

Analysis of Islamic Education Policy in the Netherlands

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze Islamic Education Policy in the Netherlands. The study from this study uses a literature review where the literature taken is in accordance with the subject of discussion and analyzed in depth so that conclusions and findings can be drawn in the research. Literature taken from books, journal articles, both national and international, and other literature. The result of this research is that Islamic education in the Netherlands is a complex issue that involves various challenges and opportunities. The Dutch government's policy provides space for Islamic religious education, but still emphasizes the importance of tolerance, social integration, and countering radicalization. Despite the various challenges in the implementation of this policy, with the right solutions, Islamic education can be an important instrument to support the development of an educated, tolerant and well-integrated generation of Muslims in Dutch society.

Keywords: Policy Analysis; Islamic Education; Netherlands

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis Kebijakan Pendidikan Islam di Belanda. Kajian dari penelitian ini menggunakan kajian literatur yang mana literatur yang diambil sesuai dengan pokok pembahasan dan dianalisis secara mendalam sehingga dapat diambil kesimpulan dan temuan dalam penelitian. Literatur yang diambil baik dari buku, artikel jurnal baik nasional maupun internasional dan literatur lainnya. Adapun hasil penelitian ini adalah pendidikan Islam di Belanda adalah isu yang kompleks yang melibatkan berbagai tantangan dan peluang. Kebijakan pemerintah Belanda memberikan ruang bagi pendidikan agama Islam, namun tetap menekankan pentingnya toleransi, integrasi sosial, dan penanggulangan radikalisme. Meskipun ada berbagai tantangan dalam penerapan kebijakan ini, dengan solusi yang tepat, pendidikan Islam dapat menjadi instrumen penting untuk mendukung perkembangan generasi muda Muslim yang berpendidikan, toleran, dan berintegrasi dengan baik dalam masyarakat Belanda.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Kebijakan; Pendidikan Islam; Belanda

INTRODUCTION

The Netherlands has a long tradition in terms of religious freedom and cultural diversity.¹ With Muslim communities made up of various ethnicities, such as Turkey, Morocco, and Syria, the need for Islamic education that is in accordance with religious teachings is important.² Before discussing Islamic education policy in more detail, it is necessary to

¹ Marcel Maussen, "Institutional Change and the Incorporation of Muslim Populations: Religious Freedoms, Equality and Cultural Diversity," dalam *After Integration*, ed. oleh Marian Burchardt dan Ines Michalowski (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2015), 79–104, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-02594-6_5.

² Sara Mazzei, "The identity construction in Arab-Islamic education systems into the experiences of people from Morocco and Syria living in Europe," *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies* 5, no. 2 (2024): 74–99.

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understand that education in the Netherlands is organized by the state and various private organizations. Although primary and secondary education in the Netherlands is secular, there are several initiatives that allow religious education, including Islam, to be taught in schools.³ Islamic education in the Netherlands has become an increasingly relevant topic and has received widespread attention, as the number of Muslim population in the country increases.⁴ The Netherlands, as a country that upholds religious freedom and the principle of multiculturalism, provides space for all religious groups to practice their beliefs, including the Muslim community.⁵ However, despite the fact that education policies in the Netherlands are secular, religious education, including Islam, remains an important part of the lives of many Muslim families living in the country.

However, Islamic education policy in the Netherlands also faces major challenges. On the one hand, the existence of a policy that allows Islamic religious education in schools is a positive step to ensure that the religious rights of Muslim students are respected.⁶ There are concerns about the potential for social segregation and the risk of radicalization that may arise as a result of religious education being too separate from the general curriculum.⁷ Issues such as social integration, potential cultural conflicts, and the quality and oversight of Islamic education are challenges that must be faced by the government and Muslim communities in the Netherlands.

Research on Islamic education policy in the Netherlands has been carried out by academics both from within and outside the country. Anne Becker the Dutch Case highlights how the Dutch education system accommodates the existence of Islamic schools through state funding schemes, provided that the schools meet national education standards. In this context, the Dutch state applies the principle of educational pluralism based on Article 23 of the Constitution which provides freedom to establish religion-based schools.⁸ However, challenges remain in terms of curriculum integration and supervision. Furthermore, Leyla Yildirim, showed that Islamic schools in the Netherlands have experienced significant growth since the 1980s. Nevertheless, they face great challenges, especially in terms of quality control and public perception related to the issue of radicalism.⁹ This research emphasizes the importance

³ Wirda Ningsih dan Helmiati Helmiati, "Social Dynamics and Its Influences on Islamic Education Policy in the Secular Netherlands," *Dirasah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2025): 39–51.

⁴ Andri Nirwana AN, "Bibliometric Analysis of Islamic Education and Character Development in Religious Education Practices in Indonesia.," *Pakistan Journal of Life & Social Sciences* 22, no. 2 (2024).

⁵ Gurpreet Mahajan, "Religious diversity and multiculturalism," dalam *Research Handbook on Multiculturalism* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2025), 193–212.

⁶ Rahmat Muliana, "ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHER STRATEGY IN MULTICULTURAL-BASED STUDENT BEHAVIOR DEVELOPMENT," *el-Tarbawi: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 1 (2024): 31–40.

⁷ Roberta Medda-Windischer, Alexandra Cosima Budabin, dan Mattia Zeba, "Introduction: The Intersection of Religion with Radicalization and De-Radicalization Processes in Comparative Perspective," *Religions* (MDPI, 2024), <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/15/11/1410>.

⁸ Anne Becker, Janet Jarvis, dan Ina Ter Avest, "The Role of Human Rights Education in Moving Towards a State-Rights-Religion Relationship in Place-Space-Time. A Study in the Netherlands and South Africa," dalam *Human Rights and the Separation of State and Religion*, ed. oleh Francis-Vincent Anthony dan Hans-Georg Ziebertz, vol. 10, Religion and Human Rights (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2023), 199–215, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-33998-1_10.

⁹ Leyla Yildirim, "New move to govern Muslims and their institutions: Dutch education minister's attempt to monitor Islamic informal education," *Thematic Dossier*, 2024, 33.

of education policies that not only guarantee religious freedom, but also encourage social integration.

Meanwhile, Kamel Essabane, Carl Sterkens, dan Paul Vermeer, the issue of cultural identity and Islamic education in the framework of multiculturalism. He examines the moral dilemma that arises when secular states fund religious-based educational institutions, especially Islam. This book emphasizes the importance of Islamic education that is able to bridge Islamic values with the principles of Dutch citizenship.¹⁰ Another study by Sahin (2013) through a work entitled *New Directions in Islamic Education* discusses the transformation of Islamic education in Europe, including the Netherlands, from a traditional system to a more dialogical and contextual model. Today's Islamic education is geared towards not only preserving religious identity, but also supporting active engagement in pluralistic Western society.¹¹

The thesis written by Jenny Berglund is also an important reference in understanding the position of Islamic elementary schools in the Dutch national education system. He stated that legally, Islamic schools are entitled to receive government subsidies, but still face obstacles in the accreditation process and suspicion from some parties that link Islamic schools to the issue of extremism.¹² Finally, Shadid and van Koningsveld, review sociologically the freedom of religion and the position of Islam in the Netherlands. They highlight the tension between the state's liberal principles and fears of radicalization. Islamic education is one of the meeting points of this tension, where the state must balance between the protection of human rights and the national interest.¹³

This research has a fundamental difference compared to previous studies that have discussed Islamic education in the Netherlands a lot. Most previous studies, have focused more on the growth and challenges of Islamic schools in social or legal contexts, but have not specifically conducted an in-depth analysis of Islamic education policy as a public policy. This research places a primary focus on the policy analysis itself—examining the process of formulation, implementation, and impact of Islamic education policies by the Dutch government. In addition, this study tries to fill in the gaps in previous studies that are more descriptive with an evaluative approach to the effectiveness of the applicable policies.

Furthermore, this research approach pays attention to the context of contemporary post-2020 policies, an aspect that has not been touched much by previous research which depart from different time and event settings. In this context, emerging issues such as growing concerns about radicalism, Islamophobia, and changes in national integration policies in Europe are important considerations in assessing the relevance and impact of today's Islamic

¹⁰ Kamel Essabane, Carl Sterkens, dan Paul Vermeer, "The Relationship between Islamic Religious Education and Citizenship Education in Liberal Democracies," *Religious Education* 118, no. 4 (8 Agustus 2023): 297–311, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2023.2262888>.

¹¹ Abdullah Sahin, *New directions in Islamic education: Pedagogy and identity formation* (Kube Publishing Ltd, 2013).

¹² Jenny Berglund, *Publicly funded Islamic education in Europe and the United States*, 2015, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:800459>.

¹³ Wasif AR Shadid dan P. Sj van Koningsveld, "Islam in Dutch society: current developments and future prospects," 1992.

education policies. This study also specifically examines formal regulations and government policy documents related to the funding, accreditation, and supervision of Islamic schools, which have not been thoroughly examined in previous research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the library research method which aims to analyze Islamic education policies in the Netherlands in depth.¹⁴ This approach was chosen because the research focuses on the study of policy documents, government regulations, and scientific literature related to Islamic education in the context of secular and multicultural countries. The main data sources in this study include official Dutch government documents such as the Education Law, national integration policies, as well as reports from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap). In addition, secondary data is obtained from scientific journal articles, books, research institution reports, and relevant mass media publications.

In analyzing the data, the researcher uses a content analysis technique, by examining the content of policies and documents related to Islamic education, then categorizes them based on certain themes such as Islamic school funding, curriculum, state supervision, and social integration.¹⁵ The researcher also utilizes theoretical frameworks of public policy analysis, such as policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation models, to assess the extent to which Islamic education policies in the Netherlands are effective and fair. The validity of the data is strengthened by triangulating sources, which is comparing the content of policy documents with the views of academics, Islamic organizations, and government agencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History of the Netherlands

The Netherlands, or officially known as the Kingdom of the Netherlands, has a long history filled with political, social, and economic changes. The country is located in Western Europe and is known for its sophisticated irrigation system, multiculturalism policies, and strong democratic traditions. The history of the Netherlands includes the period of the formation of the kingdom, the struggle for independence, the colonial era, and its role in various international organizations. In ancient times, the territory that is now the Netherlands was inhabited by Germanic tribes. In the 1st century BC, the region became part of the Roman Empire.¹⁶ After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5th century, the Netherlands became part of the Frankish empire and later smaller kingdoms.¹⁷ In the Middle Ages, the Dutch territory consisted of various provinces ruled by the nobility and were under the influence of

¹⁴ John W. Creswell dan Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

¹⁵ Elmar Hashimov, "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook and The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers: Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014. 381 Pp. Johnny Saldaña. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2013. 303 Pp.," *Technical Communication Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2 Januari 2015): 109–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2015.975966>.

¹⁶ James C. Kennedy, *A concise history of the Netherlands* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹⁷ Gary Marks, "Europe and Its Empires: From Rome to the European Union*," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 50, no. 1 (Januari 2012): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02218.x>.

the Spanish empire. The region is known as the "Low Countries" because of its low geographical position, often flooded.

In the 16th century, the Netherlands was under Spanish control led by King Philip II. Authoritarian policies and attempts to impose Roman Catholicism on a Protestant-majority society led to tensions.¹⁸ This triggered the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648), which was a struggle between the Dutch provinces and the Spanish empire. In 1581, seven Dutch provinces declared their independence through the Declaration of Unification (Act of Abjuration). This war ended with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which recognized Dutch independence. Thus, the Dutch Republic or the Republic of the Seven United Provinces (Dutch Republic) was formed and became a highly developed country in the field of economy and trade.

In the 17th century, the Netherlands experienced a period of glory known as the Dutch Golden Age. The country became a major power in world trade, shipping, and colonialism. The Netherlands established large trading companies such as the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) and the Weste Indische Compagnie (WIC), which operated in Asia, the Americas, and Africa.¹⁹ During this time, cities such as Amsterdam developed into global financial centers. The Netherlands is also famous for its advances in art, science, and philosophy, with famous figures such as the painter Rembrandt, the scientist Christiaan Huygens, and the philosopher Baruch Spinoza. At the end of the 18th century, the Netherlands experienced a period of political instability. In 1795, the Netherlands was conquered by French forces under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte and became the Republic of Batavia, which became a satellite state of France.²⁰ Then, in 1806, Napoleon founded the Kingdom of Holland, with his brother, Louis Bonaparte, as king. However, after the fall of Napoleon in 1815, the Netherlands joined with other countries to form the larger Kingdom of the Netherlands, encompassing the territory of Belgium.

In 1830, Belgium separated from the Netherlands and became an independent country. Since then, the Netherlands has continued to develop into a more modern country with a more stable political system.²¹ During the 19th and 20th centuries, the Netherlands became a thriving industrialized nation, although it still maintained colonial wealth abroad. The Netherlands was involved in two World Wars, and both wars had a major impact on the country. In World War I, the Netherlands remained neutral, but in World War II, the country was occupied by Nazi Germany from 1940 to 1945. During this occupation, many Dutch Jews became victims of the Holocaust.²² After World War II, the Dutch faced a major challenge in

¹⁸ Thomas Munck, *Seventeenth-Century Europe: State, Conflict and Social Order in Europe 1598-1700* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

¹⁹ Pieter C. Emmer dan Jos J.L. Gommans, *The Dutch overseas empire, 1600–1800* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

²⁰ Lotte Jensen, "Napoleon's Hundred Days and the Shaping of a Dutch Identity," dalam *Napoleon's Hundred Days and the Politics of Legitimacy*, ed. oleh Katherine Astbury dan Mark Philp, War, Culture and Society, 1750-1850 (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 125–42, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-70208-7_7.

²¹ Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx, dan Alain Meynen, *Political history of Belgium: From 1830 onwards* (Asp/Vubpress/Upa, 2009).

²² Pieter Lagrou, "Victims of genocide and national memory: Belgium, France and the Netherlands 1945-1965," *Past & present*, no. 154 (1997): 181–222.

maintaining its colonial power in Indonesia. In 1949, after a long struggle for independence, Indonesia finally gained independence from the Dutch.

In the 20th century, the Netherlands underwent significant social and political changes. The country underwent a rapid post-war reconstruction and became a welfare state with a comprehensive social system. The Netherlands is also a founding member of NATO, the European Union, and various other international organizations. In addition, the Netherlands is known for its policy of multiculturalism that supports individual rights, as well as freedom of religion and opinion. Despite the challenges of social integration for minority groups, the country remains committed to the principles of democracy and human rights.

Today, the Netherlands is one of the most prosperous and developed countries in the world, with an economy based on international trade, technology, and the service sector.²³ The country is also known for its progressive social policies, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage, liberal policies against drugs, as well as serious efforts in environmental protection and climate change. With a long and diverse history, the Netherlands continues to play an important role in international politics, as well as as an example of a country that has successfully integrated cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity into its modern society.

The Development of Islam in the Netherlands

Islam is a relatively new religion in the Netherlands when compared to other countries in Europe, but its existence has had a significant impact on the social, cultural, and political life of the country. Islam has been known in the Netherlands since colonial times, and until now, Muslims have been an important part of Dutch society. The history and development of Islam in the Netherlands can be seen through several important phases, starting from the first arrival of Muslims to the challenges faced by the Muslim community today. Islam was first introduced in the Netherlands through colonial relations with the Muslim world. In the 16th to 17th centuries, the Netherlands had trade relations with the Ottoman Empire, which was centered in Turkey.²⁴ The Dutch, through large trading companies such as the VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), made contact with the Islamic world in the Middle East and Asia. However, at that time, the influence of Islam in the Netherlands was still limited to traders and diplomats.

One of the important events in the early history of Islam in the Netherlands was the arrival of several Muslim workers from Indonesia at the end of the 19th century.²⁵ Indonesia, which at that time was a Dutch colony, became the first source of migration for Muslims to the Netherlands. This migration became an initial milestone for the development of the Muslim

²³ Annelies Hogenbirk, John Hagedoorn, dan Hans van Kranenburg, "Globalization in the Netherlands," dalam *Handbook on Small Nations in the Global Economy* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009), <https://www.elgaronline.com/downloadpdf/edcollchap/edcoll/9781843765929/9781843765929.00007.pdf>.

²⁴ Mehmet Bulut, "The Role of the Ottomans and Dutch in the Commercial Integration between the Levant and Atlantic in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45, no. 2 (2002): 197–230.

²⁵ Rori Afrinaldi dkk., "Traces of Islam in Minority Lands: The Historical Journey of Muslim Civilization in the Netherlands," *JUSPI (Jurnal Sejarah Peradaban Islam)* 8, no. 1 (2024): 61–69.

community in the Netherlands.²⁶ The significant development of Islam in the Netherlands occurred in the mid-20th century, along with a wave of massive migration from former Dutch colonies, such as Indonesia, Morocco, and Turkey. After World War II, the Netherlands needed labor to support post-war economic growth. To meet this need, the Dutch government opened opportunities for migrant workers from Turkey and Morocco to come to the Netherlands.

Initially, this migration is temporary and migrant workers are expected to return to their home countries after some time. However, many of them chose to settle permanently in the Netherlands, build a family, and continue their lives there. Along with that, Muslim communities from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds began to flourish in various major cities in the Netherlands, such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague. As the number of Muslim immigrants increased, the need for places of worship and religious education facilities increased. In 1955, the Rotterdam Mosque became the first mosque to be established in the Netherlands, marking the beginning of the establishment of other mosques serving the country's Muslim community.

In the 1960s, Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands began to form more structured organizations and communities. One of them was the establishment of the Dutch Muslim Organization (Nederlands Islamitisch Instituut-NII) in the 1950s, which aimed to accommodate the religious and cultural needs of the Muslim community. Nevertheless, in this period, most Muslims in the Netherlands still depended on their own immigrant community for religious, educational, and cultural affairs. In the 1970s, the Netherlands began to face new challenges related to the existence of a growing Muslim community.²⁷ The Dutch government, which had previously implemented a policy of immigrant integration, began to change its approach to a policy of multiculturalism, in which each cultural and religious group was recognized and valued separately.

However, although the Dutch government gave the Muslim community freedom to practice their religion, the process of social and cultural integration became quite a complex problem. Many Muslims feel marginalized in Dutch society, especially in terms of access to education, employment, and political representation. Tensions between Muslim religious and cultural identities and Dutch secular values often arise, especially as debates over religious freedom, women's rights, and tolerance of Islamic religious symbols such as the hijab.

Since the 2000s, Islam in the Netherlands has increasingly come to public and political attention, especially as a series of events have occurred that highlight the relationship between Islam and Dutch society.²⁸ One of them was the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004, carried out by a radical Muslim. This incident sparked a debate about radicalization and the challenges facing the Muslim community in the Netherlands. On the other hand, the Muslim community in the Netherlands is also increasingly showing its existence in various aspects of

²⁶ Thijs Sunier dan Mira Van Kuijeren, "Islam in the Netherlands," *Religious Newcomers and the Nation State: Political Culture and Organized Religion in France and the Netherlands*, 2010, 115–30.

²⁷ Han Entzinger, "The Rise and Fall of Multiculturalism: The Case of the Netherlands," dalam *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship*, ed. oleh Christian Joppke dan Ewa Morawska (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 59–86, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554795_3.

²⁸ Leen D'Haenens dan Susan Bink, "Islam in the Dutch Press: With Special Attention to the *Algemeen Dagblad*," *Media, Culture & Society* 29, no. 1 (Januari 2007): 135–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443706072002>.

life, ranging from politics to culture. Political parties such as the DENK and Muslim figures such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali have introduced debates about the relationship between Islam and liberal democracy in the Netherlands.²⁹ In 2015, the Dutch government began implementing policies to monitor and counter radicalization among Muslim youth. The policy includes a programme to prevent extremism and training for teachers to detect signs of radicalisation in schools. However, this policy has also caused controversy, as it is considered by some to be an attempt to suspect and marginalize the entire Muslim community.

Islamic Education Policy in the Netherlands

Islamic education in the Netherlands has undergone significant development in recent decades. A number of Islamic schools were established to meet the religious education needs of the young generation of Muslims. In addition, Islamic religious subjects have also begun to be introduced in some public schools as part of the extracurricular curriculum, although the teaching of Islam in public schools is often controversial. Islamic religious education in the Netherlands faces major challenges in terms of the quality of teaching, teacher training, and the integration of Islamic values with secular education. Nevertheless, there are ongoing efforts by the Muslim community to ensure that religious education can be taught in a moderate manner and in accordance with Dutch values that respect freedom and tolerance.

In the 21st century, Islam has become an integral part of Dutch society. Today, about 5% of the total Dutch population is Muslim, with the majority of them of Turkish, Moroccan and Syrian descent. Although the Muslim community in the Netherlands has grown rapidly, it still faces challenges in terms of social integration, discrimination, and negative stereotypes against Islam. However, Islam also played an active role in Dutch social and cultural life. Many Muslim organizations engage in social, charitable, and interfaith dialogue activities to promote interfaith understanding and encourage Muslim participation in public life. Several large mosques, such as the Sultan Ahmet Mosque in Amsterdam, are also symbols of diversity and tolerance in the country.

Islam is the religion that has developed the most rapidly, it is inseparable from the relationship between Islam and Dutch society which has had a long history even since the 17th century. Therefore, the contribution of Muslims to the progress achieved by the Netherlands is very large.³⁰ The large contribution of Muslims can color state policies in respecting religious freedom and tolerance. Muslims in the Netherlands, like the rest of the population, enjoy basic rights to freedom of speech, religion, education, and organization as enshrined in the Dutch Constitution. Furthermore, the development of more organized Islamic education only began in the 20th century, along with the wave of immigration from Muslim countries.

²⁹ Edip Asaf Bekaroğlu, "The Dutch, the un-Dutch, and the semi-Dutch: The politics of multiculturalism and Muslim minorities in the Netherlands" (PhD Thesis, Bilkent Üniversitesi (Turkey), 2010), <https://search.proquest.com/openview/e4caf2b66d063b5fc70d038e93f8f699/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2026366&diss=y>.

³⁰ Froukje Demant, Marcel Maussen, dan Jan Rath, "Muslims in the EU: Cities Report—the Netherlands," *Open Societies Institute EU Monitoring and Advocacy Programme (EUMAP)* (Ed.), *Muslims in the EU Cities Report*. Budapest Open Society Institute, 2007, <https://dare.uva.nl/document/2/68727>.

Islamic education in the Netherlands is one of the issues that continues to grow along with the increasing number of Muslims in the country. Islamic education policy in the Netherlands includes not only religious education in Islamic schools, but also how Islamic education is integrated into the secular public education system. As a country that upholds the principles of religious freedom and multiculturalism, the Netherlands faces the challenge of regulating Islamic education in a way that respects religious freedom without separating or discriminating against certain religious groups.³¹ The importance of Islamic education policies in the Netherlands is increasingly felt along with the increasing number of Muslim populations, most of whom come from Turkey, Morocco, and Indonesia. The Dutch government is aware of the importance of providing religious education in accordance with the beliefs of Muslims without neglecting the basic principles of state education. Therefore, Islamic education policies in the Netherlands focus on several aspects that need to be considered, namely social integration, quality of education, and the guarantee of religious freedom.

One of the forms of Islamic education in the Netherlands is Islamic schools. Although the majority of schools in the Netherlands are secular, the Netherlands provides space for the establishment of religion-based schools, including Islamic schools. These schools aim to provide Islamic religious education as well as general education recognized by the state. Islamic schools in the Netherlands operate according to the national curriculum set by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, but with the addition of Islamic religious lessons as part of the education of Muslim students.³² Since the 1980s, the number of Islamic schools in the Netherlands has been growing.³³ The Dutch government provides funding equivalent to public schools for faith-based schools that meet the set standards.³⁴ These schools play an important role in providing religious education in accordance with Islamic values to Muslim children, as well as maintaining their religious identity in the wider society.

In addition to Islamic schools, Islamic education policies in the Netherlands are also implemented in public schools. Islamic religious education is taught as an elective subject in some public schools, although this is not the case in all schools. Initially, Islamic religious education in public schools was more reserved for students from Muslim backgrounds.³⁵ However, over time, Islamic religious subjects began to be taught in a more inclusive manner to introduce non-Muslim students to Islam, as part of multiculturalism and interfaith understanding education. Islamic religious education in public schools is often taught by teachers from Muslim backgrounds. Although Islamic religious education in public schools is

³¹ Sarah Carol dan Ruud Koopmans, "Dynamics of Contestation over Islamic Religious Rights in Western Europe," *Ethnicities* 13, no. 2 (April 2013): 165–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796812470893>.

³² K. H. (Ina) Ter Avest dan M. (Marjoke) Rietveld-van Wingerden, "Half a Century of Islamic Education in Dutch Schools," *British Journal of Religious Education* 39, no. 3 (2 September 2017): 293–302, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2015.1128391>.

³³ Marjoke Rietveld-van Wingerden, Wim Westerman, dan Ina ter Avest, "Islam in education in the Netherlands. History and actual developments.," *Islam in education in European countries, pedagogical concepts and empirical findings*, 2009, 69–94.

³⁴ Geoffrey Walford, "Funding for Religious Schools in England and the Netherlands. Can the Piper Call the Tune?," *Research Papers in Education* 16, no. 4 (Januari 2001): 359–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520152732007>.

³⁵ Andrew Coulson, "Education and indoctrination in the Muslim world," *Policy Analysis* 29 (2004): 1–36.

still limited, it is considered important to introduce the basic principles of Islam and strengthen tolerance and understanding between religions in the Netherlands.

The Dutch government has an important role in regulating and supervising Islamic education in the country. Basically, the Dutch government recognizes the right of Muslims to receive religious education in accordance with their beliefs. Therefore, the government provides financial support to Islamic schools registered under the national education system. However, in Islamic education policy, the government also emphasizes the importance of social integration. One of the main goals of Islamic education is to ensure that Muslim students not only understand the teachings of their religion, but also can integrate well into the wider Dutch society, which is based on the values of democracy, religious freedom, and human rights.³⁶ In addition, the government also regulates that the Islamic education curriculum taught in Islamic schools does not contain teachings that can foster radicalization or extreme thinking. This has become one of the major concerns for the Dutch government, especially after a series of events involving extremism attributed to some Muslim individuals in the country.

Challenges in Islamic Education Policy

Islamic education policy in the Netherlands faces various challenges, both from the social and political sides. One of the biggest challenges is the issue of social integration between the Muslim community and Dutch society in general. Although the Netherlands has a strong tradition of multiculturalism, cultural and religious differences often create social tensions. Islamic education, especially in public schools, is sometimes seen by some as a separating factor between Muslim and non-Muslim students. In addition, there are concerns related to the potential for radicalization among Muslim youth. Some argue that religious education that is too separate from public education can exacerbate social isolation and reinforce extreme views. Therefore, the Dutch government is very careful in formulating Islamic education policies in order to prevent radicalization, but still provide space for religious freedom.

In addition, the teaching of Islam in public schools often depends on the number of Muslim students in each school. In some cases, these schools do not have sufficient resources to provide competent Islamic teachers, so the quality of Islamic religious instruction varies greatly. The Dutch government continues to reform Islamic education policy by introducing various innovations to improve the quality of religious education. One of the important steps is the training of Islamic religious teachers, which aims to ensure that they have the ability to teach moderately, in line with the values of pluralism and tolerance. In addition, several initiatives were also undertaken to introduce character education that emphasized universal values such as justice, peace, and respect for differences. It aims to encourage better understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim students and create a more harmonious Dutch society.

One of the main challenges of Islamic education in the Netherlands is social integration. Despite the policy of accommodating religious education, there is a tension between

³⁶ Hülya Kosar Altinyelken, "Critical Thinking and Non-Formal Islamic Education: Perspectives from Young Muslims in the Netherlands," *Contemporary Islam* 15, no. 3 (November 2021): 267–85, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-021-00470-6>.

maintaining Muslim religious and cultural identity and the need to integrate within a broader, secular Dutch society. This is often a source of controversy in society, especially related to the curriculum and extracurricular activities in Islamic schools. The Dutch government has increased supervision of Islamic schools to avoid potential radicalization. Several incidents in the past, such as the involvement of individuals in acts of extremism, have prompted the government to ensure that religious education is not used to spread ideologies that are contrary to Dutch values, such as tolerance, freedom, and human rights.

The quality of Islamic education in the Netherlands can also vary, especially in private schools that may have limited resources. Although these schools receive state subsidies, some of them face challenges in providing education on par with public schools in terms of infrastructure and facilities. Islamic education in the Netherlands is an important part of the country's education system, which prioritizes the principles of religious freedom, social integration, and multiculturalism. Along with the increasing number of Muslims, the majority of whom are from Turkey, Morocco, and Indonesia, the Netherlands has developed an Islamic education system designed to provide religious education in accordance with Islamic teachings, while ensuring integration in the wider society. The Dutch government seeks to regulate Islamic education in a way that allows the maintenance of Islamic religious identity without separating or isolating the Muslim community from the general public.

In this context, Islamic education policy in the Netherlands involves several important aspects, including the regulation of the religious education system in Islamic schools, the teaching of Islam in public schools, and government support in shaping a curriculum that accommodates cultural and religious diversity. This policy is also faced with challenges related to social integration, radicalization, and the quality of religious education.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education in the Netherlands is a complex issue that involves a variety of challenges and opportunities. The Dutch government's policy provides space for Islamic religious education, but still emphasizes the importance of tolerance, social integration, and countering radicalization. Despite the challenges in implementing this policy, with the right solutions, Islamic education can be an important instrument to support the development of an educated, tolerant and well-integrated young generation of Muslims in a multicultural Dutch society. The Islamic education policy in the Netherlands is part of the country's efforts to maintain cultural and religious diversity, while ensuring better social integration in an increasingly pluralistic society.

Despite the challenges in terms of social integration, radicalization, and quality of education, the Dutch government continues to strive to ensure that Islamic education can run in a balanced manner, respect religious freedom, and uphold the values of democracy and pluralism on which the country is based. Islamic education policies in the Netherlands are an important part of the state's efforts to accommodate religious and cultural diversity in society. The Dutch government strives to provide religious education that is in accordance with the beliefs of Muslims, while still adhering to the principles of social integration, democracy, and religious freedom. Despite the challenges of integration, quality of education, and radicalization, this policy provides space for Muslim communities to maintain their religious identity while being an integral part of a multicultural Dutch society.

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