Editorial

Introduction to Special Issue: Islam and/in Education in The Netherlands

Ina ter Avest [ID]

Department of Education, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands; khteravest@gmail.com

Abstract: This article provides information on the current Dutch educational system, paying special attention to the position of Islam in formal, non-formal and informal education. It briefly sketches the history of the so-called "pillarised educational system", a system in which the 19th century Dutch Christian education system evolved into a compartmentalised system with the pillars of Catholic, Protestant and humanistic education. At the end of the 20th century, a fourth pillar of Islamic education was founded by Dutch Muslim parents. Convinced that religious upbringing in the family and participation in mosque youth clubs constituted only the beginning of the process of becoming a good Muslim, Moroccan and Turkish parents supported the foundation of formal Islamic education in Dutch Islamic schools. This article describes developments in formal, non-formal and informal Islamic education in the light of children's rights to religious education and parents' rights to religious upbringing. Religious identity development, including religious literacy training, is presented as an important aspect of educating children to be(come) good Muslims—a process in which parents at home, imams and volunteers at the mosque, as well as teachers at school, play an important role.

Keywords: educational system; Islamic formal education; Islamic non-formal education; Islamic informal education; children's rights; parents' rights; pedagogical civil society

1. Introduction

To give an impression of the position of Islam and/in education in the Netherlands, in this introductory chapter, we first paint the history of the position of religion(s) in Dutch education in broad strokes. To this end, we must go back several centuries.[1]

In 18th-century Netherlands, the entire education system was thoroughly shaped by Christianity (Franken and Vermeer 2019; Ter Avest et al. 2007; Ter Avest 2022). Both in family upbringing and school education, children were raised according to generally accepted values and regulations rooted in the Christian tradition, particularly those of Dutch Protestant Christianity (Ter Avest and Bakker 2020; Verhoef 2015, p. 52).

In the 19th century, however, a number of parents, both Protestants and Catholics, did not agree with the confined space assigned to Christianity in the schools of that time. Among these parents, Catholics held the opinion that Christian religious education (RE) in schools was dominated by a Protestant interpretation, while Orthodox Protestants took the view that Christian RE in schools was a poor substitute for an original tradition degenerating into virtue ethics (Bakker et al. 2010, p. 474). In the eyes of these parents, only the basic virtues, values and regulations of Christianity were (re)presented in Dutch schools. Freedom of religion, a core value enshrined in the Dutch Constitution since the country was founded as an autonomous nation in 1648, gave Protestant and Catholic parents alike the right to establish schools that were in line with their religious upbringing at home. Consequently, Protestant parents founded their own private Christian schools (Rietveld-van Wingerden et al. 2003). "Teachers were recruited in the religious community the parents adhered to, and the school board was composed of parents observing the same Protestant denomination as the school had adopted" (Ter Avest and Bakker 2018, p. 876).

Catholic parents, initially, favoured neutral state schools without a characteristic Protestant flavour but eventually decided to pursue the establishment of new Catholic schools in the second half of the 19th century (Bakker et al. 2006, p. 476). Public schools in those days were funded by the government. In contrast, no governmental financial support was made available for the newly established Christian schools until the late 19th century, when Protestants and Catholics joined forces in an attempt to obtain funding for their confessional schools (the "School Funding Controversy", ibid., p. 477).

Jewish education occupied a special position, offering a curriculum in Yiddish (Lamers 2017). Due to the poor quality of the classes, the government tried to intervene with educational innovations (for instance, the implementation of Dutch as the language of instruction); however, this did not improve the quality of education in these schools. Consequently, all Jewish schools were closed down by the government, with the goal of transferring all Jewish children to state schools, which would counteract the isolation of Jews in the Dutch population. This proved to be an unsuccessful measure, and, in an alternative policy, all Jewish schools from 1835 onwards were funded by the Dutch government—for a relatively short period, however. Jewish parents, for their part, preferred to "break down the educational ghetto walls" (Verhoef 2015, p. 57) and decided to send their children to state schools, with the result that, by the middle of the 19th century, all Jewish schools (approximately 40) had closed down (Wallet 2017, p. 2). After a short interval in which Jewish RE classes were included as additional classes in state schools, new Jewish confessional schools were founded to respond to the need of parents and rabbis to ensure proper acquisition of the Hebrew language and introduction into Jewish rituals. "*Onze Joodjes moeten leren van het Jodendom te genieten*" ("Our little Jews must learn to enjoy Jewish tradition" (Wallet 2017, p. 3).

The 20th century was pivotal for the construction of the pillarised Dutch society. In 1917, as a result of the "School Funding Controversy", public schools and Christian (Protestant and Catholic) schools were accorded equal funding by the government. Article 23, paragraph 5 of the Dutch Constitution stipulates that citizens have "the freedom to provide education according to religious or other belief". (Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2008). This freedom of education is articulated in the *vrijheid van richting* (freedom of conviction, of principles of teaching), *vrijheid van oprichting* (freedom of establishment) and *vrijheid van inrichting* (freedom of organisation of teaching) (Zoontjes 2003; Budak et al. 2018). A precondition for receiving funding by the government is that schools must meet the criteria of "good education" prescribed by the government. Furthermore, all Dutch schools are inspected by the national School Inspectorate. The subdivision of education into blocs according to religious or secular convictions is known as the pillarised Dutch educational system. Until 1989, it consisted of a Protestant[2], a Catholic and a public education pillar.

In the 1970s, a new law on family reunification enabled the families left behind by Turkish and Moroccan "guest workers"—who had become part of the domestic labour force—to move to the Netherlands. In the new guest country, these Muslim families were confronted with the specific characteristics of the Dutch educational system (Rietveld-van Wingerden et al. 2010). To begin with, there was hardly any attention or care given in society to these new arrivals. As the Moroccan-Dutch author Abdelkader Benali writes in his essay "*De stilte van de ander*" (Benali 2021; "The Silence of the Other"), their efforts to survive in the country of arrival

> "were subordinate to the new era that had arrived, rebuilding of the country had priority. A reconstruction had to put things in order, but also meant that society had to become different. There was the fear that the Netherlands would become overpopulated, people left, said goodbye. Other people came. My father was one of them, because the Netherlands turned out to be an economic success story. There was room for everyone! As long as you were prepared to roll up your sleeves". "*De stilte van de ander*", p. 32.

Initially, the children of these newcomers were enrolled in Protestant, Catholic and public primary schools. In these school pillars, different pedagogical strategies were developed to adjust to the presence of "the other"—i.e., a child socialised in a different belief system—in the classrooms. However, a group of Muslim parents were not satisfied with the, in their view, unsatisfactory focus on Islam in the compulsory RE classes. In addition to caring about their children's academic performance, these parents were also concerned about "strengthening the pupils' sense of identity, i.e., cultural and religious personality development in the spirit of Islam" (Driessen 2019). In 1987, therefore, a number of Muslim parents started with the foundations of their own Islamic primary schools (Budak et al. 2018; Budak 2021)[3]—history repeats itself!

In the second half of the 20th century, Dutch society transitioned from a homogeneous Christian society into a plural society, characterised by citizens adhering to a plurality of religious and secular belief systems. Particularly from the 1950s onwards, secularity became dominant in Dutch society. In 21st-century Netherlands—a society characterised by a high degree of secularisation—the majority of primary schools nevertheless still belong to a Christian school board (see also Driessen 2019). In this educational landscape, a diverse interpretation of the Christian religious tradition(s) characterises the population of Protestant and Catholic schools: this is true not only for teachers, but also for pupils and their parents. Research on principals of Protestant schools shows that concretising the Christian "flavour" of the school is regarded as a challenge (Bertram-Troost et al. 2012). How Christian values are involved in the articulation and content of the curricula (teaching about and from Christianity) is experienced as problematic by the majority of interviewed principals. Similar statements are made by leaders of Islamic schools. In Dutch Islamic schools, as well, diversity reigns in the interpretation of good education according to Islam and the Qur'an. A continuous tension between knowledge *about* Islam, introduction *into* Islam and learning *from* Islam is experienced by teachers—by Muslim and non-Muslim teachers alike. In this Special Issue, this diversity is explored for formal education (Beemsterboer 2018, in this volume), non-formal education (Yar, Gurlesin, in this volume) and informal education (Aantjes, in this volume).

2. Religion and Religious Literacy

The question of the meaning of religion in our time is explored by Charles Taylor in a publication with a challenging title: "*What Is the Meaning of Religion* Today?"[4] (2003). As his starting point, Taylor follows William James' definition that religion consists of "feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (James 1961, p. 42). According to Taylor, participation in shared rituals and collective worship is complementary to individual faith. A collective religious life is not just the result of individuals' personal religious relationships but, to a certain extent, consists of individual belief rooted in collective experiences. Religion can then be articulated in everyday language as something you can put your faith on, as something to hope for, resulting in concrete actions that mirror your personal faithfulness. We need words and images to express what moves us—literally and metaphorically. Religious literacy consists of words and images with their evocative power, which challenge us to take a different perspective—different from the usual. For example, water is something that quenches our thirst and we can use to wash our hands, but from a another perspective, it cleanses our soul and prepares us for prayer. Viewed in this way, water becomes a symbol for purity. To grasp the symbolic meaning of an everyday object, an initiation into the religious domain is essential—an initiation that familiarises the child with the symbols, rituals, narratives and practices of religious tradition(s). Religious socialisation in the family, together with RE at school and in the religious community, is of pivotal importance for children's religious identity development. In her PhD study, Ayse Demirel Ucan states that, at the individual level, RE provides young people with religious and spiritual guidance by which they are expected to form an Islamic identity composed of faith, virtuous action and morality. This form of education is called

tarbiyah in Arabic. Its educational purpose is to prepare children to lead a life of purity and sincerity (Ucan 2020, p. 2). This educational objective, worded in general terms, does not do justice to the diverse interpretations thereof. "Diversity within Islam as well as between Islam and other religious traditions are not sufficiently emphasised in the RE curriculum and textbooks," states Ucan (ibid., p. 7). She distinguishes confessional Islamic RE from liberal or constructivist RE. Confessional Islamic RE focuses on knowledge: acquiring knowledge about Islam in order to become a good Muslim. Teacher-centred strategies and memorisation are characteristic for the pedagogy of confessional Islamic RE (ibid., p. 3; Meijer 2006, 2009). In liberal or constructivist RE, knowledge is contextualised, teaching is student-centred and students are encouraged to engage critically with the knowledge presented (Ucan 2020, p. 5). In Ucan's view, disregarding diversity in RE results in the failure to properly guide children and young people in their understanding and interpretation of Islam as a constituent part of their religious identity—be it in a Muslim context or in a plural context such as the Netherlands. She is in favour of a transformation of RE by focusing on the constructive power of individual learners, enabling them to become literate in Islam through a process of wonder and discovery by actively engaging with the reality of the objects and phenomena in question (ibid., p. 12).

Inspired by, among others, the work of Sahin (2013) and Selçuk (Selçuk 2012; Selçuk and Valk 2012), Uçan introduces the concept of critical RE (CRE), characterised by teaching and learning processes that encourage "pupils to engage in an attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible learning process" aiming at the development of "new and powerful ways of perceiving an object or phenomenon by introducing students to varied accounts of it" (ibid., p. 12). In Ucan's view, this way of learning brings pupils "closer to the reality of the object through seeing it in a new and more complex way" (ibid., p. 12). For Islamic RE, CRE "can create possibilities for Muslim pupils to develop a deeper discernment of Islamic knowledge through the use of variation" (Ucan 2020, p. 12). With this new educational concept, Ucan shows herself to be in line with the disruptive–inclusive approach favoured by John Hull (1985; Smith 2022), and the line of thought of Bert Roebben and Katharina Welling about performative RE (Roebben and Welling 2020). These concepts, each with their own characteristic pedagogical approach, do justice to the right of the child to be educated in the tradition its family adheres to. Each of these educational concepts aims to develop children's religious literacy and stimulate their religious identity development. Below, we first describe the rights of the child—an articulation of human rights—with a focus on RE. This is followed by paragraph 4 which offers a description of religious identity development.

3. Rights of the Child

In November 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereafter referred to as the CRC) and opened it for signature, ratification and accession. In this paragraph, we focus on the rights of the child regarding upbringing in the family and education at school.

The preamble of the CRC states that it is of pivotal importance to keep in mind that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance, that the family is the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members, and particularly children, and that due account must be taken of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child.

3.1. Education

Article 28 of the CRC is concerned with education. It is stipulated that primary education should be compulsory and available free to all. The development of secondary education should be encouraged. Article 29 focuses explicitly on the child's position in education, stating that "the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin" (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989).

Here, children's rights are linked with the governmental responsibility to establish primary (and secondary and professional) education and to be concerned for the quality thereof (Article 28). Article 29 tells us that "good education" is concerned with the "child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities" and that good education should "prepare the child for a responsible life in a free and plural society".

Article 8, in turn, focuses on the preservation of the child's identity, "including nationality, name and family relations" (ibid., 1989).

3.2. The Child in the Family

Parents are explicitly mentioned in Article 5, which articulates their (and/or the extended family members', and/or a community's) "responsibilities, rights and duties to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance". According to the CRC, the parents are the first responsible persons in the upbringing of the child; "the best interest of the child will be their basic concern". Parents are assigned rights as well as duties. Article 13 tells us that parents should provide the child with "information and ideas of all kind, regardless of frontiers, either orally in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any other media of the child's choice" (ibid., 1989). The child's freedom of conscience, thought and religion is mentioned in Article 14, together with some restrictions imposed by law regarding the manifestation of religion, e.g., when the protection of public safety is at stake, or when a particular manifestation limits the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Parents familiarise their children with their normal way of doing things: "this is what we are used to". In the first circle of education, children are socialised into the ways of their parents or first caretakers. They invite children to join them in their daily behaviour, rooted in their life orientation. Parents demonstrate their life and children participate in this way of life, imitating their parents' actions and, in the process, mastering the culture and religious tradition to which the parents adhere. For parents, the priority may be, for example, that the child becomes a faithful Muslim who is familiar with and practices Islamic customs, such as adhering to certain food prescriptions (e.g., not eating pork), participating in rituals (e.g., praying at home or in the mosque) and fasting during the month of Ramadan (when coming of age).

3.3. The Child at School

According to the CRC, parents have a duty to create opportunities for their children to get in touch with other ways of behaving, other life orientations. This is a duty parents have in common with teachers: a duty, one could say, that they outsource to the school. For parents, this does not mean that they let go of their child. They remain the first responsible

persons for the education of their children! In their choice of a specific school, with its specific (religious) identity and its characteristic (religiously framed) curriculum, parents show awareness of their responsibility for their child's upbringing and education.

3.4. Teaching in, about and from Religion

The difference between (religious) education in the family and at school is best described by the concepts "teaching *in*" and "teaching *about/from*". In the family, the focus lies on the child's socialisation in the religious tradition the family adheres to; the educational goal is a religious person—teaching *in* tradition. At school, the teachers' focus is on informing the child about this tradition while simultaneously presenting information about other religious traditions and life orientations. Here, the educational goal is a religiously literate person—teaching *about* religion. In everyday practice, of course, this distinction is not that strict. Parents do provide information about other religions, and teachers do show in their actual presence in the classroom what it is to be a religious person. As an example of religiousness, they invite their pupils to be(come) followers of that example. At school, the educational climate (school identity) is imbued with the worldview tradition the school (board/team) adheres to, thus implicitly inviting the pupils to live according to this inspired vision.

Familiarisation to be(come) rooted in a tradition and socialization, to be(come) rooted in a society, are two sides of the same coin: complementary processes in the development to be(come) a religious person and a participative citizen, and the development of a religious identity as part of citizenship. Constitutive core concepts thereof are freedom, equality and justice—the core concepts of human rights. The three traditions of "the people of the Book"—the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions—evolve around these concepts, in their narratives, poetic texts and moral guidelines for "the good life".

Before turning to Islamic education and its practices and praxis, we explore the characteristics of religious identity development.

4. Religious Identity Development

Trees Andree's PhD study (Andree 1983) bore the title: "*Gelovig word je niet vanzelf*" ("Becoming a Believer Doesn't Happen by Itself"). Two commonly used pedagogical methods in religious and worldview education are called "*Op verhaal komen*" ("Narrations of the Past, Settling Down in One's Story") (for lower professional training) and *"Van horen zeggen"* ("As It Was Told") (for pre-university education). These three titles implicitly communicate the need for "the other" to be introduced and participate in one's own tradition(s) as a religious person and become knowledgeable in the other's (religious or secular) worldview. The passing on of narratives "stands or falls with the assumption that the real, tangible, sentient existence—the one already accomplished, sedimented, objectified—is neither the only one nor the most authoritative" (Bauman 1999, p. 136). Every storyteller is unique "in the sense that only human beings, of all living creatures, are able to challenge their reality and ask for a deeper meaning, justice, freedom, and the good—whether individual or collective" (ibid., p. 139).

"The collective" and "the other" as "significant others" are central in the theoretical approach of James Fowler's stage theory (1981) and James Marcia's identity theory (Marcia 1980). Fowler's stages—describing the child's development through primary and secondary school—move from early childhood with its intuitive-projective faith to childhood with its mythic-literal faith, continuing to the synthetic-conventional phase in the last years of primary school and early puberty. In the intuitive-projective faith stage, the child's "understanding" of perceptions and narrations is dominated by feelings. "The child fuses fantasy, fact and feeling" (Fowler 1981, p. 135). Children in the mythic-literal faith stage worry about what is real. In telling each other stories about their experiences, they are able to distinguish between each other's perspectives and coordinate them. Storytelling stands at the beginning of their capacity to give meaning to their daily experiences and life (ibid., p. 136). The synthetic-conventional phase, the start of puberty, is characterised

by the so-called "tyranny of the other"; authority is located externally to the self (ibid., p. 154). The lines of thought held by parents and teachers, as significant others, are adopted and expressed almost uncritically and unreflectively, as if they were the children's own authentic views.

Marcia's theory revolves around reflection and the core concepts of exploration and commitment. Acknowledging the possibility of being committed to a tradition without having knowledge of other (religious or secular) worldviews and life orientations, Marcia nevertheless holds the opinion that exploration is a condition sine qua non to become an authentic religious person. Such an exploration on the part of the child starts with taking a different perspective on its belief system as presented by significant others, and in the wider world in which it is growing up (Bronfenbrenner 1997, 1999).

In his "bio-ecological model", Bronfenbrenner's focus is on the mutuality of the relationship between the child and its context (the family, the neighbourhood, the school). Learning and development, Bronfenbrenner holds, are the result of the child's interactions with an ever-changing context, and consequently with a series of ever-changing roles. The role the child takes on in the family differs from its role as a pupil at school, its role as a young adolescent in a peer group and its role in a "home of study".[5] Following Bronfenbrenner's line of thought, each change of context offers new opportunities for exploring different roles and different positionings in relation to different interpretations of core religious concepts. Guiding and structuring this process of exploration and commitment, as the CRC states, are the task of educators. Widening children's and young persons' horizons is pivotal for the growth of an authentic religious commitment. Envisioning tradition as having the quality of a verb—something to be conjugated, a process that enriches both the tradition and the religious person—does justice to the literal meaning of the Latin verb *tradere*, signifying "handing over", "passing on" and "supplying with information" (Agten 2019, p. 220).

Children and (young) adults do not adopt entire (religious or secular) worldviews as if carved in stone. Being informed by religious traditions, they selectively make use of passages and construct their own images, based on their own associative interpretations of (passages from) traditions, and use these as building blocks for their own religious identity. Young people are touched by, and create their own images from, the variety of worldview traditions they encounter in the plural context(s) in which they live. These images become meaningful through the feelings they evoke, and the ways they are verbalised in conversation with others (De Haan and Schellekens 2014). In dialogic encounters with significant others, the religious literacy of children and young people is increased, and their life orientation becomes ever more articulated. Just like young people, (religious and secular) traditions are constantly challenged to reformulate their being-in-the-world, responding to the multi-voicedness of constantly renewing personal narratives as contributions to the process of *tradere*.

Becoming and being a religious person and a participative citizen in the Dutch plural society requires the ability to engage in conversations/dialogues with persons who are principally different—engaging with both religious narratives and secular and religious people in daily life.

Thus far, in this introductory chapter, we have outlined the history of the dual education system in the Netherlands and considered the right of the child to be educated in a tradition that stimulates its religious identity development. In the next paragraph, we summarise the position of Islamic schools in the Netherlands and provide an overview of the articles in this volume that give an impression of how formal, non-formal and informal forms of education respond to young children's need for religious identity development as part of their education to become participative citizens in the Dutch plural society. Our approach in this Special Issue is characterised by a critical reading of curricula and practices used in religious upbringing and education, from the perspective of the symbolic and operational role the latter play in the religious identity development of future Dutch citizens. One question that can be asked is: does the way Islam is usually represented in upbringing

and education contribute to what is coined as "normative citizenship education"? (see ter Avest, in this volume)

5. Formal Education—Islam in/and Schools

As we described above, in 1980s Netherlands, a number of Muslim parents were not satisfied with the way Islam was taught in Christian and public schools. While in Christian schools, Islam was approached from a Christian point of view, in public schools, a so-called "neutral" objective view was taken—resulting in teaching and learning *about* Islam from a liberal or conservative Christian point of view, respectively. Turning this dissatisfaction into action, a group of Muslim parents founded their own Islamic schools in 1987. Specifically, two Dutch Islamic primary schools were established: *Al-Ghazali* in Rotterdam, with the support of Turkish parents, and *Tariq Ibnoe Ziyad* in Eindhoven, with the support of Moroccan parents (Budak et al. 2018).

After these first foundations in 1987 followed a surge in the establishment of Islamic schools—a process that was controversial and highly contested in Dutch society (Driessen 2019). The arguments of opponents revolved around processes of (self-)segregation that would hinder integration. In addition, there was a fear that children would not become literate in Dutch culture and its history. It was further argued that mostly conservative Muslim parents would send their children to Islamic schools, resulting in a practice of teaching pupils *in* an orthodox, fundamentalist Islam that would not fit with Dutch liberal society. Others, on the other hand, believed that Islamic schools would contribute to the emancipation of Muslims in Dutch society, and that a temporary segregation might serve to strengthen the self-esteem of Muslims and thereby help them to feel at home, and participate, in Dutch plural society. After the events of 9/11 and the murders of the politician Pim Fortuyn (2002) and film director Theo van Gogh (2004), exacerbated by reports of financial irregularities at Islamic schools, public opinion became more strongly anti-Islam. Investigations were conducted into financial management and (possibly) anti-democratic sentiments in Islamic schools. Whatever the results of these investigations, the resulting media attention led to an increase in negative feelings about Islamic education. As a consequence, Driessen states, "the focus of Islamic [primary] schools shifted away from increasing the number of schools to improving the quality of the existing schools" (Driessen 2019). For secondary schools, the situation is complicated. Schools have been closed due to "insufficient quality and administrative problems", the fact that "final exams were stolen" and "ties with terrorist Jihad organisations" (Driessen 2019). These scandals and the way they were played out by the media had serious consequences for all Dutch Islamic schools. There is a growing body of public opinion to abolish—or at least update—Article 23 of the Dutch Constitution (concerning public and denominational education). In 2002, the pedagogue Siebren Miedema argued for making "*Alle onderwijs bijzonder*", all education into inclusive education (Miedema 2002). Such an educational praxis would involve teaching all children *about* and *from* the different religious traditions as professed in The Netherlands.

In 21st-century Netherlands, Islamic schools hold a prominent position in the educational landscape (Ter Avest et al. 2021). It should be noted, however, that in 2022, the majority of Muslim children attended RE classes in Christian and public schools—as can be seen in Table 1 (primary education) and Table 2 (secondary education) below.

Table 1. Schools and pupils according to primary school identity [6].

Identity of Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils	Percentage of Pupils
All schools	6.132	1.386.164	100
Protestant	1.827	383.326	27.66
Roman Catholic	1.872	454.008	32.75
State	1.924	415.047	29.94
Islamic	52	?	<1.0
Remaining	457	133.783–?	0.9?

Table 2. Schools and pupils according to secondary school identity.

Identity of Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils	Percentage of Pupils
All schools	648	934.333	100
Protestant	129	199.496	21.35
Roman Catholic	146	217.582	23.29
State	187	263.638	28.22
Islamic	2	882	<1.0
Remaining	187	264.085	28.27

Only a very small percentage of Muslim children in the Netherlands attends Islamic schools. As quoted above, *"Gelovig word je niet vanzelf"* ("Becoming a Believer Doesn't Happen by Itself"). The responsibility for children's RE lies not only with teachers, but also, perhaps even more so, with parents and other significant persons in non-formal and informal education.

6. Informal and Non-Formal Education in the Family and the Mosque

6a. In 2012, Stella El Bouayadi-van de Wetering described the contexts of the family, peers and mosque regarding the non- and informal RE of Muslim children and youth in the Netherlands. El Bouayadi-van de Wetering's focus is on attitudes and rituals that children experience while growing up in Muslim families in the Netherlands. She notices that Muslim family customs are generally related to food (halal food), cleanliness and hygiene, prayer, fasting and religious festivities. Examples of such celebrations are the end of Ramadan *('Îdu 'l-Fitr)* and the Festival of Sacrifice *(Îdu 'l-Adhâ)*, which remembers Abraham/Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to God (El Bouayadi-van de Wetering 2012, pp. 78–79). Children like these festivities because they often get new clothes and can join their parents in visiting relatives where they receive presents: lots of sweets, and sometimes money as well.

In the upbringing of their children, parents place a high value on the aspect of qualification in education (Biesta 2014). The stimulation of children to be successful at school is seen as very important by Muslim parents (in Turkish and Moroccan families alike) (Nijsten and Pels 2004, p. 33 ff.). A second important goal for Muslim parents in their children's upbringing is conformity, in the sense that children become well-mannered, polite, obedient and respectful and have a well-developed moral compass (ibid., p. 45).

It can be confusing for Muslim children that many Dutch people do not participate in Islamic festivities or even lack basic knowledge about them. On the other side, *Sinterklaas* (the Dutch Saint Nicholas festival), Christmas and Easter are celebrated all over the Netherlands. The same holds for birthday parties, although some Muslim families have adopted this Dutch custom and encourage their children to celebrate this day at school by handing sweets or fruit to their classmates and teachers (ibid., p. 79).

Young Muslims, in interviews, articulate the role of their parents and teachers (at school, in the mosque) as a source of religious identity development (Visser-Vogel 2015, p. 103). Parents remind their children of their duties as Muslims. "He asks: should a Muslim do this? At that moment you can give an answer, but later you start really thinking about it: can I consider myself a Muslim when I do this?" (ibid., p. 103). Margalith Kleijwegt (2005), in her novel *Onzichtbare ouders* (*Invisible Parents*), points to the detrimental effect of parental absence on young Muslims' education. Practicing Islam with others is experienced as a source of religious identity development as well: "My grandpa always warned me, but he didn't force me, instead he would say: is it prayer time already?" (ibid., p. 103). This aspect of belonging and togetherness is also mentioned by Yar in his PhD thesis (Yar 2017, p. 126). Belonging to a group of faithful Muslims stimulates children to practice Islam and to be(come) faithful Muslims themselves. Reading the Qur'an and knowing about Islamic teachings, norms and values are experienced by young people as helpful in the development of their religious identity: "I've attended different institutions to get lessons....

I learned when you need to stand during prayer for example . . . what the meaning of everything is" (Visser-Vogel 2015, p. 104).

6b. Because of differences in language acquisition at home (in regard to mother tongue), Dutch mosques are organised along ethnic lines, and the major political and religious currents within these ethnic groups (El Bouayadi-van de Wetering 2012, p. 81). Since Arabic is the language in which the Qur'an was written and the Islamic tradition is transmitted today, mastery of Arabic is an important aspect of RE in the mosque. However, for the majority of children visiting the mosque, Dutch is their first language. The ultimate goal of RE in the mosque is being able to recite the whole Qur'an in Arabic (ibid., p. 82). Until the start of the 21st century, teaching materials were nearly always copied from materials originally published in Arabic or Turkish. The educational climate in the mosques is generally friendly; over time, the educational strategies evolved from question-and-answer didactics to pedagogical strategies adjusted to Dutch insights on how to be in tune with the lifeworld of children, and encouraging an explorative attitude (ibid, p. 84). El Bouayadi-van de Wetering is worried about the lack of attention given to young people's spiritual development in mosques (ibid., p. 137). Young people want to learn more about Islam, "they want to fill their minds and they do so. Unfortunately, they sometimes fill their minds in an unstructured, irresponsible way" (ibid., p. 139). This creates a risk of radicalisation. This is why a solution is sought, on the one hand, in the prevention of radicalisation and, on the other hand, in involving the young people themselves, in order to learn about their RE needs. El Bouayadi-van de Wetering recommends the development of Islamic education in schools with a substantial part of Muslims in the pupil population.

This Special Issue focuses on the diversity and complexity of the situation pertaining to Islamic formal, non-formal and informal education in the Netherlands. It is a complexity that relates to the situation of a religious (Muslim) minority in the ever more secularising (Christian) Netherlands, with close ties to migrant culture, and influenced by different types of schools within the Islamic tradition.

Notes

[1]　The author wishes to express her gratitude to Stijn van Tongerloo (MPhil), for the critical and constructive proofreading of this text.

[2]　The Protestant pillar is subdivided into different Christian denominations, characterised by their diverse interpretations of the Christian tradition, ranging from orthodox to liberal views and practices.

[3]　The founding process took some time. The schools opened their doors in 1989.

[4]　The original title of the booklet is "*Varieties of Religion Today. William James revisited*". Published in 2002.

[5]　A "home of study" is a kind of boarding school where children of secondary school age live during the week and are coached in their various school activities (in the broadest sense of the word). On the weekends, the children return home. See: (Ter Avest 2018).

[6]　Available from: https://opendata.cbs.nl/#/CBS/nl/dataset/03753/table?ts=1589787589945 (accessed on 7 February 2022).

References

Agten, Jean. 2019. Bibliodrama: Introducing Stories from Narrative Traditions in the Development of Young People's Life Orientation. In *Education Sciences Special Issue There Is a Crack in Everything—Education and Religion in a Secular Age*. Edited by I. ter Avest. Basel: MDPI, pp. 219–35.

Andree, Trees. 1983. *Gelovig word je niet vanzelf ('Becoming a Believer Doesn't Happen by Itself')*. Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt.

Bakker, Nelleke, Jan Noordman, and Marjoke Rietveld-van Wingerden. 2006. *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland*. Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum b.v.

Bakker, Nelleke, Jan Noordman, and Marjoke Rietveld-van Wingerden. 2010. *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland. Idee en praktijk 1500–2000 [Five Centuries of Education in The Netherlands. Ideas and Practice 1500–2000]*. Assen: Van Gorcum.

Bauman, Gerd. 1999. *Culture as Praxis*. London: SAGE Publications.

Beemsterboer, Marietje. 2018. *Islamitisch basisonderwijs* in Nederland (Islamic Primary Education in the Netherlands). Ph.D. Thesis, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Benali, Abdelkader. 2021. *De stilte van de ander (The Silence of the Other)*. Amsterdam: Arbeiderspers.

Bertram-Troost, Gerdien D., Cees Kom, Ina ter Avest, and Siebren Miedema. 2012. *Typen van protestants-christelijk basisonderwijs in een seculiere tijd. Schoolleiders aan het Woord over de eigenheid van hun School (Types of Protestant-Christian Primary Education in a Secular Age. Principals Voicing the Identity of Their School)*. Woerden: Besturenraad.

Biesta, Gert. 2014. *The Beautful Risk of Education*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Bronfenbrenner, Uri. 1997. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, Uri. 1999. Environments in Developmental Perspective: Theoretical and Operational Models. In *Measuring Environment Across the Life Span: Emerging Methods and Concepts*. Edited by Friedman Scott and Theodore D. Wachs Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press, pp. 3–28.

Budak, Bahaeddin. 2021. Waarom stichten jullie niet een eigen School? (Why Don't You Found Your Own School?). Ph.D. Thesis, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Budak, Bahaeddin, Cok Bakker, and Ina ter Avest. 2018. Identity Development of the Two First Islamic Primary Schools in the Netherlands. In *European Perspectives on Islamic Education and Public Schooling*. Edited by J. Berglund. Sheffield/Bristol: Equinox, pp. 78–105.

Convention on the Rights of the Child. 1989. Available online: https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text (accessed on 15 March 2022).

De Haan, Dorien, and Els Schellekens. 2014. *Onze klas, mijn wereld (Our Classroom, My World)*. Amsterdam: SWP.

Driessen, Geert. 2019. Islamic Primary Schools in The Netherlands. Encyclopedia. Available online: https://encyclopedia.pub/167[10-5-201919:16:43] (accessed on 23 January 2022).

Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. 2008. The Constitution of the Kingdom of The Netherlands 2008. Available online: https://www.government.nl/documents/regulations/2012/10/18/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands-2008 (accessed on 18 November 2021).

El Bouayadi-van de Wetering, Stella. 2012. Islamic Education of Muslim Children. In *Reaching for the Sky: Religious Education from Christian and Islamic Perspectives*. Edited by Stella El Bouayadi and Siebren Miedema. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, pp. 73–89.

Fowler, James W. 1981. *Stages of Faith. The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Franken, Leni, and Paul Vermeer. 2019. Deconfessionalising RE in Pillarised Education Systems: A Case study of Belgium and the Netherlands. *British Journal of Religious Education* 41: 272–85. [CrossRef]

Hull, John. 1985. *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning?* London: SCM Press Ltd.

James, William. 1961. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. London: Collier MacMillan Publishers.

Kleijwegt, Margalith. 2005. *Onzichtbare ouders. De buurt van Mohammed B. [Invisible Parents. The Neighbourhood of Mohammed B.]*. Zutphen: Plataan.

Lamers, M. 2017. *De houdbaarheid van het duale bestel; Overeenkomsten en verschillen tussen openbaar en bijzonder onderwijs 100 jaar na de Pacificatie [The Tenability of the Dual System; Similarities and Differences between Public and Confessional Education 100 Years after the Pacification]*. Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers.

Marcia, James E. 1980. Identity in Adolescence. In *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*. Edited by J. Adelson. New York: Wiley, pp. 159–87.

Meijer, Wilna A. J. 2006. *Traditie en toekomst van het islamitisch onderwijs [Tradition and Future of Islamic Education]*. Amsterdam: Bulaaq.

Meijer, Wilna A. J. 2009. Cultural Transmission and the Balance Between Tradition and Enlightment. The Example of Islam. In *Religious Education in a World of Religious Diversity*. Edited by Wilna A. J. Meijer, Siebren Miedema and A. Lanser-van der Velde. Munster: Waxmann, pp. 181–95.

Miedema, Siebren. 2002. *Alle onderwijs bijzonder (Particular Education for All)*. Zoetermeer: Meinema.

Nijsten, Cecile, and Trees Pels. 2004. Opvoedingsdoelen [Aims of Education]. In *Opvoeding en integratie. Een vergelijkende studie van recente onderzoeken naar gezinsopvoeidng en de pedagogische afstemming tussen gezin en school [Education and Integration. A Comparative Study of Recent Researches on Education in the Family and the Pedagogical Tuning in between Family and School]*. Edited by Trees Pels. Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, pp. 33–56.

Rietveld-van Wingerden, Marjoke, Johan C. Sturm, and Siebren Miedema. 2003. Vrijheid van onderwijs en sociale cohesie in historisch perspectief (Freedom of Education and Social Cohesion from a Historical Perspective). *Pedagogiek* 23: 97–108.

Rietveld-van Wingerden, Marjoke, Wim Westerman, and Ina ter Avest. 2010. Islam in Education in The Netherlands. History and Actual Developments. In *Islam in Education in European Countries, Pedagogical Concepts and Empirical Findings*. Edited by Aurora Alvarez Veinguer, Günther Dietx, Thorsten Knauth and Dan-Paul Josza. Munster: Waxmann, pp. 69–95.

Roebben, Bert, and Katharina Welling. 2020. *Performative RE. Chances and Challenges of a Didactical Concept in European Teacher Education*. Münster: Waxmann Verlag/1. VK International Knowledge Transfer in Religious Education.

Sahin, Abdullah. 2013. *New Directions in Islamic Education. Pedagogy & Identity Formation*. Leicestershire: Kube.

Selçuk, Mualla. 2012. How can Islamic Pedagogy Promote an Understanding of 'Individualized Religion'? In *Teaching Religion, Teaching Truth: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives*. Edited by Jef Astley, Leslie J. Francis, Mandy Robbins and Mualla Selçuk. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Selçuk, Mualla, and John Valk. 2012. Knowing Self and Others: A Worldvies Model for Religious Education in Turkey. *Religious Education* 107: 443–54. [CrossRef]

Smith, Jen. 2022. What Prevents Christian Adults From Learning? In Fresh Perspective, Conversation and Practice. John Hull's Theological Pedagogy as Disruptive-Inclusion. Ph.D. Thesis, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Ter Avest, Ina. 2018. A 'Home of Study': A UFO (Unidentified Foreign Object) in the Dutch 'Pedagogic Civil Society'? In *European Perspectives on Islamic Education and Public Schooling*. Edited by Jenny Berglund. Sheffield and Bristol: Equinox, pp. 292–312.

Ter Avest, Ina. 2022. Developing Children's Life Orientation in ECEC: Curriculum Development Research Project in the Pillarised Dutch Society. In *The Routledge International Handbook of the Place of Religion in Early Childhood Education and Care*. Edited by Arniika Suusisto. London: Routledge, pp. 364–80.

Ter Avest, Ina, and Cok Bakker. 2018. Islamic education in the Netherlands. In *Handbook of Islamic Education*. Edited by Holger Daun and Reza Arjmand. Berlin: Springer, pp. 873–86.

Ter Avest, I., and C. Bakker. 2020. Islamitische Bildung in den Niederlanden und Belgien; herausfordernd und vielversprechend. In *Migration, Religion and Early Childhood Education/Handbuch der islamischen Erziehung*. Vienna: Springer, pp. 155–75.

Ter Avest, Ina, Cok Bakker, Gerdien D. Bertram-Troost, and Siebren Miedema. 2007. Religion and Education in the Dutch Pillarized and Post-Pillarized Educational System: Historical Background and Current Debates. In *Religion and Education in Europe; Developments, Contexts and Debates*. Edited by Robbert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse and Jean-Paul Willaime. Münster: Waxmann, pp. 203–21.

Ter Avest, Ina, Cok Bakker, and Leni Franken. 2021. Islamic Religious Education in the Netherlands. In *Islamic Religious Education in Europe. A Comparative Study*. Edited by Leni Franken and Bill Gent. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 179–96.

Ucan, Ayse Demirel. 2020. *Improving the Pedagogy of Islamic Religious Education in Secondary Schools The Role of Critical Religious Education and Variation Theory*. New York/London: Routledge.

Verhoef, Cornelis E. H. J. 2015. *Inperking vrijheid van onderwijs. De maatschappelijke noodzaak tot herziening van artikel 23 van de grondwet (Restricting Freedom of Education. The Societal Need for Revision of Article 23 of the Constitution)*. Soesterberg: Aspekt.

Visser-Vogel, Elsbeth. 2015. *Religious Identity Development of Orthoprax Muslim Adolescents in the Netherlands*. Ph.D. study Utrecht University. Enschede: Gildeprint.

Wallet, Bert. 2017. Onderwijs, burgerschap en religieuze vorming. Nederlandse Joden tussen openbaar en bijzonder onderwijs (Education, Citizenship and Religious Education. Dutch Jews Between Public and Denominational Education). In *Overeenkomsten en verschillen tussen openbaar en bijzonder onderwijs 100 jaar na de Pacificatie*. Edited by Mieke Laemers, Martijn Nolen, Adriaan Overbeeke, Helen Overes and Renée van Schoonhoven. Amsterdam: SDU Amsterdam, pp. 199–212.

Yar, Hasan. 2017. Moskeewerk in de buurt (Mosque in the Neighbourhood; a Case Study in Amsterdam). Ph.D. Thesis, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Zoontjes, Paul J. J. 2003. Bijzonder en openbaar onderwijs (Denominational and Public Education). In *Recht en Religie, Special Issue Ars Aequi*. Edited by Ton Bertens, A. Bouichi, S. R. Damminga and M. de Jonge. Nijmegen: Ars Aequi, pp. 59–68.