



Islamic Education in Secular Europe: Governance, Mediation and Pluralism

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Abstract

This article explores the negotiation of Islamic education within secular schooling systems in Europe, focusing on governance challenges, teacher mediation, and pluralistic approaches to identity and tolerance. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), the study synthesizes research conducted in the Netherlands, Finland, Germany, and the United Kingdom to examine how Islamic educational values are accommodated in public frameworks. The findings reveal persistent obstacles, including unequal access to religious education, tensions between religious commitments and secular expectations, and policy asymmetries across national contexts. Teachers are identified as pivotal actors who mediate between Islamic traditions and dominant secular norms, supporting Muslim students' identity formation while facilitating their social adaptation in plural societies. Furthermore, pluralistic pedagogical orientations are shown to enhance mutual recognition and cultivate students' capacity to engage constructively with cultural and religious diversity. By highlighting these dynamics, the study contributes policy-relevant insights for designing inclusive educational arrangements that balance religious identity with secular governance, thereby strengthening tolerance and cohesion in Europe's multicultural environment.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Europe has attracted growing scholarly attention alongside the expansion of Muslim communities and their increasing social visibility across the continent. This development has positioned Islamic education as an important subject within contemporary educational discourse, particularly in multicultural and multireligious societies (Chen, 2025; Gusti, 2021; Kurdi, 2023). As Muslim populations continue to grow, the demand for educational provision that accommodates both religious values and the diverse identities of learners has become increasingly evident (Chen, 2022; Kurdi, 2023). Nevertheless, integrating Islamic educational values into predominantly secular education systems remains a complex undertaking, shaped by challenges related to curriculum design, state regulation, and evolving social dynamics (Tanjung et al., 2022).

These developments suggest that Islamic education should not be viewed solely as a means of transmitting religious knowledge, but also as an integral component of educational policy that must respond to ongoing social change. At the same time, educational policies in many contexts continue to treat religion

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primarily as a private matter, thereby limiting the space for the expression of religious values within formal education (Ghani et al., 2023; Gusti, 2021; Kawakip et al., 2023). Consequently, the recognition of Islamic education within formal school curricula remains uneven, with considerable variation across regions and types of educational institutions (Berger, 2021; Kurdi, 2023). Therefore, strengthening more inclusive educational policies that proportionately accommodate the needs of Muslim communities is a fundamental prerequisite for improving the quality of Islamic education in increasingly diverse societies (Gusti, 2021; Kurdi, 2023).

Against this background, the present study addresses the practical and conceptual problems faced by Islamic education in European contexts, particularly regarding how Islamic education can support the development of Muslim students' religious and social identities within plural societies. At the same time, it examines how teachers navigate the interface between Islamic religious traditions and the dominant secular values embedded in schooling institutions, classroom routines, and public expectations. Islamic education thus functions not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge and ethical commitments to the next generation, but also as an educational space in which Muslim students negotiate belonging, recognition, and participation in a multicultural environment. In increasingly diverse classrooms, students require learning spaces that enable them to understand and articulate their identities as Muslims while also engaging constructively with prevailing social norms and civic frameworks. Therefore, this study seeks to clarify how the integration of Islamic educational values may contribute to identity formation and social integration, and how teachers can manage Islamic education in ways that remain sensitive to Europe's socio-cultural conditions.

More specifically, this study explores three central issues. First, it investigates how the integration of Islamic educational values in Europe's secular education systems can contribute to the development of Muslim students' religious and social identities. Second, it examines the main challenges teachers face when managing Islamic education in secular contexts, including how they interpret and negotiate differences between Islamic religious traditions and secular educational values in policy and practice. Third, it analyzes how pluralistic approaches to Islamic education may strengthen understanding and tolerance of religious and cultural diversity among Muslim and non-Muslim students, particularly in classroom interactions and school-community relations.

This research is connected to previous literature reviews that identify recurring challenges in Islamic education across Europe. For example, Berger, (2021) shows that Islamic higher education in Europe faces substantial tensions related to differing approaches between traditional Islamic theology and the more secular academic study of religion. These tensions signal a broader gap in educational development, namely the need to balance normative religious commitments with open, critical, and academically informed inquiry. Similarly, Aslan, (2019) emphasizes the importance of pluralistic Islamic education in Europe, which not only teaches Islamic values but also equips students to understand and appreciate the religious differences present in their social surroundings. Taken together, these studies underscore the need for Islamic education models that can bridge cultural and religious differences while supporting tolerance and social integration in European society.

Although a number of studies have mapped these challenges, further research remains necessary, particularly on how inclusive curriculum arrangements are implemented in everyday educational practice. Many European countries still lack formal curricula that integrate Islamic education coherently within general education

systems, and where such provisions exist, they may vary across regions, school sectors, and governance structures. Moreover, existing studies have not sufficiently examined the pedagogical work of Islamic education teachers in responding to multicultural classroom dynamics and to broader processes of social integration. Accordingly, this research investigates how teachers can create safe and meaningful learning spaces in which Muslim students develop their identities without being isolated from, or positioned against, the diversity that characterizes contemporary European societies.

In this way, the study builds on prior research on the integration of Islamic values in European education while offering an original contribution through its emphasis on teachers as mediators between religious tradition and secular schooling. In addition, it elaborates the concept of pluralism in Islamic education in a manner that has not been comprehensively addressed in the existing literature, by linking pluralistic principles to policy contexts, classroom pedagogy, and identity-related outcomes. Ultimately, this research is expected to deepen understanding of how Islamic education can be integrated more effectively into secular education systems, and how such integration can support character development and social identity formation among Muslim students within plural and multicultural environments.

Although previous studies have examined various aspects of Islamic education in Europe, most have focused on specific national contexts, policy arrangements, teacher experiences, or pluralistic education as separate issues. Existing reviews have not sufficiently explained how educational governance, teacher mediation, and pluralistic approaches interact to shape the integration of Islamic education within secular education systems across different European contexts. Consequently, there remains a gap between the increasing policy efforts to accommodate Islamic education and the limited conceptual understanding of the interconnected mechanisms through which governance structures, pedagogical practices, and pluralistic orientations collectively influence Muslim students' identity formation and the promotion of tolerance in secular societies.

To address this gap, the present study offers a comprehensive synthesis of the literature by integrating three analytical dimensions: educational governance, teacher mediation, and pluralistic approaches within a single conceptual perspective. Unlike previous studies that primarily discuss these dimensions independently or within individual national settings, this review systematically examines their interrelationships across multiple European countries to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Islamic education is negotiated and implemented within secular educational systems. This integrated analytical perspective constitutes the principal novelty of the study.

Based on the identified research gap, the present study proposes an integrated analytical perspective and addresses the following research questions: How does the integration of Islamic educational values into secular education systems in Europe contribute to the religious and social identity formation of Muslim students? What governance and pedagogical challenges do teachers encounter in managing Islamic education within secular educational contexts, and how do they mediate the relationship between Islamic religious traditions and secular educational values? How do pluralistic approaches to Islamic education contribute to strengthening understanding and tolerance toward religious and cultural diversity among Muslim and non-Muslim students?

By answering these questions, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education scholarship by providing a more integrated conceptual

understanding of the relationship between governance, teacher mediation, and pluralistic pedagogy within secular educational settings. The findings are expected to inform educational policymakers, curriculum developers, and teacher education institutions in designing more inclusive, equitable, and context-sensitive models of Islamic education that support identity formation, strengthen intercultural understanding, and promote tolerance in increasingly diverse European societies.

METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the development of Islamic education in Europe, with a focus on three interrelated dimensions: the integration of Islamic educational values within secular education systems, the challenges encountered by teachers and institutions in organizing Islamic education, and the use of pluralistic educational approaches to strengthen tolerance and understanding of religious and cultural diversity (Bahri et al., 2026; Hidayatulloh et al., 2025; Sa’adati, 2026). The SLR approach is selected because it enables structured collection, synthesis, and critical analysis of relevant literature, thereby providing a comprehensive and evidence-based account of the topic. In this study, the SLR is conducted through systematic stages search, selection, screening, and thematic synthesis implemented with transparent procedures so that the review can be assessed and, where appropriate, replicated by other researchers.

Research Design

This research adopts a descriptive-analytical SLR design. The review begins by identifying studies on Islamic education in Europe through targeted searches using keywords such as "Islamic education Europe", "Islamic religious education Europe", "Islamic schools Europe", and other related terms that capture policy, curriculum, pedagogy, identity, and pluralism. All retrieved records are then screened through predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure conceptual relevance and minimum reporting quality. By using SLR, the study is able to map key theoretical and conceptual debates across different national contexts without restricting the analysis to a single country, institution, or educational level, while still maintaining a clear connection to the research questions guiding the review.

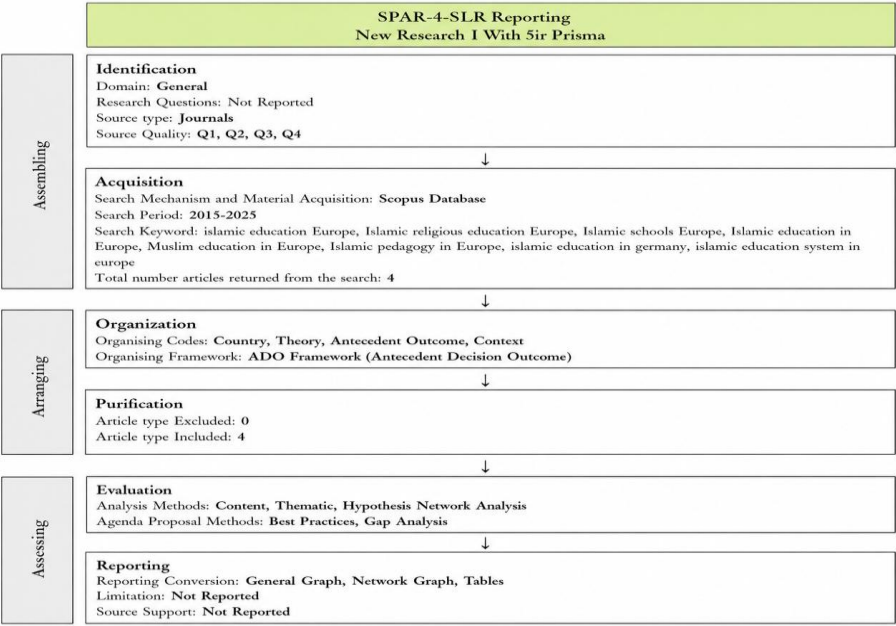


Fig 1. SPAR-4-SLR presents Identification, Acquisitioning, Arranging, Assessing and Reporting stages in SLR

Characteristics of Sample or Subject

The material reviewed in this study consists of published research outputs primarily peer-reviewed journal articles and other credible academic sources addressing Islamic education in European countries with differing educational governance and policy arrangements. Studies are considered eligible when they are substantively relevant to Islamic education in Europe, are published in indexed or otherwise reputable outlets, and provide sufficient information for review (including a complete abstract and accessible methodological description). Because the SLR focuses on published evidence rather than direct observation of particular individuals or student groups, the “subject” of analysis is the set of empirical and conceptual claims reported in the selected studies. The review covers publications from 2005 to 2025 in order to capture both foundational discussions and more recent developments in policy and practice in this field, as summarized in the following chart.

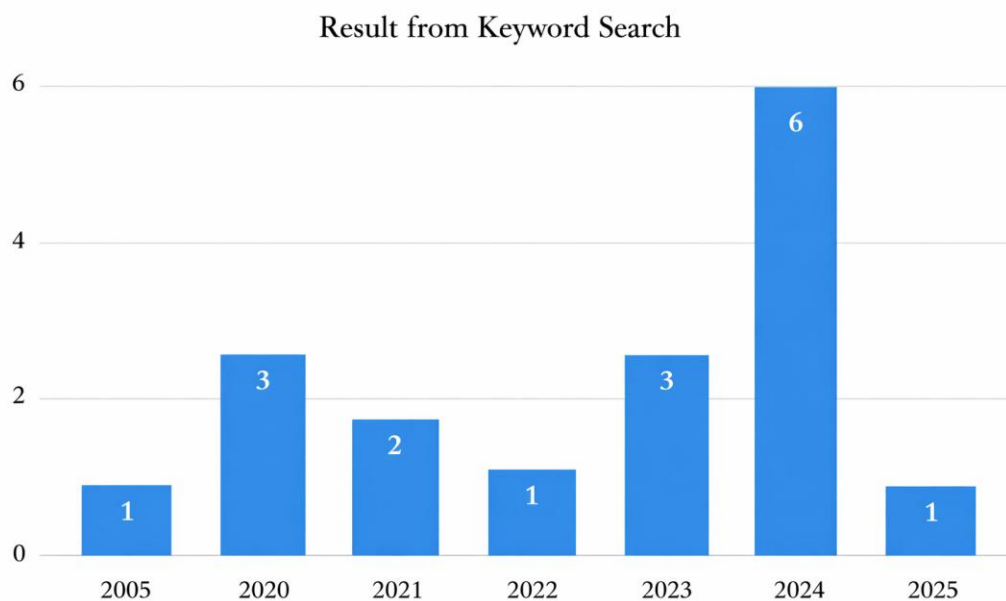


Fig 2. The chart displays keyword search results from 2005 to 2025

Instruments Used

The primary instruments for data collection in this review are academic databases specifically Scopus and Google Scholar supplemented by reference-management tools used to organize records, remove duplicates, and document screening decisions. Search strings are designed to retrieve literature directly connected to Islamic education in Europe, especially studies addressing the integration of Islamic religious values, teachers’ professional challenges, and pluralistic approaches in educational settings. For each record retained for analysis, key information is extracted and documented, including publication year, country/context, research design, analytic focus, main findings, and explicit relevance to the research questions. This extraction process supports consistent comparison across studies and provides an audit trail for how evidence is linked to the thematic synthesis.

Stages of Data Collection

Data collection starts with identifying potentially relevant studies through database searches and complementary sources. Using the keywords outlined above and applying a defined publication window, the initial search retrieved 17 records.

These records were then screened to remove items that did not meet the inclusion criteria, including studies without complete abstracts, duplicate records, and publications that were not substantively focused on Islamic education in Europe. After the first screening stage, 7 records were retained for closer assessment, and 4 were subsequently judged eligible for inclusion in the core review set. In addition to the main database search, supplementary searching was conducted to broaden contextual coverage and reduce the risk of missing relevant discussions; through this process, 21 additional records were identified from external sources. These supplementary records were reviewed for thematic relevance and were used to strengthen background mapping and interpretation where appropriate.

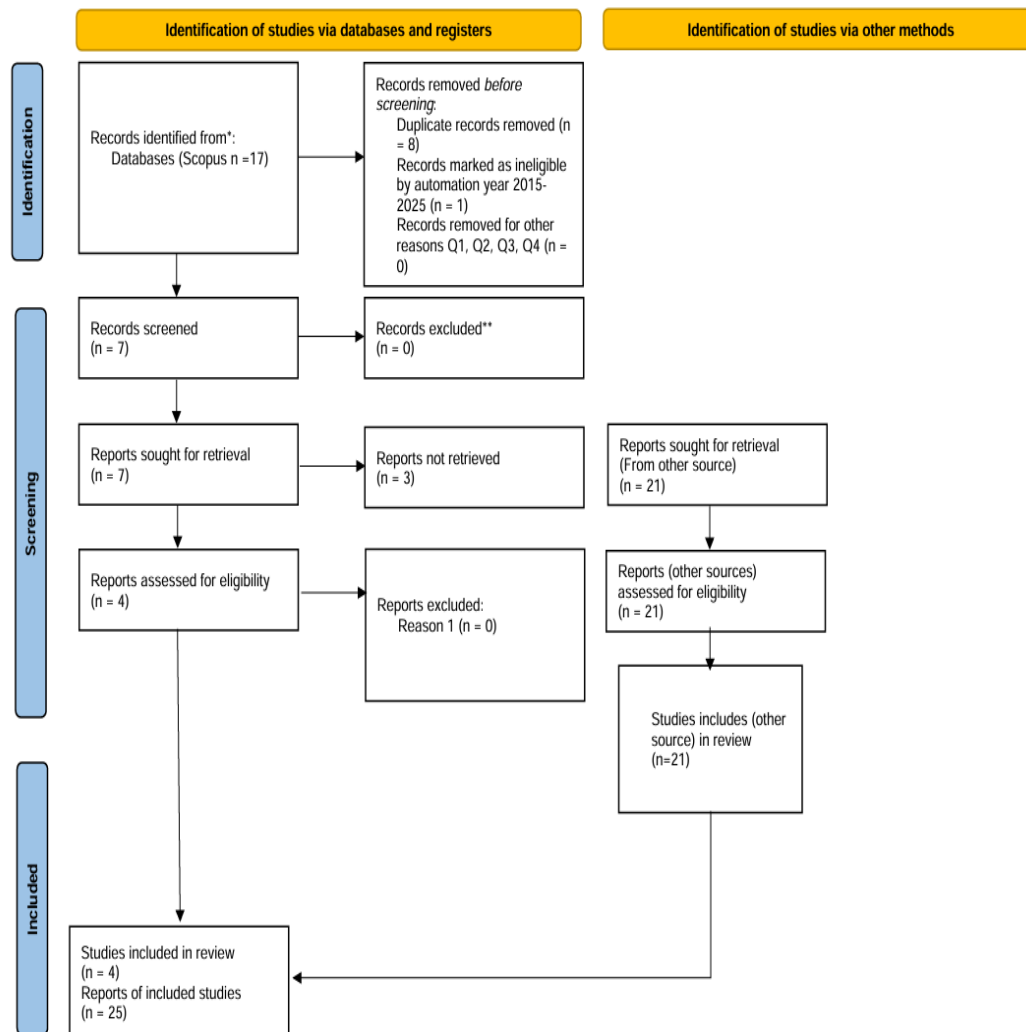


Fig 3. PRISMA Flow Diagram of SLR on Islamic Education in Europe

The selection procedure is conducted carefully to ensure that only studies meeting the stated criteria inform the synthesis. Such careful selection increases the validity and relevance of the evidence used to address the research questions, and it helps minimize bias arising from incomplete reporting or weak topical alignment. Accordingly, the sources considered include journal articles and research reports indexed in leading academic databases, as well as academically credible publications identified through supplementary searching, so that the review can describe the contemporary landscape of Islamic education in Europe in a well-supported manner.

Data Analysis Techniques

The study applies thematic analysis to the included literature. Each selected study is read systematically and coded to identify recurring themes related to the integration of Islamic education within secular systems, the challenges experienced by teachers and institutions, and the pedagogical implications of pluralistic approaches. The analysis begins with initial coding and categorization based on the study's focus, context, and reported findings. Subsequently, codes are consolidated into higher-order themes that provide an interpretive overview of how Islamic educational values in Europe are connected to Muslim students' religious and social identity development.

The thematic analysis is also used to identify gaps and underexplored areas in the literature, including limited discussion of how Islamic education teachers enact multicultural pedagogy in classrooms and insufficient empirical examination of pluralistic education practices in European contexts. Each theme is then explicitly linked back to the research objectives, which focus on identity development, teachers-related challenges, and the contribution of pluralistic approaches to building tolerance and understanding of diversity among students (Anidar et al., 2026; Aryasutha et al., 2025; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2026).

Finally, the analysis includes cross-context comparison of education policies across European countries and an assessment of how these policy environments shape the governance and everyday practice of Islamic education. The synthesized thematic evidence is used as a basis for drawing conclusions about promising strategies for integrating Islamic education within secular education systems, while also clarifying the challenges faced by teachers and students within those systems. Through this analytical procedure, the study not only summarizes existing findings but also formulates policy and practice-oriented implications that may inform more equitable and context-sensitive arrangements for Islamic education in European secular settings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the systematic literature review conducted in this study, the synthesis highlights three closely connected themes: the integration of Islamic education within Europe's predominantly secular schooling frameworks, the pedagogical and institutional challenges encountered by educators, and the relevance of pluralistic orientations in Islamic education for strengthening mutual understanding and tolerance in diverse societies. Overall, the reviewed studies suggest that, although several European countries have developed formal or semi-formal arrangements for Islamic religious education, implementation remains uneven and frequently shaped by national policy traditions, local governance structures, and public attitudes toward Islam. Consequently, Islamic education is often situated within a field of negotiation in which religious commitments, civic expectations, curriculum requirements, and multicultural classroom realities intersect.

To support transparent synthesis and enable systematic comparison across contexts, the table below summarizes key information extracted from the selected literature. The extraction focuses on each study's setting, analytical emphasis, theoretical foundations, methodological approach, central findings, and relevance to the present research questions. This mapping is intended to clarify how the literature collectively explains i) policy and provision gaps in Islamic education, ii) the mediating role of teachers, and iii) the conditions under which pluralistic approaches can contribute to social integration in plural societies.

Table 1. Extracted Data

No	Title	Author(s)	Year	Location/Context	Key Insights	Theoretical Foundations	Research Methods	Main Findings	Relevance
1	Islamic Religious Education in the Netherlands	Wasif A. Shadid & Pieter Sjoerd van Koningsveld	2006	The Netherlands	Identifies structural and policy challenges in integrating Islamic religious education across public and private schooling.	Educational freedom; social integration; religious pluralism.	Qualitative case-based analysis of schooling arrangements in the Netherlands.	Muslim participation in public provision is limited, and many families rely on Islamic private schools to meet religious educational needs.	Directly relevant for understanding provision gaps and institutional pathways through which Muslim communities seek access to Islamic education in Europe.
2	How Finnish Muslim Students Perceive and Deal with Religious and Cultural Difference	Inkeri Rissanen	2012	Finland	Examines how Muslim students negotiate Islamic values alongside Finnish liberal-cultural norms.	Tolerance and religious education; liberal and postmodern approaches.	Qualitative interviews and observations with Muslim students.	Students actively negotiate continuity and change, seeking to maintain religious identity while engaging with modern and civic expectations.	Relevant for explaining identity formation processes and the role of local cultural norms in shaping students' religious learning experiences.
3	Islamic Religious Education in	Albrecht Fuess	2007	Germany (and Western Europe)	Compares integration models of	Social integration; Islamic	Comparative policy analysis across European	Germany is frequently presented as a	Relevant for mapping policy models and demonstrating how

	Western Europe: Models of Integration and the German Approach				Islamic religious education, highlighting the German approach.	religious education; state–religion governance models.	settings.	key reference point for integration efforts, including institutional arrangements linked to training and accreditation in secular settings.	governance structures shape Islamic education integration.
4	Discourses in Islamic Educational Theory in the Light of Texts and Contexts	Fella Lahmar	2011	United Kingdom (England)	Shows how Islamic educational theory evolves through dialogue with Western educational thought and contextual demands.	Islamic education theory; Islamization of knowledge; dialogue across educational traditions.	Literature-based analysis, complemented by interviews with leaders/principals in Islamic schooling contexts in the UK.	Islamic education discourses adapt to changing community needs and broader social openness, emphasizing contextual negotiation.	Relevant for understanding the role of intellectual traditions and context in shaping Islamic education narratives within Europe.
5	Teaching Islamic Education in	Inkeri Rissanen	2012	Finland	Highlights the mediating role of	Multicultural education; curriculum	Case study: classroom observation and	Teachers balance religious	Highly relevant for teacher-facing challenges and for

	Finnish Schools: A Field of Negotiations				Islamic education teachers within Finnish schools.	theory; social integration.	semi-structured interviews with three Islamic education teachers.	commitments with civic and multicultural expectations, while managing diversity among students.	explaining how mediation occurs in daily classroom practice.
6	Shifting Paradigms in Islamic Higher Education in Europe: The Case Study of Leiden University	Maurits S. Berger	2021	The Netherlands (Leiden University)	Examines tensions between “theology” and “religious studies” approaches in Islamic higher education.	Higher education theory; anthropological approaches; innovation perspectives.	Qualitative reflective case analysis (including experiential perspective).	Islamic higher education in Europe develops under pressures of academic norms, social expectations, and debates on Islamic integration.	Relevant for extending the discussion to higher education and illustrating institutional negotiation beyond school-level provision.
7	A Pluralistic Account of Religious Upbringing in Islamic Religious	Ednan Aslan	2019	Europe (general)	Argues for pluralistic Islamic education that supports inclusion and	Religious education; pluralism theory; moral education.	Qualitative- theoretical analysis.	Pluralistic orientations are needed to accommodate diversity and reduce	High relevance for framing pluralism as a pedagogical and normative basis for inclusive Islamic

Education					engagement with difference.			exclusionary tendencies in Islamic education.	education in Europe.
8	Critical Issues in Islamic Education Studies: Rethinking Islamic and Western Liberal Secular Values of Education	Abdullah Sahin	2018	Europe (general)	Reconsiders tensions between Islamic educational values and liberal-secular educational assumptions.	Islamic educational theory; values theory; liberal education.	Conceptual review and theoretical discussion.	Highlights foundational differences while emphasizing the need for integrative and dialogical approaches in European contexts.	Relevant for deepening the theoretical basis of “value negotiation” between Islamic and secular educational frameworks.
9	Encountering Religious Diversity: Multilevel Governance of Islamic Education in Finland and Ireland	Tuula Sakaranaho	2018	Finland and Ireland	Explains governance dynamics of Islamic education through multilevel policy arrangements.	Multilevel governance; religious diversity perspective.	Comparative policy analysis.	Reveals governance contradictions and policy tensions in managing Islamic education amid national traditions and public diversity policies.	Highly relevant for governance-focused explanations of why provision varies across states and how policy structures shape Islamic education.

10	Religious Education for Muslims within State Schools: The Example of Austria	Smail Balic	1993	Austria	Discusses Islamic education provision in state schools and obstacles to integrating Islamic values in Western educational settings.	Islamic religious education; Western education.	Qualitative descriptive analysis of Islamic education teaching arrangements in Austria.	Islamic education provision is often inadequate and complicated by internal diversity within Muslim communities and curricular limitations.	Relevant as historical/background framing; however, it sits outside the 2005–2025 range and should be explicitly positioned as a foundational or contextual source.
11	Islamic Education and Islamization: Evolution of Themes, Continuities, and New Directions	Sarfarozi Niyozov & Nadeem Memon	2011	Global (incl. Europe/N. America)	Traces Islamization debates and challenges for Islamic education in Western contexts.	Islamization discourse; modern Islamic education.	Comparative qualitative analysis.	Islamic education evolves significantly, yet integration challenges persist when aligning Islamic values	Relevant as broader conceptual context, especially for framing value integration debates that also appear in Europe.

Integration of Islamic Education Values in Secular Education Systems in Europe

A recurring pattern in the reviewed literature is the uneven provision of Islamic religious education across European contexts, particularly within state-run/public schooling. In the Netherlands, (Shadid & Van Koningsveld, 2015) note that public schools frequently do not provide Islamic religious education at a level perceived as adequate by Muslim communities, which contributes to stronger reliance on Islamic private schooling as an alternative. This pattern indicates not merely individual preference, but also a structural gap in how public education systems accommodate religious needs in practice.

In Finland, Rissanen, (2012) demonstrates that Islamic religious education operates within a normative environment shaped by liberal civic values and expectations of social integration. In this setting, the integration of Islamic educational values is not limited to curricular content, but also involves continuous negotiation regarding the boundaries between religion, citizenship, and multicultural belonging. As the literature suggests, Islamic education may strengthen religious identity formation, yet it simultaneously faces pressures to align with secular assumptions that emphasize individual autonomy and integration within diverse civic communities.

Challenges Faced by Educators

Across the studies, educators appear as central actors who translate and mediate between institutional expectations and students' religious lives. Rissanen, (2012) highlights that Islamic education teachers in Finland often hold a dual role: they teach religious knowledge while also supporting students in navigating value tensions between Islamic traditions and the broader secular-cultural environment. This mediating function requires pedagogical sensitivity, because teachers must address diversity not only between Muslim and non-Muslim students, but also within Muslim student populations themselves.

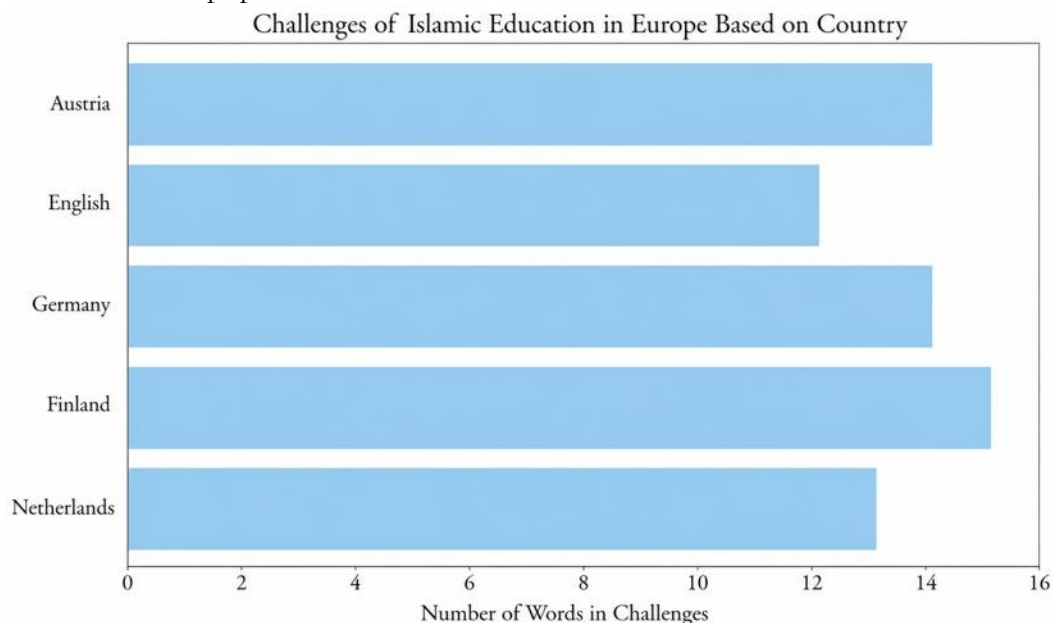


Fig 4. Challenges faced by educators in europe based on country

The literature also indicates that governance structures significantly shape the scope of teachers' work. In Germany, Fuess, (2007) notes that policy differences across federal states produce uneven access and inconsistent program implementation, which can limit teachers' ability to provide stable and inclusive

learning experiences for Muslim students. In Austria, [Balic, \(2016\)](#) illustrates how internal diversity within Muslim communities can become a practical challenge when curricular orientations are perceived as privileging particular traditions, potentially generating tensions and contestation within classrooms and communities.

Pluralistic Approach in Islamic Education

A pluralistic orientation is repeatedly emphasized as a constructive pathway for reducing social tension and strengthening mutual recognition in diverse societies. [Aslan, \(2019\)](#) argues that Islamic education in Europe should not only transmit Islamic values, but also cultivate capacities for understanding and respecting religious and cultural difference. This orientation supports Muslim students in maintaining religious identity while also developing civic competencies needed for coexistence and cooperation in multicultural contexts.

Governance-focused work further shows that pluralism is not only a pedagogical ideal but also a policy challenge. [Sakaranaho, \(2018\)](#), in the Finland–Ireland comparison, illustrates how state involvement in Islamic education is often framed as accommodation of diversity, yet it can also produce tensions when national educational traditions and public values are treated as non-negotiable. In this sense, pluralism in Islamic education depends not only on classroom pedagogy but also on policy design, governance coordination, and public narratives about religion in the public sphere.

The Role of Government and Education Policy

State policy and governance arrangements emerge as a decisive factor shaping Islamic education provision across Europe. While countries such as the Netherlands and Germany demonstrate identifiable attempts to integrate Islamic education into broader schooling frameworks, implementation remains constrained by structural limitations, uneven provision, and differing regional governance. [Shadid & Van Koningsveld, \(2015\)](#) show that, even with accommodation efforts, public provision may remain insufficient, prompting continued reliance on private alternatives. Comparable constraints are visible in Austria, where [Balic, \(2016\)](#) describes curricular and resource limitations alongside internal community diversity as persistent obstacles to inclusive and representative provision.

Taken together, the synthesis indicates that Islamic education in Europe develops within complex intersections of curriculum design, teacher mediation, and policy governance. Although progress is evident in several contexts, significant challenges remain in ensuring equitable access, coherent program structures, and broader public acceptance. In this setting, pluralistic approaches are presented as particularly important for enabling Muslim students to sustain religious identity while also engaging constructively with the religious and cultural diversity that characterizes contemporary European societies. Accordingly, Islamic education requires ongoing adaptation to Europe's evolving social, cultural, and political conditions in order to remain educationally effective and socially integrative.

This discussion interprets the synthesis findings by emphasizing why the integration of Islamic education in secular European contexts remains uneven, how educators operate as mediators under institutional and cultural constraints, and what pluralistic orientations imply for both pedagogical practice and governance. Rather than reiterating the descriptive patterns already presented, this section clarifies the mechanisms that generate recurring challenges across contexts and considers the broader implications for policy design, teacher preparation, and classroom dynamics in plural societies.

Integration of Islamic Education Values in Secular Education Systems in Europe

The integration of Islamic educational values into secular education systems in Europe is a complex issue shaped by educational policies, state governance, and the ways religion is understood within the public sphere. A growing body of research indicates that Islamic religious education is not consistently incorporated as an integral component of public education systems. Instead, it is often provided as a supplementary service whose implementation depends on national and regional policy frameworks. As a result, considerable disparities emerge in terms of access, curriculum quality, and instructional practices across different European countries. Furthermore, varying interpretations of secularism continue to influence the position of Islamic religious education within public schools, making its integration highly dependent on the social, political, and legal contexts of each country. Consequently, the extent to which Islamic educational values can be integrated into secular education differs substantially across Europe, reflecting the diversity of governance structures and educational philosophies that characterize the region (Alkouatli et al., 2023; Franken, 2023; Rissanen et al., 2020; Uriarte & Rodríguez, 2023).

Comparative studies across European countries reveal that Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands have adopted different approaches to integrating Islamic religious education into their secular education systems. Finland places a strong emphasis on religious literacy and a whole-school approach to foster intercultural competence among students. Germany, by contrast, implements diverse models that vary according to the educational policies of each federal state, ranging from confessional models to more integrative approaches. Meanwhile, the Netherlands illustrates the evolving relationship between the principle of state neutrality and the public's right to receive religious education, resulting in continuous adjustments to religious education policies in response to the needs of an increasingly multicultural society. These differences suggest that the success of integration is influenced by several interrelated factors, including the distribution of governmental authority, the model of religious education adopted, and the capacity of schools to accommodate the diverse religious and cultural backgrounds of their students. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that there is no single model for integrating Islamic educational values into secular education systems; rather, effective implementation depends on each country's institutional, legal, and sociocultural context (Alkouatli et al., 2023; Berglund et al., 2023; Franken, 2023; Friberg & Sterri, 2021; Rissanen et al., 2020).

The literature further emphasizes that strengthening teachers' religious literacy, developing inclusive curricula, and establishing collaborative policy governance are fundamental prerequisites for the successful integration of Islamic education into secular education systems. Interreligious and non-confessional approaches are widely regarded as effective in promoting tolerance, strengthening social cohesion, and fostering respect for diversity without compromising the principle of state neutrality. Nevertheless, their successful implementation requires a clear normative framework, sustained professional development for teachers, and effective policy coordination across different levels of government. Such measures are essential to ensure that religious education can make a meaningful contribution to the development of inclusive and democratic societies while remaining compatible with the broader objectives of secular public education. In this regard, the integration of Islamic educational values should be understood not merely as the inclusion of religious content in school curricula, but as a comprehensive educational process that supports intercultural understanding, democratic citizenship, and peaceful coexistence within

increasingly diverse societies (Azme, 2024; Friberg & Sterri, 2021; Lutovinova et al., 2021; Uriarte & Rodríguez, 2023).

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Managing Islamic Education

Teachers occupy a central role in managing Islamic education within secular educational settings because they are responsible for translating educational policies and curricula into everyday classroom practice. This role extends beyond merely delivering religious content; it also involves the ability to reconcile institutional expectations, students' religious commitments, and the diversity of interpretations that exist within Muslim communities. Consequently, teachers require not only pedagogical competence but also social and religious literacy to guide students in developing their identity, sense of belonging, and active citizenship within pluralistic societies (Essabane et al., 2022; Muff & Agbaria, 2024; Saada, 2022). Research conducted in Finland demonstrates that teachers serve as interpreters who help students harmonize their religious identity with social life through inclusive and dialogical approaches (Essabane et al., 2022; Saada, 2022). In addition, teachers must ensure that Islamic education promotes mutual understanding without reinforcing negative stereotypes about Islam or placing an unfair burden on Muslim students to act as representatives of their faith (Muff & Agbaria, 2024; Musdalifa et al., 2024; Saada, 2022).

These challenges become even more complex due to the internal diversity within Muslim communities, as well as the limitations of educational policies and institutional support. Teachers are expected to manage the plurality of Islamic schools of thought and religious interpretations in an equitable manner while simultaneously dealing with policy differences, limited learning resources, and insufficient opportunities for professional development (Riza, 2023). A growing body of research suggests that strengthening Islamic education requires teacher training that goes beyond subject-matter expertise to encompass multicultural pedagogy, conflict management, religious literacy, and reflective practice. These competencies enable teachers to integrate Islamic education with the values of citizenship in pluralistic societies more effectively (Azme, 2024; Moslimany et al., 2024). Ultimately, the success of Islamic education depends not only on teachers themselves but also on supportive educational policies, a well-defined curriculum, effective school leadership, and continuous professional development. Such support allows teachers to perform their mediating role effectively and to foster inclusive, meaningful, and high-quality learning experiences (Essabane et al., 2022; Muff & Agbaria, 2024; Musdalifa et al., 2024; Saada, 2022).

Pluralistic Approach in Islamic Education to Increase Understanding and Tolerance

A pluralistic approach to Islamic education is increasingly regarded as an important strategy for addressing the challenges of multicultural and multireligious societies, particularly across Europe. The literature suggests that pluralism should not be understood merely as a normative ideal centred on tolerance; rather, it must be translated into educational practice through governance structures, policy frameworks, and institutional arrangements that provide meaningful support (Asmuni & Duriyah, 2024). Accordingly, a pluralistic model of Islamic education requires pedagogical approaches that enable students to engage in open dialogue, develop ethical reasoning, and critically reflect on differences without compromising their religious identity. From this perspective, respect for religious identity constitutes an integral element of the educational process. Pluralism, therefore, should not be interpreted as the erosion or dilution of religious identity; instead, it recognizes

diversity as an inherent reality of living together in a shared society (Asmuni & Duriyah, 2024).

Within the European context, a growing body of research indicates that Islamic education can make a meaningful contribution to social cohesion when it intentionally cultivates students' capacity to understand and appreciate religious as well as cultural diversity. A pluralistic pedagogical approach enables Muslim students to preserve their religious identity while fostering openness towards others through constructive dialogue, mutual recognition, and reflective learning. In this way, Islamic education serves not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as a platform for nurturing inclusive citizenship and preparing students to participate actively in culturally and religiously diverse societies (Asmuni & Duriyah, 2024; Jakelić, 2021; Lafrarchi, 2021; Nurman et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, the success of a pluralistic approach depends fundamentally on the governance of education. The literature indicates that the regulation of Islamic education is frequently shaped by political interests, security discourses, and constructions of national identity, creating institutional constraints that can hinder the effective implementation of pluralistic principles. Consequently, advancing a pluralistic model of Islamic education requires the integration of inclusive curricula, stable and non-discriminatory policy frameworks, and teacher education that equips educators to facilitate interreligious dialogue in ways that are both ethical and reflective. Beyond enhancing the quality of learning, such an approach has the potential to broaden civic participation, foster more inclusive public spaces, and reduce prejudice between social groups in increasingly diverse societies (Asmuni & Duriyah, 2024; Jakelić, 2021; Lafrarchi, 2021; Nurman et al., 2022; Polak, 2023; Razum & Barudžija, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Islamic education within secular European education systems depends not only on curriculum design but also on governance structures, institutional support, and the capacity of educators to navigate religious diversity in pluralistic societies. The review demonstrates that Islamic education can contribute to the development of Muslim students' religious identity while simultaneously strengthening civic participation and social cohesion when it is supported by equitable public policies, professionally prepared teachers, and pedagogical approaches grounded in pluralism. However, differences in national regulations, unequal access to state-supported Islamic education, and inconsistent policy implementation continue to limit its effectiveness across European contexts. These findings indicate that the successful integration of Islamic education requires a balanced framework that recognizes religious rights while promoting democratic values, intercultural dialogue, and inclusive citizenship.

The findings have important implications for educational policy and practice. Policymakers should strengthen institutional frameworks that ensure equitable access to Islamic religious education within public schools, while teacher education programs should equip educators with intercultural, pedagogical, and religious competencies necessary for diverse classrooms. Curriculum developers should also embed pluralistic perspectives that encourage mutual understanding without compromising students' religious identities. Future research should move beyond policy analysis by examining how these governance and pedagogical frameworks are implemented in classroom practice and how they influence students' identity formation, educational experiences, and social integration across different European

educational settings.

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Author Contribution

Defriyanto: Writing-Preparation of original manuscript, **Saim Kayadibi & Moses Adeolu Agoi:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Visualization, Investigation, Improve Content, **Oki Dermawan & Nurul Jannati Salsabila:** Data accuracy, Improve Language.

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Ethical Clearance

The place or location studied has agreed to conduct research and is willing if the results of this study are published.

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