Islamic Education Within the Muslim Minority Context of Europe:

Pedagogy, Politics, and Future Directions

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Lecture

Online Book Launch

UCSIA/Centre Pieter Gillis

-Islamic Religious Education in Europe. A Comparative Study-
(Ed by Leni Franken and Bill Gent)

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In Appreciation of
my late colleague and friend
Dr Bill Gent’s Contributions to Islamic Education
Outline

- Contextual challenge:
  What is Europe’s Islam question?

- Conceptual challenge:
  How do we define ‘Islamic Education’?

- Pedagogical challenge:
  Why is it important to facilitate contextual/reflective teaching of Islam-regardless of the educational setting?

Q&A
Contextual Challenge:

Europe’s Islam question and Islam’s Europe question:
✓ Challenges of migration, postcolonial community formation
✓ Positioning Islam-Muslims within European secular, liberal democratic societies: are they compatible?
✓ Islamophobia, Extremism and Securitization
✓ Going beyond ‘assimilation vs integration’ binary within the radical diversity of contemporary Europe:
  Living together/peaceful coexistence means ‘reciprocity in accommodation/acknowledgement’
**British Muslims: socio-economic disadvantage in statistics**

- 48% British Muslims lives in poverty, more than any other religious group.
- 46% of Muslim population in England lives in the most deprived 10% of local authorities.
- 15% of Muslims own their home, compared with 31% of the population overall;
- 5.1% Muslims live in homeless shelters/temporary accommodation (2.2% overall).
- The proportion of long term unemployed among working-age Muslim men is 10.3% compared with 4.3% for non-Muslims.
- For women, the difference is higher: 38.6% compared with 5.9 per cent, 89 % of Muslims also suffer the greatest levels of disadvantage in the workplace of any minority group in the UK.
- There is a relatively high level of Muslim participation in higher education; however, Muslim students are more likely to find themselves on unsatisfying study programmes, experience higher dropout rates, and, most likely (particularly for females) not be able to gain access to post-university job markets.

Different interpretations of the secular, liberal and democratic principles:

Three approaches:

- J. Rawls’ theory of justice (equal liberty and equality principle) has western moral traditions in mind and does not include non-European religious/moral traditions. Hence, his interesting view that a morally plural society cannot reach a consensus on ‘public good’ in secular democracies.

- Habermas’ Communitive Action Theory/post-secular Europe argument is promising but even he requires none-western religious traditions/their self-understandings to be translated into the language of intelligibility of the mainstream secular rationality !

- A. MacIntyre’s monolithic concept of ‘tradition-knowing’ makes traditions so unique they cannot talk to one another ! Their truth claims clash. He aims to return the clock backward: premodern/Enlightenment Aristotelian virtue ethics as appropriated by the medieval Christianity.

• An alternative view: decolonising the study of religions and RE ?
Conceptual challenge:

• What is Islamic Education? Is it different from Is. Instruction, Nurture or Is Studies?

  Is education different from nurture, socialization, instruction, indoctrination etc.?

  ‘Muslims in education’ is different from Education in Muslim contexts.

• Religion in secular curriculum: diverse European models: from strict secularist to denominational and inclusive approaches to RE

• Religious Education: is it a form of Religious Studies?

• How is Islam taught and represented in state schools, publicly-funded Islamic ethos schools and non-confessional classes of studying.
Two distinct political framings of IE:

whose interest is being served?

The ‘educational good’ intended to serve:

- The secular state: securitization/citizenship and politically correct Islam agenda.
- The parents: replicating certain identity narratives of first generations or transnational religious movements...
- How about the needs and interests of children/young people?
The Pedagogical Challenge: Questions for Muslim Educators

- How is education understood in Muslim tradition(s)?
- What kind of educational good is intended by IE?
- Can Islamic nurture be contextual, open, critical, and capable of responding to the changing needs of European Muslim children and young people?
- Is education in Islam a rigid form of cultural transmission, instruction, and indoctrination incapable of generating a theological language of faith and personal development?
- Can Islamic ethos education promote intra-faith diversity and enable interfaith/intercultural understanding while sharing the broader ideals of Western civic and democratic education?
- Is there an ideological bias behind invoking hermeneutics? Should interpenetrative activity be guided by an ethical awareness/clarity?
A research-based reflective and critical IE that will be able to provide young Muslims with an Islamic literacy that integrates reflective thinking and inter-cultural and inter-religious understanding.

IE needs to become an interdisciplinary field of study, embracing empirical research and professional development.

Achieving this goal largely depends on constructive, collaborative partnerships between Muslim educational institutions and mainstream universities with a view to bridging the pedagogic gap between the cultures of traditional Islamic and Western education.

Facilitating Islam literacy/public understanding of Islam/Muslims.
Educational/pedagogical challenges facing the Muslim education institutions require collaboration with universities, particularly Education Science specialism.

Positioning ‘Islamic Education’, within ‘Education Studies’, as an interdisciplinary field of empirical inquiry, scholarly study and professional development.

Muslim learners’ life-world is informed by Islamic and western cultures.

Research-based pedagogical innovation/development.

Education Studies, at UG/PG level, including diverse educational/pedagogical cultures (some are faith-based) is an effective way addressing its Eurocentric framing of ES and RE.

Developing a long-term community-embedded collaborative Action: the Warwick Islamic Education project
A Community-University Partnership Model of Developing a Professional Approach to Islamic Education in Europe

- Professional development opportunities for Muslim educators and teachers of Islam
- Developing Muslim teacher education, faith leadership education programmes
- Developing contextual pedagogies, curriculum and learning resources meeting the needs of Muslim children, young people and wider public.

- UK’s first PGT level Islamic Education provision integrated into the wider Education Studies programme was developed.
- A special access course, PGA in Islamic Education, was developed to enable admission of the students coming from non-traditional education backgrounds such as *daruulums*:

  See:  
  https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ces/prospective/postgraduate/taught/islamicpga/ 
  https://warwick.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/taught/courses-2021/islamiceducationma
Selected References

- Sahin, A (2021) Islamic Education Within the Muslim Minority Context of Europe: Pedagogy, Politics, and Future Directions In IRE in Europe (this volume)
- Muslim Council of Britain, British Muslims in Numbers, 42, 46, 50