CONTEXT

Časopis za interdisciplinarne studije
6:2 (2019), 7-25

From Islamic Religious Education to Peacebuilding in Germany's State Schools

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Abstract

Under the German constitution, school education in Germany includes religious instruction as a regular school subject (article 7.3 of the *Grundgesetz* [GG] = Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany). There have been attempts to provide Islamic religious instruction in several German states with a view to ensuring that this constitutional provision applies to Muslims as well and to countering problems regarding identity and integration faced by Muslims in Germany. In this paper, the rationales for this concept are presented and the framework conditions shown. The development of Islamic peacebuilding is discussed under the assumption of the religion of Islam's potential and will for peace.

Key words*:* Islamic Religious Education, Peacebuilding, Interreligious Dialogue, Religious Identity, Intercultural Learning.

The Introduction of Islamic Religious Education in Germany

Under the German constitution, school education in Germany includes religious instruction as a regular school subject (article 7.3 of the GG). There have been recurring controversial discussions about confessional religious education in state schools. In the 1960s and 1970s, confessional religious education was criticised as unsuitable for a plural and ideologically neutral state.[1] It has occasionally been suspected of leading to "ethnic separation" and so supporting racism or, at least, "tendencies towards a re-ideologisation and re-ethnicisation of conflicts."[2] This argument has been successfully countered by revealing the confusion underlying the accusation – the confusion between confessional/religious and national affiliation.[3] The subject of Ethics, which teaches children ideologically neutral values, is often regarded as an alternative within this discussion. The religious pedagogy of the two mainstream Christian churches has, moreover, tried to make clear that even in confessionally-oriented religion classes the goal is to meet the educational commitment rather than a church- or confession-related faith mission.[4] In the words of Rolf Schieder, professor of Practical Theology and Religious Education at Humboldt University of Berlin:

> Confining religious education to church, mosque and synagogue premises would amount to a relapse into pre-modern conditions. Instead, enabling children to form an independent religious judgement is a learning goal that ought to be incorporated into the educational canon of schools of the future – not only in the interest of the individual but also in the interests of a plural and multicultural society.[5]

For this reason, "educating the human being as a whole" is considered an important aspect of religious education, all the more important given the profound individualisation at work in society today. This aspect will be discussed in more detail below.

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1 Hans-Georg Ziebertz, *Religionspädagogik als empirische Wissenschaft. Beiträge zur Forschungspraxis* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverlag, 1994), pp. 125.

2 Barbara Asbrand, *Zusammen leben und lernen im Religionsunterricht. Empirische Studie zur grundschulpädagogischen Konzeption eines interreligiösen Religionsunterrichts im Klassenverband der Grundschule* (Frankfurt a. M.: IKO – Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2000), pp. 11-13.

3 Friedrich Schweitzer and Albert Biesinger, *Gemeinsamkeiten stärken – Unterschieden gerecht werden. Erfahrungen und Perspektiven zum konfessionell- kooperativen Religionsunterricht* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2002), pp. 82f.

4 Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (Ed.), *Die bildende Kraft des Religionsunterrichts. Zur Konfessionalität des Religionsunterrichts* (Bonn: Butzon & Bercker, 1996).

5 Rolf Schieder, "Religion" in *Fachdidaktik interkulturell. Ein Handbuch,* Hans H. Reich, Alfred Holzbrecher & Hans Joachim Roth (ed.) (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2000), pp. 181–212, pp. 189.

At present, some 900,000 pupils of Muslim background attend state schools in Germany. There have been attempts to provide Islamic religious instruction in several German states with a view to ensuring that the constitutional provision in article 7.3 of the GG applies to Muslims as well and to countering problems regarding identity and integration faced by Muslims in Germany. The challenge lies in something that is still largely unresolved: the lack of Muslim contact persons. Government neutrality and the right of religious communities to self-determination, however, mean that cooperation with all the religious communities is a requirement. This matter of a common concern, referred to as *"res mixta"* in state-church law, is equally indispensable in the case of Islamic religious education. The difficulty is that Muslims in Germany are not (yet) institutionalised as the same way as they are, e.g., in Austria, which means there is no established point of contact for the German government to go to. But exactly this is the prerequisite for establishing state-provision of religious education, so that binding agreements can be made between the state and the religious community through its representative. After all, there are pivotal spheres of influence at stake, including the award of teaching licences through teacher training and recruitment, curricula, and the approval of textbooks and teaching materials.

That Islam has no structure equivalent to a church is considered by some Muslims an intrinsic advantage of their faith: each Muslim believer is called upon to reflect on their religion and to strive for the best conduct in their personal responsibility before God for their own selves. There has been and continues to be no uniform legal structure encompassing all the Muslims of Germany. Rather, there are various Islamic associations and umbrella organisations, especially the DITIB (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs), the VIKZ (Association of Islamic Cultural Centres), and the IGMG (Milli Görüs Islamic Community). On the one hand, these organisations compete for the right to exclusive representation and, on the other hand, even combined they are far from representing a majority of Muslims living in Germany. Debate over the status of Muslims as a religious community gained momentum after a verdict by the Higher Administrative Court in Münster was repealed by the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig on February 23, 2005. According to the Münster verdict, two Islamic organisations – the Central Council of Muslims and the Islamic Council – had never been classified as religious communities and were not entitled to raise a claim to Islamic religious education in North Rhine-Westphalia. The Leipzig verdict by contrast allowed that local Islamic religious communities can act as local points of contact. It thus provides a clear basis for implementing pilot projects, even without the participation of Islamic umbrella organisations.

Encouragement of religious identity formation and prevention of extremism in Islamic religious education

The fact that Muslim children and adolescents face the same difficulties in searching for an orientation and religious identity as others has long been overlooked. Yet, the challenge of finding their own way to implement traditional tenets in the individualised Western world can be even greater for them. The intention behind the new offer of an Islamic education is to support young Muslims in finding their way to religious maturity and identity within plural German society and at the same time to encourage them to participate in and actively contribute to that society. Adolescents should be given the opportunity to explore their own religion critically from the internal perspective of the Islamic faith, taking into account their living environment. Islamic religious education also promotes understanding between people of different religions and world views. Religious education offers independent forms of interpretation of life and the world that go beyond the individual's issues. Religious education introduces all pupils to the critical exploration of essential questions of human existence within the framework of their own religious background and beyond. Religious education promotes religion-related language, expression and communication skills, thus guiding young people towards critical examination of their own religious traditions and those of others. In this way, it helps them understand both the present and the future.

For example, Baden-Württemberg's plans for Islamic religious instruction include the following wording within its guiding principles for the acquisition of competence: "It grants pupils access to the religion of Islam, supports them in their search for meaning in their lives, and contributes to the self-determined formation of religious identity."[6] On the educational value of "Islamic religious education" as a school subject, the wording is as follows:

> Moreover, the concept of identity, understood within its context, dynamics and multiplicity, incorporates various cultural, religious and social backgrounds, as well as diverging levels of knowledge, while at the same time underlining basic commonalities, such as belonging both to the Muslim community and to the society of the Federal Republic of Germany. In order to consolidate the unifying elements, it is essential that pupils become capable of communication and discourse on the common and unifying elements in our pluralistic society, as well as in matters of religious decisions and viewpoints. Strengthening the ability to communicate, enter into dialogue, criticise, judge, and learn with regard to religious matters is therefore a fundamental part of Islamic religious education. In this context, the subject also accommodates interreli-

6 http://www.bildungsplaene-bw.de/,Lde/LS/BP2016BW/ALLG/GS/RISL, accessed 26 September 2019.

> gious learning and inner-Islamic dialogue as well as cultural and socio-political understanding and the critical examination of social structures and ways of thinking and acting.[7]

Through Islamic religious education, Muslim children in Germany are given an opportunity at a pivotal point in German society – for this is what school represents to them – to establish links to their own living environment and observe its recognition in the process. A state school may be the first place children learn how to integrate into a larger and, above all, more heterogeneous environment – or a place where their behaviour is misunderstood and they are ostracised.

For Muslim children to integrate successfully, their religious orientation in particular must have a proper place within the framework of constitutional provisions, because – quite differently from lessons at a mosque – school provides pupils an opportunity to see themselves as Muslims within German society and not on the fringes of that society or as "outsiders." In schools, they can be empowered to speak about and reflect on their faith in German and experience their Muslim teacher as an authentic model for successful integration. Offering Islamic religious education at state schools can cause Muslims in Germany to revise their thinking and directly help their children develop a much stronger sense of belonging to German society. This sense of belonging is key to social participation and to loyalty. After all, it is generally experience of discrimination that leads to young people joining radical and extreme movements.[8]

According to information from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, about 870 people travelled from Germany to the Middle East to join the fighters of the Islamic State in Syria or Iraq (or in smaller numbers other Islamist groups). The vast majority of these jihadists are younger than 30.[9] The mere fact is alarming; the consequences are shocking: many have been killed, others have not been allowed to come back, and the few who have returned were (and still are) severely traumatized. Most of their biographies reveal that these pupils knew little about Islam at the point they were infected by hate preachers and consequently followed a distortion of the religion, one that was completely ideologized and extreme. Conveying the religious content of Islam and the complex backgrounds of specific Qur'anic passages in a school setting can serve as a means for preventing and forestalling extremism.

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7 http://www.bildungsplaene-bw.de/,Lde/LS/BP2016BW/ALLG/SEK1/RISL/LG, accessed 26 September 2019.

8 See also: "Frontstellungen abbauen. Die Stimme einer Lehrkraft für den Islamischen Religionsunterricht," in *"Den Koran zu lesen genügt nicht!" Fachliches Profil und realer Kontext für ein neues Berufsfeld. Auf dem Weg zum Islamischen Religionsunterricht,* Harry Harun Behr/Mathias Rohe/Hansjörg Schmid (ed.) (Berlin u. Münster: Lit Verlag, 2008), pp. 27-32.

9 https://www.lpb-bw.de/islamischer-staat.html#c22702, accessed 5 December 2019.

At present, Germany receives a very large number of refugees from war and crisis zones around the world. Most of them have fled countries whose population is predominantly Islamic, so most of these refugees are Muslims and influenced by Islam. This gives additional relevance to Islamic religious education in German state schools, as well as in other areas in German society. It was in part due to such considerations that Islamic religious education was established in a number of federal states in Germany and has been expanded. In this way, school, as a place of learning that includes Islamic religious education, enables pupils to adopt a basic attitude characteristic of school life: an attitude of eagerness to understand and of critical questioning. This holds especially at the secondary level, when pupils' questions can perhaps be asked more frankly in a school context than they could within the religious one of the mosque. It is only in this spirit of openness and rational inquiry that the goal of a school education can be successfully achieved in the pupils through the formation of religious maturity and self-determining identity.

It is obvious that Islamic religious education cannot serve as a patent remedy for all the difficulties that may arise in the context of school and Islam (e. g. non-participation in swimming lessons or school trips, problems in working with parents, among other things). It became apparent, however, that in fact through Islamic religious education and not least through the presence of a trained Muslim teacher at the school, problem areas could at least be tackled more easily and solutions could be discussed and found more successfully through mediation between pupils, parents and teachers. But with all the socio-political and security-political considerations that are coming up for debate now, it should not be forgotten that the establishment of Islamic religious instruction is the implementation of a constitutional fundamental right. Article 7.3 of the GG stipulates that religious instruction in state schools is an ordinary subject, and according to the principle of equality this does not only apply to Christian religious instruction. Moreover, the promotion of religious identity is a concern that is protected by the state. In this sense, Islamic religious education will contribute to integration and prevention of extremism, but it should not be seen as oriented towards this goal only. This would amount to discrimination and would justifiably cause irritation and thus be counterproductive. The opposite is true: If we give Muslim pupils their right to religious education and religious identity at an equal level with the Christian religious education at schools, then "being Muslim" is a normal option rather than a stigma that can subsequently lead to ostracism and to radicalisation.

Interreligious aspects in Islamic religious education

It is important that religious identity develops in a living process. In this process, critical examination of the foreign constitutes a significant element. The topic of "religions" is thus firmly established in all new education plans for religious subjects in Baden-Württemberg; the aim of introducing this topic is not only to direct one's view towards others but also to cooperate with them. Therefore, critical exploration of other religions represents one of seven standards for the content-related competencies and thus forms a heavily-weighted proportion of lessons within Islamic religious education too. These new education plans for 2016 were introduced in Alevi religious education, Old Catholic religious education, Protestant religious education, Sunni Islamic religious education, Catholic religious education, and Syrian-orthodox religious education.[10]

An essential precondition for religious education is general tolerance towards other religions and world views. The first valid education plan for the Islamic religious education model project in Baden-Württemberg already expressly stated that:

Pupils shall learn

- that the society and world we live in is diverse and that people have different ways of thinking and believing;
- that no human being has influence over where they were born; that every human being is free and that freedom is part of faith; that diversity among people is the will of God; that the more we know about our own religion, the more we can appreciate others; that people believe in God – they worship Him and pray to Him;
- that people of other faiths worship in a different way.[11]

Given such an understanding, confessionally-oriented religious education will certainly not promote separation, as its critics claim. It will help to consolidate the pupils' own position, while in turn enabling them to accept others as different. In Islamic religious education, the religious-pedagogical aim is primarily to enable pupils to find their own religious identity, but it is important that this religious identity "not [be] formed in isolation but rather through encounters with and critical examination of the foreign."[12] An Islamic religious education that is credibly capable of pluralism would conform to the demands for a religious education of the future that accords with the following statement by Karl Ernst Nipkow, the Nestor of Protestant religious pedagogy:

10 http://www.bildungsplaene-bw.de/,Lde/Startseite, accessed 26 September 2019.
11 http://www.islamimdialog.de/GS_IslamR_bs.pdf, accessed 26 September 2019.
12 Schiede, "Religion", pp. 210.

> Fit for the future in my view means primarily capable of pluralism. In this sense, I wish for a liberal framework to be maintained in Germany that allows multiple offers to exist and does not take seriously only "negative religious freedom" as a "defensive right" but also "positive religious freedom" as a "right to development" (M. Heckel). What is called for at the same time is cooperation with learning phases in the classroom – plurality and cooperation for the sake of the children and adolescents' rights as individuals and for the sake of the religious communities' right to self-interpretation: Education as learning through exploring otherness.[13]

Given the strong support afforded the model project by the two mainstream churches from the outset, it is important to note that Christian religion teachers at the model schools consistently responded to Islamic religious education with great appreciation in their evaluations (approx. 80%) and there was no rejection on their part.[14]

Another aspect of the important topic of interreligious learning becomes apparent in Islamic religious education: As is generally known, Islam contains different "confessions," crudely the "Sunnis" and "Shiites." These two groups can be further divided into subgroups. Apart from the confessions within Islam, there are also affiliation to particular Islamic schools of thought, country of origin, and cultural imprint, while religious practice can also vary greatly at home. In the case of mosque-based Islamic classes, one can assume that parents who send their children there are themselves regular attendees of the mosque in question and have an active relationship with their religion. The same is not necessarily true for school-based Islamic education. Even parents who were not actively religious and do not usually attend a mosque send their children to these classes so they can learn something that cannot be taught at home.[15] In this way, a class may include not just children of a Turkish background, but also children from Afghanistan, North Africa or the Balkans, and, of course, children of mixed marriages. They should all be able to feel at home in Islamic religion class and not experience it as alienating. This inner-Islamic heterogeneity represents a major challenge for teachers and for pupils, while at the same time ensuring an authentic in-class experience that conveys that there is no one "true" Islam but several different interpretations and approaches. Certainly, the challenge inner-Islamic heterogeneity offers to Islamic religious education is less the issue of belonging to various

13 Karl Ernst Nipkow, "Wünsche an eine zukunftsfähige Religionspädagogik aus wissenschaftlicher Sicht," in *Religionspädagogik im 21. Jahrhundert,* Karl Ernst Nipkow & Thomas Schlag (ed.) (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 2004), pp. 53–70, pp. 65.

14 Jörg Imran Schröter, *Die Einführung eines islamischen Religionsunterrichts an öffentlichen Schulen in Baden-Württemberg* (Freiburg i.Br.: VIBE – Edition Azimut, 2015), pp. 193.

15 Schröter, *Die Einführung eines islamischen Religionsunterrichts*, pp. 86.

Islamic denominations (on a theological level) than of different ways of handling and implementing faith (on a practical level). At the same time, a notion particularly emphasised in the education plan now comes to the fore: "Islamic religious education is open to pupils of different Islamic and other religious backgrounds and beliefs, and in this way it contributes to mutual understanding in a plural society."[16]

Encountering religions and religious confessions and critically exploring them should be practised in religious education at an early stage. In my view, the model of "Interreligious Learning Through Encounters" is particularly suitable for this purpose and I will therefore elaborate on this in the following section.

The model of "Interreligious learning through encounters"

According to the concept of the "Cooperating Subject Group," since more appropriately termed "Interreligious Learning Through Encounters", and in keeping with the motto "Shaping Diversity – Experiencing Viewpoints – Arguing About Truth", the different confessions and world views represented by pupils in schools should be taught separately and confessionally but should also be brought together in joint discussion. The goal of these lessons is not only to help pupils acquire "religious competence" within their own world view, but also "interreligious and intercultural competence" through mutual understanding beyond the boundaries of one's own religion, ideology and culture.[17] According to this approach, subjects of different confessional, religious, philosophico-ethical and ideological orientation exist side-by-side and on an equal footing. The content of the lessons is the responsibility of the various communities, which ensure that their principles find adequate recognition. At the same time, these principles have to be explained to the pupils from the other confessional subject groups, such as Christian Religious Education and Ethics, and brought into discussion. Authenticity and cooperation are thus linked on the one hand by working on issues, topics, and materials related specifically to a religious or ideological position using confessionally-specific approaches and methods, while on the other each subject must also take the contents of the other confessional subjects into account. The intention is to cooperate in a dialogue-based way, enabling pupils to orient themselves as best they can and to form their own opinions within the debate. Pupils are obliged

16 http://www.bildungsplaene-bw.de/,Lde/Startseite, accessed 26 September 2019.

17 Katja Boehme, "Religionsunterricht im neuen Jahrtausend. Die Kooperierende Fächergruppe – ein Beitrag des Religionsunterrichts zum fächerübergreifenden Unterricht," in *PH-FR – Zeitschrift der Pädagogischen Hochschule Freiburg 2/2002*, pp. 39.

to participate. They decide on a subject of their choice (or religious conviction) in which they have to participate for a fixed period. This conscious commitment to take a stand and a decision based on their faith and confession is considered a pivotal educational content of this form of religious education. Religious identity should not evade real plurality, however, but face it through cooperation.[18] Several teachers are involved to ensure the different religious competencies are covered. They cooperate not only on invitation, in the terms of an authentic encounter, but continuously in a predictable and permanent form.[19] The distinctive feature of Interreligious Learning Through Encounters consists in the effort to bring different basic beliefs and world views, religions and confessions, faith and atheism into dialogue with one another in a well thought-out and systematic manner. This predefined goal of the cooperation is achieved if pupils from the different classes exchange views on what they have learned and come to know each others' perceptions and attitudes. In doing so, they put the solidity of their insights and convictions to the test in dialogue and so learn tolerance and readiness for conflict and dialogue.[20] Katja Boehme and Dorothea Eisele summarise the advantages of this concept from their own experiences as follows:

> ... [the model] provides a very good opportunity to promote subject-specific, methodical and personal competence at all ages. Moreover, the Cooperating Subject Group model preserves the unique character of confessional religious education and appreciates the existence of the subject of Ethics. At the same time, the model integrates a range of confessional and religious groups that may be quite different depending on regional realities. Finally, the Cooperating Subject Group (or Interreligious Learning Through Encounters) creates opportunities to meet for a conversation that promotes dialogue among the partners and requires tolerance. The model thus develops the key skills for an intercultural and interreligious competence that will be in ever greater demand in the years to come.[21]

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18 Rupert von Stülpnagel, "Keine Bildung ohne Religionsunterricht. Ein Beitrag zur aktuellen Frage des Religionsunterrichts an Berliner Schulen aus katholischer Sicht," in *Integration und Religion. Islamischer Religionsunterricht an Berliner Schulen,* Rolf Busch, (ed.) (Berlin: Dahlem University Press, 2000), pp. 207.

19 Friedrich Schweitzer, "Kooperativer Religionsunterricht: Hindernis oder Voraussetzung interreligiösen Lernens?," in *Religionsunterricht interreligiös. Hermeneutische und didaktische Erschließungen,* Eckart Gottwald and Norbert Mette (ed.) (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003), pp. 103f.

20 Katja Boehme, "Interreligiöses Begegnungslernen in der Schule," in *Religiöse Bildung und interkulturelles Lernen. Ein ErasmusPlusProjekt mit Partnern aus Deutschland, Liechtenstein und der Türkei,* André Ritter, Jörg Imran Schröter, Cemal Tosun (ed.) (Münster: Waxmann, 2017), pp. 137–150.

21 Katja Boehme and Dorothea Eisele, "Interreligiöser Religionsunterricht," in *Wegmarken der Transzendenz. Interreligiöse Aspekte des Pilgerns,* Reinhard Kiste, Paul Schwarzenau and Udo Tworschka (ed.) (Balve: Zimmermann: 2004), pp. 307.

The design ideally comprises four different phases of cooperation: To begin with, pupils work on a topic that is common to all their (confessional) subject areas in a subject-specific way, i.e. present in each confessional subject area according to its principles. This enables the pupils to act as "experts" representing their confessional group in the various mixed groups. They are also required to prepare a presentation of their approach and interpretation of the common topic. This first phase takes several lessons to complete, depending on the topic. Only then will the confessional subject groups come together in the forum. In this way, each confessional subject has its own room in which classes are held separately. A larger room is also necessary for pupils to get together in the forum as the place of joint communication. The results are then presented and discussed. Questions or discrepancies are noted during the process and proposed for discussion in the mixed groups within another phase of cooperation. Each mixed group includes pupils who are "experts" in the various confessional subjects involved. In the last phase, the pupils return to their respective confessional subject groups for a final contemplation of the process. The concept of this model is thus designed to be open to different confessions, religions, and world views. Not only is Ethics placed on an equal footing with the Religious Education of the two mainline Christian confessions, but Islamic Religious Education also has its place in the Cooperating Subject Group.[22]

There is no difficulty in finding topics suitable for use in this model involving several subjects. Comparing the education plans for Protestant and Catholic religious education with the drafts for Islamic Religious Education will reveal numerous similarities or points of intersection. One great advantage of Interreligious Learning Through Encounters is the opportunity it offers not only to talk about other religions and world views but also to get into conversation with "representatives." Starting points for Islamic education within this model could be the topics touching on Islam listed in the curricula for Christian religious education, ethics or geography and history. Conversely, cooperating with other school subjects has advantages for Islamic Religious Education, because the interconnectedness of Islamic Religious Education as a subject with other similar subjects offers necessary guidance for the discussion of questions and the challenges of a plural society.

The great fear – no matter how erroneous – of Islamic Religious Education in state schools imperceptibly paving the way for fundamentalists to exert influence in a government institution may be dismissed from the outset by in-

22 Katja Boehme, "Warum es zum Interreligiösen Begegnungslernen keine Alternative gibt. Eine kooperierende Fächergruppe bietet die Basis für den interreligiösen Dialog in der Schule," in *Katechetische Blätter*: Zeitschrift für Religionsunterricht, Gemeindekatechese, kirchliche Jugendarbeit 142, 2017, 3, pp. 178–182.

corporating Islamic Religious Education into the Cooperating Subject Group or Interreligious Learning Through Encounters approaches, as both teachers and pupils would be in constant exchange with each other. There would be constant supervision of the lessons and their content. Directing content towards mutual understanding and tolerance for others would not only be a requirement of the approach but would also be tested in practice by pupils and by the teachers involved.[23] The principles of this concept form the basis of the "Interreligious Learning Through Encounters" certificate programme developed at Heidelberg University of Education, which has been in existence since 2008, in cooperation with the Heidelberg College of Jewish studies and the Institute of Islamic Theology/Religious Education of Karlsruhe University of Education.

Development of Islamic peace building

It is obvious for the reasons stated above that Islamic Religious Education at state schools cannot isolate itself in religious terms but must be designed for dialogue. Moreover, Islamic Religious Education and other religious education and ethics teaching in school should serve peace in the class community, at school, and beyond. Indeed, it should promote peace in society and the world. For this reason, the Institute of Islamic Theology/Religious Education of Karlsruhe University of Education has made it their aim not only to educate teachers for Islamic Religious Education and place an emphasis on interreligious learning, but also to analyse the inherent potential of Islam for peaceful coexistence, explore this potential academically and strengthen and disseminate it in the framework of Islamic Religious Education and Islamic study courses. In order to implement this plan, a research project on Islamic peace education and extremism prevention has been developed whose title formulates the goals as follows:

> Auf dem Weg einer Islamischen Friedensbildung. Muslime als Bürger der Globalen Gesellschaft: der islamische Beitrag zum gelingenden Miteinander von Religionen, Kulturen und Ethnien. (Towards Islamic peace education. Muslims as citizens of a global society: the Islamic contribution to successful coexistence of religions, cultures and ethnic groups.)

23 For further information on interreligious cooperation, see Andreas Obermann, "Gemeinsames Lernen für den Religionsunterricht? Überlegungen zur gesellschaftlichen und didaktischen Notwendigkeit interreligiöser Lehrerfortbildungen," in *Die Rolle der Religion im Integrationsprozess. Die deutsche Islamdebatte,* Bülent Ucar (ed.) (Frankfurt a. M: Peter Lang, Reihe für Osnabrücker Islamstudien, 2010), pp. 572f.

The peaceful coexistence of peoples, cultures and religions arises only as a result of the civilisation process. Religions contribute to the global civilisation process by activating and communicating their pacifying potential. In this context, a common set of basic values in Global Society cannot be formed by the stipulations of a specific religion or culture. What is needed are universal approaches, as with human rights or global ethics. The aims of the research project are to explore how such a baseline of values and the peacebuilding potential of the Islamic traditions can be analysed, consolidated and disseminated, and what kind of obstacles may occur and how they may be overcome.

> In my opinion, it is high time that the Muslims living in Germany took to the streets and strongly protested against Islamist terror – in their thousands and hundreds of thousands. In other words, Muslim communities first need to realise that this terrorism is their problem and that they become accomplices by remaining silent – then hatred can be overcome.

A colleague commented in these words on a public statement I made at the university regarding the Paris attacks in January 2015. I too was of the firm opinion that Muslims all over the world and especially in Europe needed to break their silence in order to position themselves clearly against violence in the name of Islam. This issue, however, goes far deeper than it appears at first glance. In the meantime, there has also been a "*Je ne suis pas Charlie*" movement – and justifiably so. And yet there should be no reason for Muslims not to join and actively help to shape a peace movement. Oversimplified ascriptions and naive appeals fail in the face of a complex reality. For this reason, there is a need for sensitive discussion of the following points; these points are areas that need improvement, and they are certainly being improved already but need to be advanced further and linked with each other. The academic disciplines involved – alongside religious education (including Christian) and philosophy (in the sense of "education towards maturity," following Adorno) – are especially media science, islamophobia research, sociology (particularly on the topic of "post-colonialism"), historical science, and the Islamic theological sciences (especially on the Quran and its exegesis, but also the Hadith sciences and Surah).

With partners from academia, education, and civil society, research questions are being formulated and a methodology prepared. Their aim is first to form a theoretical (i.e. theological, anthropological, and education science) foundation for Islamic peace education, and then to develop, test and evaluate practical methods for peacekeeping and extremism prevention. The following specialised institutions are currently involved:

a) Institute of Islamic Theology/Religious Education at Karlsruhe University of Education (J.Prof. Dr. Jörg Imran Schröter)

The Institute of Islamic Theology/Religious Education at Karlsruhe University of Education is in charge of project leadership. This institute is already home to cooperative initiatives with lecturers in Christian theologies and Philosophy and Ethics. There is also close cooperation with Heidelberg University of Education (prof. dr. Katja Boehme) on the topic of "Interreligious Learning Through Encounters." Cooperation with the Heidelberg College of Jewish Studies, which is to be further extended, also belongs to this setting.

b) Institute of Interreligious Studies (Prof. Dr. Uhde, Freiburg)

The research project leverages the profound religious studies expertise of the Institute of Interreligious Studies, whose director Bernard Uhde, a Catholic theologian and religious studies scholar, has provided a vital foundation for interreligious dialogue and the peace potential of religions.[24]

c) European Institute for Intercultural and Interreligious Research (Dr. Ritter, Liechtenstein)

This institute based in Liechtenstein devotes itself to academic research and teaching in the field of intercultural and interreligious encounters and relationships in the context of European integration. Institute director Andre Ritter, a Protestant theologian, holds courses on religious education in a plural society within the framework of the "Islam in society" profile development at Karlsruhe University of Education.[25]

d) Pedagogy of Global Values (Dr. Kalff, Staufen)

The Open Mind Training institute is also involved in the project. Its director Michael Kalff has been actively developing and implementing methods for the

24 Publications worth mentioning include: *Warum sie glauben, was sie glauben. Weltreligionen für Andersgläubige und Nachdenkende.* (Freiburg: Herder, 2014) and ""Kein Streitgrund zwischen uns und euch" (Koran 42, 15). Bemerkungen zum Friedenspotenzial der Weltreligionen," in: *Globale Mächte und Gewalten - wer steuert die Welt? Die Verantwortung der Weltreligionen,* Hermann Weber (ed.) (Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald, 2011).

25 For our project, we already have the manuscript of a notable treatise on *Dealing with the violence potential in religions* by Werner Höbsch available. Among André Ritter's publications, the writings entitled *Nebeneinander oder miteinander vor dem Einen Gott?* (Münster: Waxmann, 2010) deserve special mentioned and will be important for the work planned with young people and of practical relevance to school and religious instruction.

communication of Global Values and interreligious understanding on behalf of government departments, foundations and UNESCO for over 15 years.[26]

e) Global Ethic Foundation (Dr. Weingardt, Tübingen)

The idea of a global ethic goes back to Catholic theologian Hans Küng. In his empirical research trips around the globe, he noted that all world religions and philosophical/humanistic views already share a common set of basic values and morals. Hence, such a common canon of values does not need to be developed for our global society, but it does have to be given new recognition, time and again. It needs to be put into practice and passed on Markus Weingardt, head of the Peace division in the Global Ethic Foundation, does research on religious peacebuilding and non-violent conflict resolution.[27]

In terms of methodology, the research project is a transdisciplinary cycle (action research). This includes the co-construction of research questions within the transdisciplinary team, as well as addressing the research questions. Expert interviews will also be carried out, in particular with Muslim experts with a view to identifying and consulting practitioners of interreligious work with young people. Other fruitful subject areas will be metaphysically open and integrative pedagogical anthropology (Kern/Wittig), current findings on the Kohlberg model of moral development (including Becker), and universal ethical concepts (Global Ethic Foundation, human rights, Vittorio Hösle, Karl-Otto Apel) and their practical pedagogical significance (Staub-Bernasconi). Another key element of the research method is the involvement of project partners from science and civil society. In this way, a potent network is being created to aid the replication of the project and its results with a view to implementing Muslim peace education through teaching and youth work. The research project thus has an interdisciplinary and international structure, financing for which has been set up in collaboration with ministries, foundations and other donors.

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26 Examples of publications within the project context: *Welt Weite Werte: Ein Trainingsprogramm für Jugendarbeit und Schule.* (Düsseldorf: Hagemann & Partner Bildungsmedien, 2005); *Jugend im WertAll: Lese- und Arbeitsbuch zur Wertekommunikation mit jungen Menschen*; in cooperation with Evi Rottmair (Weinheim: Juventa, 2007).

27 E.g. *Religion Macht Frieden. Das Friedenspotenzial von Religionen in politischen Konflikten* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007). *Was Frieden schafft. Religiöse Friedensarbeit: Akteure, Beispiele, Methoden* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2014).

Conclusions

The following points are offered as conclusions to what has been said above and as goals to be achieved against this background in order to pave the way for an Islamic peace movement:

a) Islamic peace education

In Islamic Religious Education, just as in other religion classes and in Ethics, there has to be "education towards a culture of peace".[28] This requires the development of relevant religious-pedagogical or ethics-related approaches for classes and youth work, both for the work within religious communities (or Ethics classes) and for interreligious encounters, with the aim of communicating and strengthening contributions to a successful Global Society.

b) Interfaith dialogue

As already outlined, interreligious dialogue and interreligious learning, practised at an early stage, hold great potential for peace. Research should be promoted into the anthropological, ethical, sociological and psychological similarities between the major religions, with the aim of defining the constructive contributions of the religions towards a successful Global Society (communication/establishment of global values; the binding nature of human rights; civic engagement etc.).

c) Source hermeneutics

The potential for peace in the Qur'an and the Sunnah needs to be examined and empowered as a counter to the instrumentalisation of the sacred sources of Islam for political ideologies and violence. This urgently requires contextualisation of "difficult" passages, in the sense of historical and critical exegesis[29] and the development of and emphasis on peacebuilding theology.

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28 Cf. Werner Wintersteiner of the University of Klagenfurt's courses, research activities and publications on peace education: https://www.aau.at/erziehungswissenschaft-und-bildungsforschung/arbeitsbereiche/friedensforschung-und-friedensbildung/, accessed 26 September 2019.

29 Cf. Ömer Özsoy, "Die Geschichtlichkeit der koranischen Rede und das Problem der ursprünglichen Bedeutung von geschichtlicher Rede," in: *Alter Text – neuer Kontext. Koranhermeneutik in der Türkei heute,* Felix Körner (ed.) (Freiburg: Herder, 2006), pp. 78-98.

d) Islam and the concept of the State

The relationship of Islam – or rather of Muslims living in democratic legal systems – to democracy, the separation of powers, secularisation, etc. needs to be clarified.[30] Plurality and diversity in the Global Society are certainly challenges to religious communities, but should also be seen as opportunities to enable a constructive way of approaching these issues through the democratic participation of religious communities. This includes the development of a Muslim identity in Europe, for which Islam in the Balkans and the theology courses at the Islamic Faculty of the University of Sarajevo may serve as examples.

e) Media responsibility

A problem that should not be underestimated is media reporting on Islam or, more strictly, Islamism, particularly as little is done to distinguish between the two. This creates a concept of "Islam" as enemy and fuels Islamophobia. The result is an increasing marginalisation of Muslims, who in turn react by radicalising themselves and so confirm the "enemy" concept – a vicious circle. An area that needs urgent improvement within the framework of any peace process is the critical examination of media ethics and media education, which draw attention to values and responsibility in global communication networks.[31] This also requires the development of appropriate approaches to teaching and youth work in religious communities and in school education.

f) Global justice

There can be no credible forward movement in the peace process and no commitment on the road to peacebuilding without addressing racism, orientalism and colonialism. The fact that much of the so-called "Islamic world" is in a state of war and chaos has less to do with Islam than with the intervention of Western powers, whose intention has not been to spread democracy and peace but to secure their own hegemonic and capital interests.[32]

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30 Cf. Mathias Rohe, "Islam und säkularer Rechtsstaat: Grundlagen und gesellschaftlicher Diskurs," in *APuZ – Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, 13-14/2011*, 28. März 2011, S. 21.

31 https://www.medienverantwortung.de/, accessed 23 July 2017.

32 E.g. Peter Scholl-Latour *Der Fluch der bösen Tat. Das Scheitern des Westens im Orien*t (Berlin: Ullstein, 2014).

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Od islamske vjeronauke do izgradnje mira u njemačkim državnim školama

Sažetak

Po njemačkom Ustavu, školsko obrazovanje u Njemačkoj obuhvata i vjeronauku kao redovni školski predmet (član 7.3 Grundgesetza [GG] = Ustava Savezne Republike Njemačke). S ciljem da se ova ustavna odredba primijeni i na muslimane, te da se rješavaju problemi identiteta i integracije sa kojima se muslimani u Njemačkoj suočavaju, u nekoliko njemačkih država nastoji se osigurati islamska vjeronauka. U ovom radu se predstavlja logika koja se nalazi u osnovi ove ideje i pokazuju njeni okvirni uvjeti. O razvoju islamske izgradnje mira raspravlja se na osnovu pretpostavke o potencijalu i volji za mir u religiji islama.

Ključne riječi: Islamska vjeronauka, izgradnja mira, međureligijski dijalog, religijski identitet, međukulturno učenje.