers revealed that none of the teachers had the competence to teach the subjects envisaged for Sıbyan school students. In this situation, a new decision was implemented as of 1869. Those sıbyan school teachers who met certain conditions would learn the *usul-i cedit* by taking courses at the Darülmüallimin-i Sıbyan for six months and then return to their duties (BOA ŞD 205/11). In this way, the sıbyan schools that provided education according to the old method would also be transformed into *usul-i cedit* schools. Various methods were used to establish the *usul-i cedit* approach in Istanbul. By 1872, intensive efforts would be made to spread the *usul-i cedit* in the provinces. The primary aim of this research is to reveal the quality of the training courses given to Sıbyan school teachers in the provinces within the context of the *usul-i cedit* practices. To fully understand the subject, the term *usul-i cedit* needs to be explained in all its aspects. While this term has been used to express many innovations in education modernization, it will be evaluated in this study in the sense of the skills intended to be imparted to sıbyan school teachers.

## **METHOD**

In this research, which aims to uncover the activities undertaken to teach new teaching methods to sıbyan school teachers who continued to provide traditional education during the education modernization period, the document analysis method was used. This method is used to systematically analyze the content of written documents (Kıral, 2020). Although document analysis plays a complementary role for many research methods, it can also be used as an independent scientific research method (Bowen, 2009). On the other hand, the document analysis method, which involves examining documents to collect data, classify, and evaluate the data obtained, allows revealing a historical situation (Sak et al., 2021). This method was naturally preferred in this research due to the desire to reach a conclusion by analyzing the content of documents related to the subject in the Ottoman Archives.

The following method was followed in data collection: Firstly, the terms and concepts of *usul-i cedit*, sıbyan school, teacher, regulation, and instruction were identified as keywords. The related documents were identified by scanning these keywords in the Ottoman Archives. Similarly, collections of *Düstur* and *Salname*, the national thesis center, ISAM, the National Library, and Atatürk Library were scanned, and related data were reached. Published books and articles were also examined, and the data to be used in the research were collected. The time interval for data collection was limited to the years 1868-1919.

Content analysis method was used to analyze and interpret the obtained historical documents. This method was particularly used in the process of extracting information cards by reading the documents, dividing them into themes and categories. The abbreviations of the Ottoman documents used in the research were given in the bibliography section with detailed catalog information. Additionally, the date conversion processes related to the Hijri, Rumi, and Gregorian calendars were carried out with the help of the Date Conversion Guide on the website of the Turkish Historical Society.

## **FINDINGS**

Since the research aims to determine how the modern teaching methods referred to as *usul-i cedit* were taught to sıbyan school teachers in the provinces, it is first necessary to clarify all aspects of the *usul-i cedit*. Determining the quality of the courses opened in the provinces, which constitute the problem of the research, will undoubtedly be beneficial to present similar practices. Therefore, it is necessary to also address the practices of integrating sıbyan teachers into the system, which started in Istanbul just before the provinces.

### **Usul-i Cedit (The New Method)**

The *usul-i cedit* is described as the application of new and effective teaching methods by abandoning traditional teaching methods and using modern teaching materials (Akyüz, 2012). The term *usul-i cedit*, used to denote the contemporary approach substituted for traditional practices in the Ottomans, became a term

describing modern pedagogical practices that emerged in connection with the education reform during the Tanzimat Period. The educational modernization initiatives led to the broadening of the meaning attributed to the term *usul-i cedit*, and many innovations regarding the institutionalization of the education system, curricula, teachers, students, school buildings, and health rules in schools began to be expressed with this term.

The *rüştiye* schools, which are modern educational institutions, were the schools where the first applications of the *usul-i cedit* were experienced. Indeed, with the efforts of Ahmet Kemal Efendi, Director of Public Schools, new teaching methods were tried in the *rüştiyes* in 1847, and positive results were obtained. In 1848, the *Darülmualimin-i Rüştiye* (teacher training school for *rüştiye* schools) started its educational life to train teachers who could teach the subjects taught to children in the *rüştiyes* with easy and effective teaching methods (Akyüz, 2012). This institution not only served to institutionalize the new understanding in the *rüştiyes* but also found an opportunity to spread the *usul-i cedit* in the country through many educators who graduated from the school. This issue will be explained with examples in the following parts of the research. It should be emphasized that the *usul-i cedit* had its main transformative effect in the field of basic education. The first step in creating an educated society is teaching literacy in the mother tongue. It is extremely important to impart this skill to children effectively in a short time. However, in traditional *Sıbyan* schools, the aim was to reach a level where one could read the Quran in its original Arabic. The *usul-i cedit* in basic education essentially referred to focusing on teaching Turkish literacy and the new methods developed to facilitate this. The *usul-i cedit* brought the “*usul-i savtiye*” method, which was based on reading Turkish words directly by sounding out the letters, instead of the traditional “*usul-i tehecci*” method, which meant reading Arabic words by spelling out the vowels of the letters.

How was Turkish literacy taught according to the *usul-i cedit*? Detailed information about alphabet teaching with the new method can be found in the famous work “*Rehnümâ-yı Muallimîn*,” written by Selim Sabit Efendi, considered one of the most important representatives of the *usul-i cedit*, in the 1870s. Since the book was prepared to guide teachers, the alphabet teaching was explained in detail step by step. According to this, the teacher should start by teaching the letters. For ease, the teacher should write a group of letters on the teaching board, grouped in threes or fives, and have the students pronounce them one by one, pointing to each letter with a thin stick. The names of the letters should be read together, making the students accustomed to pronunciation, and in this way, all the letters should be shown, and their names should be taught. Then, the similarities and differences in the shapes, punctuation, and joining features of the letters should be explained in detail. After all these stages, the teacher should write the letters on the teaching board in a mixed and irregular manner in groups of five, ask practice questions to the students, and ensure the full understanding of the subject. After the letters, the vowel points should be taught in the same way. After teaching the names, shapes, and pronunciations of the letters and vowel points, reading syllables and words should be started, and writing exercises should be initiated at this stage. When teaching the reading of syllables and words, it was essential to read the letters’ names and sounds directly, rather than pronouncing the names of the vowels as in the past. For example, the syllable of the letter “*jim*” (ج) should have been read as “*je*,” “*ji*,” and “*jü*” instead of “*jim fatha: je*,” “*jim kasrah: ji*,” and “*jim dammah: jü*.” Similarly, “*ba-nun (fatha)*” (ب - ن) should have been read as “*ben*,” and “*kaf-waw-zay (dammah)*” (ك - و - ز) should have been read directly as “*güz*.” Teachers were advised to choose words from daily life, names of objects that children knew before, and to continue reading exercises until the students could read and understand a Turkish book (Selim Sabit *Rehnümâ-yı Muallimîn*, tarihsiz; Şanal, 2021). The book also covered how Turkish writing exercises should be done. After the students thoroughly memorized the shapes and names of the letters and vowels, reading and writing exercises would progress together. For the first writing exercises, children would use the stone tablets they had. On these stone tablets, suitable for writing and erasing, the writing of the letters would be practiced, and then the teacher would show the method of writing on paper with a pencil. When explaining the joining forms of the letters and the writing of one- and two-syllable words, students would be familiarized with writing by giving homework examples from the alphabet book prepared according to the *usul-i cedit*. Finally, it was aimed to bring the students to a level where they could write sentences dictated from memory with an ink pen (Selim Sabit *Rehnümâ-yı Muallimîn*, tarihsiz).

Selim Sabit Efendi outlined the general framework of the reading method introduced by the *usul-i cedit* in his work. Another famous representative of the new method, Mehmet Cevdet Efendi, who was a contemporary of Selim Sabit Efendi, believed it would be more beneficial to begin teaching reading by first teaching the letter-shaped vowel points used in Turkish. According to Mehmet Cevdet Efendi, the letter “alif” acted as the “fathah,” the letter “waw” as the “dammah”, and the letter “ya” as the “kasrah,” while the letter “ha” allowed for reading smoothly without elongating the letters, like “ba,” “ta.” Since many words in Turkish were written with spelling letters, teaching these first would facilitate reading. Indeed, when moving on to syllable reading, it would be possible to read all the letters by combining them with spelling letters, make meaningful words by combining the syllables, and construct meaningful sentences from these words (Ayar, 2022). Although there were some minor differences in the opinions put forward by educators on teaching reading, the main goal was to teach literacy in the mother tongue in a short time.

In the modernization of education, the *usul-i cedit* was not just about bringing new teaching methods for reading and writing in basic education. A program that included the use of modern pedagogical methods in teaching the subjects in the *sıbyan* school curriculum was also introduced. Detailed explanations on this subject were included in the *Rehnumâ-yı Muallimîn*. First, it was envisaged that the lessons would be taught in a classroom setting according to a common curriculum. The durations of the lessons and break times were determined. The contents of the subjects in the *Sıbyan* school program, such as History, Geography, Arithmetic, and the Ottoman Turkish Language, were clarified, and how they should be taught was explained. Information was provided about the duties and responsibilities of teachers and students, the functioning of schools, and the practices of reward, punishment, and examination in schools (Selim Sabit *Rehnumâ-yı Muallimîn*, tarihsiz). In addition to all these, the preparation of Turkish textbooks and the use of these books by teachers as a basis for teaching with modern educational materials were also included in the scope of the term *usul-i cedit*.

It should be noted that the aspects of the *usul-i cedit* outlined in the *Rehnumâ-yı Muallimîn* were not just Selim Sabit Efendi’s views, but a program created by the *Islah-ı Mekatib* Commission (Commission on the Reform of Schools), an official committee formed to modernize schools, of which Selim Sabit Efendi was also a member. This program was adopted by the Ministry of Education and implemented first in *numune* schools (modern, exemplary primary education institutions established to implement the new *Usul-i Cedit* principles) and then in regular modern primary education institutions called *iptidai* schools.

The decision to generalize the *usul-i cedit* practices in basic education throughout the country as of 1868 was made after testing and refining them in Istanbul schools. This was a very ambitious initiative. It was planned to integrate thousands of schools, which had been providing education with the old method in a familiar order for years in Istanbul and the provinces, into the modern education system. The teachers at these schools would also abandon the old teaching methods and conduct education according to the *usul-i cedit*. However, many of the existing teachers were closed-minded and insufficient in terms of pedagogical qualifications. The success of the project depended on changing the perspectives of the teachers and enhancing their qualifications. Therefore, the government started by creating a legal regulation that would make it compulsory to conduct education according to the *usul-i cedit* in *sıbyan* schools. In 1869, with the General Education Regulation, it was stipulated that having a diploma from the *Darülmualimin-i Sıbyan* or proving the ability to obtain this diploma through an examination was necessary to be a primary school teacher. From now on, those who did not know the *usul-i cedit* could not become *sıbyan* schoolteachers. Existing teachers were also required to meet the same conditions to continue their duties. Therefore, the existing teachers needed to gain the competence to conduct education according to the new methods to continue their duties.

### **Teaching Usul-i Cedit to Primary School Teachers in Istanbul**

The *Darülmualimin-i Sıbyan*, which started education in 1868 to train teachers capable of teaching according to the *usul-i cedit* in Istanbul, had not yet produced graduates. It was impossible to meet the needs of the existing *Sıbyan* schools in Istanbul with the teacher candidates who would graduate from this school in



a short period. Therefore, policies needed to be developed to integrate the teachers working in Sıbyan schools into the system. The Maarif Council hoped that the new methods could be taught to those teachers with a certain academic background through accelerated courses, and thus education could continue without interruption. Indeed, in 1869, it was decided that sıbyan school teachers who had received at least five years of madrasa education would be subjected to a certain period of education at the Darülmüallimin-i Sıbyan. The teachers who learned the *usul-i cedit* methods here would continue teaching in their old schools (BOA ŞD 205/11). In fact, the Darülmüallimin-i Sıbyan was not only an institution that trained teachers in the new style but also a place where the *usul-i cedit* was taught. Teachers who attended this school on designated days and showed success were able to continue their duties.

In addition to the Darülmüallimin-i Sıbyan, *numune* schools, designed as model modern basic education institutions, also became institutions where the *usul-i cedit* education was provided. After 1873, sıbyan schools located centrally in Istanbul neighborhoods and with suitable buildings began to be transformed into sample schools (Ergin, 1977). Qualified teachers who knew and could implement the new methods were assigned to the *numune* schools. The duty of these teachers was not only to conduct education according to the new method in the schools to which they were appointed but also to teach the *usul-i cedit* to the Sıbyan school teachers in their vicinity, turning their schools into a training center for these teachers (Mahmud Cevâd, 1338).

With the appointment of Mehmet Cevdet Efendi, the former principal of the Darülmüallimin-i Sıbyan, to the Directorate of Primary Education in 1881, the activities to teach the new method to sıbyan school teachers in Istanbul gained momentum (BOA İ. DH 833/67017). It was first decided to establish centers to teach the necessary *usul-i cedit* and other lessons to sıbyan school teachers in Istanbul and to offer courses at designated times (Salnâme-i Devlet-i Aliyye H. 1299). The director himself, Cevdet Efendi, started teaching the *usul-i cedit* by opening a course in the education department (Mahmud Cevâd, 1338). To make these initiatives stable, a school called *Dârülameliyat* (practice school) was opened on April 17, 1882. In this school, external students were accepted, as well as existing sıbyan school teachers who wanted to learn the new method. Those who received education at *Dârülameliyat* for two or three months started to be appointed to Sıbyan schools (Mahmud Cevâd, 1338).

The efforts to implement the *usul-i cedit* program in basic education were initiated in the provinces simultaneously with Istanbul. The existence of institutionalization and trained human resources to serve the purpose was a chance for Istanbul, being the state center. The implementation of the program in the provinces, which did not have these opportunities, witnessed a long and arduous struggle.

### **Teaching Usul-i Cedit to Primary School Teachers in Provinces**

Following the publication of the General Education Regulation and with some delay, efforts were initiated as of 1872 to transform the sıbyan schools, which provided traditional education, into *usul-i cedit* schools in the provinces. A circular sent to all provinces on July 23, 1872, requested the determination of the current status of sıbyan school teachers. An examination committee consisting of senior teachers from *rüştiye* schools and selected individuals from the clerical and scholarly community was to be formed in provincial centers, sub-districts, and districts, and these committees were to determine whether the teachers could teach the subjects in the curriculum. The committees were to assess not only the teachers' competencies in teaching the subjects but also their ability to read Turkish fluently. Those who passed the examinations would be reinstated to their positions with a certificate of proficiency graded in three degrees, while those found inadequate would be removed from the profession. External candidates could also participate in these examinations, and those who proved their competence would be appointed to schools without teachers. The circular emphasized several times that the candidates' proficiency in Turkish would be of utmost importance. This indicates that a minimum level of competence was sought in teacher candidates who could teach Turkish literacy, the essence of the new curriculum. However, was being able to read Turkish fluently sufficient to teach literacy according to the *usul-i cedit*? The official letter continued, showing that the Education Council did not find this sufficient. The council recommended that teachers who passed the examinations be subjected

to a course under the supervision of the senior teacher of the rüştîye school and a writing teacher for an hour each in the morning and evening to learn the new method (BOA MF. MKT 2/176). Since Darülmüallimin had not yet been established in the provinces, this task was assigned to the teachers who graduated from the Darülmüallimin-i Rüştîye in Istanbul. Considering the significant role the Darülmüallimin-i Rüştîye played in developing the *usul-i cedit*, this is not surprising. The teachers who graduated from this school and were appointed as senior teachers in the provincial rüştîyes became the first representatives of the new methods in the provinces.

For the Ministry of Education, determining the general condition of the sıbyan schools in the provinces was as important as assessing the qualifications of the Sıbyan school teachers. Since the goal was to transform the traditional sıbyan schools into *usul-i cedit* schools and integrate them into the modern education system, all kinds of information were needed. However, during this period, the Ministry of Education's provincial units had not yet been established. The only representatives of modern education in the provinces were the teachers appointed as senior teachers to the rüştîye schools. Therefore, the teachers of the rüştîye schools were tasked with inspecting the Sıbyan schools on holidays and preparing reports on the schools. Examples of reports prepared by the rüştîye school teachers after inspecting the sıbyan schools in their regions can be found in the Ottoman Archives. These reports provided information on the condition of the school buildings, income, student numbers, and whether the teachers were familiar with the *usul-i tedris*. For example, in the reports of the teachers of the Eski Zağra and Sarajevo rüştîye schools, it was noted that most of the Sıbyan school teachers in their regions lived on the provisions given by the local population, many were quite inadequate in teaching, and the school buildings were in a dilapidated state (BOA MF. MKT 5/123). The Ministry of Education did not hesitate to take necessary actions regarding the teachers mentioned in the reports as inadequate. For instance, according to a document dated December 28, 1872, five sıbyan school teachers in the Taşlıca district of Yenipazar Sanjak in Bosnia, who were not capable of teaching, were removed from their duties and suitable individuals were appointed in their place. Of these teachers, three who proved their competence in the examination remained in their positions, while two unsuccessful ones were replaced by other teachers (BOA MF. İBT 2/57). Another document dated September 5, 1872, shows that the Ministry of Education requested the dismissal of incompetent teachers mentioned in the report of the Prizren rüştîye school teacher and the appointment of qualified individuals in their place (BOA MF. MKT 4/93).

In accordance with the General Education Regulation, which stipulated that teaching in sıbyan schools required the ability to teach according to the *usul-i cedit*, teachers who wanted to continue their profession had to acquire these skills. As mentioned above, those competent to teach the new method in the provinces were the senior teachers of the rüştîye schools. Since many district centers had rüştîye schools, it was thought that sıbyan schoolteachers could interact with them. However, it appears that this idea remained on paper and could not be implemented for a long time. The inability to establish an educational bureaucracy to assess the current situation and organize the course system in the provinces must have delayed the implementation of the project. Indeed, the regular appointment of education directors to the provinces began after 1882 (Kodaman, 1991). With the establishment of educational organization in the provinces, the opening of model modern basic education institutions called *numune* schools, and the spread of Darülmüallimin, the project of providing *usul-i cedit* education to sıbyan school teachers was brought back to the agenda. The *numune* schools and Darülmüallimin opened in the provinces began to function as course centers for teaching *usul-i cedit* to Sıbyan school teachers, while in the districts, the teachers of the rüştîye schools undertook this task.

### **Teaching Usul-i Cedit to Primary School Teachers in Sıbyan And Rüştîye Schools**

*Numune* schools, which were model basic education institutions opened in Istanbul after 1873, began to be opened in the provinces as well. Since teachers who graduated from Darülmüallimin and knew the new teaching methods were appointed to these schools, it was thought that these schools would also be used as a course place for sıbyan school teachers to learn the *usul-i cedit*. Indeed, a document dated August 2, 1879, states that it would be appropriate to require Sıbyan school teachers with suitable ages and academic backgrounds to attend the sample schools in their vicinity on Thursdays and Fridays to learn the *usul-i cedit*

(BOA MF. MKT 64/36). It appears that some of the numune schools, later renamed iptidai schools and spread throughout the country, indeed fulfilled this function. For example, according to a document dated October 20, 1879, the Priştine sample school was opened to teach the new teaching methods to the teachers at the existing schools and to train new teachers, and Hüseyin Efendi, a teacher at the Fatih Iptidai School, was appointed to the school. In his work, Mahmud Cevâd (1338) mentioned the efforts to teach the new teaching methods to sıbyan school teachers in 1884. According to Mahmud Cevâd, in the iptidai school in the center of Skopje, seven teachers from Radovişte and Palanga districts were trained according to the *usul-i cedit*, and those who succeeded in the examination were awarded certificates of competence. Similarly, in Balıkesir, nine teachers working in the sıbyan schools of Kemer district received training in the new methods at the school in the central district (Mahmud Cevâd, 1338).

Although detailed information about the education given to sıbyan school teachers in the iptidai schools is not yet available, some conclusions can be drawn from a document dated November 26, 1894. The document mentions the practice in the Akhisar district of Geyve. Accordingly, the Akhisar education commission summoned five imams from the surrounding villages who held the positions of imam and sıbyan school teacher and subjected them to a course in the iptidai school under the supervision of Kazım Hüseyin Efendi, the school teacher. After completing their education, the imams from the villages of Şahmelik, Evranlı, Bacı, Çardak, and Göksun were examined by the commission. The appendix of the document clearly lists the subjects in which the teachers were examined and their scores. The teachers were responsible for the subjects of the Quran and Tajweed, Islamic Catechism, Ottoman Grammar and Reading and Writing, Arithmetic, Basic Ottoman History, New Teaching Method (*Usul-I Cedit-I Tedris*), Geography, and Ottoman Handwriting (*Rika*). All the teachers who took the examination were found successful and were given certificates of confidence (BOA MF. MKT 241/27). This document is extremely important in showing the content of the courses and the proficiency examinations. It reveals that the courses did not only teach the new Turkish literacy method, which is the essence of the *usul-i cedit* approach but also included the teaching of the subjects in the curriculum.

In this process, the provincial administrations did not only rely on the teachers of the iptidai schools but also benefited from the senior teachers of the *rüştiye* schools, as planned in 1872. As noted above, in 1872, it was planned that the *rüştiye* school teachers would provide the course for an hour each in the morning and evening. However, it was impossible for the sıbyan school teachers working in the villages to attend these courses. Therefore, the courses began to be held during the summer holidays. For example, in Edremit district, it was considered to open a course for two months in the summer of 1896 to teach the *usul-i cedit* to Sıbyan school teachers. The district administration deemed Muharrem Hasbi Efendi, a teacher at Bursa idadi school (first stage of secondary school), suitable for this task. However, the Ministry of Education did not favor this, stating that the summer holidays of high schools were one month, so Hasbi Efendi could not supervise the two-month course. Ultimately, the task was given to the teacher of the Edremit *rüştiye* school, considering his familiarity with the *usul-i cedit* (BOA MF. MKT 326/53). In the Keskin district, when the education inspector found that some sıbyan school teachers were still teaching with old methods during an inspection, it was decided to summon the teachers to the district center and have them trained and taught the *usul-i cedit* by the *rüştiye* school teacher (BOA MF. MKT 489/28).

Although it can be assumed that the senior teachers of the *rüştiye* schools knew the *usul-i cedit* due to their education, it should not be forgotten that *rüştiye* schools were secondary education institutions and their curricula did not include subjects like teaching the alphabet. In contrast, the teachers of the iptidai schools, who were familiar with the *usul-i cedit*, were educators who were constantly engaged in teaching literacy in practice. It is interesting to see that this distinction was considered in the instructions drawn up by the Adapazarı district education commission regarding measures to be taken for improving education in the region. The commission decided that the courses planned to be opened for teaching the *usul-i cedit* to sıbyan school teachers should be given by the *rüştiye* school teacher for subjects like Geography, History, and Arithmetic, while the teaching of the alphabet should be left to Hafız Ali Efendi, a teacher from the iptidai school, with a salary of 100 kuruş allocated from the commission's fund (BOA MF. MKT 242/50).



So far, the research has provided information about the courses organized in the rüştiye and iptidai schools in the provinces for teaching the *usul-i cedit*. As can be seen, the given examples mostly concern the activities conducted in district centers. However, such training was also provided in provincial and sanjak centers. The Darülmualimin, which began to be opened in the provinces after 1875, served as the places where sıbyan school teachers received education according to the *usul-i cedit*.

### **Teaching Usul-i Cedit to Primary School Teachers In Provincial Teacher Training Schools (Darülmualimin)**

The initiatives aimed at reforming sıbyan schools to transform them into modern basic education institutions suitable for the requirements of the age revealed that this could not be achieved without qualified teachers who knew the new teaching methods. For this reason, the Darülmualimin-i Sıbyan was established in Istanbul in 1868 to train qualified teachers for basic education and to serve as a center to teach the *usul-i cedit* to the existing Sıbyan schoolteachers. However, the school did not have the capacity to train the teachers needed throughout the country. Therefore, the necessity of spreading such schools became imperative, and in 1872, it was decided to open two-year teacher training schools (Darülmualimin) in provincial centers (Öztürk, 2005). The first provincial teacher training schools started education in 1875 in Bosnia, Crete, and Konya (Berker, 1945). After the 1880s, they quickly spread throughout the country and were even opened in some sanjak centers.

It is understood that the provincial teacher training schools were expected not only to train qualified teachers but also to teach the new methods to the existing Sıbyan school teachers, just like the Darülmualimin-i Sıbyan in Istanbul. Indeed, in an official letter sent by the Ministry of Education to Mamüretülaziz province on July 23, 1879, it was mentioned that the teacher training school was intended to be used not only to teach the new teaching methods to the teachers in the sıbyan schools but also to train new teachers (BOA MF. MKT 63/154). In an official announcement of the Ministry of Education in 1884, it was emphasized that a teacher training school would be opened in Amasya to teach the *usul-i cedit* to both the competent sıbyan school teachers and the existing students (Mahmud Cevâd, 1338). However, some provinces preferred to use the darülmualimins primarily to teach the *usul-i cedit* to the existing sıbyan school teachers. Due to the urgent need, it was seen as a more practical solution to integrate the existing teachers into the system through rapid courses instead of waiting two years to train new teachers. Indeed, the Trabzon darülmualimin serves as a striking example in this regard. After obtaining approval from the Ministry of Education for the opening of the darülmualimin, the provincial administration decided to open the school without waiting for the allocation of funds from the treasury. Three classrooms of the Provincial Industrial School were allocated to the school, and a portion of the revenue from the provincial printing house was temporarily transferred to the school for expenses. After the appointment of Abdullah Vehbi Bey as a teacher, the school started education on August 1, 1891. The Darülmualimin was not opened to students in the first year but was dedicated to the education of sıbyan school teachers. According to a document dated January 23, 1892, since those without a teacher training school diploma or those who did not know the new methods could not teach in schools, as stipulated in a regulation communicated to the sub-districts, the imams who held school teacher positions in the villages began to come to the Darülmualimin one by one to learn the *usul-i cedit*. The number of those who learned the *usul-i cedit* and received a certificate of competence quickly reached 309. The school teachers received lessons in groups of 40 for three months in subjects such as the Quran, Religious Sciences, Teaching Methods, Turkish, Arithmetic, History, Geography, and Calligraphy. After students began to be admitted to the Darülmualimin in the autumn of 1892, the *usul-i cedit* courses were given during the summer holidays when the school was closed. The teachers were given the opportunity to complete the three-month courses in one month. Those who succeeded in the examination at the end of the course were entitled to receive a certificate of competence (Tosun, 2020). The measures taken by the provincial administration in Trabzon to force sıbyan school teachers to learn the *usul-i cedit* were largely successful. However, in some provinces, it was not possible to bring teachers to the teacher training school courses for various reasons. For example, a document dated October 18, 1884, mentions the unsuccessful efforts of the teacher training school teacher in Amasya. Immediately after

the opening of the teacher training school in Amasya, the appointed teacher tried to provide *usul-i cedit* education to the *sıbyan* school teachers but could not even bring the teachers in Amasya center to the courses. The local authorities advised the teacher to go to the districts and offer courses there. The official letter shows that the teacher claimed that the teachers in the center were not interested in the *usul-i cedit* education, and the district teachers would not show any interest either, requesting the Ministry of Education to ensure the attendance of the teachers at the courses by encouraging or even threatening them through the government. It is seen that the ministry did not remain indifferent to the issue and requested the concerned authorities to take necessary actions (BOA MF. İBT 17/105).

It appears that the perspectives of local authorities on the importance of the *usul-i cedit* were decisive for the success of the program in the provinces. The *Darülmualimin* opened in Erzurum in 1893 was closed two years later. The provincial administration appropriated the allocation of the teacher training school to cover the expenses of the Industrial School they planned to establish and dissolved the school. The task of teaching and training according to the *usul-i cedit* was assigned to the *idâdi* school. However, it was later seen that the *idâdi* school teachers could not allocate time for this task due to their primary duties. Although some *sıbyan* school teachers were assigned, there was no benefit since no fee was paid for the teaching task. Since no visible success could be achieved in basic education in the province, the governor of Erzurum applied to the Ministry of Education on March 1, 1902, requesting the re-establishment of a *Darülmualimin* in the province (BOA MF. MKT 647/2). Fortunately, permission to establish a *Darülmualimin* in Erzurum was granted by an imperial decree on April 16, 1903 (BOA İ. MF 9/1).

The Diyarbakır Director of Education, in an official letter dated January 9, 1894, argued that the teachers could be brought to the *darülmualimin* courses by encouragement rather than compulsion. The director thought that if the village teachers were given a monthly salary of 30 kuruş to at least meet their food needs during the course, all the *sıbyan* school teachers in the region could be educated in the teacher training school in groups of 20, taking turns (BOA MF. MKT 195/77). However, financial constraints did not allow such an initiative to be realized.

Of course, there were teachers among the *sıbyan* school teachers who voluntarily attended the courses with a desire to learn the new methods. A news article in the *Kastamonu* newspaper described the eagerness of an 87-year-old *sıbyan* school teacher to learn the *usul-i cedit* in a striking way. In January 1893, Hatipoğlu Ahmet Efendi, who was an imam and *sıbyan* school teacher in the village of Etyemez in the Akkaya sub-district of Kastamonu, applied to the *darülmualimin* because he did not feel sufficient in education and teaching. After completing his *usul-i cedit* education there, Ahmet Efendi was examined in front of the class board like the other candidates (Mahmud Cevâd, 1338).

The transformation of *sıbyan* schools into modern basic education institutions conducting education according to the *usul-i cedit* could only be possible by selecting teachers who knew the new teaching methods. The General Education Regulation made this a legal obligation. Based on the provisions of the regulation, an effort was made to establish a standard for the appointment of school teachers in the provinces, and the qualifications of the existing *sıbyan* school teachers were also enhanced. However, it appears that due to the need for teachers, especially in towns and villages, the employment of teachers with old methods continued into the 1890s. Indeed, a directive believed to have been written in 1893 indicated the presence of teachers appointed through foundations or selected by the local population and stated that these teachers were required to attend the *darülmualimins* at a time deemed appropriate by the provincial administrative council. These teachers did not need to attend the *darülmualimin* for two years like other students. It was sufficient for them to receive education until they acquired teaching skills. Those who refused to attend would be investigated by local authorities (Salnâme-i Nezaret-i Maarif H., 1317). Teachers who received education in the provincial *darülmualimins* and passed the examination were given a document called a certificate of confidence or competence. This document allowed teachers to continue their duties in schools. Since the appointment of teachers from outside the graduates of the *darülmualimins* continued during the Second Constitutional Era, the activities of granting certificates of competence continued without slowing down. With the enactment of

the Temporary Law on Primary Education on October 6, 1913, the system of teaching in basic education was reorganized (Düstur II/5 804-823). Those who graduated from the teacher training schools were called teachers, and those who held certificates of competence were called assistant teachers, with a validity period of three years for the certificates. Assistant teachers holding certificates were required to attend the darülmualimin courses for three years and obtain a diploma. Those who failed to do so would have their certificates revoked and would be dismissed (Articles 42-44). Thus, the darülmualimins had to intensify their course activities after 1913. For example, in 1915, a two-month course was organized during the summer months for village teachers at the Konya Darülmualimin, and the Dârülameliyat affiliated with the school was kept open for these teachers to practice (Sarıçelik, 2010).

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The research has revealed the activities carried out to teach the modern teaching methods called *usul-i cedit* to *sıbyan* school teachers in the Ottoman provinces. In addition to the general meaning of the *usul-i cedit* in the history of Ottoman modernization, it has been emphasized that it referred to the new methods developed for teaching Turkish literacy in basic education.

It has been found that the failure to achieve the desired success in the efforts to reform *sıbyan* schools during the Tanzimat Period was associated with the indifference of the teachers working in these schools towards modern teaching methods. Although a curriculum based on modern pedagogy was prepared and some administrative arrangements were made, the competence of the school teachers, who would be the actual implementers of these innovations, began to be questioned. Thus, a will was formed to gradually remove teachers who did not have the ability to teach according to the *usul-i cedit* from the system. Considering that it would take time to train the desired number and quality of teachers at the Darülmualimin-i *Sıbyan*, the idea emerged to quickly train the *sıbyan* school teachers in office according to the new teaching methods through rapid courses.

Following the legal regulations that made it compulsory to conduct education with the new methods in *sıbyan* schools, it was understood that some officials were assigned to determine whether the *sıbyan* school teachers in the provinces were familiar with the *usul-i cedit*. Initially, the senior teachers of the *rüştiye* schools in the region, and with the establishment of the bureaucratic organization in the provinces, education inspectors, and finally, education commissions formed from local people were tasked with this responsibility. It was concluded that these officials had significant functions not only in determining the situation but also in directing the incompetent teachers to the courses.

It was found that the education of the new teaching methods to *sıbyan* school teachers in the provinces was given in *numune* schools, later renamed *iptidai* schools, *rüştiye* schools, and provincial Darülmualimins. In the early periods, the location of the courses did not matter; the main expectation was that the courses be given by individuals specialized in the *usul-i cedit* program. After the establishment of Darülmualimins in the provinces, these institutions regularly and continuously provided *usul-i cedit* courses, serving as in-service training centers that enhanced the competence of the existing *sıbyan* school teachers while also training new teachers.

It was understood that the timing of the courses organized in the provinces changed over time. Although the Education Council decided in 1872 that the courses to be given in the *rüştiye* schools should be an hour each in the morning and evening, it was seen that this could not be implemented. Subsequently, after the opening of the *numune* schools in the provincial centers, these schools were turned into course centers, and it was decided to provide education to the *sıbyan* school teachers in the vicinity on Thursdays and Fridays. It was found that such courses, held during the periods when *sıbyan* schools were open, were not efficient, and especially after 1890, the courses began to be given in compressed programs during the summer holidays, as determined from many documents examined.

In the courses, new methods that facilitated teaching Turkish literacy were primarily taught. Additionally, it was understood that a program that included the use of modern pedagogical methods in

teaching the subjects in the sıbyan school curriculum was also taught. It can be easily said that the *usul-i tedris* (teaching method) lesson, which included the new style of reading and writing teaching, remained the central lesson of all courses without any changes. On the other hand, some changes were made to the course program based on the curriculum arrangements in the basic education institutions. For example, while information on how to teach subjects such as the Quran, Morality, Writing, Catechism, Spelling, Tajweed, Useful Knowledge, Geography, and Arithmetic was provided in the courses after 1868, Ottoman Turkish grammar and History were added to the course program following the curriculum arrangement in 1892.

The research also examined why the education courses that started in the provinces in the 1870s could not be completed, and it was determined that this was due to the limited capacity of the primary education institutions in the country and their inability to meet the teacher needs. So much so that the education commissions continued to appoint teachers from outside, especially in villages and towns, as they could not find candidates who graduated from the teacher training schools.

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