

Principles of an Islamic Religious Education

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Although Muslims have been living in Germany for half a century now, very little has been done in the domain of religious instruction in public schools. The secular state claims to ensure equal treatment for all citizens and religious denominations. In reality, the German model provides for a denominational religious education, whose contents must indeed be compatible with the German Basic Law (Grundgesetz), but which, in terms of content, is actually determined by the respective religious communities. In a similar way, these communities have a veto right (*missio* or *vocatio*) in matters affecting the selection and employment of teachers. This is a consequent approach, as this argument of the legal right does not concern teaching of religious studies *about* religion, but it is about a subject teaching from the inner perspective of the religion itself. For this reason, the ideologically neutral state must not identify with one single religion and decide on subject matters. Muslims have been living in Germany in large numbers for the last fifty years, and the German state has been considering the introduction of Islamic religious instruction for about the last thirty years. The Conference of the Education Ministers decided as early as 1984 to introduce Islamic religious instruction, the well known ‘Weimar appeal’ took place under the direction of the German President in 2002 in favor of the introduction of Islamic religious education. And while this appeal was finally repeated in 2009 by the German Islam Conference, very little has changed in this respect up until now.¹⁸²

In addition to Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish religious education all over the country, pupils who do not belong to any religious denomination are given the chance to take part in a subject called „ethics“. Only a small number of model experiments exist which are aimed specifically at Muslim children; these encompass a maximum of two or three percent of the total number of Muslim pupils in the country.¹⁸³ In this context, it can be seen that there is no lack of demand but of supply. Muslim children and adolescents are able to choose between a free period and lessons in their native languages, while their classmates attend religious education classes. In several German federal regions (*Länder*) and in some types of schools Muslim pupils are also required to take part in the aforementioned „ethics“ class together with their undenominational classmates. In addition, the contents of the small number of courses offered for Muslim children are actually established by the commissions of Ministries of Culture and Education, limiting the role of Muslims in the development of these curricula to a consultant role. In this way, the state reserves the right of decision in the final instance.

As the German government has up until now not legally recognized Islam as an official religious community in the country, the authorities make use of the so-called ‘neutral Islamic Studies’ (‘neutrale Islamkunde’). As the authorities are not reliant on the co-

¹⁸² Bülent Ucar, *Die Akzeptanz der Islamkunde in NRW*, in: Michael Kiefer et al. (ed.), *Staatlicher Islamunterricht in Deutschland. Die Modelle in NRW und Niedersachsen im Vergleich*, Berlin 2006 pp. 53-60. Ibid. *Wo ein Wille ist, ist auch ein Weg*, in: *Pastoraltheologie* 2010 (99) pp.252-255.

¹⁸³ Bülent Ucar, *Was kann und sollte Islamische Religionspädagogik in der staatlichen Schule leisten?*, in: CIBEDO-Beiträge zum Gespräch zwischen Christen und Muslimen 4/2008 pp. 24-30.

operation of the religious communities for developing these Islamic studies, the state alone designs the school curricula, with the teachers also being selected without prior consultation with Muslims. German authorities accuse Muslim organizations of either being controlled from abroad or of being extremist in their positions or of working against integration or of not representing a large enough proportion of Muslims in the country. However, it is highly conspicuous that up until now a mere 2% of Muslim children are given the chance to participate in Islamic Studies. In this context, the willingness of the state to invest financial resources in the religious instruction of its Muslim pupils must invariably be called into question.

Not only do public institutions treat Muslims unequally, but they have also behaved in a half-hearted and defensive fashion in this field for decades now. While they continuously bemoan a paucity of contact persons on the Muslim side, the same authorities have the legal ability to extend Islamic studies in schools – the current model experiments are not in any case religious education in a legal sense, that is according to the guidelines contained in the Basic Law – and to invest properly in this realm of society. However, none of this is being done at present. A structural and institutional discrimination of Muslims in this context must thus be determined. The importance of an institutional recognition becomes clear when the fact that thousands of religious teachers, dozens of university professors and considerable financial assistance would be necessary in the event of recognition is considered. It is also shown by the fact that recognition would result in Muslims being granted the right to their own playschools, schools, old age people's homes etc. A number of professorships for the training of teachers of Islamic Religious Education have indeed been created during the last few years, in principle a positive development that is to be welcomed. However, enormous problems also exist in this field due to the fact that the filling of these professorships is not just dependent on the academic qualifications of the candidates.¹⁸⁴ These professorships have an important function: that of the development of an authentic, modern Islamic Religious Education for Muslim children and adolescents in the secular society. The central ideas and main aims of a religious education program of this nature will be discussed in the following chapter.

Basics of Islamic teaching at schools

Leaving to one side the irksome subject matter described up to now, a form of modern Islamic Religious Education in a secular society has to adapt itself to certain basic principles and ideas as well as to objectives based on well thought out concepts of religious education. In turn, the latter must legitimize themselves at large in a theological as well as

¹⁸⁴ German politicians have nevertheless come to understand the importance of the subject for the integration of Muslims in Germany in the last few years. German Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble declared in 2009 that he would support the development of an Islamic-theological faculty in Germany. In the same way, Interior Minister Uwe Schünemann has unmistakably declared on several occasions the intention to establish an institute for Islamic Theology at the University of Osnabrück. At the same time, the German Science and Humanities Council (*der Wissenschaftsrat*) has in its role as the most important advisory body of German science policy recently declared its desire to create institutes for Islamic Theology at two or three locations in Germany. „Schäuble – Islam-Gemeinden Kirchen gleichstellen“, in: Welt 22.6.2009. Sigrid Aversch, „Niedersachsen will Imame ausbilden. Schünemann: Akzeptanz des Islam würde steigen“, in: Berliner Zeitung 25.7.08.

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in an educational way. There is no completed didactical concept of Islamic Religious Education in the German-speaking world. This is especially a consequence of the fact that basic empirical research in religious education is still in its infancy in the previously mentioned sector.¹⁸⁵

In order to increase its acceptance among Muslims and due to considerations about the nature Islamic religious education, information derived from Islamic source material together with that taken from Islamic cultural traditions must be considered when developing a modern Islamic religious education. The Koran and Islamic rules have been divided into four sections since the beginnings of the religion. The following groupings are already mentioned by Zayd ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Bakr (deceased 970): faith (*i'tiqād*), ethics (*ādāb* respectively *aḥlāq*), worship (*'ibādāt*) and behavior in the sense of controls and regulations between people (*mu'amalāt* bzw. *'uqūbāt*).¹⁸⁶ Religion consists accordingly of four areas of importance. The foundations of these four areas are constructed and provided for in Islam by the principles of faith. The other three levels can only be accounted for and constructed against the background of these foundations, as worship and ethics can according to Islamic teaching not be employed in a concrete and permanent fashion without faith.

It can be read in a well known *ḥadīth* that „Behavior can only be measured on intentions, and everyone receives exactly those things which best correspond to their intentions.“¹⁸⁷ The faith and the purpose provide the starting points and the basis for further practice-orientated norms which can be derived from and find their basis in the previously described foundations. This aspect of the sincerity is expressed even more clearly in the famous Gabriel (Ġibrīl)-*ḥadīth*. When Gabriel queried the Prophet about the „correct behavior“, the Prophet gave him the following answer: „*iḥsān* signifies that you serve God as if you could see Him, as although you are unable to see Him, He can see you.“¹⁸⁸ The Islamic *ādāb* or *aḥlāq* is frequently named by the Prophet as being the aim of his message: „I was sent to perfect the good morals.“¹⁸⁹ He also expressed himself in this fashion in his private prayers: „My Lord, in the same way in which you have in all likelihood designed my being, make my morality beautiful.“¹⁹⁰ In addition to the previously mentioned self-portrayal of the Prophet, the superb capacities of the Prophet in terms of his selection and his special function as an example and role model are specified in connection with ethics in the Koran: „... as you possess superb moral qualities“ (Koran 68/4). These sections in religious texts are remarkable when considered against the background of a perception and everyday practice of religion based on emulation which makes up part of everyday life of large numbers of religious Muslims. In this daily life, considerable emphasis is placed on performing daily prayers, whereas less attention is usually paid to the connected moral charac-

¹⁸⁵ Folkert Rickers, *Islam - eine religionspädagogische Herausforderung*, in: Wolf Dietrich Bukow-Erol Yildiz, *Islam und Bildung*, Opladen 2003 pp. 49-80, p. 54.

¹⁸⁶ Compare: Zayd ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Bakr (deceased. 970), *al-Baḥr ar-rā'iq*, Vol. 1, Beirut o.J., pp. 7-8.; also see Muḥammad Amīn, *Ḥāšiya Ibn 'Ābidīn*, Vol. 1, Beirut 1386, pp. 79; Muḥammad Anwar Kašmīrī, *Fayḍ al-bārī šarḥ al-Buḥārī*, Vol. 1, o.O, o.J., pp. 6.

¹⁸⁷ al-Buḥārī, *Īmān* p. 54.

¹⁸⁸ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Egypt 1313, 6 Volumes, Vol. 1 pp.51-52. al-Buḥārī, *Īmān* p. 50.

¹⁸⁹ Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwattaʿa*, *Ḥusn al-ḥuluq* 8. Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, Vol. 2, pp. 381.

¹⁹⁰ Ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, Vol. 1, Cairo 1313, pp. 403; compare also Koran 95/4 and 17/70.

teristics.¹⁹¹ This key message of Islam should be brought to the forefront in all forms of religious education and training and should be considered when developing appropriate didactic concepts.

Islamic education and training

Questions as to the religious significance of training and education in general, when considered in relation to the religion and more specifically with regards to the religious education of children and adolescents, constitute separate pedagogic and theological complexes.¹⁹² The key thoughts contained in the primary Islamic sources on this subject are briefly summarized in the following section. Whilst according to the Koran, children are considered as a test (*fitna*),¹⁹³ they are nevertheless regarded in a positive light in the Koranic text, and each person is required to thank God for this present.¹⁹⁴ As a result of this, the example of Luqmān demonstrates that children and adolescents should be spoken to in an appropriate and friendly fashion.¹⁹⁵ Children before puberty are regarded in Islam as being immature and are thus not subject to the rules of behavior of Islam. The Prophet frequently emphasized that children are not responsible for their actions and their omissions.¹⁹⁶ At the same time, every attempt should be made during religious instruction to follow an easy path. „Teach! And make it easier, do not make it more difficult!“¹⁹⁷ Ibn Ḥazm (deceased 1064) makes a point of highlighting the voluntary nature and character of recommendation of pieces of advice which are given in general. According to Ibn Ḥazm, anything else is unacceptable as people giving advice are also liable to make mistakes.¹⁹⁸ In this context, God’s lenience, patience, love and mercifulness is stressed time and time again. Even Ibn Taymīya (deceased 1328) highlighted the fact that everything derives from and finds its purpose in God’s love. The same author also expressed the conviction that each movement in the world is down to God.¹⁹⁹

The fact that knowledge does not in itself automatically transform people into educated or religious beings is not just revealed in the primary sources of the Islamic religion and stressed by the Islamic scholarly culture, but is also accepted in modern pedagogic. If this were not the case, no academic would be better educated than Imam-Google and nobody would be more religious than the authors of the voluminous and extensive Encyclopaedia of Islam which was written almost in its entirety by non-Muslims. In the same way, the ability to judge and to maintain a critical distance to the information on offer belongs to the elementary premises of education, as do the dedication, engagement and inborn trust in the conditions of Īmān. Islamic religious understanding states that all information, knowledge and at heart all forms of education, training and values have their basis in and are

¹⁹¹ See just Sure 107.

¹⁹² Rauf Ceylan, *Islamische Religionspädagogik in Moscheen und Schulen*, Hamburg 2008 pp. 37.

¹⁹³ Koran 8/28.

¹⁹⁴ Koran 14/39, 7/15.

¹⁹⁵ Koran 31/13-19.

¹⁹⁶ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Egypt 1313 6 Volumes, Vol.1 pp. 116.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Egypt 1313 6 Volumes, Vol.1 pp. 239. Compare also Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Aḥlāq wa s-siyār fī mudāwāt an-nufūs*, Beirut 1961 p. 62.

¹⁹⁸ Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Aḥlāq wa s-siyār fī mudāwāt an-nufūs*, Beirut 1961 pp. 48.

¹⁹⁹ Ibn Taymīya, *at-Tuḥfat al-irāqīya*, ed. Dr. Yahyā b. Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh al-Hunaydī, Riyād, without year pp. 373.

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derived from God as the absolute being and creator. As the beginning of all ontological happenings, God represents the pivot and center point of all existence and knowledge. This aspect is made clear by the following story in the Koran:

„How can you deny Allah and you were without life and He gave you life? Again, He will cause you to die and again bring you to life, then you shall be brought back to Him [2.28]. He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth. And He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens; and He is Knower of all things [2.29]. And when thy Lord said to the angels, I am going to place a ruler in the earth, they said: Wilt Thou place in it such as make mischief in it and shed blood? And we celebrate. Thy praise and extol Thy holiness. He said: Surely I know what you know not [2.30]. And He taught Adam all the names, then presented them to the angels; He said: Tell Me the names of those if you are right [2.31]. They said: Glory be to Thee! We have no knowledge but that which Thou hast taught us. Surely Thou art the Knowing, the Wise [2.32]. He said: O Adam, inform them of their names. So when he informed them of their names, He said: Did I not say to you that I know what is unseen in the heavens and the earth? And I know what you manifest and what you hide [2.33].“

By making use of the example of Adam as the prehistoric man, the story makes crystal clear that all existence and knowledge comes from God and can finally be traced back to God. People have obtained their entire knowledge and the ability to acquire further knowledge about God, the world and themselves from God and are thus intimately connected to Him.

‘Ilm or Information about religion?

In this context, it can thus be seen that all types of knowledge always make reference to God and only take on a positive meaning in a normative sense when they are connected to Him. „My Lord, increase me in knowledge.“²⁰⁰ In this passage and in other passages in the Koran, the word *‘ilm* does not refer to general knowledge about the world, religion and people. Instead, it always makes direct reference to God and knowledge about God and acquires its value first through the ontological relationship between man and God. Knowledge and action are in the same way fundamentally interconnected. „Those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah. Surely Allah is Mighty, Forgiving.“²⁰¹ Those people who are possessed of knowledge but do not act in a consequent fashion, such as those who murder, rape and lie without compunction, either possess merely factual knowledge and not faith based knowledge about God or have had their entitlement to *īmān* put in question by their own actions. A manifest sense of *īmān* out of the mouth of a person is a commitment, a theory and a stated view which requires verification. All assertions which cannot be proven or substantiated are regarded as being invalid. Problems of credibility would otherwise arise and the ability to convince people of the one’s views would disappear. „Is he who is obedient during hours of the night, prostrating himself and stand-

²⁰⁰ Koran 20/114.

²⁰¹ Koran 35/28.

ing, taking care of the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord—? Say: Are those who know and those who do not know not alike? Only men of understanding mind.²⁰²

It is frowned upon in Islam to teach and to preach without having first deeply considered, interiorized and practiced the above mentioned.²⁰³ On the other hand, the learned scholar is placed above the worshipper in numerous statements made by the prophet. „The one who knows (*‘ālim*) is placed above the worshipper (*‘ābid*) in the same way in which the moon is placed above the other stars. People who know are the heirs to the prophet. They have left no money behind, just their knowledge (*‘ilm*) (...).²⁰⁴

At the same time, the educated Muslim is according to the above mentioned ideals not just an intellectual, but also a person who is trustworthy, possesses indisputable moral virtues and actively practices the Muslim faith. It can be read in a *ḥadīṭ* that „only two people are permitted to be jealous: (...) the other is the person who receives wisdom from God, exercises this wisdom and teaches it to other people.²⁰⁵ When a group from Yemen approaches the Prophet and asks him to recommend a teacher, he proposes Abū ‘Ubayda, stating that the latter is the *amīn* (dependable and trustworthy) of the parish.²⁰⁶ In this way, the prophet documents the important role attributed to mutual trust in the context of the Islamic teachings. The retention and passing down of religious knowledge together with the significance of scholarly culture are also granted an equally great importance: „God does not take knowledge away from the people but instead reduces the number of scholars, so that scholars no longer exist and the people make ignorant people their leaders. When questioned by Fatwa, these leaders then state that they have no knowledge. They make errors and let others make errors.²⁰⁷ Numerous koranic verses and *ḥadīṭs* emphasize the role of rationality and reason and make clear that it is impossible to gain an insight into religious questions without making correct usage of human powers of discretion (*‘aql* and *qalb*).²⁰⁸ The discussion about the fact that *‘aql* cannot be understood in the Kantian sense here is unnecessary at this point. Various different *ḥadīṭs* point out the judiciousness and farsightedness of Muslims. The positive relationship between religiosity and the ability to make decisions is thus here documented. „Beware the insight (*firāsa*) of a religious person, as he sees with the light of God.²⁰⁹ On the other hand, discretionary decisions by individ-

²⁰² Koran 39/9.

²⁰³ What! do you enjoin men to be good and neglect your own souls while you read the Book; have you then no sense? [2:44] And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones, [2:45] Who know that they shall meet their Lord and that they shall return to Him [2:46]. Also see Koran 62/5.

²⁰⁴ Ibn Ḥanbāl, *Musnad*, Egypt 1313, 6 Volumes, Vol. 5 pp. 196.

²⁰⁵ Ibn Ḥanbāl, *Musnad*, Egypt 1313, 6 Volumes, Vol. 1 pp. 385.

²⁰⁶ Ibn Ḥanbāl, *Musnad*, Egypt 1313, 6 Volumes, Vol. 3 pp. 146.

²⁰⁷ Ibn Ḥanbāl, *Musnad*, Egypt 1313, 6 Volumes, Vol. 2 pp. 162.

²⁰⁸ See: Koran 42/52, 6/74-79. Also see Ali Bulaw, *Islam düçüncesinde din-felsefe, vahy-akıl ilişkisi*, Istanbul 2000 Iz yay. pp. 364-365, 376 ff. Fazlur Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History*, Karachi 1965 pp. 151-157. Navid Kermani, *Appelliert Gott an den Verstand? Eine Randbemerkung zum koranischen Begriff ‘aql und seiner Paret’schen Übersetzung*, in: L. Edzard/ C. Scyska Ed., *Encounters of Words and Texts - Intellectual Studies in Honor of Stefan Wild on the Occasion of his 60th birthday March 2, 1997*, Hildesheim 1997 pp. 56-68.

²⁰⁹ al-Buḥārī, *at-Tārīḥ al-kabīr*, o.O. o.Z., Vol.7 pp. 354. at-Tirmidī, *Sunan at-Tirmidī*, Beirut o.Z., Vol. 5, pp. 298. at-Ṭabarānī, *Mu‘ğam al-awsaṭ*, Kairo 1415, Vol. 3 pp. 312; Vol. 8 pp. 23. Ders., *Mu‘ğam al-kabīr*,

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uals are generally placed in a negative context. The following views have been passed down from the fourth caliph: „If religion were determined by personal decisions (*ra'y*), it would be more advisable to moisten the bottom rather than the top of the foot. However, I have seen that the prophet moistens the top of the foot.“²¹⁰

Religious rules and regulations are consequently fully removed from capture and comprehension through the *'aql*.

It seems to be undisputable that a form of Islamic Religious Education adapted to the particular conditions in Germany is needed at present, and that the handing down of traditional ideas of education and teaching alone will not be of great help in this process. At the same time, this future Islamic Religious Education must, on the one hand, be able to inform about Islamic sources, the traditional literature of Islamic Religious Education and the life of Islamic parishes in Germany as well as in the countries of origin. On the other hand, it must also get involved with the findings of modern educational theory, of developmental psychology and particularly with the insights of the specialized Christian didactics. In this realm, Muslim religious educators can learn a lot from their Christian and in particular their Jewish colleagues and their experiences – without trying to copy them and although differences will always remain due to elementary disagreements regarding faith and practice! Interaction with Christians and in particular Jews and the theological positioning towards their religious beliefs must finally not lead to leveling egalitarianism, but dialogical religious education must instead get involved with the other one's truth, try to understand it – even if one will never completely succeed – and try to be empathetic. Against this background, the interreligious approach is of utmost importance and obliges Muslims to a fundamental openness in the interaction with their two monotheistic sister religions. In this way, religious education can also reduce prejudices which people belonging to differing religious denominations have against each other and make a contribution to comprehension and tolerance. The migration history of the majority of Muslims in Germany means that the further pursuit of this approach developed by Christian religious teachers during the last decades and filling it with content must be regarded as an issue of utmost urgency.

The purpose of religious education should be to prompt young people to critically reflect on the knowledge learned in school lessons and earlier or simultaneously in mosques; it should also instruct them to organize this knowledge and to place it into a hierarchical order. The basis of a state-run religious education should thus not be the simple implementation of religious traditions but the analytic examination as part of a reflective discourse. At the same time, the contents of religious classes cannot be reduced to the transmission of knowledge, as learning and teaching are no ends in themselves. The attempt to *completely* banish the recitation of the Koran, the memorizing of short *sūras* and the practicing of exemplary postures for prayer from classes by making reference to the ideals of Enlightenment is not really elaborate, this attitude rather proves a lack of empathy for Muslims' religious life. Spiritual learning is made possible by these references, moreover, they acti-

al-Mawṣil, 1404 Vol. 8 pp. 102. al-Munāwī, Fayḍ al-qadīr, Beirut 1996, Vol. 1 pp. 185. Abū Ḥanīfa (Ed.), *Musnad*, Safwat as-Saqqā', Egypt 1337 pp. 225-226, no. 504.

²¹⁰ Ibn Abī Šayba, *Muṣannaḥ*, Nr.183; *ibid.* Nr. 1907. Ed. Muḥammad al-'Awwāma (Ed.) 26 Volumes. Beirut 1427/2006.

vate a complementary feedback to pre-existing knowledge and demonstrate a recognition of Islamic educational traditions.²¹¹ Nonetheless, the „stupid drill“²¹² which is frequently still practiced in other school subjects must not become the maxim of Islamic Religious Education classes. Religious education classes in particular must thus make efforts to activate or keep sharp the religious spirit of pupils and to establish a special teacher-pupil relationship. Teachers who do not share this experience of faith and do not have a close relationship to their pupils will experience a credibility problem in denominational religious education classes. The missing religious authorization will not help to reach one's goal in this context. Children and adolescents intuitively sense who really and truly is in agreement with the contents of what he or she is teaching and who is not. As far as neutral, distant religious studies classes are concerned, the line up is quite different. As denominational religious education is about more than merely transmitting knowledge, teachers cannot limit themselves to filling pupils' memories or to enriching their minds. The theory that religious education should limit itself to the transmission of knowledge and should avoid all references to action and faith may appear modern at first sight but it is inconsistent with the integral approach, the expectations of parents and pupils and the legal situation of religious education in Germany. „The basic intention of the (Islamic) curricula is, among other things, to provide an introduction to Islam which stresses the characteristics of schools as places of education in Germany, i.e. aims at reasonable learning instead of a naïve-unbroken participation in the religious life of the community ...“²¹³ It is to be doubted whether the artificial discrepancy constructed here by the author between references to faith and action, on the one hand, and the critical reflection over the contents of religious classes, on the other hand, is in reality a source of problems. The aptitude of independent thinking, acting and judging does not exclude the description and teaching of contradictory claims about the truth. Thus, a type of „Islamic education under the sign of reflected learning“ which takes place on the basis of texts whose meanings are perceived as being self-evident does in no way contradict these assumptions. In fact, both components coexist in the reality of school life, something which is meaningful in an educational sense. Self-contextualization, formation and protection of identity, interreligious competencies and inner-Islamic communication act as complementary principles.²¹⁴ The transparency of contents in religious education classes and the comprehensibility of their argumentations make it much easier to determine learning objectives and to verify them by means of preset criteria. Against this background, teachers must make an offer to children and young persons which enables them to open themselves to the spirit of faith and to free them from any external pressure in this regard. Religious education has to initiate a process of educating pupils in a way that enables them to finally „grasp“ their faith and be suffi-

²¹¹ Rauf Ceylan, *Islamische Religionspädagogik in Moscheen und Schulen*, Hamburg 2008 pp.106-109. Rabeya Müller, *Gedanken zur religiösen Unterweisung in den Moscheen*, in: Wolf Dietrich Bukow-Erol Yildiz, *Islam und Bildung*, Opladen 2003 pp. 164-168, p. 165.

²¹² Hans Günter Heimbrock, *Jenseits der Koranschulen – Auf dem Wege zur Islamischen Erziehung im westlichen Kontext*, in: *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie* 59 (2007) pp. 170-179, p. 171.

²¹³ Hans Günter Heimbrock, *Jenseits der Koranschulen*, l.c. pp. 170, see an excellent indirect self-criticism ibid. pp. 176. Similarly Dietrich Zilleßen, *Religion, Bildung, Politik. Positionen in der multireligiösen Zivilgesellschaft*, in: Wolf Dietrich Bukow-Erol Yildiz, *Islam und Bildung*, Opladen 2003 pp. 168-171.

²¹⁴ Folkert Rickers, *Islam - eine religionspädagogische Herausforderung*, l.c. pp. 54.

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ciently confident in their own views that they will not waver from them, regardless of the views and opinions of any external authority. If they do not wish to open themselves to the spirit of faith, their decision has to be likewise respected – *lā ikrāha fī d-dīn*.²¹⁵ This criticism of authority will orient Islamic Religious Education towards an attitude that is critical of ideology and will teach pupils to challenge established structures, so that the latter must legitimize themselves every now and then.

It is up to the pupils to decide whether they wish to accept this religious proposal or not. For this reason, teachers must strictly avoid overpowering pupils with their own views, they must take a stand on the hermeneutics of discourse and must not urge pupils to take up religious beliefs against their own or their parents' will, as in doing so, they would finally stimulate both dual standards of morality and hypocrisy. Negative attributions and insinuations have to be strictly avoided in this context. It is true that the dimension of faith is the hidden target of denominational religious education, but in most cases it may be assumed that faith is already present in Muslim pupils – even if the pupils themselves are unaware that it is present. This is due to the fact that religious convictions have been passed down over generations and thus have to be activated, questioned and deepened in the context of religious education in schools. Learning and teaching are highly individual processes both in religious and other matters, and these processes are neither enforceable nor can they be stipulated „per order de mufti“. This has already been made clear by the role model provided by the greatest of all teachers from the Islamic point of view: „And if thy Lord had pleased, He would have made people a single nation. And they cease not to differ.“²¹⁶ This is why teachers have to constantly adjust their language to the given class structure, negotiate contents and principles with the pupils, provide credible justifications, connect new approaches to existing knowledge, activate pupils' previous knowledge and look out for new connections. Thus, the selection of topics and the organization of contents in religious education classes must be suitable for children and account for the stages of development in which children find themselves. However, Heimbrock correctly highlights the necessity of not only consulting religious texts but also dealing with the specific realities of life in order to develop a modern form of Islamic Religious Education. These include dealing with pupils, parents and the expectations of mosque parishes and religious authorities.

Empirical research should thus on the one hand be carried out to determine the expectations and ideas which the aforementioned people and groupings have of everyday life at school, teachers, class contents, methods and styles of lessons.²¹⁷ On the other hand, Islamic Religious Education should have an evident bearing on life and be holistic. The principles of modern religious education of correlation and elementarization²¹⁸ as well as the *uṣūl*-literature of *asbāb an-nuzūl*, *tadrīḡ* and of the abrogation (*nash*)²¹⁹ provide us with

²¹⁵ „There is no compulsion in religion.“ Koran 2/256.

²¹⁶ Koran 11/118. Compare also 6/35, 12/103 und 42/8.

²¹⁷ Hans Günter Heimbrock, *Jenseits der Koranschulen*, I.c. pp. 176-178.

²¹⁸ See Hilger/Leimgruber/Ziebertz, *Religionsdidaktik*, 5th edition, 2008.

²¹⁹ See for example: al-Baihaqī, *as-Sunan al-kubrā*, M. 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā (Ed.), Mecca 1994 Vol. 10 pp. 146./ Ibn Qayyim al-Ġauzīya, *Qiyās*, 2.ed., Beirut 1975 Dār al-āfaq pp. 151-152. 'Izz ad-Dīn b. 'Abd as-Salām, *Qawā'id al-ahkām fī mašāliḡ al-anām*, Beirut 1990 pp. 51. Yūsuf al-Qaraḡawī, *Sarī'at al-islām*

sufficient guidelines and circumstantial evidence in this respect. Islamic Religious Education classes must teach pupils not only to react to contemporary challenges in an age that uses violence as a means of religious self-affirmation but also has to consciously play a peacemaking role and participate in the humane and fair organization of society.²²⁰ This is because religion can help people in their everyday life, give them orientation, create a sense of values and prevent delinquency.²²¹

What is needed is an open, cooperative, conversational and action-oriented Islamic Religious Education. It must be holistic and address intellectual sensors as well as emotional and spiritual capacities. The acquisition of skills and abilities, of competences and knowledge cannot be the only aim of religious education. As we have already stressed several times, it must additionally include faith dimensions and the search for a deeper meaning. At the same time, religious education must not practice denominational isolation but must instead seek to open religions to other human beings while keeping its own identity. The exponents of the majority society expect Islamic Religious Education to prevent religious extremism, to create transparency, to bring about integration, a feeling of being at home and identification with country and school, and finally they expect it to help a larger proportion of Muslims to become fluent in the country's language. All these requests are legitimate, but in my opinion it is rather doubtful whether they can be realized by a subject matter which is taught only two hours a week and, on top of this, is still in its infancy. In any case, the first reactions from the German regions are all point-blank positive in this field, too. Problems and concepts in religious education have to be developed on the basis of Islamic primary sources, educational traditions, religious socialization processes and empirical research in education in such a way that they are scientifically understandable, appropriate to the target group and well thought through. At the same time, lessons must be neither exclusively adaptive nor solely questioning. What is in fact needed, is a complementary basic orientation which reacts adequately to the complex nature of the topic. The consideration of the secular and multi-religious society will be of the same importance as the issue of Muslims' complex configuration in Germany; particularly their relations to their countries of origin must not be covered or hidden by a misconceived, one-sided kind of integration.

What most Muslims, however, expect from an Islamic Religious Education is the teaching of basic knowledge and practices of their religion, the recitation of the Koran, the memorization of elementary sūras and an introduction to the ethical core statements of Islam.

A balance between these different expectations is definitely possible. These different points of view are not diametrically opposed quantities but have common intersections and can therefore be reconciled with each other. In addition to providing elementary basic knowledge, the introduction to faith and the education to religious values, Islamic Religious Education has to face the question of why taxpayers' money should be spent on it. The questions of identification, integration, language improvement, transparency and so on

ṣāliḥa li t-taṭbīq fī kullī zamān wa makān, Cairo 1393, Dār a ṣ-Ṣahwa. pp. 179. See also Wael Hallaq, A History of Islamic Legal Theories. *An introduction to Sunni usul al-fiqh*, Cambridge 1999 pp. 69-72.

²²⁰ Folkert Rickers, *Islam - eine religionspädagogische Herausforderung*, I.c. pp. 54.

²²¹ cp. Hans-Joachim Roth, *Religiöse Orientierungen von Jugendlichen*, in: Wolf Dietrich Bukow-Erol Yildiz, *Islam und Bildung*, I.c. pp. 138-139.

Principles of an Islamic Religious Education

are of utmost importance for its social acceptance. Islamic Religious Education is still nascent and in the development stage in the German speaking world. Thus, many things will be „learning by doing“ for us. What we need is a careful basic research in all fields, particularly in that of empirical education research. The reflection on factors which leave their mark on religious life, the opening up of religious experiences in everyday life, the planning of learning processes, the selection of didactical criteria in order to choose contents, the age-based evaluation of teaching material for different kinds of schools etc. – these provide only a few examples from the upcoming field of activity. In this context, it is critically important to firstly determine the criteria for the settling of the essential contents in religious education classes and to secondly ask for core and fringes, for permanence and change. The educational and/or theological reasons for the core contents of an Islamic Religious Education are as interesting as the problem of objectives and their justification. Potential tensions and discrepancies between different aims must be resolved constructively and reflexively inside the realms of the German Basic Law. In this context, educational, religious and political aims have to be organized in a mutually balancing way. Various factors will thus be of prime importance for the establishment of a modern Islamic Religious Education, which will finally result in a partnership at eye level. Among these factors is the question of selecting criteria which are acceptable to politics, the legal system and the majority society and which live up to the demands of Muslim parents and association representatives. Another factor are the concrete developments in class and the expectations of pupils themselves. As a matter of course, opinions derived from primary Islamic sources as well as the findings of modern educational science have to be integrated into these considerations.