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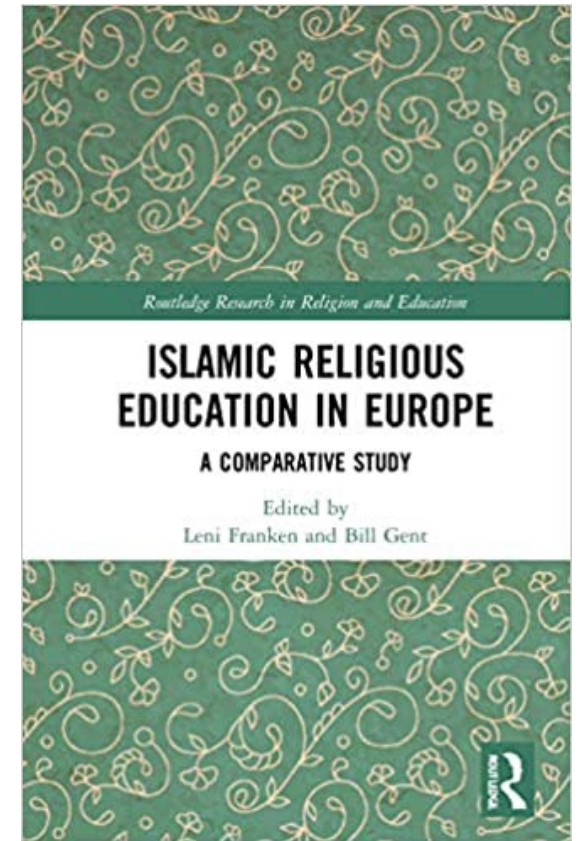


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# Islamic RE in Europe

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A few words before...

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# Introduction

- **Increasing attention for *Islamic* RE in Europe**
  - **Increasing number of Muslim students**
    - IRE in state schools (e.g. Belgium, Austria)
    - Education about Islam in state schools (e.g. Sweden, Norway)
    - IRE in Islamic schools (e.g. the Netherlands, France)
    - RE in confessional (Christian) schools (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany)
  - **Radicalization → politicization, securitization**
    - What does the *state / society* expect from (I)RE
    - What do Muslim communities expect from (I)RE?
    - Separation + cooperation church and state
- **Increasing attention for RE in Europe**
  - **Comparative perspective on (I)RE**

Oddrun M. H. Bråten

## Towards a Methodology for Comparative Studies in Religious Education

A Study of England and Norway

WAXMANN

# Why is comparative RE important?

- Norway is not an isolated Island...
- Comparative studies of England and Norway
- Important factors *explaining* developments in 1 country:
  - The traditional relationship between state and religion
  - The nature of the educational systems
- Comparative perspectives:
  - illuminates “blind spots” of taken- for-granted-ness in national contexts
  - Makes visible what characterizes developments in one country

# Why is comparative RE important?

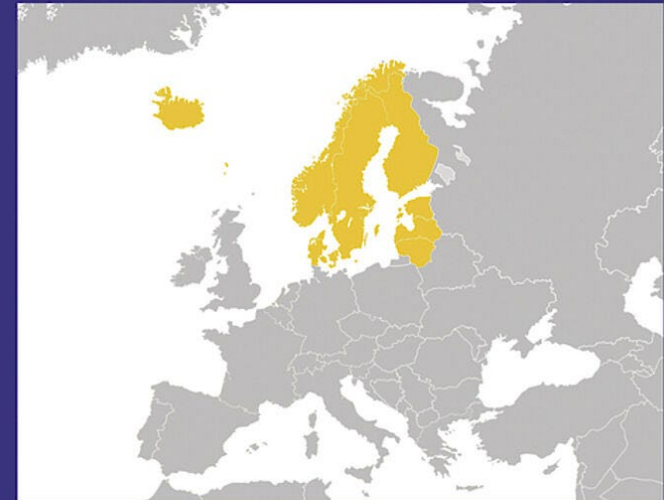
- Expanding the view: this series includes chapters on all European countries
- A pattern of “same but different” came to the fore
- Particular state/ religion/ education history determinant for possibilities to address “new” issues of plurality?
- New social patterns, old structures? How the countries of Western Europe deal with plurality in Education.

Martin Rothgangel / Geir Skeie / Martin Jäggle (eds.)

## Religious Education at Schools in Europe

Part 3: Northern Europe

Vienna University Press





# Religion & Education

Special Issue: The role of Space and Time: Comparative Methodologies for exploring how Religion in different contexts has impacted (religious-) education systems.  
Guest Editors: Oddrun M.H. Braten and Jonathan Doney

Volume 48, Number 4  
October-December 2021

Routledge

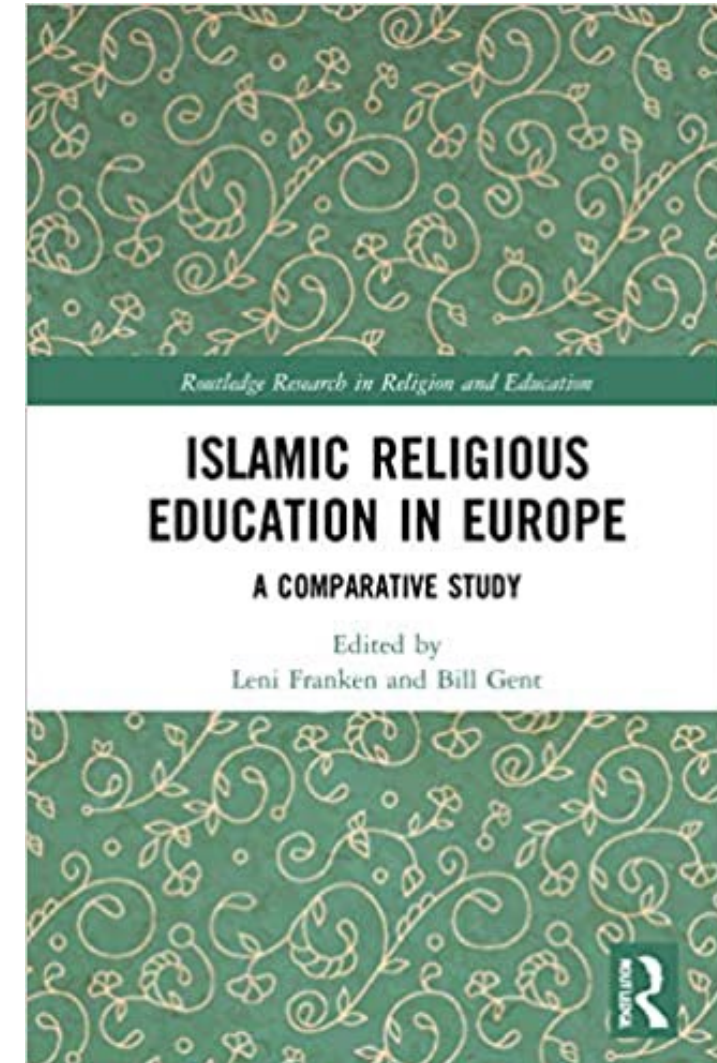
RQ: How has religion in different contexts, including in history, impacted (religious) educational systems?

- Hypothesis: *that new societal patterns are not sufficiently met in in educational systems, which rather reflects traditional religious landscapes.*
- Franken, L. Church, State and RE in Europe: past, Present Future
- Niemi, K. Comparing Through Contrasts: Reshaping Incongruence into a Mirror.
- Hendek, A. (book review) Islamic Religious Education in Europe: A comparative Study.



# Example or main point?

- Comparing Islamic RE, was a good choice of focus
- Through this general points are enlightened, and specific points reg. Islam is getting much needed attention.
- **“The state of RE determines the fate of IRE in a country”** (Hendek, 2021)
- In my short chapter I compared, in brief, IRE in Cyprus, Netherlands and Denmark – illustrating quite clearly how the national contexts determines what kind of IRE there is.
- If Christian RE is confessional RE, IRE (and other kinds) is confessional.
- If the history is of strict separation of state and religion, there is no RE, thus no IRE in state schools (France).
- And it seems it was in areas of protestant state churches that inclusive RE developed, and where we now find IRE as part of inclusive subjects.





# Why is comparison of IRE important?

- Educational policy is often about everything but religion?
  - there seems to be a blind spot reg. how religion effects **education** (and not just RE).
- Focusing on RE only, is not sufficient, if our goal is to improve education about, from and into religion/ Islam in Europe.
  - because of the entangled history of State, Christianity and Education.
- Constitutions needs to be changed, or, as L. Franken (2021) suggest, ... omitted through creative new interpretations of legislation!
- A point may be that: ***more of Europe history of different religions needs to be written into, and negotiated vis a vis, the story of the nations and it's alleged "deep history".***
- In effect **neither Islam nor the often-privileged Christian religion(s) are taught as living, negotiated, present and global religions**, which students in today's plural, globalised media reality meet
  - and thus, need to have the means to understand.
- We see that, if we look across and compare.





# High on the political agande, low on the educational agenda?

- A problem: that religion in education is often high on the political agenda but low on the educational agenda
  - as chapters in this book also illustrates.
  - Few hours in the curriculum, often shrinking, and low on the agenda in teacher education:
  - **is not a recipe for good practical teaching.**
- This book maping IRE in Europe, reveals issues relevant across borders:
  - making it visible what are **country spesific challenges**, and what are **pan-Euopena challenges**.

# IRE in Europe: typology and organization

# Introduction

- **Diverse (I)RE models in Europe**

- *IRE in state schools* (e.g. Belgium, Austria)
- *Education about Islam in state schools* (e.g. Sweden, Norway)
- *IRE in Islamic schools* (e.g. the Netherlands, France)
- *Education about Islam Christian schools* (e.g. Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany)

# IRE in Europe: challenges

# IRE in Europe: Challenges

- **Curricula and textbooks:**

- Foreign influence (e.g. *Diyanet*); Sunni-oriented; Essentialism; 'other' worldviews?

- **Critical stance and reflexivity?**

- Hermeneutical-critical stance?

- **Teacher training**

- Insufficient → increasing number of programmes, but rather new
- Role of the state?

- **Institutional embeddedness**

- Separation + co-operation Islamic communities and state (inspection; curriculum; ...)  
→ what kind of 'Islam'?

# Education about Islam in Europe: Challenges

- **Teacher training**
  - Academic embeddedness: religious studies
- **Curricula and textbooks**
  - Essentialism
  - Objective, critical and pluralistic vs. 'marinated in Lutheranism' / imbued with (Christian) prejudices
  - Stereotypes
- **Critical stance and reflexivity**
  - Awareness of one's own framework (including the religious studies' framework)

IRE in Europe: a 'post-secular' approach?



# Education about Islam in Europe: a post-secular approach?

- **Habermas**

- Semantic potential of religions
- Religion can be of value for liberal, democratic societies, but this presupposes a shift “*from the traditional to a more reflexive form of religious consciousness.*” (Habermas 2008, 38)

→ What does this mean for education into and about Islam?

# Education about Islam in Europe: a post-secular approach?

- **Education about Islam**

- A processual, pluralist conception of Islam
- Beyond essentialist hermeneutics
- Academic embeddedness and teacher training
- New textbooks and curricula
- Critical stance and reflexivity: “*the right to be intellectually and existentially challenged*” (cf. Biesta; Franck); out of the comfort zone

# Education about Islam in Europe: a post-secular approach?

- **Education into Islam**

- Institutional embeddedness:
  - *“inter-organisational reform processes within the Islamic religious community need to be promoted and some archaic legal and cultural hurdles in state administration need to be abolished.”* (Cf. Euchner & Hackner)
- Teacher training
  - New teacher training programs (e.g. Belgium, Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands)
- Curricula and textbooks
  - New textbooks (e.g. UK) and curricula (e.g. Finland [?])
  - Academic input (Islamic studies/theology *and* RS); different pedagogical approaches (cf. France, the Netherlands)
- Critical, reflective study of Islam
  - A. Sahin (2021, 281): *“The first task of Islamic Education is to facilitate a critical, reflective study of Islam and an intelligent faith development.”*
  - Hermeneutical-critical approach?
  - Literal interpretations?



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