

THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN EDUCATION

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I. Religious instruction organised during the school hours (in lower and in secondary education) in state funded schools

I.1 Question: Religious instruction organised during the school hours (in lower and in secondary education) in state funded schools. Is – and if affirmative please refer to the provisions in the law (add the text separately) – the teaching of religion in your country organised during school time in public educational institutions: in primary education, in secondary education.

I.2 Question: What choices amongst the religious education possibilities are offered in public educational institutions, e.g. catholic religion, Islamic teaching,

Answer: In the Netherlands we have two types of state funded schools, that is, public schools and special (denominational) schools. Special (denominational) schools are founded to meet the needs of parents who want their children to be raised in an environment that has the same religious or philosophical background as the one at home. We have Catholic schools, Protestant Schools, Evangelic schools, Jewish schools, Hindu Schools and Islamic Schools. These schools organize their religious instruction during school hours, both in Primary and Secondary Education. As for public schools goes, that they are accessible for children (and teachers) from all types of backgrounds. These schools are not based on any religion or philosophy. Juridically parents that send their children to public school have the right, however, to claim religious education for their children during school hours, based on their own religious background. That is why a number of public schools make use of the services provided by external organisations like IKOS, SPIOR, SOL, Arcade Cylon etc. to provide some kind of religious education based on the religious background of the children, or to teach the children some general knowledge about all religions in their environment to create some kind of mutual understanding and respect.

Since 2005 a new law was introduced that obliges all schools to structurally integrate the subject “Active citizenship and social integration” in the school system, in order to create mutual understanding and respect between groups of different cultural and religious backgrounds.

II. State funded denominational schools and state supervision

II.1. Question: Are there state funded denominational schools in your country? If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of state funded schools. If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of Islamic state funded schools. Please refer to statistical information on-line

II.2. Question: Are there non-state funded denominational schools in your country (private)? If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of private schools. If affirmative, what is the numeric importance of Islamic private schools. Please refer to statistical information on-line

II.3. Question: How do the authorities control the teaching in state funded denominational schools and are there any special questions about the control of the content of teaching in state-funded denominational schools? Please refer to the provisions in the law.

Answer: Yes, actually all denominational schools in Holland are state funded. In the year 2008-2009 25% of all children were attending public schools, 25% Catholic schools, 22% Protestant Christian schools and 8% schools of other denominations, like Jewish, Islamic and Hindu schools. There are now 44 Islamic schools in the Netherlands, of which 39 are member of ISBO (Islamic School Board Organisation).

The only recognized islam teaching method in the Netherlands is developed by SLO in cooperation with ISBO, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW). SLO is the Netherlands institute for curriculum development. All schools are considered to work with this method (they have all been given several copy’s when the method was introduced), although teachers are free to add their own material to it to make it more attractive or interactive, certainly with the introduction of new tools like smart boards etc. School inspection will ask for the methods the school is using in teaching the children about islam.

III. Refusal or limitations on the number of pupils of another conviction/belief by the governing board of a confessional (Catholic) school

III.1. Question: Does the head of a state funded denominational (e.g. Catholic) school has the right to refuse pupils from other religious beliefs? Please refer to the provisions in the law.

III.2. Question: Does the head of a state funded denominational (e.g. Catholic) school the authority to limit the number of pupils from other religious beliefs (e.g. Muslim pupils) in order to support the specificity of the project?

Answer: Yes, denominational schools have the right to refuse pupils or teachers from other beliefs. They can also limit the number of pupils from other religions.

IV. Point of views of the authorities concerning the teaching of Islam in denominational (Catholic) education, Islam instruction or instruction on other convictions/beliefs in denominational (Catholic) schools for (a number of pupils requesting it) and alternative ethical course

IV.1. Question. Is there a legal obligation to organise, if parents ask for, classes of Islamic religion in denominational (Catholic) education funded by public authorities? a. for any pupil for whom a request has been made? b. from a minimum number of pupils for whom a request has been made? Yes

IV.2. Question. Does the same obligation exist for the offer of (a) other religions and/or philosophical convictions, (b) an alternative class of conception of life, philosophy, ethics. There is an obligation to make the children acquainted with people of other religious or cultural backgrounds in order to create mutual understanding and respect. This subject is called “active citizenship and social integration”.

IV.3. Question. Can you shortly mention the pro and contra standpoints that have been expressed concerning the respect of fundamental rights (among others, freedom of education and right to education) in relation with this obligation? Some party’s want to abolish denominational schools in order to force people of different cultures to integrate and live together with mutual respect, regardless of their own cultural or religious backgrounds. People who send their children to these denominational schools, however, adhere to their needs of a religious climate in the schools that is compatible with their home situation.

IV.4. Question. Reference to the legal basis, with Website address, and also if possible to the parliamentary preparation of texts.

Answer:

<http://downloads.alleato.nl/public/Document/181/file/rapport%20scholen%20voor%20actief%20burgerschap%20slo.pdf> (Dutch)

<http://www.slo.nl/downloads/documenten/Citizenship-and-social-integration.pdf/> (English)

V. Teaching of Islam in denominational (e.g. Catholic) schools at their own initiative

V.1. Question: Is there in your country a general guideline for teaching of Islam in denominational (e.g. Catholic) schools at their own initiative defined by (a) the Bishops’ Conference, (b) another body, namely. . . Not that I know of.

V.2. Question: If affirmative, does the guideline implies that (a) the teaching of other religions is organised when: one parent asks for, or a sufficient number of parents ask for (how many?), (b) only teaching of Islam is offered as alternative religion when one parent asks for or a sufficient number of parents ask for (how many?)

V.3. Question: There is no guideline and: (a) in fact, teaching of Islam is never proposed in Catholic schools, or (b) the teaching of Islam is organised in some schools, which have taken themselves the initiative. If possible, explain the importance of this option

Answer:

VI. Religious symbols in public schools

VI.1. Question: Are religious symbols (e.g. crucifix) in public schools compulsory, allowed, or forbidden?

VI.2. Question: Is a teacher allowed to wear the Islamic headscarf and manifest her religion? Please explain if not allowed on which grounds.

VI.3. Question: Is a pupil allowed to wear the Islamic headscarf and manifest her religion? Please explain if not allowed on which grounds.

VI.4. Question: Who decides on the dress code in schools. Please refer to the law.

VI.5. Question: Can a pupil and/or a teacher be exempted from the dress code when she considers it her religious duty to wear the Islamic headscarf?

VI.6. Question: Who is the regulatory authority in this sphere?

VI.7. Question: What kind of disciplinary measures and proceedings are taken if the pupil or teacher fails to comply with the rules on dress codes?

VI.8. Question: Please describe the case-law in your country.

Answer: In the Netherlands public schools are not allowed to refuse religious symbols, dress code or headscarfs in school, since the schools are supposed to be open for everybody.

VII. After-school education in private religious institutions. Islamic instruction organised after the school hours (age 6-18)

VII.1. Question: Is there any form of Islamic teaching (for children and youngsters of age 6-18) in your country organised after school time in private religious institutions: yes

VII.2. Question: Is there any form of Islamic teaching in your country organised in primary education age (6-12) yes, in mosques etc.

VII.3. Question: Is there any form of Islamic teaching in your country organised in secondary education age (12-18) yes, in mosques etc.

VII.4. Question: How many such institutions are there in your country providing Islamic instruction organised after the school hours? Most of them are not officially registered

VII.5. Question: How many children take part in the activities of Islamic instruction organised after the school hours? ?

VII.6. Question: How is the pedagogical quality of Islamic instruction organised after the school hours safeguarded? Not

VII.7. Question: How would you characterize the public debate about this form of Islamic instruction organised after the school hours?

Answer:

VIII. Additional comments

XI. Bibliography