Islamic Education in the Netherlands

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Abstract

The arrival of so-called guest workers after the Second World War (in the 1960s and 1970s), in particular the arrival of labor force coming from Turkey and Morocco, was a confrontation with another and strange religion: Islam, in a predominant Christian country.

At first – in line with how they were named: “guest” workers – the Dutch population as well as the guest workers themselves were convinced of their return to their respective home countries. However, things changed, and in the 1980s of the last century, the process of reunion with wife and children started, resulting in Muslim children entering the Dutch educational system.

In the Netherlands education is organized in so-called pillars representing the Protestant, the Roman Catholic, and the social-humanistic worldview in, respectively, Protestant schools, Roman Catholic schools, and (neutral) state schools. As

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a consequence of family reunion, teachers (remarkably in all of these) in these schools in their classrooms were confronted with children from Muslim families, socialized in another religious worldview than their own and the one the school adhered to. Different models were developed to adapt to this new situation. Three models are described, in particular the model of “interreligious education.” Although great effort was done to include Muslims in some way or another in the developed new ways of denominational schools, some 25 years ago Muslim parents decided to found their own Islamic primary schools, after the recognition by the Dutch government of Islam as a stable ground for the foundation of Islamic schools. A new “pillar” was established, be it that only a small percentage of Islamic children attend Islamic primary schools. The majority is part of the population of Protestant, Roman Catholic, or state schools.

All schools, be it Protestant, Roman Catholic, state, or Islamic schools, are obliged to include in their curriculum a subject that was formerly called “Geestelijke Stromingen” (religious and secular philosophies of life), to inform pupils about the main characteristics of the different worldviews as they are lived by citizens in the Netherlands. These days this subject is included in a new subject called “citizenship education,” with a focus on living together, respecting, and tolerating “the other” in a democratic society.

Keywords
Migration · Responding to plurality · Diversity in education · Integration

Background

In the colonial era, the archipel of islands called Indonesia was part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, as was Surinam (in the northern part of South America) and the Windward and the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean, north coast of Surinam. The greater part of the population of Indonesia was adherents of the Islamic tradition, the second group of believers being Hindus. In Surinam and the Windward and Leeward Islands, it was just the other way around: the greater part of the population belonged to a Hindu faith community; the second group of believers were Muslims. However, in those days Muslims were approached from a strict Christian perspective, and with astonishment it was observed that “Islam overran and trampled the only true religion [Christianity] which had great impetus on the population” (quote from Abraham Kuyper, in NRC August 23, 2014). In a Handbook on Islam in the Netherlands, it is stated that “Although institutionalization of Islam in the Netherlands has a strong relation with immigration of labourers from Mediterranean countries in the sixties [of the last century], the first initiatives to create Islamic communities in our country were taken already before World War II” (Landman 1992, p. 19). Expatriates from Indonesia, living on a temporary basis in the Netherlands, developed these initiatives. Next to that missionary movements like the ṣūfī movements and the Ahmadiyyah movement had settled down in the Netherlands, however on a small scale – not reaching “John the Plumber” in the street.
Islam in the Postwar Period of the Netherlands

“John the Plumber” is confronted with Islamic fellow citizens since the 1960s of the last century, as a result of labor migration. To start with the so-called guest workers came from Mediterranean countries like Italy and Spain, adhering to the Roman Catholic tradition – a tradition Dutch people were familiar with. Later on workers also were recruited from Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. The religion these migrants practiced was Islam, a “new” religion for the Dutch colleagues they cooperated with in, for example, steelworks and textile factories.

At first – in line with how they were named: “guest” workers – the Dutch population as well as the guest workers themselves were convinced of their return to their respective home countries. However, things changed, and in the 1980s of the last century, the process of reunion with wife and children started, resulting in Islamic children entering the Dutch education system. Teachers in all primary schools (be it confessional or state school) in their classrooms were confronted with children from Muslim families, socialized in another religious worldview than their own (religious or secular) life orientation and also different from the one the school adhered to.

A decade later as a result of Surinam’s declaration of independence on 25 November 1975, the group of Muslims in the Netherlands was completed with believers from Surinam. Islam was brought to the Netherlands, not only from former colonies and by migrant workers, but these days also Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Egypt, Tunisia, Afghanistan, and Syria are part of the Muslim community. Last but not least, also Dutch converts are part of the Islamic community in the Netherlands. Nowadays approximately 850.000 Muslims live in the Netherlands that is just about 5% of the Dutch population – 290.000 Moroccan Muslims and 270.000 Turkish Muslims constituting the larger part of adherents to the Islamic tradition. The part of the Surinam Muslims is much smaller with only 40.000 believers (CBS 2009, p. 38).

Institutionalization of Islam started with the establishment of mosques, as a place to meet the so-called guest workers’ religious obligations, in particular performing prayer and attending the Friday sermons. In some cases, Dutch representatives sympathizing with the “guest workers” assisted in finding a place for the Muslims to pray and educate their children in Islam; in other cases, migrant leaders of a Muslim community struggled with Dutch development plans of cities and tried to finance the rent or purchase price with gifts of the members of their Muslim community. Sometimes the rent or the purchase price of a building and the finances to put this in order according to Islamic regulations were provided by funding from Muslim countries. Also in some cases, the Dutch government assisted financially in this process of institutionalization of Islam (Landman 1992, p. 43). The initiatives to establish a mosque, be it in an unoccupied office building or church or in a new building, in all cases were met with resistance from people living in the respective neighborhoods. Freedom, as written down in Article 1 of the Dutch constitution, including freedom of religion, apparently not yet included migrants’ religious tradition of Islam.
Islam in the “Pillarized” Educational Context of Netherlands

Freedom of religion is seen as a basic right of all Dutchmen. This right is concretized in the freedom to establish institutions according to people’s religious or secular life orientation. As a result, the Dutch society is a “pillarized society,” meaning that the institutions are organized according to dividing lines of religious or secular world-views, a typical Dutch way of living apart and living together in a country that is characterized by religious diversity (each in its own Protestant, Roman Catholic, or liberal/humanist “pillar”) in a monocultural context (all having a Dutch identity).

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, “the relation between religion and education in state schools was embodied in the teaching of Christian ethics and in religious education classes, in those days within the area of responsibility of the churches” (ter Avest et al. 2007, p. 203). School identity was characterized by Christianity “that goes beyond all institutionalized religion, a Christianity above religious differences” (ibid.: 203). Later on, due to a clash between different interpretations of “Christian ethics,” separate Christian schools were founded and financed by a community of parents or by the teachers themselves (ibid.: 204). As a result, the “voice” of the parents in the establishment of a school as well as the construction of the identity of the school was very important right from the beginning. 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. From the second half of the nineteenth century onward, Protestant and Catholic schools were “obliged to meet the gradually strengthened governmental criteria for quality of teaching and learning” (ibid.: 204); in the funding by the government however, state school still had a privileged position. In 1917 the “School Funding Controversy” (Schoolstrijd) was settled, and from then on all schools in the Netherlands are equally funded by the Dutch government, meeting Article 140 of the Constitution stating that education is the government’s continuous concern. All schools since then have to meet the criteria and aim at core objectives given by the government, and all schools are controlled by the Inspectorate of Education.

At its height in the 1950s of the twentieth century, in the Netherlands not only education but also institutions such as healthcare, newspapers, and sports clubs were organized in line with the religious orientations of parents, patients, readers, and sportsmen. Each pillar had its schools, hospitals, newspapers, and sports clubs, and there were also neutral/liberal schools, newspapers, and neutral/secular sports clubs as well as schools organized by the state. Islam was not yet included in the “pillarized” system in those days (See for a more detailed description of the Dutch pillarized system: ter Avest et al. (2007)).

By consequence, Christian teachers in Christian and teachers in state schools did not yet take account of Muslim children and their respective religious socialization at home. However, on arrival of Muslim children in the classroom, among others, as a result of the process of family reunion of the so-called guest workers in the 1980s, school boards and teams of teachers had to reflect upon the school’s Christian or neutral identity in relation to the religious education and development of life orientations of all their pupils.
Adaptation in Christian Primary Schools

Since 1917 all primary schools in the Netherlands, be they Protestant, Roman Catholic, or state schools, are fully subsidized by the government. Today, approximately two-thirds of the children attend denominational primary schools (Protestant Christian or Roman Catholic schools). These schools are not related to any church community and the respective church’s commitment to a Christian confessional denomination, which allows schools to find their own way regarding religious education for a plural pupil population. One-third of the children attend neutral primary state schools (CBS 2015). Christian schools (Protestant as well as Catholic schools) include religious education (RE) in their curriculum, which is taught by pupils’ own teacher. In state schools RE is taught on a voluntary basis, on request of the parents. For these voluntary RE lessons, pupils from one class are divided according to the religious conviction of the parents and their wish for denominational Christian or humanistic worldview education. Teachers for those separated classes are appointed and trained by organizations entrusted with each mission. These organizations are funded by churches and the humanistic organizations, respectively.

The moment school boards and teachers became aware of the consequences of the socialization of some of their new pupils in the “strange” religion of Islam, different solutions were explored to respond to this new situation. Some of confessional Protestant and Catholic schools continued to teach RE as before, focusing on their own denomination and their own religious tradition. All pupils in these schools are obliged to attend RE lessons, whether or not they are socialized in the Christian tradition the school adheres to (model A). Others include the “strange” religion of Islam by putting dialogue and encounter to the fore, taking the Christian tradition as their starting point (Wardekker and Miedema 2001; ter Avest 2003, 2009; ter Avest and Miedema 2010; ter Avest 2008a, b). The admission of pupils and of teachers appeared to be a weak spot in the process of adaptation to the new situation of religious diversity. Some schools require teachers’ as well as parents’ life orientations to be in line with the school’s identity and create a mono-religious educational context (see model A above). Others do ask teachers to underline the school’s vision and mission but allow for a plural pupil population, creating an educational context of coping with diversity from a Christian point of view (in between model A and model B). Again others focus on the pedagogical matters and teaching experience of an applicant to be employed, creating a context of teaching and learning in diversity (model C; see also Roebben 2007). In the last two decades, an increasing number of schools have gone a step further by considering interreligiosity as the main core of their school’s characteristic (Bertram-Troost et al. 2012; Alii 2009).

In the 1980s, the interreligious RE model was planned to the end in a primary school in a small town in the Dutch Bible Belt. The model was described as follow: “encounter” was the central concept in the newly developed curriculum. Religious education (RE) [during school hours] was included in this curriculum in two different ways. Firstly, the children were given RE in line with the tradition in which they were socialized at home, either the Christian or Islamic tradition. These RE lessons were given separately to Christian and Islamic children. The
class teacher taught Christianity and the imām presented Islam. Secondly, every child had a weekly “lesson in encounter,” given by the class teacher. The Christian and Islamic lessons and the “encounter lessons” were scheduled weekly and were fine-tuned to the developmental phase of the child. According to the age of the pupils, the children were introduced to the common elements (shared stories, such as the story of Joseph/Yusuf and Moses/Mūsā) and to the different accents of both religions (the different meaning of fasting, the different position of Jesus/‘Isā). From their classmates, “the other,” they learned the good reasons for behaving differently. Pupils both noticed and experienced that the authentic way their classmates believed and behaved was really meaningful for them (ter Avest 2009).

For the team of the interreligious primary school, as for teams of teachers elaborating on this model in the years to follow, multi-religiosity and variations in family cultures are not seen as a problem but as a challenge to cope with. In this kind of schools, both students and teachers are from various religious backgrounds, and the teaching of RE fosters the idea that diversity among the participants is seen as constitutive or even precondition for the formation of pupils’ own religious identity (ter Avest 2003, 2009). Some Christian teachers hesitate in relation between their teaching of interreligious education and their own commitment to their beliefs. They fear relativism and indifference, due to a presentation of religious traditions as being the same in their profound beliefs (Rietveld et al. 2010).

Research on parents of young children shows that parents’ ideas about religious and secular worldview education in schools have changed from “RE in line with socialization at home” to “RE adding to (secularized) religious socialisation at home” (ter Avest et al. 2013). In the beginning of the twenty-first century, parents anew are an important “voice” in the construction of the identity of the school and subsequently in the interpretation of RE in the secularized and plural Dutch context (ter Avest et al. 2013).

**Adaptation in State Primary Schools**

State schools in essence are “neutral” with regard to religious traditions. Whereas in the beginning of the nineteenth century, their character was Christian “above Christian differences” (see above), in the decades at the end of the twentieth, and the beginning of the twenty-first century, “neutrality” is interpreted as “objective” as the opposite to “subjective” (Westerman 2001). To meet the needs of neutrality, classes in religious and secular worldview education during school hours are optional and are kept out of the pedagogical responsibilities of the (neutral) state school. The so-called missionary institutions (for instance, cooperating Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic church, or the Humanist Society) develop teaching materials and train and coach teachers to go to state schools and teach the children in a Christian or humanist worldview in so-called GVO (Godsdienstig Vormings Onderwijs: Religious Education Classes) and HVO (Humanistisch Vormings Onderwijs: Humanist Education Classes). Classes of pupils are split according to age and the wish of parents for a Christian or humanist worldview class for their children. The optional
RE classes aim at “informing children about Christianity (and other religions) and the Bible. By way of telling stories, making use of symbols and rituals, children gain insight in “the world of faith”. Religious literacy facilitates children to reflect upon their own worldview” (www.pcgvo.nl). Next to Christian RE classes, there is a possibility for parents to require Hindu and Buddhist classes and Islamic classes; Hindu, Buddhist, or Islamic classes are more frequently given, in particular in the bigger cities in the western part of the Netherlands, although the lack of Dutch-speaking Muslims is an impediment to this. Optional lessons in Humanism aim at “facilitating the development of the values that are central in their life orientation. In HVO lessons children do not learn what to think, but the value of thinking and reflection in itself” (www.humanistischverbond.nl). The teachers appointed by the humanist society aim at the construction of a personal life orientation in interaction with classmates, adhering to the core concept of “dialogical identity development” (Veugelers and Oostdijk, 2013, p. 139).

In order to avoid “segregation” at the classroom level and meet the needs of education in a plural society, nowadays efforts are made to develop materials for teaching and learning in diversity, covered by the concept of “active plurality.” With the concept of the “active plurality,” an open approach is favored in this kind of worldview education in a plural society. The “Vereniging Openbare Scholen/ Algemene Besturen Bond” (VOS/ABB; National Organization on Education in State Schools) is taking the lead in these developments.

The teaching material for voluntary Islamic religious education (IGO, Islamitisch Godsdienst Onderwijs (Islamic Religious Education)) in state schools developed by SPIOR is called “Life and Death,” covering important themes for young children about daily life, in relation to eight central values, three basic principles of belief, and four human characteristics (IGO; van Bommel et al. 2012, pp. 14–15). The material is characterized by an open attitude toward the Dutch society. The aim of this method is to contribute to the construction of an Islamic identity of active citizens, taking their role in “bridging” activities in the Dutch plural society (ibid., van Bommel et al. 2012, p. 1). Eight Islamic values are central and are in a thematic way explored with the help of Qur’anic sūrahs. First the values are explored in a general sense. Next to that they are approached from an Islamic point of view. Then a comparison is made with two other religious and/or secularized points of view, and last but not least, they are seen in the context of possible dilemmas emerging from the context of diversity pupils live in, in order to develop an own authentic view on themes with a high priority for Muslims in the Dutch society (ibid., van Bommel et al. 2012, p. 2). The pedagogical strategy of IGO is characterized by a variety of workshop activities, fitting the psychological age of the children – based on a so-called child-centered approach (ibid.: 7).

Government Response to Diversity

To meet the need of teams of teachers and school boards to adjust to the plural classroom situation, the government in 1985 introduced the subject of “Geestelijke Stromingen” (World View and Spiritual Movements). The aim of this new and
mandatory subject was to inform pupils about the variety of religious and secular traditions as they are practiced in the Netherlands. In 2006 “Burgeringschapsvorming” (citizenship education) was introduced as a mandatory subject, complementing “Geestelijke Stromingen.” Besides mere information about religious and secular traditions, the focus of this new subject is on information about the structure of the democratic Dutch society and the practicalities of contributing to the democratic society as an active citizen. The core concepts of citizenship education are democracy, participation, and identity: democracy as a way to live together in a plural society and find solutions to cope with and respond to diversity, participation seen as each citizen’s responsibility to contribute in a constructive way to the own neighborhood and larger context one lives in, and identity as the (preliminary) outcome of the development of a subjective system of values and subsequent regulations and rules as the basis of one’s actions – at home, at school, and in the society. Pupils should become aware of the ideals and values that motivate them in their actions.

The Foundation of Islamic Primary Schools

Although great effort was done to include Muslims in some way in the developed new curricula for RE denominational schools, some 25 years ago Islamic parents decided to found their own Islamic primary schools, after the recognition by the Dutch government of Islam as a stable religious tradition for the foundation of Islamic schools. Although resistance of the Dutch population hindered institutionalization of Islam, at the end of the day, Muslims succeeded in establishing a new “pillar” in the educational landscape of the Netherlands. A small proportion of all children from Islamic families though attend Islamic primary schools – less than 1%. The large majority of the Muslim children attend Protestant, Roman Catholic, or state schools.

The start of Islamic primary schools gave rise to suspicion, partly due to the fact that not all of the instigators of this initiative mastered the Dutch language (Budak, in press; see also Inspectie van het onderwijs 1999). This suspicion expressed itself in anxiety and fear for radicalization, a frequent topic in newspapers, overruling positive articles about Islamic education (see, e.g., Ghaeminia 2010 in the daily newspaper Trouw April 21). In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the suspicion resulted in two reports of the Inspectorate of Education, researching pedagogical strategies and didactics with a focus on the democratic character of religious education and “Geestelijke Stromingen” in Islamic primary schools (Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2002, 2003). Although in none of the reports any indication was found for any mistrust regarding the intentions and aims of (religious) education in Islamic primary schools, the suspicion did not fade away completely and still lasts.

In Islamic schools, religious education is given by a specialized teacher. Whereas at the start of Islamic schools, these teachers had to construct their own teaching material by copy and paste from mainly Arabic material (Budak 2014; in press); nowadays teachers make use of curricula and teaching material developed in the Netherlands. School boards cooperating with the “Islamitische Schoolbesturen
Organisatie” (ISBO: National Institution of Schoolboards of Islamic schools), and the “Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond” (SPIOR: Foundation of Islamic Organizations in the area of Rijnmond) developed teaching material for religious education of Muslim children – teaching material adapted for the education of Muslims in the secularized and plural context of the Netherlands.

Teaching material was developed by representatives of a team of teachers of one Islamic primary school, in close cooperation with ISBO. This material for Islamic religious education in particular at Islamic primary schools is characterized by a close relation to the method “Vreedzame school” (Peaceful Education) stimulating social-emotional development. Topics in that method that are central during a certain period, like “respect,” “friendship,” and “feedback,” are brought into relation with what takes place in children’s everyday life and with surahs from the Qur’ān and the hadīth. The psychological development of children, what and how they can understand religious stories, is leading. Pupils have an exercise book in which they write their answers to preformulated questions. Every thematic period is concluded with a written rehearsal.

All schools are obliged to include in their curriculum a subject that was formerly called “Geestelijke Stromingen” (religious and secular philosophies of life), to inform pupils about the main characteristics of the different worldviews as they are lived by in the Netherlands. Nowadays this subject is included in “citizenship education,” with a focus on living together, respecting, and tolerating “the other” in a democratic society (see also Niehaus 2012; Rietveld-van Wingerden et al. 2009; Meijer 2006).

**Islamic Education in the Mosque**

Many of the children, attending religious classes in a Christian primary school or a state school, next to these mandatory and voluntary lessons at Christian and state schools, respectively, go to the mosque to attend lessons aiming at socializing children according to Islam, to make them “good Muslims.” These children attend classes in the mosque mostly on Wednesday afternoon, sometimes also during the weekend. In the mosque they learn to recite Qur’ānic surahs and the basic attitudes and ways of decent behavior, based on the Qur’ān and hadīth. For example, in the mosque children are taught that a good Muslim is “barmhartig” and never makes use of any aggressive method to convince people of the unity of God and Muhammad being God’s prophet. Since these days there is a vivid discussion about Muslim youngster joining IS (Islamic State), imāms in their Friday preaches pay attention to the basic values of Islam:

The youngsters who wish to join the IS don’t know what they are talking about. That’s why in Qur’ānic education in the mosque attention should be paid to the process of radicalization. Youngsters should know that the quotes IS people use to propagate and even advertise violence, are misused. We at the mosque should offer them a religious alternative. (Imām Yassin Elforkani, in NRC August 23, 2014; see also an interview with Imām Elforkani in NRC, December 30, 2014)
According to Elforkani, the poor economic situation of some of these youngsters makes them vulnerable for the teasing and convincing message of IS. These Muslim youngsters are not aware of IS’s offensive way of preaching Islam and Islamic behavior – not fitting the basic values of respect and mercy of Islam at all is the opinion of Elforkani.

Next to formal Islamic education, children are socialized in the Islamic way of life in “schools” related to mosques (Andree et al. 1990). Usually during the weekend young children starting at the age of 5 or 6 years are taught Arabic and introduced in saying prayer in Arabic and learn sūrahs from the Qur’ān by heart and recite them. Next to that children are taught about the basic principles of proper behavior according to Islam, and information is presented to them about the life of Muhammad and the four law schools in Islam. Girls and boys have their lessons in separate rooms in the mosque. Some children attend these Qur’ānic schools/mosque schools during the years that they are in primary school. Girls stop going to Qur’ān schools when they attend secondary school and when there is no separate room for women in the mosque (Andree et al. 1990, p. 31, 84, 95).

Muslim parents send their children to the mosque because they “find it difficult to teach their children themselves” (El Bouayadi-van de Wetering 2012, p. 78). Mosques in the Netherlands are organized along ethnic lines and political and religious mainstreams within the ethnic groups (ibid.: 81). Religious education in these mosques differs accordingly. Moroccan parents delegate religious education for a greater part to the imām in the mosque (Pels 1999, p. 203); Turkish parents sometimes talk to the imām in case of general topics regarding (religious) education in the Netherlands (Nijsten 1998, pp. 188–189). Mastering the Arabic language is very important in Moroccan mosques, since it is the language of the Qur’ān and also the national language in Morocco. The educational material is in Arabic. The goal of education in the Moroccan mosque is to recite the whole Qur’ān by heart and to practice the main Islamic rules of the rituals (ibid.: 82).

In the Turkish mosques, the children learn the Arabic alphabet, in order to be able to read the Qur’ān. These Turkish children do not learn the Arabic language as a spoken language. The Turkish language is used for religious instruction; educational material is in Turkish. Children learn the necessary Arabic words and sentences to say prayer and practice the Islamic rituals. Teachers in the mosque inform the children about the five pillars of Islam: confession of faith, prayer, fasting, zakāt, and ḥajj. In most Surinam mosques, lessons are given in Dutch, since this is the national language in Surinam. The content of the lessons is similar to those in Turkish mosques.

Next to the traditional content of curricula at mosques, modern curricula add another goal. “Given the Dutch environment, it is considered important that pupils learn that treating others with respect and decency, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, is Islamic and important social behaviour” (Nijsten 1998, p. 83). It is seen as a pedagogical challenge to teach children that respect for others is seen as good Islamic behavior, while at the same time, children are taught that drinking alcohol (as many secular and secularized Christians do in the Netherlands) is sinful or harām (ibid.: 83).
A private parents’ initiative resulted in the method “Amaleed,” a method that is complementary to classes RE in schools (Mugaibel and El Haloui 2013). In the mission statement of “Amaleed,” we read that it is the intention to facilitate knowing about and experience the Islamic tradition in a playful way and recognizing and respecting differences. The method is developed in particular for children from poorer families and combines cultural and religious topics. Attention is, for example, given to “the story of Muslims,” to “science and technology,” and to “health.” The classes are given after school hours, in the mosque, in combination with enjoying a simple evening meal together.

Recent studies show that with regard to the pedagogical climate in the mosques, teachers’ way of approaching the children has become more friendly. This is probably a reaction to the very strict pedagogical climate in the mosques in Turkey and Morocco, together with a growing awareness of “the importance of a child-friendly and effective pedagogical climate in Islamic education” (ibid.: 84). Pedagogical strategies however follow the IRE model (initiate-respond-evaluate) – the teacher poses a question, the child answers the question, and the teacher evaluates the answer as right or wrong (ibid.). This model is not in line with didactic methods used in most Dutch primary schools. Since educational material for the Moroccan and Turkish children is in Arabic and Turkish, respectively, no references are made to the Dutch context. According to Tariq Ramadan, “traditional Islamic education does not succeed in learning the Muslim youth to master the critical skills they need to resist the difficult moral and social dilemma’s they are confronted with” (El Bouayadi-van de Wetering 2012, p. 84).

Today, primary schools of different denominations with a majority of Islamic pupils try to establish a relation of trust with the imām and other key persons in the mosque and start a conversation about the pedagogics of teaching in order to try to adjust the pedagogical strategies in the mosques to the Dutch standard of education.

RE4All (Religious Education for All)

Inspired and motivated by the lines of thought of the German pedagogue Wolfram Weiβe (Religion für Alle, 1997) and the Belgian theologian Bert Roebben (Education in difference, Roebben 2007), the Dutch theologian and pedagogue Cok Bakker developed in close cooperation with his colleagues of the Utrechtse Adviesgroep (Utrecht Advisory Board on Identity, Life Orientation and Education) the concept of “Religion4All” (Bakker and ter Avest 2013). This concept was constructed in an inductive way from research on principals and teachers in state schools in the city of Rotterdam, answering the question about the policy and practice of worldview education in their schools. By way of interviews and participant observations, an answer emerged to the question: What is taught in state schools to a pupils’ population socialized in a variety of religious and secular worldviews, and by whom? In everyday practice in individual teams of teachers, three ways of responding emerged.
In the first place for teachers, the subject *Philosophy with Children* gives space for exploration of and doing justice to answers that are given to existential questions in the different worldviews classmates are socialized into at home and in the religious community their family belongs to. Some teachers like to do these classes of philosophy themselves; others prefer a specialized teacher for this subject. Characteristic for this approach is the teacher’s attitude of “listening to the voice of the child” (cf. McKenna et al. 2008).

The second concept that emerged from this qualitative study is *Education in Encounter*. The relevance of a religious or secular worldview in the life of each person, and by consequence of living together in society, is the basic principle in the concept of “Education in Encounter.” The focus on this approach is in the commonalities in different religious and secular worldviews. An important aspect of this approach is the training of pupils’ competencies to live together, respecting “the other” who possibly is different but with whom also commonalities can be shared, and living together in a world full of differences. These classes are taught by a specialized teacher in close cooperation with the class teacher.

The third model emerging from Bakker’s research is called *Differentiated Classes*. In this model in different periods of the year, the focus is on a different religious or secular tradition: a period for Protestant Christian religious education, a period for Roman Catholic religious education, a period for Islamic religious education, and a period for humanistic worldview education. These different classes in different periods are given for all children, preferably by a specialized teacher.

**Concluding Remarks**

Different schools react in different ways to the pluralization of society, as is shown throughout the chapter. Different perspectives dominate in reflections upon this situation, resulting in different positions in diversity. Whereas the pedagogical perspective dominates in the approach of the Bakker study, a theological perspective dominates in a recent Finnish study (Rissanen 2014). Dialogicality is needed in the exchange of various ideas about learning to live together in diversity among scholars in all disciplines involved. Parents should be included in these conversations, not in the least because it is all about their children, the future citizens of the Netherlands, and the main characters in the construction of and participation in a way of living together in diversity.

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