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Publicly Funded Islamic Education in Europe and the United States

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Executive Summary

Islamic religious education (IRE) in Europe and the United States has become a subject of intense debate after Muslims raised in the West carried out attacks against their fellow citizens. People worry their states are doing too little or too much to shape the spiritual beliefs of private citizens. State response to the concern ranges from sponsoring religious education in public schools to forgoing it entirely. The policies vary according to national political culture.

In Germany and Austria, many public schools teach Islam to Muslims as a subject within a broader religious curriculum that gives parents the right to choose their children's religious education. Although controversial, Germany and Austria have also started to provide teacher training for IRE in public universities. The policy reflects Germany and Austria's legal and religious contexts, in which officially recognized religions may enter into cooperation with the state.

In the United Kingdom and Sweden, public schools teach Islam to all pupils as an academic subject and train teachers through comparative study of religions departments in universities. In both countries, Muslims have been afforded the same rights as Christians to receive public funding for religious schools. While the United Kingdom and Sweden have a history of an established national church, non-Christian religions are now accorded equal opportunities and rights.

French and American public schools do not teach religion, although there is an opportunity to teach *about* Islam in school subjects such as art, history, or literature. The policy comports with the national political culture in both countries, which maintain a rigid separation between church and state.

Despite the diversity of approaches and political culture, there are three good practices that apply across the board:

1. Establishing high academic standards for teacher training programs for both IRE teachers and those who teach *about* Islam and other religions in a non-confessional manner, and allocating adequate resources to ensure these standards are met.
2. Providing factual textbooks informed by academic scholarship, both for IRE and non-confessional school subjects that teach *about* Islam.
3. Building upon current curricular and pedagogical good practices through international exchange and dialogue of scholars.

By adopting these practices, governments will further their citizens' knowledge of important aspects of the human experience and promote inclusive citizenship and respect.

Introduction

Since 9/11 and the bombings in Madrid and London, public debate about Islam and Muslims has often focused on contradictions, conflicts, and contrasting value systems. On one side of this debate are those concerned that Muslim immigrants will be disloyal to their new Western countries, and thus require increased surveillance and control. Conversely, others argue that Muslim populations in the West have wrongly suffered from the increasing intolerance and suspicion resulting from terrorist acts committed by a small number of radicals. Such voices point to a need to safeguard religious freedom and the right to equal treatment regardless of a group's ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious background.

In many countries, these discussions have directed attention toward places of Islamic education such as Muslim schools, mosques, and Islamic organizations, focusing on the often controversial manner in which they have been depicted in the media, public discourse, and, within Muslim communities themselves.[1] Because the transmission of religious tradition to future generations is crucial to the survival of any religious minority, religious education is both an essential and a challenging objective for minorities. In Europe and the United States, numerous Muslim youth and even adults attend privately-run, extra-curricular Islamic classes. Many other children attend private Islamic schools or are taught at home. Publically funded Islamic education programs provided by the state are an emergent option in several European countries. These programs lie not only at the heart of debates over religious freedom, equal rights to education, and integration, but are also connected to matters of securitization and the state control of Islam.

This paper will present an overview of publicly funded, pre-university Islamic education in the United States, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. It will provide a comparative analysis of these programs that considers their diverse political and historical circumstances, and give policy recommendations informed by this analysis. All nine countries are Western[2] secular[3] Christian majority states with Muslim minority populations. Despite these similarities, the availability of publicly funded Islamic education varies widely. This paper also provides an overview of the different approaches to teacher trainings in each country.

This paper first establishes a definition of Islamic education and a description of the state funding of education and religion in general. The paper will move on to an analysis of education in the nine selected countries focusing on integration, social cohesion and Islamophobia. As the available data on Islamic education varies widely from country to country, some reports will be more comprehensive than others. This variation can be seen, for example, in the quantity of available data on the *content*

1. Ednan Aslan, "Preface," in *Islamische Erziehung in Europa — Islamic Education in Europe*, ed. Ednan Aslan (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2009): 11–13; Jonathan Birt, "Good Imam, Bad Imam: Civic Religion and National Integration in Braitain post-9/11," *The Muslim World 96* (2006): 687–705; Yvonne Y. Haddad and Jane I. Smith, "Introduction: The Challenge of Islamic Education in North America," in *Educating the Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Y. Haddad, Farid Senzai, Jane I. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 3–19; Dan-Paul Josza, "Islam and Education in Europe: With Special Reference to Austria, England, France, Germany and the Netherlands," in *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, ed. Robert Jackson et al. (Münster: Waxman, 2007): 67–86; Peter Mandaville, "Islamic Education in Britain: Approaches to Religious Knowledge," in *Schooling Islam: The culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, ed. Robert W. Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007): 224–241; Charlene Tan, "Introduction," in *Reforms in Islamic Education*, ed. Charlene Tan (London: Bloomsbury, 2014): 1–14.
2. It is worth noting that Islam has a long history in Eastern Europe and that Islamic education (in various forms) has been part of publicly funded education.
3. Secular here means that the state is defined by its neutral interactions with religious institutions. In Europe, with the exception of France, the principle of neutrality is not identical with separation.

of publicly funded Islamic education. The presentation concludes with policy recommendations and areas in need of future research.

Islamic Education: A Definition

Despite its religious connotations, the term "Islamic education" is used by scholars to cover religious and secular education about Islam. The term "Islamic education" has been invested with a variety of usages and meanings over time.[4] In this paper it is primarily used as a broad term comprising the following categories: 1) *Islamic instruction*, provided in mosques, Muslim organizations, and homes; 2) *Islamic Religious Education* (IRE), offered as a subject in public schools; and, 3) *Teaching about Islam*, referring to nonconfessional courses on Islam offered to Muslim and non-Muslim students.

State Neutrality and Religious Education

Most forms of publicly funded Islamic education occur within the framework of an already established school system. In each country, publicly funded religious education has been shaped by multiple factors, including the structure of its educational system, its church-state relations, and the historical and political context. Similarly, the dominance of one particular religious tradition in a country often impacts both church-state relations and the educational system, even in countries where religious freedom is guaranteed.[5] Two models of religious education can be discerned: 1) the confessional (or denominational) approach; and, 2) the non-confessional comparative study of religions approach.[6] A primary distinction between these two types revolves around the entity responsible for determining the content, developing the curricula, selecting the materials, and training the teachers. As this paper will show, most systems of religious education cannot be neatly placed in either one or the other of these categories.

Islamic education programs also differ in whether they provide education *into*, education *about*, or education *from* religion. Education *into* religion introduces the pupil to a specific religious tradition, with the purpose of promoting personal, moral, and spiritual development as well as to build religious identity within a particular tradition. Many confessional approaches emphasize learning *into* religion, or learning how to live in accordance with specific religious tenets and practices. Education *about* religion utilizes a more or less academic examination of various religious traditions. This approach contextualizes religion within the comparative study of religions, history, and sociology. Education *from* religion takes the personal experience of the pupil as its principal point of departure. The idea is to enhance students' capacity to reflect upon important questions of life and provide an opportunity to develop personal responses to major moral and religious problems. In other words, students learn *from* different religious traditions and outlooks of life.[7] Even in countries with shared history and traditions such as the Nordic countries, there are broad differences in the organization of these different kinds of religious education. One important distinction centers upon the relationship between academic and religious authorities.[8] Related to this is the question of who "own[s]… religion in the classroom—religious tradition, society or teachers?"[9] Yet another

4. Susan L. Douglass and Munir Shaikh, "Defining Islamic Education: Differentiation and Applications," *Current Issues in Comparative Education: Islam and Education 7*, no. 1 (2004): 7.
5. Peter Schreiner, "Religious Education in the European Context," in *Issues in Religious Education*, ed. Lynne Broadbent and Alan Brown (London: Routledge Falmer, 2002), 87.
6. Although this distinction is an obvious simplification, it is nonetheless useful when discussing Islamic religious education in relation to other forms of religious education. There are also countries in which there is no provision for RE within the state school system (e.g., France).
7. For further discussion on these perspectives see, for example: John Hull, "The contribution of religious education to religious freedom: a global perspective," in *Committed to Europe's Future: contributions from Education and religious education: A Reader*, ed. H. Spinder, J. Taylor and W. Westerman (Münster: Coordinating Group for Religious Education in Europe (CoGREE) and the Comenius Institut, 2002): 107–110; G.M. Teece, "Is it learning about and from religion, religions, or religious education? And is it any wonder some teachers don't get it?" *British Journal of Religious Education 32*, no. 2 (2010): 93–103; Andrew Wright, *Religion, education, and post-modernity* (London and New York: Routledge Falmer, 2004).
8. Jean-Paul Willaime, "Different Models for Religion and Education in Europe," in *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, ed. Robert Jackson et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2007), 87–102.
9. Peter Schreiner, "Toward a European oriented religious education," in *Toward Religious Competence: Diversity as a Challenge for Education in Europe*, ed. H–G. Heimbrock, C. Th. Scheilke, and P. Schreined (Münster: Lit, 2001), 253–67.

distinction concerns whether religious education is voluntary or compulsory.[10]

Education as a Litmus Test for Relations With Muslim Minorities

The term "secular state" generally indicates a strict separation between church and state, meaning that no particular religion should hold a privileged position in society or a privileged relationship with the state. However, secularity does not necessarily imply that there is absolutely no relation between the state and religion. Secular states have always shown interest in religious matters, and many have provided financial support to religious institutions in the form of public funding of religious education or granting special non-profit corporate statuses and tax exemptions.

Publicly funded religious education can be understood as a litmus test for church-state relations. Given this, the study of publicly funded *Islamic* education can be seen as a litmus test for the relationship between Western democracies and their Muslim minority populations. This has become especially clear in the last several decades, during which public discourse on Islam has addressed Islamic education. Islam has had a presence in parts of Europe, such as Spain, for over a millennium. Austria and Finland have had Muslim populations for centuries; the other countries examined in this study have had a Muslim presence since at least the beginning of the 20th century. Despite this, it has been only over the last two decades that Islamic education has become an issue. In the decade since European states have begun to address Islamic education they have done so in decidedly different ways.

To assess the development of Islamic education, it is first necessary to explore discussions on integration, social cohesion, and multiculturalism in the past few decades. It has been argued that Western European policies on immigrant integration are similar to the extent that it no longer makes sense to think in terms of national models.[11] While perhaps true in some respects, a closer examination shows that each country differs in its approach to both publicly funded Islamic education and general education, as well as in its political discourse on integration and social cohesion.

After World War II, most of the Western European countries examined in this study experienced a substantial influx of labor migration, the exceptions being Finland and Spain, which were primarily emigration countries during this period. Moreover, most countries did not have specific immigration policies, as they expected immigrant workers to either return to their home countries or take their place alongside other socially disadvantaged groups. It was not until the 1970s and 80s, when it had become clear that many labor migrants would not be returning home, that serious policy discussions on immigration began to take place. Countries such as Britain and Sweden embraced multiculturalism, and others, such as France, promoted assimilation instead.[12]

During the 1990s, riots and social unrest in several countries led to an emphasis in immigration discourse on the fostering of "social and community cohesion" over integration.[13] The growing interest in *state-funded* Islamic education that has occurred over the last two decades is strongly related to this new emphasis on "social cohesion," which was considered to be possible not only through the ordinary contact between immigrant communities with the majority society, but through institutions such as schools as well.

Islamophobia is equally relevant to the topic of publicly funded Islamic education. "Discrimina-

10. Robert Jackson, "European Institutions and the Contribution of Studies of Religious Diversity to Education for Democratic Citizenship," in *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, ed. Robert Jackson et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2007), 27–56; Schreiner, "Toward a European oriented religious education," 2001; Willaime, "Different models for Religion and Education in Europe," 2007.
11. Christian Joppke, "Beyond national models: civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe," *Western European Politics* 30, no. 1 (2007): 1–22.
12. Wieviorka 2014, 637 ff.
13. Shukra et al. 2004, 188.

tion against Muslims" is an argument used both for and against establishing Islamic religious education in public schools, teaching *about* Islam in non-confessional school subjects, and publically funded Muslim schools. Since the 1990s, Islamophobia[14] has become a common, although somewhat disputed, term for the longstanding Western fear of Muslims. In this study it refers to the fear, rejection, and hatred of an essentialized Islam, as well as both gross and subtle forms of discrimination against Muslims, including verbal abuse and overt actions taken against Muslim property and individuals.[15]

Islamophobia has become a growing problem, especially in Europe and North America.[16] This can be seen, for example, in countries like Sweden, France, and Holland, where political parties that are highly critical of Islam have made electoral gains in parliamentary elections. One argument used by such parties asserts that Muslims are not adaptable to European law and thus would find it difficult to balance their loyalty to Islam with their loyalty to their new nation. Available research indicates, however, that despite the popularity of this argument among certain European figures seeking to promote the notion of a clash between Islam and the "West," it is only applicable to a small number of ultraconservative Muslim groups.[17] In a recent study of European and American Muslims, political scientist Jocelyn Cesari found that most Muslims identify with their country of residence more than their religion or ethnicity, and tend to see their own Islamic values reflected in the liberal democratic values of Western societies.[18]

While European Muslims tend to be less secular than non-Muslim populations, Cesari notes that one must focus on certain contextual factors rather than on the factor of greater or lesser secularity in and of itself:

> The gap is not between religious Muslims and "secular" Europeans or Americans but rather between the European and American context in which Muslims are living. Across European countries, the level of self-declared religiosity in the general population is systematically much lower than among Muslims groups, while in the United States, this is not the case. In other words, the general context of religiosity and social legitimacy of religions in each country is the real discriminatory factor that must be understood to grasp the situation of Islam and Muslims.[19]

Another common assumption conflates heightened religiosity with "fundamentalization."[20] However, several studies have shown that high levels of religiosity generally go hand-in-hand not with fundamentalism, but rather with the search for alternate forms of identity and the individualization of faith.[21]

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14. It is not clear when the term Islamophobia was coined, but some have traced it to Alain Quellien's *La politique musulmane dans l'Afrique occidentale française* (1910). In a section entitled "L'Islamophobie," Quellien argues that there has always been, and still is, a Western and Christian "préjugé contre Islam" (prejudice against Islam) (p. 10). Other sources trace the term's origin to *L'Orient vu de L'Occident* by Étienne Dinet and Sliman Ben Ibrahim (1925), who wrote about the "délire islamophobe." Of particular significance to the term's much later and more common usage is *Islamophobia: a Challenge to Us All*, a 1997 report by the British think tank Runnymede Trust.
15. Erich Bleich, "What Is Islamophobia and How Much Is There? Theorizing and Measuring an Emerging Comparative Concept," *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 12 (2011): 1581–1600.
16. Vincent Geisser, *Le nouvelle islamophobie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003); Joselyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Chris Allen, *Islamophobia*, (London: Ashgate, 2010).
17. Joselyne Cesari, *Why the West fears Islam, an Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), chapter 7. For an analysis of contemporary salafism see also: Susanne Olsson, "Swedish Puritan Salafism — a hijra within," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 8, nos. 1–2 (2014): 71–92; Susanne Olsson, "Proselytizing Islam — problematizing 'Salafism'," *The Muslim World* 104, nos. 1–2 (2014): 171–197.
18. Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam*, chapter 2 and p. 61.
19. Ibid., 78.
20. Dirk Halm, "The Current Discourse on Islam in Germany," *International Migration & Integration* 14, (2013): 471.
21. Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam*, 78–79. See also: Jenny Berglund, "Islamic Identity and its Role in the Live sof Young Swedish Muslims," *Contemporary Islam: Dynamics of Muslim Life* 7, no. 2 (2013): 207–227; Halm, "Current Discourse on Islam in Germany"; Christine M. Jacobsen, *Islamic Traditions and Muslim Youth in Norway* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Gerdien Jonker and Valérie Amiraux, *Politics of Visibility: Young Muslims in european Public Spaces* (Bielefield: Transcript Verlag, 2011); Mia Lövheim and Jonas Bromander, *Religion som resurs?* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2012).

Though countries such as France and Spain have attempted to impose legal restrictions on certain Muslim practices (for example attempts to ban *halal* meals in school lunches or attempts to extend the ban against religious signs to colleges and universities in France), for the most part such efforts have failed. French scholar Alain Gabon has attributed the failure of apparent anti-Muslim legislation to the following factors: 1) The condemnation of human rights groups; 2) Successful legal actions against such laws; 3) Political risks to politicians of alienating Muslim voters; and 4) the basic guarantee of religious freedom embedded in the liberal European legal system.[22]

Here it is important to note the connection between the emergence of publicly funded Islamic education and the emphasis on equal rights in Europe, which demands that all religions be treated equally. In many European countries this has allowed Muslims to obtain state funding for religious schools, introduce IRE in public education, train teachers of Islam, and establish university departments of Islamic theology. Securing equal rights for religious minorities, however, is only one side of the coin. The other is the tendency to use the public funding of education as a coercive means of achieving social cohesion—i.e., as a way to mold the conduct and thinking of Muslim populations to cohere with the conduct and thinking of the Western majority populations.

Four Models of Church-State Relations

To further illumine the discourse on publicly funded Islamic education, this section examines the nine designated countries' approach to religious education, which has been shaped by historical, cultural, social, political, and educational factors. Islamic education can be seen is as the continuation of a historical settlement between "earlier" religious minorities, the established church, and the state. Each country's religious disposition will be analyzed, as dominant religious traditions can shape the educational system, even in countries that guarantee religious freedom.

The following four categories indicate a different approach to Islamic education, based upon the relation between church and state in each country:

1. **Cooperation between the state and religious institutions (historically the Christian church):** Austria, Germany, and Spain: Officially recognized religions may enter into cooperation with the state. And although the nature of this cooperation varies, recognized Islamic associations can cooperate with the state and provide IRE within the school system.
2. **The existence of parallel state (or dominant) religions:** The Netherlands and Finland: Historically in the Netherlands both Catholic and Protestant churches have provided parallel systems of institutionalization (and thus religious education), as have Finland's Lutheran and Orthodox churches. This has given Muslims in these countries the opportunity to create a parallel path for Islamic religious education within the school system, and to provide university-level teacher education.
3. **The existence of one dominant state religion:** Sweden and the United Kingdom:[23] In these countries a national church dominates state-religion relations. Today, however, the national church and most minority religions are afforded the same opportunities and rights. Both Sweden and the United Kingdom provide non-confessional RE which teaches *about* Islam to all pupils within the school system. These two countries also provide state funding for Muslim schools that conform to national curricula.
4. **Distinct separation between church and state:** France and the United States: These two countries maintain a more rigid separation between church and state. Thus the institutionalization of Islam (and Islamic education) is not a political question, but is rather left to the initiative of Muslim communities. To some degree, teaching *about* Islam is provided classes such as history, geography, and literature.

22. Alain Gabon, "L'Islamophobie est-elle en train de s'essouffler?" *Le cahiers de l'Islam*, November 25, 2013, <http://www.lescahiersdelislam.fr/L-Islamophobie-est-elle-en-train-de-s-essouffler_a511.html>.
23. Sweden has not had a state church since 2000; today the Church of Sweden is now called a "national" Church. Nonetheless, church-state relations are still very much affected by the Church of Sweden's long history.

Religious Education and Social Cohesion

As we shall see, strategic differences in perceptions of social cohesion in different countries shape Islamic education. In Britain, for example, social cohesion is tied to the teaching of citizenship, whereas in the Netherlands the focus is on maintaining academic standards so as to promote socioeconomic integration.[24] Although Sweden and Finland are both "Nordic Welfare states,"[25] they have very different conceptions of how religious education can foster social cohesion. In Sweden, social cohesion is thought best achieved by a non-confessional form of RE open to students of all persuasions. Finland develops a separate RE course for each type of religious adherent. The Swedish approach is based on the notion that when a mixed group of students is offered one course that teaches *about* the variety of world religions, this tends to forestall prejudice and xenophobia, thus contributing to social cohesion. The Finnish perspective, on the other hand, argues that when Muslim or Orthodox or Jewish students participate in an RE course specifically designed for their own tradition, they become knowledgeable about their origins and build a strong sense of personal identity. This creates solid Finnish citizens that can contribute to social cohesion in unique and meaningful ways.

Notions of the "Muslim School"

Muslim schools have been established in many European countries and the United States, although the availability of public funding differs in each country. Publicly funded Muslim schools differ from country to country not only because of variations in the criteria for public funding, but also because different public school systems breed different types of Muslim schools. In Sweden, for example, all Muslim schools are co-educational, whereas in the United Kingdom single-sex schools do exist. Even within the same country, the basic content, approach, and emphasis of Islamic religious education can vary from school to school based upon the particular theological interpretation of Islam that guides the teaching and governs the school ethos. In some Muslim schools, IRE frequently employs contemporary musical forms (e.g., halal-pop) to enhance teaching, whereas in other schools, all forms of instrumental music are entirely banned.[26]

It is thus impossible to speak of "publicly funded Muslim schools" in homogeneous terms—either globally or nationally. The variation of IRE content from school to school can be attributed to factors such as the interpretative tradition and/or education of the teacher, the student population, the background of the parents, the choice of teaching materials, and how the teacher views the majority society.

Different Notions of Church-State Separation

Of the countries discussed in this paper, the United States and France maintain the most rigid form of church-state separation, meaning that the institutionalization of Islam (the process of establishing Islamic institutions such as mosques, schools, organizations, etc.) is not carried out by the state (at least on the surface), but is rather left to the initiative of Muslims. However, there are clear and important differences between the French and the American approach to church and state. Within the United States, debates about Islam's legitimacy, religious content, and internal organization are viewed as strictly belonging to the private sphere. It is therefore considered improper for state or federal agencies to interfere with or even comment on such matters. This is a far cry from the situation in France, where colonial experience has influenced the organization of Islam and has even allowed for

24. See also Inga Niehaus, "Emancipation or Disengagement? Muslim Minorities and their Islamic Schools in Britain the Netherlands and South Africa," in *Muslim Schools and Education in Europe and South Africa*, ed. Abdulcader Tayob, Inga Niehaus, Wolfram Weisse (Münster: Waxmann, 2011): 20. She notes that this has been important in the Netherlands, since many Muslim schools attract children from academically weak backgrounds.
25. See Ulrika Mårtensson and Mark Sedgwick, "Preface," in *'Public Islam' and the Nordic Welfare State: Changing Realities?, Tidskrift för Islamforskning* 8, no. 1 (2014): 1–4; for discussions on Islam in the Nordic Welfare states.
26. Jenny Berglund, "Singing and Music: A Multifaceted and Controversial Aspect of Islamic Religious Education in Sweden," in *Reforms in Islamic Education: International Perspectives*, ed. Charlene Tan (London: Bloomsbury, 2014): 211–230.

preferential treatment. Such was the case with the construction of the Grande Mosque in Paris, which was financed by the French government in gratitude for Muslim participation in the French army's World War I campaigns. However, whereas the United States views religion in a generally favorable light, the French often consider it a public irritant (as with the strong reaction to *hijabs* in schools).

Historically, religion has played an important role in American public life as well as in integration of incoming populations. In Europe, on the other hand, religion has had a less prominent public role.[27] Thus in America even the watershed events of 9/11 did not make Islam and Muslims the prime focus of the debate on minority rights, religion, and social cohesion, as has been the case in Europe. Finnish researcher Toumas Martikainen has noted that straight comparisons between America's more "religion-friendly" approach and Europe's more "religion-hostile" approach are inappropriate,[28] as these comparisons tend to overlook the progressive evolution of church-state relations and the positive role played by European institutions in social integration.[29]

Differences in Training of IRE Teachers

Schools are powerful socializing agents in that they represent and reproduce the dominant conceptions of the wider society. Thus by following the requirements of a national curriculum, religious education teachers can become indirect agents of state policies toward religion.[30] This does not mean that teachers do not exert personal influence in the classroom; clearly, through their choice of content and mode of presentation teachers can indirectly uphold or question state policies. In the end, however, an IRE teacher's influence is highly dependent on what interpretative tradition she or he belongs to, the teacher's personal views, their knowledge of Islam, and didactic competence.

Qualitative research conducted in IRE classrooms in Finland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom indicates that selection of IRE content is a balancing act between existing interpretations of renowned Islamic scholars and contemporary Western values as expressed in national curriculums.[31] Thus the selection of IRE content is not a matter of *inventing* an Islamic interpretation; rather it is a matter of *adapting* common features of Islamic tradition that might be considered relevant to the specific national context. Such adaptations are based upon a teacher's knowledge of existing Islamic interpretations in combination with an assessment of the behavioral and religious skills *required* for Muslims living in European society. This demonstrates how tradition, local school context, situational perceptions, and global issues impact IRE content. Offering IRE without providing proper teacher training disregards the power of well-informed educational choices. Here it should be noted that while Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain provide training programs for IRE teachers the availability of such programs in some of these countries is extremely limited.

Muslim communities may perceive state-initiated IRE teacher training as a means of controlling the content and direction of Islamic education. However, when the initiative comes from the Muslim community itself, it is generally perceived it as supportive of Islamic oriented education. This contrast notwithstanding, the state obviously has an abiding interest in establishing thorough training programs due to

27. See for example: nancy Foner and Richard Alba, "Immigrant Religion in the U.S. and Western Europe: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion?" *International Migration Review* 42, no. 2 (2008): 364–365.
28. Mårtensson & Sedgwick, "Preface," 2.
29. Toumas Martikainen, "Muslim Immigrants, Public Religion and Developemtns toward a Post-Secular Finnish Welfare State," *'Public Islam' and the Nordic Welfare State: Changing Realities, Tidskrift för Islamforskning* 8, no. 1 (2014): 100.
30. Geir Skeie, "Plurality and pluralism in religious education," in *international handbook of the religious, moral and spiritual dimensions in education*, ed. M. de Souza et al. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006): 308–319.
31. Jenny Berglund, *Teaching Islam, Islamic religious Education in Sweden* (Münster: Waxmann, 2010); Damian Breen, "State-Funded Muslim Schools: Stakeholders and Legitimacy in the UK Context," in *Religion in Education: Innovation in International Research*, ed. Joyce Miller, Kevin O'Grady and Ursula McKenna (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Inkari Rissanen, *Negotiating Identity and Tradition in Single-faith Religious Education: A Case Study of Islamic Education in Finnish Schools* (PhD diss., Helsinki University, 2014).

the school's role in fostering future citizens. Parents also prefer their children to be taught by well-educated teachers, although parents may hold different definitions of a well-educated teacher. Standardizing teacher training may thus form an essential element in successful integration of IRE in Europe.

Non-confessional Teacher Training

Research on non-confessional teaching *about* Islam indicates that Islam (like the other religions) is often depicted in a stereotypical way that disregards the interpretative nuances and variations that exist in practice.[32] Much criticism has also been directed toward the manner in which Islam is portrayed in textbooks for non-confessional RE, as well as in courses on history and literature.[33] Adequate teacher training is of utmost importance in alleviating this problem.

In the United Kingdom and Sweden, training programs for teachers who will be teaching *about* religion from a non-confessional perspective include courses on Islam from a comparative study of religions perspective. But in the United States and France, where teaching *about* Islam is embedded in subjects such as history and geography, teacher training programs generally do not contain course on religion. In France, teachers can take additional elective courses on religious issues, but religion is not included in their original training.[34] Similarly, in the United States additional courses are provided by specialized programs such as Harvard Divinity School's Religious Literacy Project.[35] Restricting "teaching *about* religions" to elective courses, however, severely limits the number of teachers with academic training on Islam, which can significantly impact understanding of social and political events, minority-majority relations, and art and culture in today's globalized society.

Even though the publicly funded educational systems of Britain, Sweden, the United States, and France adopt a non-confessional approach to religious education, international exchange between researchers in this field appears to be quite limited. Bruce Grelle, Professor and Director of the Religion and Public Education Project at California State University, notes that empirical research on non-confessional RE in Europe has been largely ignored in American discussions on religion and public education.[36] On the other hand, American Academy of Religion (AAR) discussions on teaching *about* religion in the humanities have been largely ignored in the educational discourse of most European countries.

With regard to teacher training, the European *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools,*[37] *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education*[38] and the American *Guidelines for Teaching About Religion in K-12 Public Schools*[39] include recommendations for teacher education programs and emphasize the

32. Jenny Berglund, "An ethnographic eye on religion in everyday life," *British Journal of Religious Education* 36, no. 1 (2013): 39–52; Mark J. Halstead, "Islamic Education in the United Kingdom," in *Islamische Erziehung in Europa: Islamic Education in Europe* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2009): 179–201; Shiraz Thobani, *Islam in the School Curriculum: Symbolic Pedagogy and Cultural Claims* (New York: Continuum, 2010).
33. Susan L. Douglass, "Teaching about religion, Islam, and the World in Public and Private School Curricula," in *Educating the Muslims of America*, ed. Yvonne Y. Haddad, Farid Senzai and Jane I. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 85–108; Jonas Otterbeck, "What is a reasonable demand? Islam in Swedish Textbooks," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, no. 4 (2005): 795–812; Thobani, *Islam in the School Curriculum*, 2010.
34. Anne van den Kerchove, "Islam within the Framework of 'Laicité': Islam in Education in France," in *Islam in Education in European Countries: Pedagogical Concepts and Empirical Findings*, ed. Aurora Alvarez Veinguer et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2009).
35. "Religious Literacy Project," Harvard Divinity School, <http://hds.harvard.edu/faculty-research/programs-and-centers/religious-literacy-project>.
36. Bruce Grelle, "Teaching about Religions in US Public Schools: European and American contrasts," *Panorama, International Journal of Comparative Religious Education* 18 (2006).
37. "Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/29154>.
38. Robert Jackson, *Signposts: Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education*, Council of Europe, <https://book.coe.int/eur/en/human-rights-education-intercultural-education/6101-signposts-policy-and-practice-for-teaching-about-religions-and-non-religious-world-views-in-intercultural-education.html>
39. "Teaching About Religion: AAR Guidelines for K-12 Public Schools," American Academy of Religion, April 2010, <https://www.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Publications/epublications/AARK-12CurriculumGuidelines.pdf>.

necessity of knowledgable teachers about religions. The AAR guidelines state:

> If religion is left out of pre-service and in-service teacher education, it is likely either that religion will be left out of the classroom because teachers feel uncomfortable with content they feel unqualified to teach or, if included, that the treatment of religion by unprepared teachers may fall short of constitutional guidelines in approach or accuracy in regard to content.[40]

Although the nine countries presented below provide Islamic education in their public schools, there is nonetheless a lack of training programs capable of training teachers about Islam. This shortcoming needs to be addressed to assist the growing generations of Muslims and non-Muslims in the West to surmount potentially harmful prejudicial, stereotypical notions

The Two Sides of the Coin

On one hand, the emergence of publicly funded Muslim schools and IRE in Europe can be seen as to provide equal educational opportunities to Muslims and other religious minorities through partnerships with the state. On the other hand, public funding can also be conceived as a means to "domesticate" Islam by bringing it within the European framework. In other words, offering publicly funded Islamic religious education can be viewed as an attempt to control Muslims.[41] Moreover, offering IRE under a national curriculum that includes specific values concerning human rights and so forth indirectly encourages interpretations of Islam (or, for that matter, any other religion) that are more compatible with Western modernity.

An Overview of the IRE Framework

As outlined in the table below, the nine countries analyzed in this paper are presented in an order that reflects the degree to which each provides three forms of publicly funded Islamic religious education: 1) IRE in public schools; 2) publicly funded Muslim schools; and, 3) publicly funded IRE teacher education.

	IRE in public schools	**Publicly funded Muslim schools**	**Publicly funded teacher education for IRE- teachers**
Austria	X	X	X
Germany	X	X	X
Netherlands	X	X	X
Finland	X		X
Spain	X		X
Sweden		X	
United Kingdom		X	
France			
United States			

TABLE 1: Summary of IRE in Countries Examined

40. "AAR Guidelines," 18.
41. Jonathan Laurence, *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012): 249. It is widely acknowledged that the process of curriculum development can affect not only individuals, but also communities and traditions (see, for example, Thomas Popkewitz, "Curriculum study, curriculum history and curriculum theory: the reason of reason," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 3 (2009): 301–319.

Austria

There are approximately 500,000 Muslims living in Austria.[42] During the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, the Hanafi School of Islam was officially recognized as a religious community (*Religionsgemeinschaft*). When Bosnia and Herzegovina were annexed in 1908, approximately one million Muslims became subjects of the Empire.[43] Four years later, the 1912 Law of Islam (*Islamgesetz*) was formulated, recognizing Islam as a legal entity.[44] After World War I, Austria and Hungary became separate countries and the number of Muslims living in Austria was relatively small. Nonetheless, the legal status of Islam in Austria did not change. Discussions on the implementation of the 1912 law commenced at the end of the 1960s, after the number of Muslims had risen due to labor migration.[45] Muslims in Austria are officially represented by the Islamic Religious Community of Austria (*Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*) (IGGIÖ). Formally recognized in 1979 as representing the Muslim community's relations with the state, the law grants Islam the same legal status as Christianity and other state-recognized religions in Austria—i.e., as a *corporation* under public law.[46]

Religious Education

There are 13 recognized religious communities in Austria,[47] each of which has the right to provide confessional religious education in public schools. While religious education is considered compulsory, students may opt out. Austria's basic program of religious education has been described as "church in school," meaning that the state provides the facility and religious communities provide the content.[48] Since the right to teach RE in Austrian schools is not restricted to the Reformed Church in Austria, the Austrian model can be described as a *model of recognition* that is based on a multicultural interpretation of neutrality, equality, and integration. This model upholds the rights of legally recognized religious communities to manifest, and also allows for public funding of various religious institutions and public school lecturers.

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

IGGiÖ's legal status affords it the right to teach Islamic Religious Education in public schools. Particularly over the last couple of years, both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IGGiÖ have emphasized the good relationship between the state and religious associations. IGGiÖ is responsible for both the teaching curriculum and content of IRE.[49] In the 1980s the organization had problems finding qualified teachers;. In 1997 the Islamic Religious Pedagogical Academy (IRPA) was established and approved by the Austrian Ministry of Teaching and Cultural Issues to address this gap. Since 2006, qualified candidates can receive a master's degree in IRE (*Islamische Religionspädagogik*) at the University of Vienna, which entitles them to teach IRE in secondary

42. Vahidin Beluli, "Professional Advancement for Imams in Austria," in *The Training of Ilmams and Teachers for Islamic Education in Europe*, ed. Ednan Aslan and Zsófia Windisch (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012): 122.
43. This means that around one million Muslims became subjects of the Empire.
44. Ednan Aslan, "Islamic Religious Pedagogy at the University of Vienna," in *The Study of Religion and the Training of Muslim Clergy in Europe*, ed. Willem B. Drees and Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld (Leiden, Leiden University Press, 2008): 427–443; Jozsa, "Islam and Education in Europe," 2007.
45. Aslan, "Islamic Religious Pedagogy," 2008.
46. Wolfgang Wieshaider, "The Legal Status of the Muslim Minority in Austria," in *The Legal Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Europe*, ed. Roberta Aluffi B.–P. and Giovanna Zincone (Leuven: Peeters, 2004): 31.
47. Helmar-Ekkehart Pollitt, "Religious education in Austria," in *Religious educatation in Europe*, ed. Elza Kuyk et al. (Oslo: IKO Publishing, 2007): 19.
48. Ibid., 18. While this normally consists of two lessons per week, only one such lesson is provided if there are merely 3 to 10 pupils in attendance.
49. For examples in English see Zekirija Sejdini, "Curricula and Textbooks for Islamic Religious Education in Austria," in *Islamic Textbooks and Curricula in Europe*, ed. Ednan Aslan (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011).

schools. According to Ednan Alsan, a professor of Islamic Religious Pedagogy (IRP) at the University of Vienna, graduates are provided with "a thorough knowledge that enables them to reflect on society in the context of the Islamic faith," as well as "developed competences for inter-religious dialogue."[50] Aslan describes the background and present challenges of the IRP program:

> The new IRP study-programme is meant to provide a basis for addressing contemporary issues that Islam is historically unfamiliar with. It will now place those themes that have only been dealt with peripherally at the center of theological-pedagogical discussions. The difficult situation continues to cause frequent and fierce discussions among the participants of the study programme. The theologians position the IRP and the discipline of pedagogy in a subordinate role, and the pedagogues try to replace theology. Our main problem is first of all to clarify to the theologians what it is exactly that pedagogy has to offer. This process will take considerable time. In particular those Islamic scholars that are unfamiliar with contemporary academic culture see few advantages in this novel type of cooperation.[51]

The establishment of IRP as a recognized Educational Sciences discipline at the University of Vienna is a highly interesting development in the European context. Because pedagogy is generally a more practical discipline than theology, IRE teachers trained in Islamic Religious Pedagogy could offer Muslim youths one means of dealing life in Austrian society, particularly since contextualization is inherent in the field of pedagogy.

Muslim Schools

Apart from public schools, there are also a number of religious schools in Austria. Most of these are Roman Catholic, although a handful of Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim schools exist as well. While IRE in Muslim schools follows the same basic public school syllabus, Islam plays a greater role in the ethos of these schools than it does in the public schools.[52]

Political Debate on Islam and Islamic Education

Because the number of Muslims living in Austria has drastically increased since 1912, one of the IGGiÖ's longstanding aims has been the passage of an updated "Islam law." A law was proposed in October 2014, but created great controversy for imposing restrictions and requirements on Muslims that are not legally imposed upon Austria's Christians and Jews.

The new draft demands, for example, that within six months of the law's passage all independent Muslim associations be dissolved and legally absorbed into the IGGiÖ, effectively granting the organization control. Moreover, once joining, these associations would not be granted the same legal status within the IGGiÖ that Jewish associations enjoy within their umbrella corporations. And since Austrian law provides all citizens with the right to establish associations, this new Islam law would be unconstitutional. Another noted shortcoming is that whereas Austrian law has made special provisions for Protestant, Catholic and other expressions of Christianity—e.g., the right to specialized religious education and specialized university lecturers—the proposed law on Islam makes no such special provisions. Finally, the proposed law specifically prohibits Muslim organizations from accepting funding from abroad—a restriction not imposed on Christian and Jewish counterparts. Here the clear intent is to prevent countries like Turkey (which maintains salaried imams in other coun-

50. Aslan, "Islamic Religious Pedgagogy," 436; see also Ednan Aslan, "Österreich-Austria," in *Islamische Erziehung in Europa — Islamic Education in Europe*, ed. Ednan Alsan, (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2009): 325–350; Ednan Aslan, "Training of Imams and Teachers in Europe," in *The Training of Imams and Teachers for Islamic Education in Europe*, ed. Ednan Aslan and Zsófia Windisch (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012).
51. Aslan, "Islamic Religious Pedagogy," 436–437.
52. Pollitt, "Religious education in Austria."

tries) and Saudi Arabia (which has propagated proselytizing efforts to spread Wahhabism) from influencing Islam in Austria.[53]

Although as of November 2014 the outcome of the current debate remains unclear, none of this bodes well for Austria's Muslim communities, which seem to be on the verge of an enormous setback. As Austrian political scientist Farid Hafez has noted, the situation seems to be going from "Habsburg equality to Islamophobic discrimination."[54] If true, this will most certainly affect IRE since the provision of religious education is one of the important rights of these public religious corporations. At this point, however, the manner in which this might affect publicly funded Islamic education remains unclear.

Broadly speaking, it is clear that attitudes toward Muslims in Austria have grown more negative over the last several decades as a result of international events. Austria's Muslims have been increasingly called upon to justify their beliefs and practices and to confirm that they do not support terrorism. In the wake of the rise of extreme right-wing hostility toward Muslims—including the right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) using anti-Muslim slogans in its political campaigns—the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has openly criticized the tone of Austrian politics as anti-immigrant.[55]

53. Farid Hafez, "Institutionalized Islamophobia, The Draft of the Austrian Islam-Law," *Seta Perspective*, October 31, 2014. <http://setav.org/en/institutionalized-islamophobia-the-draft-of-the-austrian-islam-law/perspective/17701>.
54. Ibid.
55. See the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights Report on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU. See also Euro-Islam.info, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/austria/#identifier_36_479>.

Germany

Many Muslims migrated to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s to become part of the labor force. These were most often referred to as "guest workers," indicating that they were expected to return to their countries of origin at some point.[56] It was not until the end of the 1990s that Germany acknowledged itself as a country attracting immigration. Germany's current Muslim populations numbers around 4 million, or 5% of the total German population. Two thirds of Muslims in Germany trace their origins to Turkey, half have obtained German citizenship, and one third were born German.[57] Germany is a federation consisting of 16 states (*Länder*), each of which has individual responsibility for education—this has considerable bearing on the availability of publicly funded Islamic education.[58]

The German state is secular but has a *supportive* attitude toward religion. The state can enter into cooperation with religious associations if they have been classified as a "cooperation by public law"[59] or an official religious community. The requirements for an official religious community are: a) Permanency, shown through a constitution and a sufficient number of members; b) Clear membership rosters, in order to determine which pupils are entitled to attend religious instruction; c) Representative who can define the religious principles and represent them; and, d) Not subject to influence by state institutions.[60] To reach the highest classification of public cooperation, the religious association must also show that it has "sufficient financial resources and has existed in Germany for at least 30 years."[61]

While there are Muslim communities that have existed in Germany for well over thirty years, the first generation of Muslim immigrants did not establish organizations that meet the above requirements because most viewed themselves as guest workers that would eventually return to their home country. As such, no Muslim organization has thus far achieved the status of an official religious community.

Religious Education

The German constitution grants parents the right to have their children educated according to their own religious tradition. While maintaining a neutral posture toward religion, the state is nonetheless responsible for providing the space for the teaching of religion in a confessional manner.[62] In other words, the provision of RE as a school subject is a shared undertaking that involves both the state and the religious communities, meaning that the state practically supports religious education in schools. Since the state itself is prohibited from interfering with religious matters, it must cooperate with officially recognized religious communities or those that are classified as public cooperations.[63] Although most German states provide two hours of RE per week, this can vary from state to state since each state is authorized to establish its own educational standards.

56. Mathias Rohe, "The Legal Treatment of Muslims in Germany," in *The Legal Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Europe*, ed. Roberta Aluffi B.–P. and Giovanna Zincone (Leuven: Peters, 2004): 83.
57. Aysun Yasar, "Islamic Instruction at Public Schools in Germany: Expectations and Challenges," in *Islamic Education in Secular Societies*, ed. Ednan Aslan and Margaret Rausch (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013): 127; see also Halm, "The Current Discourse on Islam in Germany," 458, for a discussion on problems in establishing the number of Muslims in Germany.
58. Peter Schreiner, "Religious education in Germany," in *Religions Education in Europe*, ed. Elza Kuyk et al. (Oslo: IKO Publishing, 2007): 81–82.
59. Mathias Rohe, "The Legal Treatment of Muslims in Germany," 87.
60. The DITIB (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs) has had difficulty meeting this last requirement, being Germany's largest and most renowned Islamic association, with ties to the Turkish Diyanet (the Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs) (Yasar, "Islamic Instruction at Public Schools in Germany," 2013).
61. Yasar, "Islamic Instruction at Public Schools in Germany," 131.
62. Josza, "Islam and Education in Europe," 2007. Schreiner, "Religious education in Germay," 2007.
63. Yasar, "Islamic Instruction at Public Schools in Germany," 131–132.

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

In accordance with the above requirements, only Islamic associations recognized as official religious communities can enter into cooperation with the state. Thus far only two such associations, both in the state of Hessen, have qualified.[64] Despite the absence of official Islamic communities in other states, IRE pilot projects have been organized in Baden Wüttemberg, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia,[65] Rhineland-Palatinate, and Schleswig-Holstein. In these states, advisory boards comprised of parents and representatives of non-official Islamic associations have been formed to determine IRE content. German Professor Yasar Sarikaya has noted that the type of IRE offered in these pilot projects differs from that which is constitutionally guaranteed to German Muslims, in that it is non-denominational and primarily teaches Islamic culture and history. According to Sarikaya, the main reason for this is the complete lack of recognized official Islamic communities.[66]

The Alevi[67] Association has obtained official religious community status and can thus cooperate with the state to provide religious education in public schools in some states. However, the terms "Islamic" and "Muslim" do not appear this association's formal self-description.[68] In the state of Hamburg a special type religious education has been arranged that invites different religious communities to participate in classes "for all."

Teacher Training

The German government also funds four university centers that offer Islamic theology in Münster-Osnabrück, Frankfrurt-Greissen, Tübingen, and Nuremberg-Erlangen.[69] IRE teachers receive training at these centers. Per German law, the involvement of an official religious community is also required in to teach theology at the university level. Different universities have skirted this requirement by establishing Islamic advisory boards in order to launch Islamic theology. Islamic theology as a subject was established after being recommended by the German Islam Conference,[70] a state initiative launched in 2006 by the German Ministry of Internal Affairs to strengthen social cohesion and integration, and prevent extremism.[71]

According to German scholar Aysun Yasar, many Muslims in Germany feel ambivalent about the role of the German state in IRE and Islamic theology. Yasar states that on one hand, parents are satisfied that Muslim children have the option to learn about Islam in school, in the same way as do Catholic and Protestant children. But on the other hand, they are unsettled because they question the attitude of the German State toward Muslims and Islam, and suspect that it is trying to impose a German type of Islam upon them.[72]

The objectives of the German Islam Conference indicate a strong element of state control, in that it has entered into questions of religious interpre-

64. Ibid. Many Islamic associations are instead registered as non-profit charitable organizations, which is one level below becoming an official religious community. Status as a non-profit charitable organization affords certain priviliges, such as exemption from paying taxes.
65. The North Rhine-Westphalia pilot project titled "Islamic Studies in German" is one of the most wide-ranging projects, and also one of the oldest, having begun in 1999 (Yasar Sarikaya, "Islamic Religious Education in Germany: Curricula and Textbooks," in *Islamic Textbooks and Curricula in Europe*, ed. Ednan Aslan (2011): 114.
66. Sarikaya, "Islamic Religious Education in Germany," 2011.
67. Alevism is a religious and cultural minority with roots in rural Anatolia in Turkey. Alevis are influenced by Shiite Islam, Sufism, and Nestorian Christianity. Alevis are often associated with the Sufi Bektashiorden. Many Alevis, however, do not define themselves in religious terms, but rather see themselves as representing the political left in opposition to the Turkish establishment.
68. Josza, "Islam and Education in Europe," 2007; Yasar, "Islamic Instruction at Public Schools in Germany," 2013.
69. See Aslan, "Training of Imams and Teachers in Europe," 49–55, for an overview of how they are organized and what courses they provide.
70. Yasar, "Islamic Instruction at Public Schools in Germany," 135.
71. "Deutsche Islam Konferenz," <http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/EN/Startseite/startseite-node.html>; see also Laurence, *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims*, 2012 and Alison Smale, "Germany Adds Lessons in Islam to Better Blend Its Melting Pot," *New York Times*, January 6, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/07/world/europe/germany-adds-lessons-in-islam-to-better-blend-its-melting-pot.html>.
72. Yasar, "Islamic Instruction at Public Schools in Germany," 137.

tation. The Ministry of Education, for example, has stated that "it wishes to close an academic and scholarly gap and to enable a historical-critical approach to the Qur'an."[73]

Additionally, Muslim female teachers are not allowed to wear the headscarf in school, except in some states where they can do this only do this if they teach IRE. The majority of students that study Islamic theology in Germany are women, most of whom wear the headscarf. And while many of these qualified graduates desire to teach IRE as well as other subjects, they might be unable to do so unless the German government lifts its controversial headscarf ban in public schools.[74]

The Political Debate on Islam and Islamic education

The integration debate in Germany is clearly dominated by the issue of Islam and Muslim rights to externally display their religious identity, for example by wearing headscarves in public institutions such as schools).

German scholar Dirk Halm (2013) has analyzed the German public discourse[75] on Islam and concludes that there is no evidence of a general rejection and exclusion of Muslims in the public discourse in Germany. Nevertheless, appeals for religious tolerance have become rare since September 11, except with the caveat that there must be no "misplaced" tolerance. Halm also claims that German society has become "less self-critical regarding the shortcomings of its own integration policy".[76] According to Halm, negative German attitudes toward Islam are not based on direct experience with Muslims, but are rather "imported" from media reports on international conflicts and terrorism in Muslim majority countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. He also notes that the media's excessive focus on conflicts involving Islam has caused many Germans to wrongly conclude that Muslim integration in their country has completely failed.

On all political levels, Muslim integration has become a prominent and complex issue in Germany. One of the most difficult questions in this debate concerns the "principle of secularity," meaning the willingness of religious organizations to accept the separation of state power and religious actors.[77] The discourse on this subject is divided by two existing dichotomies: 1) Secular Islam vs. Islamism; and, 2) Traditional Sunni organizations vs. the growing number of independent non-affiliated Muslims.

There also has been extensive debate about the factual representativeness of current Muslim organizations, the entities primarily involved in of cooperation with the state. The degree to which these organizations are truly representative, for example, has been identified as an important factor that can have an impact on the successful integration of Muslims in German society.[78]

The German state's recent interest in IRE also indicates a shift in Germany's self-image from being a country that accepts guest workers to being one

73. Ibid., 136, with reference to *Bundesministerium für Bildung and Forschung*, 2012.
74. Ibid.
75. Halm distinguishes between *the official discourse* (the minutes of the German Bundestag for two periods, September 2000–September 2001 and September 2003–September 2004) and the *unofficial discourse* (reports in Der Spiegel and the Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (WAZ) during the same periods of time).
76. Halm, "The Current Discourse on Islam in Germany," 465.
77. Ibid., 467. According to Halm, the discussion on the principle of secularity and the idea that Muslims who do not embrace such an idea would be more or less impossible to "integrate" has lead to the exclusion of the second largest Islamic association in Germany, IGMG, in official talks. The official reason for IGMG's exclusion is that it falls under observation by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Other controversial questions in German discourse on Muslim integration include democratic values, gender equality, freedom of religion and transnational ties to country of emigration.
78. Halm, "The Current Discourse on Islam in Germany," 459. The four most important Muslim organizations in Germany are according to Halm: The Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt fur Religion (DITIB) (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs). The Islamische Gemeinschaft Millî Gruş (IGMG) (Islamic Association Millî G.rüş). The Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren (VIKZ) (Association of Islamic Cultural Centres). The Alevitische Gemeinde Deutschland (AABF) (Federation of Alevi Communities in Germany).

that accepts permanent immigrants; it also demonstrates how questions concerning Islam have changed over the years. As noted, the state's role in training IRE teachers has been generally interpreted as one means to control the Muslim community. This notwithstanding, there is also the potential for mutual contributions to educational discussions and teacher training.[79]

79. See, for example, Jenny Berglund, "Enriching teacher education with the content of Muslim cultures," in *Building a shared future: Islam, Knowledge and Innovation*, British Council, HRH Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge (2012): 25–27.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands' Muslim community began to grow after World War II.[80] In contrast to France and Britain, the Muslim community that has established itself in the Netherlands is not primarily comprised of individuals from former Dutch colonies. Instead a large portion of this community originates from Turkey and Morocco, having initially arrived as labor migrators. Today the Netherlands is estimated to contain approximately 885,000 Muslims.[81]

As in other European countries, church-state separation should not be taken to mean that absolutely no relation exists between these two entities in the Netherlands. The country had been known for its "pillarized system," an organizational model intended to provide all Dutch communities, religious or otherwise, with a respected place in society. Each community (e.g., Catholics, Protestants, and even the working class) generally had their own schools, political parties, newspapers, and associations. Communities lived somewhat separately, although their leaders occasionally came together to discuss issues of common interest. Since WWII, this system has been gradually disappearing—a process known as "depillarization." The Muslim community began to establish itself in the Netherlands during this period.[82]

Only 25% of schools in the Netherlands are run by the state. The remainder are privately run but publicly funded, and offer education from a religious or specialized pedagogical perspective. It is estimated that around 65% of both privately and publicly run schools are formally Christian.[83]

Religious Education

While there is no separate compulsory religious education course in Dutch schools, it is obligatory for primary schools (age 4–12 years) to include *Geestelijke Stromingen* (GS), or neutrally taught courses on diverse spiritual traditions. GS is often incorporated into regular history or geography classes, and focuses on Christianity—historically the country's majority religion. In public primary education, religious communities are granted the right to provide confessional religious education. Christian or humanist RE is provided in most schools, but parents can request IRE.[84] The government currently provides 10 million euros per year for five different RE classes in public schools: Protestant, Roman Catholic, Islamic, Hindu, and humanist. The religious organizations involved are able to select their own teachers.[85]

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

Certain constitutional principles govern state funding of Islamic religious education in the Netherlands:

- Non-discrimination (on religious and other grounds), which implies the neutrality of the state toward the various religious communities (or communities adhering to a non-religious world view);
- Freedom of religion;
- Freedom of education (including establishment of educational institutes), with the important provision of equal financing for public (i.e., state, municipal) and private (i.e., denominational and others) primary schools.[86]

80. Johan Meuleman, "Islam and Education in the Netherlands," in *Islamic Education in Secular Societies*, ed. Ednan Aslan and Margaret Rausch (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013): 143–162.
81. "Islam in Netherlands," Euro-Islam.info, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/the-netherlands/>.
82. Meuleman, "Islam and Education in the Netherlands," 2013; Marjoke Rietveld-van Wingerden et al., "Islam in Education in the Netherlands: History and Actual Developments," in *Islam in Education in European Countries: Pedagogical Concepts and Empirical Findings*, ed. Aurora Alvarez Veinguer et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2009).
83. Ina Avest ter et al., "Religion and Education in the Dutch and Post-Pillarized Educational System," in *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, ed. Robert Jackson et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2007).
84. Avest ter et al., "Religion and Education in the Dutch and Post-Pillarized Educational System," 213; Jozsa, "Islam and Education in Europe," 79–80.
85. Dr. Ina Ter Avest (Inholland University, the VU University and Utrecht University), e-mail message to author, November 27, 2014.
86. Meuleman, "Islam and Education in the Netherlands," 150–151.

The state has funded religious education in the Netherlands' public schools since 2008. IRE is now provided in both Muslim and non-Muslim schools, and Muslim parents can request this subject. Today many public schools are paying more attention to the diversity of religions. In the case of Islam, this can mean that it is possible for families to request IRE classes and increased recognition of Islamic religious festivals. In some schools, however, tensions have mounted due to the reluctance of school boards to offer IRE, allow the *hijab*, and so forth.[87] Although the state funds IRE in public schools, Muslim communities provide the teachers through *Contct Orgaan Moslims en Overheid* (CMO), the contact organization for Muslim schools.[88]

Muslim Schools

The Netherlands' first Muslim primary school was opened in Rotterdam in 1998, on the initiative of Mehmet Akbulut, a Dutch Muslim parent. Akbulut had requested a public school to provide IRE for his daughter and was told: "If you think religion is so important, go and start your own school."[89] Currently there are forty-three Muslim primary schools and one secondary school in the Netherlands, all fully funded by the state. Although these schools must meet all basic educational standards to be eligible for state funding, they generally incorporate and additional one to three hours of IRE in their curriculum. These schools receive 6100€ per child annually, and can also request voluntary fees from parents to cover extracurricular activities such as field trips. State funding is also available for after-school activities organized by the school. In Rotterdam's Ibn Sina School, for example, extracurricular activities include sports, arts, and classes on Islamic philosophers. In some regions, the municipality also provides public and religious schools with timeslots and swimming lessons at public pools. While school uniforms are generally not used in the Netherlands, schools may nonetheless impose their own dress codes. The strictness of dress codes in Muslim schools varies: some schools merely require modest clothing (not too short, tight, transparent) and others require *hijab* for girls.[90]

The content of IRE courses can also vary between schools. Often pupils learn *suras* (Quranic verses), the Pillars of Islam, and religious stories that teach moral guidelines. According to Cihan Gerdan at Ibn Sina school, parents sometimes hold strong opinions about the content of IRE and diverse interpretations exist in relation to a number of issues—e.g., music, dress codes, which holidays are to be celebrated, etc.[91] While some schools were ititially organized along ethnic lines, many schools now contain students from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

A variety of Dutch-language IRE schoolbooks are available, written with the specific aim of engaging Muslim children growing up in Dutch society by using images that Dutch Muslim children can easily relate to.[92] A private publishing house managed by ISBO, an umbrella organization for Dutch Muslim schools, sells these books.[93]

A large number of Muslim parents choose to send their children to Christian schools, considering them to provide the type of high caliber educational environment[94] that stresses academic achievement, self-discipline, and respect for God.[95]

87. Ibid.
88. Interview with author, July 1, 2014.
89. Mr. Akbulut, in discussion with the author, July 1, 2014. See also Rietveld-van Wingerden et al., "Islam in Education in the Netherlands," 2009.
90. Akbulut, July 1, 2014.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Islamitische Schoolbesturen Organisatie (ISBO), <http://www.deisbo.nl/>.
94. Avest ter et al., "Religion and Education in the Dutch and Post-Pillarized Educational System," 2007.
95. Wasif Abdelrahman Shadid and Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, "Islamic Religious Education in the Netherlands," *European Education* 38, no. 2 (2006):76–88; Wasif Abdelrahman Shadid and Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld, *Religious Freedom and the Position of Islam in Western Europe*, (Kampen: Pharos, 1995).

Teacher Training

From 1995 to the present, IRE teachers in the Netherlands have received IRE training at Inholland University of Applied Sciences,[96] which also has offered training for imams and Islamic "spiritual workers" since 2006. In 2014, Inholland University introduced *Diploma Islamitisch Onderwijs* (DIO), a continuing education course for teachers of all subjects working in Muslim schools.[97] DIO aims to train both Muslim and non-Muslim teachers to be aware of their school's particular character, thus improving their job performance. Amsterdam University, a private Protestant college, opened a Center for Islamic Theology in 2005 and Leiden University has recently developed a program for the study of Islamic Theology.[98] All these initiatives have received financial support from the state.

The Political Debate on Islam and Islamic education

Over the last ten years, immigration policy in the Netherlands has vastly changed from being exclusionist, (via a multiculturalist and integrationist perspective) to assimilationist.[99] According to a Pew survey, current Dutch public opinion of Islam is generally negative.[100] As with many other European countries, Dutch society is polarized, and educational level represents an important indicator of attitudes toward Islam and Muslims.[101] On this trend, migration researcher Han Entzinger says that when it comes to explaining negative attitudes toward immigrants in Dutch public opinion, cultural factors, and most of all Islam, seem a more powerful factor than the economy. Entzinger notes that there is a great deal of common mistrust between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Netherlands and many feel that these are two worlds that are not compatible. Here, the issue of social class and feelings of social exclusion cannot be ignored: Entzinger shows that such feelings are strongest among non-Muslims with low education levelsand highly educated Muslims, most of whom are second generation.[102]

In response to the tense discourse on immigration and Islam in the Netherlands, an all-party Parliamentary Committee was recently convened to investigate the "failure" of integration. The committee concluded that "in most cases immigrants have integrated remarkably well, and this has occurred in spite of public policies rather as an effect of them." However, in a reflection of the political climate in the Netherlands, many politicians rejected the results of this report.[103]

The debate over the Netherland's Muslim schools is connected to the larger debate on Islam and Muslims in Dutch society. Those in favor of Muslim schools argue that a familiar environment in which the pupil is gradually socialized into the wider society strengthens identity. Opponents argue that the schools fall short of normal standards and tend to marginalize (or, in the worst case, radicalize) Muslim youths. Dutch scholar Johan Meuleman notes, however, that with the exception of a few isolated cases, the fear of radicalization has proved to be misplaced. He adds that over the last decade the quality of the schools has considerably improved, and some Muslim primary schools have even surpassed the standards of their public counterparts.[104] Mr. Gerdan at Ibn Sina School confirms that many Muslim schools that had been initially academically weak are today obtaining excellent scores on the CITO (National Test). In 2009, the ISBO resolved that by 2013 all Muslim schools would be recognized by the inspector for their high standard of teaching and education.[105]

96. The program began in an institute that later became part of Inholland University of Applied Sciences.
97. Personal interview with author, July 1, 2014.
98. Meuleman, "Islam and Education in the Netherlands," 156.
99. Entzinger 2014, 701.
100. Pew Research Center 2005: http://www.pewforum.org/2005/10/19/an-uncertain-road-muslims-and-the-future-of-europe/
101. Han Entzinger, "The growing gap between facts and discourse on immigrant integration in the Netherlands," *Identities, Global Studies in Culture and Power* 21, no. 6 (2014): 701.
102. Ibid., 702.
103. Ibid., 703.
104. Meuleman, "Islam and Education in the Netherlands."
105. Personal interview with author, July 1, 2014.

The Netherlands' long tradition of faith schools seems to have worked in favor of publicly funded Muslim schools. After an initial period of an inadequate number of teachers and suitable facilities and the xenophobic tendencies of the surrounding society, Muslim schools seem to have moved into a phase of greater stability. The goal at present is to improve the level of academic achievement, important to afford students the opportunity for higher academic study and advance social cohesion

The Netherlands was one of the first countries to offer IRE teacher training. By offering IRE within the school system and then establishing academy-level programs to train IRE teachers, the Netherlands has made IRE an accepted part of the academic community's educational sciences. This can be seen in the discipline of practical pedagogy as well as in the philosophy of education.[106]

106. See, for example: Wilna A.J. Meijer, *Tradition and Future of Islamic Education* (Münster: Waxmann, 2009).

Finland

Compared to many other European countries the current Muslim population in Finland is relatively small—40–45,000 persons or approximately 0.8% of Finland's 5.4 million inhabitants. While Finland has experienced an increase in Muslim immigration starting from the end of the 1980s, for the last 100 years Finland has had a small Muslim population—the Tatars, a Muslim population originating in central Asia—who arrived during the time that the country was a grand Duchy of Russia.[107] Today Finland contains a highly diverse Muslim population, which includes Somalis, Arabs, Kurds, Kosovo Albanians, Bosnians, and Turks.[108]

Religious Education

In Finland, religious education (RE) is a compulsory school subject in both comprehensive (7–16 years) and upper-secondary school (16–18/19 years). The Finnish RE model enables pupils to follow the religious education of their own denomination. In 2004 Finnish RE was changed from a confessional to a non-confessional school subject taught "in accordance with the pupil's own religion."[109] This categorical change also has been described as "weak confessional," with "confessional" referring to the fact that both the pupils in the classroom and the curriculum reflect a common worldview.[110] Whereas Lutheran Religious Education (LRE) is taught in all schools, alternate RE is offered only if the municipality or town contains a minimum of three pupils that are members of one of Finland's registered religions, and if parents demand that religious education in their specific tradition be offered to their children. Those that desire general RE not connected to any particular religion are given the option of a course in "Ethics"—a subject that is arguably more neutral, but that can include teaching *about* religion. Currently there are 13 registered religious education curricula in Finland's comprehensive schools and ten such curricula in its upper secondary schools.[111]

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

Muslim students in Finland are to receive Islamic religious education (IRE) within the state school system with a non-confessional curriculum, meaning that the IRE orientation in public schools is educational rather than religious. According to the Finnish National Board of Education, experiential forms of learning and ways of familiarizing students with different forms of religious practice are needed, but all learning activities are to be enacted on established pedagogical grounds.[112]

According to the new (2005) comprehensive IRE curricula, the purpose of IRE is to strengthen the pupil's Islamic identity and their understanding of the significance of Islam for themselves and for society. Students are also taught to understand and interact with persons holding different worldviews, something that is stressed in all Finnish RE curricula.[113]

107. Toumas Martikainen, "Muslim Immigrants, Public Religion and Developments toward a Post-Secular Finnish Welfare State," *'Public Islam' and the Nordic Welfare State: Changing Realities?, Tidskrift för Islamforskning* 8, no. 1, (2014): 78–105.
108. Martikainen, "Muslim Immigrants,"; Tuula Sakaranaho, "Constructing Islamic Identity: The Education of Islam in Finnish State schools," in *Islamische Erziehung in Europa: Islamic Education in Europe* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2009): 109–128.
109. Harriet Zilliacus and Gunilla Holm, "'We have our own religion': a pupil perspective on minority religion and ethics instruction in Finland," *British Journal of Religious Education* 35, no. 3 (2013): 282–296.
110. Elina Hella and Andrew Wright, "Learning 'about' and 'from' religion: phenomenography, the Variation Theory of Learning and religions education in Finland and UK," *British Journal of Religious Education* 31, no. 1 (2009): 53–64; Martin Ubani, "What Characterises the Competent RE teacher? Finnish student teachers' perception at the beginning of their pedagogical training," *British Journal of Religious Education* 34, no. 1 (2011): 35–50.
111. Arto Kallioniemi and Martin Ubani, "Religious Education in Finnish School System," in *Miracle of Education, the principles and practices of Teaching and Learning in Finnihs Schools*, ed. Hannele Niemi, Auli Toom and Arto Kallioniemi (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2012): 177–188.
112. Rissanen, *Negotiating Identity and Tradition in Single-faith Religious Education*, 2014; Sakaranaho, "Constructing Islamic Identity," 2009.
113. Sakaranaho, "Constructing Islamic Identity," 2009.

Recent research on IRE in Finland indicates that the country's model safeguards the rights of Muslim minorities and significantly contributes to the development of a Muslim identity. It also encourages Muslim students' commitment to and participation in Finnish society. In her study of IRE in Finland, Finnish researcher Inkeri Rissanen has shown that IRE teachers are deeply involved in developing a representation of Islam appropriate for a liberal educational context, and that pedagogical and ideological negotiations are prioritized over theological differences in decisions on this matter. She has also shown that, due to their ability to identify with both groups, IRE teachers sometimes serve as cultural interpreters in practical discussions between immigrant Muslim families and school personnel.[114] Rissanen notes that teachers manage the sometimes problematic diversity of interpretations of Islam by focusing on aspects that are shared by most Muslims. However, this is also sometimes challenging due to parents' diverse cultural backgrounds.[115] Muslim parents and pupils viewed the existence of IRE as recognition of Islam in Finnish society and acknowledgement of Muslim identities in Finnish schools. Rissanen concludes that providing religious education that is in keeping with the students' religion supports integration by affording religious traditions a tangible role in education—i.e., religious persons are integrated not only as individuals but also as a part of the country's institutional infrastructure.[116]

IRE Teacher education

In 2007, an educational program for IRE teachers was established at Helsinki University. However, the program has attracted few students thus far since university studies require a high level of proficiency in the Finnish language, and also because existing IRE teachers have found it difficult to relinquish their posts to make time for further education.[117] IRE has been available outside the context of public schools prior to the establishment of the IRE curriculum in 1995, the possibility of such education outside the school context existed before this.[118] Prior to 2007, the Finnish state did not require teachers to have formal Islamic pedagogical training, although some had received training while still living in Muslim majority countries.

IRE Textbooks

In recent years, Finland's National Board of Education has published an IRE book series titled Salam, which includes workbooks and material for teachers. Thus far, books for two different age groups have been published and a third is scheduled to appear in 2014. The stories about Muslims in these books are set in a Finnish environment: two Muslim Finnish children, for example, are portrayed baking wheat buns, visiting a forest, and spending time at their grandmother's farm.[119] The books are sponsored by the state, which has also provided teaching materials for other minority religions. Some textbooks on Islam have been published in both Finnish and Swedish, both official languages in Finland. This demonstrates the state's commitment to widely disseminating these books since the number of Swedish-speaking Muslims in Finland is extremely low. The book series received some media attention discussing its Finnish cultural orientation, which some have been perceived as an attempt by the Finnish state to control the expression of Islam. Conversely, Finnish opponents of immigration and Islam have criticized the series as an attempt by the state to establish the "frightening" notion of a Finnish Islam.[120]

Teaching About Islam

Non-Muslim students are not excluded form learning about Islam. They can opt to attend shorter, very basic courses on Islam within their own RE subjects. Finland's new RE curricula requires teaching about diverse religions and minority cultures, even at the

114. Rissanen, *Negotiating Identity and Tradition in Single-faith Religious Education*, 2014.
115. Ibid.; Sakaranaho, "Constructing Islamic Identity," 2009.
116. Rissanen, *Negotiating Identity and Tradition in Single-faith Religious Education*, 2014.
117. Sakaranaho, "Constructing Islamic Identity," 120.
118. Ibid.
119. "Finnish Schools to Teach Islam," *OnIslam*, October 13, 2011, <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/europe/454296-finnish-schools-to-teach-islam.html>.
120. Inkeri Rissanen, e-mail message to author, October 21, 2014.

primary school level. Thus Muslim, Jewish, and Christian students in primary school are afforded the opportunity to study these religions.[121]

State Support for Muslim Organizations

In Finland, religious community organizations and registered associations can apply for municipal support. In the 1990s with the first wave of Muslim immigration, this provision enabled organizations with few resources to thrive. Many local Muslim groups organized and gradually were approved as representatives of local Muslim interests. Approved organizations could utilize state support could to develop their own various religious educational programs and activities.[122]

The Political Debate on Islam and Islamic Education

Although Finland's Muslim population is relatively small, Muslim communities experience a similar level of prejudice and discrimination as their counterparts in other European countries. This can can be traced to abundant media reports on disturbing international events involving Muslims such as war, terrorism, and beheadings.[123] Additionally, some politicians have even begun to openly speak about Muslims in very derogatory terms.[124]

Finnish researcher Toumas Martikainen has noted that over the last decade Finland's Nordic welfare state model[125] has increasingly compelled all religious organizations to become more competitive for state funds.[126] He concludes that:

Except for the high-level security concern over radical Islam, there is nothing that makes the Muslim experience different from those of other religions in the country. It actually seems that the social positions of all religions are becoming closer to each other, including the nationally specific Lutheran and Orthodox Churches, and potentially more controversial. It is in this sense that religion has become public and Finland post-secular.[127]

The Finnish model of religious education has attracted much debate. Many argue in favor of a more integrative, multi-faith model in which all pupils are taught together providing the opportunity for dialogue between different religions. Minorities in Finland are satisfied with the present model and interested in maintaining the status quo. For the municipalities, on the other hand, this model is costly as well as problematic, since IRE and other minority religion teachers are required to travel to many schools each week. These shortcomings notwithstanding, it is clear from Rissanen's study that teachers, pupils, and parents appreciate Finnish IRE and view it as an important acknowledgement of Islam in Finnish society.[128]

121. Sakaranaho "Constructing Islamic Identity," 2009.
122. Martikainen, "Muslim Immigrants," 2014.
123. Birgitta Löwander and Mirjam Hagström, "Antisemitism och islamofobi — utbredning, orsaker och preventivt arbete," Forum for Levande Historia, 2011, 22.
124. Nordin 2005, see also http://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2012/05/09/islamofob-och-sannfinlandare.
125. See, for example, the introduction in Mårtensson, "Introduction: 'Public Islam' and the Nordic Welfare State," 2014, which contains an excellent presentation of the Nordic welfare state model.
126. Martikainen, "Muslim Immigrants," 100.
127. Ibid., 101.
128. Rissanen, *Negotiating Identity*, 2014.

Spain

Islam in Spain dates back to the 8th century and was the country's dominant religion for over 500 years. While small pockets of Muslims remained in Spain after the *Reconquista*, most were expelled after 1492. Prior to the mid-1970s Spain had been primarily a country of emigration; since then, however, it has gradually become a country of immigration, with most migrants being North African Muslims. Today Spain's Muslim population stands at around 1.4 million, or approximately 2.5% of the total population with the majority being of Moroccan decent.[129] The Muslim community in Spain is distinctive in that it contains many European converts who have been instrumental in establishing various Muslim organizations. In 1992, Islam was legally recognized through an Agreement of Cooperation with the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE), which encompasses most of the country's Muslim organizations.[130]

Religious Education

Schools are divided into private and public sectors, with the state subsidizing most of the private (majority Catholic) schools.[131] Both private and public schools are required to offer religious education as well as *alternative activities*. Religious education in public schools is confessional, consisting of mostly Catholic RE, but with some schools offering IRE and other confessional options.[132] While the definition of "alternative activities" seems a bit unclear, these tend to be related to phenomenological understandings of religion and culture.[133]

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

The 1992 Agreement of Cooperation with the Islamic Commission made it possible for Muslim pupils to receive Islamic religious education in public schools. The agreement affords the same rights to recognized religious minorities as it does to the State Catholic Church. Article 10 of the agreement reads:

> Muslim pupils, their parents and any school governing bodies who so request are guaranteed the right of the first mentioned to receive Islamic religious teaching in public and private subsidized schools at the infant, primary and secondary education levels, providing, in the case of private institutions, that the exercise of such right does not conflict with the nature of the school itself.[134]

One criticism that has been lodged against the agreement is that it does not contain an itemized budget, something that has caused the law to remain unimplemented.[135] At first the government provided classrooms and formal admission for teachers appointed by the Muslim communities, but salaries had to be paid by CIE, which was and still is responsible for the curriculum as well.[136] However, in more recent years the government has taken over payment of IRE-

129. Juan Ferreiro Galguera, "Training Centres for Imams in Spain," in *The Training of Imams and Teachers for Islamic Education in Europe*, ed. Ednan Aslan and Zsofia Windisch (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), 257–272.
130. Elena Arigita, "Representing Islam in Spain: Muslim Identities and the Contestation of Leadership," *The Muslim World* 96 (2006): 564; see also Ndeye Andújar Chevrollier, "La Enseñanza Religiosa Islámica en la Escuela," Bordón 58 nos. 4–5 (2006); Ricard Zapata-Barrero, "The Muslims community and Spanish tradition; Maurophobia as a fact and impartiality as a desideratum," in *Multiculturalism, Muslims, and Citizenship: A European Approach*, ed. Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou and Ricard Zapata-Barrero (2006), 143–161.
131. Aurora Álvarez Velinger and Céline Béraud, "Religion and Education in the French and Spanish Context: Distant Cousins," in *Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society*, ed. Thorsten Knauth et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2008), 357–368.
132. Ibid. Catholic RE is organized by the Spanish Conference of Bishops.
133. José Maria Guardia, "Religious Education in Spain," in *Religious Education in Europe*, ed. Elza Kuyk et al. (Oslo: IKO Publishing, 2007), 185–191.
134. Javier Rosón, Sol Tarrés and Jordi Moreras, "Islam and Education in Spain," in *Islam in Education in European Countries: Pedagogical Concepts and Empirical Findings*, ed. Aurora Alvarez Veinguer et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2009), 19.
135. Zapata-Barrero, "The Muslim community and Spanish Tradition," 151.
136. Joaquín Mantecón, "Islam in Spain," in *The Legal Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Europe*, ed. Roberta Aluffi B.–P. and giovanna Zincone (Leuven: Peters, 2004), 227–229.

teacher salaries, at least partially resolving the situation. Although questions concerning the curriculum and the lack of teaching materials and competent IRE teachers have made it difficult to implement the agreement, IRE is now available in primary schools that have a sufficient number of Muslim pupils (no less than 10 in a group) plus a qualified teacher.[137]

Although there is currently no training program specifically designed for IRE-teachers, all are required to meet the ordinary academic standards for teachers and must also speak perfect Spanish. Beyond this, all IRE teachers must be approved by the CIE.[138] Because these requirements have proven difficult to meet, IRE is not offered in many schools even though there are a sufficient number of pupils. For the most part, IRE is presently available in Madrid, Ceuta and Melilla (Spanish towns located in Moroccan territory) and has a countrywide workforce of 40 to 50 qualified teachers, whereas around 450 would be needed. In 2006 and 2007, two IRE textbooks were published where previously IRE teachers had to produce their own teaching materials.[139]

REDCo Project[140] interviews with pupils, parents, teachers, and headmasters involved in Spanish IRE indicate that the program suffers from the following problems: a) many Muslim parents are unaware of their right to obtain IRE; b) parental interest in the program is lacking; c) parents and students mistrust IRE-teachers of a different ethnicity and/or country of origin, or because they lack pedagogical training.[141]

Muslim Schools

There are three types of schools in Spain: public schools, private schools that are partially funded by the state, and private schools that are not funded at all. At present, there are no partially funded Muslim schools.[142]

The Political Debate on Islam and Islamic Education

The 1999 riots between local youths and Maghrebis led to the rise of the Popular (Center-Right) party, which blamed the unrest on the presence of immigrants and called for a reduction in the number of new arrivals. The party's anti-Muslim propaganda campaign has been largely responsible for the negative public views of Islam, which is directly linked to the problem of immigrant integration. This view was undoubtedly heightened further by the March 2004 terror attack on the Attocha-station. Since that time Islamophobia has been on the rise in Spain and Muslims are increasingly being depicted as the "enemy within" by the media.[143]

There has been considerable debate in Spain about the presence of religion in schools. The Catholic Church has had a monopoly on religious education for centuries and still struggles to maintain its position.[144] This becomes more difficult with the increasing diversification of Spanish society and the increased visibility of diverse religions. The lack of suitably trained teachers (i.e., teachers that meet the criteria mentioned above) is a major hurdle for IRE and is crucial to the future of the program. Arranging to bring IRE teachers up to the same standard as other RE teachers is an important goal that would indicate Spain is actually serious about its 1992 agreement.

137. "La educación religiosa islámica en los sistemas públicos de España y de Europa," *Musulmanes de Occidente*, <http://mdocc.casaarabe.es/noticias/show/la-educacion-religiosa-islamica-en-los-sistemas-publicos-de-espana-y-de-europa>. See also Mantecon, "Islam in Spain," 2004.
138. Rosón et al., "Islam and Education in Spain," 21.
139. "La educación religiosa islámica en los sistemas públicos de España y de Europa," *Musulmanes de Occidente*, <http://mdocc.casaarabe.es/noticias/show/la-educacion-religiosa-islamica-en-los-sistemas-publicos-de-espana-y-de-europa>. See also Rosón et al., "Islam and Education in Spain,".
140. "Religion in Education: REDCo," Universitat Hamburg, <http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html>.
141. Rosón et al., "Islam and Education in Spain," 26–29.
142. Juan Ferreiro Galguera, "Islamic Religious Education in Spain," in *Islamic Textbooks and Curricula in Europe*, ed. Ednan Aslan (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 244.
143. Joselyne Cesari, *Muslims in the West after 9/11, Religion, Politics and Law* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2010).
144. Aurora Álvarez Velinger and Céline Béraud, "Religion and Education in the French and Spanish Context: Distant Cousins," in *Encountering Religious Pluralism in School and Society*, ed. Thorsen Knauth et al., (Münster: Waxmann, 2008).

Sweden

Sweden has a population of approximately 9 million and is often characterized as a welfare state, meaning that the state sponsors a variety of social services largely financed by taxes. This is of relevance to the present discussion, since both public and so-called "independent" schools are publicly financed. In addition to Sweden's social welfare programs, there is no charge for university attendance, and religious organizations are able to obtain financial support for some of their activities.[145] Prior to 2000, the Evangelical Lutheran Church had been Sweden's official state church. Today it has the status of a *national* church, meaning it is no longer directly tied to the Swedish state.

The current number of Muslims living in Sweden is around 450,000 persons.[146] Of these, approximately 110,000 are formal members of one or another Islamic congregation, and approximately 100,000 are school-aged or younger.[147] Muslim immigration began in the 1950s and 60s with labor migration, and continued in the 80s with the establishment of a liberal refugee policy. Sweden's refugee policy has since tightened to some degree; but nonetheless—relative to the size of its population—Sweden accepted more refugees in 2013 than any other country in the European Union.[148]

While citizenship for immigrants in most European countries is contingent upon meeting certain national standards and criteria, this trend has not yet taken hold in Sweden. For instance, Sweden does not require Swedish language proficiency as many other European countries do. Political scientist Karin Borevi explains:

> The core idea of Swedish welfare state universalism is that integration presupposes that citizens enjoy equal access to a bundle of fundamental rights. Rights are particularly crucial for integration, as they provide the necessary integrative glue for the entire society. They enable individuals to regard themselves—and be regarded by others—as full and legitimate citizens.[149]

Religious Education

In 1962 a reform measure was established requiring that the school subject "Christianity" be presented in a manner that is "neutral" with respect to questions of faith. Seven years later the subject's name was changed from *Christianity to Knowledge About Religion* (*religionskunskap*). This indicates its transition from a confessional to a non-confessional form of religious education, one that prioritizes teaching *about* religion—including different religions—from a comparative study of religions perspective.[150] The term "non-confessional" means religions should be presented such that no particular worldview is favored above another, and so that pupils from all ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds feel comfortable. Since 1996 the course has been compulsory for all pupils, with no possibility of opting out., Despite the call for neutrality, the course retains a certain Lutheran outlook (or value system) due to the country's historical Protestant Lutheran background.[151]

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145. Mårtensson, "Introduction: 'Public Islam' and the Nordic Welfare State," 2014.
146. Roald 2009.
147. Otterbeck & Bevelander 2006, 8.
148. "Asylum Statistics," Eurostat, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics>.
149. Karin Borevi, "Multiculturalism and welfare state integration: Swedish model path dependency," *Identities, Global Studies in Culture and Power* 21, no. 6 (2014): 717.
150. Sven G. Hartman, " Hur religionsämnet formades," in *Livstolkning och värdegrund*, ed. Edgar Almén et al. (Linköping: Linköpings universitet, 2000) 212–251.
151. Jenny Berglund, "Swedish religion education — Objective but Marinated in Lutheran Protestantism?" *Temenos* 49, no. 2 (2013): 165–184.

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

Since RE is non-confessional and pupils from all types of backgrounds are taught together about different religions, there is no IRE in Swedish schools with the obvious exception of those schools that are Muslim in orientation (see below). Teaching *about* Islam is also part of compulsory non-confessional RE since the national syllabus states that different religions and their rituals, narratives, key ideas, holy places, ceremonies, and symbols must be included when teaching the course. The latest revision of the syllabus (2011) stressed the importance of teaching "varying interpretations and practices" of different religions.[152]

There are a number of publishing houses that produce textbooks for Swedish RE (*Knowledge About Religion*), with each school and teacher deciding which book to use or whether alternate teaching materials (e.g., webpages) are preferable. In his analysis of secondary-level textbook chapters about Islam, Swedish professor Jonas Otterbeck concludes that the choice of content is sometimes "tendentious," marked by insensitivity to the matter of power relations. A major problem of almost all Swedish textbooks is that they often give the impression that all Muslims embrace the same Islamic worldview and follow the same Islamic tradition, without attempting to explain Islam's cultural diversity and changing expressions. According to Otterbeck, a common feature of such books is the tendency to present not *Islam* but rather *Islamism*—i.e., a political interpretation of the Islamic tradition.[153] Similar problems exist in textbooks intended for the lower grades, which generally depict the Muslim lifestyle as being radically different from that of the majority society when, in reality, such a depiction is only applicable to a very small segment of Sweden's Muslim population.[154]

Teacher Training

RE-teachers for the secondary and upper-secondary level receive part of their training at various study of religions departments. While some universities organize courses that are specifically designed for students of teacher education, other universities offer the same set of courses for teaching students as they do for any other student in the religious studies department. In either case, courses about different religions from a history of religions perspective are always a part of a teacher's training. The number of semesters and credits required depends on one's future level of teaching (2 to 4 semesters or 45 to 90 ECTS).

State Support to Religious Organizations

In Sweden, Muslim organizations that are constituted in a certain manner and "approved" receive financial support from the Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities (*Samarbetsnämnden för stöd till trossamfund* or SST). The grant stipulates that the given religious organization contributes "to maintaining and strengthening the fundamental values upon which society is based, and is stable and plays an active role in the community."[155] The purpose of the support is "[to] help to create conditions in which religious communities can pursue active and long-term activities of a religious nature in the form of services, pastoral care, religious instruction and care."[156] From this it follows that a number of Muslim organizations in Sweden receive financial support that can be used to sponsor their own Islamic instruction classes. Minimal research has been conducted regarding the Islamic instruction that mosques and Muslim organizations provide in afternoon and weekend classes. However, a recent report on Qur'an classes in Muslim organizations in

152. *Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre*, (Stockholm: Skolverket, 2011). See also Jenny Berglund, "Islamic education in Sweden," in *Islamic Education in Secular Societies*, ed. Ednan Aslan and Margaret Rausch (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 170.
153. Jonas Otterbeck, "What is a reasonable demand? Islam in Swedish Textbooks," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, no. 4 (2005): 795–812.
154. See also Berglund, "Singing and Music," 2014, and Kjell Härenstam, "Skolboks-islam" (PhD diss., University of Gothenberg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1993).
155. SFS 1999: 932 § 3.
156. Signhild Risenfors, Sevtap Gurdal and Emma Sorbring, *Korankurser som föreningsverksamhet? En undersökning bland muslimska föreningar i Västra Götalandsregionen* (Trollhättan: Högskolan Väst, 2011).

a certain area of Sweden indicates that several such organizations have had problems locating suitable teachers. The report also indicates that attendance at such supplementary classes can be viewed as more of a leisure-time activity that enables Muslim children to interact with friends from different parts of town. It also shows that much of the time is spent on learning the Arabic language, which is obviously necessary for anyone interested in reading the Qur'an.[157]

Muslim Schools

Publicly funded Islamic religious education (IRE) is taught only at Muslim schools, sixteen of which presently exist. Of these, nine have been classified as "Islamic" by the Swedish National Agency for Education and seven have been classified as "Swedish-Arabic" or the like. Because a number of the schools characterized as "Swedish-Arabic" provide some sort of IRE, they can be considered "Muslim" as well. Each Muslim school in Sweden educates between 20 and 750 pupils.[158] Sweden has no tradition of gender-segregated schools and as a consequence, all Muslim schools are co-educational. In terms of dress codes, some schools recommend "modest dress," which generally means skirts or shorts that are not too short and tops that are not too revealing. Although headscarves are not required in any of these schools, in some a majority of the older girls wear them.

Muslim schools in Sweden belong to the category of independent schools, also called "free schools." Such schools are fully funded by the state and must have the same educational aims and basic curriculum (including non-confessional RE) as the public schools, although they are permitted to have a "profile" that is distinctly their own. In Muslim schools, this profile consists of 1–3 hours of IRE per week plus an Islamic school ethos.

There is no national syllabus for IRE; each school is responsible for preparing its own syllabus. However, this local IRE syllabus must be formulated in a way that adheres to the "fundamental (or foundational)" values stipulated in the national curriculum: the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable.[159]

The one to three hours of weekly IRE taught in Muslim schools often consists of a combination of Qur'an studies, Islamic history, and in many schools, Islam-related songs. The remainder of each school's general schedule consists of the standard subjects prescribed by the Swedish national syllabi. In some schools, Qur'anic recitation is taught as part of IRE.[160] Existing research on IRE-classes indicates that the narratives chosen from Islamic history for use in the classroom are selected because of their relevance to the situation of Muslim pupils in modern-day Swedish society—e.g., narratives that concern the importance of generosity and good behavior toward neighbors. This approach can be characterized as a way of connecting the "macro" world of Islamic history to the "micro" world of the pupils. The variation of IRE content from school to school can be attributed to factors such as the interpretative tradition and/or education of the teacher, the student population, the choice of teaching materials, and how the teacher views the majority society.[161] At present there are no available Swedish-language teaching materials for IRE, which means that most teachers import their textbooks from Muslim majority countries.[162]

Some teachers attempt to create their own Swedish teaching materials. One IRE teacher explained that she prefers textbooks with Swedish images of "snow, kindly policemen and health care facilities"

157. Ibid.
158. Berglund, Teaching Islam, 2010. Here it should be noted that since 2010 the number of pupils in some of the Muslim schools has risen.
159. Skolverket, *Curriculum for the compulsory school*, 2011; for examples of local IRE syllabi see the appendix to Berglund, *Teaching Islam*, 2010.
160. Berglund, *Teaching Islam*, 2010. See chapter 3, and also Berglund, "Singing and Music," 2014.
161. Berglund, *Teaching Islam*, 2010; Jenny Berglund, "Global questions in the classroom — The formulation of Islamic religious education at Muslim schools in Sweden," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 32, no. 4 (2011): 492–512.
162. Jenny Berglund, "'Snow, kind policemen and health care facilities': Choosing Teaching Material for IRE in Muslim schools in Sweden," in *Your Heritage or Mine: Teaching in a Multi-Religious Classroom*, ed. Lena Roos and Jenny Berglund (Uppsala: Swedish Science Press, 2009), 107–118; Jenny Berglund, *Teaching Islam*, 2010.

rather than foreign images of palm trees and sand; in other words, she prefers images and descriptions of the environment in which her pupils factually live.[163] Another complaint is that imported Islamic teaching materials tend to depict Muslim girls as being far less active than Muslim boys. To counteract this tendency, one IRE teacher went so far as to bring her own images of girls actively involved in pastimes such as playing football and so on.[164]

Apart from Sweden's primary Muslim schools, there is one publicly funded Muslim community college in Stockholm.[165] The college provides courses needed by immigrants to fulfil compulsory and upper secondary school requirements as well as training in Islamic theology and the Arabic language. It has been especially successful in educating Muslim women that lack basic schooling but are also in need of an educational environment that is *halal* or "culturally safe."

As Sweden currently has no available program for the systematic training of IRE teachers, many IRE teachers receive higher Islamic education in Muslim majority countries or educate themselves. However, according to the strict standards of Sweden's National Agency of Education, such teachers are not qualified enough for formal accreditation, something problematic when evaluating these schools.[166] Since neither Islamic theology nor Islamic pedagogy is offered at Swedish universities, a simple way of addressing this problem would be to allow Islamic courses taken at foreign universities to count toward accreditation in Sweden. Credits received for these out-of-country courses could then be combined with those received from Swedish universities for courses in the educational sciences. Combining these two halves would thus make for one fully accredited IRE teacher.

Political Debates on Islam and Islamic Education

Islamophobia and hate crimes are on the rise in Swedish society.[167] In the 2014 election, the anti-immigrant "Sweden Democrats" political party received nearly 13% of the vote. Moreover, the Swedish media tends to depict Islam and Muslims in a negative light and Muslim immigrants are regularly problematized in public debate. They are often depicted as a minority that is resistant to democracy and secularization and opposed to the established separation of church and state. This notwithstanding, the number of Swedes who agree that "there are too many foreigners in the country" has steadily decreased from 52% in 1993 to 36% in 2009.[168]

A number of controversies have arisen relative to the matter of Muslim schools in Sweden. In both 2003 and 2004 the Swedish National Agency for Education conducted an extensive inspection of Muslim and Arab independent schools, largely as a result of a TV program that had exposed various problems and violations. The TV program was made by a freelance journalist who sold it to one of the state sponsored TV-channels. The first inspection occurred in the autumn of 2003 and resulted in two permit cancellations as well as six calls for particular improvements.[169] After a follow-up visit in 2004, the National Agency issued a "result-memorandum" in which it was stated that "[t]he interviewed students generally express that they are happy in their schools and feel secure during their school day." In addition, it appears that even those schools that escaped criticism during the first inspection also tried to improve in various ways.[170] However, the deprecating news report ultimately led to increased criticism of all Muslim schools, not only those that were mentioned on TV. In reac-

163. Berglund "'Snow, kind policemen and health care facilities,'" 2009; Berglund, *Teaching Islam*, 2010.
164. Ibid.
165. "Kista Folkhogskola," <http://kistafolkhogskola.se/>.
166. Berglund, *Teaching Islam*, 59–60.
167. Otterbeck, "What is a reasonable demand?" 2005: Göran Larsson and Simon Stjernholm, *Främlingsfientliga handlingar mot trossamfund* (Stockholm: Nämnden för statligt stöd för trossamfund, 2014), <http://www.sst.a.se/sstsuppdrag/framlingsfientligahandlingar.4.2fd784f81498e7bc198f3809.htm>.
168. Borevi, "Multiculturalism and welfare state integration," 719.
169. Press Release, *National Agency for Education*, December 18, 2003, <http://www.skolverket.se/press/pressmeddelanden/2003/tre-muslimska-arabiska-fristaende-skolor-uppfyller-inte-kraven-for-godkannande-1.236>.
170. Press Release, *National Agency for Education*, May 12, 2003.

tion to the negative attitudes that the program engendered, many Muslim parents and IRE teachers believed it to be part of an organized "conspiracy" against Muslims in Swedish society.[171]

Today Muslim schools in Sweden have entered a phase of greater stability. There has not been a comparative analysis of academic performance in Muslim schools, non-Muslim free schools, and public schools. Should the findings of such a proposed study provide proof of the academic success of these schools, this would be yet another step toward their acceptance by Swedish society.

Muslim schools are often mistakenly discussed as if they are homogeneous entities. While it is true that all these schools must follow the national curriculum, the teaching of IRE varies between schools in terms of content, teaching style, and choice of materials depending upon the interpretation of Islam.[172] Unfortunately, there is very little knowledge in Swedish society about these theological differences.

171. Personal interview with author, April 5, 2012.
172. See Berglund, *Teaching Islam*, 2010.

United Kingdom

Britain's Muslim population is approximately 2.7 million or around 4.4 percent of the population.[173] The majority come from one or another former colony, with around three-quarters having South Asian backgrounds. A large Muslim migration to Britain occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when many moved from the Indian subcontinent to fill the labor shortage and help rebuild British industry after WWII.[174]

The Anglican Church of England is Britain's established Church and plays a major role in the educational system. To balance its historical privileges, a compensatory system has been created to provide religious minorities with the same possibility to thrive. As will be seen, education is an area where minority religions have become increasingly involved.

The 1989 Rushdie Affair[175] was a pivotal event in terms of the public discussion of multiculturalism and Islam in Britain. Prior to this, minorities had not taken a strong role in the public debate on integration and how multiculturalism should best be achieved.[176] While the following primarily focuses on England, it should also be noted that significant differences exist between England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland when it comes to the provision of education.

Religious Education

Religious education (RE) in England is a non-confessional multi-faith[177] school subject; its aims are educational rather than religious. While it seeks to contribute to the pupil's personal, spiritual, and intellectual development, it avoids cultivating an interest in and/or promoting any particular religion—or, for that matter, "religion" in general. The religious education provision may thus be considered suitable for students of all faiths (or none at all). Although RE is an obligatory school subject (with a provision for opting out), it is not included in the national curriculum but rather belongs to what is known as the "basic curriculum," which allows for local input.[178] This kind of non-confessional religious education is taught in all schools with the exception of those that are independent and those that are voluntary aided schools with a religious foundation.[179] The system maintains a degree of flexibility in that the syllabi are locally drafted by the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). This permanent board is comprised of representatives from four stakeholders: the Church of England, other religious denominations, local politicians, and teachers. The number of Muslim appointees to this council has significantly increased over the years.[180]

173. "Statistics of the Muslim population in the UK for 2011, 2012 and 2013," *Office for National Statistics, UK*, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/business-transparency/freedom-of-information/previous-foi-requests/people--population-and-community/statistics-of-the-muslim-population-in-the-uk-for-2011--2012-and-2013/index.html>
174. Halstead, "Islamic Education in the United Kingdom,",179.
175. In 1988 British-Indian novelist Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* was published. Rushdie was accused of blasphemy, and in 1989 Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa* (a legal opinion) proclaiming that Rushdie should be killed. For a thorough analysis see, for example, Kenan Malik's *From Fatwa to Jihad The Rushdie Affair and Its Legacy* (2009).
176. "Islam in the United Kingdom," *Euro-Islam*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/united-kingdom/>.
177. Alberts (2007) calls multifatih religious education 'integrative' since pupils of different faiths are integrated in the same classroom.
178. Halstead, "Islamic Education in the United Kingdom," 189.
179. Jozsa, "Islam and Education in Europe," 70. Voluntary Aided Schools are state-funded schools in which a trust or foundation (often a religious organization) has an influence on its operations and provides funds for for the purchase of things such as the school building, which is often owed by the trust. Voluntary Aided Schools have more autonomy than Voluntary Controlled Schools, which are entirely funded by the state.
180. Halstead "Islamic Education in the United Kingdom," 190; see also Wanda Alberts, "Didactics of the Study of Religions," *Numen* 55, (2008): 300–334.

The English school system consists of both public and private schools, all of which are required to hold a daily collective worship that is of Christian character.[181] However, any school can request a "determination" that allows for a different type of collective worship (e.g., that which is Islamic in character).[182] While Church of England schools have historically received public funding as voluntary aided schools, all schools that follow the national curriculum and employ qualified teachers are now eligible to receive government assistance.[183]

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

Although England's public schools do not offer confessional Islamic Religious Education (IRE) as a separate school subject, non-confessional RE does include Islam among the religions that are discussed. Pupils are taught *about* Islam as opposed to learning *into* it. British educational researcher Shiraz Thobani has criticized the course for presenting the major religions simply as "world religions" without much context, arguing that each religion (and its various denominations) should be explored within specific and changing settings.[184] Thobani further notes that when Islam is presented as a world religion, it is most often characterized as a system of doctrines, rituals, and ethics and the life of Mohammad is discussed only from a static historical perspective—a mode of presentation that tends to neglect historical development and diversity.[185] While Thobani's critique is valid, it is worth noting that there are now several UK-based projects developing religion courses that *do* emphasize context and diverse interpretations (e.g., the interpretative and ethnographic approaches coming out of Warwick Religions and Educations Research Unit (WRERU)).[186]

The long tradition of non-confessional RE in Britain is paralleled by a long tradition of stellar RE-research. The *British Journal of Religious Education* is one of the leading scholarly publications in this field, credited with publishing and evaluating several influential models for teaching non-confessional RE.[187] In recent years research on different types of Islamic Education in the UK and internationally has also become more frequent.

Since RE is a school subject that has a locally derived rather than a national syllabus, the content of the course can vary from region to region. Apart from obligatory non-confessional RE, schools are able to offer "public exam" courses on particular religions (including Islam), taught from a comparative study of religions perspective.[188] Students also can learn about Islam in history classes, and, less frequently, in classes on art, science, geography, etc.[189] Thobani points out that aspects of his critique have been echoed by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).[190] He further notes that:

[British school texts] appear to deploy a peripheral vision, as opposed to a direct gaze, when representing the Muslim world. Muslim history on the whole is portrayed as lying on the fringes of temporal and geographical zones. It is treated as a pedagogical elective and, like the past of other migrant communities, considered connected to British history, despite the

181. Halstead, "Islamic Education in the United Kingdom," 196.
182. Ibid., 191.
183. Ibid.
184. Thobani, *Islam in the School Curriculum*, 55.
185. Shiraz Thobani, "Peripheral vision in the national curriculum: Muslim history in the British education context," in *Narrating Islam: Interpretations of the Muslim World in European Texts*, ed. Gerdien Jonker and Shiraz Thobani (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010): 234–256.
186. Se for example Nesbitt 2004 and Robert Jackson, "Understanding religious diversity in a plural world: the interpretive approach," in *International Handbook of the Religious, Moral, and Spiritual Dimension of Education*, ed. Mario de Souza et al. (Dordrecht: Springer Academic Publishers, 2006); Robert Jackson, *Education and religious diversity: the interpretive approach in international context* (Münster: Waxmann, 2010).
187. See, for example, Robert Jackson and Kevin O'Grady, "Religion and Education in England," in *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, ed. Robert Jackson et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2007), 193–196.
188. Jozsa "Islam and Education in Europe," 74.
189. Halstead, "Islamic Education in the United Kingdom," *Islamische Erziehung in Europa: Islamic Education in Europe*, (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 193.
190. Thobani, "Peripheral vision in the national curriculum," 251.

prolonged engagement of British colonialism as well as post-colonial interventions in Muslim regions, not overlooking at the same time the settlement of Muslims in Britain in recent times.[191]

Muslim Schools

The diversity of Britain's Muslim communities in combination with the diversity of educational possibilities makes for the existence of various types of Muslim schools.[192] To date there are over one-hundred Muslim schools in England, but of these only eleven are publicly funded, having achieved the status of voluntary aided schools. As mentioned, public funding requires a school to follow the national curriculum and employ qualified teachers.[193] Although Muslim schools have existed in England since the 1980s, it was not until 1998 that one received public funding.[194]

Several British scholars have found that such schools are viewed by Muslim communities as one way of protecting their identity, which is seen as being under attack in various ways. Some Muslims are concerned that the public school curriculum disregards religious teachings and lacks accurate information about Islam and its historical achievements.[195] In a study of Muslim school's transitions from private to public funding, British education researcher Damian Breen shows that when a private Muslim school becomes publicly funded it begins to experience both formal and informal pressure from state institutions and the surrounding society. The state organs generally focus on the fulfillment of the criteria for continued public funding, and by following this path the schools begin their march toward professionalization.[196]

In comparing privately and publicly funded schools in England, Breen also found that the primary goal of both sets of schools is more or less the same—i.e., "to produce young Muslims who are confident in their Islamic identity and who would prosper in wider society."[197] Differences, however, arise over how to achieve this dual goal. In privately funded schools, it is generally believed that the best way to produce confident young Muslims is by means of an all-Muslim staff that embodies the tenets of Islam and teaches the children by example. In publicly funded schools, while the means of producing confident young Muslims also entails teaching the provisions of Islam, there is the contrasting conviction that a mixed Muslim/non-Muslim staff best prepares pupils for life in wider society. Apparently, being privately or publicly funded has implications relative to infrastructure.

Although only publicly funded schools are required to follow the national curriculum, many of the non-funded schools choose to do so as well, largely in order to prepare their pupils for the national exams. However, doing so may have consequences in circumstances where, for instance, more conservative interpretations of Islam would ordinarily call for the omission of aspects of the national curriculum that are considered un-Islamic—e.g., in relation to music, figurative arts, or value lessons.[198] A London-based IRE teacher provides an example of the how the dilemma can be negotiated: "we sing a lot, but only lyrics that could be considered Islamic and when we draw we teach the children the art of calligraphy. Also in science we try to include the names of great Muslim astronomers, mathematicians and doctors."[199] Ofsted inspects Muslim schools along with all the other schools in Britain and publishes the results on the Ofsted webpage.

191. Thobani, "Peripheral vision in the national curriculum," 244.
192. Mandaville, "Islamic Education in Britain," 228–229; see also Niehaus, "Emancipation or Disengagement?" 2011; Geoffrey Walford, "English Education and Immigration Policies and Muslim Schools," in *Educational Strategies Among Muslims in the Context of Globalization: Some National Case Studies*, ed. Holger Daun and Geoffrey Walford (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 209–228. In the UK there is also a possibility for home schooling, see for example Ahmed 2012.
193. Breen, "State-Funded Muslim Schools," 42.
194. Mandaville, "Islamic Education in Britain," 230.
195. Claire Tinker and Andrew Smart, "Constructions of collective Muslim identity by advocate sof Muslim schools in Britain," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35, 4 (2012): 643–663, see also Shah 2011: 51–65, Ahmed 2012: 725–749.
196. Breen, "State-Funded Muslim Schools," 2013
197. Ibid., 54.
198. Niehaus, "Emancipation or Disengagement?" 117–118.
199. Personal interview with author, April 30, 2014.

The Islamia schools are among the better-known schools in England and their primary school in London was the first Muslim school to receive public funding.[200] They describe their curriculum as being "based on the National Curriculum enhanced by Qur'anic, Arabic, and Islamic Studies in a secure Islamic environment through the application of the Qur'an and Sunnah."[201] There are wide variations in the quality and content of educational provision among various Muslim faith schools. A representative from one such school expresses: "we cannot claim that all Islamic schools are good—some are, some are not. They show the same variations as other schools, of course."[202] Variations among Muslim schools involve not only the quality of education (as determined by Ofsted), but also the matter of theological affiliation. Despite the fact that publicly funded Muslim schools must keep to the national curriculum, they still have the freedom to present Islam in a number of ways to reflect a variety of interpretations.

Debates on Islam and Islamic Education

In 2005 the chief inspector of schools expressed concern that Muslim schools were not adequately preparing their pupils for entry into British society. In the aftermath of the London bombings, this issue took on a greater mood of urgency and resulted in the inauguration of special programs for the development of citizenship education within several Muslim faith schools.[203] Later research has shown that many Muslim schools use Islam and the Qu'ran to support citizenship education, with students tending to draw on Islamic values when developing a Muslim national identity that promotes solidarity and democratic values.[204]

The London bombings (2005) also brought the general question of Islam (and Islamic education) to the forefront of the policy agenda, in addition to such earlier events as 9/11, the Bradford riots (2001), and Britain's involvement in the Afghan (2001) and Iraqi (2003) wars. This troubling chain of events sharply polarized the debate on Muslim education in an environment that had already been fraught with tensions and disagreement. A new discourse on the cultural representation of Muslims emerged, predominantly framed by anxieties fomented by militant extremism. In 2002, citizenship education was introduced in all schools, and in 2007, those schools that were publicly funded but privately run (such as the Muslim schools) were obliged to actively stimulate social cohesion.[205]

The debate about Muslim schools in Britain is at times contentious, with both supporters and opponents of such schools basing their arguments on equal rights, social cohesion and identity. Head teachers of state-funded Muslim schools often emphasize strong academic performance, arguing that Muslim children perform better in Muslim schools than they do in secular state schools. Muslim parents in particular seem to appreciate the higher behavioral standards of Muslim schools. On the opposite side, groups such as *Women Against Fundamentalism* particularly object to what they consider to be the differential treatment of boys and girls in some Muslim schools.[206]

In the ongoing debate about Islam and education, the recent "Trojan Horse Affair" is worth mentioning despite the fact that it involved secular schools rather than publicly funded Muslim schools. In March of 2014, the British media leaked an anony-

200. Mandaville, "State-Funded Muslim Schools," 230.
201. Islamia Primary School, <http://islamiaprimary.org.uk/>.
202. Perosnal Interview with author, April 30, 2014.
203. Mandaville, "State-Funded Muslim Schools," 2007.
204. Ibid; see also Christopher Bagley and Nader Al-Refai, "Citizenship Education: A Study of Muslim Students in Ten Islamic and State Secondary Schools in Britain," in *Reforms in Islamic Education*, ed. Charlene Tan (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 195–210; Halstead, "Islamic Education in the United Kingdom," 2009.
205. "Education and Inspections Act 2006," *The National Archives*, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>; see also Farid Panjwani, "Religion, citizenship and hope: civic virtues and education about Muslim traditions," in *Sage Handbook of Education for Citizenship and Democracy*, ed. James Arthur, Ian Davies, and Carol Hahn (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 292–304 for a discussion on Islam and citizenship education.
206. For a thorough discussion on the arguments for and against state funded Muslim schools in Britain see Claire Tinker, "Rights, social cohesion and identity: arguments for and against state-funded Muslim schools in Britain," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 12, 4 (2009): 539–553.

mous letter alleging that Salafists were taking over schools in Birmingham to promote their specific agenda.[207] Ofsted decided to investigate the matter, as did the Department of Education. They appointed Peter Clarke, a former senior counter-terrorism official to lead its investigation. His report claimed to have found "a coordinated agenda to impose hardline Sunni Islam,"[208] following which the Birmingham City Council appointed Ian Kershew to conduct a further investigation. Kershew, however, found "no evidence of a conspiracy," no evidence of violent extremism and no evidence of radicalization or some sort of anti-British agenda; he merely found a desire to improve educational attainments by promoting certain Islamic principles and values. He did warn of governance problems in some of Birmingham's Muslim schools and criticized the city council's role in sanctioning or ignoring such practices.[209] As a knee-jerk reaction to this Trojan Horse affair it seems as Ofsted's remit has been extended to evaluating values in a way that has led to actions during inspections that has made Ofted highly criticized for "straying beyond its legal brief".[210]

The British educational system displays a wide variety of educational options for parents. The fact that some Muslim schools characterize IRE as a type of citizenship education to promote social cohesion can be viewed as an attempt to facilitate Muslim integration and engagement in British society. Although a large amount of research has been conducted on religious education in Britain, the number of studies dealing with the content of IRE is still rather small. The "Trojan Horse affair" shows that the matter of Islam and education remains a highly contentious issue in British society. Broadly speaking, the political class, the media and various Muslim groups have divided into two distinct camps: those who believe that British society must wake up and come to grips with the real and present danger of Islamic radicalization, and those who believe that this is all misguided and essentially serves an agenda that marginalizes and/or scapegoats Muslim communities. Researchers repeatedly pointed to the rise of Islamophobia in British society, with the Runnymede Trust report setting the standard in this regard.[211]

Britain's integration policy is historically based on valuing and promoting cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Over the last decade, however, the discourse on multiculturalism appears to have become more negative and intertwined with the political identity of Muslims in particular.[212] Still, political and institutional leaders today are more prone to reach out to the leaders of Muslim groups when problems arise (as has been shown above). Muslim schools, religious institutions, and social organizations now have a greater possibility of receiving the same degree of state funding that is extended to Christian and Jewish groups.[213]

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207. Richard Adams, "Scathing report could shut Muslim school for promoting Salafi beliefs," *The Guardian*, May 21, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/may/21/ofsted-inpsectors-faith-school-salafi-olive-tree-primary>.
208. Patrick Wintour, "Trojan horse inquiry: 'A coordinated agenda to impose hardline Sunni Islam'," *The Guardian*, July 17, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/jul/17/birmingham-schools-inquiry-hardline-sunni-islam-trojan-horse>.
209. "Trojan Horse: Reaction to council and government reports," *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-birmingham-28374058>. This affair is ongoing (July 2014) i.e. what will be the result is at present possible to tell.
210. Colin Richards, "Ofsted's chief inspector is not in a position to play God," *TES* Opinion, 10 December 2014, https://news.tes.co.uk/b/opinion/2014/12/10/ofsted-s-chief-inspector-is-not-in-a-position-to-play-god-not-his-subordinate-angels-on-their-visits-to-schools.aspx.
211. *Islamophobia: A Challenge to Us All*, Runnymede Trust (1997); Allen et al.
212. Meer & Modood 2014, 666.
213. Ibid., 668.

France

France contains a population of 3.5 to 5 million Muslims, representing 6 to 8.5 percent of the population.[214] Muslim migration dates back to the 19th century, with many French Muslims being either migrants or children of migrants from former French colonies. France's colonial history in Muslim-dominant countries has resulted in supposedly "special" treatment of Islam over other minority religions.[215]

France is a secular republic with a legal system dating back to the 1905 Separation of Churches and State Act.[216] While a strict separation between church and state is an important principle that governs all religions, in practice there are several "modifications and relaxations."[217] For example, "public utility" associations (including those that are religious) enjoy certain tax advantages.[218] The French republican model of integration has been described as civic-territorial and assimilationist,[219] meaning that citizens are expected to voluntarily recognize the egalitarian values of the nation and express any cultural and religious differences only in private, as these hold no political legitimacy in the public sphere.[220]

Religious Education

Among all the European countries discussed in this paper, France maintains the strictest separation between church and state. French schools are the emblem of French-style secularism, known as *laïcité*. French schools also have been one of the most important institutions for instilling French values in different social groups such as economically disadvantaged classes and immigrants.[221] Prior to the 1905 law separating church and state, an 1881/82 law pertaining to free, mandatory, and laïque (secular) primary schooling had been introduced.[222] The principle of laïcité upholds the neutrality of the state toward religion, demanding that schools and other public institutions remain non-religious.[223] In keeping with this 1905 law, religious education classes have no place in French schools. Instead, primary schools are permitted to close one day a week (with the exception of Sunday) to allow parents to enroll their children in religious education organized by non-state entities.[224] While these religious education courses can sometimes take place on school premises, courses are conducted by a religious organization. However,

214. "Islam in France," *Euro-Islam*, <http://www.euro-islam.info/country-profiles/france/>.
215. Joselyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 23. An example of this is the already mentioned Grande Mosque in Paris, which was built by the French government in appreciation of the Muslims who fought for France in World War I.
216. Note, however, that in France there are three departments that have publicly funded confessional religious education: the Alsace-Moselle departments of Northeastern France, which prior to 1905 were considered part of Germany (see Louis Hourmant and Jean-Paule Willaime, "L'enseignement religieux dans les écoles publiques d'Alsace-Moselle : évolutions et defies," in *Le défi de l'enseignement des faits religieux à l'école: réponses européennes et québécoises*, ed. Jean-Paule Willaime (Paris: Reveneuve, 2014), 309–330.
217. Brigitte Basdevant-Gaudemet, "Islam in France," in *The Legal Treatment of Islamic Minorities in Europe*, ed. Roberta Aluffi B.–P. and Giovanna Zioncone (Leuven: Peeters, 2004): 59.
218. Ibid., 60.
219. Jacques Barou, "Integration of immigrants in France: a historical perspective," *Identities, Global Studies in Culture and Power* 21, 6 (2014): 643.
220. Ibid.
221. Ibid., 645.
222. Velinger and Béraud, "Religion and Education in the French and Spanish Context: Distant Cousins," 2008.
223. Jean-Paul Willaime, "Teaching Religious Issues in French Public Schools: From Abstensionist Laïcité to a Return of Religion in Public Education," in *Religion and Education in Eurpoe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*, ed. Robert Jackson et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2007), 87; see also Velinger and Béraud, "Religion and Education in the French and Spanish Context: Distant Cousins," 2008.
224. Ibid.

religious education in the Alsace-Moselle region differs from the general approach in all other regions of France.[225]

In 2001, French academic and philosopher Régis Debray produced a report for the minister of education about the state of religion in French schools.[226] The report, entitled *Teaching Religious Facts in a Secular School*, offers a number of recommendations, one of which proposes integrating the study of religion into a range of subjects, including history and philosophy. As a result of the Debray Report, the European Institute of Religious Sciences (IESR) was established in 2006 at the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* at the Sorbonne.[227] IESR's mission is to help teachers incorporate "religious facts" into certain school subjects and to encourage discussions on curriculum content. Debray concludes that the French principle of *laïcité* still stands at the heart of the new policy; however, rather than being anti-religious, *laicite* guarantees one's freedom of religion. According to Debray: "*Laïcité* is an opportunity for Islam in France and French Islam is an opportunity for *laïcité*."[228]

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

Although IRE is not taught within the French publicly funded school system, parents who want their children to learn about Islam outside the home send their children to afternoon or weekend classes provided by mosques and private Islamic organizations.

Teaching about Islam

Although religious education in France is not a separate school subject, education *about* religion has now been incorporated into subjects as history and philosophy (as recommended by Debray). These subjects primarily address religion's contribution to civilization rather than religious rituals and beliefs. Islam, for example, is regarded as historically important to Mediterranean development due to its advances in algebra, astronomy, medicine, geography, and agriculture, as well as its contribution to artistic and scientific progress. In many ways, Islam and other religions are treated as if they belong to the pre-modern world.[229]

A teenage boy attending an afternoon class at a Parisian mosque confirms: "Here I have learned about how to live as a good Muslim, how to pray and fast; it is strange that my other schoolmates don't know about this—except, of course, the ones who are Muslim."[230]

Many teachers perceive teaching *about* Islam to be difficult due to a lack of education as well as the generally negative perception of Islam in French society. One teacher has characterized this difficulty as follows: "When I say something about Islam there is always a pupil who says it is not right. I don't know what is right myself, how would I? I was trained as a history teacher, not in religion. The easiest is to avoid speaking about religion, and Islam in particular."[231]

While teachers are able to take elective courses on religious topics, core teacher training contains little on teaching religion.[232] As a result, some French universities have recently attempted to improve teacher education by including teaching *about* religion per the recommendations of the Debray report. This indicates a shift in France toward acknowledg-

225. Anne van den Kerchove, "Islam within the Framework of 'Laicité ': Islam in Education in France," in Islam and Education in European Countries: Pedagogical Concepts and Empirical Findings, ed. Aurora Alvarez Veinguer et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2009). The reason for this exception is that the region is still under an 1801 concordat that allows for the teaching of religious education in primary and secondary schools.
226. Regis Debray, "L'enseignement du fait religieux dans l'ecole laïque," French Ministry of National Education, 2002.
227. "Institut européen en sciences des religions," < http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr/>.
228. Debray, "L'enseignement du fait religieux dans l'ecole laïque," 42.
229. Van den Kerchove, "Islam within the Framework of 'Laicité,'" 2009; Sabine Mannitz, "The Place of Religion in Four Civil Cultures," in *Civil Enculturation, Nation-State, School and Ethnic Difference in Four European Countries*, ed. Werner Schiffauer et al. (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004): 88–119.
230. Perosnal interview with author, May 6, 2014.
231. Interview May 6, 2014.
232. Van den Kerchove, "Islam within the Framework of 'Laicité,'" 2009.

ing the importance of teachers with a background in the comparative study of religions.[233]

In lower-secondary schools (*college*), knowledge *about* Islam is primarily presented through history courses, with an emphasis on Islam's formative period—an approach that is the same for all religious traditions. Knowledge *about* religion is also sometimes taught in philosophy and art history; art history is considered an especially appropriate opportunity for discussions of Islam and other religions.[234]

Muslim Schools

There are three types of schools in France: public school, Catholic schools subsidized by the state, and privately funded schools. In public schools, the display of religious symbols in school facilities is strictly prohibited, as is the wearing of religious symbols or clothing such as the hijab, *kippah* or "big" crosses. This prohibition was confirmed by a bill drafted in 2004, which states that dress and signs that "ostensibly manifest the religious affiliation of pupils in state schools" are not allowed.[235]

While many Muslim parents send their children to Catholic schools, a small number of private Muslim schools do exist and have increased in number since the "Affaire de Foulard"[236] ("the head-scarf affair") and a 1994 Ministry of Education directive stating that headscarves were "elements of proselytism in themselves" and are thus unacceptable.[237] A number of privately run Muslim schools are "under contract" (*sous contract*) with the state, meaning that they receive state funding for the teachers' salaries and thus must follow the national curriculum. School must have been functioning for at least five years to obtain this "contract."[238] Averroès High School in Lillie is one such Muslim school; the school attracted much attention when it received top rankings.[239]

Political Debate on Islam and Islamic education

Research points to a general distrust of Islam in French society, largely caused by the French colonial experience in Algeria and violence in the greater Muslim world. French researcher Jacques Barou has pointed out that since the 1980s France's second-generation Muslim immigrants have become marginalized. He notes that while earlier generations of immigrants were "first socially integrated, then assimilated, before finally also identifying politically with France," Muslims originating from North Africa in particular tend to feel politically and socially excluded, causing frustration and unrest in urban areas.[240] Younger generations of French Muslims have been more demanding of human rights and freedoms, seeking equal rights to their Christian neighbors.

While Islamophobia gains ground in France, as in most other European countries, most legislative attempts to restrict Muslim expressions and practices have not been successful.[241] A notable

233. Tim Jensen and Karna Kjeldsen, "RE in France," *LLP-Comenius Project: Intercultural Education through Religious Studies*, forthcoming 2015.
234. Ibid., 28.
235. Basdevant-Gaudemet, "Islam in France," 74.
236. The "Affaire du Foulard," or the wearing of the Islamic headscarf, has caused considerable controversy in France; see, for example, Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000),130; Ritva Kastoryano, "French secularism and Islam: France's headscarf affair," in *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach*, ed. Tariq Modood et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 57–69.
237. Quoted in Basdevant-Gaudemet, "Islam in France," 73; see also Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe*, 2000.
238. Van den Kerchove, "Islam within the Framework of 'Laicité,'" 2009.
239. "France's first private Muslim school tops the ranks," *France 24*, March 29, 2013, <http://www.france24.com/en/20130329-france-first-private-muslim-school-tops-ranks-averroes/>.
240. Barou, "Integration of immigrants in France," 648.
241. According to the *Collectif Contre L'Islamophobie en France* (CCIF) [The National Observatory Against Islamophobia], the number of Islamophobic incidents in 2014 showed an overall decrease from the previous year. This, however, must be considered in light of the fact that within that general framework, acts of vandalism and other forms of harrassment and violence have increase by 12.5 % during that same period, while the number of verbal threats have decreased by 45%. The president of CCIF claims that this general decrease does not necessarily reflect what is happening on the ground since Muslims, like other groups, do not report each and every Islamophobic act.

exception was the famous ban of the *hijab* in public places. Other legal attempts—including an attempt to curtail Muslim practices on college campuses and workplaces, a ban on ritual slaughter of animals, and blocking halal alternatives in school lunch programs—have failed, despite aggressive anti-Muslim campaigns.[242]

The past several decades have seen increased discussions on the necessity of teaching *about* religion in France. The Debray report marked a positive shift in the French attitude toward teaching *about* religion (including Islam), although adequate teacher training programs remain lacking. The establishment of the European Institute of Religious Sciences can be viewed as an important step toward providing teachers with the necessary knowledge to make informed choices about how Islam should be taught within their school subjects.

242. See, for example, Gabon, "L'Islamophobie est-elle en train de s'essouffler?" 2013.

The United States

Estimates differ regarding the size of the U.S. Muslim population, with figures ranging from two to seven million.[243] In 2011, the Pew Institute set the number at around 2.75 million. The U.S. Muslim population is diverse and consists mainly of immigrants. More than 63% of American Muslims 18 years of age or older, were born abroad; with 25% of Muslims immigrants arrived starting from 2000.[244]

The United States Constitution maintains a clear separation between church and state, as expressed in the Constitution's sacrosanct First Amendment:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.[245]

This fundamental principle of American government has significantly impacted public funding of religious education.

Religious Education

In the United States, publicly funded schools and universities cannot teach religion in a way that favors one particular tradition, meaning that schools must remain neutral relative to religion. Teaching religion in schools was brought before the Supreme Court in the now classic case *Abington School District v. Schempp* (1963), which held that school-sponsored prayer and devotional Bible readings violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.[246] A poll from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2010 has found that many Americans believe that the Constitution places greater restraints on religious education in public schools than it actually does.[247]

Over the last twenty-five years, the First Amendment Center (FAC) has compiled information about how to teach religion in accordance with the First Amendment. Both the FAC and the American Academy of Religion (AAR) have produced a number of publications on this subject.[248] And yet, despite the widespread call to teach *about* religion with neutrality in public schools, there exist no teacher training programs on this in higher education.[249] According to several American scholars, there is a growing consensus of opinion concerning why it is important to teach *about* religion in public schools:

> Teaching about religion makes an indispensable contribution to *historical and cultural literacy*. It is simply impossible to adequately understand history and culture (literature, art, music, philosophy, law, ethics, politics) without knowing the role that religious beliefs, practices, and communities have played and continue to play in human life.[250]

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243. Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam*, xxv.
244. "Muslim Americans: No signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Exremism," *Pew Research Center*, August 30, 2011, <http://www.people-press.org/2011/08/30/muslim-americans-no-signs-of-growth-in-alienation-or-support-for-extremism/>.
245. "About the First Amendment," *The First Amendment Center*, <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/about-the-first-amendment>.
246. *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 1963; see also Grelle, "Teaching About Religions in US Public Schools," 2006; Moore 2012.
247. The Pew Forum, "Who Knows What About Religion?" 2010, http://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/28/u-s-religious-knowledge-survey-who-knows-what-about-religion/.
248. "About the First Amendment," *The First Amendment Center*; see also Grelle forthcoming; "Guidelines for Teaching About Religion" *American Academy of Religion*, May 2010, <https://www.aarweb.org/about/teaching-about-religion-aar-guidelines-for-k-12-public-schools>.
249. Douglass, "Teaching about Religion, 94. Beyond this, the FAC has also published a guidebook that informs teachers about Islam and Muslims in the United States: *What is the Truth About American Muslims? Questions and Answers*.
250. Grelle, "Teaching about Religions in US Public Schools," 2006; see also Diane L. Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Publicly Funded Islamic Education

Most Muslim children attend public school in the United States. However, in 2009 there were an estimated 235 private Islamic schools that, like all private schools in the United States, are not eligible for public funding.[251] The majority of Muslim schools are K-6, even though Muslim high schools also exist. Many of these schools combine a secular educational program with classes in Arabic and IRE.[252]

Teaching about Islam

The only publicly funded Islamic education permitted public schools is education *about* Islam, which for decades has been embedded in courses on world history, geography, and world religion.[253] Teaching *into* Islam (or, for that matter, any other religion) is out of the question—i.e., teachers cannot claim the truth or untruth of religious scriptures and beliefs. Reenacting a sacred event or simulating a religious ritual, for example, is considered inappropriate because it could place a student in the awkward position of having to pretend a belief that is not factually held, and would be considered disrespectful to the event or ritual in question.[254] In *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*, Diane Moore presents a cultural studies approach to teaching about Islam that is suitable for publicly funded schools.[255] This model has been used extensively not only by public schools, but by private schools as well.

Teacher education

Teacher training in the United States does not require the comparative study of religions. Each state determines its own educational standards and requirements, which are then applied by local school boards. In general, however, teachers are rarely taught about religion in their formal teacher training.[256] Instead, many seek professional development opportunities as part of the license renewal process. Harvard Divinity School has launched a Religious Literacy Project that aims to enhance the public's understanding of religion and map how religion is actually taught in American K-12 schools. The project describes its contribution as follows:

> We provide resources and special training to educators, journalists, public health workers, foreign-service officers, interfaith/multifaith groups, students, and others dedicated to understanding the complex roles that religions play in contemporary global, national, and local contexts.[257]

Textbooks

Textbooks from the 1970s and 1980s portrayed Islam, Muslims, and the Middle East with numerous inaccuracies. Textbook companies were often slow to correct mistakes and draw upon scholarly work.[258] The Council on Islamic Education (CIE) has regularly drawn attention to these flaws and urged publishers to improve textbook quality. While many publishers have responded positively to this demand, the CIE has also been accused of censorship, and some publishers have been criticized for using Muslim activist groups as a point of reference rather than academic scholarship on Islam.[259] In the 1980s, most textbooks contained approximately one paragraph or so on each world religion, although by the 1990s many textbooks contained a full lesson, or even a chapter, on each.

Political Debate on Islam and Islamic education

Most Muslims in America perceive that their lives have become more difficult since the attacks

251. Haddad and Smith, "Introduction: The Challenge of Islamic Education," 12.
252. Nadia Roumani, "Education, Islamic," in *Encyclopedia of Islam in the United States Vol. One*, ed. Jocelyne Cesari (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), 205.
253. Douglass, "Teaching about Religion," 2009.
254. Associated Press Wire Report, "Families' lawyer: Muslim role-playing in school went too far," *The First Amendment Center*, October 21, 2005, <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/families-lawyer-muslim-role-playing-in-school-went-too-far>.
255. Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy*, 2007.
256. Grelle, "Teaching about Religions in US Public Schools," 2006.
257. Harvard Divinity School, "Religious Literacy Project," <http://hds.harvard.edu/faculty-research/programs-and-centers/religious-literacy-project>.
258. Douglass, "Teaching about Religion," 87.
259. G.T. Sewall, *Islam in the Classroom: What the Textbooks Tell Us* (New York: The American Textbook Council, 2008).

of September 11. Prior to this event discussions on Islam and Muslim terrorism primarily treated these as external threats to American interests abroad. Afterwards, however, the notions of both homeland and homegrown terrorism strongly entered public discourse and discrimination against Muslims began to increase.[260] Pew Institute polling also indicates that the primary current concern of American Muslims is discrimination and prejudice.[261] This post-9/11 turn of events has directly impacted the debate on Islamic education in the public and private spheres. American political scientist Farid Senzai explains:

> Since that tragic day, there continues to be considerable media coverage and insistence by some policy-makers that Islamic schools are part of a "fifth column" and thus should be placed under surveillance. This heightened attention reflects an effort by some to link Islamic schools to extremism, thus suggesting that they may be a growing threat to national security. In the post-9/11 environment Muslims are under increasing scrutiny, particularly by those who fear that Islamic schools are producing radical youth.

Many American Muslim parents have started asking whether it is safer to send their children to Islamic schools so as to avoid anti-Muslim backlash in the public school system.[262]

Education has become an increasingly important issue for American Muslim parents. On one hand, the United States Constitution makes it clear that neither Islam nor any other religion can be taught from a confessional point of view. However, teaching *about* Islam from a "historical, literary, traditions-based, and cultural studies" perspective can be easily incorporated into school subjects without violating the First Amendment.[263] Curiously, hardly any teacher training teacher training programs include courses designed to enhance a teacher's knowledge about religion from a comparative study of religions perspective; instead teachers must take the initiative to enroll in such courses after obtaining their diplomas. This more or less guarantees that many teachers who touch upon Islam in history, literature or geography courses have little academic understanding of this topic, and may therefore rely on non-academic sources such as the media.

A major distinction between the U.S and European debates on Muslims revolves around the different socioeconomic and demographic status of American Muslims, who form a minority immigrant group and enjoy improved economic standing than their European counterparts.[264] According to Cesari, this is one of the reasons that the U.S. immigration debate has not been as "Islamicized" and linked to the threat of terrorism as it has in Europe.[265]

260. Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam*, 3.
261. The Pew Report on Muslims in America ("Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007, 36) lists the most important concerns of U.S. Muslims as follows: discrimination/racism/prejudice (19%); being viewed as terrorists (15%); ignorance about Islam (14%); stereotyping (12%); negative media portrayals (7%); not being treated fairly/harassment (6%); religious/cultural problems (5%); war/U.S. foreign policy (3%); radical Islam/extremists (3%); hatred/fear/distrust of Muslims (2%); jobs/financial problems (2%); lack of representation/not involved in community (1%).
262. Senzai 2009, v.
263. "AAR Guidelines."
264. "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," *Pew Research Center*, May 22, 2007, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2007/05/22/muslim-americans-middle-class-and-mostly-mainstream/>.
265. Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam*, 2.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Historical, political, educational, and religious norms impact publicly funded Islamic education in Europe and the United States. Given the extensive differences along these various parameters, one country's model will not necessarily be suitable for another. However, all models should be analyzed in relation to the following three considerations: 1) teacher education for both IRE teachers and those that teach non-confessional school subjects that include teaching *about* religions; 2) development of adequate textbooks (for both non-confessional and confessional RE); and, 3) further development of unbiased curriculums enriched by continued exchange across national borders and international waters. These three considerations will be discussed followed by suggestions for future research.

Teacher Education

Now that IRE has entered the publicly funded school systems of several European states, the only balanced and rational way forward is for those states to also provide proper professional training for the teachers of IRE. Each country's higher education system can easily include such a specialized training program among the already existing programs for other RE teachers. The provision of university-level courses for IRE teachers can be viewed as an important step toward a professionalization that is essential to the successful integration of IRE in European countries.

IRE teachers have important, multipronged objectives. They must remain relevant to European Muslim youths while conveying certain Islamic understandings. Teachers must also be able to represent the modern as well as the more ethnic-based interests of the students they teach. They must also earn the trust of both the majority and the Muslim minority population. By providing IRE teachers with a solid higher educational foundation and involving them in general educational and pedagogical discussions, each country equips them with the best tools for achieving such complex aims. The responsibility for the success of IRE teaching rests not only with the state, but also with the teachers themselves. They must participate in teacher union activities and form their own IRE teacher associations, creating the opportunity to share their pedagogical knowledge within a national educational context.

Professional training for those who teach *about* Islam in non-confessional contexts is also important. Since the comparative study of religions[266] is an established discipline in most Western universities, courses *about* Islam and other religions can be easily included in teacher training programs. This serves not only future non-confessional RE teachers, but also those that might be teaching *about* religions within the context of history, art, literature, and so forth. University-level education *about* religions provides one means of counteracting stereotypical and xenophobic notions about Islam and other religions, and benefits society in various other ways. Accomplishing this is not only the responsibility of administrators and organizers of teacher education, it is also the responsibility of each university's scholars of comparative religion.[267]

Textbooks

The provision of appropriate textbooks for both IRE and non-confessional teaching *about* Islam is essential for Muslim and non-Muslim pupils alike. Interviews with IRE teachers from diverse countries show that the quality of textbooks is a matter of general concern.

266. Comparative study of religions is also called religious studies or study of religions.
267. I would here like to acknowledge the work of Wanda Albers and Tim Jensen, who inititated the EASR (European Association for the Study of Religons) Working Group on Religion in Secular Education. For information about the EASR, see <www.easr.org>.

First and foremost, textbooks must be both useful for the teachers from a pedagogical point of view and relevant to the students; they must take national context into consideration. While it may be true that textbooks from other national contexts are not entirely useless, when they are produced within the framework of a given educational context they become easier to connect to other school subjects as well as to the national curricula.

There cannot be one IRE textbook that is representative of each and every interpretative tradition taught in school. Although most Muslims share certain fundamental beliefs and principles, Islam is articulated and practiced in diverse ways within a diversity of Islamic traditions—a diversity that becomes even more heterogeneous in combination with various national, social and individual characteristics.[268] The question then arises as to which or how many versions of Islam a textbook should represent.

To assure a largely unbiased presentation, textbooks for teaching *about* Islam and other religions should be written from a strictly academic perspective. There are numerous examples of non-confessional textbooks that do not meet minimal academic standards. While some publishing houses ask Muslim organizations to review the content of textbooks prior to publication, this may not be enough if reviews are performed only in accordance with the interpretive tradition of the involved organization. Another way of addressing the matter of inadequate textbooks is for publishers to engage authors that are trained in the comparative study of religions as well as best practices in presenting knowledge to specific age groups. Teachers themselves should also scrutinize the books that they purchase.

Curricula, Syllabi and Best Teaching Practices

There is also a need for further development of IRE curricula and syllabi; international exchange could be of great inspiration here. Despite differing interpretations of Islam, Western European Muslims share the experience of living as a minority. As such, Muslim school leaders and IRE teachers might benefit from sharing their experiences over national borders.

Those that teach *about* religions can also benefit from more international exchange and conferences. At present, this sort of exchange occurs quite frequently on the academic level but irregularly on the level of teachers and policy makers. While the contexts for teaching *about* religions differ significantly, teachers and policy makers should be informed about each other's activities and perspectives. Relative to other school subjects, this certainly does not seem to be the case with teaching about Islam.[269]

Future Research

Public funding of Islamic education and Muslim schools remains a controversial matter in need of further study. The following questions present opportunities for future research:

- How do Muslim school students who have completed their primary and/or secondary education compare to similar students from other types of schools? Do their life choices differ from those of other students?
- What is the actual content of IRE in different countries and at different schools? What teaching methods are used and how do these continue to develop?
- Within each country, what are the similarities and differences between IRE as taught in private Muslim schools and IRE as taught in public schools?
- What do non-confessional and teacher educational programs teach *about* Islam?
- What are the experiences of students that move from public secular schools to Muslim schools and vice versa?
- What do students bring from IRE to secular school subjects and vice versa?[270]

268. Waardenburg 2003, 208ff.
269. See, for example, Berglund 2015 (forthcoming), which provides examples of cross-border exchanges with regard to school subjects such as mathematics, but could not find examples of such exchanges realtive to the subject of religion.
270. A project scheduled to begin in 2015 headed by the author will examine the experiences of Swedish and British Muslim students that are moving between municipality/state schools and evening/weekend Islamic supplementary classes.

About the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World

The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World is a research initiative housed in the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The Project's mission is to engage and inform policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public on the changing dynamics in Muslim-majority countries and to advance relations between Americans and Muslim societies around the world.

To fulfill this mission, the Project sponsors a range of activities, research projects, and publications designed to educate, encourage frank dialogue, and build positive partnerships between the United States and Muslim communities all over the world. The broader goals of the Project include:

- Exploring the multi-faceted nature of the United States' relationship with Muslim-majority states, including issues related to mutual misperceptions;
- Analyzing the social, economic, and political dynamics underway in Muslim societies;
- Identifying areas for shared endeavors between the United States and Muslim communities around the world on issues of common concern.

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- The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together leaders in politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from the United States and from Muslim societies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The Forum also serves as a focal point for the Project's ongoing research and initiatives, providing the foundation for a range of complementary activities designed to enhance dialogue and impact;
- An Analysis Paper Series that provides high-quality research and publications on key questions facing Muslim states and communities;
- Workshops, symposia, and public and private discussions with government officials and other key stakeholders focused on critical issues affecting the relationship;
- Special initiatives in targeted areas of demand. In the past these have included Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, and Religion and Diplomacy.

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