Al-Qasemi Journal of Islamic Studies, **volume 3, Issue 1 (2018), 1-24**

State Accommodation of Islamic Education: Review of Policy Frameworks

Ayman K. Agbaria[1]

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to outline the major policy frameworks through which settings of religious education in general, and Islamic education in particular, are accommodated in public school systems, mainly in European contexts. To do so, the paper reviews the literature on religious education, seeking a better understanding of the contested place of religion in public spheres and policies, and mapping out the various models of religious education in modern nation-states. Specifically, the paper argues that the existing state accommodation policies are grounded in the history of church-state relations, as reflected in constitutional provisions and governmental policies. Furthermore, the paper argues that state accommodation policies are, for the most part, directed to enhance integration and social cohesion, but not necessarily to develop a Muslim identity that is part and parcel of Europe's national contexts.

Keywords: Islamic Education, State Accommodation Policies, Integration, Muslim Minorities.

Introduction

Religious heritage and identity are passed on through a number of societal structures, including family, social networks, religious institutions, and perhaps most significant, educational institutions. The role of the school system in developing the entwined identities of today's pupils cannot be underestimated, and therefore the way in which education engages religion has great significance for the ways in which such identities are constructed.

[1] Faculty of Education in the University of Haifa, and Al-Qasemi Academy - Academic College of Education, (aagbaria@edu.haifa.ac.il)

That said, the purpose of this paper is to outline the major policy frameworks through which settings of religious education in general, and Islamic education in particular, are accommodated, integrated if you will, in public school systems, mainly in European contexts. To do so, the following sections review the literature on religious education, seeking a better understanding of the contested place of religion in public spheres and policies, and mapping out the various models of religious education in modern nation-states.

I wish to emphasize, at this early stage, that this paper by no means intends to provide a full or comprehensive review of the existing literature on religious and Islamic education. Rather, it seeks to provide interested scholars with a panoramic view of the complexities of religious education policy, with special attention to Islamic education. In line with Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 75), the paper assumes that the analysis of religious education policies "requires not only an examination of their specific content but also an investigation of the context that provides them with meaning and legitimacy. " Therefore, this paper is essentially an attempt to grapple with the "politics of education," that is, "the way the broader social, economic and cultural context gives rise to particular state politics and education policies" (Simons, Olssen & Peters, p. 21).

Religion in a Post-Secular Age

Debates about religion's place within the public sphere and whether it indeed merits one, have become a cross disciplinary phenomena attracting the attention of researchers from a variety of disciplines. The trend, for a long time, has been to uphold as normative the dichotomy pitting "religious/traditional" and "secular/modern" against one another, ignoring the historical and cultural specificities of secularism, religion, tradition, and modernity, while simultaneously equating the notion of modernity with that of secularity – the disengagement and segregation of religion from the public sphere (see more in Friedland, 2001, p. 127). This equation of secularity and modernity led to a

general belief among scholars, beginning in the 1960s, that modernity somehow undermined the social significance of religion and led to a period of religion's analytic neglect (Gorski & Altinordu, 2008).

In this regard, Sherkat and Ellison (1999) explore the salience of the study of religion through the prism of sociological research, noting that, for the first time since the 1960's, there is a plethora of scholarly research and theorizing about religion, which goes directly against the predictions of secularization theories that called for the decline of religion in social life, individual life, and religious institutions. These predictions were proven quite incorrect by events transpiring around the world in the late twentieth century, including the rise of fundamentalist religion in the United States and the Middle East, as well as the introduction of new religious movements, leading to a resurgence in the importance of religion (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999).

Arthur, Gearon, and Sears (2010), in their work entitled *Religious Faith, Citizenship Education and the Public Square*, identify three major assumptions used by western societies to validate their decisions to keep religion separate from the public sphere: the idea that religious belief is antithetical to thought and rationality; the idea that religious belief, particularly that held by exclusivist religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is intolerant of difference; and that the "separation of church and state" necessitates keeping religious expression out of the public sphere (Arthur, Gearon & Sears, 2010).

With respect to the notion of a separation of church and state, perhaps the most widely quoted reason for barring religion from public life is one given by Bernard Lewis, who stated that rather than originating as an attack on religion, "secularism in the modern political meaning – the idea that religion and political authority should be separated – is, in a profound sense, Christian" (Arthur, Gearon & Sears, 2010, p. 105). For example, the ever-so-powerful concept of "separation of church and state" is not, as many might believe, rooted in the U.S.

Constitution, which in fact makes no mention of it. What the Constitution does limit is the establishment of a state religion or the placing of limits on the religious freedom of its citizens. Indeed, the concept was not conceived in order to protect politics from religion, as many today presume, but rather to protect religion from politics. Separation at that time was not meant to be exclusion, as Christianity played a large role in the life of the young nation. So, in fact, the separation of church and state did not call for the exclusion of religion from the public sphere; rather, it was designed to protect religion's place within it.

A more nuanced understanding of the current relationship between religion and the public sphere is delineated by Habermas (2006), who differentiates between what he calls the formal and informal public/political spheres, the former consisting of parliaments, courts, and ministries, and the latter being the appropriate setting for communication between religious and non-religious people. He maintains that, although political institutions need to maintain neutrality with respect to religion, discourse between secular and religious citizens, and among those of different religions, can and should utilize religious language and argument. However, one chooses to define the relationship between religion and the public sphere, it is impossible to avoid the discussion of religion, as it continues to play a major role in the lives of people worldwide. As stated by Sherkat and Ellison, "Not only has religion stubbornly refused to disappear, it continues to hold sway over (a) political beliefs and commitments (b) family relations (c) health and wellbeing and (d) free social space and capital" (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999, p. 369).

The rise of politicized Christianity in the United States in the 1970's, coupled with the revolutionary Islamic movements rising in the Middle East, formally reintroduced the study of the relationship between religion and politics; countries such as Ireland, India, Sri Lanka, Palestine, and Bosnia stand as a testament that religion remains an important and key factor in determining

politics (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999). However, of the four major world traditions – Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity – Islam appears to play the most active role in contemporary politics (Moaddel, 2002). Habermas entitled this re-entrance of religion and politics, especially after September 11, as a shift into what he pronounced to be a 'postsecular age' (Gorski, Kim, Torpey, & Van Antwerpen, 2012; Habermas, 2006, 2008). This was not meant to insinuate that the world was returning to a state where secularism and rationalism didn't exist, but rather "one in which religious and secular worldviews could co-exist and even enter into dialogue with one another" (Gorski & Altinordu, 2008, p. 56).

The description of Western societies as post-secular underscores an understanding that these societies have been experiencing a transformation of their public consciousness because of the continued existence and prevalence of religious communities in their increasingly secularized environments. Thus, this transformation requires developing new ways of thinking and dialogue among secular and religious citizens, who both should learn to translate their concerns and demands into a language that is mutually understood by each other, and to establish public spheres that are sensitive to both secular and religious alike (Habermas, 2006; Habermas & Ratzinger, 2006). For Taylor (2007), the religious return not only challenges the hegemony of the mainstream master narrative of secularization, but also problematizes further the dialectical relations between the "secular" and the "sacral" beyond any binary opposition.

State Accommodation of Religion in Schools

In "the age of diasporas: a worldwide archipelago of ethnic/religious/ linguistic settlements", as described by Bauman (2010, p.399), national educational system has become not only more diverse, but also under more pressures to serve the needs of these diasporas for recognition of their cultural heritages and religious traditions, and maintaining of bonds with the original homelands and ancestors' socio-cultural structures. There are also converts into

minority religions such as Islam, who too wish to socialize their children into the new religion. Under the demands of ethnic/religious/linguistic minorities for equality, recognition, and belonging, "the solid-modern policy of dealing with difference, the policy of assimilation … is no longer feasible, … But neither the old strategies of resisting the interaction and merger of cultures are likely to be effective, even if considered preferable for people fond of strict separation and isolation of 'communities of belonging' (Bauman, 2010, p. 400). Yet, the approach espoused by a state with respect to religious education depends on a number of factors, including the historical role and value of religion in society, the ethnic and cultural composition of society, the structure of the educational system, internal divisions and cultural politics, as well as the founding principles of the state (Maoz, 2006).

Unsurprisingly, many international and supranational organizations have been increasingly involved in advocating for the importance of including religious education in schools, while promoting concrete educational initiatives that advance values of pluralism, multiculturalism, tolerance, and respect. Initiatives include the 2005 UN launch of the "Alliance of Civilizations", which recommends that education systems, including religious schools, must provide students with a mutual respect and understanding for the diverse religious traditions (see more in Jackson, 2007, 2007a, 2008a, 2008b). These initiatives, for the most part, draw on Article 18 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, calling for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Thobani, 2010). This reference to the universal right to one's own culture and religion is echoed in the demands of Islamic minority groups themselves, who use this discourse to state their demands for cultural and religious recognition.

That said, a number of frameworks have been developed for the analysis of the relationship between the state and religious education, particularly Islamic education (Daun & Arjamand, 2005; Daun & Walford, 2004; Fuess, 2007;

Thobani, 2010). Thobani (2010), for example, identifies three major "policy contexts" that determine the presence and nature of religious education in educational systems: 1) governments whose policy regarding religious education is decidedly secular, 2) those that promote a pluralist approach to teaching about religion, and 3) those that employ confessional modes of religious instruction. He explains that, as a norm, most countries adopt definite policy stances on religion in education, which of all the subjects in national curricula tends to be the most strictly governed, for political, historical, and legal reasons.

Thobani defines these policy contexts as follows: The first refers to countries where religious education is not supported in state schools, but where non-confessional methods of religious teaching might be found in a variety of school subjects, including history, literature, civics, and philosophy. In these countries, confessional religious education is relegated to the religious communities and denominations of the private sector. The second policy context, which consists of countries promoting a pluralist approach to teaching about religion. Yet, not *into* it. Religion appears as a distinct subject in a curriculum that teaches about religions from a non-confessional and multi-faith perspective. For families for whom this level of religious education does not suffice, there is the option of religious schooling, which may even receive state funding, depending on each country's qualifications. The third and final policy context consists of countries where the confessional teaching of religion is authorized by the state and where state schools utilize confessional modes of religious instruction. This instruction might be aligned with the dominant faith in the country or be split along denominational lines, according to the number of relevant faiths.

With regard to Islamic education in Muslim states that fall into Thobani's third category, of states that use a confessional mode of religious education that is state sanctioned, Doumato and Starrett (2007), in *Teaching*

Islam: Textbooks and Religion in the Middle East, provide a number of case studies that illustrate how some countries have transformed Islam into a version of a school subject that is generic and monolithic to serve the political regimes' interests in continuity, stability, and legitimacy. Turkey and Iran present particularly salient examples of such states and are explored in studies such as those by Kaplan (2005) and Arjamand (2004), respectively. Through an analysis of state school textbooks in Turkey, for example, Kaplan (2005, p.671) demonstrates how the textbooks use a particularized version of Islam to create a stronger nationalism, noting that "nationalist interpretations of religion attempt to strengthen the sense of Turkish identity at the expense of one based on the universal Muslim community, the *ummet"*.

Focussing on Europe, Fuess (2007) has proposed a framework that argues that most European nation-states attempt to use the model of church-state relations that evolved in the context of Christian churches to define their relationship with their Muslim communities. He identifies four main approaches used by Europe to deal with Muslim communities: 1) *laicite*, developed in France, a religiously neutral state and a strict separation of church and state, 2) "religion for all," such as exists in Great Britain and the Netherlands, where the constitution does not officially recognize religious communities but provides courses that teach *about* religion and facilitates the founding of private religious institutions, 3) "official recognition," as in Belgium, Austria, Spain, Germany, and parts of Switzerland, where the constitutions permit the official recognition of new religious communities and there is therefore the possibility of specific confessional religious education taught by believers to believers in state schools, and finally, 4) "total disregard," as in Italy, where Catholicism still dominates public discourse concerning attitudes towards religion.

Fuess emphasizes how attempts on the part of the European states to fit the Muslim community into a pre-existing framework designed for Christianity

are troublesome at best, and demonstrates how little these countries understand the structure of the religion of Islam. He cites an "imam quota" fixed by a Belgian minister of justice in April 2004, which stated that a mosque could obtain funding for permanent imams based on the number of believers belonging to the mosque – one imam for 250 members, two for 500-1,500 members, and so forth (see in Fuess 2007, p. 222). This framework is, of course, not applicable to Islam, which does not include a concept of *belonging* to a particular mosque, the way that Christians or Jews might belong to a Church or synagogue.

Identifying a parallel struggle experienced by both the educational systems and the parents of Muslim children in non-Muslim countries, Daun and Arjamand (2005) examine the educational systems in Europe for their provision of opportunities for Muslim students to enjoy a modern and competitive as well as religious education. They explain that educational systems are caught in between two sets of demands: those of globalization, which call for countries to produce technically and economically competitive pupils, and those of international discourse legitimizing religious and multicultural demands on education. At the same time, parents want their children to be competitive in today's global market while maintaining their religious morality, training, and identity.

Specifically, Daun and Arjamand lay out three approaches for how states respond (whether successfully or not) to these demands: 1) states that allow unsubsidized private Muslim schools, 2) states which allow subsidized private Muslim schools that must apply for approval and are not required to teach the national curricula, and 3) states which only allow schools teaching the state curricula (see in Daun & Arjamand, 2005, p. 404). In each of these cases, the ability of students to obtain a "modern and competitive as well as religious" education is hindered – whether by lack of financing, lack of curricular requirements in standardized subjects, or lack of religious education altogether.

Models of Religious Education

The entangled relationship between secularism and religion plays out within the domain of education, as different countries, and even individual schools, forge their own relationships with religion and its teachings. Spring (2009) points to the existence of various forms of knowledge as affecting the ways in which schools go about the process of educating and describes a clash between "many religious knowledges and a secularized world where the major goal is economic growth and increasing consumption of the material products" (p. 149). These differing forms of knowledge and the tensions among them have led to the evolution of competing models of education in the world, which he categorizes as the 'Human Capital World Model', 'Progressive Education World Model', 'Religious Education World Model', and 'Indigenous Education World Model', as explained in what follows.

The first, the human capital model, is based upon the assumption that the goal of education is to create competitive workers for the global economy. This model is characterized by the standardization, placing a heavy emphasis on evaluations, tests, core curricula, measure of accountability, and the global teaching of English. Accordingly, the value of education is measured by economic growth and development. The major criticism of this model is that it fails to educate for a significant citizenship, responsible activism, and values of social justice. These critics often turn to the progressive world education model, whose goal is precisely to cultivate socially responsible citizens. Characteristic of this model include teacher autonomy, participatory learning, and emphasis on local languages, contexts, and interests and of the students.

The final two models, religious world education and indigenous world education, respond to the lack of morality and spirituality implicit in the former models, and utilize religious and indigenous knowledges within the curriculum and pedagogy. Specifically, the religious education world model concentrates

on the study of traditional religious texts, religious rites, moral principles, ethical standards, and the rejection of secularism. Spring (2009) emphasizes the importance of understanding that these four models are not necessarily oppositional or mutually exclusive.

It is worth to note, however, that within the religious education world model there is a copious amount of space for different variations and pedagogies. For example, Michael Grimmitt (2000) suggests a threefold typology of religious education, distinguishing among educating *into, about,* and *from* religion. Educating *into* religion involves a confessional approach, in which a single tradition is taught by members of the faith, with the objective of socializing students into the beliefs of the religion or reinforcing existing beliefs. Educating *about* religion is taught non-confessionally and from a neutral standpoint, using descriptive and historical methods to educate about the beliefs, values, practices, and influences of religion on individuals and communities. Finally, educating *from* religion provides students with opportunities to consider various moral quandaries and questions and allows them to develop their own religious\spiritual ideas and views.

Jackson (2004) expands these categories of religious education to five, while reflecting on how each category developed in response to the increasing plural nature of western democracies: 1) the confessional approach, which in its denial of plurality strengthens the unified national and cultural identity of the nation-state, 2) the privatization of religious schooling, which represents a recognition of plurality and maintains a separation of church and state, 3) the post-modern personal narrative approach, which rejects the traditional set of distinctions based on religion and focuses on the individual development of beliefs and values, 4) the religious literacy approach, which in its recognition of plurality acknowledges the truth claims of different religions and aims to prepare students to make informed personal judgments, and finally, 5) the interpretive

and dialogical approaches, which focus on developing the skills required to interpret religious material in order for individuals to ascertain their own opinions and views on key moral issues. The *interpretive approach* sees religions as broader traditions that serve as reference frameworks for individuals, and as communities of belonging and networks of meaning through which religious tradition and language are mediated and passed to the young generation.

On the whole, Jackson's work (2004, 2007, 2008a, 2008b) stresses the importance of including personal accounts in order to facilitate the linking of individual experience to social experience, and the necessity of employing pedagogy that invites students to formulate and clarify their own views. He suggests that religious education should be rendered through flexible pedagogies that encourage religious plurality, critical reading of traditions, and perceiving religions as social and cultural constructs whose meaning has been shaped by various historical events and contexts. In this regard, Panjwani (2005) is critical about Jackson's emphasis on the personal experience of religion, as he argues that what the interpretive approach lacks, in its aim to capture religion authentically by presenting it as it is practiced in daily life by individuals and families, is attention to the understanding of a religious belief and its practices throughout its history. Just as one cannot attempt to understand a religious tradition based only on its form in a particular historical period, without regard to its current meanings, so too, one cannot see religion as a phenomenon only of the present, ignoring its historical meanings and roots.

That said, for many scholars, teaching religion in public schools can facilitate the incorporation and integration of religious minorities, particularly Muslim minorities, and is often seen as a useful instrument for promoting the values of liberal democracies (Panjwani, 2004, 2005; Rachman, 2003; De Ruyter & Merry, 2009). For example, De Ruyter and Merry (2009) argue that teaching

religion is a way to protect liberal democracy in the face of the challenges posed by multiculturalism:

> Inviting pupils to learn from religious ideals that cohere with liberal democratic values can have a twofold function: Doing so (1) fosters understanding and respect of others; and (2) pupils learn that the laws of a liberal democracy serve to protect reasonable pluralism and that religious ideals may be an important source of inspiration for some to pursue the ideals of a liberal democracy. (De Ruyter & Merry, 2009, p. 307)

Therefore, the teaching of religious ideals creates "reasonable citizens," able to listen respectfully and cooperate productively, furthering one of the most important goals of education in liberal democracies while simultaneously recognizing that for people of faith, religious ideals constitute an important part of their identity (De Ruyter & Merry, 2009, p. 296). As religion is a major component of cultural and historical development, it should be taught in public schools so students can effectively respond to events transpiring throughout the world, and so schools can prevent the cultural ignorance that leads to prejudice and racism.

Panjwani (2005) furthers the argument for the utility of the teaching of religion in multicultural environments, positing that there is enormous potential in using religious education to foster social cohesion. Unfortunately, he argues, most educational systems have yet to properly take advantage of this potentially fruitful opportunity. He explains that in multicultural societies, social cohesion necessitates dealing with the juxtaposition of a historically informed fear of diversity with its contemporary reality (Panjwani, 2005). This proves a task too difficult for most educational systems, which fall prey to tendencies to amplify the divisions among religions, and overlooking internal doctrinal debates and sectarian controversies. In order to seize the opportunity available to strengthen social cohesion, a balance needs to be achieved, in which the simultaneous

recognition of differences and commonalities can exist (Panjwani, 2005). For Rosen (2012), who writes about the state's responsibility to accommodate groups (religious or otherwise) considered extremist, or even illiberal, the accommodation of these groups is an instantiation of liberal commitments, not a compromise of liberal values.

Nonetheless, be it a country in the Middle East or one in western Europe, the national education system accommodates Islam in ways that reflect the existing traditions of church-state relations and serve each state's political interests in legitimacy, stability, and social cohesion. Unsurprisingly, of all of the school subjects in the national curricula, the study of Islam is perhaps the most closely monitored and strictly standardized by the state. To do so, all states have fashioned generic and unified versions of Islam within the framework of the school curriculum.

Approaches to Islamic Education

Notwithstanding the vast literature on the philosophies, goals, and practices of Islamic education (e.g., Coulson, 2004; Daun & Arjmand, 2005; Daun & Walford, 2004; Halstead, 2004, 2007; Panjwani, 2004; Rayan, 2012; Sahin, 2013; Waghid, 2011), this part does not engage with Islamic education from these perspectives; rather, it focuses on the policy level. Research about Islamic education encompasses the education of Muslims in Muslim countries and even more emphatically in non-Muslim (mostly Christian) countries, coupled with the education of non-Muslims in Europe and America about the religion of Islam, in an effort to promote pluralism and tolerance in these increasingly diverse nations.

In this regard, Douglass and Shaikh (2004) identify four types of Islamic education: 1) the education of Muslims in their Islamic faith, 2) education for Muslims that includes religious and secular disciplines 3) education about Islam for those who are not Muslim, and 4) education in an Islamic spirit and tradition.

They argue that the first, which refers to the process of passing on Islamic knowledge through primary sources, should in fact be entitled “Muslim education,” due to its varying stances on so many issues. The second, education for Muslims, refers to full time religious schools that deliver both secular and Islamic education. Again, they argue that these should be called “Muslim schools,” “indicating the goal of living up to the standards of Islam, rather than implying its achievement” (Douglass & Shaikh, 2004, p. 8). Education about Islam, they maintain, in keeping with many contemporary scholars, is in need of updating, because even though it has improved over recent decades, it is still limited to the study of the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli issue, and placement at the center of a traditional/modern dichotomy. The final type of Islamic education, teaching in an Islamic spirit and tradition, refers to upholding the legacy of Islamic tradition that places education at the center of a Muslim’s duty, and to the tenet that the teaching should embody the traditional concepts and understandings perpetuated by Islam.

Be it an education for or about Muslims, many scholars have been critical of the representation of Islam in textbooks (Ihtiyar, 2003; Nizoyov & Pluim, 2009; Otterbeck, 2005; Panjwani, 2005). The enormous complexity among Muslims, whose diversity encompasses ethnicity, socio-economic class, language, theology and culture, is often lost in the homogenizing descriptions of Islam presented by orientalists, fundamentalists, and nationalists (Nizoyov & Pluim, 2009, p. 638). As Ramadan (2004) observes, western schools often reduce spirituality to rituals and adopt a Manichean approach, producing an “Us” versus “Them” reality that is unconnected to the realities in America and Europe, making it difficult for students of Muslim origin to navigate to others to whom they are connected.

In his analysis of texts teaching about Islam, Panjwani (2005) found that most of the authors of texts used in the United Kingdom are non-Muslim, and

they represent Muslims in idealized and simplistic forms. He suggests that representations of Islam in textbooks can be described as belonging to one of four paradigms: 1) a *Monist* paradigm, which presents a predominantly Sunni interpretation of Islam as a monolithic faith, 2) a *Literalist* paradigm, in which textbooks ignore the vast diversity of Muslims' theological cultural and historical approaches to religious texts and practices, 3) an *Absolutist paradigm*, which does not acknowledge religious change and leads to the notion that no good person can exist outside the strict religious framework, and finally, 4) an *Apologetic paradigm*, which presents unproblematic and idealistic views.

Focusing on the school level, Ipgrave (2010), in her research on the experiences of Muslim students in plural and secular environments, directly confronts the ways in which a school can mediate its relationship with its students and their religions. She argues that the relationship between the school and the student is an important one, because, if students feel that there is a conflict between their school and their religious identity, it could lead to feelings of alienation, lowered self-esteem, and disengagement from the learning process. Conversely, seeing their own cultures reflected in the curriculum can have the positive effect of promoting motivation and achievement.

Ipgrave lays out a framework for analyzing a school's attempts to accommodate the religious identity of its students, in her case Muslim students, in what she calls the *permissive* and *affirmative inclusion* stances. Schools that are operating within the framework of the *permissive* stance allow students to express their religious identity in school, or at the very least, do not set up boundaries or obstacles to that expression. This can include providing time and space for Muslim prayer, allowing students to attend Friday prayer, facilitating the observance of the Ramadan fast, giving time off for religious holidays such as *Eid*, and adapting school uniforms to Muslim codes of modesty. *Affirmative inclusion*, on the other hand, refers to proactive moves made by schools to

recognize their students' diverse religious identities within the framework of the curriculum and school events. This might include incorporating lessons on multiculturalism in the nation and religious diversity, or recognizing various religious holidays (Ipgrave, 2010, p. 10).

Each of these stances has its difficulties and challenges, which she delineates in the discussion following the introduction of the framework. In both the permissive stance and the affirmative stance, the school is left with the authority to define the religious culture of the students, as it is the school that controls what is or is not allowed, and that decides what to include and highlight in the curriculum. These overtly school-determined versions of Islam tend to be both simplifying and essentializing, and do not allow space for the students to explore the boundaries of their religion, nor do they acknowledge internal diversity. Finally, as the schools aim to avoid marginalizing and alienating students and to battle low-self-esteem and confidence, they often do not use direct language about religion and are sometimes guilty of "pathologising pupil religion, even as it is affirmed, so that it becomes a special need for which strategies have to be found to ensure it does not hinder learning" (Ipgrave, 2010, p. 15).

Thus, Ipgrave concludes that a school must integrate *permissive* elements that allow students to express their religious beliefs in their actions, words, and dress, and *affirmative* elements that call for pluralistic and reflexive education. This reminds us of Jackson's *interpretive approach*, which calls for a space in which students can think critically about all religions and interact with one another in an equal and open environment, in order to understand what their religions mean to one another.

That said, until recently the literature that addressed Muslim populations in Europe and their integration did not consider religion as a fundamental dimension of their incorporation (Gorski & Altinordu, 2008, p. 69). Additionally,

instead of attempting to use religion in a positive way to aid in the process of integration, much of the normative and empirical literature on multiculturalism has focused instead on the challenges to liberal democracies created by religious minority practices, highlighting issues such as veiling, female genital mutilation, arranged marriage, polygamy, and sex segregation (Gorski & Altinordu, 2008, p.69), thereby blaming religion for difficulties encountered in dealing with multiculturalism.

The potential of religion to act as a positive force in the integration of minority religious groups is explored in depth by Mushaben (2008), who writes about the experience of young Muslims in Germany and their relationship with religion. She argues that amidst the struggle for liberation in Germany, young migrant offspring are turning to their collective identity to enhance their social inclusion, personal self-determination, and political participation. They mobilize their strong sense of Muslim identity, not to obtain seclusion and distance, but rather to more intently engage with Germanness out of a desire to gain German citizenship (Mushaben, 2008, p. 512). She describes how these youths look to the *umma*, the universal community of believers to "pull them out of the swamp of failed integration" (Mushaben, 2008, p. 513).

Germany is not alone in this experience, as youth in countries such as France, the Netherlands, and Britain are dealing with similar issues, demanding not to be forced into a pre-determined democratic identity, nor to be left within the old multicultural order, which had them confined in social ghettos. Like Mushaben (2008), Moll (2007) argues that these Muslim youths desire integration without relinquishing their Muslim identity. They hope to redefine and reconstruct the debate on what it means to be a part of national identity and what it means to be Muslim. Furthermore, they aspire to take part in the shaping of the national identities themselves and hope to see a dialogue of "equals" replace the Western integration of Islam (Caesari, 2004).

Summary

Islam finds itself at the forefront of research on religious education, due to growing Muslim populations in non-Muslim countries and to Islam's paramount importance in contemporary politics (Guven, 2005), which have led to its status as one of the most closely monitored and strictly standardized school subjects. Much of the current research on religious education, therefore, deals with issues particular to the teaching of Islam in non-Muslim countries. These studies are mostly critical of the representations of Islam presented in Western countries, and they generally take the form of analyses in which the author critically analyzes school textbooks to show how the majority of the descriptions of Islam are misrepresented and misinterpreted (Ihtiyar, 2003; Otterbeck, 2005; Panjwani, 2005).

Generally speaking, the literature on religious education is indeed multidisciplinary, and addresses multifaceted issues, including state approaches to accommodating religious education in public schools, various models and pedagogues of religious education, and debates over religion's place and role the public sphere, and in mediating multicultural challenges and tensions. In response to growing multiculturalism in Europe, and particularly to the increasing presence of Muslims, a major area in the current literature involves examining the use of religious education in schools to combat the difficulties posed by diversity. While previously, the literature consistently cited religion as an obstruction to integration, the new wave of literature has focused on the benefits of teaching religion in diverse schools as an effective tool to advance social integration, combat discrimination, and promote mutual understanding and respect.

Bibliography

Arjamand, R. (2004). Educational strategies among Muslims in the context of globalization: Some national case studies. In D. Holger & G. Walford (Eds.), *Muslim minorities* (vol. 3) (pp. 63-80). Leiden: Brill.

Arthur, J., Gearon, L., & Sears, A. (2010). *Education, politics and religion: Reconciling the civil and the sacred in education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Bauman, Z. (2010). Education in the World of Diasporas. *Policy Futures in Education*, *8*(3-4), 398-407.

Cesari, J. (2004). *When Islam and democracy meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*. New York: Palgrave.

Coulson, A. (2004). Education and indoctrination in the Muslim world. *Policy Analysis*, 511, 1-36.

Daun, H., & Walford, G. (Eds.). (2004). *Educational strategies among Muslims in the context of globalization: some national case studies* (vol. 3). Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.

Daun, H., & Arjmand, R. (2005). Education in Europe and Muslim demands for competitive and moral education. *International Review of Education*, *51*(5/6), 403-426.

De Ruyter, D.J., & Merry, M.S. (2009). Why education in public schools should include religious ideals. *Studies in Philosophy and Education,* 28(4), 295-311.

Douglass, S.L., & Shaikh, M.A. (2004). Defining Islamic education: Differentiation and applications. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, *7*(1), 5-18.

Doumato, E.A., & Starrett, G. (Eds.). (2007). *Teaching Islam: Textbooks and religion in the Middle East*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Friedland, R. (2001). Religious nationalism and the problem of collective representation. *Annual Review of Sociology, 27*, 125-52.

Fuess, A. (2007). Islamic religious education in Western Europe: Models of integration and the German approach. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs. 27*(2), 215-239.

Gorski, P.S., & Altinordu, A. (2008). After secularization? *Annual Review of Sociology, 34*, 55-85.

Gorski, P.S., Kim, D. K., Torpey, J., & Van Antwerpen, J. (Eds.). (2012). *The Postsecular in Question*. New York: New York University Press.

Grimmitt, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Pedagogies of religious education: Case studies in the research and development of good pedagogic practice in RE*. Great Wakering: McCrimmons.

Guven, I. (2005). The impact of political Islam on education. *International Journal of Educational Development,* 25(3), 193-208.

Habermas, J. (2006). Religion in the public sphere. *European Journal of Philosophy*, *14*(1), 1-25.

Habermas, J. (2008). Notes on post-secular society. *New perspectives quarterly*, *25*(4), 17-29.

Habermas, J. and Ratzinger J. (2006). *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

Halstead, M. (2004). An Islamic concept of education. *Comparative Education*, *40*(4), 517-529.

Halstead, J. M. (2007). Islamic values: A distinctive framework for moral education? *Journal of Moral Education*, *36*(3), 282-296.

Ihtiyar, N. (2003). Islam in German textbooks: Examples from geography and history. *Prospects*, *33*(4), 375-84.

Ipgrave, J. (2010). Including the religious viewpoints and experiences of Muslim students in an environment that is both plural and secular. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 11(1), 5-22.

Jackson, R. (2004). *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy*. London, RoutledgeFalmer.

Jackson, R. (2007). European institutions and the contribution of studies of religious diversity to education for democratic citizenship. In R. Jackson, S. Miedema, W. Weisse, & J. P. Willaime (Eds.), *Religion and education in Europe: Developments, contexts and debates* (pp. 27-56). Munster, Germany: Waxmann.

Jackson, R. (2008a). Teaching about religions in the public sphere: European policy initiatives and the interpretive approach. *Numen*, *55*(2/3), 151-82.

Jackson, R. (2008b). Contextual religion education and the interpretive approach. *British Journal of Religious Education*, *30*, 13-24.

Kaplan, S. (2005). Religious nationalism: A textbook case from Turkey. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, *25*(3), 665-676.

Maoz, A. (2006). Religious education in Israel. *University of Detroit Mercy Law Review*, *83*, 679-728.

Moaddel, M. (2002). The study of Islamic culture and politics: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *28*, 359-86.

Moll, Y. (2007). “Beyond Beards, Scarves and Halal Meat”: Mediated Constructions of British Muslim Identity. *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, *15*(1), 1-1.

Mushaben, J.M. (2008). Gender, HipHop and Pop-Islam: the urban identities of Muslim youth in Germany. *Citizenship Studies*, 12(5), 507-526.

Nizoyov, S., & Pluim, G. (2009). Teacher's perspectives on the education of Muslim students: A missing voice in Muslim education research. *The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto Curriculum Inquiry*, *39*(5), 637-77.

Otterbeck, J. (2005). What is reasonable to demand? Islam in Swedish textbooks. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *31*(4), 795-812.

Panjwani, F. (2004). The "Islamic" in Islamic education: Assessing the discourse. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, *7*(1), 19-29.

Panjwani, F. (2005). Agreed syllabi and un-agreed values: Religious education and missed opportunities for fostering social cohesion. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *53*(3), 375-393.

Rachman, A. (2003). Developing a sustainable educational policy for a better quality of mankind. *Prospects*, *33*(4), 367-374.

Rayan, S. (2012). Islamic philosophy of education. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(19), 150-156.

Ramadan, T. (2004). *Western Muslims and the future of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalising educational policy*. London, UK: Routledge.

Rosen, M. D. (2012). The educational autonomy of perfectionist religious groups in a liberal state. *Journal of Law, Religion and State*, *1*(1), 16-44.

Sahin, A. (2013). *New directions in Islamic education: Pedagogy and identity formation*. Leicestershire, UK: Kube Publishing.

Sherkat, D.E., & Ellison, C.G. (1999). Recent developments and current controversies in the sociology of religion. *Annual Review of Sociology, 25, 363-94.*

Simons, M., Olssen, M. E. H., & Peters, M. A. (2009). *Re-reading education policies (Part 1): The critical education policy orientation*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense.

Spring, J. (2009). *Globalization of education: An introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Taylor, C. (2007). *A secular age.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Thobani, S. (2010). *Islam in the school curriculum: Symbolic pedagogy and cultural claims*. London, UK: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Waghid, Y. (2011). *Conceptions of Islamic education: Pedagogical framings*. New York, NY: Peter Lang .