



ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN GERMANY: CHALLENGES AND HOPES

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ABSTRACT

In Germany, there is no recognition of Muslims as an official religious sect, in addition to the fact that educational issues are within the jurisdiction of the state. Diversity in education is a loophole for Muslims to organize education in the community, given this diversity. In terms of teaching religious subjects, German states stand independently. This article is based on a literature study that collects documents from books and journals through a qualitative approach to the phenomenon of education obtained in various literatures and interpreted descriptively. The way the Muslim generation in Europe learns their religion is one of the most critical problems faced by Muslims there, both at the individual and community levels. Every religious sect has the constitutional right to teach religion to its adherents. Discussions on this topic began in Germany 40 years ago with the question of the conditions under which Islamic religious education can be provided in public schools, and the discussion continues to this day. Since the state has

autonomy in education, we can find different models of religious lessons in each state and other obstacles, such as teaching staff and learning materials; therefore, the right legal formula must be sought to teach religion to the Muslim generation correctly.

Keywords: *Islamic, Secondary School, German*

ABSTRAK

Di Jerman, tidak ada pengakuan terhadap umat Islam sebagai aliran agama resmi, selain fakta bahwa masalah pendidikan berada dalam yurisdiksi negara. Keberagaman dalam pendidikan menjadi celah bagi umat Islam untuk menyelenggarakan pendidikan di masyarakat, mengingat keberagaman ini. Dalam hal pengajaran mata pelajaran agama, negara-negara bagian Jerman berdiri sendiri. Artikel ini didasarkan pada studi literatur yang mengumpulkan dokumen dari buku dan jurnal melalui pendekatan kualitatif terhadap fenomena pendidikan yang diperoleh dari berbagai literatur dan ditafsirkan secara deskriptif. Cara generasi Muslim di Eropa mempelajari agama mereka merupakan salah satu masalah paling kritis yang dihadapi umat Islam di sana, baik di tingkat individu maupun masyarakat. Setiap aliran agama memiliki hak konstitusional untuk mengajarkan agama kepada para penganutnya. Diskusi tentang topik ini dimulai di Jerman 40 tahun yang lalu dengan pertanyaan tentang kondisi di mana pendidikan agama Islam dapat diberikan di sekolah-sekolah umum, dan diskusi tersebut terus berlanjut hingga hari ini. Karena negara memiliki otonomi dalam pendidikan, kita dapat menemukan berbagai model pelajaran agama di setiap negara bagian dan kendala lainnya, seperti staf pengajar dan materi pembelajaran; oleh karena itu, harus dicari formula hukum yang tepat untuk mengajarkan agama kepada generasi Muslim dengan benar.

Kata Kunci: *Islam, Sekolah Menengah, Bahasa Jerman*

A. INTRODUCTION

The Supreme Council of Muslims in Germany criticized the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, west of the country, regarding religious education. The Supreme Council of Muslims said: "We received with regret the ruling issued on September 9, stating that the religious sect's conditions for supervising the teaching of Islam in public schools in the North

Rhine region were not met.³" The Council added, in a statement seen, that "the decision does not serve the prospects for religious education for Muslim children and their integration into German society without discrimination."⁴ He considered that "an important opportunity has been missed to organize religious education in the state after the year 2019 in a manner consistent with the constitution, instead of the current exceptional program in effect now, which conflicts with the principle of non-interference of the state in the affairs of the religious supervision of religious sects stipulated in the German Constitution."⁵ The Council affirmed that it will continue its efforts within the framework of assuming its religious and social responsibility for the benefit of Muslims and society. The Supreme Administrative Court in the German city of Münster issued an unappealable decision stating that the religious sect's conditions for supervising the teaching of Islam in public schools in the North Rhine region were not met. What is the future of Islamic education in Germany, which is experiencing pros and cons among the government and minority groups? This research is essential because it is related to Islamic education in Germany, which is full of immigrants who are integrated into the German state and must obtain citizenship rights.⁶

Islamic Religious Education in German Primary Schools: Researching the Responses of Parents and Pupils. We conducted library and documentary studies in this writing and reviewed several journals. Among the journals we studied was Islamic Religious Education in German Primary Schools: Researching the Responses of Parents and Pupils; this article provides an overview of the education of Muslim children in Germany and the relationship between parents and teachers who teach them, which needs to be re-evaluated. We analyzed the data that had been collected and explained again descriptively how important Islamic education in Germany is for Muslims and German society itself as knowledge.

B. METODE

We use a library method that collects documents as primary and secondary sources consisting of books and journals. With a qualitative

³ Leni Franken and Bill Gent, eds., *Islamic Religious Education in Europe: A Comparative Study*, 1st ed. (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2021. | : Routledge, 2021), doi:10.4324/9780429331039.

⁴ 169, 2021, 'مردان غونیش', 'دروس التعليم الديني ودرس الدين الإسلامي في ألمانيا', مجلة رؤية تركية, 2021, doi:10.36360/1560-010-004-010.

⁵ Ayman Al-Maz Al-Maz, 'Attact on Muslin in German', *Anatolia* 2 (April 2020): 2.

⁶ Bülent Ucar and Danja Bergmann, *Islamischer Religionsunterricht in Deutschland: Fachdidaktische Konzeptionen Ausgangslage, Erwartungen und Ziele*, Veröffentlichungen des Zentrums für Interkulturelle Islamstudien der Universität Osnabrück 2 (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2010).

approach, we discuss existing sources and references. This research is descriptive because this research aims to obtain answers related to the image and attitude of the German government towards Islamic education in secondary schools. The responses or perceptions of the parties involved are discussed qualitatively with descriptions of words and expressions resulting from interpretations of book reviews and journals obtained.

C. THEORETICAL/LITERATURE REVIEW

Every year on December 10, the World observes Human Rights Day. This day marks the anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Declaration is a crucial document that sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone should enjoy. Human Rights Day is a time to reflect on these rights and to promote their importance around the World. As one of the largest platforms dedicated to higher education in Germany, we celebrate Human Rights Day by highlighting the many ways in which Germany is leading the way in adhering to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarding education, especially Article 26 (below): Article 26 – Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁷

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Primary education shall be compulsory. Technical and vocational education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be accessible to all based on merit. Education shall be directed to develop the human personality fully and strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall encourage understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, as well as racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations to maintain peace. Parents have the right to choose the kind of education that will be provided to their children. We emphasize the importance of human rights in education and the broad benefits that accrue to all. We also reviewed the article entitled Democratic Education in West Germany: The Effects of the New Minorities written in The University of Chicago Journal, and can use it as a theoretical basis that Germany is a country that respects minority rights, especially in education.⁸

⁷ Ahmed E. Souaiaia, *Human Rights in Islamic Societies: Muslims and the Western Conception of Rights*, First published, Routledge Studies in Islam and Human Rights (London New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

⁸ Arlette C. Hill, 'Democratic Education in West Germany: The Effects of the New Minorities', *Comparative Education Review*, 1 May 1987, doi:10.1086/446681.

D. RESULT

Many Muslim children in Europe go to the mosques every weekend to receive lessons in the Arabic language, the Holy Qur'an, and Islamic education, amid encouragement from their parents, out of a desire to preserve their religious identity and a willingness to learn the language of the Holy Qur'an and whatever verses of the Holy Qur'an are available.⁹ The experience of weekend schools in Europe has developed significantly over the past two decades, compared to previous decades, regarding educational curricula, teacher performance and training development, and places of education. Associations and unions of Arab schools have emerged within many European countries and European institutions to qualify teachers of the Arabic language and sciences.¹⁰ Islam and the need for development and improvement is still urgent because education, in general, is the key to change, building personality, and formulating it according to vision, thought, and planning, and it is our way to make the European Muslim personality according to our independent conviction.¹¹

This delay in development, review, and renewal undoubtedly led to criticism and rejection of teaching Islamic education vocabulary in mosques by Western officials in some European countries. Therefore, we must review what we provide our children to be compatible with a rapidly changing world and an environment with appropriate ideas. However, this review must take place within the Islamic conception of citizenship philosophy framework, which is based on the balance between openness and conservatism, the harmony between the constant and the variable, and the requirements of belonging for religion, homeland, nation, and humanity.¹² Ten years ago, North Rhine-Westphalia was the first German state to take the step of offering lessons on the Islamic religion to Muslim students in its public schools. This step began in the 2012/2013 academic year in 33 schools with approximately 1,800 Muslim students. According to data from the state Ministry of Education, approximately 233 schools across the state currently provide lessons in Islam to approximately 24,000 male and female students. This is equivalent to about five percent of the total of

⁹ Ala al-Hamarneh, Jörn Thielmann, and Nikola Tietze, eds., *Islam and Muslims in Germany*, Pbk. ed, Muslim Minorities 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

¹⁰ David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹¹ Engy Abdelkader, 'A {Comparative} {Analysis} of {European} {Islamophobia}: {France}, {UK}, {Germany}, {Netherlands}, and {Sweden}', *UCLA Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law* 16 (2017), doi:10.5070/N4161038735.

¹² Franken and Gent, *Islamic Religious Education in Europe*.

457,000 of them in schools in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.¹³ Later, other states joined this initiative, most notably the state of Bavaria and, most recently, Saarland, which recently began teaching Islamic education to first-grade students in several of its schools.¹⁴

Currently, about five percent of Muslim schoolchildren in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia receive lessons in the Islamic religion. No. The Minister of Education in North Rhine-Westphalia, Dorothee Feller, believes in an interview with the Catholic News Agency that there is a "need to raise it and expand the teaching of the Islamic religion" in schools.¹⁵

The Minister adds: "I am happy that we now have lessons for the Islamic religion. But of course, the supply is insufficient, so we want to expand it further. Currently, we have about 370 qualified teachers who teach Islamic education. Teaching the Islamic religion in our schools is also important for our Muslim citizens."¹⁶

In the Marxloh neighborhood in the German city of Duisburg, there is a primary and middle school that offers an Islamic religion class.¹⁷ Eighteen second-grade students accept teacher Hussein Setin's class. The students first sing a song praising God, then move on to another part of the lesson related to helping others. The teacher asks the students questions about who helps their parents at home, and the little fingers rise. Since the beginning of the academic year, Hussein Steen's subject is no longer called Islamic Studies but "Teaching the Islamic Religion."¹⁸ North Rhine-Westphalia is the first German state to approve the "Teaching the Islamic Religion" subject in its educational curricula, and a full year has passed since that. Now, some difficulties have emerged: 100,000 Muslim children live in the state, but only 2,000 have the opportunity to learn the Islamic religion, and the reason lies in the lack of teachers, which was expected.¹⁹

A shortage of Specialized Professors

More time must be spent to cover the shortage of trained professors in this field. State Education Minister Sylvia Lohrmann said

¹³ Ala Al-Hamarneh and Jörn Thielmann, eds., 'Islamic Instruction in German Public Schools: The Case of North-Rhine-Westphalia', in *Islam and Muslims in Germany* (BRILL, 2008), 241–65, doi:10.1163/ej.9789004158665.1-592.57.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Aysun Yasar, 'The Development of the School Trial Islamic Religious Instruction at Bavarian Public Schools', *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 23, no. 1 (14 June 2018): 23–33, doi:10.19109/td.v23i1.1655.

¹⁶ Al-Hamarneh and Thielmann, 'Islamic Instruction in German Public Schools'.

¹⁷ Hamarneh, Thielmann, and Tietze, *Islam and Muslims in Germany*.

¹⁸ Lisa Harms-Dalibon, 'Surveillance and Prayer – Comparing Muslim Prison Chaplaincy in Germany's Federal States', *CMS* 5, no. 1 (December 2017): 8, doi:10.1186/s40878-017-0051-5.

¹⁹ Ibid.

months ago: "But what alternative did we have? We could have trained teachers poorly without knowing whether this article would be passed." First, there should be a legal basis. Therefore, approving the subject of teaching Islamic religion is a slow process, but with the beginning of the new academic year, the situation is expected to improve. The training of professors specializing in teaching Islamic religion in German universities has just begun. The first class to graduate will be from the University of Münster starting in 2017. Hussein Steen teaches the second grade at the Marxloh School in Duisburg and is among forty teachers trained in this field. Hussein studied Islamic sciences and theology at Uludag University in Bursa, Turkey. Since 1999, he has been teaching Islamic education.²⁰

It takes years to prepare "qualified" Teachers.

Ten years after the teaching of Islamic education was approved in schools in North Rhine-Westphalia, some problems still exist, including the fact that the number of teachers specialized in this field is small, as the state's Minister of Education acknowledged.²¹

The Minister explained: "We are still in the construction phase. I am very pleased that the University of Paderborn, after the University of Münster, has now also started training teachers in this field. This shows that we are moving forward."

Initially, the state Ministry of Education came up with a temporary solution: to conduct some courses in which the trainee would obtain a certificate authorizing him to teach the subject of the Islamic religion. However, the training of teachers specialized in teaching this subject in German universities began at the University of Münster, where the first class graduated in 2017.

Muhammad Khorshid, a university professor specializing in this subject at the Center for Islamic Studies at the University of Münster in Germany, formed the first batch of teachers specializing in Islamic education. In this regard, Khorshid pointed out that qualifying teachers to teach Islam in German schools requires at least "five years."²² In an interview with Deutsche Welle Arabia, Khorshid explained: "Starting today, we need 25 to 30 years until the Islamic religion is taught in all schools in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The percentage is still low due to the lack of qualified teachers, but there is a great demand for this specialization."²³

²⁰ Franken and Gent, *Islamic Religious Education in Europe*.

²¹ Husna Amin et al., 'Issues and Management of Islamic Education in a Global Context', *NJMPI* 6, no. 3 (December 2021): 608–20, doi:10.31538/ndh.v6i3.1808.

²² Al-Hamarneh and Thielmann, 'Islamic Instruction in German Public Schools'.

²³ DW DW, 'Muslim in Jerman', n.d.

Teaching Islamic Education is a "wonderful step."

Murat Sensoy is one of the first teachers to graduate from the Center for Islamic Studies at the German University of Münster, and today, he teaches Islamic studies at the German "Ingerloh/Neubekum" school. The German media foundation DR quoted the teacher of Turkish origin as emphasizing the importance of these lessons for Muslim children: "Islam lessons are significant for children because many matters from their daily lives are discussed and placed within the appropriate framework here." Because of their constant busyness, parents may not find enough time to personally supervise their children's education in Islamic religious teachings in countries such as Germany. This is why the Syrian woman, Fatima Al-Hajj Mustafa, believes teaching Islamic education in German schools is a "wonderful step."²⁴ The Syrian woman, accompanied by her husband and five children, arrived in Germany at the beginning of the Syrian refugee wave in 2015. Her daughter and youngest son chose to attend Islamic education classes in a primary school in the German city of Münster.

Regarding this experience of her children, Mrs. Fatima Al-Hajj Mustafa told DW Arabia:²⁵ "Through my experience with my children, my daughter gained some valuable information about our religion, and she used to discuss it with me after every lesson, but I noticed that my youngest son had many questions about our faith, especially when... Comparison with religions. Asking questions and searching for answers, as Mrs. Fatima Al-Hajj Ali says about her son's experience with Islamic religion lessons in German schools, is what this step aims to achieve, as Professor Muhannad Khorshid from the University of Münster confirms.²⁶

He adds, "These lessons aim to learn about the Islamic religion through a scientific approach considering the specificity of teaching in German schools. To educate students and enable them to be decision-makers. They must learn to think, ask questions, and search for answers instead of giving them ready-made answers." In addition to putting question marks on some of the wrong concepts or traditions they have come to know in the name of religion."²⁷

²⁴ Abed Alraheem, "الإنسانية والاجتماعية العلوم مجلة", العدد (4 املجلد) : 28 (2) , ص م 2020 فبر اير : 42-62 Woman and Political Work in the Islamic Contemporary Thought," *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, no. 4 (2020): 42–62, <https://doi.org/10.26389/AJSRP>.

²⁵ Ucar and Bergmann, *Islamischer Religionsunterricht in Deutschland*.

²⁶ | عربية على حياة المشاهير والأحداث الطريفة DW تدريس مادة الدين الإسلامي في 75 مدرسة بولاية ألمانية | منوعات | نافذة" DW | 20.09.2023," accessed October 23, 2023,.

²⁷ "Islamic Religion Classes in German Schools: Who Decides? - Qantara.De," accessed October 24, 2023, <https://en.qantara.de/content/islamic-religion-classes-in-german-schools-who-decides>.

Mosques May Complement The Work of Schools

For her part, Haj Ali sees several positives in the step of teaching the Islamic religion in German schools: "Children learn about the importance of practicing acts of worship and its benefits, such as prayer and fasting. It also contributes to strengthening the child's personality and acquiring good morals. In addition to learning about Islamic holidays. Most importantly, respect for other religions and sects."²⁸

In addition to her experience with her daughter and son receiving Islamic lessons in German schools, Mrs. Fatima Haj Mustafa supervises teaching children the Arabic language and some interventions about the Islamic religion at Al-Salam Mosque in the German city of Münster.²⁹

In this regard, she explained that she noticed, through the mosque's activities in teaching the Arabic language and some Islamic behaviors and etiquette, that "teaching the Islamic religion in the mosque complements and expands the information and basics that students receive in German schools, in addition to memorizing and interpreting the Holy Qur'an and talking about the Prophet's biography."

Problems That Hinder The Teaching Process

The process of teaching Islam in German schools still faces many obstacles and problems related to the method of developing the subject of "Islamic education" and its compatibility with the German constitution on the one hand and, on the other hand, with the formation of Islamic associations and institutions and the failure of many of them to agree on a standard curriculum.

This reflects the difference in the political orientation of many of these associations, perhaps the most prominent of which is the Turkish Islamic "Ditib" Union in Germany and the controversy over its being the "extended arm" of the Turkish state and its influence on the content of Islamic education lessons.

In this regard, the Minister of Education in North Rhine-Westphalia, Dorothee Feller, explained that the DETIB union is one of the most significant associations in North Rhine-Westphalia. There are many Muslims of Turkish origin in our country who are represented by "Ditib." The union also agreed with the condition to "work impartially from the state and within the Basic Law (Constitution)." Feller continued: "Lessons are given in German by teachers trained in Germany according to the state's curricula. Suppose there are tangible

²⁸ عربية على حياة المشاهير والأحداث الطريفة DW تدريس مادة الدين الإسلامي في 75 مدرسة بولاية ألمانية | منوعات | نافذة" DW | 20.09.2023."

²⁹ "Meister Eckhart - Rediscovering a German Sufi | HuffPost Religion," accessed September 15, 2023, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/meister-eckhart-rediscover_b_10015660.

indicators that an Islamic association is violating the agreements. In that case, the expected result will be the termination of its contract by the state government. But so far, things are going well." Fine."³⁰

Some Islamic associations in Germany view this project critically because the state has given itself the right to determine the content of Islamic religious education, unlike Christian religious education, where churches decide the content themselves. In 2012, the then-German government chose a temporary solution: an advisory board made up of representatives of associations; the state decided the content of the lessons and granted would-be teachers a religious teaching license.³¹

Different Levels of Students

One of the problems Hussein faces as a teacher is that the level of students varies within the same class. He says, "Our mission is to unify prior knowledge and correct incorrect information." In this way, the subject of Islamic education has achieved some of its missions, which are evident in its enlightenment missions. But what is the solution for 98% of Muslim students who do not receive Islamic education lessons? Will the solution be for them to visit mosques and Quranic schools? Or should their parents take on the task of teaching them the principles of Islam? About ten thousand students from various educational levels are receiving lessons in Islamic studies, according to the state Ministry of Education, which is a subject that differs from teaching the Islamic religion. But even this subject needs teachers.³²

Shortage of Teaching Materials

One of the new teachers is Aziz Fouladvand, who teaches Islamic education in several Bonn city schools, especially the upper levels. "We lack teaching materials," Aziz complains. A teaching book called "Safir" is an educational curriculum for the fifth and sixth grades, but it is unsuitable for the higher levels. Aziz, specializing in political science and Islamic religion, teaches sixth to tenth-grade levels. "I search for appropriate topics for each grade myself, but it is tiring and takes much time," he says. No educational curricula are available for advanced levels; students who did not have the opportunity to learn the Islamic religion in school resort to teaching in mosques and Quranic schools or receive education at home. "In my classes, I try to approach traditional religious knowledge critically sometimes, which can lead to

³⁰ Hamarneh, Thielmann, and Tietze, *Islam and Muslims in Germany*.

³¹ Engy Abdelkader, 'A Comparative Analysis of European Islamophobia: France, UK, Germany, Netherlands, and Sweden', *UCLA Journal of Islamic and Near Eastern Law* 16 (2017), doi:10.5070/N4161038735.

³² Al-Maz, 'Attact on Muslin in German'.

heated debate," Aziz says. Aziz continues: "This does not exist in the home or the mosque."

Religious practice and its application are not asked about due to the differences in methods of spiritual practice and customs according to the students' countries of origin and their different Islamic sects. Despite the problems faced by teaching Islamic education in German schools, it is considered a positive thing within the Islamic communities in Germany, as it is "a recognition of Muslims as citizens with equal rights with other citizens," says Professor Muhannad Khurshid.³³

The Most Crucial Problem

Herein lies one of the obstacles facing the project of teaching Islamic religious education in Germany, namely that there is no official recognition of Islam, or more precisely, Muslims do not have the status of a "recognized religious sect" in Germany, so this happens. No Islamic body or group can represent Muslims before the state. Germany, unlike countries like Austria, for example, Political and Legal Issues.³⁴

Teaching the "Islamic education" subject again entered a turning point of controversy in Germany after the Bavarian state parliament approved compulsory and optional teaching for Muslim students in the state's schools. It was a step promoted by the local government as a significant push for the "integration of Muslims," but it was not without opponents who adopted the same rhetoric, skeptical of Islam and Muslims, and who waged legal battles against it, reaching the point of arbitration by the Constitutional Court. On the other hand, on the part of the Muslim communities, opinion is divided between those who welcome it and those who see it as a "trick" and another restriction on their religious freedoms and rights.³⁵

Bavaria approves Teaching Islam.

In a step described by its Minister for Integration, Gudrun Brendel-Fischer, as "a new milestone for the integration of our female and Muslim citizens," the Bavarian state parliament approved, on July 6, its amendment to the law regulating religious education in state schools, by incorporating the article "Islamic Education" in the state's official curricula.³⁶ The amendment above stated, "School students who choose not to follow religious education lessons are obligated to participate either in morals lessons or Islamic education lessons with a

³³ Yasar, 'The Development of the School Trial Islamic Religious Instruction at Bavarian Public Schools'.

³⁴ Franken and Gent, *Islamic Religious Education in Europe*.

³⁵ Al-Hamarneh and Thielmann, 'Islamic Instruction in German Public Schools'.

³⁶ Yasar, 'The Development of the School Trial Islamic Religious Instruction at Bavarian Public Schools'.

doctrinal logic of faith."³⁷ Consequently, the status of teaching Islamic teachings was changed to a regular school subject, which is added to the list of choices among other issues, such as ethics, so it is among the options for Muslim students living in about 350 schools within the state. On the other hand, before this amendment, Muslim students had the choice between studying the teachings of Christianity, whether Protestant or Catholic, and the subject of ethics as an alternative. Today, they can choose the "Islamic Education" subject, which has become compulsory, subject to marking and examination.³⁸

While German media said, "In Bavaria, unlike the states of North Rhine-Westphalia or Baden-Württemberg, to name a few, Muslim representative associations were not involved in determining the content of education and selecting and training Islamic education teachers." Michael Piazzolo, Minister of Education in the state of Bavaria, whom the German federal government entrusts, commented on the report in the curricula of his state, saying that "this presentation provides Muslim students with an alternative to ethics lessons, where they also learn the foundations of Islamic teachings and values."³⁹

Exclusion, Deception, and Courts

In contrast to this latest acknowledgment, teaching the Islamic religion in German schools remains controversial for a country that includes a Muslim minority exceeding 6.5 million people. Teaching this subject as a citizen's right for this minority, just like its Christian counterpart, whose children learn the teachings of their religion in schools, is still viewed with skepticism even by decision-makers, who restrict this education.⁴⁰ While the Bavarian official authorities celebrate their decision, the Muslim community remains cautious. Ali Aiken Annan, spokesman for the "Coordinating Council of Islamic Communities in Bavaria," considered the matter a "trick" that is not in the interest of the Muslims of Bavaria—explaining that what happened was their exclusion as Muslims from determining the content of their religious education, in contrast to the German state, which gave itself the right to decide on that, unlike what happens with Protestant or

³⁷ R. Spencer, *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions about the World's Fastest-Growing Faith* (Encounter Books, 2003), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=eanFm7hiM1cC>.

³⁸ Helen N. Boyle, 'Memorization and Learning in Islamic Schools', *Comparative Education Review* 50, no. 3 (August 2006): 478–95, doi:10.1086/504819.

³⁹ Yasar, 'The Development of the School Trial Islamic Religious Instruction at Bavarian Public Schools'.

⁴⁰ Mehmet H. Tuna, Jonas Kolb, and Zekirija Sejdini, 'Religious Learning Environments of Austrian Muslim Youth: An Empirical Analysis of Religious Educational Processes', *Religions* 14, no. 8 (4 August 2023): 1002, doi:10.3390/rel14081002.

Catholic religious education, where the churches decide the content themselves.⁴¹

This is confirmed by Harry Harun Beer, a professor of Islamic education in the city of Erlangen, adding: "The method of formulating the subject of "Islamic education" is not compatible with the German Constitution," which stipulates in the third paragraph of its seventh article that religious education curricula must be compatible with the principles of religious sects. To which he belongs. Therefore, the state must provide Islamic education "compatible with the principles of the Islamic religion and Islamic identities," says Harun Peer.⁴²

In this regard, it is noteworthy that the German court had previously decided on this controversy in 2020, when the Ministry of Culture in the state of Hessen stopped cooperation with the Turkish Islamic Union in Germany "DITIB" in teaching "Islamic education," justifying this with doubts about "DITIB" as a partner, especially regarding its independence from the Turkish state. The court ruled the matter invalid, and it was mandatory to resume that cooperation.⁴³

E. DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Behr believes that Islamic religious education will have an essential meaning for Muslims and all German citizens in general. He also appreciated the German government's willingness to allocate 20 million euros to build four Islamic theology centers in several leading universities. "Being part of a world-renowned university means that Islam no longer stands outside. We stand on an equal footing with other theology schools," said the Head of the Islamic Center at Tübingen University, Omar Hamdan. He believes Islamic education in the school curriculum is critical. The hope is that no more young Europeans will misunderstand Islam. "Islam is not what the ISIS militant group says," he said. Currently, hundreds of young Europeans have been influenced by ISIS ideology and have joined the radical group.

Language is one of the problems in bringing German society closer to Islamic knowledge. This obstacle is very pronounced, considering that most preachers in this country were not born and raised in Germany. This raises concerns that the Islamic teachings they preach cannot be fully understood by young people who intend to study Islam in depth.

⁴¹ Yasar, 'The Development of the School Trial Islamic Religious Instruction at Bavarian Public Schools'.

⁴² Al-Hamarneh and Thielmann, 'Islamic Instruction in German Public Schools'.

⁴³ Theodor Hanf and Karim El Mufti, eds., *Policies and Politics of Teaching Religion*, 2. Aufl, Studien Zu Ethnizität, Religion Und Demokratie, Vol. 16 (Baden-Baden [London]: Nomos, 2014).

The lack of preachers and language barriers, according to Behr, make young people who are interested in studying Islam vulnerable to being influenced by irresponsible parties and then leading them to an extreme understanding of Islam. Therefore, Behr will ensure that his students get the correct Islamic knowledge. "When radical preachers appear somewhere, I am sure my students will debate with those people and then explain the correct Islamic teachings." With the support provided by the government by facilitating Islamic education, Behr is also optimistic that his party will produce many Muslim scholars who can answer all questions from citizens about Islam. "I teach people to open up their worldviews so that they are not rigid and hostile to other religions. So far, Behr continued, what has happened in Germany is because there is no party capable of providing enlightenment regarding Islam, which is constantly accused of being a religion that supports violence and extremism.

"This is what makes some Germans follow suit in hating Islam."

Germany is the second most populous Muslim country in Europe after France. In Germany, Islam is the third-largest religion after Protestantism and Catholicism. Data shows that the Muslim population in Germany currently reaches four million people, 220 thousand of whom live in the German capital, Berlin.

Temporary Solution

Muhannad Khurshid is forming the first batch of teachers who specialize in the pedagogy of teaching Islamic religion. He is a university professor specializing in this subject at the Center for Religious Studies at the University of Münster. Khurshid defends the temporary solution that the Ministry of Education came up with, which lies in conducting some training and courses in which the trainee obtains a certificate authorizing him to teach the subject of the Islamic religion.

Muhannad Khorshid says: "On the one hand, there is a group of Muslims who have studied the Islamic religion so that they can teach it, while the other group - which in my view is the most important - are Muslim teachers who teach subjects other than the Islamic religion." They also receive the necessary training to teach the required subjects.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Hamarneh, Thielmann, and Tietze, *Islam and Muslims in Germany*.

F. Conclusion

After four years of dialogue between the German Islamic Congress on the one hand and the German government on the other, it was decided to allow Islamic lessons to be taught to Muslim children in German public schools. The German Interior Minister says in this regard: It is necessary in the future to listen to the recommendations of the German Islamic Conference to enhance the social and religious integration of Muslims in Germany. One of the most important recommendations of the conference was teaching Islam in German public schools and establishing Islamic colleges in German universities. The German Interior Minister says that academic status is necessary because Islamic jurisprudence in Germany may be able to solve the problems facing Muslims in German society. The Minister also added that Germans must realize Islam is part of German society. Religious lessons were limited to Jews, Catholics, and Protestants, but now they also include Muslims, who constitute about 5% of the total population of the Federal Republic of Germany. Some teachers and politicians oppose the idea of Islam being present in German public schools. AFD leader Alexander Gauland said after the Bedford-Strom proposal: "In addition to the fact that we have much more important problems within our schools, a German bishop can't promote the image of Islam." No studies have yet tested the extent of the impact of Islamic religious classes on preventing extremism, according to Harry Harun Beer, professor of Islamic studies and pedagogy at Goethe University in Frankfurt. However, these classes are essential. Because they show students that their beliefs are no less critical than others taught in their schools and because Islam is open to reflection and self-criticism. The Islamic religion class is trendy at Mansour School, where about 95% of the students are first- and second-generation immigrants. When Mansour walks in the schoolyard, he can barely walk five steps without a student stopping him to ask about grades, love, or plans for the future. "What Mr. Mansour is teaching me is something you don't learn in the mosque," said Yusef Akar, a 17-year-old student. "How to interact with non-Muslims who may not know how to interact with us. Or who are afraid of us." But the matter is not limited to that; "It shows me how much I am welcomed here," Akar said, "because the school no longer asks us to turn away from our religion. They accept it and even create the opportunity for you to learn it. This gives me the feeling that I am part of this community."

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