Interfaith Education for All

Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action

Duncan Wielzen and Ina Ter Avest (Eds.)

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Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action

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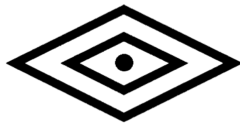

SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM / BOSTON / TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-94-6351-168-1 (paperback)
ISBN 978-94-6351-169-8 (hardback)
ISBN 978-94-6351-170-4 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
https://www.sensepublishers.com/

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

Printed on acid-free paper

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THE REV. VICTOR H. KAZANJIAN JR.

PROLOGUE

Interfaith Education for All: A Global Imperative

In communities around the world people struggle to find positive ways to establish a shared commitment to community, cooperation, mutual understanding, the respect for the rights of others and the corresponding responsibilities that we each share as global citizens amidst a sometimes-dizzying array of diversity. There is no power greater than education to develop the future cadres of citizens, scholars, professionals, and public servants, essential to cohesive and vibrant societies. But not just any education. Education that transforms students into global citizens is one that aspires to be that place where diverse identities and points of view are brought together in a common task deepening understanding of self, other, and the World that leads to positive social relations. Education that embraces diversity is not a place of a particular ideology nor theology but rather that place where a diversity of all viewpoints becomes the central ingredient of a vibrant learning community. It is in such a place that educational experiments show us how human beings whose identity is so often forged along lines of difference can take up responsibilities and craft together a common life.

As multicultural education emerged into the mainstream at the end of the 20th century as a response to the increasing cultural diversity of communities around the world, religious diversity was largely absented from this paradigm. Religious and spiritual identity was rarely seen as a significant identity factor in the same ways as ethnic or national identity. Seen as antithetical to a secular or religion-specific learning environment, interfaith education that engaged the diversity of beliefs as an essential element of preparation for life in diverse communities was largely absent. However, the rise of religious identity as a recognized factor of social relations (all too often seen in a negative way as leading to social fragmentation and intergroup violence), thrusts religious diversity into the educational arena. Too often the answer to the conundrum of engaging diversity in education (especially religious and spiritual diversity), has been to mute particularist voices in favour of a single normative identity, whether this be religious, nationalistic, or secular in nature. This reaction to the complexity of religious diversity in society continues in today's political world whether it be debates over school curriculum, dress, or national identity. But gradually an educational experience has been envisioned that offers students the experience of reconstructing themselves in ways that make them better at seeing religious diversity as a resource rather than a barrier to healthy and peaceful human community.

In *Interfaith Education for All: Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action*, the authors take us on a journey of discovery through the

theoretical and practical worlds of an interfaith educational paradigm which invites the identity forming narratives of each student into the commons of the classroom where students are recognized in such a way that the learning environment becomes a place of dialogue and interaction, of encounter and conversation, of essential and healthy conflict, but conflict that ultimately seeks the common cause of citizenship in diverse communities, countries and world.

Among the many resources that reflects this paradigm referenced in these pages is the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* prepared by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights for the Office Security and Co-operation in Europe. This document suggests that

> it is vital to grasp the confluence rather than the clash of civilizations. Throughout Europe – as with the church of San Roman in Toledo – there are layers of civilization built on and interacting with other layers. Modern-day Europe is the result of the interweaving of migrations of disparate peoples, interactions of religions within a cradle moulded by Christianity and by other religious and cultural forces for more than twenty-five centuries, through borrowing, copying, transforming, transmitting, and absorbing. Toledo offers us not only visual reminders of interwoven civilizations, but also remnants of civilizations alternatively fighting each other, living together under tension, prospering together, suffering together, as well as exhibiting examples of tolerance and intolerance.

The powerful theory, practice and reflections expressed in *Interfaith Education for All* call us to a vision of interfaith education for global citizenry that rejects intolerance as an inevitable human condition, does not stop at tolerance as the desired outcome, but embraces that which lies beyond tolerance, interdependence, as that which we must seek if we are to meet the challenges of a troubled world. As Executive Director of the United Religions Initiative, a global grassroots interfaith peacebuilding organization, I see the power of interfaith education to help communities move beyond tolerance to an interdependence essential for coexistence.

For centuries tolerance has been the goal towards which forward thinking people have worked in seeking to respond to the diversity of ethnic traditions, religious beliefs and cultural experiences in societies around the world. This work of tolerance has been carried out while intolerance has dominated much of human history and been a contributing factor to horrific destruction of human life. At a time when tolerance has often been replaced by overt acts of hate in many of our communities, tolerance would seem a worthy goal for which to strive. And yet as the authors in *Interfaith Education for All* suggest, the path towards just, peaceful, diverse communities, pushes us to consider what lies beyond tolerance.

For me tolerance is conflict arrested. It is a great harness applied to the destructive forces of ignorance, fear and prejudice. It provides a wall between warring parties. At best, it is a glass wall where protected people can see one another going about parallel lives. But nonetheless it is still a wall dividing us from each another. When I agree to tolerate you, I agree only to acknowledge your

existence and not to injure you. I make no commitment to get to know you, to learn about you, and to see our lives as interdependent. As such, tolerance is not a basis for healthy human relationship nor will it ever lead to true community, for tolerance does not allow for learning, or growth or transformation, but rather tolerance keeps people in a state of suspended conflict and ignorance.

For us to begin to understand the creative possibilities that are held within the diversity of human experience, we must move beyond the tendency to settle for tolerance as the goal for human encounter and risk the possibility that our lives are in fact inextricably connected one to another. As people of different religions, spiritual expressions, indigenous traditions and humanistic beliefs, we are too often segregated from each other, which leaves us ignorant of the values and practices that are significant to our lives. Ignorance is the enemy of peace. Tolerance does not dispel ignorance. Only through interfaith education which encourages us to embrace our diversity and claim our interdependence will we learn about each other, form true relationships, and build communities of mutual respect that are essential for establishing cultures of peace.

I am particularly grateful to my friend and colleague Duncan Wielzen, and his co-editor Ina Ter Avest for the gathering and shaping of these powerful essays, which provide an invaluable resource illustrating the importance of interfaith education as an essential component of educating people for citizenship in the diverse communities that comprise our world.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Looking ahead at Contested Concepts and Practices

Since the beginning of the 21st century migration intensified globally. Wars, armed conflicts between sectarian groups, and poverty have uprooted and displaced millions of people. Refugees fled amass to neighbouring countries in search for safe havens or humane living conditions. In Turkey, Lebanon, South-Africa and many Western countries the socio-demographic landscape altered significantly due to migration within the Southern hemisphere and migration to the Western world.

In many European countries, primary schools are becoming increasingly religiously diverse as a direct result of global migration. In the Netherlands, for example, the Dutch government already began developing policies for intercultural education in 1974. The Dutch government first introduced a system for education in the native languages and cultures (OETC) of children of primarily Muslim (Turkish and Moroccan) migrants. With this measure, the government tried to cope with the ethnic and cultural pluralism in Dutch society, although the initial focus was on the migrants' eventual return to their birth countries. A decade later, in 1985, 'Philosophical Movements' (lessons *about* world religions and philosophies of life) became part of the curriculum of all primary schools, irrespective of their corporate identity. It was mandated by law (Griffioen & Bakker, 2001).

Similar measures were taken and are still being taken in other Western countries vis-à-vis incremental pandemic, ethnic and religious pluralism in their respective societies. Hence, in 2014 the Council of Europe published *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Nonreligious World Views in Intercultural Education*. And more recently, for example, Flanders in Belgium introduced a new education model for its catholic primary schools, the so-called *catholic dialogue school*. In this model, catholic education commits itself to an open and constructive dialogue with other religions and philosophies of life (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014). Moreover, in Australia and Wales there is a growing concern about how religious education (RE), which for long time was taught monolithically (teaching in religion), can now meet up to the challenges and new demands of ethnic and religious pluralism (teaching *about* and/or *from* religion). There are serious efforts to abandon the monolithic fashion of teaching for a more interfaith conscious and friendly approach.

Interfaith education is accompanied by neighbouring concepts such as: interreligious education, multi-religious education, and (inter) worldview education. The different contextual approaches in this book yield to a variety of perspectives on interfaith and its neighbouring concepts in relation to education.

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 1–17.
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The term itself – interfaith – raises various complex questions, especially in relation to education (Byrne, 2011). To understand what this term means, we turn to James Fowler's (1981) conceptualization of faith and his Faith Development Theory.

Fowler defines faith as "a person's or group's way of moving into the force field of life. It is our way of finding coherence in and giving meaning to the multiple forces and relations that make up our lives. Faith is a person's way of seeing him or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose" (Fowler, 1981, p. 4). Fowler further distinguishes between faith, religion and belief. But this distinction, and the evaluation of the concept of faith, departs from a Christian viewpoint. A critical assessment of faith, however, must also consider the values, perspectives and evaluations from non-Christian and secular sources. It is therefore essential to distinguish between religious and secular worldviews or convictions, since faith itself is not limited to the religious domain. Bertrand Russel underscores this view by asserting: "Christians have faith in the Resurrection; communists have faith in Marx's Theory of Value" (Russel, 1992, p. 216). Russel sees both as systems of faith. Moreover, in discussing the concept of belief – i.e., from an interfaith perspective – one cannot overlook the input of so-called secular or philosophical movements/convictions. Good interfaith praxis and theory require examining "the entire spectrum of beliefs and include authentic voices of the other rather than the dominant culture's representations" (Byrne, 2011, p. 57).

Even though Fowler's Faith Development Theory has been ground-breaking, it has also attracted critique. Heinz Streib (1991, 2001, 2005), for example, points to the lack of "narrativity of faith" in Fowler's conceptualization. He therefore proposes contextual modifications of the concept of faith and faith development. For Streib these are necessary due to incremental religious and secular worldview orientations in contemporary societies that go beyond Fowler's 'narrow' conceptualization of faith and faith development (Streib, 2005, p. 107). Furthermore, Streib (2003, pp. 19-22) and Coyle (2011) catalogued substantial criticism levelled against Fowler's Faith Development Theory, with regard to the overemphasizing of cognition at the expense of emotional/psychodynamic dimensions like processes of transition and transformation, and for ignoring cultural specificity. In addition, Fowler's theory is also criticized for not accounting for diversity in faith structures and for ignoring how diverse faith development can be.

The comprehensive discourse on faith and faith developments can provide a key for understanding the concept of interfaith in relation to education. That is why we utilize this concept in relation to its neighbouring concepts. Faith development, according to Fowler (1981) is a relational process. Hence, interfaith education becomes a *pleonasm*, since the 'inter'-aspect is already included in the concept of 'faith' and its developmental processes. Adding to the disparate positions on the concept of faith renders the term 'inter-faith' a contested concept in relation to education.

Some argue that interfaith is also about respecting and appreciating the other (Patel, 2004). Interfaith therefore, encourages individuals and groups to build

engagement and commitment with and toward each other despite existing social, religious and ideological differences. But if faith is understood in relational terms, 'inter-faith' becomes redundant which requires further research that highlights the dialogical aspect of faith in relation to education. Such faith, which is undergirded by religious and/or secular worldviews, must and can be learned. It requires therefore a critical pedagogical method that is transformative, empowering, transgressive, and even subversive, thus in line with Freirean pedagogical terms (Puett, 2005). Such a method comes close to the concept of *Bildung*, understood in postmodern terms (Schreurs, 2006; Van Stralen & Gude, 2012). It aids pupils to construct their own spiritual, (inter)religious or (inter) worldview identities (both religious and secular), but in relation to the space they inhabit (family, school, neighbourhood, and the wider society). The ultimate goal concerns transformative processes that advance the integral development (moral, affective and intellectual) of pupils, who concomitantly grow to become strong personalities with adequate social skills necessary for living together harmoniously in plural milieus. Amongst these skills are the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, to argue, defend or critically assess any given moral position, and to value diversity as an enrichment to culture and society. This concurs with the purpose of the United Religions Initiative (URI) that seeks to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings. This book is inspired by the URI, a global grassroots interfaith network that cultivates peace and justice by engaging people to bridge religious and cultural differences and work together for the good of their communities and the world. Against this background, any kind of *faith*-based education – i.e. faith in the broadest sense, thus also originating from secular traditions – must be accompanied by critical pedagogy and provocative pedagogy – and must also at all times be subjected to critical assessment – if it wants to achieve its ultimate objectives in transforming our world (Puett, 2005).

In this book, authors from a variety of countries and religious backgrounds (mainly Christianity and Islam, and to a lesser degree Paganism and Hinduism) enter the broad domain of RE from their own respective positioning on faith-based education. The international orientation on key concepts related to religion, faith and belief reflects the pedagogical discourse.

The contributors to this book are scholars, researchers and practitioners in the wider field of RE. Their contribution in this book is motivated by an eagerness to enrich the wider discourse on Interfaith Education. The chapters in this book breathe a diversity in approaches: philosophical, theological, pedagogical, and given form by the perspective of RE. We hope that, at the end of the day, the reader can come to the conclusion that the outcome of the authors' exertions is an ongoing dialogue on living together amidst diversity in religious and secular worldviews.

This book is divided in three parts. Part One consists of contributions of highly respected scholars in the field of RE and Interfaith Education. It begins with a contribution from the Dutch pedagogue Siebren Miedema, followed by a

contribution from the German Protestant theologian Johannes Lähnemann. We then leave the European mainland and turn to the United Kingdom. The British Muslim scholar Abdullah Sahin underlines the importance of the psychological development of students for Interfaith Education. We then take a huge leap to the Sultanate of Oman where Argentinian-born scholar, Sergio Saleem Scatolini, presents his view on Islamic Religious Education. He therefore reflects substantially on his teaching period in Flanders, Belgium. From there, we return to the Netherlands where the Dutch Catholic theologian Aad de Jong writes about the intentions of Interfaith Education. What follows is a Euro-Asian collaboration with a contribution by Mualla Selçuk from Turkey and Ina Ter Avest from the Netherlands. With their description of a model for worldview education we then conclude the theoretical elaborations on the concept of Interfaith Education.

Siebren Miedema explicitly relates the concept of ‘interfaith’ and its neighbouring concepts to citizenship education and human rights education. He notices that the use of the concept ‘faith’ seems to be rooted and mostly used in the USA and Australia, whereas in European and other western countries people write and talk about ‘religion,’ and by consequence about inter-religious education. Miedema himself prefers to use the concept ‘worldview,’ and ‘religion’ as a sub-concept of ‘worldview.’ A distinction is made by Miedema between teaching and learning *about* the other, with a focus on the *content* of interfaith education, and a functional approach with a focus on the *bridging role* of religion in the construction of peaceful cohabitation in a plural society. ‘9/11’ is seen by Miedema as a turning point in locating religion in the public domain. Prior to ‘9/11,’ religion was seen as a private matter. Starting from 2002, in publications of the Council of Europe, religion is increasingly seen as part of a culture, and religious education has been treated as included in intercultural education. It is striking that the Council of Europe uses the term ‘intercultural dialogue’ in its publications. In *Signposts*, one of the Council’s publications (2014), the concept ‘faith’ was removed and replaced by ‘religious and non-religious convictions.’ Miedema is in favour of combining interfaith education with citizenship education and human rights education, not only in the sense of teaching and learning about such issues, but even more so in the sense of acquiring skills to participate democratically in plural societies. To develop this, Miedema refers to the concept of ‘maximal citizenship education.’ The school as an embryonic society is seen by Miedema as a place to practice citizenship. The aims of interfaith education, or in his own words of ‘inter-worldview education’ are to prevent “conflicts between adherents of different religions and worldviews, of people of different faiths, and to break down existing walls between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and prevent the rise of such walls.” Miedema’s conclusion is: “As educators and religious educators we know what we need to do!”

The ultimate objective of interfaith education according to Johannes Lähnemann is building trust. Aims in line with this ultimate objective are helping people to find orientation, assist with (religious) identity construction and offering examples of social responsibility as they are narrated in religious traditions. Lähnemann elaborates on the three well-known pedagogical strategies of teaching and learning

in, *about* and *from*, and points to the latter as the most promising for interreligious education. The question Lähnemann raises is how the 'added values' of different religious traditions can be presented in European classrooms. To answer that question, he presents an overview of developments in the field of religious education in Europe, for which he refers to a publication issued by the Peace Education Standing Commission (PESC), *Interreligious and Values Education in Europe. Map and Handbook*. The good news is that religion is increasingly seen as a field for public discourse and public learning. One of the problems mentioned is the very poor situation of religious education due to lack of expertise in the field of pedagogy, specifically regarding pedagogical strategies of (inter-)religious teaching and learning. Religious communities are mentioned as sources of expertise. In the publication *Signposts* of the Council of Europe, the author notices a change of perspective from religion as a private matter, to religion as part of the public sphere and of intercultural education in public schooling. Three projects, according to Lähnemann examples of interreligious education, are presented: *"Offene Türen," an alternative City Guide (Nürnberg)*, a project of Religions for Peace in Belgium *Hopen Deuren*, and *The Global Ethic Project* that started in Tübingen. Research on the representations of religions is of particular relevance according to Lähnemann in the face of the sweeping generalizations, stereotypes and prejudices regarding other religions. Recommendations, based on preliminary findings of these research projects, are presented by Lähnemann as a guide for the construction of textbooks.

The question Abdullah Sahin aims to answer in his contribution, is firstly how faith traditions understand difference in the challenging context of the modern world, and secondly how religion can contribute to an attitude of 'critical openness' amongst European Muslim youngsters, which is preconditional for interfaith encounters. Sahin states that in the Hebrew Bible, as well as in the Qur'an, diversity is seen as a sign of the Divine Majesty and Creativity – an aspect of human life to be articulated, since it contributes to human flourishing. Despite the influence of secularisation in the western world and beyond, the role of Islamic faith communities and the strengthening of their voice in European societies cannot be denied anymore. Sahin points to the need for reflection on the role of Islam in the public domain. "Inclusive social and political structures [have to be created] where presence of the 'other' is not simply tolerated, but integrated into the fabric of a shared social space." This is conditional upon the will to rethink and contextualize the religious tradition and develop the competency of 'critical openness,' according to Sahin. This includes reclaiming the legacy of critical education as constitutive part of Islam. 'Difference' has to be respected, and is seen by Sahin as a possibility to learn from each other. Human dignity has to be safeguarded. Serving the common good is central. "If there is any need to compete, the Qur'an insists, we should compete in doing what is good ensuring that the dignity and welfare of all is served." Sahin stresses the need for self-relativisation and self-transcendence. The recognition that we have limitations encourages us to go beyond ourselves; and encourages us to remain open to the world around us and the reality beyond us, according to Sahin.

At the psychological level, Sahin takes as his starting point the need for the encounter with the other in order to know yourself. At the sociological level, Sahin points to the danger of expanding worlds and diverse contacts, with the risk of raising anxiety and fear. Facilitating the development of 'critical faithfulness' is at the heart of the education of Muslim youngsters in a European context, according to Sahin. Sahin's model, with its focus on religious literacy and dialogicality, shows a way to fulfil this task.

Sergio Saleem Scatolini's starting point are Muslim communities as a minority in the Belgian society, which is populated by a majority of secularized Christians – most of them affiliated with the Roman Catholic church. Adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam believe to have received divine revelations providing instructions for living together in peace. According to Scatolini, time (history) and place (culture) influenced the wording of these revelations. Islamic Religious Education (IRE), in Scatolini's view, should not indoctrinate pupils and students with the (semi-)divine character of Holy Scriptures, but inform pupils and students about their connection to time and place – a contextual approach. IRE as a school subject should be at the service of general education; education is "… the assistance that we owe our younger generations so that they find and claim their role in God's creation, and can feel at home in their own bodies, in the stories which they are a part of, and the places where they live." Scatolini distinguishes between religious education in schools on the one hand, and religious upbringing in mosques, Qur'an schools, or madrassas on the other. In schools, IRE contributes to the general process of pupils' and students' identity development. Scatolini further elaborates upon the core concepts of IRE (search, knowledge, wisdom and values), and concludes that IRE has a confessional character, and that IRE classes are workshops on "how to think Islamically by searching, analysing, reflecting, and learning in the presence of and in collaboration with others, including non-Muslims." The difference with 'the other' is a challenge for educators, that presents opportunities to facilitate the development of pupils and students in terms of learning to respect difference and acknowledging the right to be different. Scatolini coins this approach as a 'pedagogy of faith,' combining a critical approach to 'the other' with a critical approach to one's own tradition. IRE should encourage pupils and students to be in dialogue with 'the other' who is different from me. Preconditional for dialogue is religious literacy "… as a doorway to wisdom and about striving for the realization of higher Qur'anic and human values in the presence of and together with other Muslims as well as non-Muslims."

Aad de Jong starts with presenting the intention of the United Religions Initiative (URI) "to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings." The aim of De Jong's contribution is to shed a clear light on the intentions underpinning interfaith education. According to De Jong, the 'speech act'-theory of Searle is useful in the communication with people adhering to different beliefs. Regarding the objectives of interfaith education, De Jong distinguishes ultimate intentions from immediate goals (of a religious education curriculum and of a religious education class). As an ultimate aim, De

Jong chooses ‘participation in a plural society.’ For this participation, understood as contributing as a citizen to living-together-in-peace, ‘we-intentions’ and ‘we-knowledges’ are required, according to De Jong. Consequently, the recognition of constitutive and regulative rules is required as well. Interfaith education should provide pupils and students with good reasons to make their choice to respond to society’s needs as a free citizen. To make free participation happen, a shared language is preconditional, and thus the teaching and acquiring of communication skills should be prioritized in interfaith education. These skills should include the ability to understand the beliefs of ‘others,’ but also the capacity to express one’s own faith. Helpful to structure this specific language acquisition related aim of interfaith education is Searle’s distinction between locutionary (sounds and written signs), perlocutionary (one-sided, like when convincing the other) and illocutionary speech acts (opening up for exchange of ideas, like when asking questions) is helpful; the latter being subdivided in assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. In interfaith education, these speech acts should always be related to characteristic religious concepts – not only to concepts derived from one’s own tradition but, in an equal way, related to the tradition of ‘the other.’ Prior to all interventions in interfaith education is the motivation of the students. Several strategies are mentioned, like staying close to the students’ own experiences, raising the curiosity of students, provoking them or triggering their imagination. Basic in all the strategies is the involvement of each of the students. For De Jong, participation as a citizen starts with participation in the classroom.

The starting point for the development of Mualla Selçuk’s model for religious education, lies in the challenge of Muslims living in a secularizing context – which is the case in Turkey as well as in Europe. Every understanding of the Qur’an, according to Selçuk, is related to the context in which a person lives and his or her psychological framework. To understand the meaning of the Qur’an today, students have to learn about the way the Qur’an was understood by the listeners living in the time of its revelation. The description of the relation with ‘the people of the Book’ is seen by Selçuk as one of the first examples of the Islamic perspective on interreligious encounters. Following Selçuk’s interpretation of Qur’anic verses, the dialogue within and between religions should take its starting point in “the *willingness* to question what is different, the *desire* to learn the meaning of this diversity, and the *ability* to appreciate those differences as enriching experiences which stimulate the mind and the heart.”

This message of the Qur’an is at the basis of the ‘Communicative Model’ as developed by Selçuk, in close cooperation with the Canadian theologian John Valk. Religious education today, according to Selçuk, should not aim at literal presentations of texts and ready-made solutions to existential questions, but should include “the exploration of a variety of perspectives in order that every participant in the dialogue is able to find his/her own religious positionality.” The implementation of such a model requires the meeting of certain criteria, of which an open and safe space to ask questions is the first requirement. The approach of texts in Selçuk’s ‘Communicative Model,’ or ‘conversation with texts’ as she prefers to call it, facilitates the emergence of an interpretation of Qur’anic texts that

is relevant for the lives of students today – in a secularized context. As an illustration of this conversational approach, Selçuk presents three topics: the relationship between Islam and democracy, the concept of Jihad, and the question of Islam and other religions. This latter topic is of pivotal importance in interreligious education classes, where teachers are confronted with questions like: "Are all religions true? Or is only one religion (Islam) true?" The aim of Selçuk's 'Communicative Model' is to "empower students, by enabling them to relate to different understandings of what it means to be a Muslim, both historically and in today's pluralistic world."

Part Two of the book consists of *grassroots stories* – stories emerging from classroom practices taking place in a variety of cultural and educational contexts.
Suhaliah Hussien, Rosnani Hashim and Nazatul Akmar Mohd. Mokhtar, introduce Malaysia as a country with many ethnicities, cultures and religions. To create harmony is prioritized, but until now this has not been very successful. The educational system of Malaysia is inherited from British colonial times. In public schools, the language of instruction is Malayan. Students are expected to be bilingual (Mandarin-Malayan, Tamil-Malayan). Malaysian culture is taught to students, with attention to cultural and religious diversity. However, intercultural competencies are neglected. The Hikmah pedagogy was developed to create a community of inquiry in Malaysian classrooms.

Hikmah pedagogy is rooted in the Philosophy for Children program (P4C), which states that philosophy is an appropriate tool to trigger and develop the natural curiosity of children emphasizing critical, creative, ethical and caring thinking. Students in the Malaysian context are usually devout followers of a particular religion. A Community of Inquiry (CoI) aims at students becoming aware of their religious beliefs, which "provokes deeper understanding of the complexities of the issues; disagreement is common and allowed." The five stages constituting a CoI are described and illustrated with concrete examples. For a CoI a democratic classroom is preconditional, in conjunction with the presence of a well-informed and sensitive teacher to facilitate the dialogical classroom conversations. The P4C/CoI approach has been remodelled with an emphasis on the inclusion of religious and ethical values relevant to Muslims in the Malaysian society; and consequently, the new model has received the name of *Hikmah* (wisdom) Programme. According to the authors, this pedagogical strategy can be infused in the whole curriculum of a school, or it can be implemented as a 'stand-alone' subject. In the latter case, it is taught outside school hours and focuses on thinking skills. In case of infusion, the acquisition of thinking skills is interwoven with every subject that belongs to the curriculum. Preliminary research findings show that Hikmah pedagogy stimulates the development of open-mindedness on behalf of students, as well as tolerance and respect for the religious views of others. Hussien et al. end their contribution with a call for teacher training institutes that educate future teachers to be "open minded, tolerant and respectful of [their] students' views before [they] can encourage [their] students to do so."

Naïma Lafrarchi explores the potential strength of the Hikmah pedagogy for the Belgian context. First, Lafrarchi describes the Belgian constitutional framework for education. Article 24 of the Belgian Constitution describes the freedom of education. The vast majority of schools in Flanders today are schools with a Catholic identity – it is on these Catholic schools that Lafrarchi focuses. Catholic schools include 3 hours of RE per week in their curriculum. In accordance with article 24 §2 of the Constitution, public schools have to organise two hours of RE per week.

Secularisation and pluralisation are great challenges for teachers in public schools and Catholic schools alike. The Muslim Executive Board (EMB) is responsible for the organisation of Islamic religious education in public schools, as well as for teacher training, teaching materials, and the ongoing professional development of teachers. Lafrarchi decribes several pedagogical-didactical and educational concepts in order to give an overview of, and better insight into crucial elements as preconditions for a successful implementation of the Hikmah pedagogy in the Belgian context. In addition, she gives a short overview of the roots and the core characteristics of the Hikmah model. Lafrarchi proposes to implement the Hikmah model in the RE lessons given in public schools, during the interconvictional competences classes (ICC). Another possibility, according to Lafrarchi, is to implement the Hikmah model by making use of possibilities provided by the transversal curricula learning objectives on citizenship and social skills.

Philosophising about Qur'an verses and *Hadith* literature according to the Hikmah pedagogy, will stimulate pupils to start their own reflection on the meaning of the verses, living in the contemporary Flemish/Western context. Although the Hikmah model cannot be directly applied in the Flemish education context, public schools offer a particularly promising environment for experimenting with this model, according to Lafrarchi.

From Belgium, we travel to the Netherlands. Two consecutive contributions articulate the diversity of approaches that are available for interreligious education in Islamic education in this country 'behind the dikes.'

Leo Van der Meij describes the beginning of Islamic education in the Netherlands, which was founded by guest workers of Moroccan and Turkish origin. As of 2016, 50 Islamic primary schools exist in the Netherlands; a central organization assists these schools in their identity development, i.e. the ISBO, Islamic School Board Organisation. As regards their confessional identity, the majority of the schools is described as orthodox Islamic. School rules and regulations are based on the Qur'an and the *Sunna*; the pupils are socialized in every day's practicalities of Islam. In the media, these schools have been portrayed in a predominantly negative way.

According to Van der Meij, there is little support in Dutch society for encounters initiated by Islamic schools, due to the reason that in the main discourse regarding confessional education, Islamic education is questioned because of the perspective that it leads to segregation in society. Islamic schools themselves differ in the way they either promote or not promote encounters with other confessional

schools; the attitude depends on the religious identity of the schools, which ranges from Salafism and Islamic orthodoxy to liberal or Islamic Sufism.

To describe the different positions of these Islamic schools, Van der Meij refers to the ‘Four-point model’ of the Christian theologian Paul Knitter, which maps out four different religious perspectives: exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism and acceptance. Using Knitter’s model, it can be demonstrated according to Van der Meij that there are many possibilities for interreligious encounters with other confessional schools, ranging from joint, friendly sports activities, to projects based on interreligious themes like prayer and visiting holy places. Terrorist attacks – in the name of Allah – that occurred in Europe recently and the phenomenon that Muslim youngsters leave the Netherlands to support the Islamic State, have reduced the support for Islamic education in the Netherlands. Islamic schools that enter into a dialogue with others, contribute to a positive image of Islamic schools in the Dutch society. It is only by dialogue, according to Van der Meij, that we can defeat religious intolerance.

Ismail Taspinar writes about Islamic education in the Netherlands as well. Diversity takes a central place in his contribution, in which he refers to intra- and interreligious encounters. His contribution begins with a personal recollection of his early years in the Netherlands, when he was a small boy and a regular visitor of his Roman Catholic neighbours.

The vision and mission of the SIMON schools is based on ‘Islam,’ which is understood as ‘to become part of the peace of God.’ In line with this interpretation, the role of all educators, teachers and parents alike, is to enable each child to respond to her/his Creator in an authentic way. As regards the diversity of religions, Taspinar refers to the Qur’anic concept of ‘the people of the Book’; diversity within Islam is seen as a difference in focus, whereby some traditions focus on law, while others focus on rituals or socio-economic aspects, for instance. All SIMON schools are ordinary Dutch schools. The school board of the SIMON school network strives to gather a staff of teachers that is composed of 50% Muslims and 50% teachers with a different religious (or a secular) background, with the intention to create interesting possibilities for the encounter with ‘the other’ in this way.

The motto that summarizes the pedagogical strategy of the schools is ‘becoming who you are.’ The concepts of value education and character education inform the pedagogical strategies of teachers. In everyday classroom practice, the teachers often refer to sayings taken from the Prophet or a narrative taken from the *Hadith* literature to underline their corrective remarks. The core values of the SIMON schools are summarized in the so-called ‘seven pearls’ – including awareness of the unity of God, tolerance and responsibility – and apply just as much in the school environment as they apply as values in the context of the Dutch plural society. By consequence, the subject of ‘developmental citizenship’ is given a central position in the curriculum of the SIMON schools. Communication skills, according to Taspinar, are basic for intra- and interreligious encounters. Taspinar points to the fact that much depends on how the Dutch society communicates with newcomers. Integration is seen by Taspinar as a double-sided process – involving

native-born Dutch people and so-called ‘newcomers’ alike. Taspinar concludes by sharing his dream: he envisions vulnerable people who long for community and dreaming of living together in peace – a dream that is sometimes realised in the here and now, at unexpected times.

From the Netherlands, we turn northwards and arrive in Finland. Heidi Rautionmaa and Arto Kallioniemi inform us about the Finnish situation, and about their exploration of integrated religious education and dialogue in the context of inter-worldview education. An important double aim, according to the authors, is to stimulate a positive attitude on behalf of the students towards ‘the other,’ and to teach them skills for interacting dialogically with such others. The subject of ‘inter-worldview dialogue’ gives the students space to critically reflect upon their own thoughts, and to respectfully discuss the ideas of others about existential questions. The implementation of such a school subject in the Finnish curriculum takes centre stage in this chapter.

In Finland, there is a very strong tradition of state schools, and only a couple of confessional private schools exist. RE is a compulsory subject in the school system, and RE courses are seen as playing a part in the acquisition of civil skills. Schools offer Lutheran, Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox RE according to the parents’ wishes, or secular ethics as an alternative for RE if so desired. Next to that, up to eleven other religions can be included in the curriculum. Like in other European countries, as a result of the changes in the cultural and religious context, segregated RE classes have been a subject of intense debate in Finland. In response to these discussions, the concept of ‘integrated religious education’ has been explored in a limited number of schools. The starting point was to partially integrate the contents of the curriculums for the various religions and the different types of secular ethics, with inter-worldview dialogue as a constituting part. Different strategies to meet the expectations are discussed. According to the authors, integrated RE creates opportunities for students to learn to present their own perceptions and points of view regarding their faith and worldview, and to get acquainted with the corresponding perspectives of their classmates. Inter-worldview education, according to the authors, takes place in seven stages ranging from merely becoming aware of difference to a personal transformation process. Respect for the personal stories of others and for the narratives that originate from the tradition they adhere to, is preconditional in this practice-oriented learning process. The authors express the wish that the experiences gathered with this innovative model for inter-worldview education may prove useful – and can be applied – in international contexts.

While narratives are mentioned regularly in Part Two of this book, Vicky Garlock’s focus is explicitly on storytelling as a means to make children familiar with sacred texts. Her starting point is the global citizenship and plurality which children nowadays will experience at an unprecedented level. They will have encounters with people from different faith traditions, and will have to live with these people and their beliefs about creation and the afterlife – to mention but a few beliefs which can conflict with beliefs of others. For that reason, a curriculum

'Faith Seeker Kids' was developed, first for children raised in Christian families, later incorporating narratives from other religious and secular worldview traditions.

The curriculum consists of fifteen lesson plans, each describing developmentally appropriate teaching materials and offering at least one story. The curriculum is based on theories of development, like Piaget's stage theory of cognitive development, Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Fowler's faith development approach. The limitations of a stage approach are discussed by the author and exemplified with quotes from young children. However, stage theories can inform teachers about the average level of cognitive and affective development of the pupils they are working with. Research on metacognition and memory capacities informed the developers of the teaching materials that the stories should contain up to 1000 words for the youngest children, and up to 2000 words for the older children. An example is presented of the Moses-narrative and its perception and reception by children of different age groups. In their puberty, pupils are open for questioning their own beliefs and those of others, and can arrive at conclusions that differ profoundly from the positions taken by their parents or educators. By way of conclusion, the author states that pedagogues informed by stage theories of development should not underestimate the cognitive abilities of children they meet in real-life situations, in the classroom.

Ina Ter Avest and Duncan Wielzen start with a discussion of human rights and children's rights. The authors refer to Friedrich Schweitzer, who not only points to the legal aspects of these rights and duties, but also – and with greater emphasis – to their pedagogical and moral aspects. Following Schweitzer, Ter Avest and Wielzen argue that children have innate religious and spiritual needs, and that by consequence these dimensions should be included in education. Aware of the fact that this fulfilment of needs can be realized by socialization into a religious tradition, the authors favour an interreligious approach which goes beyond mere enculturation. They take 'the voice of the child' as their starting point, leading to a child-centred approach, and they underline their approach by referring to 'theologizing with children.' Theologizing with children is a process in which educators encourage children to reflect on questions about God, human(s) (relations) and the world, and how these are (inter)related. This cannot be realised without the input of parents, by interacting with teachers about their way of upbringing – religiously and culturally – at home. The role of the professional educator is exemplified with a biographical perspective on the life of the former principal of the interreligious Juliana van Stolberg School.

The authors refer to research showing the creativity of children to include different religious concepts in their own authentic images, for instance their image of God. The authors also present preliminary findings on the ongoing 'slow research' with children, now young adolescents, who were formerly pupils of the Juliana van Stolberg School.

By way of conclusion, the authors state that 'space' is of pivotal importance for interreligious and interfaith education – space which is provided in schools so that the voice of the parents and 'the voice of the child' is heard.

Fiona Tinker explores the possibility to have paganism included in the curriculum of religious education in Scotland. The present-day education system in Scotland grew from the context of a system put in place by the church. Christianity is part of the history of Scotland and its education system. From 1918 onwards, churches were no longer responsible for the running of schools. Their input remained however, resulting in two kinds of RE: Protestant based and Roman Catholic based RE. Scottish education aims at developing the learning competency of students, strengthening their self-confidence, and at making students aware of their responsibilities as citizens who can contribute in a constructive way to society. The religious and moral part of education is based on the Toledo Guiding Principles. Pupils are encouraged to explore other belief systems, like Judaism and Hinduism. According to the author, paganism should be included as well. She constructs her arguments on solid grounds. First of all, the author points to the need to counteract prejudice based on ignorance and lack of information. Second, schools have to take account of the context in which a child is raised. Thirdly, the author points to global citizenship as a reason to include paganism in the curriculum. To counteract lack of knowledge the author informs the reader about the main characteristics of paganism, among which love for nature is only one. A programme was developed to counteract the lack of knowledge about paganism and to contribute to its recognition, hopefully leading to a positive attitude as regards civic involvement, equality and inclusion of paganism in Scottish curricula, in accordance with the motto: ‘One Scotland, Many Voices.’ The author describes the long way to go for those parents who do not want to check the box ‘other’ in the list of options for religion, but who – for their own sake and for their child(ren) – want to be recognized in their pagan faith. Protests from these parents, according to the author, contribute to the process of achieving an inclusive vision, both in schools and in the Scottish society of which pagans are a part.

Jessica Bouva takes us down south, to the African continent, and describes a pilot study on interreligious education in the Gambian context, detailing its challenges and hindrances. The religious and educational landscape of The Gambia is described in the introduction.

The Supreme Islamic Council plays an important role in RE in schools all over the country. Both Christian and Islamic private schools exist. Private Christian schools have classes comprised of a mixture of Christian and Muslim pupils, while private Islamic schools only have classes with Muslim students. RE is a compulsory subject in all of these schools, and is given in line with the religion of the pupils.

Teachers at these schools receive their training at the Gambia College School of Education (GCSE). *Arkade* (the Dutch counterpart, an organisation for coaching and consultancy on RE) was asked by lecturers of this College to provide assistance in the development of a module for interreligious education. To be taken in consideration in this innovative module, was the need to abandon the didactical transfer model of teaching in favour of a constructivist learner-centred model. A pilot model was designed based on the input of semi-structured interviews and a validating meeting, and based on relevant literature of scholars in the field.

Interviews, among other means, revealed the need for development of tolerance; literature research put forward the concepts of 'teaching and learning in, about and from religion' the 'interpretative approach' and the 'dialogical approach.' The subsequently developed module focused on dialogue. The module was tested in a pilot study, showing that – after overcoming the shortcomings and the first fears – students were enthusiastic as well as their teachers. In their reflection on the pilot module, the authors reveal a variety of aspects needing to be improved, like the monolithic way in which dialogue is presented in the lessons. For the implementation of such a module, maximal effort from all actors is required – this being preconditional for success not only in the Gambian context.

In the last chapter of Part Two of this book Doerga, De Ruiter and Ter Avest provide a description of the Dutch context of public education and its practices for (inter)religious education. The focus of this chapter is on RE in public schools. Public schools have to organize RE classes whenever parents ask such classes for their children. Both Christian RE classes and Islamic RE classes are organized. Teachers who teach these classes sometimes meet with team members of other schools, discussing questions like 'Can a teacher with a Christian background teach Islam?,' and the other way around: 'Can a teacher with an Islamic background teach Christianity?' Contrasting, or even conflicting positions resulted in the publication of a document stating the competencies for teachers of religion(s) in public schools; being a graduate from a Teacher Training College is preconditional.

The first case study is presented from the perspective of a Christian teacher, who teaches Christian RE lessons in classes mainly comprised of Muslim pupils. This teacher frequently refers to the fact that there are similarities between the two traditions, i.e. Christianity and Islam, who are "different and similar at the same time." The case study is about heated discussions ("always, there really is no exception") about the different meanings that texts can have for people. The clarification of different interpretations of the concept of *haram* results in a classroom atmosphere that creates some space for tolerance of difference.

The second case study is presented from the perspective of a Hindu teacher who teaches Hinduism RE lessons. As a child, she went to a Christian school, which was an enriching experience for her. In her RE lessons she informs her pupils about the history of the Hindu religious tradition, 'the ten principles' (including knowledge, tolerance, forgiveness and patience) and the core narratives of Hinduism. As a teacher, her aim is to give her pupils a sense of their divine spark. Teaching RE in this way, in the opinion of this teacher, turns the children into virtuous citizens – virtuous in the sense that they "flouris[h] on the personal level, and on the societal level balancing between the extremes of emotional responses." One of the conclusions that follow from the case studies is the insight that the teacher's biography plays a pivotal role. It is a prerequisite for an effective interreligious pedagogical strategy that teachers reflect about their own positionality.

Part Three of this book focuses on the perspectives on interfaith education. It comprises three reflective chapters, each written by John Valk, Ryan Gardner and Ursula Günther (scholars originating from Canada, the United States and Germany, respectively). They reflect upon the 'state of the art' as presented in the first part of the book, and upon the sometimes successful, sometimes unruly interfaith experiences at the grassroots level, related in the second part of the book.

John Valk points to different crucial aspects that are mentioned briefly in Part One and Part Two. Valk mentions that interfaith education seems all too often to be focused largely on the individual pupil and his/her personal beliefs and identity development. Less attention is given to religious and secular perspectives and their influences on individual and collective beliefs and values. These perspectives, he indicates, influence society's institutions, and not least its educational institutions, whether religious or secular/public.

According to Valk, both religious and secular/public schools have an obligation to educate students about various worldview perspectives. This becomes important not only in assisting them to become effective citizens, but also in assisting them in developing their own worldview perspective, whatever that might be. Valk hopes that both religious and secular students become critically aware of their own and other worldview perspectives.

Students steeped in a secular worldview may view their religious classmates as 'backward' in their development, but in Valk's view this is often held as a result of ignorance, both of their own worldview perspective and those of others.

Valk indicates that experiencing differences as problematic often reveals an inability to translate terms or concepts across worldviews. These issues and questions, according to Valk, need to be faced and explored in interfaith education, or worldview education and in contexts beyond the interfaith education classroom.

Ryan Gardner points to the need for reflection on religious and secular worldview(s) in teacher education programs. He describes a model which is theoretically based on the work of, amongst others, Argyris & Schön, and Korthagen. He distinguishes between four different levels of reflection, all of them important, but it is only in combination that these levels effectively contribute to the development of competences of interfaith education teachers. Technical reflection, according to Gardner, is decision making about immediate behaviours or skills. Descriptive reflection focuses on attempts to provide justification for events or actions. Dialogic reflection refers to the weighing of competing viewpoints and the exploration of alternative solutions. In critical reflection, ethical and moral aspects of the teaching profession are taken into account. The distinctive foci in these types of reflection are illustrated with some clear examples taken from real-life narratives that teachers provided. Gardner is aware of the fact that these reflections may be insightful, but practicing the new insights is an altogether different matter! Argyris & Schön already pointed out this pivotal difference, by means of their distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use. According to Gardner, his model of reflection – when practiced by all stakeholders involved – will increase the impact of interfaith education.

In the final chapter Ursula Günther summarizes and comments on the contributions of the authors of Parts One and Two, thereby visualizing her analysis by way of graphs. In her view, all these authors embrace a shared and just future from their own perspective and in their own way. That is what connects them.

Contrary to what was expected and expressed in the secularization thesis, religion is still a hot topic these days. Countless individuals are searching for an own religious stance, and more and more people pursue encounter with other persons' religious expressions in the public domain, or are at least open to such a possibility. The challenge, according to Günther, however, is to counteract the general speechlessness and the lack of religious literacy by developing a common language.

The conceptual clarity offered in Part One is helpful for the reader to understand the examples of good practice of Part Two. The diversity in theoretical approaches and real-life case studies gives a broad view of the interfaith landscape in different parts of the world. The examples of Islamic RE and its relation to interfaith education contribute to a more differentiated perception of Islam, according to Gūnther. These and other examples indicate a willingness from the part of schools and educators to change the direction toward further mutual understanding. That this will be realized in different ways related to diversity in contexts goes without saying, according to Günther.

Translating findings from theoretical research and from 'examples of good practice' into school practice takes time, and probably that is what is most needed: time for reflection and motivation to proceed. To go on, Günther points to five preconditions to be fulfilled, culminating in the question: Who has the final say? Is it the academic theology, or the pupils? Günther favours a paradigm shift towards a child-centred approach, exemplified by what she coins as a context related rhizomatic approach dissolute from any hierarchy. That will take us further to a new episode in the pedagogy of interfaith education for all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to the United Religions Initiative (URI), both the Global Office (San Francisco) and URI-Europe for the remarkable inspiration that has led to the publication of this book on Interfaith Education. This book captures the spirit of URI.

We also thank Stijn Van Tongerloo and Julie Wedam for their professional cooperation with proofreading many chapters of this book. Their kindness and constructive approach brought ease to this journey.

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PART ONE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTERFAITH EDUCATION

SIEBREN MIEDEMA

2. THE CONCEPT AND CONCEPTIONS OF INTERFAITH EDUCATION WITH NEIGHBOUR CONCEPTS

Reflections from Pedagogical Perspectives

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will theoretically as well as conceptually reflect from a pedagogical perspective on the very concept and some of the different conceptions of interfaith education that are used in literature. I will also consider the so-called neighbour concepts like intercultural education, interreligious education and inter-worldview education and relate this to citizenship education and human rights education too.

I will start with presenting some conceptualizations in respect to the concept 'interfaith education' as outlined in a few recent publications. In these publications, originating mostly from English speaking countries, the concept 'interfaith education' is explicitly used instead of other terms. Common core is that they all point to the bridging possibilities of interfaith education between different faith traditions and stimulating mutual understanding and reciprocal respect among children, thus contributing to solidarity and peace. Concluding that using the term 'faith' is quite uncommon in Europe when dealing with religion and worldview, I will then present a brief overview of the developments in the discourse on the role and place of religion and worldview during the last two decades from the perspective of the Council of Europe. My brief overview starts in 2002 when the Council of Europe began its debates on intercultural education and the place of religion as part of that.

Then the fruitful intertwinement of interfaith education or inter-worldview education with citizenship education and human rights education is addressed. The purpose is to articulate my contention that interfaith education, or in my terms inter-worldview education, combined with citizenship education and human rights education is really a necessity for all schools and all children and young people attending these schools. It can foster an inclusive pedagogical approach and an inclusive attitude and commitment of all pupils (Ter Avest & Miedema, 2010).

THE TERMS 'FAITH,' 'RELIGION' OR 'WORLDVIEW'

Not intending to give an overall overview but just comparing some recent publications dealing with the concept of 'interfaith education' that specifically

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 21–30.
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have taken a critical-pedagogical focus and thus considering the civic educational aspect I will also deal in this contribution later, has resulted in the following conceptual harvest. Cathy Byrne defines interfaith education as “learning about any position of faith – its beliefs, practices, cultures, philosophies, cosmologies and institutions – in relation to one’s own perspective (religious or not)” (Byrne, 2010, p. 47). She adds to this that “(t)his is similar to the academic ‘studies of religion’ but emphasizes the duality (of mine and other), highlighting the opportunity and responsibility of the educative process to create a bridge to understanding difference” (Byrne, 2010, p. 47). She is using the term ‘multi-faith education’ as identical with ‘interfaith education.’ From a Freirean critical pedagogical approach, she is emphasizing that the only authentic aim of education in general is to liberate and is based on a commitment to open and critical learning by students. Byrne is focusing on the Australian context and is heavily criticizing from her Freirean perspective the single-religion based approach quite common in her country; that approach deals almost exclusively with the Christian tradition without paying any attention to other religions and worldviews.

Also inspired by critical pedagogues like Paulo Freire, Peter McLaren and Henry Giroux, Tiffany Puett has formulated that the nascent field of interfaith education

> includes practitioners who seek to explore and develop understanding of diverse religious worlds; yet learning about diverse religions is not pursued as an end in itself. Interfaith educators see their ultimate task as cultivating and sustaining social cohesion and a culture of peace. Interfaith educators seek to stimulate a religious discourse that expresses mutual respect and understanding and facilitates a process that builds solidarity. (Puett, 2005, pp. 265-266)

Thus, in Puett’s view interfaith education can play a decisive role and as it seems to be the case this role is of instrumental nature “in the search for new methods of education that will advance broad social transformation, shifting away from a paradigm of dominance, exclusiveness, and violence and towards a paradigm of equity, inclusiveness, and peace” (Puett, 2005, p. 265). Such an interfaith education will honour the personal religious and cultural experiences that constitute peoples’ religious identities differently and will address the impact of pluralism and religious diversity upon the students’ religious identity (Puett, 2005, p. 270). Puett states that the “crux of interfaith education honors the insight that we cannot know ourselves without knowing the other” and that we need to explore the positive potential that religions have to offer and should not exclusively focus on the negative contributions that religions make as is so often the case (Puett 2005, p. 271).

In several publications of the Center for Children and Theology in Washington DC, USA, interfaith education gets attention under headings like ‘Why Interfaith Education?’ (CC&T, homepage) and ‘Interfaith Education For Every child’ (CC&T, 2015). Interfaith education is seen as a means to make children in schools in the USA acquainted with the religious beliefs, practices, sacred signs and rituals

of their classmates and friends other than adherents of the Christian tradition. The aim is learning about religions in a broad sense, to prevent against discrimination and prejudices, but the intention is also to stimulate the personal development of the older children by exploring the whole world with its many cultures and religions. So, next to the aim of learning about religions and cultures there is for the older children also the teaching from religions and cultures approach fostering what I coin as the development of their self-responsible self-determination of their own personhood formation in respect to religions, cultures and worldviews (Miedema, 2014). Experiencing the holiness of their own Christian tradition, the children are able to recognize and respect the holiness in the encounter with people of other faiths and learn not to be frightened by other faiths and their believers because each tradition has a vision on eternal peace, joy and wholeness as its culmination. In that way both faith and peace are nurtured in children. Reading material about other faiths and meeting their believers in person as well as visiting local mosques, synagogues, Buddhist temples and other places of interest may contribute to pupils' appreciation of other faiths and worldviews. This is all done in public schools in the USA in order to reduce religious ignorance and intolerance, and although the plea of the Centre is for interfaith education for every child, there is still a lot of tension articulated at different places in that country between the separation of church and state and the desire to teach what is called "interactive and multi-sensory interfaith education" (CC&T, 2015).

It is interesting to notice that using the term 'interfaith' and 'interfaith education' is more common in the literature originating from English speaking countries in North America and in Australia, than in Europe. From this perspective, it is rather remarkable that one of the oldest academic journals in the field of religious education, started already 1905, after using for ten years since 2000 as front subtitle 'An Interfaith Journal of Spirituality, Growth and Transformation' has changed that front subtitle more in line with the subtitle before 2000 into 'the Journal of the Religious Education Association: An Association of Professors, Practitioners, and Researchers in Religious Education.' So, the term 'faith' is no longer used.

I do not know whether this was one of the reasons for that journal, but Tiffany Puett is aware of the fact that there are limitations to the use of 'faith' within 'interfaith,' because "not all religious traditions place an emphasis on faith and, thus, may not understand themselves to be 'faith traditions' (Puett 2005, p. 272). However, she still sticks to the use of 'interfaith' for the practical reason that she is working for an interfaith organization. She theoretically finds herself in agreement with a definition of interfaith provided by Eboo Patel in a talk given at Harvard University's Center for World Religions om March 11, 2004 that runs as follows: "'Interfaith' is when our experience of the diversity of modern life and our connections to our religious traditions cohere such that we develop faith identities which encourages us to interact with others in intentional and appreciative ways. It is the goal of being rooted in our own traditions and in relationship with others" (Puett, 2005, p. 272). This view is fully compatible with the prophetic view Trees Andree articulated already in the early 90s on interreligious education in the

Netherlands stating that education should care for the development of each student's unique religious identity as well as at the same time creating opportunities for the encounter with students from other religions and worldviews (see Miedema & Ter Avest, 2011, pp. 416-417).

So, the use of the term 'interfaith education' is quite uncommon in Europe. It could be insightful to present the developments in the discourse on the role and place of religion and worldview from within the Council of Europe (CofE) during the last two decades by taking into account the in 2014 launched book written by Robert Jackson and published by the Council of Europe titled *Signposts: Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education* (Jackson, 2014).

It was in 2002 when the debates on intercultural education and the place of religion as part of that started in the Council of Europe (CofE, 2002; Schreiner, 2012; Jackson, 2014, 2016). Till '9/11' religion was regarded as just a private matter and that is why the study of religions was excluded in public education. The tragic events of '9/11' broke the ground for a growing concern that religion is an issue that should be dealt with in the public square too, because the challenges of dealing with diversity and dialogue should definitely be put on the agenda now. All young people should have an understanding of religions and beliefs as part of their education. In 2002 a complete new project started dealing with the religious dimension of intercultural education with the aim to foster the understanding in schools of pupils of religions and beliefs in education, and to make them also attentive to the misuse and discordant sides of religion. Notice that in the title of the working document (CofE, 2002) it reads education for intercultural and interfaith dialogue! The focus then was on promoting "a better understanding between cultural and/or religious communities through school education, on the basis of shared principles of ethics and democratic citizenship" (CofE, 2002). In 2007 the reader *Religious diversity and intercultural education: a reference book for schools* was produced (Keast, 2007). In 2008 the Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs launched the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. "Living Together As Equals in Dignity" (CofE, 2008). It is clear: since 2002 intercultural education became the vehicle for addressing religious aspects/issues; after 2002, the term 'interfaith' ceased to be employed and was replaced by the undifferentiated concept of 'religion.' For reasons of inclusivity the notion 'non-religious convictions' was gradually introduced next to religion.

In August 2014, the Signposts-book was published as the result of an expert group that since 2008 was working on a document aiming at formulating guidelines and indications how to deal with religions and worldviews within the context of intercultural education in schools. The signposts are presented as a way to provide an open and adaptable working text instead of an inflexible framework to deal with religions and other worldviews in the context of intercultural education. It intends to assist policy makers, schools, teacher trainers and other actors in education to use the formulated recommendations in their own particular, regional, and local contexts. The terminology is further developed into the phrase 'religions and non-religious world views,' and in education these should be dealt

with in an integrated way. The aim is to stimulate mutual respect, intercultural understanding and dialogue and encounter between pupils in the safe space of the school by using dialogical methods that relate to the lifeworld of the pupils. Pupils should meet a plurality of religious and/or worldview positions in schools and on the basis of knowledge, skills and attitudes be able to develop the competencies to deal with this. In the documents, but also in the policy and practices of some of the member states there is a preference for a teaching and learning about religions and worldviews as a way to honour the separation of church and state at the level of the school. Sometimes the practices in other member states are a combination of a teaching and learning about and from approach (Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, & Willaime, 2007).

I think that the mixed feelings regarding the aims of religious or worldview education as expressed in the public debate in Europe is one of the reasons why the term 'faith' or 'interfaith' is not used that often. Maybe it might be interpreted as too much associated or even contaminated with religious institutions. Especially in countries with a strict interpretation of the separation of church and state and thus school, such a relationship is criticized. Preferred terms are 'inter-religious' or rather new in the discourse 'inter-worldview.' A term like 'multi-religious' might be interpreted as leaving two or more positions as they are on their own resort, without the intersubjective connotation of encounter and dialogue, thus dealing with communalities and differences in a dialogical way.

INTERFAITH EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

During the first decade of the 21st century the Council of Europe has not only dealt with the place of religion in intercultural education, it rather gave a strong impetus to paying attention to democratic citizenship education in the member states. This has steadily been done in relationship to (inter)religious education combined as positioned within intercultural education. The aim for this pedagogical, educational, as well as political agenda was to strengthen the potentialities and to tackle the dangers of religions and worldviews within the setting of the schools (see Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, & Willaime, 2007).

Already in 1993, the *World Conference on Human Rights* in Vienna called on states to include human rights, democracy, and the rule of law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal education. In 2005 in Budapest the European Ministers responsible for youth called for a framework policy document, an international instrument on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. However, the importance of the relationship of and the distinction between education for democratic citizenship and human rights education was only put on the agenda of the Council of Europe in 2010. A Charter was adopted by the Ministers on May 11, 2010, and further elaboration took place by publishing the booklet *Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* (Cof E, 2010).

It is highly interesting to compare this rather late start in Europe with the attention paid to human rights education in South Africa that started immediately after the abolishment of the Apartheids-regime in 1994. The need to pay explicit attention there and then to democratic education, human rights education and a new awareness of how religion or worldview could be addressed without any preference for the Christian tradition, has positioned South African pedagogues including religious educators at the international forefront of the debate on human rights education (see Roux, du Preez, & Ferguson, 2009; and also, extensively Roux, 2012).

It is my contention that the plea in the 2010 *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* for the relationship of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education, is an open invitation to schools to embody in their own practices – thus in pedagogical relations and situations, in classrooms setting and at the level of the school – democratic principles and human rights. One of the reasons for my contention, also fully in line with what is stated in the *Charter*, is that it should not simply be done in the form of imparting knowledge (teaching and learning about), but also of developing skills, and influencing attitudes with a view to encourage active participation in and defence of human rights (see CofE, 2010, p. 30). Thus schools – being embryonic societies – should themselves embody and practice the constituent elements of real participative and deliberative democracies. I am greatly inspired here by the train of thought of the philosopher and pedagogue John Dewey on democracy and education (cf. Dewey, 1897/1972, 1916, 1927).

Following and further elaborating Dewey's pragmatist view, it is, from a pedagogical, societal and political perspective, desirable that students already in the embryonic society of the school experience or be confronted by and become acquainted with the other students' religion or worldview, cultural, ethnic, economic backgrounds, ideas, experiences, practices, situations, and contexts. Having seen in their studies the impact of religion/worldview, and the influence of political, cultural and economic domains locally and globally, they can also benefit from such experiences and insights when they encounter religious/worldview, cultural, ethnic and political 'others' in society at large, and around the globe. However, the school has its own place here *sui generis*. So, from a societal as well as pedagogical point of view, all schools should be willing – and in my opinion, should be obliged – to aim at fostering democratic citizenship education, interreligious or inter-worldview education, and human rights education. Thereby bringing about or at least promoting mutual respect and understanding and stimulating the development of democratic citizenship formation, religious (worldview) citizenship formation, and human rights formation (cf. Miedema, 2006). Attention should especially be paid to the human rights education with this tripartite aim: the empowerment of the students as speakers to be able "to contribute to the building and defence of a universal culture of human rights in society and globally, with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms" (see Cof E, 2010, p. 7).

Regarding the concept of 'religious education' I prefer to use the concept 'worldview education' with 'religion' as a sub-concept of worldview, and define it as the system, which is always subjected to changes, of implicit and explicit views and feelings of an individual in relation to human life. 'Views and feelings in relation to human life' can refer to everything with which people can be occupied and consider important to them. In empirical research with students we use a short 'stipulated definition,' namely: "A worldview is the way one looks at life" (Bertram-Troost, De Roos, & Miedema, 2006). Using the concept of 'worldview' may help to avoid strong secularist approaches against religion, which want to leave religious education out of the curriculum of the school *in toto*. Everyone has at least a personal worldview that may or may not be directly influenced by an organized worldview, and this should be taken into account pedagogically as we have claimed elsewhere (see Van der Kooij, De Ruyter, & Miedema, 2013). The concept 'worldview' can also prevent exclusivist claims leading, for example, to preferential argumentation in paying attention only to one religion, for instance the Christian one. Both cases can be interpreted as universalistic worldview or religious claims against, for instance, the universal claim in human rights of self-development and self-appropriation. A thick conception of worldview education includes teaching and learning about and from worldviews, and this in contrast with a thin conception which is just teaching and learning about worldviews.

What might be really helpful to strengthen the tripartite intertwinement is the concept of *maximal citizenship education* as outlined by the late Terrence McLaughlin in contrast to 'minimal citizenship education' (see McLaughlin, 1992). McLaughlin interpreted these distinctions in terms of contrasting interpretations on the continuum of the very concept of 'democratic citizenship.' It was his aim "to offer a substantial notion of 'education for citizenship' in the context of the diversity of a pluralistic democratic society," a notion "… 'thick' or substantial enough *to satisfy the communal demands of citizenship, yet compatible with liberal demands concerning the development of critical rationality by citizens and satisfaction of the demands of justice relating to diversity*" (McLaughlin, 1992, p. 235, italics added). Such a society, according to McLaughlin, should seek to find a cohesive balance between social and cultural diversity.

His elaboration on a minimal and maximal approach runs as follows. In the minimal approach on citizenship education, the subject is presented in a purely knowledge-based way, and with a particular civics-related content to be transmitted in a formal and didactic manner. The identity conferred on an individual in this conception of citizenship is merely seen in formal, legal and juridical terms. In schools, the development of the students' broad critical reflection and understanding is not stimulated or fostered. A maximal approach on citizenship education, in contrast, is characterized by an emphasis on active learning and inclusion, is interactive, values-based and process led, allowing students to develop and articulate their own opinions and to engage in debate, dialogue and encounter. The individual's identity, individuation or subjectification in this constructivist conception is dynamic instead of static, and a matter for continuing debate and redefinition. Maximal citizenship education "requires a considerable degree of

explicit understanding of democratic principles, values and procedures on the part of the citizen, together with the dispositions and capacities required for participation in democratic citizenship generously conceived" (McLaughlin, 1992, p. 237), so in the school and in the society at large.

Elsewhere we have shown (see Miedema & Ter Avest, 2011) that the concept of maximal citizenship education offers the possibility to include religious education, or more adequately speaking worldview education, as part of such an educational program, and that it makes it even fuller in combining democratic education for citizenship and worldview education in schools. This combination can adequately be coined 'worldview citizenship education.' This is fully combinable with what has been claimed elsewhere to be the aim of education in schools for a transformative pedagogy, that is, that every child and youngster in every school should be able to develop her or his personal identity or personhood (Wardekker & Miedema, 2001) from a combined individual and collective perspective. It is our contention that the emphasis McLaughlin places, in his maximal definition, on the 'satisfaction of the demands of justice relating to diversity' offers precisely another possibility, namely to include human rights education as part of such an educational program. And this could be broadened to include theories and practices of fairness, care and critique. Conceptually speaking the triangle of the three forms of education in interrelationship is then complete.

The intertwined relationship of interfaith or inter-worldview education with citizenship and human rights education might strengthen the aim of stimulating religious or worldview discourses that expresses mutual respect and understanding and facilitates processes that build solidarity and peace. At the same time, this intertwinement might foster the flourishing of interfaith-citizenship or inter-worldview citizenship as constitutive parts of the encompassing personhood formation of children and young people, thus honouring the human rights of self-development and self-appropriation.

IN CONCLUSION

Based on his new book *What is populism?* the German political philosopher Jan-Werner Müller, affiliated with Princeton University in the USA, points as the hard core of populism to its anti-pluralistic nature: "If you're not for me, you are against me" (De Gruyter, 2016, p. 16). It is evident that schools cannot compensate for all the evils of society at large, but from a realistic, hopeful and passionate commitment schools can contribute to counter-voices and counter-practices.

My plea in this contribution for interfaith or inter-worldview citizenship education based on an inclusive pedagogical approach is part of such an educational counter-voice and can result in concrete counter-practices in schools.

Along these lines a contribution can be provided that may result in preventing conflicts between adherents of different religions and worldviews, of people of different faiths, and can break down existing walls between 'us' and 'them' and prevent the rise of such walls. Combining teaching and learning about and from, this approach is aiming at the personal meaning making and meaning giving of the

children and youngsters. Their personhood formation does not presuppose the coming into being of separate, monadic individuals, because the social component is always a constitutive aspect of such a personhood formation. Precisely this may result in solidarity and peace with other people, in taking care and responsibility for the creation and for the world where we live in. The liberation pedagogue Paulo Freire is the pedagogue of consciousness, liberation and emancipation, but he is also the pedagogue of the heart and of the hope. Educability of the heart is, according to Freire, strongly connected to love, which is grounding for the dialogue. The dialogue and the encounter in the pedagogical relationship of teacher and child and of a child with her/his peers can only exist where the love for the world and among human beings, reigns (Miedema, 2016). Teachers are bearers of hope, because they are focusing on the here-and-now and on the future. They are oriented towards possibilities of re-creation and the flourishing of the personhood of their pupils, and thus averse to doom-mongering and passivity. Here we find the clear and distinct aims of interfaith or inter-worldview citizenship education and also a counterweight against growing populism. As educators and religious educators, we know what we need to do!

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JOHANNES LÄHNEMANN

3. INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A Way for Building Trust[1]

Fear between religious, ethnic and political groups is at present a source of tensions as it has been in the past. We may think of segregated or newly segregating societies, as has been evident in Northern Ireland, on Cyprus, Lebanon, and in the former Yugoslavia. And we have new tendencies of ethnic-religious egoism which fuels separation and negative images of "the other" – especially with generalizations such as "So is the West" or "So is Islam" in quite a number of states in Asia and Europe and in Africa and America as well. It is a fact that the lack of knowledge and of a welcoming atmosphere combined with long-lasting prejudices – often politically misused – can lead to fanaticism and to violence.

It is a task of Education to engage in breaking down such ignorance and prejudices. Religious education can do even more – as it offers assistance and direction to people seeking direction in their lives, helping them in their lives and helping them in their actions. In this chapter, I will explain principles and perspectives for these tasks based on the work of the *Peace Education Standing Commission* (PESC) of *Religions for Peace* (RfP).

ORIENTATION – IDENTITY BUILDING – TRAINING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: AIMS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

There are 3 areas in which religious education and interreligious learning can serve as a key agent:

Helping people find direction. Religious education plays an essential role in cognitive learning. When people are well informed, use their knowledge critically and are able to question, they are less likely to be deceived because they have the ability to see things differentiated. When people understand the ways in which religious faiths relate to life and meaning, they are able to empathize with others' views and see through the mechanisms that cause ethnic and religious discord and fanaticism.

Helping people in their lives. Religious education teaches about the sources of life and of values that transcend superficial pleasures. It leads to respect for the integrity of creation as gift of God in the monotheistic religions and teaches – mainly in the Buddhist tradition – how all living things are related and mutually interdependent. Religious education can give strength, support, comfort and courage through prayer, meditation and worship.

Helping people in their actions. Religious communities can offer examples of living together in solidarity according to their ethical principles, living for one

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 31–43.
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another, speaking up for the weak and disadvantaged – teaching to cope with the problems of life with a sense of mutual responsibility.

RELIGIOUS AND INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION – ITS LEVELS AND ITS ADDED VALUE

Migration, traveling and media make it increasingly impossible to live without taking "the Other"[2] into account. But there are too many cases where narrow-minded education with a one-way perspective predominates – and a black-and-white view of "the Other" is promoted.

The task that emerges for education requires commitment on the part of religious communities in cooperation with all people of good will. Young people will only be equipped for living together in a way that will ensure the continued existence of our planet if they respect their fellow human beings, feel responsibility for the whole living as well as inanimate world.

In the field of religious education three ways of learning can be distinguished[3]:

1. Learning religion means to be educated and socialized in one particular religious tradition. This is basically catechesis as largely carried out within religious communities. But nowadays all religious communities have to recognize in their educational endeavours that their traditions have to be articulated in the context of pluralistic societies.
2. Learning about religion means to receive knowledge about religions in an informative, not judgemental way recognizing equally different religious traditions. It can foster the awareness of different world views, their cultural and moral impact and their contribution to human rights – and so contribute to an attitude of tolerance as a precondition of living together in a good way. This would be a prime task for public education.
3. Learning from religion means that interaction with religions can help for the development of personal orientation and identity-building. This is relevant for education in religious communities as well as in public education. Religious education in religious communities has to take into account the pluralistic and often secularized contexts of the learners, and religious education in public schooling should provide an encounter with religions experienced in living communities, rather than with neutral facts.

All three ways can be a contribution to lead from fear to trust while the third way can prove a most fruitful program.

Regrettably inter-religious cooperation over religious education in public schooling and also in the pedagogy of the religious communities themselves is still very rare. This is a crucial point for the development of lively interaction in our pluralist societies.

In England where there is a long tradition of interreligious cooperation in education the Birmingham City Council's Education Department and the *Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education* (SACRE) worked closely with the *Birmingham Faith Leaders Group*, an organization representing faith communities from within the city, to identify 24 spiritual and moral dispositions. These were

included in the *Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education*, which transformed the traditional concept learning “about” faith, into learning “from” faith, and illustrated what values faith had to offer (Birmingham City Council 2007/2016).

They show very clearly that there is a wide range of “added values” which can be presented by the different religious traditions. If educators engage in the “learning” of these dispositions they can help to build up an atmosphere of sensitivity for each other as well as for nature and so giving a solid basis for trust. The first eight, the 19th and 23rd are presented here. They are chosen because they can be seen as key dispositions in explaining what “learning from religion” in religious and interreligious education means.

§ 1 Being Imaginative and Explorative

This disposition requires lateral thinking, the capacity to see things differently, together with the capacity to see the promise and potential of the world about us.

Religiously it means giving due regard to, or seeking out, what is sacred and to explore, for example, what it may mean to be made in the image of the Creator or to investigate the idea of a promised land.

§ 2 Appreciating Beauty

This disposition requires a deep sensitivity for the world about us, an awareness of the nature of human responses, and the capacity to make qualitative distinctions.

Religiously it is an awareness that in the world there is a qualitative dimension which is thought to be given and which is indicative of transcendence i.e. it is not wholly subjective. This dimension normally evokes the human response of respect and reverence. The recognition of an aesthetic dimension in the world is made manifest by human beings through their own works of aesthetic creativity.

§ 3 Expressing Joy

This disposition requires an awareness of human affective responses and certain expressive capacities, for example, in music, in language, in body language.

Religiously it is an acknowledgement of, and a response of life itself to, transcendence through music, laughter etc.

§ 4 Being Thankful

This disposition requires an awareness of relationships of dependence and of not being wholly self-sufficient and in control of our own well-being. It requires a willingness and expressive capacity to acknowledge the relationship of dependence and the good that flows from it.

Religiously it is the awareness of being dependent on the transcendent and it is the response to the sense that, in the light of this relationship, all will be well no matter how things go.

§ 5 Caring for Others, Animals and the Environment

This disposition requires an awareness of the needs of others (and other things) together with a feeling that these needs matter, and the will to do something about them.

Religiously it is the sense that this caring is not a matter of self-interest but a divine duty laid upon human beings.

§ 6 Sharing and Being Generous

This disposition arises out of an awareness that others may be dependent on us, the sense of wholeness that may come from our relationships with others, and the will to please others.

Religiously it is the unity of creation in which the needs and joy of others are the needs and joy of the self. It is because the transcendent is a fecund source that humans are likewise impelled to give liberally.

§ 7 Being Regardful of Suffering

This disposition arises out of the affective capacity for pity, as well as out of an attention to the situation and condition of the other and the will to help or to maintain one's solidarity with the other.

Religiously, the sense of the unity of all things leads to an attention to pain and suffering so that what is endured by an other is felt by the self. This unity is such that the pain and suffering touches the very core of the transcendent.

§ 8 Being Merciful and Forgiving

This disposition presupposes the recognition that the unity and solidarity that exists between all people and all things is readily broken through aesthetic and moral offence. It also presupposes an acknowledgement of offence, the desire for unity and the will to bring it about despite the cost it may entail.

Religiously there is the possibility of spiritual offence that goes beyond aesthetic and moral offence. Restitution of the social and universal solidarity therefore rests on a Divine mercy and a responsive human mercy and forgiveness.

§ 19 Being Hopeful and Visionary

This disposition might reasonably be linked to being imaginative and explorative. The attitudes of expectation and anticipation are fundamental to some forms of religious life and contrasts sharply with the mood of despair. The disposition of

being hopeful should be distinguished from being fatalistic in which everything is determined and from a reliance on "luck" in which people depend on chance.

Religiously, hope is based on the promise offered by transcendence and the power of providence to transform realities.

§ 23 Being Reflective and Self-Critical

This disposition presupposes an awareness of the confusions of motives and the comforts of fictions. It requires a will to eschew such comforts as false consolations and a determination to be clear about what is the case and to evaluate rightly.

Religiously, to exist before God is to anticipate the purity of understanding and the transparency of motives.

But what about realizing such dispositions in education in the whole of the European contexts?

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN EUROPE'S SCHOOLS – A GROWING AWARENESS

While in educational debates on intercultural education the factors of religions and world views for a long time have been neglected, this has changed in the new millennium – along with the reactions to the horrible attacks of September 11th, 2001. From 2002 onwards there has emerged a new consciousness in this field at least on the European level (Council of Europe 2014, 5).

The development can clearly be demonstrated with the PESC Publication of 2008, edited together with the Comenius Institute Münster: *Interreligious and Values Education in Europe. Map and Handbook*.[4]

It could be stated:

> In nearly all countries of Europe, there is a growing insight that religion should be part of public education:
>
> - to transmit the necessary knowledge about the cultural-religious heritage
> - to be orientated about the religiously rooted values and ethic for personal life as well as for society
> - to reflect meaning and aims for life in the light of the scriptures, traditions and spiritual practices of religions
> - to educate for tolerance and prevent wrong prejudices through authentic information about and – if possible – encounter with the different living religions.

The *European Map of Interreligious and Values Education* (EMIVE) shows that Religious Education (RE) in public schooling is established in all Western, Central and South European countries (exception: France[5]), and that it is in development also in the former communist Eastern states.

There is a general tendency not to leave RE only to the religious communities or to private initiatives. Religion is increasingly seen as a field for public discourse and public learning:

On the map, we could show that in the north-west and north of Europe RE is dominantly multi-religious/non-confessional (England/Wales/Scotland, Norway, Sweden). Also in countries with a strong confessional tradition (Ireland, Iceland) there is much space for multi-religious learning. In the south and east we have predominantly confessional RE and – traditionally – little information about other religions. But there are examples of a lively discussion to incorporate more elements of interreligious learning (e.g. Turkey and Greece[6]). In the central European (especially the German-speaking) countries we find a mixture of confessional and non-confessional approaches.[7]

In our Commission (PESC), we have also identified the problems for religious education in the public sphere.

The concrete conditions for interreligious and values education are still extremely different in various parts of Europe.

There are countries with a highly developed infrastructure where RE has a continuous history – in countries with a multi-religious approach (for example England) as well as in countries with a confessional approach (for example in most parts of Germany or Austria): in syllabus development, the production of textbooks and teaching material and in teacher training on a university level.

There are countries where the whole position and presence of RE is very weak: without or with little teaching material, without regular syllabuses and with teachers who have little opportunity to gain the necessary professional skills (especially: Albania and Ukraine, but also for example Russia and the Czech Republic).

In the majority, there is more responsibility for RE with the religious communities than with the state. In some cases, there is a lively co-operation between religious communities and state institutions, but in many cases, there is almost no control of the content, aims and methods by state or independent pedagogical institutions.

Interreligious cooperation concerning the presence of RE in public schooling and also in the pedagogy of the religious communities themselves is still very rare.[8] This is a crucial point for countries where segregated societies still exist (as in Northern Ireland and in the former Yugoslavia). But also in countries without traditional tensions the reciprocal control of the presentation of the different religions in textbooks and syllabuses is mostly not developed.

There are still few examples of direct encounter with the religions in the pedagogical field, of visits in the places of worship as part of "outdoor schooling" and of lively learning. And there is little recognition of the rich cultural heritage and mutual influence of different religions in various parts of Europe (e.g. Judaism in many European countries, Christianity in Turkey, Islam in Bosnia and Spain). Additionally, conflicts and hurts in history should be reflected. This results in a number of recommendations:

– A new impetus on the part of the religious communities and the politicians is needed for interreligious and values learning, in order to face cultural-religious agnosticism, religious and ethnic fanaticism as well as relativism, from the side of the religious communities and from the political side.
– It should become part of the Interreligious Councils' and of multi-religious groups' efforts to assist the possibilities of interreligious and values learning – on the international, the national, the district and the local level.
– Religious communities should be partners for syllabus and textbook development (not only for RE, but also for history, geography and elements of the school ethic and school life). In confessional RE knowledge about other religions should necessarily be part of the curriculum. In multi-religious/non-confessional RE religions should be presented as "wholes" and as "systems of responsibility" (and not only in "piecemeal fashion"). Competent members of the religious communities should be asked and prepared to re-read new curricula, textbooks and teaching material.
– Interreligious experts can offer their service as mediators in cultural-religiously rooted conflicts or tensions (for example in questions of reciprocal participation in religious festivals, questions of school worship, clothing and physical education of girls, sex education, …).

Parallel to the development of recommendations of the *Peace Education Standing Commission*, a changing attitude concerning religion in education on the European political level emerged. After 2002, the Council of Europe started to pay attention to education about religions (and from 2008 also about non-religious convictions) in public schools across Europe. The earlier view of excluding the study of religions in state education – because religion was felt to belong only to the private sphere – was reconsidered. The events of September 11, 2001 in the USA were an impetus for change.

Robert Jackson has recently summarized the *Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States* on the dimension of religions and nonreligious convictions within intercultural education (Council or Europe, 2008a):

> The Recommendation provides guidance on education about religions and 'non-religious convictions' in the context of intercultural education... The Recommendation acknowledges diversity at local, regional and international levels, and encourages connections to be made between 'local' and 'global', the exploration of issues concerning religion and identity, and the development of positive relations with parents and religious communities, as well as organisations related to non-religious philosophies such as secular humanism. The intention is to introduce young people to a variety of positions in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance, within the 'safe space' of the classroom. (Jackson, 2016, p. 7)

In this process, it proved especially challenging to make clear that in the field of values and religious education more is needed than cognitive orientation – and that the treasures of religious traditions can really help with life orientation and identity building ("Learning from Religion").

In this context, the REDCo Research Project “Religion in Education. A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries” has been a valuable step forward. It was carried out in eight European countries: England, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation and Spain. The following features have been found in all these countries:

1. For those pupils who have no ties to organised religions, the school forms the main forum for learning about religion and the religious perceptions of other pupils.
2. For those pupils who belong to a religion, the school provides the main opportunity to come into contact with other religions.
3. Many of the pupils are prejudiced towards the religions of others, but at the same time are prepared to enter into dialogue with others whom they regard as interesting. The school provides a unique forum for them.
4. Almost all pupils regard teaching an interreligious understanding at both the personal and the societal level as a necessity and possibility. School offers possibilities to promote this possibility.[9]

The most ambitious overview is given by the project *Religious Education at Schools in Europe* (REL-EDU) at the University of Vienna, carried out since 2013, with 6 Volumes on RE in Central Europe, Northern Europe, Western Europe, Southern Europe, Southeast Europe and Eastern Europe.

The actual summary about the developments can be found in the Council of Europe’s book *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education* with recommendations for the policies in the member states. A chapter of special interest is how to link schools to wider communities and organizations. It gives “examples of how schools can build educational links with religious and other communities, including the organisation of visits to religious buildings, and of the role of members of religious and belief groups in giving moderated talks about their communities in schools, in which the role of the speaker is to inform (often through personal stories) and not to proselytise” (Jackson 2016, p. 12f.).

Finally, I would like to give examples of cooperation between interreligious initiatives and the sphere of public education.

BUILDING TRUST: FOUR EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

“Offene Türen” – An Alternative City Guide

In Nürnberg an interreligious infrastructure has been developed which has had an intense impact on the teaching and situation in schools: The local *Religions for Peace (RfP)* group has edited a brochure *Offene Türen. Religionsgemeinschaften in Nürnberg und Umgebung* (Open Doors. Religious Communities in Nürnberg and its Environments). In this booklet 32 different religious communities give brief information about the principles of their belief, the structures of spiritual life and their social and educational activities – including addresses, E-mails of contact

persons and presence on the internet. These have been distributed in the religious communities, the educational institutions and especially in the schools of the city. Besides personal information which is offered by members of *RfP* there is the society for Christian-Jewish co-operation, a Christian institution for the encounter with Muslims (*Die Brücke* – Bridge) and a Muslim institution for the encounter with Christians and people of other beliefs (*Begegnungsstube* – Meeting Room – Medina). There is the yearly *Woche der Brüderlichkeit* (Week of Brother- and Sisterhood) for Christians and Jews and the *Dialogwoche Christentum – Islam* (Week for Christian-Muslim Dialogue).

Open Doors/Hopen Deuren – A Project of Religions for Peace, Belgium[10]

The project is an example of informal learning, within the context of cooperation among city authorities, schools and religious groups, based in the world of the child's imagination and inspired by the idea of "doors" and the many physical and abstract associations this theme arouses in children of all social, cultural, and philosophical backgrounds.

The aim of this project is diversity education and contains the following elements:

- Leading to better knowledge of oneself;
- Looking at the diversity of interpretations, to discover "the Other" as different without value judgment or hierarchy;
- Educating for a culture of openness;
- Underlining the enrichment gained by diversity;
- Combating generalizations, categorizations, stereotypes, discrimination and any expression of same through violence;
- Encouraging action and universal commitment.

Activities start with observation and interpretation of five paintings. This leads children to begin to reflect on and come to grips with self through art, as interpretation is the prime indicator of self-knowledge. The learning process then leads from a personal, individual view to a wider view of community, culminating in the universal. The project starts from a picture (and other activities) to encourage the discovery of "the Other" without value judgment or hierarchy and underlines the enrichment gained by diversity. Additionally, the project focuses on possible incentives of committing to peace as a universal citizen.

In Antwerp, this project was set up with the enthusiastic cooperation of 600 pupils and their teachers from all types of schools, and not less than 15 cooperating groups and religious communities. This project idea and concept could easily be adopted by other countries and cities, especially where inter-religious groups or councils already exist.

The Global Ethic Project and Its Contribution to Education

Starting in Tübingen/Germany, the *Global Ethic Project*, initiated by Hans Küng, has developed to a manifold way of inspiration for interreligious and ethical

learning in Germany as well as abroad. It is based on the fundamental insights of the *Declaration toward a Global Ethic: The Golden Rule* – What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others, or, in positive terms: What you wish done to yourself, do to others! and the 4 irrevocable directives which are taken from the *Decalogue* – in the tradition of the monotheistic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the obligations of a lay Buddhist in a positive way: 1. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life, 2. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order, 3. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness, 4. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women. "Right from its inception, the Global Ethic Foundation has consistently attempted to make the substance of its work accessible to teachers. Working together with teachers from many different types of schools who teach many different subjects, and often after consultation with and support from university educationalists, it has developed and field-tested many different projects, materials and instruments for everyday pedagogical use" (Schlensog in Lähnemann 2015, p. 11). To mention just a few of the activities (a.a.O. 12):

The multimedia project: *Tracing the Way. Spiritual Dimensions of the World Religions* is a valuable educational tool. Its seven one-hour films, which are available in several languages as an international edition, have become a regular fixture in many media departments and school libraries, and the accompanying illustrated volume and interactive CD-ROM are not only used by teachers to prepare for this subject but also in many classrooms.

Based on this project an exhibition entitled *World Religions – Universal Peace – Global Ethic* was created. The exhibition is available in several languages and in various formats and has been successfully used for years not only in Germany but in many countries, all over the world. The exhibition has been shown in schools and in many different public forums: in banks, town halls, educational institutions and academies, in large organizations such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, in the halls of religious organisations, and in parishes and spiritual centres of the great religions.

Finally: With the Internet learning platform *A Global Ethic Now!* the foundation has moved into a whole new area of media communication. The website allows interested persons to learn about a global ethic interactively and to familiarize themselves with various aspects of the topic (religion, politics, the economy).

In addition, the *Global Ethic Foundation* has always offered *courses* and *training sessions for teachers* about the world's religions and many different aspects associated with the topic of a global ethic. It has also initiated and offers support for *school projects* and *inter-religious initiatives*, providing suggestions on the content of the projects and support to implement them. Especially in situations of social tensions there are schools which have developed a school ethos in cooperation of school administration, teachers, parents and students.

Standards for Interreligious Textbook Research and Development

In the framework of the *Peace Education Standing Commission*, we have initiated a research project, sponsored by the German Research Association (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft/DFG*), which has been carried out in the course of more than 10 years in the countries Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon and is still going on: *The representation of Christianity in textbook in countries with an Islamic tradition*. We found that – even in the age of audio-visual media – the importance of textbook research lies in the fact that school textbooks pass on fundamental knowledge to the younger generation: selected, methodologically prepared texts (historical and religious sources, stimulus texts, material for committing to memory), key themes, pictures, suggestions. In a situation of limited specialist training for teachers, textbooks often "teach the teachers" and play a substantial role in lesson planning.

Interreligious textbook research is of particular relevance in the face of the sweeping generalizations, prejudices and stereotypes regarding other religions and cultures ("Islam is like this" – "The West is like that") that were, and still are, to be found in school textbooks.

In our research, we have not only analysed ca. 500 textbooks but had also dialogue and exchange with colleagues in the 6 countries and partly also with cultural authorities and could observe improvements after our research. At the Nuremberg Forum 2010, we have invited scholars mainly from Europe and the Middle East but also from South Africa to identify a number of standards for interreligious textbook development.

As a result, we described 9 such standards which could also be seen as "signposts" for interreligious learning generally:

1. to give an authentic, professionally sound portrayal of the religions,
2. developing a dialogue orientated interpretation of religion and belief,
3. portraying the religions and their importance in the lives of real people,
4. how history is to be handled,
5. dealing with religions' cultural heritage and their contextuality,
6. the controversial issue of attitudes to the phenomenon of mission, to religious freedom and tolerance,
7. mutual understanding in the field of ethics,
8. the life conditions of the students and their relevance for religious learning, and
9. pedagogical and media didactic approaches which accept the students as independent partners in the learning processes. (Pirner & Lähnemann, 2013, pp. 147-159)

For each heading, we have summarised the need and the tasks involved; we have then described the respective problem areas, and finally we have set out the Standards to be achieved. The Standards have not only been published in the Forum volume, but also in magazines including the *Jewish Quarterly* and have also been translated into Arabic and been communicated with international agencies.

The four examples presented here are only a selection of many more existing relevant projects. They are chosen because they show the wide range of possibilities for interreligious education in different contexts and levels in teaching and action as well as in research – locally, nationally, internationally. They should serve as an encouragement to multiple initiatives of interreligious learning activities as ways to trust and mutual enrichment against all tendencies of separation, enmity and fear between religions and cultures.

NOTES

1 This chapter summarizes and expands the content of the brochure "The role of interreligious education in overcoming fear and building trust" of the *Peace Education Standing Commission of Religions for Peace* (PESC), ed. by Johannes Lähnemann. Nürnberg 2015.

2 "The Other" means the other person as stranger as well as a strange religion and/or culture.

3 These distinctions are inspired by Michael Grimmit (1973).

4 Summarized from Lähnemann and Schreiner (2009, pp. 5-7).

5 In France, religious education is excluded from state education because of the strict separation of state and religion according to the laicistic constitution.

6 See the contributions of Emmanuel Perselis for Greece and of Mualla Selcuk and Recai Dogan for Turkey in Lähnemann and Schreiner (2009, pp. 67-73, 74-80): a growing insight in these countries that education for tolerance and knowledge about other religions is necessary.

7 See Religious Education at Schools in Europe 2013ff.

8 This is an observation in most parts of Europe. See Lähnemann and Schreiner (2009). An exemption are the SACREs – the *Standing Committees on Religious Education in England* in which members of school staff and of religious communities work together.

9 Wolfram Weiße (2009) in Lähnemann and Schreiner (2009, pp. 82-83).

10 http://www.wcrp.be/100-portes-deuren-doors/index.htm

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ABDULLAH SAHIN

4. RELIGIOUS LITERACY, INTERFAITH LEARNING AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES

An Islamic Educational Perspective

INTRODUCTION

We are living in a world characterized by cultural and religious diversity and most significantly we are witnessing re-emergence of religion as a social dynamic increasingly shaping public sphere within what appears to be the dawn of post-secular democratic societies in the West. Different value systems based on deeper narratives of meaning, formed within distinctive historical and cultural contexts, are now living side by side. It is true that cultural exchange and dialogue have always been a significant part of the human story. The evidence for this lies deep in our own identities; each time we try to pin down what makes our identities 'unique,' we discover the traces of the 'other' in our self-understandings. Levinas (1999), guided by phenomenological methods suggested by Husserl and largely inspired by the theologically embed philosophy of Buber, demonstrates how subjectivity arises from the idea of infinity, and how infinity in turn is generated out of a deeper level of dialogue between self and the other. Similarly, developmental psychologist Kegan (1983) showed presence of a dialogical process shaping the emergence of distinctive meaning patterns that are constructed by a dynamic, evolving self throughout human life cycle.

At the sociological level, rapid technological innovations have facilitated much closer human encounters and played a key role in the emergence of today's globalised cultural condition, a truly novel social reality in human history. Increasing levels of diversity while offering opportunities for creative encounters and cross-pollination of ideas and experiences, also triggers the fear of the 'other' in us all causing the deeply rooted, often semi-unconscious prejudices to be remembered. Unable to face and engage with diversity we may easily retreat into our comfort zones where we project our fears and insecurities onto an 'imagined other.'

One of the most significant questions facing the world today is how we make sense of difference and the cultural/religious plurality defining our lives. Within the Western secular consciousness, religion is increasingly seen as an irrational reactionary force nurturing fanaticism, conflict and violence, and, therefore, less tolerant of diversity and perceived as a threat to world peace and harmony (Dawkins, 2006; Juergensmeyer et al., 2013; Friedmann, 2003). As such, it is

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 45–53.
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important to examine how our faith traditions understand difference, and the diversity of cultures and religions within the challenging context of the modern world.

This chapter, overall, argues that critical and reflective religious literacy together with educational competence for interfaith and intercultural dialogue and understanding need to be an integral part of mainstream as well as faith-based schooling organized within wider secular-liberal societies. Furthermore, I suggest that the loaded binary readings of the current cultural and religious diversity, expressed with the concepts like 'integration versus assimilation' or 'minority versus so called majority host cultures' (Laurence, 2012; Kivisto, 2002), are no longer able to account for the contemporary increasingly fragmenting and fluid social reality conceptualized by the late Zygmunt Bauman (2000) as 'liquid modernity.' Incidentally, it must be noted that K. Marx, a founding figure of modern social theory, has already successfully, at least for once, predicted that modernity 'will melt all that is solid' (Berman, 2010). This chapter as an alternative suggests what is more significant is to see the degree to which diverse cultures that make up the wider society are capable of being 'critical open' and ready to learn and engage with one another. As such, reflective religious literacy and interfaith understanding remain essential to nurture 'critical-openness' among children and young people. This civic and educational capital facilitated by a deeper culture of critical-openness is expected not only to bring about more engaging citizenship but also to contribute significantly towards the formation of a new inclusive sense of solidarity and social cohesion within culturally and religious diverse societies.

I will critically consider the possibility of a constructive role for religion(s) within contemporary secular/democratic polities. This will be followed by developing a reflective Islamic educational perspective capable of nurturing critical openness among European Muslim young people. It will be argued that such a critical Islamic pedagogy remains vital in enabling young Muslims to use their religious and cultural heritage as an educational resource facilitating civic engagement and inspiring service to common good and social cohesion.

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF FAITHS IN CONTEMPORARY PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES

Evidence from history suggests that faith traditions became civilizing forces whenever they had the confidence and competence to develop an inclusive attitude towards the 'other.' Within Abrahamic faith traditions, the diversity defining the human condition could easily be perceived as signifying Divine majesty and creativity (see Hebrew Bible Psalm 104 and the Qur'an 30:22/ 49:13 (in the Qur'an references the first number refers to the chapter (*surah*) and the second to the verse (*ayah*)). Therefore, in general terms, the difference was not only acknowledged, but also accommodated and encouraged to be articulated, so that the wider faithful polity could become a true cosmopolitan inclusive social reality. As such faith became a liberating educational force facilitating human flourishing, showing

respect for human dignity, and above all else, creating a broad social ethics for public life, whereby, the well-being of all is protected and served. Inclusiveness is not the achievement of only modern secular democracy. Faith traditions are equally capable of genuinely accommodating and creatively expressing human diversity.

However, when faith is reified into the framework of a rigid religious institution, it appears no longer able to civilise or be a catalyst for human flourishing. On the contrary, it becomes a strong, emotionally-charged overly sensitive force defining boundaries, and, therefore, vulnerable to be subordinated to serve individual and collective interests embedded within the wider social, economic and political power structures of a society (Hull, 1998; 1992). Religion, as an integral part of human experience, shows ambiguity and ambivalence that deeply informs the human condition. It must be stressed that the rigidity of tribalism, mostly associated with religions, is not the exclusive property of religion. Secularity, for example, a significant political principle of inclusiveness within liberal democracies, could easily be reduced to *secularism*, a dogmatic secularist ideology of exclusiveness (for more on this significant distinction, see Sahin, 2011).

Despite the long history of secularisation in Western societies, and the undeniable impact of this distinctive Western secular narrative on the rest of the world, today the social significance of religions cannot be denied. It must be stressed that in modern Western societies increasing cultural and religious diversity, coupled with growing distrust in the establishment highlighted with the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union (widely known as the Brexit vote) and with unexpected recent presidential election results in the USA, appears to be the cause of social fragmentation. This acts as a pretext for allowing identity politics and nationalism to re-emerge. In many ways, I think the hard-achieved consensus of inclusive secular ethics that has to a large extend provided a coherent sense of togetherness and direction in Western societies, is showing its fractious limitations in accommodating contemporary religious and cultural plurality in a just and meaningful manner. For example, despite the obvious faith dynamic informing individual and collective identities of diverse Muslim communities settled in Western Europe after the Second World War, they have been largely perceived and addressed within secular categories of race and ethnicity. It is only after tragic watershed events like '9/11' and the rise of reactionary resurgent political Islam in the wider Arab and Muslim world that secular policy makers have recognized the significance of faith (Islam) in shaping the sense of belonging among ethnically and culturally diverse Muslim communities in Western Europe.

With the arrival of Muslim migrants in secular Western Europe the discussions over the role of religion in the public sphere appears to have gained a new momentum. For example, the policy debate on public manifestation of religious symbols and sensitivities seems to have been initiated with the intense arguments over permissibility or banning of wearing headscarves and veils by female Muslim teachers in public schools in Europe (Bowen, 2008). In a way, while Muslims are struggling to reconcile their faith with the wider values of secular democracy, Islam presents a challenge to the secular/liberal consensus of governance as many

of its adherents show distinct faith-based needs to be accommodated and responded to. In these radically diverse and challenging conditions, we need to create inclusive social and political structures where presence of the 'other' is not simply tolerated, but integrated into the fabric of a shared social space. This requires new engaging communities' interest in developing contextual expressions of their identities, but also the wider societies' willingness to acknowledge, accommodate and most significantly, allowing such encounters to contribute to an inclusive sense of belonging to emerge. Moreover, in addition to a strong recognition of rights and responsibilities, I feel there is an urgent need to call for a new sense of shared social ethics capable of renewing feelings of trust amongst diverse communities that make up wider society.

Faith traditions by integrating basic universal moral values such as respect for human dignity and upholding social justice, can significantly contribute to the formation of this new shared sense of social ethics, essential in meaningfully relating to one another, and fostering a shared sense of belonging. However, this is conditioned upon showing awareness and coming to terms with the history of conflict and suspicion informing our religious memories. We cannot be naïve about the destructive consequences of the inherited imperial theologies which continue to shape our collective identities. More importantly, we need to be willing to *rethink* our faith traditions within the context of today. The act of rethinking is a necessary part of being able to 'relativize' (i.e. contextualise) our identities so that we can recognise, and be open to engage with one another. In other words, we need to show competence for 'critical openness' so that we can be reflective on our identities/cultural heritage, and be ready to learn from each other. In fact, 'critical openness' remains as a key competence which needs to be nurtured in multicultural societies so that a new sense of solidarity and social cohesion could be facilitated. If we are unable to show humbleness in contextualising our world views, we face the danger and in many ways, the 'violence' of reducing and assimilating the 'other' to the stories of our self-understanding. It must be stressed that faith, above all else, signifies human need and competence for both self-relativity and self-transcendence: i.e. recognition of having limitations encourages us to go beyond ourselves and remain open to the world around us and the reality beyond us (for a further discussion on 'critical faithfulness,' see Sahin, 2015, 2016).

THE CORE NARRATIVE INFORMING ISLAM'S MESSAGE TO HUMANITY: NURTURING CRITICAL FAITHFULNESS AND SERVING COMMON GOOD

When, as a Muslim, I start rethinking Islam in today's context, I realize that I need first to clarify the fundamental Islamic narrative and Islam's core message to humanity. The first step is to explore how Islam perceives human nature and makes sense of the 'difference' in principle that shapes the human condition and its personal/cultural articulations. This hermeneutic engagement enables me to discover that the Qur'an's core message to humanity and its theological vocabulary are embedded in a deeper universe of ethical meanings. According to the Qur'an, God by virtue of gifting humanity with life, expects recognition and gratitude for

this act of Divine generosity. Upon reflection, those who chose to acknowledge God's favour and willingly express their gratitude by worshiping Him alone, achieve the status of faithfulness, peace and serenity, they become *Muslims/Mumins* (literarily the terms suggest being in the state of peace and security and theologically they refer to the faithful believers who trust and voluntarily submit to the Creator). Faithfulness is deeply tied to the ethical status of being grateful to the Creator, and to be able to reciprocate to the goodness of the 'other.' Prophet Muhammad famously stated that, 'those who cannot be thankful to people, cannot be thankful to the Creator.' The Qur'an depicts the opposite of faithfulness as ungratefulness: those who chose to not acknowledge (deliberately cover-up, ignore and deny) God's favours and the gift of life, become *kafirs*, literally, the ungrateful ones. As such, in Islam's core narrative, the Divine-human relationship reflects reciprocity of rights and responsibilities, and most significantly, it is guided by a deeper relational and rationale ethics. That is why, in Islam the idea of justice is central. The Qur'an states that the entire reason for inspiring countless prophets is the expectation that they can become catalysts for enabling humanity to establish justice among themselves (57:25). The Qur'an elucidates clearly that God creates humanity, in the same essence as women and men, and as people of different cultures and faiths, so that humanity could be inspired to learn from one another (30:22/49:13). Clearly 'difference' in principle is seen as a positive reality, potentially, as an educational motivation for humanity to be open to dialogue so that they can learn from one another (*taaruf*) (49:13).

Similarly, the fundamental teaching of the Qur'an, *tawheed*, acknowledging the Oneness of God, also means being able to grasp a deeper level of unity and balance within the perceived contingency and diversity of human life. The idea is that humans should try to grasp the inter-connectedness and inter-dependence in nature and in human existence. This unifying vision of *tawheed* should guide humans, while reconciling their differences and resolving possible conflicts. There is also a clear awareness that some of the theological differences will never be reconciled in this world. The message is that we should respect our differences and what is un-reconciled should be left to God to resolve in the Hereafter. However, the Qur'an is at pains to stress that our theological differences should never prevent us from cooperating on serving the common good. We should transcend our differences and try to find 'common ground and fair compromise'; agree to acknowledge the Oneness of the creator and engage in producing good deeds for humanity (3:64). If there is any need to compete, the Qur'an insists, we should compete in doing goodness, ensuring the dignity and welfare of all is served (2:148). The Qur'anic narrative of human creation is deeply embedded in the sense of nurture/care and the responsibility to protect the gift of intelligent life that God has bestowed upon humanity. More significantly, humanity is entrusted with the 'stewardship of earth' (*khilafa*), i.e. serving nature by looking after it and managing it in a responsible and just manner. Because of this emphasis on upholding justice and protecting the well-being of all in Islam's central message, later Muslim legal thought recognised serving common good, *maslaha* as a fundamental source of law (*sharia*) in Islam. In other words, alongside the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions (*hadith/sunna*), a

Muslim judge needs to take into account factors such as serving common good and personal and social benefit while considering/resolving the cases in his/her court.

The emphasis on protecting human dignity and serving the common good define the Prophetic vocation of Muhammad. Unfortunately, due to space limitation in this book, I cannot elaborate on relevant prophetic traditions in detail. Yet I would like to illustrate the point with a few examples. Muhammad's trustworthiness and interest in being part of any activity that would bring about good for all is well attested to, even by those who did not necessarily accept his message. Ibn Ishaq (d.767), one of the earliest biographers of Muhammad, stresses that those who rejected the Prophet's message continued to recognize him with his pre-Islamic nickname *alAmeen*, the trustworthy one. Furthermore, Ibn Ishaq provides examples illustrating the Prophet's concern with the wellbeing and welfare of his people even though some of his close family members, i.e. paternal uncles, did not accept his message (for further examples see Ibn Ishaq, English translation by Guillaume, 2002).

Muhammad's native city, Mecca, was also a commercial centre attracting tradesmen from abroad. When the Meccan's decided to set up a special committee of the virtuous men pledging to protect the visiting foreign tradesmen's well-being and security, Muhammad joined the initiative. Many years later, after receiving the revelation, he would remember this committee, set up in so called time of ignorance (*jahiliyya*), with admiration. He was reported to have said that if the committee was active he would not have hesitated to become part of it as it served the public good. One of the famous prophetic traditions states that 'people should not cause harm or be subjugated to harm.' While commenting on this short prophetic statement a famous medieval Muslim theologian, Najmuddin al-Tufi (d.1316) produced a commentary that can be regarded as an early work on Muslim social ethics. He convincingly argued that protecting public good and human well-being are so central to the entire Sharia that they could even override the explicit textual statements in Muslim core sources.

CONCLUSION

My final point is pedagogic in nature as civic educational competence cannot be nurtured without presence of a critical and reflective educational culture. For more than a decade I have been working with Muslim young people and Muslim faith leaders in the UK. This experience of researching and teaching has convinced me that creating a self-critical attitude within the community remains the key to enabling European Muslims to contextualise their presence including their faith in Europe. A self-critical and self-reflective attitude is an essential requirement in developing the competence for 'critical openness,' which will facilitate intercultural and interfaith learning and dialogue. As such, a shared attitude of 'critical openness' by Muslims and the wider society towards the reality of plurality, both within the Muslim intellectual and civilizational legacy and within the contemporary world, indicates both stake holders' willingness to nurture and embrace a distinctive Islamic sense of belonging in Europe. This much-needed

initiative will aim to synthesize the significant contextual dimensions that inform European Muslim self-understandings today. Most crucially, it should be stressed that presence of such a 'critical open attitude' leads to a meaningful process of dialogue, reciprocity and gradually integration because it requires self-conscious critical engagement and assessment (Meijer, 2009). As a Muslim educator, I would suggest that in Europe today we need a Muslim theology that articulates a rational and meaningful way of speaking about God, that is capable of nurturing 'critical openness' towards both the entirety of our rich Muslim heritage and to the world around us, and that facilitates the emergence of an Islamically meaningful sense of belonging in Europe.

Of course, as mentioned above, such a theology of belonging is obviously predicated upon the possibility that the core sources of the Muslim imagination (the Qur'an, the prophetic legacy and the wider Muslim intellectual and ethical traditions) themselves encourage this critical openness and, most importantly, nurture what I term as 'critical faithfulness' (Sahin, 2015), which I shall return to below. In today's plural societies, critical openness remains the key to enabling diverse communities that make up society as a whole to engage in constructive dialogue and a meaningful way of relating to each other. Although these qualities of critical thinking, openness and dialogue are most commonly associated with secular modernity, I want to argue that they are part of the human condition and that diverse human cultures have all practised them to various degrees. Faith traditions have in principle advocated human openness towards an all-encompassing ultimate reality. In fact, nurturing a competence for transcendence seems to be a crucial aspect of human consciousness that enables us to limit our selfish impulses and reach out and be open towards each other. There is the temptation today to think that Muslim communities can be hectored into a culture of critical openness, or paradoxically that it can even be imposed in some way. This is counter-productive and wrongheaded. Instead, critical openness needs to be rediscovered in the religious and cultural civilization of Islam and nurtured within Muslim communities. This means that wider society should create the spaces in which this rediscovery of critical openness can take place in a nurturing environment. For me, in practical terms, this means that Muslim communities should support but also be supported to build educational competence in terms of the provision of professional training for Muslim educators, the development of educational resources, and improve the overall quality of teaching and learning within the community-based educational institutions such as *madrassahs* and *dar alulooms* (Islamic seminaries). If done in the right way, this would mean that Muslim communities could in their own terms lay claim to and nurture an internal logic of coexistence and sense of belonging in Europe.

As a Muslim educator, therefore, I ask myself how to enable young generations of European Muslims, whose life-world is informed by the presence of cultural/religious diversity, to draw on their faith heritage as an educational resource. This transformative model of Islamic education integrates Islam's heritage of critical education with contemporary reflective pedagogies and as such is carefully designed to challenge the formation of rigid religiosities. Its model of

learning guides and inspires young Muslims to develop reflective, inquiring and ethically responsible Muslim self-understandings, so that they can intelligently express their faith and peacefully channel their frustration and criticisms. It enables Muslim educators, faith leaders, schools and related policy makers and frontline agencies to monitor the religiosity of Muslim young people without isolating them. Most crucially, this intervention strategy is based on the conviction that education (*tarbiyah*) in Islam is perceived to be a lifelong process of 'compassionate transformation' (Sahin, 2017) that aims to facilitate human flourishing. Such a transformative Islamic pedagogy can foster values of 'critical openness to learn from one another' (*taaruf*), active citizenship and civil engagement. The aim is to help them integrate the diverse aspects of their experience into a meaningful synthesis of respecting one another and growing into faith and humanity. I provided (Sahin, 2014) a full account describing the impact of this 'transformative Islamic pedagogy' on diverse groups of Muslim educators and faith leaders in my book *New Direction in Islamic Education*, chapters 7 and 8.

To avoid rigid faith formations among the members of religious communities and to inform the wider secular public about religions properly, there is an urgent need to make religious literacy, inter-cultural and inter-religious competence, an integral part of the general education of all children. We need to offer our young people a reflective/critical religious literacy so that they could challenge extreme interpretations of their faith. Communities should be able to offer the rationale and ethics for relating to one another better through drawing on their religious and cultural heritage. Today, Muslims need to reclaim the legacy of critical education in their faith heritage so that they can much more constructively engage with the world around them. More crucially presence of a transformative and reflective Islamic pedagogy remains vital for the European Muslim diaspora to bring about a distinctive sense of belonging to the European Muslim *ummah*. Application of this reflective Islamic pedagogy can bring about engaging faith leaders, who in turn can help young Muslims to contextualise their faith in their contemporary reality. More than ever we need to develop an engaging Muslim public theology that is capable of drawing on the transformative educational vision of Islam, so that its humanizing ethos of upholding justice, protecting the dignity and well-fare of all can become apparent.

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SERGIO SALEEM SCATOLINI

5. RECALIBRATING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (IRE) IN MUSLIM-MINORITY COMMUNITIES[1]

> 'Perhaps a stable order can only be established on earth if man always remains acutely conscious that his condition is that of a traveller.' (…) Where hope is lacking the soul dries up and withers, it is no more than a function, it is merely fit to serve as an object of study to a psychology that can never register anything but its location or absence. It is precisely the soul that is the traveller; it is of the soul and of the soul alone that we can say with supreme truth that 'being' necessarily means 'being on the way' (en route). This has without a doubt been strongly felt throughout the ages by the spiritually minded; but alas, an arid scholasticism stifled the intuition. (Marcel, 1951, pp. 7 and 11)

Human communities are social entities. As such, they are both collective and particular. They are situated: one community is not the other. Space and time coordinates signal their finite existence as always-already being somewhere and at a given point in time. Communities do not encompass space and time; they are framed by them. Within time and space, communities develop multiple and multilayered identities, or cultures, which include norms and rules, languages and art forms, customs and rituals, economies and reactional activities, education and science, fashion and folklore, (his)stories and worldviews.

Objectively speaking, since human communities are made up of human beings, they share in their members' strengths and weaknesses. In and of themselves, our communities are not divine; neither do they possess divine attributes. Human communities are part of the created world: perfectible but never perfect (at least never so far). Nonetheless, some religious communities – such as Jews, Christians, and Muslims – believe that they have become depositories of divine revelations. These revelations are worded in human language and were revealed in specific places, at given times, and to particular individuals. However, believers – especially most Muslims – assign to these revelations attributes which could be described as quasi-divine (e.g. they are said to be wholly inerrant and universally valid across time and space, not essentially dependent on context for meaning, and not subject to change, very much unlike the whole of the created order). For example, Qur'anic norms are interpreted as being the unmovable and unchangeable divine Will itself. Those who try to be less pretentious might compare them to gravity and other laws of physics which apply everywhere on Earth regardless of culture, space, and time. Once religious revelations have been quasi-divinized, it

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 55–66.
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becomes understandable that some believers may think that people who do not accept their revelations (exactly as they understand them) are being illogically argumentative, intellectually insincere, and socially contentious. In their eyes, doing otherwise would be like accepting that gravity is an optional, cultural view.

In a tribal world, the view sketched above would feel natural. I have often been told that 'such is life, and only fools would deny it.' However, in increasingly globalized and urbanized societies, where tribes and clans become less and less important and relevant, religious communities perceived and felt as tribes often suffer from existential problems. On occasions, they can themselves turn into an existential problem for others – such as Da'esh, or the so-called 'Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant,' (ISIS or ISIL) has. As a Muslim, an educator, and a 21st century world citizen, I am keenly aware of the need for honest and multidimensional reflection on the issue of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), its nature, scope, guiding principles, and methods. In this chapter, *I advocate an approach to IRE which envisages it as being at the service of the general education of pupils and students*. I am, therefore, against using this school subject to indoctrinate children and youngsters in a way that is divorced from the rest of the body of knowledge that we have about the environment, the human mind, world cultures, the past, the cosmos, etc. Moreover, when I say 'education,' I do not mean the mere training of future workers, but the assistance that we owe our younger generations so that they find and claim their role in God's creation, and can feel at home in their own bodies, in the stories which they are a part of, and the places where they live. Although all school subjects should somehow contribute to this existential project – including Math, Geography and Physical Education – subjects like Islamic Religious Education have a special role to play in this.

THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IS IRE'S IMMEDIATE FRAMEWORK

Let me start by restating what I would often say to my own students in Group-T's undergraduate program in IRE in Belgium: *There is – or there should be – a clear distinction between religious education in schools and religious upbringing and training in mosques, Qur'an schools, or madrasas.* Mosques and the like are part of communities that exist for explicitly religious and devotional purposes, while schools and colleges are not. The latter belong to the education system of a country, not to its religious establishment. The schools and colleges may have been founded by people with religious motivation, but their function is not strictly religious. Their overall goal is to help pupils and students to ready themselves to take up their places in society as sustainers and co-creators of positive development. IRE should best be conceived of as an aspect of this process.

Furthermore, in countries such as Belgium where the religious education has been organized according to creeds, and most students choose to be educated from their own faith perspective,[2] I agree with Selcuk that:

> (…) the task of Islamic religious education is to enable each pupil to discover the individual whom God intended him or her to become. Therefore, I have

> always advocated an education that nurtures the pupils' minds and hearts in God's wisdom; so they can grow in what we call *musalama* (i.e., a peaceful relationship with God, with oneself, with others, and the creation). (Selcuk, 2013, p. 255)

Let me underline that IRE should never be confused with catechetics. IRE belongs to general education and should therefore seek to make positive contributions to the learners' construction of identities that are respectful of themselves as free human beings, of others as fellow human beings, and of their concrete communities. From this perspective, it is advisable to bear in mind Roebben's words:

> Young people do not need 'more' identity, they need a 'better' identity, one that is fitting into their personal narration and into the larger context of a culture of recognition, of persons recognizing each other in their otherness. (Roebben, forthcoming)

IRE is not geared to prepare future imams or missionaries. It is part of the holistic education of children and youngsters. As such, it must have cognitive, affective, and experiential dimensions (Engebretson, 2010).

In schools, pupils and students of IRE should be challenged to find meaning from content and context without losing sight of the pretexts with which God and religion are spoken about. The people engaged in IRE should be personally involved in the process and, in fact, they (we) always are, be it by commission or by omission. That is why IRE programs should not only engage people's intellectual curiosity. It should also be deeply related to their concerns, such as their identity and eternal destiny. Furthermore, as the cases of young European terrorists have shown us, the ways in which young Muslims answer their existential questions cognitively and emotionally can deeply affect the societies where they live (which entails that non-Muslims, too, indirectly have a stake in the discussion about IRE).

My suggestion is that *21st century IRE should encourage students, especially Muslim ones, to set out in search of knowledge and wisdom with an emphasis on the realization of values.* In our fragmented world, IRE ought to positively contribute to more harmonious lives and more functional communities wherever the learners may happen to find themselves. Muslim pupils and students must be made aware of their constraints and possibilities, as well as of their freedom and accountability, which are all characteristics of functional, fragile, and unique human beings (Roebben, forthcoming).

Given that more freedom goes hand in hand with more responsibility, educators and learners must not bury their heads in the sand. We must acknowledge the dangers of spiritual meaninglessness, apathy, sectarianism, and fundamentalism, and must, therefore, develop 'spiritual muscles' to face the challenges honestly and critically (Roebben, forthcoming).

Let me now elaborate on the components of my schematic view of IRE.

Search. The element of search is important not only as a 21st century disposition, but also as an Islamic faith attitude. Muslims believe that AL-LAH is the wholly Other, the Unfathomable One. Precisely because our God-talk will always be very anthropomorphic, we must continually try to go beyond our concepts. We must respect God's otherness from our linguistic and thought categories. In other words, IRE programs ought to seek to help pupils and students to realize that unless we accept that AL-LAH is different from our views of Islam – and even from the words of the Qur'an – we will run the real risk of worshipping an idol, a projection of our wishful thinking, fears, hang-ups, frustrations, anger, etc. For example, we may speak of AL-LAH as king (*malik*) because this metaphor is in the Qur'an, but we must also realize that it is a metaphor: God is not like any human king. AL-LAH does not think exactly like our kings, emirs, sultans, presidents, or prime ministers. Nor does He behave in a way comparable to theirs. God can never be self-preoccupied, touchy, or despotic as some human leaders can be.

Knowledge. The element of knowledge is also a key element of IRE. This is the learning-about-religion dimension that must gradually introduce pupils and students to the key beliefs and practices of the Muslim community. This ought to be done in a way that is true to life by showing the development of the tradition across time and space. Much of the ills that affect Muslims today have to do with lack of historical consciousness. Far too many believers have anachronistic understandings of our faith. They fail to grasp the truism that the core Qur'anic message may be timeless, but the rest of the tradition is not.

Wisdom. Furthermore, young Muslims with incipient knowledge should be helped to seek for wisdom. This is the learning-from-religion dimension of IRE. Knowledge is important, but it is not always appropriated existentially. It does not always enhance the lived experience. But wisdom does. Wisdom encapsulates "a collective experience representing a social and practical worldview. It looks more like ethics than the other human sciences. But while ethics is limited to human actions only, wisdom encompasses all human actions and relationships and a worldview" (Önal, 2010, p. 222). Wisdom, unlike knowledge, seeks to combine general principles and particular situations. It entails being humble, honest, patient, and observant. A clear focus on wisdom could be an antidote not only to all sorts of fundamentalism, legalism, or ritualism, but also to cultural bigotry and chauvinism. As Muslims, we may not agree with other worldviews and religious traditions on matters of faith, but we can still learn from their wisdom. Such a mindset could enhance communities and promote solidarity, especially in multicultural societies.

Values. Finally, IRE for the 21st century ought to train pupils and students to discover the values behind the norms and practices of the Islamic tradition. By realizing that most of those values are not exclusive to Muslims, young Muslims may be encouraged to seek ways acceptable to both Muslims and non-Muslims to crystalize some of those shared values in their communities.

In short, IRE cannot limit itself to what must be thought about Islam; it must be an endless workshop, or atelier, of how to think islamically by searching, analyzing, reflecting, and learning in the presence of and in collaboration with

others, including non-Muslims. By *thinking islamically*, I mean thinking in light of the grammar of the Qur'anic faith. In other words, when one thinks islamically, one looks at life through the prism of the belief that AL-LAH is the only absolute Being and that He is involved in the human story.

IRE: CONFESSIONAL BUT NOT SOLIPSISTIC

Even though IRE belongs to general education and not to catechetics, it is essentially religious. It comes not only from a deist mindset that posits the existence of a Deity, but also from a community's theist experience that acknowledges revelations as signs from on high. IRE is learning about religion in religion. This entails, for example, that although 21st century IRE programs will most probably speak of human rights, these will not be founded only upon philosophical considerations, but more specifically upon insights gained from the religious foundational event. Furthermore, this also implies that even within an open and tolerant inter-religious setting, certain differences with other religions and worldviews will not be seen or presented as "ephemeral and insubstantial" (Barnes, 2010, p. 29). IRE is confessional education.

Whether one likes it or not, one religion is not the other. Believers make choices for a religion not only because it feels more right than the others, but also because it is believed to more accurately articulate the spiritual dimension of human life (e.g. the God-human relationship, right and wrong, and the afterlife). "Religious statements," as Hacinebioglu (2010) rightly indicated, "are mainly truth assertions not only about the world and affairs of the world but also the world as a metaphysical sphere of existence" (p. 77). In other words, it may be expected of IRE that it condemns the killing of non-Muslims purely on the basis of religious differences, but it would be illogical to expect that it fully agrees with the understanding of spirituality espoused by Animists, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, or Christians. In Barnes' words, "The challenge for religious educators is to develop strategies that develop respect for others, while acknowledging their right to be different, to believe different things and to follow their own particular conception of the good" (Barnes, 2010, p. 36). For example, it would be unreasonable to ask of Christian pupils or students that they acknowledge the Qur'an as God's final, authoritative revelation or of their Muslim counterparts that they accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Any education – or indeed any legislation – aiming to do something like that would be unjust by 21st century standards. We need what Roebben has described as 'learning in the presence of the other' (Roebben, forthcoming), which includes the usual learning about, from, and in religion, but now acknowledging the irreducible presence of the other and their right to be different from us. Roebben sketches out the different dimensions of this kind of religious education as follows:

*Learning **about** religion*	*Learning **from** religion*	*Learning **in/through** religion*
Representation	Presentation	Presence
Understanding the representations of the other	Respecting the presentation of the other	Re-defining and re-dignifying my own presence in the light of the other
Information	Communication	Appropriation
Teacher provides knowledge and overview as an expert	Teacher manages the communication in the classroom as a moderator	Teacher confronts the students authentically with lived religion as a witness

Without honouring the other's presence and religious rights, our communities would land in relationships dictated by 'an eye for an eye' dynamic which, as Gandhi rightly observed, would leave the whole world blind. The type of learning in the presence of the other endorsed here excludes violence or coercion. However, to wholeheartedly embrace such pedagogy of the faith, important parts of the Qur'an and aspects of the Muslim tradition will have to be revisited and re-appropriated. These are the texts which have been articulated in terms of them-versus-us and us-versus-them and which include killing and warfare against the other either 'in the name of religion' or being legitimized with religious arguments.

Of course, the idea of being both non-judgmental and confessional IRE bears an inner contradiction. On the one hand, Muslims will advocate and demand for themselves and others the right to be different and to live differently, while, on the other hand, they will also preach that their own metaphysics and ethics are universally valid. This dichotomy may not always be apparent in Muslim-majority communities, but it has been in the West for some time, and it has also started to be in the global online village. Consequently, IRE must help Muslims to renegotiate their appropriation of the Islamic tradition. If all religious communities – including the Muslim *ummah* – were to live in an endless apologetic and proselytizing mode, it would become extremely difficult to find a modus vivendi, or a way of life (Barnes, 2010), that can preserve peace without necessitating the dominance of some and the subjection of others (which has been the norm in Islamic jurisprudence ever since the so-called Constitution of Medina). Muslim educators and learners must agree to disagree and compromise in acceptable terms whenever necessary.

In short, IRE for the 21st century should aim not only to enhance 'religious literacy' (Wright, 2006), but also to encourage the learners to live in different ways

and in dialogue with different beliefs as a way to "contribute to a diverse and respectful world community" (Barnes, 2010, p. 39). Diversity cannot be reduced to a vague shared core, not even among Muslims. If Al-Qaeda and Da'esh have taught us Muslims anything, it is that 'we' is not the plural of 'I' (Carmody, 2010, p. 44, quoting Noddings). 'We' includes at least one more person different from me, and it is, therefore, not all about me, my beliefs. IRE should help us Muslims to keep our eyes firmly on the promise of Paradise, but it does not give us the right to turn our society into living hells for others, either Muslims or non-Muslims.

IRE: CRITICAL AND *SELF*-CRITICAL

The long history of the Muslim community has been marred by internal strife. Not even during the Prophet's life was absolute peace the norm. Muslims have killed Muslims, and they still do. This cannot be ignored since problems cannot be solved unless those who have them recognize that they do. IRE for the 21st century, both as learning about and from religion, should go beyond the shared essentials of our Islamic tradition. It should empower the learners to be critical of themselves and of our tradition. The desired uniformity and unity ought not to whitewash the divergences and disunity in the thought and life of the *ummat al-muslimeen wa-l-muslimaat*. Religious literacy should intellectually and emotionally equip pupils and students to articulate their own religious faith and stance "in as much of its ambiguity as possible" (Carmody, 2010, p. 48).

For example, 21st century IRE programs should help students to fight against the institutionalization of religious scruples. Among Muslims this is done by making people feel that Muslims need the opinion of a scholar before engaging in or abstaining from the most frivolous acts, such as applying nail polish (in the case of Muslimas) or saying 'Have a blessed Friday' to other Muslims. Muslims must realize that these kinds of questions are not only a sign of (collective) spiritual illness, but also a complete disservice to the religion and the Deity it proclaims. We should always ask ourselves what image of God – what concept of God – our religious questions and answers evoke and convey. In other words, what kind of PR are we doing for AL-LAH? To think that a mundane act such as polishing one's nails, which ordinarily has no ethical implications at all, will doom a person to the Hellfire is not a sign of religiosity. It implies that God is being perceived as a Hitler-like being.

Female Muslim students often ask whether their ritual ablution will still be valid if their nails have been polished. In such cases, critical IRE should underline that nail polish has no inherently ethical or magical properties. Neither has it been declared *haraam* by a Qur'anic verse. The Qur'anic norm regarding ritual ablution is simple, namely:

> O you who believe! When you rise to perform the prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles. If you are in a state of major ritual impurity, then purify yourselves. But if you are ill, or on a journey, or one of you has come from satisfying a

> call of nature, or you have touched women, and you find no water, then resort to clean earth, and wipe therewith your faces and your hands. God desires not to place a burden upon you, but He desires to purify you, and to complete His blessings upon you, that haply you may give thanks. (Q. 5:6; Nasr, 2015)

No *hadith*,[3] or prophetic tradition, or scholarly opinion should take us away from the essentials of the revealed text.

1. The Qur'anic text simply states that Muslims must wash and wipe some clearly indicated body parts before praying.
2. It also indicates that in the event of major ritual impurity, the Muslim who is about to pray must also purify the body parts involved in it.[4]
3. In the case of lack of water, Muslims can use clean earth.
4. In relation to the ablution prior to prayer (and beyond it), AL-LAH wishes to remain a lenient, reasonable, and practical God.

In short, believers ought to avoid playing mental gymnastics to make religious practice unnecessarily difficult, not even out of piety. 'Washing,' said to a medieval audience like the original audience of these Qur'anic verses, meant washing, not pre-operatory sterilization. For example, women can still 'wash' their hands even if their nails have been polished. In fact, they do all the time, such as before cooking.

Educators should help students to realize that wanting to turn religious practice into something for which expert advice is needed in order to perform ordinary tasks is not a sign of piety but of a mind that needs counselling. 21st Century Muslim youngsters ought to understand that a reasonable God asks reasonable things from His servants. On the other hand, a dictator-like 'god' will most probably expect unreasonable things to placate his dysfunctional ego.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our religious life is a lifelong attempt to surrender to the reality that only God is divine in and of Himself and nothing else is (neither us, nor the Qur'an, nor the Prophets). This endeavor cements a person's freedom to become someone as well as their existential duty to live conscientiously and reflectively. Freedom and responsibility are not transferable. This is an existential fact and a central Qur'anic teaching.

مَّنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

> Whosoever is rightly guided is only guided for the sake of his own soul, and whosoever is astray is only astray to its [*sic*] detriment. None shall bear the burden of another. And never do We punish till We have sent a messenger. (Q. Al-Israa, 17:15; Nasr, 2015)

As a result, each individual's unique effort to become someone – hopefully an increasingly better creature – and to come home to themselves and make a home in

creation for themselves turns human life into a *living* relationship between oneself, other creatures, and God with existential and moral dimensions. This metaphysical and theological understanding of our selves from the viewpoint of creatureliness reveals important aspects, limits, and potentials of who we are and how we do, could, or should mold our shared lives.

Consequently, as a school subject, IRE is of a special nature. It belongs to the category of subjects which seek to teach pupils and students about facts and ways to use that information to create wealth or promote health, but also to inspire them to enhance personal and collective growth and holistic wellness. IRE cannot limit itself to exposés of historical scenarios, legal matters, or cultural-anthropological rituals. It ought to be about living life consciously and in as free and responsible a way as possible vis-à-vis ourselves, each other, and our Creator.

IRE will – indeed, it ought to – bring into the classroom the past and the future, but it should never lead them into thinking that the dead or the yet unborn are people with whom we can have an actual personal relationship. Hence, IRE should even help the learners to understand that Muhammad bin Abdullah – the final Prophet of the *tawheed* (monotheism) – was inspired and guided by God for as long as he lived. Then, he died. And with it, the refreshing waters of his prophetic inspiration – and, indeed, of all binding prophecy – dried out. When we read a *hadith*, what we hear is not the Prophet's living voice, but an echo[5] of it as relayed by past generations of Muslims. Consequently, if IRE teachers were to convey the idea (or the feeling) to their students that the Prophet is alive and speaking to us 'live' whenever a *hadith* is read, they would be doing a disservice to the students. In order to awaken his society, Nietzsche proclaimed to them the death of the Western, cultural god. In order to awaken Muslims and Muslimas as thinking and critical people, we need to proclaim the death of Muhammad bin Abdullah, on the one hand, and the ongoing presence of AL-LAH, the Ever-Living, on the other. As a result, our IRE curricula must embrace the idea that AL-LAH wants us to be 21st century men and women, not carbon-copies of medieval Hijazi Arabs.

Embracing our freedom and responsibility as post-modern men and women does not mean that we will become hypocrites, picking and choosing what suits our sensibilities and sensitivities. Our endeavor to surrender to the truest reality accessible to us will not become any easier. On the contrary, when *taqleed*, as the (quasi-superstitious or magical) imitation of the past for the sake of imitation, is seen for what it is, we Muslims will realize that it is built on the belief that AL-LAH has frozen history and mandated us to re-live it as pieces of a museum. 'Doing one's *islaam*' in the 21st century in ways that acknowledge generational and geo-social differences calls for more determination, intellectual effort, and sincerity (*ikhlaas*) than repetition or imitation does.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I propose that IRE be all about searching for Islamic and religiously relevant knowledge as a doorway to wisdom and about striving for the realization of higher Qur'anic and human values in the presence of and together with other

Muslims as well as non-Muslims. For, ultimately, whatever we say about the Islamic Message will reflect either positively or negatively on how people conceive of AL-LAH. In other words, a monstrous religious discourse and praxis will be perceived as representing a monstrous deity, just as a generous religious lifestyle bespeaks a generous God. If our God-talk is based on solipsistic, anachronistic or fascist readings of the Islamic sources, our thought and practice will imply either that we believe that God is solipsistic, anachronistic or fascist, or that He expects us to become so. However, if we proclaim an Islamic Message that focuses on the aspects of our tradition which highlight fairness, mercy, and togetherness as creation's response to its Creator, those around us and ourselves will be more inclined to believe that the God Whom we worship actually cherishes these values in divinely perfect and all-encompassing ways.

Having said this, whatever we think and say about God, we must remember that despite the anthropomorphic elements present in the Qur'anic text, its Message is essentially apophatic. Nothing is like God, and God is not like our projections, rationalizations, hangups, or wishful thinking. The Islamic profession of faith that AL-LAH has no partners applies to our feelings and emotions as much as it does to Prophets, Holy Books, and religion as such. The Qur'anic text clearly indicates that we must learn to be each other's partner and to avoid identifying God with anything in the created realm.

فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا ۖ يَذْرَؤُكُمْ فِيهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ.

> The Originator of the heavens and the earth, He has appointed for you mates from among yourselves, and has appointed mates also among the cattle. He multiplies you thereby; naught is like unto Him, yet He is the Hearer, the Seer. (Q. Surat Al-Shura, 42:11; Nasr, 2015)

Despite sharing much of the Bible's creation narratives, the Qur'anic text excludes the idea that anything in creation – including ourselves or the Qur'anic text – is 'God's image and likeness.' In the created realm, we are all creatures, neither essentially divine nor God-like. Therefore, our knowledge of ourselves, society, history, or the universe may indeed function as signposts along the way, but it eventually is unable to provide us with the final and accomplished picture of what God might be like. We must accept God's absolute otherness, and our shared human similarities. Consequently, IRE should ideally instil in our pupils and students a twofold desire: on the one hand, the aspiration to grow in apophatic (*tanzeehi*) spirituality and, on the other hand, the desire to grow in just togetherness (or human partnership and solidarity). Human languages such as Qur'anic Arabic may convey the gist of God's Will for us, but AL-LAH is greater than any language and all of our God-talks. We Muslims must, therefore, strive to avoid arrogance and seek humility in our thoughts, deeds, and words. Moreover, at times, silence will become the most adequate language to express our creatureliness and religious piety (*taqwa*).

NOTES

[1] This contribution offers a preview of a broader, ongoing research project which deals with conceptual issues related to Islamic Religious Education, from both pedagogical and theological perspectives, as well as with general challenges and concrete, personal suggestions. Moreover, although there are not references to all of the works listed in the references/bibliography, they play an important role in the broader project to which this contribution is an introduction.

[2] In Belgium, pupils and students in government (or community) schools must choose between religious and non-religious (i.e. humanist) education. Moreover, if they opt for the religious track, then they have to choose one subject from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist variants.

[3] A *hadith*, or *hadeeth*, is a usually short account about what the Prophet said or did himself or implicitly allowed others to do.

[4] This is usually understood as referring to *ghusl*, the more comprehensive manner of ablution, or washing, 'which is required in the case of major ritual impurity, such as caused by menstruation, sexual intercourse, seminal discharge and according to some, touching a dead body' (Nasr, 2015, p. 279, in the commentary).

[5] An actual echo or an alleged echo depending on how demonstrable the connection of the account to the Prophet is.

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AAD DE JONG

6. LEADING INTENTIONS OF INTERFAITH EDUCATION CONCEIVED AS CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of religious education? People have different thoughts about this. Many stakeholders today want to broaden religious education to interfaith education. Then the goal is to teach students to live better with people who have another faith. Sometimes, proponents intend to serve citizenship education with it. In this sense, I interpret for example the overall aim of the United Religions Initiative (URI) "to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings" (www.uri.org).[1] But what is meant by that, exactly? Not everybody agrees on the answer to that question, either. In this chapter, I want to make a contribution to the discussion: what are precisely the intentions of interfaith education?

In doing so, I make extensive use of philosophical insights elaborated by J. R. Searle. Searle's philosophical work contains useful clues for discerning the precise objectives of interfaith education. His theory about the construction of social reality is very serviceable to identify more precisely what constitutes citizenship and, consequently, citizenship education (Searle, 1995, 2010). His speech act theory is very enlightening for the communication with others who practice different faiths (Searle, 1969, 1999). His approach of the human mind is very helpful to determine more accurately what education implies (Searle, 1983, 2004). And his ideas about the connection of all these elements are very clarifying for the coherence of the various intentions of interfaith education as citizenship education for all (Searle, 1999, 2008).

In addition, the structure of this chapter is based on a distinction that Searle makes between different intentions of activities. He sees a distinction in the directness or the proximity of intentions (Searle, 1983, pp. 79-111; Searle, 2001, pp. 44-45). Based on this distinction, I will distinguish between three different kinds of intentions regarding interfaith education. The first category covers the ultimate intentions of interfaith education conceived as citizenship education (par. 1). The second kind involves the more direct intentions, which should be realized to implement this interfaith education, and which form the planning of this education (par. 2). And the third level of intentions consists of the direct intentions which underlie the educative activities themselves.

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 67–81.
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ULTIMATE INTENTION: PARTICIPATION IN OUR HISTORY (WITH GOD)

I would like to begin with the ultimate intention. The reason for this is that the ultimate intention determines the function and relevance of all other intentions. Imagine that you want to promote peace by means of citizenship education, in the sense of tolerance towards others who practice different faiths, or you want to promote justice, interpreted as equal rights for men and women. Are those justifiable choices in terms of an ultimate intention? That will depend on how these choices will be elaborated.

In relation to the elaboration of the ultimate intention with interfaith education, I agree with those who state that the promotion of participation must be the ultimate goal. What are the reasons for this choice and what are the implications of it? Participation is the realization of collective intentions (we-intentions) or the collective knowledge of facts (we-cognitions). These types of intentionality always imply three points. First, there is the personal contribution or share of the participants themselves. For example, my participation in the money circulation implies that I myself spend, save or loan money, and that I personally know the value of that money, etc. Secondly, there is the cooperation with other participants or the joining with other co-users. Buying something is always buying from other persons. And knowing the cost of an article is always knowledge of the price agreed upon with the vendor. Third, there is the institutional whole in which people participate, with examples such as the circulation of money, the value of money or the system of property rights. Even if one chooses participation as the ultimate intention for interfaith education as citizenship education, the underlying collective intentionality will have these three elements. Then, this education is intended to promote that individual persons with their personal faiths join and participate in greater social wholes, like collective activities and collective knowledge.

The intended participation can be volitive and active or cognitive and receptive – or both. The distinction concerns the direction of fit. But what exactly is meant by direction of fit? Let me clarify this by indicating the difference between seeing a rose and wanting to pick a rose, i.e. the difference between a successful perception and a successful intention. In both cases, there is a mental intentionality to the rose. But what is the difference between the two modes of intentionality, i.e. between a perception of an object and an intention to do something? If it is a successful perception it fits to the rose. Then the direction of fit is mind-to-world. In the case of the intention to pick the rose, there is an opposite direction of fit. If the intention succeeds, the action fits to the intention (in this case the intention of wanting to pick the rose). This means that the intention is realized (the rose is picked). Then the direction of fit is world-to-mind. This difference applies not just to perceptions and intentions, but to broader categories of intentionality as well. It is particularly relevant for the distinction between all cognitive forms and all volitive forms of intentionality. So, cognitive forms of intentionality – like memories and convictions – have a direction of fit of mind-to-world as well. And other volitive forms of intentionality – like plans and desires – also have a direction of fit of world-to-mind. This distinction in direction of fit, however, should not be confused with another distinction that is relevant for the difference between cognitive and

volitive forms of intentionality. That is the distinction in direction of causation. Take again the intention to pick the rose and the perception of the rose. In the case of the perception, it is the rose that causes the perception. The direction of causation is then world-to-mind. Here, the direction of causation is exactly the opposite of the direction of fit, since in perception it is mind-to-world. By contrast, in the intention to pick the rose, it is the intention that causes the action. Therefore, the direction of causation is mind-to-world, while the direction of fit is world-to-mind. And this last direction of causation applies to all volitive forms of intentionality, including plans and desires. Conversely, for all cognitive forms of intentionality, including memories and beliefs, the direction of causation is world-to-mind.

Coming back to participation as the ultimate intention for citizenship education, this distinction is very important. The way we can participate in our international security system is a nice example. Joining the fight in a just war is active and volitive participation. In such a case, the activity will fit the intention and so the direction of fit will be world-to-mind. Participation in the collective memory of the Second World War, on the other hand, is a form of cognitive and receptive participation. Then the direction of fit is mind-to-world, so in the opposite direction. These directions of fit run opposite to the direction of causation. In regard to the causation of the collective memory of an event, the direction of the causation is event-to-memory, whereas the direction of fit is memory-to-event. And concerning the causation of a collective fight, the direction of causation is mind-to-activity, but the direction of fit is activity-to-mind. There are many good reasons not to limit our ultimate intention with citizenship education to participation in the mere cognitive sense, by narrowing it to the sharing of the collective knowledge of society, for instance. Firstly, because citizenship is a status function with rights and obligations. To fulfil the duties of a citizen you have to participate in a volitive sense as well. This also applies to interfaith education that is conceived as citizenship education besides.

This double-sided participation as an individual citizen is primarily a personal participation alongside other citizens in the greater whole of society. So, throughout this chapter I will claim that our first and ultimate intention with citizenship education should be the promotion of this societal participation. This greater societal whole to which I referred, is a system of interrelated status functions of all kinds – like citizenship – where a person or object ‘X counts as Y in context C.’ These status functions carry a system of deontic powers. What exactly is meant by deontic powers supported by status functions? Simply stated it includes everything anyone is permitted to do and is obliged to do if he or she has that status. These are called powers because they are capacities or possibilities to exert influence on someone or something even if this influence is not actually fully exercised. So, the system of deontic powers carried by status functions is the system of “rights, duties, obligations, requirements, permissions, authorizations, entitlements, and so on,” ranging from the right to vote and the obligation to pay taxes, to the authorization to defend one’s property (Searle, 2010, pp. 8-9). Some deontic powers are conditional. A person is only entitled to receive a pension if he

or she has reached the retirement age laid down by law. And some deontic powers are disjunctive, like the power to register as member of a political party. Within a society, differences in deontic power often lead to conflicts. Personal participation in the prevention or resolution of such conflicts could be an important aspect of the ultimate intention with interfaith education conceived as citizenship education for all. The reason for this is that people's religious beliefs always play an important role in their societal participation. Personal participation in the policy on refugees is a striking example of this. But society is not limited to our own nation state – or our own welfare state, for that matter. This institutional whole is always part of greater institutional wholes and broadens into these greater wholes, like the European Union and the United Nations. This has important implications for societal participation as the ultimate intention which underpins interfaith education that is construed as citizenship education.

But the intended participation has an historical dimension as well. This is the actual, concrete participation of individual citizens in the entire development of a people and a society during their lifetime, and it concerns their participation in long-term history as well. Deontic powers granted by status functions in societies change over time due to human activities. Changes in unemployment benefits in welfare states will not happen automatically. People participate in these developments, concretely and actively. For this reason, our second ultimate intention with citizenship education should be the promotion of actual participation in the whole history of society, understood as a system of institutions with their deontic powers carried by status functions. But "deontic powers provide us with reasons for acting that are independent of our inclinations and desires" (Searle, 2010, p. 9). My ownership of my bank account gives other people reasons to keep their hands off that money. It follows then that these desire- and preference-independent reasons are liable to change as well. The deontic powers of citizenship provide us with reasons for acting that are independent of our inclinations and desires. People can personally participate in the collective prevention or remediation of deterioration in the system, and participate in the collective improvement of this whole system. But there are different kinds of reasons, for example economic reasons and reasons of environmental protection, which are difficult to combine. So, one has to choose what to prioritize. Education always plays an important role in these developments, for example in the fight against unemployment. Interfaith education can provide assistance as well. Typical for religious education has always been a strong focus on the past – concentrated in particular on the historical sources of religions – accompanied by a focus on the long-term future – in the form of attention for the utopias of the religions. To promote the kind of historical participation in the improvement of social institutions which I sketch in this chapter, it is necessary that faith education includes learning the ability to cooperate with people with another faith. And during everybody's lifetime this cooperation needs to be maintained, leading to an ever-expanding history.

Moreover, precisely with a view to religious education, the intended participation also has a third dimension. This is the secular participation in the

higher, broader or more profound whole in a religious or non-religious sense. It is not another kind of participation, but only another dimension of it. By way of their participation in society and in virtue of their participation in the development of societal institutions, people participate in that whole. For many Christians that whole is the Kingdom of God. For many atheistic persons, it is the course of evolution in a world devoid of God, for example. A notion that is very relevant for this dimension of participation is the notion of rules. This is because religion is often seen as a set of precepts or rules for life. In this context, it is relevant to see the distinction between constitutive and regulative rules. Both are important in a society. Regulative rules are of the form 'do X' and constitutive rules have the form 'X counts as Y in context C.' An example is chess. The constitutive rules of chess are the rules of the game as such. These rules are constitutive of chess in the sense that playing chess does not exist apart from these rules. The regulative rules of chess, on the other hand, are the rules for playing chess in a correct or good way. The golden rule of reciprocity, 'treat others as you would wish to be treated,' is a regulative rule upheld by many religions in the world. But the rule 'Sunday is a day of rest' is a constitutive rule in a Christian context, in the sense that observance of this rule generates a fact in that context. Following this rule and defending it against overruling by political decisions for economic reasons, could be an instance of participation in this religious sense as well. It makes sense to have this 'religious' participation in mind when organizing interfaith education understood as citizenship education. This kind of 'religious' participation needs to be deepened, expanded or exalted continuously, to become participation in an always greater transcendent meaningful whole.

This threefold participation which I discussed should be as free as possible. Indoctrination is wrong. But what does it mean for interfaith education to be driven by the ultimate purpose to promote free participation, for instance free speech? First, there will always be a gap between good reasons for realising this participation and the free decision to do it (Searle, 2007, pp. 46-55). Education can never fill that gap. The only bridge is the self. Second, that self is not a kind of a homunculus in anyone's brain, but the formal principle of a free person which an individual has to assume (Searle, 2008, pp. 137-151). In this sense, the self is not a polyphonic self to be filled in the course of education, resulting in a lot of different voices which the student has in his head. It is purely formal without any content. And third, participation becomes more free to the extent that an individual weighs up more and better reasons to act, and to the extent that he or she becomes less dependent on external causes. But the possibilities for making free choices to participate are always limited by the brute facts of nature and the institutional facts of the society. On the other hand, the institutional facts can provide good reasons for participation, just like one's faith can. Following the gospel or the Qur'an provides good reasons to work for poverty alleviation in developing countries, for instance. So, the key to free participation as the ultimate intention which underlies all education, is to help students to find and weigh up good reasons for this participation. That is also the case for interfaith education construed as citizenship education.

Last but not least, the threefold participation that is envisioned here should be as 'just' as allowed by the entire system of institutional facts. Regarding the participation of citizens in society, justice concerns especially the distribution of goods and deontic powers according to constitutive rules in relation to the whole system of institutions in society. Justice is not fairness in the sense of fair play as following regulative rules. Neither does it come down to overlapping consensus. It is the value and norm that is decisive for the right distribution of goods and deontic powers in accordance with the standards of reasonableness, equity and proportionality. These standards are the constitutive rules in societies that exist for the creation and recognition of status functions, and in this sense, they are absolute. For instance, social contracts remain intact as contracts although there could be 'pragmatic' reasons to override them (Searle, 2010, p. 189). In the Netherlands parents have the constitutional freedom of education, in the sense that they have the right to choose in what kind of school their children will be educated. This value and norm can sometimes be overridden by the government, due to the government's duty to guarantee the quality of education in schools. But it is unjust to jeopardize the constitutional freedom of education by playing it off arbitrarily against the value and norm of good education in schools. Here, justice is at stake. And the ultimate criterion has to be that education really improves the just participation of the students in the just distribution of goods and power in society, with its entire complex of institutional characteristics. Only when interfaith education is shaped by the intention to promote this kind of just participation, can it justifiably be designated as 'citizenship education for all.' And only in that case can it override the constitutional freedom of education, an exceptional measure that needs to be weighed and approved by official judges whom we all recognize as such.

In summary, the ultimate intention we should have with interfaith education envisioned as citizenship education for all, should be the promotion of free and just participation in the history of our society as an institutional system (with God).

PRIOR INTENTION: COMMUNICATION OF FAITH IN LANGUAGE

What knowledge, which skills or capabilities should interfaith education try to cause in order to promote this participation? And how should this education try to cause a will in (future) citizens to participate in accordance to their individual faith or ideology? That is the question of the prior intention of interfaith education viewed as citizenship education for all. An illustrative example of the objective to be pursued, could be the participation of a Muslim boy and a Hindu girl in the struggle for equal rights for men and women. What knowledge or competence should interfaith education try to cause, in this case? That is a difficult question, because there does not yet exist enough evidence-based knowledge about the effectiveness of specific educational means, which, if available, could determine the planning of interfaith education in view of these ultimate intentions. But at least we can derive some general principles from these ultimate intentions, to guide the planning process. Knowledge of and critical reflection about similarities and

differences in official views and rules within the five world religions, is not sufficient for participation with others in the sense of a realization of collective intentions. Neither does a so-called ‘change of perspectives’ suffice, which remains only a process in the mind of individual persons.

In order to be able to engage in collaborative participation with other persons, you have to be able to communicate with them. Mainly for that reason, the prior intention should be to try and trigger communication about matters of faith concerning social institutions. Communication is the first and foremost requirement to achieve personal participation with other people in collective activities and collective knowledge. For instance, the personal cooperative participation of a Muslim and a Christian in a western democratic state, requires two-way communication of their religious convictions and desires in relation to sharia and democracy. Comparison of the five world religions could be useful, especially to learn about the background of persons with a different faith. But it is not enough to participate with fellow citizens who have their own, personal faith. Critical reflection is not enough to achieve this, either. And communication is a more precise prior intention than encounter or dialogue. It is the understandable imposition of mental meaning on physical forms, and the recognition of that meaning imposed by other persons on their sounds and signs. This is possible if both partners in the communication follow the same constitutive rules for this imposition of meaning in a context, which is familiar enough for both. This communication is the most functional activity for the intended personal participation in the aforementioned social, historical and ‘religious’ sense. And what (future) citizens should learn to communicate in interfaith education, is faith. In this context, ‘faith’ includes all kinds of religious and non-religious convictions, desires, memories, intentions and emotions concerning social institutions and the improvement of these.

The intended communication not only consists of receptive or cognitive communication, but also includes active communication. It does not only imply learning to understand the speech acts or written texts of other persons, but also learning to express the own experiences, memories, convictions, desires and intentions of oneself in an understandable way to other citizens. Perhaps it is important to stress that understanding is not the same as interpretation. In interpretation, the hearer or reader imposes his own meaning – like the predication of characteristics or ways of doing on the speech or writings of others. In real understanding, the point is that the hearer or reader only recognizes the intrinsic meaning of the language signs as intended by the other. For an atheist, understanding the expression of a Muslim that ‘Allah has 99 names’ is not the same as imposing his atheistic interpretation. It is the recognition of what the Muslim wants to say with this assertion. Moreover, in this two-way communication, both partners combine two levels of intentionality. The first is what they want to communicate, such as their convictions and desires. The second level is the intention to communicate these mental states. This is an important point, because people can have all kinds of religious convictions and other mental states and processes. But if they do not have the intention to communicate these

and if they keep them in their head, they are not able to cooperate with others and hence unable to participate in collective activities. Christians and Hindus in India who only think about abortion and euthanasia, do not participate in the improvement of legislation about it. This example might also illustrate how useful it is for the realization of participation that individuals learn to communicate about their faith with other (future) citizens, who have a different faith or ideology.

Now, the intended communication should consist in the understanding and realization of functional speech acts. These can, of course, also be written language. And with those speech acts I do not mean the locutionary acts of making sounds or producing signs. Nor am I thinking here of the so-called perlocutionary acts like convincing another person or comforting someone. Such perlocutionary effects do not only depend on what someone says, or on how someone performs a speech act. In these cases, the mental state of the hearer or reader is at least as important as the perlocutionary act. For the causation of these effects is not based on rules, at least not on constitutive rules for meaning. However, here I mean by speech acts the so-called illocutionary acts like asking questions, making promises, stating negations etc. Of these acts, there exist five main types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations (Searle, 1979, pp. 1-29). They are all functional for participation as a faithful citizen in society, and thus for communication which seeks to promote participation. For example, the participation of Dutch Christian citizens and Dutch atheist citizens in the European Union not only requires that they are able to communicate their beliefs about important issues in assertions or negations. While voting or when giving other permissions, when advising or when pleading, they also give directives to their representatives in the European Parliament to act in the way they want them to. And they already give directives when they ask other people what they want to do with the European Union. Questions are a sub-type of directives. They are the communication of the desire that your conversation partner will say something that fulfils your desire to gain a particular piece of knowledge. Commissive speech acts such as promises, appointments and contracts are particularly relevant for one's participation as a citizen with a personal faith. The relevance of expressives – such as thanks, apologies or condolences – is perhaps less obvious in this context. Declarations, on the other hand, play a crucial role in communication regarding institutional facts. This is because all the status functions in a society owe their existence to implicit or explicit declarations, by means of speech acts which take the form 'hereby I declare that X counts as Y in this context C.' Moreover, the intended communication does not have to be limited to the literal meaning of these serious types of speech acts. In religious communication about social reality in particular, this communication should be broadened to playing with polite indirect speech acts, using metaphors and analogies, irony and fictional discourse. Those are very functional in religious language games.

This game with speech acts should have relevant propositional content. Its use points to three key factors for interfaith education. First, one has to learn to refer to those identifying aspects of social reality which are relevant in connection to the faith or ideology of particular groups of people. In Sri Lanka, in religious dialogue

between Christians and Buddhists about arrangements for health care, it is important not to refer purely to medical-economic aspects of such institutional facts and practices, but to refer to diaconia, compassion or other religiously relevant aspects as well. Secondly, it is important to learn to predicate the specifically religious characteristics of these objects, features or ways of acting. Complaints about these arrangements could contain the predication of qualities that are wrong according to their faith. And thirdly, this propositional content has to be a unified whole without reduction of the reference to a predication which takes the form of a 'concept' or 'theme,' and without the reduction of predications to references to objects. The smallest meaningful language unit is a total speech act. And if a speech act contains a propositional content, the smallest unit is a whole proposition. This is an important point for the planning of all education which tries to cause communication, and, by extension, for the planning of the kind of interfaith education envisaged here, as well.

But the main problems with respect to this interfaith education arise due to the unfamiliarity with the 'strange' cultural and religious background of the other. The 'war on terror' in America could be a good example. Most Christians and Muslims wanting to participate in this war, are motivated to do so coming from a very different background. Like always, this background is comprised of a whole mental complex of assumptions, practices, attitudes and capabilities, which does not determine communication as such, but at least hinders or enables it. But the biggest problem arises from the fact that this background forms a mental whole which is devoid of representations of reality. It does not represent facts or acts like experiences, memories or desires do. Normally people are not aware of this. And in the case of intercultural and interreligious communication, interlocutors are not familiar enough with the background of the other. Very often this causes xenophobic fear of cooperation and communication. That is the reason why it is so difficult to familiarize oneself with a 'strange' background, at least up to a degree that two parties begin to understand one another and succeed in making themselves understandable. It is, therefore, also the reason why it is so functional to make people aware of and familiar with the relevant parts of the background of their conversation partners, in order for the intended communication to succeed.

But there is more. The interfaith communication that is envisaged here, has to be as equal as is required for communication. This equality prescribes equal opportunities for all to communicate, and observance of the same rules and facts by everyone. Citizens often talk to each other about their tax obligations, for example. I can imagine that atheist and Muslim citizens in Turkey disagree about the tax regulations in their country. Here, the issue is not whether all human beings are equal for the law or for Allah, or whether all have to pay their taxes according to the same tax regulations. The point here is that all are able to follow the same rules of meaning in order for there to be understandable communication via speech acts, and that in order for there to be such communication, they are required to do just that. For instance, a superior must lie as little as a subordinate does, and a Muslim should abide by a contract just as an atheist is required to do. Religion does not act as an impediment to opportunities for intelligible communication, nor does it act as

a hindrance to understanding the rules for intelligible communication. People have to learn to understand that this is the case, especially in the context of interfaith education which has the intention to improve interreligious communication.

In addition to ensuring that equality is observed and applied uniformly, the communication in question has to be rational as well. That means as rational as is desirable for understandable communication. Rationality concerns the logic and relations between speech acts. Consider the example of a Jew and a Muslim living in Israel, who want to communicate about the family policy of the government in relation to gay marriage. Whether their communication will be rational as communication does not depend on the reasons they give for their convictions, desires and other mental states, but on the logical relations between the speech acts. Their communication is not rational when they contradict themselves, or when a response to a question contains a proposition about an entirely different issue. In the past, the rationality and logic of language has been mostly restricted to propositional language. But one of the advantages of speech act theory is the widening of communicative logic and rationality to the relations between complete speech acts (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985). If you want to ask another person a religious question about gay marriage, it is not rational to assert a firm thesis about it. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to elaborate all the implications of illocutionary logic for interfaith education. But I want to stress here that potentially 'overriding' arguments for choosing less rational forms of communication never undo the validity of illocutionary logic as such. With respect to the curriculum reform in intercultural and interreligious education, there may be good reasons to widen the scope to cultures and faiths which differ from our Western rational tradition. But that does not imply that this tradition itself should cease (Searle, 1995).

In summary, the most necessary prior intention we should have with interfaith education as it is conceptualized here, should be to try to cause equal and rational communication of faith in functional speech acts with relevant content against a familiar background.

INTENTION IN ACTION: EDUCATIONAL MENTAL CAUSATION

In view of the prior intention to trigger communication, what should be the direct intention with educational action itself? What can teachers in Australia do in class if they want to cause communication between Muslim and Buddhist pupils? By what kind of factual educational activities or perceptions can a teacher try to foster the capacity and the will among the students to communicate in that way? That is a difficult question, because there does not yet exist enough evidence-based knowledge about the effectiveness of specific means for education designed with these prior and ultimate intentions in mind. But from these prior intentions we can derive some general principles for the educational activities.

In any case, the direct intention must be the real intentional mental causation of improvement of this communication. This causation does not just come down to facilitating or conditioning or triggering a regular cause-effect relation like in

billiard games. It is an activity to make something happen based on the experience of regularity under causal relevant aspects. An illustrative example could be an educational causation pursued in a school in the United States of America, which is to achieve that pupils with an atheist background can – and would like to – communicate with pupils with a Muslim background on rules governing border controls and the issue of closing borders. What is causation here? It is important to bear in mind that educational causation is the opposite of explanation. It has to make something happen. And in education it always takes the form of mental causation in the sense that – at the very least – either the causative agent or the effect is a mental state. As educational causation, it has to be intended as well. However, the educational causation that is intended is not only – and not first and foremost – a causation within one person, but between persons. It is typical a causation of something in other minds or bodies. In education, the intention of the teacher is to always cause an effect in the mind or the physical capacities of the pupils. In case of interfaith education, the intended effect is the free choice to communicate with individuals who adhere to different faiths, and acquirement of the capacity to do so.

Like participation and communication, causation has both an active or volitive side and a receptive or cognitive side. An example could be the educational causation intended by a teacher in a Chinese school, which is that pupils from an atheist family want – and would like to – communicate with fellow pupils from a Taoist family about the topic of national finance. As is the case for all educational causation, there seems to be an asymmetry here. In education, the teacher, parent or educator typically is the person who causes in the active sense. He or she has to cause effects in the pupils, children or learners. The active side of educational causation by the teacher is giving instruction, especially through directives, also through questions, in this case for example by asking questions like 'what do you mean exactly' or 'why do you say that.' The receptive side of educational causation in the pupils is the intended understanding of the instruction or the perception of visual causes like a film or video, for example. That is the top-down causation of something which has the upward direction of fit. Of course, the pupils or students can learn something by themselves as well. But often that effect is not intended by them. So, in the learners the causation is receptive with an upward direction of causation and a top-down direction of fit. The individuals who learn can cause the learning effects by themselves, as well. In that case, they cause in an active sense. 'Learning by doing' was the old slogan. And it is even more complex because pupils can also cause learning effects in each other, sometimes intended as well. There are a lot of learning materials used with the intention to cause education effects. Sometimes they even substitute the teacher or other pupils. Nevertheless, the educational basic form of causation is: educator causes actively – effect in learner/pupil is caused receptively.

Now the first step in achieving the intended educational causation should consist in the attempt to motivate the pupils to engage in the communication envisaged within the interfaith education program. It always remains their choice. But at least education can give them good reasons to make their choice. Or it can help them to

understand particular reasons, which have to be reasons they can personally relate to. But what kind of reasons could motivate students to participate actively in this type of learning processes? As an example, we can imagine a situation in Japan. In a particular school, a teacher wants to motivate his or her Buddhist pupils to improve their communication with a number of pupils who have a Shinto background. Specifically, he or she intends to encourage them to engage in communication about safety and law enforcement by police in the city. What reasons might motivate them to get started? Probably it is not that difficult to get them to communicate about safety and law enforcement as such. But motivating them to start talking or writing about ideological or even religious aspects of safety and law enforcement is probably more difficult. In general, it might help if the teacher appeals to their needs and interests. But that is never a sufficient reason to motivate someone to begin cooperating and start communicating with others. Appealing to the public interest, the common good or some sort of categorical imperative falls short for the same reason. The point is not that every individual ought to do something for society as a whole or the public interest because of a universally valid regularity for instance. The point is that every individual has to want to do that in cooperation with others because of a personal motivation. In any case, altruistic reasons must be part of the student's motivation. The consideration that people only come to themselves through interaction with others cannot be an altruistic reason. Then the other only serves my self-interest. However, neither should these reasons be weak altruistic reasons like the motive for offering hospitality or the appeal that other human beings make on me to help them if they are in trouble. Probably there is already a much stronger altruistic motive available, which is provided by human language itself. A motive that already commits people to act in an altruistic way. A question is a directive to give an answer. And a promise made to another person, obliges one to keep it. That is probably a reason why the language of the teacher, students or other, unfamiliar people should already provide a strong altruistic motive to get involved in the intended communication. This applies only to the language by which questions are asked and appointments are made. And in order to respect the free will of students, indirect requests are a good pedagogical tool, since they are strong motivators like: 'Shall we agree that we now talk about …?'

In addition to motivation, the most central part of educational causation is the (re-)presentation of the intended communication or elements of it. Of course, this implies the (re-)presentation of speech acts and their meaning. And the three main elements are the classic forms of educational causation: 1. imitation of examples, 2. explication of elements and 3. repetition or training. But in this context, the most important and most difficult part is the presentation of the 'strange' background of the 'other' in the classroom, insofar as such backgrounds are not conscious. How can educators, other persons or educational means help pupils to become more familiar with the 'strange' cultural and religious backgrounds of individuals who adhere to a different faith? Suppose that in the UK a teacher wants to spend an 'interfaith' lesson on communication about decency, values and norms. The main conversation topic is the question 'What is normal in our country?' In the class,

there are also pupils with a Jewish and a Hindu background. How can they become sufficiently familiar with each other's background, especially insofar as they are not aware of it themselves? Honestly, I do not have an exact answer and I guess that this problem poses the greatest challenge to interfaith education. I suspect, however, that a key may lie in contrasting and provocation. This is a delicate strategy. For how is it possible to provoke without evoking resistance or hostility? At this point I think that the most effective means will be to ask each other polite questions about the intentions of the communicative acts and about the reasons that conversation partners have. And by comparing those reasons the different cultural and religious backgrounds might become more conscious to the individuals themselves, and more familiar to others.

But there is still a third possibility that exists for educational causation. And for improving both social institutions and the communication with regard to social institutions, this element of education could be very functional. This element is imagination, meant here as the ability to fantasize about institutional facts and acts in interfaith communication. Doing the exercise of pretending to communicate about something by role-playing this communication, might stimulate the cooperative exploration of new and better interfaith communication construed as citizenship education for all. But I want to add a warning. It is very tempting to consider role playing as the best form of educational causation by which to achieve the kind of interfaith education envisaged here. But it requires careful preparation and careful subsequent reflective communication to have truly the desired effect.

All these ways in which to bring about educational causation should operate in solidarity. Solidarity means that people with more opportunities help those who have fewer possibilities. In this case it concerns unequal opportunities for learning to participate, by learning to communicate. One of the problems here is that solidarity in education often remains limited to solidarity with members of the own group, in this case one's own nation and religious community. Here, often the golden rule of reciprocity is inserted, e.g. 'Treat others like you wanted to be treated by them,' which is a directive issued by many religious groups. And for the content of the participation and communication envisaged here this is, of course, an important principle. From this rule, one can also infer that solidarity in the field of interfaith education should be extended to all human beings. But precisely because educational causation is asymmetrical, it does not quite hold up in the relation between educators and learners. However, there must be another kind of solidarity as well, but then in the simple sense that education has to try to break the language barriers between all those involved as much as required for the communication of matters of faith.

And last but not least, all interfaith education conceived as citizenship education has to be as professional as it is functional. Professionalism always concerns the standards of quality in a particular field. In this context, professionalism does not only require the possession of sufficient expertise in the field of social institutions, such as knowledge of political and economic issues that relate to citizenship and citizenship education. It also implies possession of sufficient know-how in the fields of theology and religious studies, and knowledge of relevant elements of

psychology and sociology of religion. And the most important professional requirements are adequate knowledge and skills in the domains of interfaith education and didactics. That is indeed a very complex professionality, quite apart from the normative dimension of the profession. Obviously, it has major implications for the education of the educators. And probably, we should draw consequences for educational practice as well. My advice would be: proceed, but don't move too fast. The extent to which interfaith education conceived as citizenship education can succeed, is limited by the level of professionality of those who want it and perform it.

In summary, our ultimate intention with interfaith education that is specifically intended as citizenship education for all, should be the promotion of free and just participation in the history of our society (with God). To that end, the most functional prior intention for this education should be the attempt to cause equal and rational communication of faith regarding social institutions in functional speech acts, with relevant contents against a familiar background. And the underlying intentions for educational activities which are undertaken to achieve this prior intention, should be the solidarity and professional motivation to participate in this communication, the (re-)presentation of the conditions for success in regard to this communication of matters of faith, and the pursuit of imagination in order to find better ways to communicate such matters of faith.

NOTE

[1] URI prefers to write 'Earth' with a capital letter, for it is not earth with a small e, as in the land surface of the world, that is meant here. By Earth with capital E, this international interfaith network refers to "the planet, third from the sun. In context of the vastness of our universe and the universes, the Earth is our island home where all living beings and plants are interdependent and carry the responsibility of holding up our end of the life equation along with guarding the integrity of the other life forms" (http://www.uri.org/the_latest/2011/10/for_the_benefit_of_the_earth_community).

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MUALLA SELÇUK AND INA TER AVEST

7. COMMUNICATING QUR'ANIC TEXTS

A Model for Intra- and Interreligious Education

INTRODUCTION

In the latter decades of the twentieth century, migrants from Turkey and Morocco confronted Europeans with a previously unknown religion: Islam. However, because these migrants were perceived as 'guest' workers, no serious efforts were made to organize inter-religious encounters.[1] In this global age, Muslims all over the world face the challenge that preserving their religious identity and responding to the challenges of the times is not an easy combination; it generates tensions. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, Muslim migrant workers and refugees force the native-born inhabitants of their countries of residence to listen to the voice of the so-called 'newcomers.' Native-born and migrant inhabitants have to reflect on the position they adopt towards 'the other.' In this chapter, we specifically explore how the Qur'an – as the Holy Scripture of Islam – provides Muslims with inspiration for this encounter. We begin our investigation with the texts sent down to the Prophet Muhammed, and subsequently refer to the understanding of texts which deal with the differences that arose amongst followers of the Prophet. In the second paragraph, we examine Qur'anic verses regarding the encounter with followers of so-called neighbour religions – Jews and Christians. The ideas which scholars have developed regarding these encounters, are expanded on and articulated in a 'Communicative Model,' presented in the third paragraph. We conclude this chapter by expressing our hope that this 'Communicative Model' stimulates scholars to continue their reflection on interfaith dialogue.

REPRESENTATION OF QUR'ANIC TEXTS; *INTRA*-RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

Every Muslim, be it in a mono-religious context or in a multi-faith society develops a relationship with the Qur'an as the word of Allah. The norms and regulations as described in the Qur'an are leading for Muslims all over the world. Muslims develop a relationship with the Qur'an due to interacting with multiple contexts – in their family with their parents, at school as a result of their teachers' efforts, by reading articles from theologians in journals or at internet, or by reading the Qur'an themselves (Selçuk, 2012, p. 12). Every person, either by listening to recitations of the Qur'an, or by reading the Qur'an, understands the text within the scope of his/her frame of reference; every person understands the Qur'an in his/her own way.

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 83–93.
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Qur'anic texts, however, have particular characteristics, which they possess due to the influence of the historic period in which the Qur'an was received by the prophet Muhammed, and due to the context in which the people lived whom Mohammed told about his godly encounters. A context that is clearly different from that of today's readers and listeners. To understand the essential meaning of the Qur'an requires intellectual effort (ibid., p. 12). Special teaching methods are preconditional for Islamic teaching and learning, and for understanding the basics of Islam. First of all, students should be provided with knowledge about the revelation period of Islam, and should learn about the situation in which the first addressees lived. This is preconditional, since in the Qur'anic texts many examples are given which relate to the concrete facts of this world, and to the worldview which the first addressees adhered to. For example, for the addressees it was a very common practice to pray to a variety of gods, whereas the Qur'an spoke about the negatives of polytheism. To give another example, in those days the birth of a girl was less valued than the birth of a son, and by consequence some parents buried their new-born daughters alive. By way of the Qur'an, Allah told them that they would be held accountable for this after death. Additionally, the way Paradise is described in the Qur'an, conveys an impression of worldly pleasures in those days. An approach to multi-religiosity is shown in the Qur'anic verses about the relationship with Christians and Jews, which is addressed because Christians and Jews were neighbours in those days. The text and the context existed side by side (ibid., p. 13). People in those days had no difficulty whatsoever in understanding what was meant. Questions which occupied the followers of the Prophet, such as "menstruation, the situation of women, orphans, how plunder was to be distributed, even the movement of the moon" (ibid., p. 13) were answered by *suras* sent down to the Prophet. The first addressees had a direct relation with the Prophet.

However, when the Prophet died, this direct relationship was severed, and the process of interpretation(s) started. The first followers had unmediated, personal memories, but once that generation had died, the reception and understanding of Qur'anic texts became a different one. It was not only the succession of generations which resulted in different receptions and understandings. The encounter with people from other cultures, too, made it an urgent matter to care for the transfer of existing knowledge about texts, shared habits and rituals. *Hadith* scholars dedicated themselves to a precise and scientific representation of the sayings of the Prophet by "developing criteria for differentiating the trustworthy *hadiths* from the untrustworthy ones" (ibid., p. 14). The result of the work of *hadith* scholars were techniques for representation and heuristic interpretation, which differed from one another. "The appearance in Muslim history of different views held by scribes, exegetes, theologians, *Sufis*, and philosophers indicates that, historically speaking, it is virtually impossible to see Islam as imposing only one perception and only one view" (ibid., p. 15).

REPRESENTATION OF QUR'ANIC TEXTS; *INTER*-RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION

There is no 'one Islam,' with regard to how the messages from Allah to the Prophet were received by Muslims. There is no 'one Islam' either, with regard to how the messages are received and interpreted by people who do not (yet) know of them, or adhere to other narratives that constitute their worldview. The Prophet Muhammed was sent to a polytheistic society, "to introduce Allah who is also the source of the People of the Book" (ibid., p. 19). The similarity of Muhammed's message to the narratives of the Jews and the Christians is not surprising, since the divine source is the same. This similarity invited close relationships with the People of the Book. Below, we refer to Qur'anic verses about the relationship between the Qur'an and the Holy Books of the Jews and the Christians (ibid., pp. 21-22).

> And before this, was the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy: and this Book confirms (it) in the Arabic tongue; to admonish the unjust, and as Glad Tidings to those who do right. (Al-Ahqaf [46]: 12)[2]

> It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) … before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgement between right and wrong). Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah, will suffer the severest penalty, and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution. (Al-'Imran [3]: 3-4)

These verses underline that, according to the Qur'an, guidance for the believers is provided by the Holy Books which were sent down earlier.

That the People of the Book can be trusted, despite the fact that they give preference to their own Holy Scripture (either the Torah or the Gospel), is expressed in the following *ayah*:

> To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety. (Al-Ma'ida [5]: 48)

Sometimes, Muslims are even advised to go and talk with readers of the Book when they doubt the truth of the revelation:

> If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee: the Truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord: so be in no wise of those in doubt. (Yunus [10]: 94)

Besides texts which make us aware of the tensions that might arise from living in diversity, we also find texts in the Qur'an that tell us about the reasons why conflicts might arise, and which offer solutions for possible conflicts. One of the reasons for conflict is that some adherents of other traditions use what is sent to them in their Holy Scripture purely for their own benefit. Of course, this happens only in a minority of cases. With regard to this issue, the message of the Prophet to Muslims is to refrain from classifying all People of the Book in one category,

instructing them instead 'to bring nuance in their relationship with them' (ibid., p. 25). Nuanced distinctions are the means by which communication with 'the other' can begin:

> And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except in the best way, unless it be with those of them who do wrong: but say, 'We believe in the revelation which has come down to you and in that which came down to you. Our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we submit (in Islam). (Ankubut [29]: 46)

The message here is that a dialogue with 'the other' should start from what is shared and ought to continue with questioning what is different *in the best (possible) way*. Such a dialogue, we suggest, would be built on the *willingness* to question what is different, the *desire* to learn the meaning of this diversity, and the *ability* to appreciate those differences as enriching experiences which stimulate the mind and the heart. A dialogue of this quality ought to be developed as a very natural aspect of living together in cultural and religious diversity. This is a valuable lesson, and just as relevant to our contemporary times. In days which precede ours, this lesson was put into practice by both laymen and scholars.

It is on the shoulders of all these forerunners that we built our model for *intra-* and *inter*religious education, designed for contemporary pluralistic societies. However, we are not copying the work of previous experts in the field. To establish a bridge between the Qur'an as Holy Scripture which was sent down, and Muslims and adherents of other religious traditions in our present time, serious scholarly work has to be done. We present our 'Communicative Model' as one of the many initiatives to inspire the faithful in contemporary times, drawing both on the *suras* sent down to the Prophet and the different receptions and interpretations written by respected *hadith* scholars.

COMMUNICATIVE MODEL

Religious education should create a space for the creation of meaningful relations between the content of the Holy Scriptures and *Hadith* on the one hand, and the life experiences of students on the other. The focus of religious education nowadays, should not be on the presentation of ready-made solutions or the memorization of prescribed answers, but on the facilitation of 'conversation' with the writings of a multitude of scholars on the possible significance of historical texts for contemporary times. Good teaching should not limit itself to a literal presentation and interpretation of texts taken from the Qur'an, but should extend to their visionary meaning. Prescribed answers or ready-made solutions taken from past traditions are of little assistance: every person has his/her own unique journey (Selçuk & Valk, 2012, p. 447). Religious education should challenge students on how to establish a relation between these texts and the diversity of earlier interpretations, and the existential questions deriving from their own life experiences (ibid., p. 445). The content of the Holy Scriptures (and this is the case for Muslims, Jews and Christians) becomes meaningful only when linked to the

students' own experiences, and when these are reflected upon in conversation with others – parents, friend, colleagues. Dialogue should be encouraged in religious education, since it opens one's mind for the perspective of the other. Not the defence of a single perspective should be central, but the exploration of a variety of perspectives in order that every participant in the dialogue is able to find his/her own religious positionality. Crucial, then, according to our view, is a pedagogical strategy that fosters students to look at reality through the eyes of others instead of having them approach their existential questions through only one point of view. Put differently: for learning to be effective, students require a framework to realize that *how* we know something is at least as important as that *which* we know. Education is about more than the transmission of information; it is there to assist students with the creation of meaning (Palmer et al., 2010; Parks, 2011). We are of the opinion that this kind of model for a teaching and learning strategy must meet the following criteria (Selçuk & Valk, 2012, p. 449).[3] The model is designed to help students to recognize the spirit of the Holy Qur'an, its holistic worldview, and its ultimate intent. It should:

1. Help students to view the Islamic heritage and the world as a meaningful whole, rather than as unrelated and isolated pieces of information.
2. Validate the importance of asking basic questions, like what it means to be human, and what it means to be Muslim.
3. Teach students how to integrate the information which they have acquired about Islam into new frameworks of meaning (which will help them to meaningfully integrate social science theories and theology).
4. Impress on students that everyone has a worldview.
5. Help students to increase their self-knowledge and knowledge of others.
6. Help students to grasp the nature of their own beliefs and to become increasingly aware of the beliefs of others, so that true dialogue can develop.

Below we present a series of questions and the conversations between students which followed from these, during a religious education class. Such questions are very often answered in the manner portrayed below, indicating that Qur'anic texts are taken in a literal, unreflected way. The following conversation about gender roles in society took place between female students (Selçuk, 2016, pp. 5-6):

Example 1

A. Why do you turn the headscarf into a major issue when you talk about women in Islam?

B. What do you mean … Don't you know that the headscarf is something universal which is taken from the Qur'an?

A. I'm not sure, it may be a part of Islamic culture formulated at a time when things were different from what they are now.

B. No! We're dealing with a universal principle here. Because the Qur'an is a universal book and whatever it says is universal.

A. I don't think so. I think the principle could be applied in a different way but I don't know how! I feel like being pulled in lots of different directions!

Example 2

A. Are women suited to become religious leaders?

B. May God protect us from the catastrophes of the times!

C. Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity! Says Islam.

Example 3

A. Our biology shouldn't dictate our destiny. We're socialized to view ourselves as dependent, less intelligent and as derivative from men.

B. Yes. From an early age, we are taught the role of subservient beings and learn to value ourselves through the eyes of this patriarchal culture.

C. Islam itself is not the source of restrictive gender roles. The problem lies with interpretations of the faith which are negative towards women, and accounts of the sayings of the Prophet which have been fabricated, giving rise to misogyny!

In order to respond to these questions, students need information about the socio-historical context of Qur'anic passages, enabling them to take the view of the first addressees into account, and enabling them to situate Qur'anic passages in the Prophet's biography as a whole, and in relation to his life experiences and praxis. A more holistic understanding would pave the way to a better translation of the meaning of the texts to our contemporary context. Otherwise, the manner in which students understand Qur'anic passages will be unsatisfactory and incomplete. They may even do injustice to the texts, by deriving rigid rules from it.

Looking at Example 1, a conversation which takes place between two students, it is obvious that their understanding is related to the way in which they understand the Qur'an and human nature. Student B (you may call her/him a textualist) argues for a literal reading of the Qur'an and believes that its message should remain 'pure' and ought to be applied to every life situation. This understanding of the Qur'an is very common among Muslims and is often adopted by scholars as well. It leads to an approach of the text that is strictly legalistic and literal. Interpreters of the Qur'an who adopt this view are mostly caught up in legalities, rituals, formalities, and debates about who is on the 'right side' and who is the 'bad one'!

The second student could be counted among those who are in favour of progressive understanding. He/she is prepared to question the text and its manifold receptions and interpretations by asking questions like (Selçuk, 2016, pp. 7-8):

What was the meaning of the text for the first addressees?

What were the cultural norms at that time?

What is the nature of the message? Is it a legal, ethical or theological text?

Is it universally applicable or does it refer to a specific situation?

How could the message be related to the universal objectives of the Qur'an?

How was the message applied at that time and what were its different applications throughout history?

How could we apply it to our contemporary context?

What do you think about the universality and the specificity of the message?

Can you propose some examples of applications for contemporary life?

Can you suggest alternative ways of understanding the text?

These questions generate an understanding of the context of the verses which may be called historical, and which leads to an exploration of the universal vision contained in the message.

This approach to the study of texts – in view of its nature we might even speak of a 'conversation' with the text – seeks an interpretation which is relevant to the lives of Muslims today. It asks the questions what it means to be human and what Muslims should do to respond to complex life situations. The Communicative Model serves an understanding of the Qur'an which proves helpful in coping with the tensions in post-modern societies. The model prioritizes the ethical core of the Qur'an and the relationship with 'the other.' The model facilitates the development of the students in terms of gaining an authentic position on Islam and other religious and secular worldview traditions, and the acquiring of a more humanistic perspective built on the universal objectives of the Qur'an and other Holy Scriptures.

Students come to the classroom with many misconceptions and oversimplifications. In the Communicative Model, their understanding is used as a starting point for new approaches. The preconceptions of the students are taken into consideration; but on the other hand, they are challenged to go beyond what they have encountered in the past, so as to transform old concepts into new ideas.

This is a transformation which runs from passive, received knowledge to active, constructed knowing.

'Received knowledge' is storing of information and facts, accompanied by a belief that the truth comes from outside. In such cases, knowing becomes an act of reception rather than an act of construction. The Communicative Model facilitates a way for students to gradually leave this dependency on outside knowledge behind, in order to move towards a more internalized and authentic positionality. This is not a question of rejecting the past, but rather one of letting the past flow into the present situation, and guiding the students to various discoveries. It is about stimulating them to think through old ideas, in order to formulate these in new words, for it to become possible that these ideas enlighten the life experiences of students today (Selçuk, 2016, p. 10).

The Communicative Model has its starting point in the conviction that all knowing is perspective-based. Knowledge will be gained from the vantage point of, for instance, a certain faith, a particular point of interest, a political conviction, that is: from a certain point of view. Knowledge which is presented in the Communicative Model, engages the critical thinking faculty and defines its own perspective, and then serves to help the students to recognize their own positionality. Where one is standing in the constructing of knowledge – the perspective from which knowledge is gained – shapes what can be known. Religious education following the Communicative Model aims at bringing religion face to face with life. It touches the very centre of the students' existential questions, personal life and position in society, and their developing faith in God.

Below we show the Communicative Model *in action* during an Islamic religious education class. Three conversation topics serve as an illustration: the relationship between Islam and democracy, the concept of Jihad and the question of Islam and other religions.

Islam and Democracy

> Islam is not compatible with democracy, as it features both a religion and a community. Islam does not need to change and is capable of resolving all issues which may emerge over the course of time.
>
> Islam is in accordance with democracy, because it appeals to the individual's capacity for reason and freedom, which is central to Islam.
>
> Islam does not propose a government model; it concentrates on the ethics of governance and the ethical principles which it proclaims are universal.

Such dissimilar and at times outright contradicting statements are typical in today's education environment. As students work on clarifying their understanding of the text, they not only need to cope with the apparently conflicting views voiced by their fellows, but also with the 'hidden curriculum' imposed by the community. New developments in social science emphasize that in order to develop a

competence of reflection, students need to understand the foundations of their knowledge, and need to reach conceptual clarity on the content of what they know. Furthermore, learning about religion also requires that clarity is gained on the knowledge previously acquired about religion.

Islam and the Concept of Jihad

One student presents Jihad as "the first obligation for Muslims that comes after *İman Billah* (Belief in God)." Another translates it as "Holy War." Another explanation is that "Jihad is the striving for good and the struggling with evil." Yet another student states that "Jihad is the name of every attempt to purify one's soul." In the answers of the students to the question what Jihad is supposed to be, four main themes can be distinguished (Selçuk, 2010, p. 4). These four themes are: Jihad as the main duty of a Muslim, Jihad as a holy war, Jihad as a struggle with the self (*Nafs*), and Jihad as commanding the good and forbidding the bad. In what way ought Islamic religious education respond to those different definitions? According to our view, conceptual research is helpful for understanding religious facts and for effective thinking. Conceptual research transfers several religious themes to us (ibid., p. 2). In her PhD research, Jacomijn van der Kooij (2016) unravelled the core concepts in relation to religious education, or – as she prefers to name it – worldview education. Van der Kooij's distinction between organized and personal worldviews, as well as her description of the possible relation(s) with moral education, is very helpful for our work on dialogical faith education. Conceptual knowledge is preconditional for each and every student to attain, individually, the level of constructed knowledge (see below).

Islam and Other Religions

On the issue of Islam and other religions, students often feel uncertainty and experience much cognitive contradiction. Although they have the preconception that they must believe firmly in the uniqueness and superiority of Islam – as being the only true religion which must be protected against different views and counterarguments –, they gradually become aware that other religions may equally be true, which at least proves to be the case for their adherents. The fact remains, that adherents of these religions attest to the truth of their religious beliefs, and hope to be redeemed through them.

Religious education teachers are frequently confronted with the following questions: Are all religions true? Or is only one religion (Islam) true? Can a non-Muslim be redeemed, for example through the Abrahamic traditions (namely, Christianity and Judaism)? Is it possible to question the authenticity of religions like Hinduism and Buddhism?

In order to understand Islam, and to express it, we need new approaches which fit with the needs of a pluralistic society. As demonstrated above, it is clear that the companions of the Prophet and the succeeding generations developed new understandings and re-interpretations of the message of Islam. Many Islamic

disciplines, particularly Islamic theology (*Kalam*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*Fıkh*), became major fields in which religious knowledge was generated in light of the Qur'an. We can easily find a pluralist feature in the Islamic traditions of interpretation, both on the levels of received knowledge and constructed knowing – whereby the latter does not require a monopoly on interpretation. Within this pluralist structure, passages from the Qur'an such as "Surely, the true religion in the sight of Allah is Islam" (3:19) and "God has chosen Islam as the way of life for you" (5:3), have been reduced to an understanding of Islam as consisting of never changing dogma's, leading to an approach which excludes all who did not follow these prescriptions in their daily life (exclusive interpretation). On the other hand, some inclusive interpretations have indicated that the term *Islam*, besides being a proper name for the religion of Islam, also carries the general meaning to submit,' submission to one God only. And this is understood as referring to *any* submission to a single God, not just the God of Islam; a liberating advance of Islamic tradition.

The ability to think and reflect on different ways of understanding, depends first of all on a rich body of knowledge about the subject. This is coined as the epistemology stage of the model which is presented. The most obvious implication of this approach is that teaching and learning in accordance to the Communicative Model, begins with taking differences seriously.

IN CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we state the initial purpose for which the above-mentioned Communicative Model is designed: the exploration of a series of practical situations which arise in the daily lives of students, in order to find ways to understand the text of the Qur'an and its purpose on the basis of its universal aims. Our second aim with this Communicative Model is to empower students, by enabling them to relate to different understandings of what it means to be a Muslim, both historically and in today's pluralistic world. We realize that conceptual knowledge is preconditional for reflection-in-action, and in order for a link between the understanding of the text and self-understanding to emerge. With conceptual knowledge, we refer to the ability to differentiate between the historical, time-bound elements of the text and the universal visionary meaning contained in it, which is above time and space. A bridge is needed to overcome distance and cultural differences, and to connect with the universality of the message – a bridge we find in the context of the students' daily lives, and the existential questions which arise in that context.

This kind of communicative approach to religious diversity can grow through an interfaith perspective, by inviting women and men from different religious backgrounds to act together in order to explore our common humanity. The Communicative Model offers hope for the future of religious education, offering a mixture of 'teaching about' and 'teaching from.' In a present-day pluralistic context, we expect this model to contribute to a better understanding of individuals from different religious backgrounds. We hope this chapter may serve as an

epistemological and hermeneutical invitation for those who are interested in teaching Islam in a pluralistic context, and for those who seek to establish a position for Islamic religious education in the context of intra- and inter faith encounters. However, at the end of the day, everything depends to a large extent on the ability of teachers to challenge their students to learn from tradition(s) and to serve as guides in this ongoing process – a pedagogical method which qualifies as a provocative pedagogic strategy (Ter Avest et al., 2012) – in order to usher the students' cognitive development from received knowledge towards constructed knowing.

NOTES

[1] For a detailed description of these developments, see Ter Avest et al. (2007, pp. 203-221).

[2] The name refers to the name of the Sura in the Qur'an, the number between square brackets to the according chapter of the Sura, and the number behind the colon to the verse in the respective Sura.

[3] For an extensive further elaboration of this model, coined as a worldview model, see Selçuk and Valk (2012, pp. 451-452).

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PART TWO

BEST PRACTICES OF INTERFAITH EDUCATION

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8. HIKMAH PEDAGOGY

Promoting Open Mindedness, Tolerance and Respect for Others' Religious Views in Classrooms

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring good relations among the different races, ethnics and religions is one of the primary aims of a multiracial and religious country like Malaysia. This forms the basis of a harmonious and successful nation, where education is the avenue to achieve this aim. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how a particular pedagogy known as Hikmah pedagogy was able to promote open mindedness, tolerance and respect for different views among secondary school students, which are imperative for a peaceful Malaysia. This chapter is based on a research that attempts to examine how Hikmah pedagogy can be practised in Malaysian classrooms with the original aim of enhancing students' critical thinking skills.[1]

THE CHALLENGES OF A PLURALISTIC COMMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia is a diversified country, consisting of about 60 percent of the majority *bumiputera* (which literally means 'sons of the soil,' i.e. Malays and other indigenous communities, such as *Iban, Kadazan, Dusun* and *Dayak*). Thirty percent of Malaysians are Chinese, while the remaining 10 percent constitutes the Indian community. The Malays are all Muslims and speak Malay language, while other *bumiputera* communities in the two Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak are followers of different religions and speak different ethnic languages. Besides that, most Malaysian Indians are Hindus and speak Tamil, whilst the religious and language backgrounds of the Chinese varies from Christianity, Buddhism to Confucianism for religions, and Cantonese, Mandarin and Hokkien for languages. The religious, ethnic and language plurality in Malaysia exists within and across ethnic groups, with the exception of the Malay community. Due to this high diversity of ethnicities and religions in Malaysia, there has been a continuous effort to promote harmony, integration and unity amongst the various communities through its education system as a tool for social cohesion. However, the different types of school that are available in Malaysia may hinder the realization of this aim (Ishak, 2002).

Malaysia has inherited a unique system of education since British colonization during its pre-independence time, in the form of three types of primary schools funded by the government. The first type is the national school that uses Malay

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 97–106.
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language, i.e. the national language as the medium of instruction, which is attended largely by the Malays. Secondly is the national type (Chinese) school that uses Mandarin as the medium of instruction, while the third type is the national type (Tamil) school where Tamil is used as the medium of instruction. Furthermore, Malay language is only taught as a subject in the national type schools. Even though, national type school students are expected to be bilingual, the lack of using Malay across the curriculum has made this quite difficult, which has compelled the Ministry to prepare different standards of Malay language exam paper for Year Six primary school examination for the national and national type schools. Moreover, the different types of schools may adopt the same national curriculum and standardized examination, but social engagement and integration amongst the various communities are very minimal since most Chinese and Indians would send their children to the respective national type schools.

Apart from the different types of schools, another challenge is "Malaysian politics that is characterized by the ethnicity," which is also closely associated with religions in Malaysia (Ishak, 2002, p. 102). For instance, "the Malays may be politically dominant, while the non-Malays, particularly the Chinese are considered as economically superior" (ibid., p. 107). The extent of both ethnics' superiority has created a tension where the "Malays are more concerned with maintaining their identity and strengthening Malay-Islamic practices as well as improving their economic gains, while the Chinese perceived these as a threat to their culture and language" (ibid., p. 109).

In the effort to alleviate the tension, education can still be used as the means to unite Malaysians, particularly through its curriculum. Subjects such as Islamic Education taught to the Malays, Moral Education taught to the non-Malays, and Civic and Citizenship Education (CCE) for all students are taught at the primary and secondary schools in Malaysia. Through these subjects, knowledge about the multi ethnics, cultures and religions in Malaysia are taught to the students. However, the lack of understanding and integration between the ethnics and religions indicates that the aim to achieve peace and harmony is still far from reality. Perhaps, this could be due to the emphasis on students' achievement and performance in schools rather than the development of values amongst the students. An alternative pedagogy that is worth to be examined is Hikmah pedagogy that has been modelled after the philosophical inquiry approach (Lipman, 2003) that has the potentials to create a community of inquiry in the Malaysian classrooms.

RECASTING PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY IN THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT: HIKMAH PEDAGOGY AND COMMUNITY OF INQUIRY

Teaching about religion differs in terms of the audience or students. If the teaching of religion is done on its followers, then it would be in a confessional manner (Hand, 2006). However, if students consist of non-followers, then the teaching of religion is not only done in a non-confessional manner, but it should also be culturally accurate and sensitive. This is because different religions may diverge

pertaining to specific traditions, practices and issues. So, opening up a classroom to discuss various and diverse point of views may be challenging as a practice and also to the students who are entrenched in dominant ideas, yet it can be an important step to a better understanding of views about "other religions" (Phelps, 2010, p. 193).

Hikmah Pedagogy for Malaysian Classrooms

Philosophical inquiry is a pedagogy that has potentials in creating a community that inquires about a particular issue (that may be sensitive or controversial) in a classroom, while observing differences and exchange of views used in the Philosophy for Children program (P4C). P4C was introduced by Matthew Lipman in the early 1970s as a form of philosophy in action in the classroom (Hashim, Hussien and Imran, 2014). Lipman believed that philosophy was the appropriate tool to trigger and develop children's natural curiosity through the teaching and learning process. It can also help to develop children's higher order thinking emphasising on critical, creative, ethical and caring thinking. Lipman introduced a philosophical thinking programme for primary students through a series of novels (with accompanying manuals) whose main characters are children that experience and share different aspects of philosophical thinking (Nikolidaki, 2010).

The P4C programme has grown and expanded, in terms of its methods and materials such as text, picture, artwork, poster, video, music etc. One of the aims of P4C is to develop and establish a Community of Inquiry (CoI) in the classroom. The CoI encourages students to independently think and consider different answers to the questions raised. Furthermore, students learn not to hastily assume that there is only one right answer to an issue. Instead, students learn that it is quite impossible to arrive at one final answer, since some answers can be considered as better than others based on their evidences or argument (Benade, 2011).

Considering the multiracial and religious context of Malaysia, the Centre for Philosophical Inquiry in Education, which is now known as Centre for Teaching Thinking (CTT) at the International Islamic University Malaysia has remodelled Lipman's approach to include religious and ethical values relevant to the Muslim and Malaysian society, and later named it as the Hikmah Programme.

Hikmah is originally an Arabic word, which literally means wisdom but bears the same meaning in Malay. The Hikmah pedagogy as a method of teaching thinking can either be done as a 'stand-alone' approach or infusion. Stand alone is an approach where a thinking programme is taught outside the school curriculum with its main objective focusing on the development of thinking skills. Meanwhile, infusion is an approach that integrates the development of thinking skills in a subject. Infusion approach considers the mastery of the content and the development of thinking skills as its objectives. For instance, in an English class, the teacher would plan to enhance students' thinking through materials that focus on students' language skills. The choice of either adopting a stand-alone or infusion approach is usually decided by the type of curriculum of an educational system. In the Malaysian system of education, the tight curriculum and limited

time of the schooling system does not allow the introduction of stand-alone, so infusion is regarded as the best and more practical approach for teaching thinking.

Recent studies have shown that Hikmah pedagogy is the most ‘natural’ method of improving students’ thinking skills because it aims to establish a ‘community of inquiry’ (CoI) (Othman & Hashim, 2006; Abdullah, 2009; Juperi, 2011; Hashim et al., 2014). In other words, Hikmah is a pedagogy that can help create a community in the classroom that learn to inquire and question with the purpose of engaging in deep thinking and arriving at a better understanding of an issue collaboratively.

Community of Inquiry (CoI) in Malaysian Classrooms

In some studies, CoI is referred to as ‘Community of Philosophical Inquiry’ or CoPI (Hannam & Echeverria, 2009), and ‘Collaborative Philosophical Inquiry’ (Millett & Tapper, 2010). The aim of a CoI is to groom a group of students who “listen to one another with respect, build on one another’s ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another’s assumptions” (Lipman, 2003, p. 20).

A CoI involves a group of people who actively think together in order to increase their understanding and appreciation of the world. It is a journey of moral and philosophical exploration. It is an environment where students are given the opportunity to discuss critically, creatively and collaboratively their own selective ideas and concepts which they find worth pursuing. In the Malaysian context where students are usually devout followers of a particular religion, the moral and philosophical exploration that they experience will consequently bring their religious beliefs to the foreground of the discussion. The discussion is a dialogical one because each student contributes to the classroom discussion on an equal footing. When this happens, the elements of listening to others’ views, empathy, respect, friendship, and thinking cooperatively are present throughout the dialogical discussion, in which the students do not necessarily have to arrive at an answer. More importantly, the discussion must provoke deeper understanding of the complexities of the issues and disagreement is common and allowed, so long as it is done in a subtle way, in the pursuit of finding the truth.

What the CoI does in a classroom is that it challenges students’ unquestioned opinions and views and compels them to think beyond conditioned and stereotyped views to form a meaningful reaction to specific issues in the real world. In such situation, students have to think independently and for themselves. The exchange of views in the CoI also enables students to re-examine their views through logical analysis and revise them when necessary.

In a CoI classroom, teachers acting as facilitators must be good listeners, open-minded, and skilful questioners who can challenge opinions and responses in order to bring the discussion to a deeper and higher level. The classroom environment must be emotionally and intellectually safe to enable participants to reason and reflect upon the issue discussed without the influence of any authority.

Basically, there are five stages of CoI, first is the offering of a stimulus, which can be in many forms such as a text, poster, or video. The stimulus contains values and issues that students will engage in and question. Students are seated in the shape of a circle or horseshoe and face each other. This type of seating signifies the equal status and rights that each member of the CoI possesses. Then, in the second stage, students take turn in reading aloud the text. This is where students begin to discover the meaning of the stimulus. Next, in the third stage, students construct the agenda collaboratively by generating questions based on the text. Questions contributed by students are acknowledged by writing down each student's name at the end of the question. In this sense, the agenda of the CoI is mapped according to students' interest and what they consider important. Students guided by the teacher will, in the fourth stage, categorise the questions and then decide, which category will be discussed first. The discussion, in the fifth stage, ensues with the deliberation and attempt to answer the questions. This fifth stage consists of articulation of agreements and disagreements, and quest for better understanding of the meaning and concepts in the stimulus. Some of the behaviours that are usually observed among members of the CoI are questioning each other's views and reasons, building on another's ideas, countering others' claims, highlighting consequences of another's idea, using specific criteria when making judgments, and supporting one's claim with appropriate evidence.

It is through this process of CoI that members develop open mindedness, when they are able to accept criticisms, welcome the other side's views, tolerant to differences of opinions, while respecting others and their rights. Engaging in the CoI also enables the members to enhance their reasoning skills when they are asked to provide examples and counter examples, uncover underlying assumptions, draw suitable inferences, and evaluate judgments. However, the success of creating a CoI depends on the teacher's own thinking skill and disposition. To acquire and master Hikmah pedagogy, the teacher needs to engage in a CoI before s/he can create and facilitate one. It is for this reason that when training teachers in Hikmah pedagogy, teachers have to be involved in a CoI for an extended duration of time until they can conduct the CoI by their own.

The characteristics of a CoI exemplify a democratic classroom. A democratic classroom requires a teacher to facilitate the classroom discussion and empower students to think and express their 'voices.' Developing students' reasoning abilities, acknowledging their ideas and teaching them to value their friends' opinions that are different from theirs promote students to cooperate and work with each other to achieve a common goal in the class. It also encourages the students to understand the importance of working and 'living' in harmony through tolerance, respect and open mindedness.

The importance of creating a democratic classroom through a CoI using the Hikmah pedagogy in subjects such as Islamic Education, Moral Education, and Civic and Citizenship Education (CCE) is that it enables students to understand and become more tolerant of other people's views and religions' practices. Although teachers often face the challenge of helping students to practise what they have learnt in their lives such as learning to be more understanding and tolerant in a

multi religious society, Hikmah pedagogy through its dialogues in the classroom, may resolve this matter when students encounter differing views and learn to respect them.

TOWARDS PROMOTING OPEN MINDEDNESS, TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS: HIKMAH PEDAGOGY IN THE MALAYSIAN CLASSROOMS

Hikmah pedagogy is most useful when dealing with subjects that require students to act on and practise the knowledge that they acquire, particularly subjects that deal with values, beliefs and practices such as Islamic Education, Moral Education, and Civic and Citizenship Education (CCE). Using Hikmah pedagogy as an infusion approach is also useful and productive in a class that is attended by students of different ethnics and religions. This is due to the nature and process of inquiry that will involve and engage all students in the class. The examples that are presented to elucidate on the three important characteristics for a harmony and peaceful Malaysian society are based on a collection of published (Hashim et al., 2014) and unpublished studies (Abdullah, 2009; Juperi, 2011; Hamzah, 2015; Ab Wahab, 2015) on Hikmah pedagogy conducted and supervised by members of the Centre for Teaching Thinking. Studies cited here were done in several subjects such as Islamic Education, CCE, English and Malay Language.

Open Mindedness

Hikmah pedagogy can help Muslim students to become more conscious of their faith. Hamzah (2015) studied how Hikmah pedagogy has helped in improving students' inquiry skill and have better understanding of Islam in the teaching of Islamic Education secondary class. Hamzah (2015) found that "Hikmah pedagogy has helped Muslim students to better understand Islam, its principles and practices, compared to the traditional method of learning" (Hamzah, 2015, p. 51), because students are more conscious of the reason and wisdom behind every practice that they have and are required to perform. Apart from that, Ab Wahab (2015) also conducted a study to examine Hikmah pedagogy and how it improves Islamic Education students' thinking skills. In his interviews with the students, he found that learning Islamic Education using Hikmah pedagogy has helped them to be more open minded and tolerant, "students were more open to different views, improved their communication skills, became more cooperative, strengthened their bonding with their teacher, became more creative and their self-confidence increased as compared to the conventional class method of learning Islamic Education" (Ab Wahab, 2015, p. 71).

On the other hand, a good illustration to explain students' open mindedness was highlighted in a study done by Juperi (2011). One of the Islamic Education topics that she taught was on 'preserving the sanctity of the mosque.' In that particular lesson, few of the questions raised by the students were, "Is it just Muslims who can build mosques? What about non-Muslims? Can a non-Muslim enter into a mosque?" (Juperi, 2011, pp. 43-44). These questions provided an opportunity to

the Muslim students to explore the rights and practices of non-Muslim in Malaysia. It is important for them to understand Islam and Malaysian views of religious freedom. Some Muslim students felt challenged when they see places of worship of other religions larger than the mosques. But living in a multiracial country, the teacher was able to point out about the right to have a prayer place for the Muslim and non-Muslim. The teacher also emphasised on the point that the places of worship for other religions may be larger in size than the mosque, but the mosques were higher in number. Using Hikmah pedagogy, the teacher was able to develop tolerance amongst the students by way of more knowledge and better reasoning.

In one of our recent studies (Hussien, Hashim, & Mohd. Mokhtar, 2016), the CoI was introduced in a CCE class to examine the extent of reasoning and democratic classroom that it can promote. One of the significant findings that the study found was how CoI was able to open students' mind to others' views. A good case in point is derived from one of the CCE lessons on the topic of places of worship. During the discussion, a student shared his feeling and experience travelling abroad to a non-Muslim country when he faced difficulty in looking for a place to pray. He mentioned that there were countries that provided a space for worship for all religions. Since Christianity was the official religion of the country where he travelled, there was the symbol of a cross in that space, so he raised the issue of whether a Muslim is allowed to pray in such a room. This was debated and the discussion led to another recent issue regarding a "protest by Muslim demonstrators who forced a church to take down its cross for fear of posing a challenge to Islam and swaying the faith of young Muslims" (Menon, 2015). Some students in the class realised that they held views that were mostly emotional rather than founded on Islamic principles and values. This discovery was an eye opener for them since they realised that many beliefs and views that they have were actually constructed by society and not part of the Islamic teachings. Such issues may be perceived as controversial and sensitive, but they are important to be discussed openly if the aim of a peaceful Malaysia is to be achieved. As one student, Farah (pseudonym) said, "I feel a lot more open-minded to other's opinions instead of like, oh no you're wrong. Let me think about it first, let me see what is his opinion and from what aspect (FGI 10-10)" (Hussien et al., 2016).

Tolerance and Respect for Others' Religious Views

Learning to be tolerant is another fundamental characteristic that CoI inculcates. Tolerance makes it possible for understanding and respect to take place particularly when it involves differences of opinions. Tolerance and respect are two values that are closely related and may be dependent upon each other. Yet they are different where the former concerns one's ability to accept others' views or 'stand' others' behaviours even if he or she finds them disagreeable. Meanwhile, respect is a feeling that concerns one's consideration or admiration of someone or something.

In the twelfth lesson of CCE, on the topic of 'A Democratic Government: Leadership,' two questions contributed by the students on 'differences' were, "Why are there differences amongst members of a community?" and "Why is it

difficult to accept differences?" Such questions helped students to uncover the root of many problems that have caused misunderstandings and tension amongst the different religions and ethnics.

A discussion was initiated by the questions posed by students, but eventually students moved from merely answering questions by providing examples and unsupported reasons, to countering examples and providing reasons based on their own experiences. Lessons soon became 'sharing moments' as students collaboratively define or clarify ill-defined concepts. In one of the Malay language classes observed, the discussion revolved around the concept of fasting as one of the practices among the different religions in Malaysia. Comparison was made between Islam, Hindu and Buddhism. It was a surprise to see a number of Muslim students who were not aware of the fasting practices observed by the other religions. The discussion then extended to the dietary restrictions in the different religions. It was interesting to note that all students were aware of these differences. A Chinese student shared her story of how she prepared separate food for her Indian and Malay friends during her birthday party. She also mentioned that she used paper plates and cups because she understood the concept of Halal in Islam. A Malay student also mentioned how she made sure that there was vegetarian food for her Indian and Buddhist friends during her *Eid* Open House.[2] The understanding about food choices amongst the different religions signifies the tolerance that is practised among students of various religions.

Another basis for CoI to realise its aim is actually respect for others' views, since a good discussion and exchange of views can only be ensured once members of a community learn to respect each other's views. For instance, a student from the CCE class expressed her views on Hikmah pedagogy as being successful in developing feelings of respect for each other. She admitted that she learned to understand and respect others' opinions even when she disagreed with them. She also mentioned that she has realised that there were no wrong or right answers, just different perspectives (FGI 14-14) (Hussien et al., 2016).

Examples discussed have shown the potentials of Hikmah pedagogy and CoI in enhancing students' reasoning and also opening up their mind, making them more tolerant and more respectful of others' religious views. Hikmah pedagogy can be practised in various subjects through infusion. Practising it in a heterogeneous class would be more beneficial because it allows students to share their differing views and experiences.

CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the challenges that Malaysia face in ensuring peace and harmony amongst its multi ethnics and multi religious society. Hikmah pedagogy and CoI champions elements of a democratic classroom where students are empowered through the development of their independent thoughts and voices. Excerpts from various studies were cited to reflect how three characteristics, namely open mindedness, tolerance and respect for others' views, which are

fundamental for a highly diversified society like Malaysia, were developed through Hikmah pedagogy and student engagement in CoI.

Like any democratic classroom, the success of the pedagogy and CoI actually lies in the teacher's ability and skill to create an active and student focussed classroom. Teachers also need to be creative and critical when selecting an appropriate text or stimulus to initiate the discussion. A stimulus that is used in a CoI needs to include issues and questions that students can raise. It should also be relevant to the topic of the lesson. More importantly, teachers act as a facilitator who guides and probes students to further elaborate and question their own claims, while ensuring that the discussion remains dialogical. Thus, Hikmah pedagogy can only be successful if the teacher possesses a critical disposition before s/he can exercise it on his/her students. The teacher also needs to first be open minded, tolerant and respectful of her/his students' views before s/he can encourage her/his students to do so. If such a teacher can be moulded, then the future of Malaysia would be bright because she will be built by critical, creative and ethical individuals.

NOTES

[1] The result of the funded research is one research report, two unpublished Masters and one PhD dissertation, of which this chapter has cited. However, this chapter only draws out a small aspect of the research, i.e. the aspect of Hikmah pedagogy and its potential to foster good inter faith relations in Malaysian pluralistic society.

[2] In Malaysia, the concept of Open House is an occasion where the host will open their house to guests during particular religious celebration like *Eid Fitri* for the Muslim, Chinese New Year for the Chinese and *Deepavali* for the Hindus.

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NAÏMA LAFRARCHI

9. HIKMAH FOR INTERCONVICTIONAL DIALOGUE IN BELGIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, much attention has been given to intercultural and interreligious dialogue in general. Until now, however, less focus has been devoted to pedagogical models that support interreligious dialogue through (Islamic) religious education (RE) in schools. An important question in this regard is: How can a pedagogical model support teachers toward creating and strengthening dialogue between pupils of different religious and convictional backgrounds? Based on Lipman's Philosophy for Children (P4C) model, Hashim (2012) developed the Hikmah model. This model contributes to cognitive, social and affective competences such as critical and reflective thinking, communication and social skills.

The aim of this chapter is threefold. The first paragraph briefly describes the constitutional framework in which in Belgium/Flanders education takes place, including the complex Flemish RE system. The second paragraph describes the Hikmah model, starting with Lipmans' P4C model as foundation for the Hikmah model. The third paragraph explores the praxis of RE in Flemish primary schools and provides examples of possible practical pedagogical and didactical implementations of this model in Flemish primary classrooms. Some examples of how teachers can develop interreligious competences such as respect and dialogue as well as how to stimulate and strengthen the interreligious dialogue in primary Flemish private and public schools are presented.

THE BELGIAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Belgium is a federal constitutional monarchy with the separation of church and state. Since 1988 education has been a regional responsibility, governed and administered by the Flemish, French and German Communities. Article 24[1] protects the freedom of education and the rights of parents to make choices regarding the education of their child. The first paragraph stipulates that the Communities must provide neutral education i.e. an education which respects philosophical, ideological or religious freedom of choice on the part of parents. While any person or organisation can start a school, the vast majority of schools in Flanders and Brussels ruled by the Flemish Community today, are still Catholic. However, alongside these Catholic schools there are also public schools. Based on article 24 §2, these public schools have to organise two hours[2] a week of funded religious education.

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 107–121.
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Since 1974 Islam[3] has been recognised by the constitution; however, due to internal diversity and policy matters, the first official representative institution, *Executief van de Moslims van België* (EMB, the Executive of Muslims in Belgium) was only launched in 1998. Since that time, the EMB has the responsibility for organising Islamic religious education in public schools, including teacher training, teaching materials and ongoing professional development related to supervision, pedagogical and didactical support. The first teacher training program recognized by the Flemish government was established in 1998. Since then, five Islamic RE teacher training programs[4] have been started at different high schools mostly as a reaction to – or at least accelerated by – the recent attacks committed by IS in Paris and Brussels. Until now, there are no Flemish Islamic primary schools.

Before going into the core of this chapter, we begin with two definitions. First, we will speak in this chapter of inter-religious and interconvictional[5] dialogue as "an active and conscience encounter between persons with different religious and convictional backgrounds."[6] Second, we will also speak of intra-religious dialogue, which we define here as "an active and conscience dialogue between persons of the same religious background"[7] (Roebben, 2012, 2015).

In 2012 the *Commissie Levensbeschouwelijke Vakken* (CLBV, Commission of Interconvictional Courses, CICC)[8] developed and introduced a compulsory interconvictional competences framework complementary to all religious and non-religious education curricula. The Commission includes representatives of the constitutionally recognized religious and non-religious denominations. As an umbrella concept for the curriculum, the Commission chose the notion 'interconvictional' due to the recognition of the non-religious denominations.

Flanders has a pillarized educational system funded by the Flemish Community. Thus, here we focus on the Flemish primary Catholic and the public schools situated in Flanders and Brussels funded by the Flemish Community.

More than 60% of Flemish primary schools are Catholic, another 20% are community schools, and 15% are organised by municipalities and provinces.[9] Catholic schools were established by private funding. Community schools were established by delegation of the Flemish Community to the *Gemeenschapsonderwijs* (GO!, Community Education). Municipality and provincial schools belong to the competence of the municipal and provincial administration. Belgium is characterised by an increasing religious plurality with, on average, 7% of its population identifying as Muslims. Consequently, Muslims are one of the largest minority groups present in schools. The percentage of Muslims, mostly Moroccan or Turkish immigrants of the third or fourth generation, in private Catholic schools is about the same as in public schools, with the biggest concentration in Antwerp and Brussels.[10] Public schools are open to every child independently of his/her convictional background. As a natural consequence, pupils of several convictional backgrounds are represented as part of the school population. In the big cities, a large percentage of Muslim pupils is enrolled in those schools, but also in Catholic schools.

Organisationally, religious education (RE) courses in public schools are given separately, but at the same time by a teacher appointed by the representative

institution of each recognised denomination. The Catholic schools offer only Catholic RE courses, which means concretely that pupils of different convictional backgrounds follow the same RE course at the same time.

Besides the socio-demographic changes, Catholic schools are also challenged by the secularisation of their own school population. The redeveloped curricula by the *Erkende Instantie* (Recognised Institution, 2000) demonstrate the consciousness of this internal and external religious diversity by explicitly referring to the re-contextualisation of RE via hermeneutical dialogical communicative methods. This means that within Catholic schools and Catholic RE courses in public schools, an internal diversity is acknowledged. The new approach includes and refers to a more hermeneutical dialogical teaching method. Consequently, the course itself is open to the possibility of dialogue with the 'other' of any conviction starting from the Catholic pedagogical project (Lombaerts & Pollefeyt, 2004). Based on the two above mentioned societal facts, the organisation *Katholiek Onderwijs Vlaanderen* (KOV, Catholic Education Flanders) has made efforts to rethink the approach and role of Catholic school education. Hence, the Catholic Dialogue Schools (CDS) project was launched and promoted into the field since 2016. This CD Schools project starts from the Catholic religious framework, but develops an open dialogical policy towards pupils of all religious and non-religious backgrounds.[11] The schools as a whole, and the RE teacher in particular, are challenged to build bridges between pupils to exercise, among other things, interreligious dialogue. The particularity of Catholic schools is seen in the fact that the pupils follow at the same time the same religious course. This internal and external religious diversity motivates and challenges RE teachers in both private and public schools.

The above-mentioned information is important for the evaluation of the implications and implementation possibilities of the Hikmah model in both RE systems. We expect that the interactions in public school will be more fruitful, due to the natural presence of pupils with a variety of religious backgrounds. In Catholic schools, the probability is lower to have such a rich mix except in large cities as for example Antwerp, Gent, Mechelen, Genk, Hasselt and Brussels. Hikmah pedagogy sustains pupils in learning to philosophise about specific themes. This model derives from Lipmans' Philosophy for Children Program (P4C). The Hikmah pedagogy is a revised version of the P4C model. In addition to critical and creative thinking, personal and interpersonal development and ability to give meaning to experience, it introduces as a renewed element, i.e. the reflection on Qur'anic verses, *hadiths* and local Malaysian traditions through stories designed specifically for this purpose (Hashim & Banging, 2009; Hashim, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to examine how pupils can learn skills to dialogue. Thus, in what way can a model such as Hikmah, developed in the diverse Malaysian context, foster and facilitate this learning process in the diverse context of Flemish public schools?

Before moving forward, we remind that in 2012 the CICC designed a framework as a starting point for RE teachers to work on interconvictional dialogue (ICD). The attacks on 7th January and 23th November 2015 in Paris and 22th March 2016 in Brussels gave further impetus to think about pedagogical

instruments to improve interconvictional dialogue. To do so, the CICC and the Minister of Education signed an engagement agreement on the 28th of January 2016. The next section describes some common concepts in existing RE theoretical frameworks.

RE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This section aims to give an overview of relevant theoretical concepts of religious education frameworks. Several pedagogical-didactical and educational concepts are described to give a better insight into and overview of the crucial elements as preconditions for a successful application of the Hikmah pedagogy.

Much has been written about the concepts of 'learning *into*, *from* and *about* religion' (Grimmitt, 1987). Ter Avest and McDougall (2014) extend this concept with 'teaching *for* religiosity.' Their explorative research used a non-religious story like 'The Little Prince' in a rich learning environment using 'picture voice-method' and seemed to be fruitful to contribute to the development of religiosity. Additionally, to the picture voice-method, Roux (2012) describes an interesting element raised during project workshops: every person is a story-teller. Stories and narratives involve real life experiences, timelines, dialogue, conversation and reasoning that are imbedded in social contexts (Roux, 2012), which can be a fruitful starting point for interconvictional dialogue in class taking into account developmental stages and capacities of the pupils.

Based on Piaget's (1932) religious development stages, Fowler (1981, 1991) considers faith development as a dynamic process wherein the content of the religious tradition is related to our own life and existential questions. Focusing on the religious identity development, the Interpretative Approach of Jackson describes four core pedagogical principles: representation, interpretation, reflection and edification. We cannot elaborate these concepts in this limited space, but for Jackson (2004) edification is conceived as the result of a reflection process by which the pupil reflects on the meaning of acquired (experiential) knowledge and integrates this in his knowledge about himself or herself and others constructed so far. This critical process can lead to a reassessment of a person's religious identity. Jackson also underlines (in Fancourt, 2007; Jackson, 2009) the teacher's role, more over as being dialogical, part of the class activities and conscious of her/his own convictions, and develops therefore adequate didactical materials (Jackson, 2004; O'Grady, 2010). Having such a dialogical attitude implies developing a connection between pedagogical and professional values. It refers as well to an attitude towards the ideas, thoughts and interests of pupils regarding study materials and learning activities. Teachers have to be impartial (Jackson & Everington, 2016) and to create a 'safe space' for the pupils to feel free to speak and articulate their thoughts, feelings and even their fears (see also Andree & Bakker, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Roux, 2012; Jackson & Everington, 2016) and a rich learning environment to stimulate such a learning process (cf. Ter Avest & McDougall, 2014).

To develop and strengthen one's religious identity Sahin (2013) developed a psycho-social model to investigate the Muslim religiosity and faith development of

pupils. His supposition is that critical-dialogical and transformative educators play a crucial role in RE and religious identity development of pupils.

To respond to the challenges of RE in schools Bulckens and Roebben (2001) developed religious didactics, considering the fundamentally changing world, life experience and the Christian tradition. To deal theologically and pedagogically with internal and external diversity in Catholic schools Pollefeyt and Lombaerts (2004) designed a hermeneutical communicative model (HCM). The starting point of the HCM are the hermeneutical intersections (Lombaerts, 2000) linked to religious and ideological issues that raise in class. The aim is to create, via hermeneutical intersections, the opportunity to discover one's own and another's religious and ideological ideas, and to stimulate, strengthen and develop sensitivity for the 'other' in class. Roebben states that universal questions are raised based on shared human experiences, and are addressed on a personal level through critical evaluation of particular religious and non-religious beliefs. Roebben developed an inclusive religious pedagogy (2012, 2015).

Also, worth mentioning is the co-constructive learning model in multicultural (CLIM) contexts introduced by Paelman (2001, 2006). This model contains valuable elements which can be applied in interconvictional dialogue.

Based on the results of the European REDCo project (2006-2009) the following recommendations were formulated to increase engaged and contextualized interfaith dialogue: 1) the encouragement for peaceful coexistence, 2) the promotion of diversity management, 3) the inclusion of religious as well as non-religious worldviews and 4) the development of professional competences (see also Skeie et al., 2013). The recent publication of the Council of Europe (CoE, Jackson, 2016), a discussion document, is written to assist practitioners and policy makers in intercultural[12] education. This publication elaborates on the REDCo recommendations and presents concrete suggestions for teachers and others involved in the diverse context of European education. The fundamental rationale for including religion in the work of education relates to human rights, citizenship and intercultural education. However, the term religious education is not as such mentioned in the CoE documents.

In practice, interreligious dialogue between youngsters and pupils has to be conform to preconditions including (Agten, 2011): 1) religious identity development and 2) multiple, creative and reflective didactics through deepening and concrete questions. To do so, Agten listed several layers to work on: 1) questions for clarification,[13] 2) questions for arguments,[14] 3) questioning for alternatives,[15] 4) questioning for consequences[16] and 5) questions to evaluate and make conclusions.[17] We can also find a fourfold[18] proposal of learning perspectives for manuals in the Interpretative Approach of Jackson (in Alberts, 2008).

To end with, RE is also valuable for the socialisation of pupils and can be seen as part of the civic and societal training to develop hermeneutical, reflexive and critical skills (Vermeer, 2010).

The above cited authors pointed out to pedagogical didactical elements such as the importance of the learning context as a powerful and rich environment (Ter Avest & McDougall, 2014; Roux, 2012), the developmental processes of the

learner (Jackson; Sahin, 2013), the pivotal role of the teacher (Jackson & Everington, 2016), the learning environment as a safe space (Andree & Bakker, 1996; Jackson, 2004; Roux, 2012), the developmental stage of pupils' psychological development (Piaget, 1932), the used didactical material (Paelman, 2001, 2006; Bulckens & Roebben, 2001; Roebben, 2012, 2015a; CoE 2016). All those elements have to be well considered, thought through, to be put together as a puzzle and fit to make the Hikmah model a success. These findings are relevant to our forthcoming discussion of the Hikmah model.

Before we address the Hikmah model, we describe briefly the main elements of Lipmans' Philosophy for Children-model (P4C), since the Hikmah model is based on the P4C (see chapter 8).

FROM PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN TO HIKMAH PEDAGOGY

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is used as a didactical method based on the Piagetian framework. Philosophising with children can be described as a didactical method through which true-life questions are discussed in the classroom to help children phrase their thoughts, feelings, fears, experiences in a structured way and moderated by the teacher (Büttner, 2007). Theologising with children was developed as a new concept in religious pedagogy partly due to the interest of the Evangelical Church in Germany (Büttner et al., 2014). Theologising as a didactical method aims to stimulate the development of religiosity of young children, even in *Kindergarten* (Kammeyer & Schwarz, 2013). Before going further, we describe theologising as "an approach to RE that appreciates and fosters the children's questions and their interpretation of the things in their life and their image of God" (ibid., p. 111). Philosophising and theologizing "share the attempt of recognizing children as independent thinkers and having their opinions heard. (…) as thinking about the great questions of humanity which concerns each of us" (ibid., p. 113).

In 1998, Malaysia introduced 'critical thinking' as a learning objective in education. Malaysia chose a holistic approach in which attention is paid to intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional development opportunities. To achieve these goals, a preference is given to more student-centred teaching methods and strategies such as research and exploration methods, the Socratic method, discussion, project and group work. Therefore, Hashim introduced Lipman's P4C, and from the beginning it was implemented as a cross-curricular method.

The Philosophy for Children Program (P4C), conducted at several Malaysian schools, grew out of the need for improving education in that country. P4C is based on the Community of Inquiry method (CoI) (Lipman, 1988). CoI includes active and authentic discovery learning for both students and teachers, who are stimulated to ask questions and share views on questions and issues of everyday life. Through dialogue and finding solutions for logical, metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, aesthetic, social or political issues, the P4C promotes and strengthens one's logical reasoning ability, critical and creative thinking, self-esteem, listening skills and involvement in group discussions. The P4C program trains students to ask relevant,

critical and philosophical questions about the learning content, to articulate rational arguments, to justify their positions and opinions, and to formulate evidence for their assertions (Othman & Hashim, 2006).

P4C uses stories with specific and important philosophical life issues, as exemplified by the Lisa books (Lipman, 1983). Lisa books contain true-life stories designed for pupils of primary schools. The stories are designed to help the children articulate their thoughts and feelings through the recognisable stories. These texts focus on ethical and social issues such as honesty, lying and telling the truth. Other themes include children, animal rights, employment and gender discrimination. The teacher is a guide into the stories in which activities such as open conversations, dialogue, reflecting on other opinions, collective learning, reasoning, discussion and questioning take place as inspirational didactical methods. Through such active involvement, thinking is explicitly encouraged and promoted.

In January 2006, the Centre for Philosophical Inquiry in Education (CPIE) was set up under the Institute of Education (IE) with the aim to promote the method of working known as 'philosophical inquiry' in education under the direction of Hashim, professor at the IE of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The motivation was twofold: Malaysia had poor performance in international comparison competitions and there were social problems due to many ethnic tensions.

Based on different studies and their findings (e.g. Hashim, Hussien & Juperi, 2014; Preece, 2013; Hashim, Hussien, & Imran, 2014), Hashim developed the Hikmah model.

THE HIKMAH MODEL

The Hikmah model has been developed in Malaysia for primary schools in order to enhance students' critical and reflective thinking skills about religion and the meaning of religion in their lives. The model was first introduced in the teaching of English, Malay, Islamic Studies, and Moral Education, as well as a subject unto itself (Hashim, Hussien, & Imran, 2014). In addition to critical and creative thinking, personal and interpersonal development, and the ability to give meaning to experience, it introduces a process of reflection on Qur'anic verses, *hadiths* and local Malaysian traditions through stories designed specifically for such a purpose (Hashim & Banging, 2009; Hashim, 2012) (see for an extensive description chapter 8).

Examples of stories used in the Hikmah model can be found in the series, *Thinking Stories for Muslim Children*: Mira's trip to the zoo, Mira's new school, Mira's thinking about God and Mira helping the poor (Hashim, Hussien, & Juperi, 2014). We cannot explore the different stories, but the main point is that the stories have true-life elements. *Mira's trip to the zoo* describes the visit of Mira where the snake reminds her of the Pharaoh's magicians or/and the elephant reminds her of *sourat Al Fiel* (Q:105). The book *Mira's new school* describes the wish to learn new words. It reminds her of the story of the Prophet Adam when he was learning

words from God and the importance of knowledge mentioned in *sourat Al Baqara* (Q:02). Children are encouraged to recognise, to think and talk about their own experiences. At crucial moments, the teacher encourages the pupils to think by asking questions. The teacher is therefore a supervisor of the thinking process and the formulation of thoughts, avoiding suggestive questions and expects no right answers. The learning objectives as listening to others with respect, formulate feelings and experiences, phrasing critical questions about the discussed topic and giving well founded reasons for their viewpoints and learning process should be well-framed and outlined in order to achieve their optimal potential during this dynamic class event. The main objective is to develop and strengthen the thinking abilities of the pupils through philosophical discussions stimulated by true-life storytelling and exchange of experiences. By doing so, they exercise their questioning and reasoning abilities and thus strengthen their cognitive and affective competences.

Hashim, Hussien and Imran (2014) describe as preconditions for the Hikmah model the following: skills and attitudes of the teacher, the quality and relevance of the learning materials, the customised and creative activities and exercises and the support of the school board. The latter is especially important to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to implement the Hikmah pedagogy.

Before and after applying the Hikmah pedagogy, in their research Hashim, Hussien and Imran (2014) studied the feelings and attitudes of the pupils towards the Hikmah model, the skills of developing critical thinking and improving the confidence of pupils by e. g. surveys, interviews, formulating questions in class and analysis of notes of the students. In summary, the general feeling among the students was positive towards the model. The results of this research show that the Hikmah pedagogy has the potential to lead to more and better interreligious dialogue. For more details, we refer to chapter 8 by Hussien et al.

However positive these reactions of Malaysian students are, further questions still need to be asked, before applying it to Flanders' educational context: How does teaching and learning about religions take place in Flemish schools? In what way and to what extend can the Hikmah model be introduced into Flemish (Islamic) RE and make it successful for Flemish students? What are the consequences of implementation of the Hikmah model for Teacher Training?

PRAXIS OF RE IN FLEMISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Islamic RE curriculum for public primary education, *Leerplan Lager Onderwijs* (Primary Education Curriculum, PEC, 2012) is divided into six study domains: faith, worship, biography of the Prophet, Qur'an, morality, and religion and culture. This curriculum explicitly refers to constructivism as a learning model. In (social) constructivism, the learning process is characterised by learning through interaction with others. The pupil is an active player and listener at the same time. The aim is not to be exhaustive, but to trigger the critical thinking process by asking questions.

The PEC contains several anchor points, which could incite pupils to philosophise. These anchor points include: a supportive learning environment, the importance of one's own ideas and awareness, the consideration of alternatives and the discussion thereof, the formulation of new concepts and the use thereof in various situations, the development of higher cognitive activities, such as problem solving, comparing, asking open questions that are meaningful and thorough, stimulating reflection and encouraging research on a particular topic, encouraging interaction between pupils, circle group discussions, and so forth. Philosophising nor theologising as such are integrated in the PEC. In what follows however, we give some examples of topics that can be used as a starting point for philosophising with Muslim pupils.

Anchor points can be found in the learning subjects, e.g. 'Islam is my religion,' when we talk about 'I am a Muslim' or in the learning domain 'worship,' or when the subject 'prayer' is discussed. We also find additional opportunities in the learning domain 'morality' when the concept happiness is brought in. Other examples include topics such as 'Belief in the Prophet' or stories from other religions, particularly those from Christianity and about Jesus. For the learning subject 'I know my Prophet' the classroom conversation is suggested as a didactic method. The pedagogical strategy of such a classroom conversation, where pupils are sitting in a circle while discussing the lesson topic, may well be an opportunity to apply the Hikmah model.

For the Qur'anic learning domain, we can carry out theological discussions by stimulating pupils with the following questions: In which way can the Qur'an contribute to a better co-existence? Are there other Holy Books and why? Why did God send Holy Scriptures to the people? How important are these and why? Are there differences or similarities between the Bible and the Qur'an? How come there are similarities and differences? The teacher encourages pupils by asking questions to think without being suggestive. No specific answers are expected nor used as right or wrong criteria during class discussions. Through listening to each other's knowledge, opinions and views, making comparisons with other Holy Books, students sharpen their ability for critical reflection and learn to formulate critical questions. The Qur'anic learning domain is particularly well-suited for working on intra- and interreligious and interconvictional dialogue. As mentioned above, work within the *Interlevensbeschouwelijke Competenties* (Interconventional Competences, ICC) hours or/and in the RE lessons on these themes can be very fruitful for the pupils and class dynamics towards developing, stimulating and strengthening interreligious and interconvictional dialogue. These questions and the discussions may also contribute to intra- and interreligious and interconvictional tolerance.

Finally, we consider the learning subject 'Friendship and Brotherhood,' in which concepts such as love, respect, helpfulness and losing a friend are central. Affective objectives such as empathy, tolerance, patience, and communication are displayed in the curriculum. Through philosophising about those objectives and learning subjects, the teacher can work on cognitive as well as affective competences to strengthen the dialogue and tolerance between pupils.

In the following section, we discuss further opportunities for the Hikmah model. The limited scope of this chapter allows only for a brief consideration of a few examples, anchor points and opportunities arising from the PEC and ICC framework in primary public schools.

HIKMAH IN THE FLEMISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS?

The Hikmah model has valuable elements, but it is constructed within the diverse cultural, social, religious, political and educational context of Malaysia. It is obvious that the Flemish context is quite different. Firstly, Flanders is characterised by a growing internal and external religious and cultural diversity. Secondly, it has a pillarized educational system with public and private schools funded by the Flemish community. There are till now no Islamic private schools recognised by the Flemish community. The third relevant characteristic is that Islamic RE courses are only delivered into the public schools. The pupils of the different Christian denominations have at the same time, but not together, RE lessons. However, this does not prevent us from developing an adaptation of this model, suitable for Flemish (Islamic) RE. We propose to use the model during the RE courses in public schools, and more specifically, during the interconvictional competences (ICC) hours. The commission has formulated twenty-four interconvictional[19] competences categorized into three areas: 1) me and my conviction, 2) me, my conviction and those of others and 3) me, my conviction and the society. Each learning aim is labelled as either knowledge or skill and attitude. The pedagogical-didactical methods have to be developed by the RE teachers themselves. In its current form, the PEC at times identifies the questioning methods, but does not explicitly address intra- or interreligious or interconvictional dialogue.

Another opportunity to integrate the Hikmah-model and to create and develop changes in attitudes by creating an open and safe space to encounter the ‘other’ can be seen in the transversal curricula learning objectives[20] on citizenship and social skills, when taken together with the interconvictional competences (ICC). An opportunity is thus already present to formulate educational projects about interreligiosity and citizenship as described in the Flemish *Vakoverschrijdende Eindtermen* (VOET, Cross Curricula Learning Goals). To be successful, such projects must be carried out by all the teachers and school members, including those responsible for the overseeing school policy.

The Hikmah model is about perception of pupils and thus it is important to pay attention to the development of, and insight into each other’s religious and non-religious convictions through tailor-made didactical methods taking into account the characteristics of the pupils, learning environment, teacher’s skills, didactical material well-prepared with outlined clear learning objectives.

In sum, one can find possibilities for philosophising in the curriculum of (Islamic RE of) primary schools. Many topics are broadly formulated and thus allow for the development of dialogue and tolerance between pupils. The teacher must create a safe space to make this dialogue possible in which the learner can construct an own identity, images of God and opinions both independently and

with others, and by doing so, the teacher helps to increase the convictional tolerance towards each other. In this way, the RE teacher acts as a counsellor, coach and moderator of the class event. For the latter, specific teacher training programs are needed to develop and appropriate the needed skills and attitudes.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The Hikmah model is based on Lipmans' P4C. Hashim has introduced a new element, namely philosophising on the Qur'an, *hadith* and Malays' cultural customs. This method seeks to engage children, to stimulate, strengthen and develop skills such as critical and creative thinking and to reinforce listening, social and communication skills. The model had positive effects on the development of pupils' self-confidence, questioning methods, awareness and empathy; furthermore, it has challenged existing teaching strategies and encouraged active participation in group discussions. In addition, the Hikmah model aims to develop and strengthen tolerance and respect among students. The latter is most relevant when working on intra- and interreligious dialogue in Flemish schools.

To be successful, the Hikmah pedagogical-didactical model requires a skilled teacher and attention should be given to teacher training. We emphasize that philosophising is more than initiating group discussions and therefore well-defined learning objectives must be designed. Moreover, an optimum learning safe space must be created and teachers need to master the learning method and stimulate pupils questioning through relevant and lifelike stories. The Hikmah method prompts children to think and deal with religious themes, and by doing so, contributes to positive intra- and interreligious dialogue.

The Hikmah model cannot be directly applied into the Flemish (Islamic) RE courses. Even though there are active didactic methods presented, the existing PEC does not mention philosophising as a didactical method. However, we find some opportunities and starting points for philosophising with children. Philosophising on Qur'an verses and *hadith* could engage pupils to think about the meaning of the verses in the contemporary Flemish/Western context. Comparing (Holy) stories from different convictions helps pupils to compare, exchange information, listen to, think critically and dialogue about the similarities and differences. Even between pupils from a same cultural background in the same class could arise interesting discussions about differences in religious or non-religious practices. All those opportunity moments can be taken by the skilled teacher to enhance and increase positive interconvictional dialogue and the social and communication skills of the pupils. Besides the opportunities, we have to be careful to not oversee the societal difference between an as good as homogeneous Malay Muslim population and Flemish diverse society. Furthermore, the Flemish school system with public and private funded schools and the organisation of the RE courses are different.

The Flemish schools, especially public schools, offer a rich environment for experimenting with the Hikmah model. To reach this goal, further research is needed to develop a Hikmah model suitable to and tailor-made for the Flemish

context. Qualitative as well as quantitative research can give us insights into the learning processes of pupils and the needed conditions for successful implementation of the Hikmah model in Flemish schools.

NOTES

[1] Article 24 of the Constitution stipulate: §1. Education is free; any preventive measure is forbidden; the punishment of offences is regulated only by law or federal law; the community offers free choice to parents. The community organises non-denominational education. This implies in particular the respect of the philosophical, ideological or religious beliefs of parents and pupils. Schools run by public authorities offer until the end of compulsory education, the choice between the teaching of one of the recognised religions and non-denominational ethics teaching. §2. If a community, in its capacity as an organising authority, wishes to delegate powers to one or several autonomous bodies, it can only do so by federal law adopted by two-thirds majority of the votes cast. §3. Everyone has the right to education with respect of fundamental rights and freedoms. Access to education is free until the end of compulsory education. All pupils of school age have the right to moral or religious education at the community's expenses. §4. All pupils or students, parents, teaching staff or institution are equal before the law or federate law. The law and federate law take into account objective differences, in particular the characteristics of each organising authority that warrant appropriate treatment. §5. The organisation, the recognition and the subsidising of education by the community are regulated by the law or federate law.

[2] Catholic schools organise three hours of religious education, two hours are funded by the Flemish Community and the third is organised on their own costs.

[3] Other recognised denominations are Catholic religion (1830), Anglican (1835), Orthodox (1985), Protestant (1930), Israelite/Jews (1931) and Humanism (1993).

[4] Erasmushogeschool Brussel (1998-1999), Groep T Leuven (now UCLL) (2008-2009), Thomas More Mechelen (2015-2016), Thomas More Turnhout (2016-2017), Arteveldehogeschool Gent (2016-2017); Artesis Plantijn Antwerp (2016-2017).

[5] I also use the concept 'interreligious' in this chapter, knowing that the translation is not perfectly correct with the term used in the official documents.

[6] Definition by author.

[7] Definition by author.

[8] The commission does not use the concept interfaith, because also non-religious denominations are recognized by the Belgian constitution. They preferred the concept interconvictional competences to underline the engagement towards all denominations. The commission members are the inspectors of all by the constitution recognized religious and non-religious denominations.

[9] In this chapter, we do not focus on Jews, Protestant and other private schools.

[10] www.ond.vlaanderen.be. Since 2014-2015 the number of pupils choosing Islamic religious education in public schools doubled. In Brussels, more that 50% of the pupils are enrolled in Islamic religious education organised in public schools.

[11] Based on the constitution and to receive funding from the Flemish community, the school has to be open for every child independently of his/her religious denomination.

[12] The document stipulates that each state has to develop tools and instruments taking into account the local context. The document describes religion as a part of intercultural education, acknowledging the impediment of the issue.

[13] What do you mean by…? Can you give an example of …? What has it to do with ….? What is the question again? Can you rephrase it?

[14] Why do you think that …? How can we know it is true? Can you explain where that idea is coming from?

[15] What is the difference between this and/or that? Can you give an example where it is not the same? Can you imagine that this is not possible? Could the opposite be also true? Is there someone who has another idea/opinion? Can you tell us more about your idea/opinion?

[16] What would happen if it was true? What can we conclude out of this story? Is there a rule for understanding it?

[17] How would you summarise? What can we conclude? Did we find (the right) an answer? What have we learned? Do we understand the story better, and doing so, the opinion of the others? Do we understand the issue/problem well? Are all the possibilities investigated? How would you conclude this discussion? How did we get involved in this discussion? Are there other possibilities to understand the story? Are there other perspectives? How would you react in the case of …?

[18] 1) Making clear, 2) working out, 3) building bridges and 4) thinking it through. Thinking through is part of the process of edification. Important in this process is the internal and external bridging process. Internal bridging between the child's world and the other who they encounter in class. External bridging is the process between the religious tradition at home and in school.

[19] Interconvictional competences and not interreligious competences due to the fact that beside the recognized religions also non-religious ideologies are recognized by the constitution.

[20] *Vakoverschrijdende Eindtermen* (VOET – Cross Curricula Learning Objectives); www.ond.vlaanderen.be

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LEENDERT W. VAN DER MEIJ

10. INTERFAITH EDUCATION AND DUTCH ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

Possibilities for Interreligious Encounters and Islamic Education in the Netherlands

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is about Dutch Islamic education and the (im)possibilities for interreligious encounters at Islamic primary schools. It discusses different views on Islamic education in the Dutch society and whether Islamic schools are capable to host such encounters. Using Paul Knitter's Four-point model, the different types of Islamic schools are described and the (im)possibilities for interreligious encounters are revealed. Is it possible for Islamic schools to perform acts of friendship towards other children of Abraham, and to initiate religious brotherhood?

DUTCH EDUCATION

In the Netherlands, most schools[1] are funded by the government and are either public-authority (public) schools or confessional schools. Public schools are schools which declare to be neutral towards religion or ideology, whilst confessional schools are schools with a specific religious or ideological basis.[2] For schools to qualify for state funding, the Dutch government imposes several conditions: there must be enough pupils to start and maintain the school, the staff must be qualified to teach and there must be an adequate level of education.[3] Discrimination is not permitted in public or confessional schools: neither staff nor pupils may be rejected on grounds of race, gender or sexual preference. However, confessional schools are permitted to give preference to pupils or staff who adhere to a particular religion or belief system. Some Dutch political movements and individual Dutch politicians have expressed the desire to abolish confessional schools in order to create more solidarity in society, and to promote the integration of various ideologies or religions (Schoo, 2004; Lagerveld, 2012). Support for this notion has existed for decades, and prompts both supporters and opponents to express their views in the media. So far, confessional education has not been abolished and there is still a pillarized[4] education system in the Netherlands. The limited number of pilots which have been launched in the past in order to create an interreligious encounter school, have not had a wide following.

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 123–136.
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FOUNDATION OF DUTCH ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

In the seventies, the first Muslim migrant children entered the Dutch educational system. Their fathers had been invited by the Dutch government for temporary work in the Netherlands as guest workers through international recruitment agreements. These migrant workers mainly came from countries where the Islamic religion is dominant, such as Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. In the Dutch primary schools, the children of these guest workers were given extra lessons in their own language and culture, in order to prepare them for return to their country of origin. The aim of these lessons was to prevent a loss of connection with the country of origin, by ensuring that the migrant children's knowledge and skills remained intact, thereby preparing them for their return if necessary.

In the early eighties, the Dutch government offered the possibility of organizing family reunification, based on international treaties. Since then, the Netherlands has been perceived, on the political level, as a multicultural society in which people from different cultures and religious convictions can live together in a single society.

As a result of family reunification, those families living in the Netherlands often chose schools based on the school's geographic location. Many were unaware of the precise distinction between public and confessional schools, and thus chose a school situated close to their home for practical reasons. Muslim migrant children were therefore enrolled in both public and confessional schools. As a result, these Muslim children may be taught about Jesus, the son of God, by a Christian teacher in a confessional school, or be told that God does not exist and that the earth was not created in seven days by a teacher in a public school.

Most Muslim parents took this situation for granted (Shadid & Van Koningsveld, 1990, pp. 92-93) and accepted this as being an insurmountable alienation of their private Moroccan, Tunisian or Turkish identity, as a result of migration to a society with a vastly different ideology and culture. About one third of these children attended a Qur'an school in the weekend to learn Qur'an verses and gain knowledge of Islamic teachings and customs. This compensated the public or confessional identity of their school (Shadid & Van Koningsveld, 1990, p. 80). A small group of parents, some of them members of a mosque board, looked for ways to make use of the opportunities to found confessional – in this case, Islamic – education. They wanted their own schools which are consistent with the cultural and religious background of the children. They wanted education that was in harmony with the valued customs and traditions they are familiar with (Wagtendonk, 1987, p. 103).

In the late eighties, the applications for an Islamic school, funded by the Dutch government, were honoured. There were arguably enough pupils and the school had a qualified teaching staff. Although the quality of education still had to be demonstrated, two Islamic primary schools were opened in 1988: *Al Ghazali* in Rotterdam and *Tariq Ibn Zayid* in Eindhoven.

ISLAMIC-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER SCHOOL

In approximately the same period a unique situation developed in the middle of the Netherlands, at a Protestant Christian primary school, the Juliana of Stolberg, in the Dutch city of Ede. Due to the geographical location of the school, it attracted many children of Muslim parents following family reunification processes. The management and staff of the school recognised the unique composition of the pupil population caused by these developments. After several discussions with the school's supporting body, which consisted of both Christian and Muslim parents, the school chose to become an Islamic-Christian encounter school. This unique concept[5] soon attracted the attention of local and national media and politics.[6] For this school, "meeting each other" meant that there was a scope for having mutual religious beliefs and practices. During the religious education lessons, attention was paid to the New Testament gospel for Christian children and to the Islamic traditions – which are described as *Hadith* – for Muslim children. During the religious recognition/encounter/dialogue lessons, attention was paid to interreligious themes (Abraham, praying). Furthermore, Christmas was celebrated and attention was given to Ramadan, too. Was this a culmination of interfaith education in the Netherlands? Unfortunately, it was of short duration. The encounter school could not fulfil all needs: Muslim parents felt that the religious education lessons should be given by an Imam, the staff indicated that there was no teaching program available to facilitate good interfaith education, and some of the Christian parents voiced concerns that an increase of Muslim children in the pupil population would disturb the balance between the two religions in the encounter school (Wagtendonk, 1987, p. 122). Years later, research about children who attended this school yielded an interesting result: the Muslim and Christian children held an image of God which was mutually influenced.[7] These children, with their different religious backgrounds and beliefs, saw God as a personal, friendly God who cared about them. This demonstrates, on the one hand, the strength of an encounter school: a mutual recognition of faith concepts leads to a certain brotherhood. On the other hand, there is also the risk that the specificity of the various religions becomes diluted by mutual influence (Westerman, 2005).

ISBO AND DUTCH ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

After the founding of the first two Islamic schools, more schools appeared. In 1990, a central body was founded that supports Islamic schools in the field of identity, education and legislation. This organisation, ISBO (Islamic School Board Organisation), is also an interlocutor for the Dutch government and the Dutch Inspectorate of Education. There are now[8] exactly fifty Islamic schools in the Netherlands. Islamic schools in the Netherlands differ from each other. The majority of these schools is orthodox[9] Islamic (85%), some of them are Salafistic,[10] and a minority (15%) is liberal-Islamic (Driessen, 2011). In some schools, boys and girls are separated in their classrooms and in other schools, boys and girls are mixed. Most schools adhere to a Sunni tradition of Islam, a few of them have a Sufism focus. In most schools, Turkish and Moroccan children form the majority,

alongside a variety of cultural and subcultural backgrounds (African, Middle Eastern, also Asian); both Muslim and non-Muslim teachers are employed in the schools. However, there are also common principles that the Islamic schools share: education has an Islamic foundation, the school board has predominantly Muslim members, the staff is respectful to Islam, there is an Islamic cleric associated with the school to advise the staff, Islamic feasts are celebrated, the school rules and regulations are based on the Qur'an and the *Sunna* (the Islamic tradition), and the children who attend the schools are initiated into Islamic practice.

SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND DUTCH ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

Although the Dutch Islamic schools make up only a small proportion of the approximately eight thousand primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands,[11] they have repeatedly been portrayed negatively in the news during the past years.[12] This has partly been due to irregularities which were detected in the past: administrative disorder at some of the schools, cases of fraud with exams and education funds, sponsorships by foreign radical mosques and reports by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education about the weak and even very weak educational quality of nearly a quarter of these schools in 2009.[13] However, such abuses put oil on the fire for a small part of the Dutch population, that already has difficulty adapting to the institutionalization of Islam in the Netherlands. Such abuses are readily discussed in the media, and support for Islamic education is minimal at present. The foundation of new schools has become increasingly difficult.[14] Furthermore, terrorist attacks in the Middle East and Europe, committed in the name of Islam, have a negative impact on the support for Islam and Islamic education in the Netherlands. Many Dutch people find it difficult to distinguish between Islamic terrorism and Dutch Islam and Islamic schools.[15] What should be done about this? The ISBO correctly anticipated unacceptable situations which occurred in the past in those schools: they proposed a 'Good Governance' (ISBO, 2011) charter in which a code of conduct for boards and principals of Islamic schools is described.[16] This charter was endorsed by most Islamic school boards. The organisation also withdrew support from schools that did not endorse the charter, or schools that, at a later stage, propagated radical views which were contrary to European values such as freedom, forbearance, equality and tolerance (EACEA, 2015). In addition, the ISBO launched a long-term project to improve the quality of Islamic schools (project *Quality Islamic Education*), which successfully reduced the number of schools with weak to very weak educational quality to nearly zero.[17]

CONCEPTIONS OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Islamic schools themselves can create support by initiating contacts with others. By showing hospitality and by starting initiatives which encourage encounters with others, Islamic schools can demonstrate that Islamic terrorism has nothing to do with the Islam of peace, which is central to most Dutch Islamic schools. In this chapter I will discuss whether Islamic schools are capable of such encounters, or

willing to attend such encounters, and whether they dare to perform acts of friendship and brotherhood towards a hesitant – and sometimes distrustful – Dutch society.

Firstly, it is important to show how the right for Islamic education is being advocated and experienced in Dutch society. What support is there for Islamic education?

In the Netherlands, there is a constitutional right to Islamic education. That law is described in the Dutch Constitution (Article 23, subsection 2) and reads as follows:

> All persons shall be free to provide education, except for the authorities' right of supervision and, with regard to forms of education designated by law, its right to examine the competence and moral integrity of teachers, to be regulated by Act of Parliament.[18]

Within the Dutch society, a distinction can be made between three main conceptions regarding Islamic education which have taken root. The first conception, which has already been described as expressing the desire of some politicians, is as follows: confessional (Islamic) education does not contribute to the solidarity within society (van der Meij, 2009, pp. 12-14). It promotes (Islamic) segregation and hence alienation of Dutch-European values. Confessional education should be abolished and everyone should be given, regardless of their cultural or religious background, education in public schools.

A contrary conception is upheld by, amongst others, the ISBO: Islamic teaching promotes the empowerment of Muslims and actually contributes to the integration of Dutch Islam.[19] A third conception represents a risk for the continued existence of Islamic education. The existence of confessional education is not questioned, yet a negative exception is stated where Islamic education is concerned. According to supporters of this conception, Islamic education is not compatible with the Judeo-Christian background which has profoundly influenced the Dutch cultural values for centuries. In addition, the Islamic values taught to children in Islamic schools are believed to oppose the Dutch values of freedom, equality and tolerance. To quote (2016) a member of the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party For Freedom, PVV) during a debate between a member of the Party for Freedom (representing the voice of about a fifth of the Dutch population at the moment) and a member of the *Socialistische Partij* (Socialistic Party, SP):

> We are against Islamic schools. Islamic education is anti-Western and preaches hatred and inequality. The magnificent achievements of our open society are quite fragile and we must guard them. Sometimes indeed by taking rigorous measures; this (closing Islamic schools, author) is one of them.[20]

These conceptions demonstrate that there appears to be little support and space for any encounter with, or originating from the side of, Islamic education. Unruly opinions make encounters with dissidents[21] more difficult, but not impossible. Especially in a time of distrust, accessibility and hospitality are necessary to

generate new confidence. Friendly encounters with Islam and Islamic education are the tool of choice to counteract fear or concern. Islamic schools can initiate these encounters in different ways, but the identity of the Islamic school has a decisive impact on these encounters.

As already described, different types of Dutch Islamic schools are distinguishable. In the Netherlands, liberal schools are in the minority, whilst those with an orthodox identity form the majority. The degree to which a school is orthodox, forms a spectrum, ranging from moderate to strict orthodox Islamic Salafism. The character of the Islamic school will affect the type of encounter that can take place. If the Islamic school sees itself as the equivalent of any other religious school, the encounter there will differ from an encounter situated at a school which feels superior to other schools. Naturally, this also applies to the public or Christian school with which an encounter is to be established.

The theological vision of the Islamic school on dissidents is important for the type of encounter that could take place. Equally important is how the public school or Christian school is appreciated theologically according to the Islamic framework. Friendly encounters are important for mutual acceptance and respect; interfaith encounters go deeper and may signify fraternization and religious enrichment of the participants' identity.

FOUR-POINT MODEL AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF DUTCH ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

To explain the theological view of the school or the type of Islamic school, I use the Four-point model that has been described by Paul F. Knitter. The model he described has been applied to different religious perspectives in Christianity but due to the universal nature of these perspectives in monotheistic religions, it is possible to apply this model to Judaism and Islam.[22]

1. Exclusivism

The first religious perspective which Knitter describes in his book *Theologies of religions* (Knitter, 2009), the Replacement model, has an exclusive character: there is one religion among all the religions that explicitly invokes its exclusivity. This religion recognizes a nature in itself which is deemed to be so exceptional, that it is deemed appropriate that, as a religion, it occupies a superior place among other religions. This can be because of a special divine revelation, a particular insight that eliminates other religions, or due to a new prophet who replaces previous divine revelations and religious insights. This perspective mainly exists in the more orthodox variants of religions. By such means, according to traditional Islamic belief, by way of the revelations given to the Prophet Muhammad, have the earlier insights about God and his people been replaced, which were present in Judaism and Christianity. From a more orthodox point of view: Islam supersedes Judaism and Christianity and is the only true religion. This latter view is present in the more orthodox schools and appears to be an obstacle to interreligious encounters, because there is no longer religious equality in the encounter with the other. If a

perspective about superiority prevents an interreligious encounter, the school may be described as a 'religiously closed school.' However, this does not conclude the case. At these schools, steps may be undertaken to make the acquaintance with other religions. It is possible that there is religious interest in other monotheistic religions, such as Judaism and Christianity. Within religion, philosophy or active citizenship curricula, attention may be paid to other religions. During these lessons, areas of agreement can be discussed, such as certain shared values, but differences in religious doctrine or practice can be brought up too. In that case, the pupils will develop a broader religious consciousness, despite of how religions are lined up in terms of superiority. Islamic schools who adopt this attitude, are not religiously closed schools, but can be characterised as 'religiously conscious schools.' Each year, at the Islamic primary school *Al Ghazali* in Rotterdam, a Religion Education (RE) teacher discusses with his pupils what certain celebrations mean to other religions, for example Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter. In a dialogue with his pupils, he explains to them what is celebrated on that day and asks them to respect this. In addition, he presents the Islamic views regarding these celebrations to his pupils.

2. Inclusivism

A second perspective which Knitter describes is characterised as the Fulfilment model. From this angle, there is a less superior, and a more inclusive point of view. Once again there is one particular religion as the centre of other religions, but this religion is now seen as completing other religions. It does not abolish other religions, but complements these, enriching where there were flaws or imperfections. This view exists in the Islamic tradition. For most Muslims, Islam completed the existing truths (such as the belief in one God) and the revelations of the prophets who were already partakers of the People of the Book. The faith of Jews and Christians, which was the basis of Islam, is therefore appreciated. This inclusive thinking can also be found in the idea of *fitra*: this is the principle of good nature that is inborn by the Creator in every human being. "You are a Muslim *a priori*, born a Muslim, whether you like it or not. Some Islamic schools articulate this concretely as 'become who you are.'"[23] An open attitude is very possible from this perspective, although it may cause tension in reciprocity, when an inclusive point of view inclines towards a perspective about superiority. Religious equivalence in an interreligious dialogue and encounter is of great importance: if there is genuine interest in the foundations laid by another religion, or genuine interest in what looks to be a completion by the other, then there can be an encounter from heart to heart. Then elements of the meaning and the significance of the own religion may be discovered in the other.

There is a story about a rabbi[24] that describes the essence of humans meeting each other heart to heart: he asked his pupils if they could tell him how you could know if the night was over, and the day had begun. One student replied that if you could distinguish a dog from a sheep, the night was over. Another student replied that a date tree and a fig tree had to be distinguishable. The rabbi said, "The night

has passed and the day has started when you see your brother or sister in the face of the other." This describes the essence of meeting each other. Islamic schools who can see themselves in the face of the other, have understood the essence of true brotherhood. Such Islamic schools can be characterised as 'religiously open schools.' They meet other religious traditions and enrich their identity therewith. At the Dutch Islamic primary school *Ababil* in Schiedam, the coordinator of 'Active Citizenship and Culture' organises projects to meet others practically. She and her colleagues organised a bazaar in collaboration with a public school in the neighbourhood. The proceeds of this bazaar were intended for refugees who will be housed in Schiedam. Another annual project which this coordinator organises, is a visit to a Christian church near the school. The pupils are given a tour through the church; following this visit they make drawings about similarities and differences between the church and their mosque. The coordinator told me that she attended a Protestant Christian primary school, and that because of this, followers of other religions don't scare her. She has figuratively seen a brother and sister in the face of the other and passes this on to the pupils of her school.

3. Pluralism

In contrast to the Fulfilment model, Knitter also describes a third perspective, based on a principle of equality. This Mutuality model describes that religions differ from each other in rituals, doctrine or ethics, but that the final destination of the religious journey is the same. The different contexts (time, culture, language) in which God has revealed himself throughout history, have led to different interpretations and thus to different religions. An interreligious encounter from this perspective is characterised by an attitude which emphasizes the equality of religions (Knitter, 1985): there are differences between Jewish, Christian or Islamic schools, but essentially all human beings believe in the same Creator. At an interfaith encounter, it is likely that differences are minimised and agreements highlighted. If this occurs, the question arises whether it is still a 'religiously open school,' or whether it is a 'religiously indifferent school.' There is a more limited number of Islamic schools who have a theological pluralistic vision; if this is required in the interreligious dialogue from an equality principle, this encounter is likely to be unsatisfactory and disappointing for both participants. The example of the Islamic-Christian encounter school which I have already described, did not give the desired[25] result because, amongst other things, balance in the different identities at the school was lacking. If balance can be maintained, a strong interreligious solidarity can be created through an interfaith encounter based on a principle of equivalence, in which the religious identity of the school is preserved, similarities are appreciated and differences are not minimised: the Dutch publisher Kwintessens, for example, has published the series *Samenleesverhalen* ('Read Together Stories'), designed to allow young learners to become mutually acquainted with Islam and Christianity in order to foster multicultural and interreligious communication. In this publication, balance is maintained between religious similarities and differences. There are picture books with educational

supporting materials about the prophets *Jozef/Joesoef*, *Mozes/Moess*a and *Noach/Noeh*. These picture books can be read in two ways: on one side of the bookpage the story is told from the Judeo-Christian tradition, and on the other side the story is told from the Islamic tradition. This series is very suitable for schools with children from different religious and cultural backgrounds within the same classroom, to conduct an interfaith conversation that leads to mutual acceptance and understanding. The author of these picture books subsequently offered the series to the coordinator 'Identity' of the ISBO, so that it could be used in the Islamic schools. The ISBO chose not to use this educational supporting material, because of fear that the stories taken from the Judeo-Christian tradition would confuse the (young) Muslim children due to the different stories. The ISBO finds it important that Muslim pupils take note of other religions, but desires that the pupils are taught an Islamic framework first, on the logic that the pupils will later be able to appreciate stories from other religious traditions on the basis of that foundation.

4. Acceptance

The fourth and final perspective which Knitter describes is the Acceptance model. On the one hand, this perspective provides space for an exclusivist religious viewpoint, like in the Replacement and Fulfilment model. On the other hand, it gives space to a more pluralistic view, like in the Mutuality Model. It allows the individual character of the schools, visible in their identity, to be conserved completely. Religious differences are accepted and a specific religious preference may also exist. However, this religious preference is not given a superior attitude, based on the theory that every religion has been developed in its own time, culture and language field. Religion is therefore an interpretation of the actions of God in history. This viewpoint forms an optimal condition from which an interfaith encounter can take place: Islamic schools profess that the Prophet Muhammad is the most important of the prophets to them, but respect that Moses and Jesus are the most important ones for Jewish and Christian schools, respectively. The Qur'an is different compared to either the *Tanakh* (Jewish bible) or the New Testament and there may thus be a difference in appreciation and love. Yet these sacred books are all interpretations of the voice of the Creator. When comparing religious saints, Abraham is universal, as the unique ancestor of Muslims, Jews and Christians. He answered the voice, and promises were made to his offspring. The Qur'an describes him as the first Muslim (*Surah Ali Imran* 65-67), the New Testament describes him as righteous (New Testament, the Epistle to the Romans 4:3) and in the Torah, he is blessed (Genesis 12:2). In the encounters that take place according to the Acceptance model, exclusive identities are enriched by other, yet similar religious traditions and the rituals, doctrines and ethics belonging to these.

INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTERS IN PRACTICE

Interreligious encounters at Islamic schools can be held at different levels of depth. With the Four-point model of Paul F. Knitter it is demonstrated that there are many

interreligious encounter concepts that can be achieved with other religious schools. Practically speaking, this can range from joint, friendly sports activities, to art, culture and nature projects, based on interreligious themes like prayer (*salat*), caring for the poor (*zakat*), the creed (*shahada*), fasting (*saum*) and visiting holy places (*hadj*), which can all be presented from different religious viewpoints. Possibilities also lie in cross religious visits to a synagogue, church or mosque. Recognition can be found in the traditions which religions share, resulting in the enrichment of one's own identity. The life of common prophets like Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, who revealed the Creator's message about peace and mercy (Exodus 34:6-7; Luke 2:14, *Surah Al-An'am* 54), can effectuate solidarity and fraternization and can enrich the identity of all, through that which is of value to the other. Some of the best practices at other European schools (Belgium, Germany) are described in the document, *The role of interreligious education in overcoming fear and building trust* (Lähnemann, 2015).

CONCLUSION

The emergence of Islamic education in the Netherlands at the end of the 20th century, was partly based on the desire of Muslim immigrants to participate in the Dutch society, and also inspired by the goal to preserve and continue the Islamic identity among the children of Muslim immigrants.

After the founding of, what are now, fifty Dutch Islamic schools and an Islamic School Board Organisation, the support for confessional education is losing momentum – especially support for Islamic education. The rise of right-wing political parties demonstrates how difficult it is for a part of the Dutch society to accept Islam. The fear of Islamic terrorism seems to affect the public support for religious education in general, and for Islamic education in particular.

There are educational, cultural and religious differences between the Dutch Islamic schools. The theological beliefs and practices in Islamic schools range from Salafism, and Islamic orthodoxy to liberal or Islamic Sufism. Similarities can be found in the Islamic principles of these schools, with the celebration of Islamic festivals and the teaching of Islamic practices to the pupils.

According to Paul F. Knitter, the religious perspective determines the extent and manner of contact with other religions. He describes four theological perspectives that can be taken. These four perspectives (exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism and acceptance) are not only found in Christianity: taking account of the studies on Islam in relation to these perspectives, they can be found in Islam as well.

The theological perspective and the religious appreciation of another religion in an Islamic school affects the potential for interreligious contacts between the different schools. There are Islamic schools with exclusive, religious superior views and where no interreligious contacts are initiated. Some schools observe a religious recognition of other religions and discuss them from an inclusive viewpoint with the pupils. There are Islamic schools that bring their pupils to a nearby church and discuss the similarities and differences between the church and a mosque with their pupils afterwards.

Islamic schools that show hospitality and kindness to others, and enter into a dialogue with dissidents, contribute to a positive image of Islamic schools in the Dutch society. They manifest the Islam of peace, and combat peacefully against the violence that is taking place in the name of Islam. During the summer of 2016, whilst writing this chapter, various terrorist attacks have occurred in Europe in the name of Allah and Islam, and a few hundred fundamentalist Muslims have departed from the Netherlands, occasionally from an Islamic school, destined for the Islamic State. This in turn reduces the political and public support for Islam in the Netherlands. Some politicians speak openly about their desire to close Islamic schools, in the belief that they are a breeding ground for terrorism. But those who engage in interreligious dialogue, will defeat the divisive society, religious intolerance and the essence of terror. Interreligious encounters which are initiated by the Islamic schools that I have described, bring a liberating balance in the appreciation of Dutch Islam and contribute to tolerance, brotherhood and peace. When we succeed in meeting each other both with religious recognition of one another's religion and acceptance of the resulting differences, it becomes possible for us to truly meet each other, and to love sincerely.

NOTES

1. Education in numbers (2016). *Aantal en omvang van instellingen in het primair onderwijs*, retrieved October 3rd, 2016, from https://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/primair-onderwijs/instellingenpo/aantal-instellingen
2. Types of confessional schools include Roman Catholic, Protestant, Islamic or Hindu. Confessional schools may refuse to admit pupils or to employ teachers whose convictions differ from those the school holds.
3. Dutch government (2016). *Openbaar en bijzonder onderwijs*, retrieved October 3rd, 2016, from https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/vrijheid-van-onderwijs/inhoud/openbaar-en-bijzonder-onderwijs
4. Here defined as a society that is highly divided into different social and political movements or pillars, based on a (religious or secular) worldview.
5. The Juliana van Stolberg school had a unique view on interreligious encounter education, based among other things on the theory of the Amsterdam theologian Henk Vroom, whereby teachers are working together with Islamic and Christian theologians to make encounter education successful. See: I. Ter Avest (2003). *Kinderen en God verteld in verhalen*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, p. 214-215.
6. The website for research in Dutch historical newspapers, Delpher, provides many examples of local and national attention, when using the search term "Islamic school Ede." See: http://www.delpher.nl/nl/kranten, 11th October 2016.
7. For example, the Christian idea of a caring, loving God seems to have influenced the view of Muslim children. See: I. Ter Avest (2003). *Kinderen en God verteld in verhalen*. Zoetermeer: *Boekencentrum*, p. 292.
8. 17th October 2016, according to information from the ISBO website, http://www.deisbo.nl/?cat=1.
9. Here defined as strictly adhering to the (religious) rules and regulations.
10. As seen, by example, at the *As Siddieq* Primary School in Amsterdam, described as the *Ahli Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah*, http://www.as-siddieq.nl/aanbod/identiteit/, 17th October 2016.
11. Education in Numbers (2016), *Aantal en omvang van instellingen in het primair onderwijs*, retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/primair-onderwijs/

instellingenpo/aantal-instellingen and *Aantal en omvang van vo-scholen*, from http://www.onderwijsincijfers.nl/kengetallen/voortgezet-onderwijs/instellingenvo/aantal-scholen

[12] Trouw (2013), *Inhaalslag: Ook islamitische scholen zijn nu 'excellent,'* retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4664/Mijn-kind-moet-naar-de-basisschool/article/detail/3389009/2013/02/06/Inhaalslag-ook-islamitische-scholen-zijn-nu-excellent.dhtml

[13] ISBO (2016). *Overzicht van kwaliteitsbeoordelingen ISBO scholen*, retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.deisbo.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/overzicht-van-kwaliteitsbeoordelingen-isbo-scholen-2010-2015.pdf

[14] Algemeen Dagblad (2016). *Islamitische scholen komen niet van de grond*, retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.ad.nl/home/islamitische-scholen-komen-niet-van-de-grond~a740e134/

[15] Based on the views of upcoming right-wing Dutch political parties, as referred to later in this chapter.

[16] ISBO (2011). *Handvest goed bestuur en kwaliteit islamitisch onderwijs*, retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.deisbo.nl/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/handvest-goed-bestuur-en-kwaliteit-islamitisch-onderwijs.pdf

[17] ISBO (2016). *Overzicht van kwaliteitsbeoordelingen ISBO scholen*, retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.deisbo.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/overzicht-van-kwaliteitsbeoordelingen-isbo-scholen-2010-2015.pdf

[18] Parlement & Politiek (2016). *Hoofdstuk 1 Grondwet*, retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.parlement.com/id/vhnnmt7jesyv/hoofdstuk_1_grondwet_volledige_tekst.

[19] ISBO (2009). *Visie*, retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.deisbo.nl/?p=183

[20] Dutch Parliament (2016). *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Plan van scholen*, retrieved October 17th, 2016, from https://www.tweedekamer.nl/downloads/document?id=5d4273cd-e62e-4e46-868a-245ab4cefb9e&title=Conceptverslag%20Onderwijs%20op%20een%20andere%20locatie%20dan%20school.docx, p. 7.

[21] Defined here as disagreeing with another religious or non-religious system, organisation, or belief.

[22] Various studies demonstrate that the different perspectives described in Paul F. Knitter's Four-point model (exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism and acceptance), which Knitter applies to monotheistic Christianity in the book *Theologies of Religions* (2009), can also be applied to the variety of monotheistic Islam: Kazi Nurul Islam describes the possibilities for a pluralistic perspective on the basis of the Qur'an in *The Qur'anic Message of Universalism and Religious Pluralism* (2013); Farid Esack describes Islamic pluralistic and inclusivist thinking in *Qu'ran, Liberation and Pluralism* (1997); and in her investigation *Salvation or Other Believers* (2013) Cindy Kremers cites some exclusivist verses in the Qur'an that are used by the Wahhabi stream of Islam in order to demonstrate the superiority of Islam over other religions. These different perspectives on the diversity of Islam are furthermore described by John Hick in *Religious Pluralism and Islam* (2005).

[23] SIMON. *Worden wie je bent*, retrieved October 20th, 2016, from http://www.simonscholen.nl/files/Worden%20wie%20je%20bent%20(N).pdf

[24] When the former prime minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, used this Chassidic story in his statement in 2002 in South-Africa, he mentioned that he originally received the story from a Muslim educator and was very pleasantly surprised to hear it from him. This example illustrates the universal religious significance and meaning of the story for believers from different religions. United Nations (2002). *Israël Statement*, retrieved October 31th, 2016, from http://www.un.org/events/wssd/statements/ israelE.htm

[25] For parents and teachers, as described in this article under the heading *Islamic-Christian encounter school.*

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Trouw. (2013). *Inhaalslag: ook islamitische scholen zijn nu 'excellent,'* retrieved October 17th, 2016, from http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4664/Mijn-kind-moet-naar-de-basisschool/article/detail/3389009/2013/02/06/Inhaalslag-ook-islamitische-scholen-zijn-nu-excellent.dhtml
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ISMAIL TASPINAR AND INA TER AVEST

11. DIVERSITY IS THE KEY TO PEACE

Interfaith Education in an Association of Islamic Primary Schools in the Netherlands

INTRODUCTION

“When I arrived in the Netherlands, I was a young boy, a teenager. My parents remained behind in Turkey, while I began living with my brother in the Netherlands. Next door to us lived a Roman Catholic family. They adopted me as if I was their own son. I joined them in the celebration of their religious festivals, I was part of the *Sinterklaas* narrative (Saint Nicholas Day, celebrated annually in the Netherlands with the giving of gifts). It was in this family that I learned about ‘the other’ who is a faithful adherent of a different religion. Sometimes I went with them to church. By consequence, I learned that I was different. My curiosity drove me in the direction of Christianity, just as it drove me towards the work of Islam scholars. When I was eighteen, I committed fully to Islam, following the rules for prayer and fasting and celebrating the Islamic religious festivals. Back then, without knowing it, there were three *suras* – sent down to the Prophet – that were a source of inspiration to me and which would become leading for me.”[1]

> It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Torah (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) … before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgement between right and wrong). Then those who reject Faith in the Signs of Allah, will suffer the severest penalty, and Allah is Exalted in Might, Lord of Retribution. (*Al-’Imran* [3]: 3-4)

> Say, o disbelievers. I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion. (*Al-Kafirun* [29]: 45-49)

> And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except in the best way, unless it be with those of them who do wrong: but say, ‘We believe in the revelation which has come down to you and in that which came down to you. Our God and your God is One; and it is to Him we submit. (*Al-Ankabut* [29]: 46)

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 137–146.
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"These experiences of encounter with 'the other,' in particular 'the other' as represented by the girl next door, had the result that I developed myself as a Muslim while living in the midst of diversity – a diversity that was already typical for Dutch society in those days, and has become more characteristic ever since. Two features of my person, my being a Muslim and my curiosity for 'the other,' became the solid basis on which my ambition for Islamic education in the Netherlands grew and still rests today, an ambition which is aptly summarized in the slogan of our schools: Diversity is the key to peace."[2]

In this chapter, we will give an outline of the pedagogical strategies of the SIMON schools,[3] an association of Islamic schools in the Netherlands. The SIMON group has an Executive Board presided by the chairman Ismail Taspinar, whose pedagogic vision and personal biography influenced the schools. First, we present the vision and mission of these schools, which is based on the Islamic tradition. In the context of the Netherlands, the voices of the teachers and parents are preconditional for the development of an authentic Islamic school identity. Next, in the second paragraph, we examine the pedagogical strategies that challenge the pupils in the course of their path of development to 'become who you are.' The pedagogical strategies of the SIMON schools are inspired by theories on the psychological development of the child, specifically Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. The third paragraph is dedicated to citizenship education, a school subject currently under development, which integrates religion in a holistic approach of education-in-context. The chapter concludes with a paragraph containing reflections and some recommendations for further research in interfaith education.

VISION AND MISSION

In its literal meaning, the word Islam is synonymous with the English word 'to submit,' 'to submit oneself to God (Allah).' A more metaphorical understanding of the word is "to become part of the peace of God" (Aktaran, 2003, p. 24). Yet another interpretation is related to the Arabic word *Dien*, which is best translated with 'religion' as a natural human condition as this is meant by God. Man is part of God's Creation, a creature that has been given a personal will that can – according to the situation which varies considerably – enter into conflict with the natural human and religious condition. Not living in accordance to the natural condition will result in estrangement. Educators, parents and teachers alike, are responsible for the development of the child's personal will, to enable each child to respond to her/his Creator in an authentic way. In its guise of pedagogic cornerstone of the SIMON schools, Islam is thus understood as submitting to – and living in peace with – the divine nature of the Creator, and by consequence the inherent good character of each child (ibid., p. 25).

According to the Qur'an there is only one religion, since all revelations received by the different prophets (like Adam, Noeh/Noach, Ibrahim/Abraham, Moesa/ Moses and Isa/Jesus) are part of a single, universal faith. In the Qur'an, this universal faith is called 'Islam.' Some of the prophets are more influential than

others. Examples include Musa/Moses, who showed his people the *Taurat*/Torah, and Isa/Jesus who is represented in the *Indjil*/Gospels. This is the reason why Jews and Christians are called 'People of the Book.' The last revelation was sent to the prophet Muhammed (ibid., p. 25). In the messages sent down to the prophet Muhammed, God reveals Himself to people of faith, both men and women all over the world, through the history of past religious communities, through concrete situations in the religious communities of Mecca and Medina, and by way of the encounters which Muhammed had with 'others.' According to the SIMON schools, the Qur'an is an inspiration for people and it motivates their actions (ibid., p. 26).

The *Sunna* is complementary to the Qur'an. At the same time, it presents the first comments on the Qur'an. Following the line of the SIMON schools, it is not possible to understand the Qur'an or to carry out the main Islamic rituals without having learned from the *Sunna*. Next to the *Sunna*, the narratives of the life of the Prophet Muhammed are a source of inspiration for all Muslims. Moreover, the *Hadith* literature contains stories about the life of the Prophet Muhammed and regulations on how to live as a good Muslim. The *Hadith* literature is based on the questions of the followers and the answers given by the Prophet Muhammed.

Different traditions can be identified within Islam, with some focusing on Islamic law, while others focus on Islamic rituals or the social and economic relations between people. The *Sunna* mentions four schools of Islamic law. Muslims, in general, name themselves after one of these four traditions. Sometimes this is related to the ethnic background of the person. Many of the Turkish people in the Netherlands are followers of the *Hanafit* school of law. Many Moroccans living in the Netherlands, conversely, follow the *Malikit* school of law. These days, new typologies of Muslims are created to do justice to the more complicated relations which develop in contemporary times (ibid., p. 27).

The educational vision of the SIMON schools is based on the Qur'an. In close relation to this vision, the school's mission statement is formulated in accordance to the main themes found in the Qur'an, the *Sunna* and the *Hadith* literature: the unity of God, the individuality of men and women and their part in the community, creation and environment, the revelations received by the different prophets, life after death, the essence of the good and the nature of sins.

The SIMON schools form an integral part of Dutch society. Next to Islamic religious festivals, national holidays are celebrated like the King's birthday and the fourth and fifth of May, during which the Second World War is remembered. The SIMON schools have an open policy regarding the appointment of teachers, and for the admission of pupils as well. The SIMON schools strive for the maintenance of a teacher population which is composed of 50% Muslims and 50% teachers with a different religious (or a secular) background. In itself, this is an example of experiential learning, with lessons being drawn from the respectful encounter with other Muslims, and adherents of different religious (or secular) worldviews, as well. In sum: the goal is not segregation, but integration according to a distinctly Islamic point of view.

In his farewell speech, the Prophet Muhammed told his followers to treat each other in a just manner, since they would have to answer for their acts at the end of

their lives when they encountered their Creator (ibid., p. 26; see also Ibn Ishaak, 2006). To treat everyone in a just manner, be they Muslim or non-Muslim, and to treat the different interpretations of the Qur'an, the *Sunna* and the *Hadith* literature equally, is a main characteristic of the SIMON schools, and is incorporated in their pedagogical strategies.

'BECOMING WHO YOU ARE,' PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

In the pedagogical strategies of the SIMON schools, religion and education are intertwined – as was the case for the pedagogy of the Prophet (Van Bommel, 2006). Often a corrective remark from a teacher is related to sayings of the Prophet or a narrative from the *Hadith*. Knowing about the Creator and acting in accordance to His will, and the gaining of knowledge about nature, come together in a person's contribution to society. Knowledge of norms and regulations, valuing what is good and preventing evil, and the ability and attitude to act "with your hand, your voice and your heart" (ibid., p. 29) – in sum: aspects of behaving as a just person – are represented in the concepts of *Tarbiyah* and *Adab*. The pedagogical strategy of the SIMON schools resembles the concept of *Bildung*, and facilitates the development of the child's *Fitrah* (فطـرة. Human nature according to Gods intentions). *Bildung* and *Fitrah* include head (cognition), heart (affects) and hands (behaviour). In the Dutch context, these pedagogical aims are made concrete through use of the concepts of value education (Veugelers, 2000) and character education (Sanderse, 2012). The goal is not merely a transfer of knowledge but genuine development of insight, in order to encourage and motivate the child to not merely copy what is learned, but to practically translate the core values of Islam as a free and autonomous individual. In this way, the child will become both a follower and a critically thinking and acting believer. In order to motivate the child to practice what it has learned, emotional commitment is required, which goes beyond the possession of knowledge and insight (Aktaran, 2003, p. 44). Teachers, familiar with the child's background, always try to link daily experiences to newly and still to be integrated information. For SIMON schools, it goes without saying that the psychological development of the child in the domains of thinking and perceiving, and the reception and interpretation of what is presented, paired with an emotional commitment is of essential importance for the acquiring of the core concepts of Islam in all their complexity and their practical translation into life.

The child's development takes place in a concrete environment, amidst family and peers and under the guidance of teachers – who are all living in the plural Dutch society. The core values of the Dutch society are freedom (of expression and religion), equality between (and dignity of) men and women and solidarity (with those in need), all based on a common humanity. Teachers and parents are therefore role models who have the obligation to create a space in which the child can flourish according to its *Fitrah*. "Every other is another 'I,' connected to her/his context, influenced by and influencing his/her context" (ibid., p. 31; see also Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the summer of 2016, this context was determined by the so-called 'coup' in Turkey. In response to this situation, the initiative was

taken to remind the parents of the SIMON schools of the SIMON diversity policy. In a letter which was published on the central website, the parents were reminded of the core values of the SIMON schools and were invited to stick to those values, by not allowing themselves to engage in political discussions or activities leading to social exclusion (see www.simonscholen.nl/nieuws.html). Articulated is that those values are not inspired by the Gülen movement, and that there is no relationship whatsoever between the SIMON schools and the Gülen movement, even though one SIMON school is located in the same building as a Gülen-related *Kindergarten*.[4]

The values mentioned above, which lie at the heart of the pedagogical strategies of the SIMON schools, prompted the formulation of seven core values, the so-called 'seven pearls' of living together, which apply just as much in the school environment as they apply in the context of the Dutch plural society. These pearls are: awareness of the unity of God (*Tauhied*), tolerance for diversity, justice, autonomy, the human quality to make efforts to ensure that the good (i.e. what is right) is done as well as possible, transparency and responsibility, and last but not least: community. The didactics in the SIMON schools, which put these seven pearls into practice, are developed around three verbs: "thinking, seeing and acting" (ibid., p. 38). Investment in value education contributes to critical-democratic citizenship education (Kelchtermans & Simons, 2007, p. 147). In the next paragraph, we focus on the subject of citizenship education as included in the curriculum of SIMON schools.

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

As mentioned above, the Dutch plural context is seen as a pivotal part of the educational context of the child. Schools in the Netherlands have a certain degree of freedom when it comes to teaching the subject of citizenship education (Kelchtermans & Simons, 2007, p. 145). The SIMON schools capitalize on this degree of freedom, not only by including characteristic Islamic values – as represented in the seven pearls – in citizenship education, but by providing scope for the core values of the Dutch society as well. Well aware of the many perspectives on 'citizenship' (see *Advies Onderwijsraad*, 2003), the approach of the SIMON schools is based on the psychological development of the child, and is coined as "developmental citizenship" (Aktaran, 2003, p. 39). Well aware of the different perspectives on psychological (cognitive and emotional) development and its relation to citizenship education, the SIMON schools find their inspiration in the approach of Piaget, Erikson and Coleman. These approaches come together in what is coined as 'developmental citizenship.' For the youngest children (age 4-5) this means that the focus is on social learning (copying, imitating) and discipline, moving to raising awareness about values and internalisation, followed by reflection on values for the oldest children (age 11-12). Ultimately this will result in critical-democratic citizenship due to the relation between the child and Dutch society, and the relation between autonomy and social commitment. This process has much in common with Grimmitt's teaching in, about and from religion (1987).

This way of teaching and learning at the end of the day will result in critical-democratic citizenship in the first place due to the inherent relation between the child and the Dutch society – the child being a (future) citizen. In the second place it is due to the relation that is established between individual autonomy and social commitment – the latter being a consequence of the group dynamic in the classroom as a mini-society. The internalisation of an open attitude towards the way in which individuals contribute to citizenship in a plural society, is expected to bring the child to active participation in Dutch society as a Muslim. Part of citizenship education at the SIMON schools revolves around exchange and interaction with pupils from neighbouring schools, participation in activities which take place in the school district, and taking part in a so-called *Brede School* (inclusive school), in cooperation with Christian and public schools (cf. Ter Avest & Miedema, 2011).

To overcome conflicts arising from different approaches of diversity in Islam, the development of communication skills is preconditional. This reflects *dialogicality*[5] as a core value of critical-democratic citizenship. Good communication skills enable pupils to answer questions like, "What is your opinion about the attack in Brussels?" Although an individual pupil or adult has nothing to do with this attack, they should learn to give a balanced reaction to these questions from non-Muslims. This ability is taught and acquired in a playful way during the exchanges with pupils from schools with another ethical or religious identity. This is important both for pupils and teachers. In the relationship between the teachers and the parents of the pupils, communicative qualities are of the utmost importance if parents and teachers and pupils are to come together in the school as a so-called "community of values" (Aktaran, 2003, p. 39). Respecting the right of the parents to educate their children according to their religious conviction and life orientation is an important factor here. Preconditional is the continuous reflection of the teachers on their classroom practices "to become aware of the values they wish to stimulate, the type of citizenship they aim at, and how to stimulate pupils in their subjective value orientation" (Kelchtermans & Simons, 2007, p. 147).

REFLECTION

As stated above, the SIMON schools do not want political discussions to enter in their educational community. But what about their pedagogical strategy which is concentrated on doing justice to the diversity in receptions of Islam, and to a variety of approaches to political interpretations of Islam? Teachers, as role models, are invited to have class room conversations about this subject. This results in a possible paradox between the teacher's *espoused theory* – what a teacher is expected to do – and his/her *theory-in-use* – the actual performance of a teacher in the classroom (cf. Argyris & Schön, 1980). To enable teachers to do what they are expected to do, teaching material has been developed in the SIMON schools for the purpose of starting classroom conversations about various ways to respond to the range of (political) interpretations of the 2016 coup. Some of these methods had already been developed within the framework of *Vreedzame School*

(Peaceful Education), and were adapted to the new situation which arose in the summer of 2016. Teachers were told to be on the alert for statements issued by children like, “Death to all Gülen followers” and “All Gülen followers should be imprisoned,” and were invited to give their reaction on the spot, taking the SIMON principles regarding diversity into account. As Fenstermacher stated, this method is only one of three aspects influencing the actions of teachers. Apart from this method, there are what he called the ‘manner’ and the ‘style’ of the teacher (Fenstermacher, 1999, in Kelchtermans & Simons, 2007, p. 149). He uses the word ‘manner’ to point to the moral and intellectual qualities of teachers, including virtues like courage, honesty, care and justice; and the word ‘style’ to refer to a teacher’s personality. It makes a difference whether a teacher has a humorous approach towards conflicts or a more penalising approach; it makes a difference whether a teacher expresses her/himself in a to-the-point way or whether narratives constitute the core of her/his teaching. Whereas method and manner are transferable, personality cannot be given to someone else. We recommend to research this ‘style’ aspect, which influences the professional identity of teachers. We are of the opinion that qualitative methods should be used in order to conduct this kind of research, and a combination of theoretical perspectives according to a so-called mutual interpretability approach to theories, as has been presented by Visser in his farewell lecture (2016).[6] The theoretical frameworks of Kelchtermans’ biographical approach (1994), Van Ewijk and Kunneman’s (2013) normative professionalism and the elaboration thereof by Bakker and Montessori (2016), and the work of Matthys on identity capital (2010) are very promising in this respect.

In reaction to the so-called ‘coup’ in Turkey, classroom conversations were not the only initiative taken by the SIMON schools. Discussions with parents about this subject were included in the responses. One of the goals of the SIMON schools is to maintain a direct relation between the pedagogical strategy of the school, with the way in which parents raise their children at home. Due to the fact that the psychological development of the child is given central importance in the pedagogical strategies of the SIMON schools, we recommend that these pedagogical strategies are further developed by using the Dialogical Self Theory and its elaboration on child development (Berteau, 2012).

Consulting with adherents of different religious traditions about universal values, initiating exchanges, and to keep interreligious dialogue going, is a constant factor in the approach of the SIMON schools. These initiatives are not taken to defend the Islamic truth, but in order to explore different perspectives on, and receptions of inspiring and motivating narratives in the Holy Scriptures. This might at first create uncertainty, give rise to doubts, and result in disturbances or even chaos. According to the SIMON schools, in fact, this should give us the right reason to organize encounters, showing that there is no alternative. However, preconditional for an encounter on equal footing is that Muslims are not regarded with suspicion, due to the radicalization of young Muslim and their involvement in the Syrian war, for example. No matter how clear it is that young Muslims take part in processes of radicalization, we have to remember that it is not only Muslims

who turn to conservative, orthodox and dogmatic positions. According to the SIMON schools, radicalization constitutes a broader, societal tendency, characterized by the attitude of retreating into one's own positions, not just restricted to young Muslims.

Despite the efforts of the SIMON schools to make their pupils into critical-democratic citizens of society, much depends on how the Dutch society receives newcomers. Over the past years, not in the least because of negative media attention relating to terrorist attacks by Muslims, second and third generation migrants have been displaying signals of seriously considering 'return' to the country where their parents or grandparents came from. This clearly illustrates that integration is a double-sided process, which involves the native-born population just as significantly as the migrant population. We all have a long road ahead of us. More research is needed regarding the role of the receiving country, and its willingness to include the social and identity capital of newcomers (cf. Putnam, 2001; Yar, 2017) into the Dutch identity. In this kind of research, attention should be paid to aspects which facilitate or hinder the development of hybrid/hyphenated identities. Affective commitment and loyalty to more than one ethnic group or country also deserve to be given special attention.

This brings us to a dream which infuses the SIMON schools: gathering a staff of teachers with different religious backgrounds, who work together and feel responsible for the religious development of all their pupils, regardless of the Islamic tradition their parents adhere to, while being aware of the universal values contained in the narratives of these various traditions. The point of departure at the SIMON schools is an Islamic truth claim, the envisaged endpoint is universal truth obtained from mutually enriching stories, taken from different narrative traditions. For the SIMON schools, this is more than a dream, it is practically achieved in an exemplary way at particular points in time, in some schools by some teachers. These are moments characterized by the fusion of cognitive knowledge and emotional commitment, for example when different perspectives merge together as in the perception of the drawing of the witch and the beautiful young lady, or the rabbit and the duck.[7] One example of such a 'merging' is a teacher with a Roman Catholic background, who, every morning, recites the *sura El Fatiha* – the first *sura* of the Qur'an and so-called 'mother of the Qur'an' – with her pupils, and more specifically in Arabic. She can join in this shared religious activity, because she is familiar with the actual meaning of the Arab words. In fact, she personally interprets these words as coming very close in their meaning to some of the prayers she learned as a child, and underlines the potential power contained in this *sura*, and in other prayers, for individual religious development. A utopian way of responding to differences, informed by the awareness that in spite of the use of different words, the same dream is dreamt. A utopian dream of vulnerable people who long for community; a dream that is sometimes realised, in the here and now, through the educational practices developed at the SIMON schools.

NOTES

[1] Quote from the interview with Ismail Taspinar, September 23, 2016.
[2] Second part of the quote from the interview with Ismail Taspinar, September 23, 2016.
[3] SIMON schools (S*tichting Islamitisch Onderwijs Midden- en Oost Nederland;* Foundation of Islamic Education in the Centre and the Eastern part of the Netherlands) offer primary education on Islamic principles, and welcome children and their parents who can adhere to the principles embodied in these schools, inspired by the Islamic tradition.
[4] The situation in Turkey following the so-called 'coup' of 2016, challenged Ismail Taspinar to learn more about the Gülen movement. This resulted in a more articulated point of view whereby a distinction was made between the pedagogic vision of the SIMON schools and the inspiration of Fethullah Gülen, the leader of the Gülen movement. The ideals and practices of the Gülen movement, the explicit views on integrative education, and the power relations amongst its adherents were also addressed. Among the parents of the SIMON schools, there are some who have ties to the Gülen movement (a very small group).
[5] *Dialogicality* is understood as the competency to engage into a dialogue, a constructive and meaningful conversation requiring an open attitude paired with a genuine curiosity, and the willingness to change one's mind.
[6] Visser explains the concept of mutual interpretability by means of the following example. We all know the rabbit-duck illusion, an ambiguous image in which the head of a duck can be seen as the head of a rabbit. Simultaneously, the ears of the rabbit are the beak of the duck, and simultaneously, the eye of the duck is the eye of the rabbit. That is exactly what theories do when we say that they interpret each other mutually.
[7] See endnote 6.

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12. INTEGRATED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO PROMOTE DIALOGUE IN INTER-WORLDVIEW EDUCATION

A Finnish Approach

INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, religious education (RE) has been a much discussed and debated school subject in European countries and at the international level. According to Robert Jackson, one of the leading researchers in the field, RE has never been discussed as widely and actively as it is now (Jackson, 2012). Nowadays, RE needs to respond to a multitude of positions in society, and views held by individuals (Boeve, 2012). Increasing migration, religious pluralism, changes in the religious landscape and secularization have created a need to profile RE anew at the national and international levels. Religion, worldviews, education, dialogue and the relations which exist between these have become important topics of debate in societies of the 21st century, and RE has a great deal of potential for promoting dialogue and increasing mutual understanding (Jackson, 2012, 2014; Weisse, 2009).

In order to teach the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary to drive dialogue forward, pedagogical tools must be developed. The need for such tools is a key issue in contemporary RE. By implementing inter-worldview[1] dialogue in schools, pupils from different cultural and religious backgrounds learn to critically reflect on their own thoughts and experiences relating to religious and worldview issues, and they learn to interact with others on these matters. The implementation of inter-worldview dialogue in the curriculum can increase mutual understanding and can be a way to build respect for others in a shared community, which are among the aims of the Finnish RE curriculum (see Religious Education: Non-Statutory National Framework, 2004, p. 36). The idea of inter-worldview dialogue is also present in the Finnish new core curriculum, which has been implemented in schools beginning August 2016 (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014). The focus of this chapter is on the possibility of organizing inter-worldview dialogue as part of RE lessons, in order to prepare the pupils, as future citizens, to live and participate in a multi-religious world while respecting different religions and worldviews. In Finnish schools, different kinds of solutions are currently implemented to organise religious education as a part of the school curriculum. The official solution is to separate the pupils on the basis of their religious affiliation, and to offer separated RE lessons. However, some schools organise integrated RE

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 147–158.
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lessons, which means that pupils from different religious backgrounds are brought together in the same classroom and are given the same lesson. We refer to the concept 'integrated RE' to indicate these kinds of solutions. We refer to the concept 'worldview education'[2] to indicate solutions according to which pupils from all sorts of religious affiliations, plus pupils who aren't members of any religious communities, are brought together in a single classroom. Pupils who aren't members of religious communities usually have their own subject at school, an alternative subject for religious education: secular ethics. But nowadays there are schools that integrate this subject in RE, bringing pupils who attend secular ethics lessons to the same classroom as other pupils, to be educated in worldview education lessons together.

THE FINNISH LANDSCAPE IN TERMS OF RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS

The Finnish society has been very homogenous and commitment to the Lutheran church has been very strong. Lutheranism has been the national, state religion for centuries and has played an important role in shaping a sense of Finnish national identity. The increasing globalization of recent years has altered the Finnish society. Diversity in Finland has often been regarded as a product of today's increased immigration, but the fact is that cultural and religious minorities (e.g. Eastern Orthodox and Muslim Tatar communities) have formed an important part of the Finnish society for centuries (Ketola, 2011). In the 1990s, when immigration to Finland began to increase, the growing diversity became a more pressing topic in societal debates. Discussions and debates about multiculturalism and the plurality of the Finnish society are more prevalent today than ever before (Ketola, 2011).

The Finnish society has become remarkably more diverse. Historically, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Greek Orthodox Church have represented the national churches. Approximately 77% of the population are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and 1% adheres to the Orthodox Church. The number of immigrants and refugees has increased year after year, currently making Finland the home of over 60,000 practising Muslims. The majority of Finnish Muslims are Sunnis and an estimated 10 to 15% are Shias. Islam is also the fastest-growing religion of the last few decades (Onniselkä, 2011, pp. 122-123; Martikainen, 2013).

The traditional support for Lutheranism has decreased, particularly among the young. However, the majority of Finns (approx. 77%) still officially belong to the Lutheran Church (Kuusisto, 2011; Riitaoja, Poulter, & Kuusisto, 2010). Apart from greater secularization, traditional forms of Christianity (e.g. Lutheranism) are becoming increasingly privatized, and there is also a growing interest in New Religious Movements among Finns (e.g. Amma-movement, New Hinduism). The change of the religious landscape in Finland has led to a challenge for RE, necessitating a commitment to dialogue, particularly dialogue as an important aspect of the promotion of inter-worldview education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: THE FINNISH APPROACH

There are only a few private schools in Finland, and there is a very strong tradition of state schools. Only a couple of confessional private schools exists. Nowadays, the role played by churches and religious communities in public education is strongly diminished compared to the past. Education was separated from the Lutheran Church at the end of the 19th century (Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2012). RE is a compulsory school subject in the Finnish comprehensive school system, and religion courses in state schools have been seen as playing a part in the acquisition of civil skills. Therefore, RE has been seen as the responsibility of society in general. In recent decades, the number of RE lessons has been on the decline, and nowadays there is generally only one hour of RE taught per week in Finnish comprehensive schools (Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2012, pp. 178-179).

In Finland, RE is taught to pupils according to the religious affiliation of their parents. Schools offer education in the Lutheran, the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox denominations of Christianity. Furthermore, they offer education in secular ethics (an alternative for RE) and eleven other religions (e.g. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism). The historical roots of the current policy on RE reach back to the 1920s, and were redefined in 2003 by means of the Freedom of Religion Act. As a consequence of the 2003 reform, RE continued to be organized in conformity to the parents' religion, but the term "confession" was dropped in favour of the expression "one's own religion" (Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2012). From an international perspective (e.g. Kodelja & Bassler, 2004), the Finnish model for religious education can be characterized as a religion-based model, based on membership in a religious community, to organize RE in public schools.

From a European perspective, the Finnish approach is interesting because pupils from religious minorities are given RE about their own, familiar religion in state schools, which is not typical in many other European countries. Public education provides RE in Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism for example. The Finnish model differs from the models used in other Nordic countries, too. For instance, in Sweden, the renewal of the subject took place in 1962 and the choice was made to give it a non-denominational character (Larsson, 1996, pp. 70-71). The same kind of solution was accepted in Norway, in 1997 (Haakedal, 2000, pp. 88-97).

Austria is the only European country which uses a model that is almost identical to the Finnish one. The difference between the two systems is, that in Austria the religious communities are made responsible for the preparation of the RE syllabus. They are further given the authority to formally approve RE textbooks (Pollitt, 2007, p. 19). In Finland, the RE syllabus is the result of a cooperation between the National Board of Education and religious communities, but all RE teaching is controlled, financed and enforced exclusively by the State. Religious communities are not authorized to provide RE teaching. This is a unique way of organizing RE in a state-owned school system (Davie, 2000, pp. 90-91; Kodelja & Bassler, 2004).

Despite the fact that less Finnish citizens associate themselves with any particular religion nowadays, a trend which has been on the rise for years, 91% of the pupils in comprehensive schools still participate in Lutheran RE lessons, 5%

participates in life-orientation classes and ethics courses, and 4% attends RE in other religions (Statistics Finland, 2015).

As is the case in other European countries, discussions and debates on RE and its implementation in state schools have become more intense in Finland over the recent years. The key topic under discussion is how to organize RE (or, using a more neutral term: worldview education) in an increasingly plural world (Miedema, 2006; Weisse, 2009; Bråten, 2009; Jackson, 2014). The changes in the educational landscape related to Finland's religious makeup, have emphasized the need for dialogue, in order to stimulate common understanding between different religions and worldviews. It has also been pointed out that the current organisation of RE, which involves separating the pupils, increases the likelihood of marginalizing ethnic minorities, as members of minority communities may well feel alienated from majority religion groups (Miedema, 2006; Åhs, Pouter, & Kallioniemi 2016, pp. 209-210). Changes in the way in which religions and worldviews are perceived, have given rise to a new situation: some schools have begun to change the way in which they organize RE.

INTEGRATED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND WORLDVIEW EDUCATION

By using the concept of 'integrated religious education,' we refer to a recent pedagogical innovation in the field of RE. This model favours a more inclusive education; it looks towards RE as a common subject for all pupils, regardless of whether they belong to certain religious communities. This new model has much in common with the Hamburger approach, summarized by the motto *Religion für Alle* (RE for All; Weisse, 2013) and the Dutch approach summarized by the motto *Leren van en met elkaar* ('Learning from and with each other'; Andree & Bakker, 1996). Over the last few years, some schools in Finland have pioneered with such an integrated model of religious/worldview education (Käpylehto, 2015; Åhs, Poulter, & Kallioniemi, 2016). The number of schools that is organizing RE lessons in this new way, is increasing.

The main idea is to partially integrate the contents of the curriculums offered by the secondary schools, which are about different religions and different types of secular ethics. In practice, this means that for most of the time pupils will be studying together in common classrooms. They will be separated in different classrooms only when the integration of the different curriculums is difficult, this will be the case mainly for classes in which the holy scripture of a certain religion is studied closely. In such cases, the lesson contents are so specific and the pupils' perspective on the subject is so influenced by their background, that conducting a dialogue becomes very difficult. Sometimes it is relevant to first have an intra-faith dialogue, in which only pupils from the same religious background will be participating. The majority of contents, including ethics and world religions, are studied together.

In worldview education and integrated RE many pedagogical strategies can be used, and this is also true for the inter-worldview dialogue which forms a constitutive part of this education. Court and Seymour (2015, pp. 521-522)

summarize six different strategies which are partly included in integrated RE: 1. learning through contrast – learning about other religious traditions in order to learn about yourself and to respect difference; 2. learning about others – learning about other religions generates understanding and gives rise to interaction, because people live in a common, shared world; 3. learning from others – this strategy emphasizes that learning from other traditions gives the learner a sense of shared understanding and even shared histories; 4. learning with others – this strategy focuses on partnership, i.e. collaboration on joint projects, which are inviting to people because they are devoted to the common good; 5. learning to deepen one's own faith – this strategy revolves around deepening one's own faith and religious identity; and 6. learning to achieve spiritual growth – this strategy focuses on the search for connections between religious phenomena, the ability to see such connections, and the gaining of insight. The implementation of these strategies requires the availability of sufficient time to put them in motion, and a variety of resources.

Not all of these strategies are suitable for use in a public-school environment, however, due to perspective on education that is dominant in state-owned schools – some strategies presuppose the educational approach held by the religious communities. The main difference between the two is that in the case of public Finnish schools, RE is kept non-confessional, with all the relevant restrictions, whereas this is not the case for education offered by religious communities (Leganger-Krogstad, 2011; Court & Seymour, 2015, p. 519).

Jackson (2014) has reflected on the conditions that have to be fulfilled in order for a successful dialogue to develop within RE. These include: respect for a person and his or her right to have a particular religious or non-religious viewpoint, openness to learn about different religions, the willingness to suspend judgement, and empathy. These attitudes can be encouraged by, for example, nurturing sensitivity in relation to the variety of religious and non-religious convictions that exist, promoting dialogue between people from different backgrounds, addressing sensitive and controversial issues, and combating stereotypes and prejudice. According to Jackson (2014), the learning environment should be perceived as safe, and the role of the teacher is that of a moderator, so that conflicts may be avoided. Teachers must give accurate information about different religious traditions to their pupils, and they need to be aware of tensions which may occur among groups of pupils, due to their religious background.

WORLDVIEW EDUCATION IS ABOUT HAVING ENCOUNTERS WITH REAL-WORLD PEOPLE

Worldview education has an important role to play in the search for new educational methods that will advance broad social transformation. It carries with it the potential to initiate a paradigm shift from dominance, exclusiveness and violence to equity, inclusiveness and peace.

Integrated RE offers the possibility to practice worldview education, especially because of the classroom context, i.e. during worldview education the classroom is

filled with pupils from different worldview and faith backgrounds. Integrated RE, with its focus on inter-worldview dialogue, gives participants the opportunity to learn how to present their own perceptions and points of view with regard to faiths and worldview matters. This paves the way for deep encounters with non-religious – agnostic or even atheistic – partners who are not without faith, but whose faith is expressed in terms of reason, truth, evolution, science, or some other entity.

Integrated RE and worldview education are closely linked. Many approaches which are specifically developed for integrated RE can be used in worldview education as well. They are not one and the same, however: integrated RE focuses on religious worldviews, worldview education on the other hand addresses elements of both religious and non-religious worldviews. Wherever educators develop the concept of worldview education and translate it effectively into teaching practice, sensitivity to different worldviews is a prerequisite; this ought to permeate the school context.

It should be noted that many aspects of interfaith education – and many of the pedagogical approaches to this kind of education – have been developed with the idea of promoting interfaith dialogue in spiritual contexts, in religious communities. The school context, however, differs significantly from religious contexts and the starting point in schools and in religious contexts is very different. In religious contexts, the participants in interfaith dialogue are usually members of religious communities. In school contexts, the pupils and their families may be members of religious communities, but this does not necessarily hold for all of them. Or, in spite of their family's belief system, the pupils might not be particularly religious or spiritually minded, they may not have developed any religious, spiritual or non-spiritual identity of note, and thus would not identify themselves as members of some religious or non-religious group. Such elements should be borne in mind when adapting approaches that have been designed for interfaith education and interfaith dialogue to worldview education and in inter-worldview dialogue.

Eboo Patel (2016) has referred to interaction and relations when defining the concept 'interfaith.' He sees the 'inter' in interfaith to stand for the interaction between people who orient themselves to religion in different ways. The 'faith' aspect of interfaith stands for how people relate to their religious and ethical traditions. So, for Patel, interfaith is, first, about the way in which our interactions with those who are different have an impact on how we relate to our religious and ethical traditions, and, second, about how our relationships with our traditions have an impact on our interactions with those who are different from us. According to this definition, worldview education is about having encounters with real-world people, and about familiarizing ourselves with the distinct way in which they express their religiosity. A type of worldview education which concerns itself with how abstract religious systems are interacting, misses out on such opportunities however. So, a concrete classroom environment provides pupils with opportunities to exchange their ideas, to share their personal experiences, discover the other, and gives them the possibility to challenge their own perceptions.

INTER-WORLDVIEW EDUCATION PREPARES FOR DIALOGUE

Inter-worldview education has grown out of the interfaith movement, a movement with a progressive and activist agenda (Braybrooke, 2013). Inter-worldview dialogue is not limited to a process of learning, i.e. learning how to live together in spite of religious and cultural differences, it also involves a process that provides opportunities to take constructive action, which can lead to positive change.

As interfaith literacy within the interfaith movement developed, organizers began to turn their attention to the most effective methods and pedagogies to teach others about different belief systems, spiritual traditions and non-religious traditions (Braybrooke, 2013). Inter-worldview education now seeks to equip learners with knowledge about the histories, practices, beliefs and values of various world religions and worldviews. While teaching, the basic objective is to seek out and to compare common positions, around which the variety of faiths, spiritual traditions and non-religious traditions can develop common thinking and action towards common goals. Inter-worldview education prepares pupils for interfaith and inter-worldview dialogue (Kamaara, 2010).

The aim of inter-worldview education is to equip pupils with tools and competences, so as to allow them to engage in inter-worldview dialogue. Leonard Swidler (1987) argues that dialogue serves three goals:

1. To gain ever more profound knowledge about yourself, and to enrich your appreciation of the faith and worldview tradition to which you belong.
2. To gain ever more authentic knowledge about the other, and to gain a friendly understanding of others as they truly are and not as they are caricatured.
3. To live an ever-fuller human life, and to establish a more solid foundation for community life and for joint action by adherents of various faith and worldview traditions.

All these aspects are very transformative.

Inter-worldview dialogue and cooperation includes a vision of society in which individuals are both self-determining (they are able to gain sufficient religious literacy to process out the main religious stereotypes, for instance) and interdependent (they are capable of interacting dialogically with others). Worldview education involves actors that engage in this learning process to attain the goals of dialogue. Moreover, due to its own dynamics, this process generates self-determination, authenticity and the interconnectedness of people.

Inter-worldview education incorporates elements of experimental education, which provides the learner with an experience and offers assistance in reflecting on that experience. Thus, for example, youth interfaith educationalists around the world have drawn on the experiential learning movement that began with the philosophical work of John Dewey (1916) in the early years of the 20th century.

If inter-worldview education is seen as very similar to experiential education, it can also be described as a practice-oriented process, and on this basis, the process in question must be analysed or personally reflected on in order to achieve personal and individual growth (Lindsay & Ewert, 1999). The learning process allows participants to reflect on different cultures, faith traditions, ideas and ways of thinking. It has also been developed to help participants with openness to others,

nurturing their inner selves, and with responding better to the needs of their immediate environment. It is a cognitive, affective and experiential process that has the potential to transform attitudes, and the ultimate potential to promote more inclusive, cohesive and peaceful communities (Engebretson, 2009). To pursue this goal, trust needs to be developed between participants, an evolution which requires self-awareness, teambuilding and teamwork, personal dignity, and individual and group problem-solving skills (Smith et al., 1992). These are also the required elements for successful inter-worldview dialogue.

Interfaith and inter-worldview education both have their giving and receiving elements. As Leonard Swidler points out, the primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in one's perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly. Swidler has defined seven stages in the interfaith learning process (1997). Knowledge about this multi-stage process can be used to deepen the relationship which grows through interfaith dialogue offered in the classroom. These stages can also be demarcated during worldview dialogue. They describe the potential for transformative change contained in dialogue: 1. Encountering of radical difference; 2. Crossing over, letting go and entering the world of the other; 3. Inhabiting and experiencing the world of the other; 4. Crossing back with expanded knowledge; 5. Dialogical/critical awakening, a radical paradigm shift; 6. Global awakening, the paradigm shift matures; 7. Personal and far-reaching transformation of life and behaviour. These statements summarize the learning processes which we ought to be on the lookout for, in teaching. Most importantly, participants in such a dialogue will not only be energized as a group and as individuals, they will also be able to inspire others (Swidler, 1999). Mohammed Abu-Nimer (2007) stresses the importance of such elements of learning, and notes that we may hopefully expect that with this kind of interfaith dialogue, the participants will, in some way, behave differently afterwards. Inter-worldview education can have strong transformative effects on individual participants, causing shifts in consciousness that fundamentally change the way they understand themselves and other people, in positive ways (Rautionmaa, 2016).

The pedagogy of worldview education must go both ways and must be open. Rules need to be defined that allow people to speak for themselves. Safety must be provided so that those who have previously been excluded are now welcomed (Patel, 2010).

Worldview education requires at the very least the creation of an infrastructure which makes it possible to meet and conduct a dialogue in a supportive, non-judgemental environment that supports respect and trust. Preconditional for inter-worldview dialogue is the full and equal participation of pupils with different religions and worldviews in the classroom, followed by the subsequent, equally unlimited participation of such groups in society.

Agneta Ucko (2008, p. 12) has pointed out that "mutual respect is significant in the sense that it affirms differences and does not confuse 'difference' with 'wrong.' Neither does it allow differences that are natural and legitimate to devolve into divisions." Researchers into inter-worldview dialogue (e.g. Court & Seymoure,

2015) have noted that mutual respect grows when an increase in mutual understanding and appreciation of differences and similarities takes place. Ucko argues that "mutual respect helps to build relationships despite our differences, and helps in the process of mutual correction, enrichment and self-criticism" (Ucko, 2008, p. 12).

Getting to know one another, and building a level of trust and mutual respect that cuts across different faith and worldview traditions, takes more than a single encounter. It requires a series of dialogical encounters over time to develop a shared vision for the common good. Regular, on-going dialogue between the participants is essential to support the learning process, in creating opportunities for pupils to share their insights, and by giving them continuous scope to get to know each other more deeply.

TELLING STORIES AS A WAY OF PRACTISING DIALOGUE

One learning method in inter-worldview education is storytelling. The goal of storytelling is to foster personal relationships among a diverse group of pupils. By means of this device, the bonds of interfaith and inter-worldview trust and respect begin to grow, or are deepened, among pupils.

According to Eboo Patel (2008), storytelling is a particularly strong method when working with young people. It becomes a tool for sharing, and thus for promoting understanding. Storytelling provides a bridge which enables people to overcome some of the previously mentioned obstacles, by opening up the possibility for a different kind of conversation. Being listened to, listening authentically to the experiences of others, and learning about profoundly personal matters which are experienced as positive and very meaningful, creates a potential for positive change, especially in the relationship between people who have formed negative stereotypes about each other.

The philosopher and theologian Martin Buber (1962) believed that storytelling has the capacity to bring about healing, and that it is, in itself, a sacred action. When participants relate to one another on this level of shared humanity, they have an opportunity to become witnesses of each other's lives. They start to be caretakers of each other's stories.

In this process, participants are witnesses to the lives of others, who are their neighbours. They can begin to work through a set of questions. This activity falls under the scope of the cognitive approach. Who are we to each other? What is our responsibility towards – our connection to – the stories of people whose lives have been very different from our own? What have we learned from each other? How have the stories of others changed me? How can we tell each other's stories faithfully? (Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research, 2001).

When faced with participants who show their feelings, it becomes especially clear that such an encounter differs from a scholarly debate, where the discussing of doctrines or the comparison of texts is at the heart of it all. Storytelling is often a path to opening up new possibilities. It challenges listeners to look at matters from the perspective of someone else. In many cases, when participants represent their

personal faith and convictions, this approach challenges them to recognize what is of particular importance in their own religion or ideology, instead of further allowing it to be clouded by cultural contexts. Encounters and cooperation can lead people to put the emphasis on ethics, instead of focusing on doctrine.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have presented the Finnish societal context, followed by an overview of approaches to integrated RE and inter-worldview education, whereby we promoted an inter-worldview dialogue in classrooms populated by pupils/students with different cultural and religious backgrounds. Inter-worldview education, which promotes understanding between adherents of different religious and non-religious worldviews, can be seen as a challenging enterprise in the Finnish school context. The need for mutual understanding and reciprocal respect is obvious in our current, globalized world. A plurality of changes in societies – which include secularization, the rise of fundamentalism, and the emergence of new religious and spiritual movements – increase the need for inter-worldview education. Furthermore, the changes in the population structures of European societies, caused in part by the influx of migrants and asylum seekers, make it necessary to give pupils the tools to enter into dialogue with people who belong to a plurality of faith communities.

In many countries, introducing inter-worldview dialogue in education is at a very early phase. There is an obvious lack of theoretical reflection about what inter-worldview dialogue involves at the school level, and further research is required. In this chapter, we presented some ideas on the implementation of new educational methods and the application of research in the Finnish context, which may prove useful in international contexts.

NOTES

[1] Inter-worldview dialogue is a part of integrated religious education. It takes place when pupils from different worldview and faith backgrounds participate in the same lesson. We use the concept 'inter-worldview' because it emphasises the dialogue between different faiths and spiritual and secular traditions more clearly than the concept 'worldview dialogue.'

[2] In this chapter, we use the term worldview education to refer to the RE and secular ethics courses given in Finland, since this is an inclusive term, which highlights both the religious and nonreligious worldviews of the students attending the classes (Åhs, Poulter, & Kallioniemi, 2016).

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VICTORIA MICHELA GARLOCK

13. INTERFAITH EDUCATION FOR KIDS

Using Story and Sacred Texts

INTRODUCTION

Children in the 21st century will experience global citizenship at an unprecedented level. Given that they will almost certainly encounter cultures, traditions, mindsets, and worldviews vastly different from their own, it becomes more important than ever to provide them with tools for navigating that diversity. The contribution of *Faith Seeker Kids* to that wider effort is an interfaith curriculum for kids.

While much has been made of the "rise of the nones" in the U.S. and parts of Europe, research suggests that the religiously unaffiliated will decline as a share of the global population over the next few decades (Pew Research Center, 2015). Thus, it is increasingly likely the current generation of children will meet people who hold very different beliefs about creation, the nature of the sacred, and expectations regarding an after-life. The curriculum developed at *Faith Seeker Kids* strives to provide children with a knowledge base they can access, throughout their lives, to communicate compassionately and respectfully about faith differences. While many possible approaches exist, this curriculum achieves that goal largely through the use of stories and sacred texts.[1]

Our curriculum was originally designed for a progressive-type Christian church[2] in the U.S. which is influential for at least two reasons. First, while the Christian Bible is used as the foundational text (about 30-40% of the lesson plans make use of stories from the Christian Bible), the remaining lesson plans incorporate stories from other faith traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Hasidic Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Sufism). Second, interpretative license is relatively open-ended. Children can approach the stories literally or metaphorically, comparisons can focus on similarities or differences, and we expect their viewpoints to vary as they age.

This chapter outlines theories and research findings in the field of child development that we used in developing our curricular approach. It also includes specific examples of how we have applied theory to our practice. The curriculum is divided into themes (e.g., Peace, Creation Stories, Embracing the Darkness, Compassion, and Awe/Wonder) that were chosen, in part, because nearly all belief systems address these issues through their narratives, ritual practices, and sacred texts.

Each thematic unit contains 15 lesson plans. They are typical of developmentally-appropriate educational materials and consist of at least one story as well as relevant crafts and activities. The curriculum has now been utilized in our Sunday school program for several years. Some units have also been adopted

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 159–173.
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by other Christian churches, including a Methodist church that used several units for their Wednesday evening program and a United Church of Christ congregation that used the stories for their Sunday school program. (Their classes mirror adult church services, so they don't use crafts or activities.) For continuity and ease of reading, this chapter will primarily focus on stories and passages from our Peace unit.

INCORPORATING DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES

While a comprehensive exploration is beyond the scope of this chapter, several prominent theories of cognitive development and faith formation served as guideposts in creating our curriculum.

Stage Theories of Development

One of the most influential theories of cognitive development is that of Jean Piaget (e.g., Piaget, 1954; Piaget & Inhelder, 1958) who described, in great detail, the changes he observed in children's thinking ability from birth through the teenage years. These observations led to his theory of four cognitive stages that children move through at particular ages. For example, in Piaget's Pre-Operational stage (Piaget & Cook, 1952), which spans the ages of 2-7 years, children exhibit an increased ability to think about objects not present in the immediate environment (best exemplified by their penchant for pretend play). However, the ability to view the world from anything other than their own perspective is still relatively nascent. Over time, as thinking abilities progress, children develop a more adult-like understanding of abstract concepts and the delineation between one's own thoughts/feelings and those of others.

Several other notable stage theories emerged in the field of psychology over the course of the 20th century, including Freud's theory of personality development (e.g., Freud, 1940/1949), Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (e.g., Erikson, Paul, Heider, & Gardner, 1959), and Kohlberg's theory of moral development (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981). This stage-based approach was then used in several late 20th-century theories of faith formation. One of the most well-known is that of Fowler (1981), who outlined six stages of faith development that were heavily influenced by Piaget. In similar fashion, Larry Stephens (1996) offered eight stages of faith formation that directly mirrored Erikson theory of social development. Others, like Powers (1982) and Westerhoff (2000), offered more independent versions of stages in faith formation.

Limitations of the Stage Approach

While stage theories of cognitive development and faith formation are certainly valuable, they clearly do not account for all the data. For example, research findings continue to show that Piaget generally underestimated children's abilities (e.g., Baillargeon, Spelke, & Wasserman, 1985; Gelman, 1979). More specifically,

when experimental paradigms are altered to make tasks easier or less reliant on complex verbal/motor responses, children regularly show greater reasoning skills.

Various methodological critiques have also been levelled at Fowler's theory of faith formation (e.g., Coyle, 2011; Nelson & Aleshire, 1986). In his Intuitive-Projective stage, which corresponds to the early years of Piaget's Pre-Operational period, logical thinking is thought to be largely absent. However, anecdotal evidence suggests otherwise. Heywood (2008) offers this account, which meshes with our own experiences in children this age:

> A 7-year-old hearing the story of Noah's Ark from a version of the Bible that neglected to mention the wives of Shem, Cham and Japheth used the questioning skills encouraged by current mainstream educational methods, together with a basic knowledge of biology, to wonder how we could all be descended from three men. An even younger child stumped the teller of the story of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea by questioning the fairness of a God who could wipe out the whole Egyptian army when some of them would have been 'good men.'

A telling example from our Preschool-Kindergarten class occurred when the teachers were reading about Moses' adventure on Mount Sinai. The Bible describes the mountain in this way:

> Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. (Exodus 19:18, New Revised Standard Version)

The question posed to the kids was this: What does God look like to you? A mild argument ensued as three of them tried to convince the others of their viewpoint. One child said she already knew what God looked like. God was an old man with a white beard and he lived "right over there" as she pointed to a non-descript, but distant, corner of the room. Another child took issue with her claim and asserted that "God is everywhere." A third child was quick to point out that both classmates were mistaken since "God lives inside you."

On the one hand, stringent application of Piagetian-type stage theories would suggest that young children cannot think about or talk about abstract concepts such as God. Clearly, these anecdotes suggest the opposite. On the other hand, Piagetian theory predicts a certain amount of parallel thinking, which is exactly what we observed. There was no indication that these kids recognized that they were offering different perspectives on the single (albeit complex) notion of God, and they made no attempt to interact with one another or engage in dialogue.

The challenge for educators, then, is to draw appropriately from such theories. To that end, we have incorporated two widespread features of stage-type theories in our curriculum. From psychological theories, we have made use of the concept of cognitive progression. From faith formation theories, we have incorporated the concept of questioning one's beliefs.

Cognitive Progression

Developmental theories, in general, attempt to account for the impressive advancements in language, memory, abstract abilities, perspective-taking skill, and overall cognitive performance seen from birth to adulthood. Stage-based theories tend to assume that individuals move progressively from one stage to another (e.g., Piaget & Inhelder, 1958, and to a certain extent Powers, 1982, but see Erikson et al., 1959 and Streib, 2001, for alternatives to this view) and that advances occur at approximately the same ages across children. Many such theories also include several stages prior to the onset of puberty (e.g., Erikson, 1993) in acknowledging the remarkable development that occurs prior to adolescence. Our curriculum incorporates both ideas by using four age groups[3] and matching content with the widely-accepted abilities of kids in each group. This approach is not particularly revolutionary and is, in fact, typical for many published Christian curricula (e.g., Group Publishing, 2010; Sparkhouse, n.d.).

In the Preschool-Kindergarten (roughly ages 3-6 years) and Lower Elementary (roughly grades 1-3 or ages 6-9) groups, we use simpler language, and prompts often focus on the tangible/concrete aspects of the stories. While kids are given opportunities to share their own viewpoints on story content and the overall theme, we do not expect them to engage in extensive dialogue about their differing interpretations. For example, in the introductory lesson "What is Peace?" we offer a variety of definitions for the word "peace." At the end, we give the kids an opportunity to share their own thoughts about what "peace" means for them. They offer a variety of responses: "being calm," "not yelling," "helping friends who are fighting," "getting people to share," or "saying why it's not fair to cut in line." The goal is not to reach consensus about the "correct" meaning of the word or to debate the reasoning behind one particular answer over another. Rather, we simply provide space for kids to both share and listen. In this way, kids routinely hear responses that are both valued and varied.

Lesson plans for the Upper Elementary (roughly grades 3-5 or ages 9-12) and Middle School (roughly grades 6-8 or ages 11-14) groups are more advanced. Prompts provide opportunities to compare/contrast stories, to discuss divergent opinions, and to examine content both literally and metaphorically. For lessons grounded in Biblical stories, kids hear actual passages from the Bible instead of versions from Bible storybooks. In addition, Bible passages are paired with content from well-known sacred texts from other traditions (see section on "Use of Sacred Texts" below).

Our curriculum also incorporates research-based knowledge on the development of memory and metacognitive skill (e.g., Case, Kurland, & Goldberg, 1982). The total number of words (about 1,000-1,200) presented in our stories/passages for each lesson plan is similar across age groups; however, prompts are included more frequently for the younger groups. Narratives for the Preschool-Kindergarten group are presented in 100-125 word paragraphs while those for the Lower Elementary group are presented in 250-300 word chunks. In the Upper Elementary and Middle

School groups, narratives are also presented in chunks of 250-300 words, but the cognitive demand is higher because the narrative is more complex.

The "Questioning" Stage

Many stage theories also include a period of heightened analysis and self-examination. In cognitive theories, this is perhaps best exemplified by Erikson's stage, Identity vs. Identity Confusion, that happens between the ages of 12-18 years (e.g., Erikson, 1963). A similar idea can be found in various theories of faith formation. For example, Powers (1982) calls this stage Reality Testing, Westerhoff (2000) calls it Searching Faith, and Reinhart (1993) labels it Disillusionment.

Semantics aside, our curriculum acknowledges that many young adults eventually form their own conclusions about faith-based beliefs and practices, and we recognize that those conclusions may differ considerably from the standards of their families, congregations, and communities. We therefore allow, and even encourage, kids to express their own opinions about narratives, passages, moral lessons, and themes.

Our anecdotal experiences with lessons centred on the Biblical saga of Moses leading the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt are perhaps illustrative in this regard. When learning about the 10 plagues (Exodus 7-12),[4] for example, young children tend to offer two competing perspectives. In the first perspective, God is seen as being rather ineffective. Instead of sending plague after plague, kids often suggest that "God should have used his words." In the second perspective, God is seen as a sort of super-hero who has the privilege of deciding how to wreak havoc on the world. Kids who adopt this view often share their own ideas for punishments (e.g., fire bombs, X-ray guns, carnivorous dinosaurs).

As kids age, their overall comprehension of the Exodus story serves as evidence of their cognitive advancements. They tend to recognize that, in the real world, wars often happen when two groups of people disagree, and they are more familiar with the idea of God "being on a certain side." By early adolescence and the middle school years, at least some kids also understand that stories can serve as literary devices. They can explore allegorical interpretations (e.g., that the plagues represented various gods in the Egyptian pantheon) and compare the story to modern-day social justice issues. They can also comprehend that differing opinions exist about the same story.

Summary

There is some consensus on the part of researchers, caregivers, and educators that overall thinking abilities – whether they be "purely" cognitive or faith-related – are not identical in four-year-olds when compared to 20-year-olds, but identifying and outlining those differences remain an important part of the ongoing research process. In our curriculum, we have tried to achieve a delicate balance between investigational research and practical experience. We incorporate basic ideas found across stage theories by offering lesson plans that differ in cognitive load for our

four different age groups. At the same time, we acknowledge that stage-type approaches often underestimate the cognitive abilities of kids by providing ample opportunity for exploration and creative interpretation.

STORY AS A PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUE

Anecdotal and Research Evidence

Anecdotal evidence supports the idea that kids love stories. Educators, librarians, publishers, and authors regularly tout the benefits of story (e.g., Szurmak & Thuna, 2013), and some have even recognized the importance of kids, themselves, being storytellers (Hamilton & Weiss, 2005). Boyd has taken this a step further by proposing that storytelling and the creation of narrative are integral aspects of being human. He argues that storytelling may even confer an evolutionary advantage for the species by offering a method for focusing attention, highlighting our commonalities, and promoting social cohesion (Boyd, 2010).

The research literature on the benefits of story is significantly smaller than that for general cognition, but there are some findings that support the use of story as a pedagogical tool. For example, presentation of narratives with clear themes and identifiable goals results in greater memory retention (Bower, 1976), and it has been suggested that storytelling can be used in medical settings to promote both learning and values clarification (Bergman, 1999). Even young children, aged 3-5 years, show improvements in oral language ability when stories are either read or heard (Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004).

These findings are bolstered by neuroscience research indicating that the brain responds in complex ways to different aspects of a narrative. For example, some studies used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) techniques to look at brain areas activated when people listen to a story. Data showed that when a character's goals changed, the prefrontal cortex – an area known to be involved in real-life goal-directed behaviour – showed increased activation. Similarly, when a fictional character interacted with a new object in a story, brain regions associated with hand representation and real-life grasping showed increased activation (Speer, Reynolds, Swallow, & Zacks, 2009).

We have generalized such findings to interfaith education by using story extensively in our curriculum. In the younger groups (Preschool-Kindergarten and Lower Elementary), content is presented exclusively through story. In the older groups (Upper Elementary and Middle school) about half of the content is presented through story; the rest makes use of actual passages from sacred texts.

Role of Stories in our Curriculum

Christian educators regularly bemoan the age-inappropriate nature of the Bible. Many passages are unpleasant and filled with "murders, rapes, genocides, betrayals, mauling by wild animals, curses, divine retribution and apocalyptic horrors" (e.g., Wilson, 2013). Large portions are also non-narrative and consist of

genealogies, proverbs, and letters. Christian educators circumvent such issues by using Bible Storybooks (e.g., God's Story for Me, 2009; Milton, 1997; The Beginner's Bible, 2005).

Interestingly, a similar approach is taken by parents and educators around the world. The Tao Te Ching essentially contains no stories; the Qur'an is largely poetic and offers numerous passages about dire punishments raining down on those who fail to follow the straight path; and the Vedic texts are incredibly complex with narratives scattered across Puranas (e.g., the legend of Varaha the Boar which is found partly in the Vayu Purana and partly in the Varaha Purana). Despite those issues, kids are routinely exposed to the belief systems of their families/communities, at least in part, through story. From the Hindu tradition, there are the tales of the Panchatantra. From the Islamic tradition, there are stories about the life of Muhammad. From the Buddhist tradition, the Jataka tales are known examples. Kid-friendly narratives also exist in the Sufi and Sikh traditions and can be found, like stories from the other traditions, both on-line and in published books.

Taken together, these works provide ready-made, age-appropriate ways to share the behavioural standards, moral lessons, and ethical principles valued in their respective cultures and traditions. Moreover, well-crafted stories provide a glimpse into other cultures by placing narratives in a particular context. Jesus is near the Sea of Galilee, Muhammad lives in a desert environment, the Hindu deities reside in the heavenly realm, the Jataka tales occur in India, and Hasidic tales are set in 18th century Eastern Europe.

A peek into the world of "the other," can also happen through character names or seemingly-incidental mentions of cultural practices. In one Sikh story, used in the Peace unit of our curriculum, the main character is their 10th guru, Gobind Singh. In another, the main character is Bhai Sud. In the versions we authored for our curriculum, those names are explained. Moreover, Bhai Sud snacks on mango and leftover *chaat* (fried dough) in a nod to Indian culture. We use a similar approach with our Hasidic stories. In one story, the hero is Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Hasidic movement; in the other, the hero is Levi Yitzchok Berditchev, a well-known rebbe. Again, those names are explained in our versions of the stories, and we retain features like the rebbe using meat and cheese to stop young thieves because those were foods typically eaten by the Hasidic Jews in 18th century Poland/Ukraine.

These stories also provide a glimpse into alternative ways of articulating who and what God is. In our versions of Native American stories, we use the term Great Spirit, which is found in several other accounts. In our Hindu stories, we retain the terms used in the Puranas: Goddess Earth, Vishnu, Supreme Being, and Supreme Lord. In the Buddhist Jataka tales, the compassionate Buddha character is represented as a deer, a warrior prince, or a quail king, both in the stories we authored for our curriculum and in adaptations handed down for centuries.

Creating a Curricular Unit

Each of these techniques – context, character development, and authentic terminology – allows us to teach about belief systems through exposure rather than through lecture. Our 15-lesson Peace unit is representative of our approach. The first lesson introduces the theme and presents the various ways in which people think about "peace." Six lesson plans are based on stories from the Christian Bible: Isaiah imagining a peaceful kingdom (Isaiah 11:3-9), Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41), the woman healed by touching Jesus (Mark 5:21-34), Jesus using ravens and lilies to propose worrying less (Matthew 6:25-34), Jesus sending out the mission of seventy (Luke 10:1-9), and Jesus appearing to the fearful disciples after his death and resurrection (John 20:19-23). The remaining eight lesson plans revolve around stories from other belief systems (Native American, Islamic, Hasidic, Sikh, Sufi, Hindu, Buddhist, and Native African). Lesson plans are then placed into one of three subunits – Peace-Makers, Peace for the World, or Finding your own Peace – based on content/theme.

Each lesson plan, regardless of its origin, offers opportunities to reflect on what "peace" means in a given narrative (e.g., peace among nations, spreading a message of peace, peace as a reduction in anxiety or fear, finding peace within) and to think about how differing perspectives on "peace" might relate to one's own life.

PLACING THE NARRATIVES IN CONTEXT

In addition to teaching *through* narrative works, we also provide some background information on the culture and belief system of origin. We do this for all the narratives, including stories drawn from the Christian Bible. To guide our introductions, we once again turn to information gleaned from cognitive research.

Researchers have long suggested that children initially categorize concepts at a basic level (as opposed to a super- or sub-ordinate level) and that this categorization is formulated on the basis of perceptually salient differences in appearance, movement and function (e.g., Rosch, 1978). Take, for example, the classic case of the superordinate category of mammals. Under the category of mammals, we find several basic level categories: dog, cat, horse, cow. Under these basic level categories, we find subordinate groups. For dogs, we might have subordinate categories for shepherds, retrievers, and poodles.

In our curriculum, we incorporate those findings by utilizing a basic level categorization scheme for the world's religions and belief systems. For example, when we teach kids about the Buddhist tradition, we use Buddhism as our basic level category instead of using a super-ordinate category (e.g., Asian traditions, Eastern philosophies) or a sub-ordinate category (e.g., Zen, Tibetan, Mahayana). Similarly, Islam is the basic level category we employ instead of a superordinate category (e.g., Abrahamic faith) or a subordinate category (e.g., Sunni, Shi'a, Ahmadiyya).

Beyond that, we tend to focus on geographical information, significant names, and widespread ritual practices. For example, we teach that Hinduism originated in

the part of the world we now call India, that their stories frequently mention gods and goddesses, and that adherents often light candles or make offerings of food or flowers as part of their faith practice. Similarly, we mention the importance of tribes in the Native American tradition and talk about which tribes lived on the land currently inhabited by non-indigenous residents.

For the Middle School group, we take advantage of their enhanced categorization and comparative thinking skills (e.g., Piaget & Inhelder, 1958), and expand on these ideas in a couple of ways. First, we begin to introduce some sub-ordinate and super-ordinate concepts. We might show an image of Tibetan Buddhists meditating in a typically ornate worship space and compare it to an image of Zen Buddhists meditating in a typically stark worship space. We might also point out that Buddhism and Hinduism both started in India and spread throughout Asia, which is why some people refer to them as Asian or Eastern traditions. Second, we begin to introduce comparisons across basic level categories. For example, we might show various images of Buddhist temples and various images of Christian churches and talk about some of the similarities and differences.

We use a similar approach when introducing Bible stories. We talk about where Jesus lived, typical and atypical church architecture, traditional Christian symbols, and various Christian practices found around the world. By presenting Christianity in a manner similar to other faith-based traditions, we hope to place the world's belief systems on a more equal footing. We want to develop a working knowledge base about these traditions, but we also want to lessen the extent to which we create an "us vs. them" mentality. For the youngest kids (Preschool-Kindergarten and Lower Elementary), we aim, rather simply, for exposure: to the culture, to the language, and to common practices. For the Upper Elementary kids, we offer prompts that encourage thinking about – or at least noticing – some of the similarities and differences. For the Middle School kids, we ask more open-ended questions that provide space for them to share their thoughts with the group, to listen to opinions that might differ from their own, and to gain an appreciation for multiple perspectives.

It is our assertion that each tradition imparts wisdom about how we might care for our earth, interact with the sacred, and live in harmony with one another. By "teaching as we go," we avoid lecturing about doctrines, dogmas, and traditional tenets and focus instead on an appreciation for the historical, cultural, and ethical insight that each belief system brings to bear on the human condition.

USE OF SACRED TEXTS

In addition to the stories used in our curriculum, we also share passages taken directly from sacred texts with the kids in the two older groups (Upper Elementary and Middle School). This approach is used specifically for the lesson plans built around Biblical narratives. Most of those lessons begin with the Bible passage, but the passages are presented somewhat differently for these two age groups. For the Upper Elementary group (roughly grades 3-5 or ages 9-12), where kids are still

developing basic reading skills, the passages are read by the teachers. For the Middle School group (roughly grades 6-8 or ages 11-14), the passages are often read by the kids themselves depending on how adept and comfortable they are with reading aloud. Occasionally, we will even use a "reader's theatre" version of the story.

Because the language of the Bible is often more complex when compared to the stories we author, we offer a few guidelines prior to sharing the passage. For example, for the story of Jesus calming the storm, teachers go over certain vocabulary words like "stern," "perishing," "rebuked," and "awed." This often takes a bit less time for the Middle School group when compared to the Upper Elementary group since those words become more familiar with age (Logan, 1992). Lesson prompts also provide general reminders about what to look for in the passage. For example, in the story of Jesus calming the storm, we reiterate that calm, peaceful feelings are somewhat the opposite of fearful, anxious feelings.

Once the foundation is laid, the stories are either heard or read. We frequently replace pronouns (e.g., he, them) with proper names (e.g., Jesus, the disciples) to make the story easier to follow. Essentially, however, the passages are read, as is. This is feasible, in large part, because many Bible stories, particularly those found in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), are fairly short. Here is the Biblical passage we use for Jesus calming the storm.

> On that day, when evening had come, [Jesus] said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd behind, [the disciples] took [Jesus] with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But [Jesus] was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and [the disciples] woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" [Jesus] woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. [Jesus] said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And [the disciples] were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:35-41, New Revised Standard Version)

To ensure comprehension of the passage, follow-up questions are asked. Some questions focus directly on content (e.g., Why do you think the disciples woke Jesus up?) and are more likely to have a "correct" answer (i.e., because water was coming into the boat and they were afraid). Other follow-up questions focus on how the story might relate to the kids' everyday lives (e.g., Have you ever been in a boat? Have you ever been afraid in a storm?).

We also provide opportunities for the kids to share their own thoughts/opinions about the story (e.g., What do you think about the idea that Jesus stopped a storm?) This approach allows the group to explore textual omissions and ambiguities, which in turn promotes applied thinking, an appreciation of different perspectives, and respect for both belief and scepticism. Prompts such as "Do you think storms are always 'bad'?" "How do you decide when to 'bother' a teacher or other adult

when you are afraid?" and "Do you think/believe that people, in general, can control the weather?" all offer rich educational opportunities to move beyond story content.

Importantly, in all of Bible-based lesson plans used with the Upper Elementary and Middle School groups, Biblical passages are paired with excerpts from other sacred texts. For the story of Jesus calming the storm, the Upper Elementary kids hear a verse from the Qur'an. The teachers first offer a brief reminder that the word for God in Arabic is Allah and that the pronoun "He" is often used, even though we don't know if God is a man. The teacher also frequently adds some guidance and Vygotskian-type cognitive scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) about what the kids might notice (e.g., "This passage from the Qur'an seems similar because it also talks about ships in a storm and asking God for help"). Then, the teachers read:

> It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a storm wind and the waves come upon them from everywhere and they assume that they are surrounded, supplicating Allah, sincere to Him in religion, "If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful." (Surah Yunus (Jonah), verse 22, Sahih International)

Since there are also differences (e.g., mention of "a good wind," being "thankful" instead of being "filled with great awe"), kids are given an opportunity to say whether they agree that the passages are similar or not, but cognitively, this can be a difficult task for the Upper Elementary age group, so discussion tends to be somewhat limited.

The Upper Elementary group also hears a short passage from the Buddhist Dhammapada. This poem (Access to Insight, 2013) was written by the Buddhist monk, Bhuta Thera, which provides us with an opportunity to talk briefly about both Buddhism and monks. Then, we ask the kids to close their eyes and imagine meditating in a nice, warm cave while a storm rages around them as they listen to the following passage:

> When the thundering storm cloud roars out in the mist,
> And torrents of rain fill the paths of the birds,
> Nestled in a mountain cave, the monk meditates.
> – No greater contentment than this can be found. (Stanza 1)

We can also introduce the idea of storms serving as metaphors for difficult times in one's life. That, in turn, provides opportunities to discuss strategies for alleviating stress in their own lives or to offer age-appropriate tips for meditating.

For the Middle School group, we once again take advantage of their increased attention span, memory ability, and abstract reasoning skills and share the complete version of Bhuta Thera's poem (Access to Insight, 2013). The longer passage provides a broader set of images and more exposure to the rhythm of the language. These features require a bit of pre-presentation vocabulary review, but they also enhance the follow-up discussion about exhibiting equanimity in various situations

and finding contentment in life's ever-changing circumstances. Here is the passage we use:

> When along the rivers the tumbling flowers bloom
> In winding wreaths adorned with verdant color,
> Seated on the bank, glad-minded, he meditates.
> – No greater contentment than this can be found.
>
> When in the depths of night, in a lonely forest,
> The rain-deva drizzles and the fanged beasts cry,
> Nestled in a mountain cave, the monk meditates.
> – No greater contentment than this can be found.
>
> When restraining himself and his discursive thoughts,
> (Dwelling in a hollow in the mountains' midst),
> Devoid of fear and barrenness, he meditates.
> – No greater contentment than this can be found.
>
> When he is happy – expunged of stain, waste and grief,
> Unobstructed, unencumbered, unassailed –
> Having ended all defilements, he meditates.
> – No greater contentment than this can be found. (Stanzas 2-5)

If time permits, the group can expand even further with Rumi's poem "Search the Darkness" (Rumi, 2008, p. 53). Again, the teachers review some basic facts about the life of Rumi (i.e., that he is associated with Sufism and lived in 13th century Persia) and remind the kids to listen for metaphors representing life's less-than-peaceful times.

> Sit with your friends, don't go back to sleep.
> Don't sink like a fish to the bottom of the sea.
> Surge like an ocean, don't scatter yourself like a storm.
> Life's waters flow from darkness. Search the darkness, don't run from it.
> Night travellers are full of light, and you are too: don't leave this
> companionship.
> Be a wakeful candle in a golden dish, don't slip into the dirt like quicksilver.
> The moon appears for night travellers, be watchful when the moon is full.

Afterwards, the group can explore the feelings depicted by the metaphors (e.g., Have you ever felt like a sinking fish? Have you ever felt like you were a powerful, surging wave? Have you ever felt like the dark was your companion? What does it mean for you to be a "wakeful candle?"). These discussions are often lengthier and more profound than what can be observed in the Upper Elementary group. Such open-ended questions invite story-telling, provide opportunities for deep listening, and encourage tolerance in the face of differing opinions. Teachers are also encouraged to share their own views/experiences and to model empathic understanding.

CONCLUSION

Our goal is not to churn out mini religious scholars. We do not ask kids to recite the tenets of other faith traditions, and we do not require critical evaluations of ritual practices or beliefs. Rather, we offer an approach, grounded in cognitively-oriented theory and practice, where kids can grow up with some knowledge about belief systems different from their own. That knowledge is offered respectfully, compassionately, and nonjudgmentally. We focus on stories (and in some cases sacred texts) and avoid lecturing; we attempt to foster an appreciation for the historical and sociocultural roots underlying various traditions; and we try to provide a glimpse into the deep wisdom imparted by our ancestors around the world.

The world has become a global community, and encountering diversity in human interactions is a near-given. Diane Eck, Director of the Pluralism Project, has offered guidelines about how world citizens might best handle this new world order (Eck, 2006). She challenges us to move beyond tolerance toward active engagement and to move away from isolation toward dialogue. She also offers hope that we can maintain our identities while also forging bonds across our differences.

At Faith Seeker Kids, we are convinced that children are capable of acquiring age-appropriate knowledge and tools that will help them navigate our pluralistic world. Efforts made by adults are certainly admirable and greatly needed. However, developmental theories and ongoing research have provided rubrics for how we might explore interfaith education with our children, and we have been given an opportunity to develop a curriculum that incorporates scholarly findings. Time will tell if we are successful.

NOTES

[1] The sacred texts used in our curriculum include the Qur'an; the Buddhist Dhammapada; the Bhagavad Gita, Vedas, and Puranas from the Hindu/Vedic tradition; and writings from various mystics.

[2] This includes accepting different conceptions of "God" and viewing the Christian Bible as a type of literature rather than a compilation of historical or scientific facts.

[3] Grades/ages provided correspond to the U.S. public education system.

[4] In the Exodus story, God sends ten catastrophic events to the Egyptians to convince the Pharaoh to free the Hebrew slaves. The plagues include frogs, hail, darkness, and death of the first-born.

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INA TER AVEST AND DUNCAN R. WIELZEN

14. IN RETROSPECT – CHILDREN'S VOICES ON INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION

'Slow Research' on the Reception of InterReligious Education (IRE)

INTRODUCTION

Religious and secular traditions contain narratives about existential questions people since ages have tried to respond to, and the core values in their life orientation. In this chapter, we listen to the stories of former pupils to learn about the appropriation of the core values narrated in the Christian and Islamic tradition as they were presented in the first and only interreligious primary school in the Netherlands, the 'Juliana van Stolbergschool.' At this school, the educational staff together with experts (theologians, psychologist) developed a model for InterReligious Education (IRE). How do former pupils in retrospect reflect upon this teaching and learning about and from IRE? What lessons can be learned from their memories and how can these shape the future of interfaith education in the Netherlands?

We start with an exploration of children's rights regarding religious education from the perspective of fundamental human rights. We then proceed with arguing that the right of the child to express its views and to have these respected stands on equal footing with the right to religious education. Inspired by insights from Children's Theology, a relatively new concept within the field of religious education, we lay a solid foundation for a child-centred approach in an IRE pedagogy. Data from our 'slow research' give us a glimpse of former pupils' views in retrospect on IRE as this was included in the curriculum of the Juliana van Stolbergschool. These data highlight the contribution of IRE to their current positionality in the Dutch plural society. In a concluding paragraph, we draw some preliminary conclusions from our ongoing research, which we expect to be valuable for future developments on IRE and InterFaith Education (IFE) in the Netherlands and beyond.

CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Human Rights Perspectives

Children's right to education is a fundamental right embedded within the framework of internationally respected Human Rights. It is enshrined in the 1948 *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: "Everyone has the right to education" (Article 26:1). Concomitantly with this right is the right to *religious* education.

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 175–188.
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Enger (2010, 164) argues that "it is difficult to defend a position where this right to education should exclude the right to education in the field of *religion*." This basic human right, however, is intrinsically linked to the child's right to religious freedom (UN, 1989, 14:1).[1] The Declaration of Human Rights goes as far as to argue that parents' rights can never be uphold at the expense of children's rights. If parents, for whatever religious conviction choose to withhold their children from schooling, they risk being prosecuted by the state. Moreover, Article 14:2 from the 1989 *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, emphasizes not only the parents' right but also their moral duty to enable the child to fully exercise this right to religious freedom. By implication one can argue that parents are obliged to have their child(ren) become acquainted with different religious or secular worldviews via, e.g., IRE.

Friedrich Schweitzer (2010) claims that this Convention is not very clear or explicit in support of children's right to religion and to religious or spiritual education. He deems it less outspoken in this regard, except for the articles 14 and 27.[2] Hence, he seeks to establish such a right not only in legal terms but also on pedagogical grounds. He argues that children have innate religious or spiritual potentials and needs. Therefore, it is necessary for their growing up and making sense of the world to include this dimension in their education.

There are still other claims one can make when referring to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29:1. These claims are discussed below. Article 29:1, in its different subsections, stipulates that the education of the child should be directed to:

> … the development of its personality … to its fullest; development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms … development of respect for … his or her own cultural identity … the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; and the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

This article covers a broad range of principles that promote a positive stance (respect) towards religious and cultural diversity. Against the background of ethnic pluralism, these principles foster a positive attitude of children that suggests a disposition and engagement toward 'embracing diversity.' It is our contention that religious education can help children to acquire competencies necessary for active participation in societies characterized by religious and cultural pluralism. However, the type of religious education we envisage therefore goes beyond initiating children into a religion, or a religious way of life. What we envisage rather is religious education as "a means of deepening young people's understanding of [the meaning of] religion(s), whatever their background …" (Jackson, 2014, p. 23). That again requires a model for inter-religious education. According to Pollefeyt (2007) scholars developed such a model in the 1990s both as a critique on and an alternative for the model of multi-religious education. Inter-

religious education (IRE) embraces diversity and prepares pupils for active engagements in religious plural contexts. This model "openly approaches the plurality of religions and worldviews as a learning opportunity. Religious education thus becomes a place of encounter and dialogue between different religious convictions" (Pollefeyt, 2007, p. XII). IRE facilitates encounter and dialogue between pupils from diverse religious and secular backgrounds. In the same vein, the German theologian and religious pedagogue H.-G. Ziebertz noted earlier that the interreligious model introduces children into the cognitive and value system of various religions. Hence, they become familiar with these religions which at the same time facilitates the development of their own personal religious identity (Ziebertz, 1993, p. 86). IRE strengthens the development of children's personality, and teaches them to respect and tolerate values from different cultural and religious traditions other than their own. IRE enables children to fully exercise their civic right to religious freedom.

Far from being exhaustive,[3] this brief account on children's right to religious education – as we read this in the Declaration of Human Rights – underpins its relevance for contemporary plural societies. Since the 1960s migration patterns have intensified globally, ensuing into increased religious and cultural diversity in European countries and thus in the Netherlands. How can teachers of religious education facilitate the learning process of young people's respectful attitudes regarding ethnic, religious and cultural diversity? In our view, the voice of the child should be included in the exploration of religious education in diversity. In line with the Golden Rule "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," being heard and respected enables children to listen to others and respect them in a similar way.

From Right to Respect: A Child-Centred Approach

The child's fundamental right to education is well anchored in the United Nations Conventions and Declarations. However, in earlier days, teachers interpreted this right as being mere recipients of the religious knowledge of their teachers' (experiential) knowledge and life orientation. This concept coined as 'banking education' (Freire, 1970) denied children the right to express their own views. The teacher-student relation had a purely *narrative* character, with the former as the 'narrating subject,' and the latter as the patiently, listening object. Freire refers to the negative aspects of this pattern in education as "narration sickness" (1970, p. 70). It has at times also characterized RE in Christian denominational schools where the teacher told or read Bible stories to children who often were not allowed to question the content of these stories, let alone voice their views resulting from their reception of the stories told. The primary goal of this form of RE was the religious socialization of the child by means of transferring appropriate knowledge. Becoming a proper Christian was the aim of this type of RE.

Research carried out in England and reported by Ipgrave (2009) points to young children's desire to learn about other religions so that they can maintain positive relations with people of those other religions later in life. As one child puts it: "I

can learn about all of them [religions] so I know that when I grow up I know about everyone and that their gods – who they are, and I know I won't be racist" (2009, p. 57). Ipgrave concludes that such an "information-based religious education … has greatly increased young people's knowledge of and respect for the lives and beliefs of others" (2009, p. 68).

The REDCo research (2006-2009)[4] showed that in general, at least for the Netherlands, teachers in secondary schools no longer regard religious socialization as the primary goal for RE. Students find it important that in RE classes they learn *about* various religions in a descriptive, impartial manner. Moreover, based on their personal experiences with religion in school almost 75 percent of these students support the idea of becoming acquainted with various religions through RE. In their view, it is important to learn to understand other religions better, since that can help them to construct their own authentic positionality regarding these religions and learn to respect other people irrespective of their religious or secular backgrounds (Bertram-Troost & Ter Avest, 2008, 2011, p. 4).

Of particular interest is how teachers and students look at the latter's identity development from a RE perspective. Teachers find it important that religious education enhances students' consciousness of their own value orientation and worldview perspective and their developing (religious) identity. When REDCo researchers questioned students about this matter, however, the far majority (80 percent) indicated that religious education does not play a significant role for their identity formation (i.e., learning to know themselves better). Hence, these research findings (should) have implications for the objectives teachers ascribe to their RE lessons. Teachers and others involved with curriculum design cannot ignore the voices of students who are very outspoken on the issue of identity formation as part of the objective of religious education. They must consider this question seriously and respect the children's perspective while at the same time taking their pedagogic responsibility seriously. Schweitzer makes an important observation for that matter when he argues:

> The question what children need inevitably becomes an important starting point, and the answer to this question can no longer be given by adults who presuppose that it is they who always know best about the true needs of children. Even if children, at least during their first years of life, cannot speak for themselves, we must be prepared to learn how to carefully observe, and to intensively listen to, what they may tell us in their special ways of communicating. We must be prepared that even young people might have something meaningful to contribute to their own religious development and education. (Schweitzer, 2010, p. 1078)

Thus, teaching RE also requires from teachers an attitude of respect for their pupils' voiced opinions and ideas. Enabling children 'to tell their own stories' creates learning opportunities within RE that are in the children's interest. Due to the limitations of this chapter we cannot develop this element of aligning curriculum design – in terms of its overall objective – with children's perspectives here further.

Above we have underlined the essence of including children's right to express their own opinions as inherent to their fundamental right to religious education and that adults must respect this right. In the following we will adopt a religious pedagogical approach to concretize the child's right to form and express his or her own (religious) worldview. Therefore, we turn to Children's Theology, or the perspective of 'Theologizing with Children' (TWC).

CHILDREN'S THEOLOGY FOR A CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH IN RE

What is Children's Theology?

Children's Theology and its related concept 'Theologizing with Children' (TWC) came up around the beginning of the 21st century as a new concept within the field of religious education. In this chapter, we employ the concepts of 'Children's Theology' and 'Theologizing with Children' interchangeably.[5]

From the very beginning, Children's Theology has had advocates in Germany. Religious pedagogues and theologians are the primary scientists among its frontrunners. The central concern for practitioners and researchers in this domain is to maintain respect for children's articulation of theological questions[6] and to regard them as valuable and competent subjects (Dillen & de Kock, 2015; Zimmerman, 2015). Respecting these questions implies trying to find answers and providing a safe and powerful learning environment therefore. This is important because asking questions constitutes an integral part of growing up. And finding – preliminary – answers contributes to the child's development.

To define Children's Theology, Zimmerman (2015) names the following points:

– theology of revelation and answers
– lay theology
– existential and personal theology
– concrete, creative and contextual
– but also, temporary, critical and dialogical theology.

Based on these points we arrive at the following description: 'Children's Theology implies the art of theologizing with children, grounded in theory and practice, and which involves communication of children among themselves and with adults about (possibly) existential questions from children's concrete daily life experiences, and their intertwined relation with narratives, rituals, symbols or metaphors in Holy Scriptures. These questions result from children's personal experiences, views and contextual (social, cultural, religious) backgrounds. Their answers are based on creative insights, possibly facilitated by their teacher's pedagogical interventions. These responses are temporary since they are contingent on change because of growing up.' Ipgrave demonstrated the critical and dialogical nature of Children's Theology with her research among British schoolchildren living in a religious plural milieu. She points out how Christian and Hindu children negotiate and construct a new understanding of God when confronted with the challenge of contrasting positions on Gods unity (Christianity) or plurality (Hinduism). In the end, the children come up with the idea of God in which both

divergent positions are reconciled, i.e., "a god of many colours" (Ipgrave, 2009, p. 65). This finding demonstrates children's ability to improve their religious literacy regarding complex theological questions. Previous research among pupils from the Juliana van Stolbergschool also yielded the same conclusion regarding children's potentials (Ter Avest, 2003, 2009).

Scope of Children's Theology

On a theoretical level, Children's Theology constitutes a broad range of scientific research and reflection concerning children's own thoughts and views on theological, religious and spiritual questions. Since the beginning of this century there is a growing corpus of systematic research into children's way of responding to these questions. These are published in, among others, the thematic *Jahrbücher für Kindertheologie* (Bucher et al., 2002-2009) issued in eight annual bands; in the *Handbuch Theologisieren mit Kindern* (Büttner et al., 2014; see also the literature overview in Kuindersma, 2008; and contributions in Dillen & Pollefeyt, 2010).

Central to Children's Theology is the process in which educators encourage children's reflections on, and questions about God, human (relations) and the world, and how these are (inter)related. This process involves interaction and dialogue amongst children and between children and their teachers regarding these theological questions. The underlying thought is that children have a distinct way of coping with ultimate questions on life, death, the hereafter etc. Their questions are not less valuable or less intelligent than those of adults. Their views are valuable contributions for generating and constructing theology which does not differ substantially from 'adult academic theology,' but only in gradual terms.

Children's Theology is not limited to Christian religious education – in families or in schools. It can also be developed in a religious plural context as Ipgrave pointed out. In such a context children's conceptualization of God is "one of encounter with other faiths." Her research findings further suggest that "this context of plurality has had a powerful influence on their [the children] understanding and acted as an impetus to their reflective and creative theology" (Ipgrave, 2009, p. 68).

This brief account on Children's Theology highlights its main features:

– it puts children and their religious tradition at the centre of their learning process
– it perceives of children as valuable and competent subjects
– it respects and encourages children's perceptions on theological questions
– it accepts these perceptions as authentic and valuable contributions toward generating and constructing theological knowledge through communication and dialogue.

The primary central interest in Children's Theology is not on transmission; instead, children are regarded as equal partners in conversation. Teachers take pupil's theological expressions seriously; likewise, pupil's views on a topic or existential problem (Zimmerman, 2015). We conclude that Children's Theology offers a solid theoretical framework to promote a child-centred approach in the academic field of the pedagogy of religion.

This said, we can now proceed with our final part. In the following we present data that we have gathered from interviews with former pupils of the Juliana van Stolbergschool in Ede, a middle-large town in the mid-eastern Dutch province of Gelderland. The data reflect the pupils' voices. From their retrospective reflection on the IRE classes at this school we draw some preliminary conclusions and point to possible directions for the future of interfaith education. Below, first, we present a situation in the childhood of the former principal of the Juliana van Stolbergschool, to exemplify the pivotal role of a 'critical incident' in relation to this principal's internal motivation for the development of IRE.

CHILDREN'S VOICES AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Childhood Experiences as Disruptive Moments: Keys to Transformative Action

Generally, there seems to be consensus among psychologists, therapists and behaviour scientists on how childhood experiences impact and influence individuals' choices in later life, especially concerning the pursuit of (non)professional occupations (Breeuwsma, 1993; Marcia, 1980). The individual's motivation for these choices is often linked to experiences encountered during childhood. As 'disruptive moments' (Ter Avest, 2014a) these experiences bear their marks on one's professional identity development. They press one to search for new forms that enables appropriate and acceptable positioning (Ter Avest, 2014b, p. 9). The development of one's professional identity influences one's personal biography, but the same can also be said in reverse order. Thus, this influence is mutual.

In the case of Bart Ten Broek – the former principal of the Juliana van Stolbergschool – a disruptive moment occurred when as a child, he overheard a conversation between his parents and his schoolmaster, Mr. van der Kleij. The latter had visited Ten Broek's parents to plea on his behalf for further studies which could possibly lead to an academic career. But due to a lack of financial resources they could not afford to let Ten Broek pursue the level of education that matched his intellectual abilities. Nevertheless, overhearing his schoolmaster pleading on his behalf impacted him strongly. That, in retrospect, made him become conscious of the essence for a child to be seen and heard. In Ten Broek's own words: "I literally mean that you must see the child-in-context, including its (family-) culture and religion." Ten Broek took this as a pedagogical principle in the development of an IRE-model at the Juliana van Stolbergschool.

The Story of Bart Ten Broek Continues

In an innovative study on 'normative professional identity development' Ter Avest (2014a) employs the concept of 'disruptive moments' as a key construct towards an individual professional career. In the story of Bart Ten Broek, such a disruptive moment in his childhood is described above. In the case of Ten Broek, there seems

to be a link between this disruptive moment and his personal engagement for the transformation of the Juliana van Stolbergschool from a Protestant-Christian school into the first interreligious school in the Netherlands.[7]

At the Juliana van Stolbergschool Bart Ten Broek challenged the staff to respond to the growing number of Muslim children who attended the school. In the school's education policy, the staff adopted three principles to respond to the emerging religious diversity:

- every child is one that deserves attention, mirrored in the slogan of the school: 'Every Child Matters.' As a result, the curriculum had to be child-centred and in line with the children's family background as this was brought into the school;
- intensive participation of parents in this process of change[8];
- implementing an intercultural and interreligious model for education.[9] (Ten Broek, 2002, pp. 28-29)

The immediate challenge the school faced was to find an answer to the question of how a Christian school can provide religious education for the Muslim pupils with respect for their religious development. In the efforts to find answers to this question the school developed a program for 'encounter education' which was followed by 'recognition education' with recurring themes like 'encounter' and 'dialogue' at the centre of the school's praxis.

Despite the various adaptations, the school retained her principles. The first principle – 'Every Child Matters' – remained the primary pedagogical principle and therefore had the highest priority. This is illustrated by changes in the school's` praxis inspired by the experiences of Muslim pupils. For example, the hitherto dominant practice of praying with eyes closed, as was common within the Protestant-Christian tradition of the school, became less strictly observed when one child responded to a question by saying: "I can pray with my eyes open" (Ten Broek, 2002, p. 29).

Another example of the implementation of this pedagogical principle regards the way Bart Ten Broek explains the different manners in which people experience the Devine and the different ways they articulate that, which is also reflected in the Torah, Qur'an and Bible. For that, he cites the theological view of a child who had spontaneously argued: "The Bible and Qur'an? They are the same, only written in a different way" (Ten Broek, 2002, p. 34). Already then, the school under Ten Broek's leadership had committed itself to respect children's voices and views. The title of his article referred to in this paragraph reflects this principled stance: *A pre-mature education model?*

The Voice of Former Pupils

Already during the process of developing IRE at the Juliana van Stolbergschool, a research project was initiated to follow the pupils' religious development during this process of IRE-under-construction. To start with, pupils were interviewed at different moments at the age of 10, 11 and 12, and again at the age of 14 and 17.[10]

The second phase of this research project started in 2015 ('slow research'). From 2015 onwards former pupils, now adolescents some of them married and having children, are interviewed. The leading questions of the interview are: 'What do you remember of IRE at the Juliana van Stolbergschool, how do you evaluate IRE and what is the relation of this IRE with your actual (religious) positionality? So far five former pupils were interviewed.[11]

Preliminary findings show that all five of the interviewed former pupils mention 'space' as an important aspect of their memories of the Juliana van Stolbergschool. Space in the sense that they were approached in a respectful way and that their 'different' background was regarded as an inseparable part of their (Muslim) identity. Once a year teachers visited the child's family at home to get familiar with his or her background. These annual visits by teachers are concrete examples of what the children experienced as "receiving space to be who you are." As Abdul, one of the respondents – who refers to his identity as Moroccan-Dutch – says: "I knew that I was different, but it was normal to be different." For this former pupil, the awareness of being different is related to film crews interviewing the mother of a boy next door about her view on the plural pupil population of the Juliana van Stolbergschool. In that interview, this mother spoke about "a coloured boy coming to play with her son," and then Abdul realised that he was that 'coloured boy.' But at the Juliana van Stolbergschool he never had the experience of being 'coloured' and by consequence seen as an outsider. The IRE classes were perceived by him as a 'normal' way to teach and learn about and from religion(s). Abdul, in retrospect, is appreciative for having received IRE, because, as he says: "Now I can speak with Muslims, with Christians about their faith, because I know about both traditions. When somebody refers to a story from the Bible, I can say: 'In the Qur'an we have a similar narrative.'" Abdul gives his two children an Islamic upbringing. Therefore, he celebrates the Islamic religious feasts and tells them the stories related to the rituals on those specific days. Abdul did not choose to send his children to the Islamic primary school nearby, but he decided, rather to send them to a public school, a Montessori school, where "every child matters, just as at the Juliana van Stolbergschool." He proudly recounts a conversation with his nine-year-old son about the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels (2015/2016), and the subsequent processes of radicalization and blaming Muslims. When asked what he thinks of this 'bashing Muslims,' his son replied: "Muslims cannot be bad people, because I am a Muslim."

Another respondent, Amina, a former pupil with a Turkish background, mentions as her first memory of the Juliana van Stolbergschool that she felt welcome. She relates this welcoming feeling to the celebrations of Christian and Islamic feasts during school hours. "I felt acknowledged in what was important for me due to my upbringing," Amina recounts. "The Turkish children's feast, the 23rd of April was celebrated," which she remembered was very important for her as a child. "The teachers were really interested in our family culture and in our religion, in particular the commonalities with the Christian tradition." When a Christian religious feast was celebrated in the church, for example at Christmas time, Amina remembered that the teachers never forced them to do as the Christian children,

"but we were told to be respectful – which we did." The same holds for the prayer at the start of the day: "We were never pushed to fold our hands. 'Just be silent and respectful,' that's what the teacher told us. We were accepted including our Islamic identity." When Amina was in her final year of the primary school, a school camp was organised. However, for her father it was out of question that she could participate and stay overnight. She vividly remembered the ensuing discussions between the teacher and her father, which eventually led to the teacher promising to take her home from camp every evening, so that she could still participate in the daytime activities. 'Critical incidents' for this former pupil, now a mother of adolescent boys, opened the space for the development of an own Islamic identity. "That's what I learned at the Juliana van Stolbergschool: being accepted and respected."

Another former pupil named Rabia, with Moroccan roots, talking about her years at the Juliana van Stolbergschool, remembered that "values and regulations did not differ from what I was told at home." "I read the Bible, and discovered that some of these narratives were not conflicting with the narratives I knew." Due to the IRE at school she can be touched by texts from the Bible and the Qur'an alike. When talking about Mariska, a Christian friend she regularly visited at home, she states: "I liked that things were more or less the same there as well. What was really different was the way she spent her Sundays: not allowed to do anything." "That made me curious about other life orientations," she explains, "a curiosity that was stimulated at school." There she experienced an open attitude regarding the cultural rules and regulations that were taught to her at home. She remembered one particular teacher who had invited her parents to discuss the girls' dress code, especially for the gymnastic class. From what she could remember, Rabia was perceived as being different when continued further education in secondary school, in contrast to what she had experienced at the Juliana van Stolbergschool. In her experience, she felt completely different from Christian peers in secondary school. There it seemed as if nobody was familiar with the fasting period of Ramadan, and as if nobody was interested either. "That was really different from what I remember of my primary school," she states. "At the Juliana van Stolbergschool being different was a regular aspect of school life."

Louisa, another young lady with Moroccan roots, compared her experiences at the school she first visited with that of the Juliana van Stolbergschool where she received IRE. It was at the latter school that she started to wear a headscarf. "I don't know why exactly … I just became interested in Islam. I had tapes to listen to … I read translated Arabic booklets … I still cannot read Arabic, which I regret." Louisa became interested in Islam whilst attending the Juliana van Stolbergschool. "I was curious about the reasons why Allah wanted us to behave in a certain way, and my mother then answered, 'That's why,' which made me even more curious." She enjoyed the Bible story telling at school and had a keen interest in learning about other religions. "I was like a sponge, sucking all the narratives." She remembered one teacher who did not like her wearing the headscarf. If she could not retell the narrative that he had told, he would say: "You better take of your headscarf to be able to actually hear what I'm telling!" Louisa still remembers the

occasion whereby she approached the principal with another friend for his help to organise an activity. “I don’t know any more what kind of activity it was,” but somehow, he took their request seriously. “He was a warm, welcoming, interesting man, listening to the voice of us, little children,” she adds smilingly. “I would have liked to send my children to such a school, with such an open atmosphere. At the time my children had that age there was not such a school,” she concludes the interview.

The same holds for Tikri, also a former pupil of the Juliana van Stolbergschool. This young mother, decided to send her children to an Islamic primary school, where she currently works as a teacher. She regrets that her two sons now only learn about Islam, without also getting acquainted with other life orientations. With her eldest son, she discusses the different ways people live their religion. Tikri explains to him that some women decide not to wear a headscarf, but that it is not the dress that makes them a true believer. She describes herself as a faithful Muslim, with a Moroccan background, socializing her children in Islam in a down to earth way and taking daily experiences of her children as a start for reflection from an Islamic point of view. She remembers that she always liked the school meetings at the start and at the end of the week. “I liked to play part in it, and participate at the end of the week in the presentation of what we learned in the Islamic classes.” Remembering particularly the religious education classes at the Juliana van Stolbergschool she tells about the moment that she and other Muslim children attended to Islamic classes whereas her Christian classmates attended Christian classes. “Then I was just wondering why? Now I’m wondering ‘Why did they not bring these classes together?’” However, she admits in retrospect, “I learned that each one can hold on to the own religion; that it’s no problem to be different.” That being different might be a problem, in her view explains why so many white children were taken out of school by their parents, by the time Tikri had reached grade eight. This mass withdrawal of white children by their parents – nowadays coined as ‘the white flight’ – contributed to a certain degree to the closure of the first and only interreligious (Christian-Islamic) primary school in the Netherlands. The foundations it laid for its pupils, in terms of the development of their moral and religious identity, however, still carry their marks into the 21st century. Moreover, the IRE model that was developed at this school has generated several adapted versions in both public governmental and confessional primary schools in the Netherlands.

CONCLUSION

Above we described that from a human rights perspective children do have the right to IRE as a form of religious education. It is the moral duty of their parents to make it possible for them to fully enjoy this right. Therefore, parents and other educators like teachers, must create space for children to learn about and from their own and others’ religious or secular life orientations. Educators in schools must respect and encourage children’s views on spiritual and religious matters. Research

from Children's Theology shows that children are capable to form and express their own religious views.

Our ongoing 'slow research' not only highlights the theoretical stance of Children's Theology, but also shows the importance of allowing for 'space' to children in their learning environments. Therefore, developing models for IRE/IFE should be based on a child-centred pedagogical approach in which the child is seen in context, including its (family-) cultural and religious background. For the child to be seen, heard and understood this implies respect for and acceptance of its cultural socialization in the family and their way of religious upbringing. By consequence, a pedagogy for 'every child matters' cannot be put into practice without intensifying parents' involvement. Teachers and parents, as partners in education, together are the creators of a safe space for the development of a proper life orientation that enables children to live in diversity. Cooperation between educators of the first and second pedagogical sphere is essential, because every child matters!

NOTES

[1] Article 14:1 reads:

> States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

[2] Article 27:1 reads:

> States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

[3] See also Ter Avest (2017) focussing on Children's Rights for RE.

[4] REDCo (Religion in Education. A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries) is an international research project carried out in eight European countries. In this project researchers addressed the question of how religions and values contribute to dialogue or tension in Europe. See further Weisse (2010, 2011).

[5] In this chapter, we employ the concept of Children's Theology in inclusion of the concept of Theologizing with Children.

[6] Some examples of 'theological questions' by children are found in Spadaro (2016). In the book entitled *Dear Pope Francis* the Pope answers to questions posted by children from around the world. We think it suffices to give four examples of theological questions by children.

> Dear Pope Francis. Can our deceased family members see us from heaven? Emil (9 years, Dominican Republic, p. 10)
>
> "Dear pope Francis. It's an honour to ask you my question. My question is wat did God do before the world was made? Sincerely, Ryan (8 years, Canada, p. 12)
>
> Dear Pope Francis. If God love us so much and does not like us to suffer, why then he didn't defeat the Devil? Alejandra (9 years, Peru, p. 22)
>
> Dear Pope Francis. Will the world ever become again as it was before? Sincerely, Mohammed (10 years, Syria, p. 32)

[7] This transformation process is documented in various publications (Andree et al., 1993; Griffioen, 2001; Ten Broek, 2002).

[8] The change concerned the special task given by the Ministry of Education to make visible how to integrate children from what was then termed 'cultural minorities' into the new form of primary education that was about to start from 1985 onwards (Ten Broek, 2002, p. 28).

[9] The staff received support from a team consisting of theologians from both Christian and Islamic tradition, a religious psychologist and various parents of Christian and Muslim pupils. This team was active in the steering process of implementing intercultural education and served as an advisory board.

[10] See Ter Avest (2003, 2009) for an extensive description of the research project and its findings.

[11] For privacy reasons the names of the former pupils of the Juliana van Stolbergschool are fictitious.

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FIONA TINKER

15. A CASE FOR EXPANDING MULTI-FAITH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: SCOTLAND

The Scottish Pagan Federation

INTRODUCTION

In common with many other countries, Scotland's present education system grew from the context of a system put in place by the church. In the early medieval period, two kinds of schooling existed; bardic schools and the schools founded in monasteries. The bardic schools were oral and, by their nature, little is known about their curriculum content although it is known that pupils were taught poetry and music. In contrast, the religious houses were seats of written learning and from them grew the model for education we are familiar with today.

The history of the Christian church in Scotland is also part of the story of Scotland: of Culdees and monks, of the Reformation, of Covenanters, of tensions between Roman Catholicism and the new Protestant beliefs; many wars, a beheaded Queen – and tensions between the Protestant Church and the breakaway Free Church of Scotland. It is outside the scope of this short piece to examine this history in detail or its effects on education. Suffice to say that in 1872 the Education (Scotland) Act created school boards. These school boards took over the majority of existing Protestant church schools and added further schools to the extant ones. This assimilation was not the case for schools set up by the Roman Catholic Church, who remained outside this new system. However, by 1918 another Education Act replaced the school boards with local education authorities and the Catholic schools in Scotland were brought under their government whilst retaining their own Roman Catholic faith ethos. In addition, in 1918 the concept of free secondary education for all was established in law.

Although the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church were no longer responsible for the running of schools, their input into the curriculum continued, resulting in two kinds of religious education in schools, one based on Protestant tenets and the other based on Catholic ones. Teachers in Catholic schools needed (and some posts still need) approval from their Diocese on their fitness to teach in a Catholic school.[1]

TENSIONS

The tensions between these two approaches fed into sectarian conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, particularly in the west coast of Scotland, which had a high number of Catholic Irish immigrants. This sectarian tension manifested itself

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 189–199.
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(in living memory) in how favourably one part of the population was treated in contrast with the other in such matters as housing, public services and access to Higher Education. Although no longer an issue in public life, sectarianism is still extant to a certain degree in the Scottish society.[2]

Sectarianism – like other forms of religious intolerance – is a cancer that eats away at the coherence of any society. Scotland has welcomed waves of immigrants over the centuries and, as each group has settled here, they have become part of the fabric of Scotland: Scots whose names show that they have ancestral roots in other lands as well as roots in Scotland, the land of their birth. Initially, the bulk of immigrants belonged to one faction or other of Christianity, with a smaller number of people from the Jewish, Sikh and Muslim faiths making Scotland home. By the 1970s, Scotland welcomed more immigrants from further afield as the world changed and dictators expelled certain ethnic groups from their countries, groups whose religious faiths were not based in Christianity.[3]

In addition, there was a rise in the exploration of the indigenous religions and beliefs of this land for those who did not find deity in the tenets of Christianity and who identified as Pagan. This was followed by a cautious resurfacing of beliefs and practices which had remained hidden behind the veil of folk belief or similar for many years. The simplified background to this was that the re-discovery of indigenous faith and belief was firstly brought about by an exploration of folklore which occurred in the 19th century, where esteemed researchers such as Alexander Carmichael[4] and Fiona MacLeod[5] collected and translated stories, prayers and charms from the Gaelic-speaking highlands and island into English. By the 20th century, stories about the native Gods and Goddesses were available to all and in part, this led to an exploration of the pre-Christian religions in Scotland and the growth in number of people identifying publicly as Pagan.[6]

Such a divergence of beliefs combined with the new beliefs brought to Scotland by immigration could be seen as a catalyst for further sectarianism and racism. Yet this is not the case. Scotland is not some kind of Utopia, no society is. But the worst excesses of intolerance have not happened here. There are no calls from supposed leaders demanding we ban Muslims from entering our country – and if there were, the declaimer would more likely to be pitied than listened to seriously. This has partly to do with societal attitudes, summed up in the phrase: “we’re a Jock Tamson’s bairns”[7] and partly to do with how Scotland has developed since the return of our Parliament to Edinburgh in 1999.[8]

WHAT IS THE UK?

It is worth pausing for a minute to consider the matter of the United Kingdom: The 18th century Acts of Union between Scotland and England clarified the church’s position and clarified that Scotland retained its own system of education and law. This ensured those institutions continued as they had existed pre-union, which is why Scots Law, Education and the Church of Scotland are distinctly Scottish and very separate institutions entirely from those of neighbouring England. The lack of understanding about how the Union operates often causes confusion: there is no

such thing as homogeneous UK approach to law, education or religion: Scotland is one of four countries that constitute the present entity named 'The UK' and each country has its own domestic approach to these matters.

The Scottish Government has fully embraced European Equality Legislation.[9] In addition, it instigated several policies, including *One Scotland*,[10] which sets out the Governments aims in building a modern, fairer country. In the matter of education, it has developed an approach to learning which is underpinned by four capacities Scottish education aims to develop in pupils: Successful Learners; Confident Individuals; Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors. These capacities echo the aspirations the Scottish people have of their government and they are etched in the ceremonial mace of Scotland: Wisdom, Integrity, Justice and Compassion. These aspirations also undermine the new Scottish Curriculum, a *Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)*, which was introduced in 2010. Education Scotland/Foghlam Alba is the body responsible for education from 3–18 years and the development of a CfE is their remit. The guidance issued by Education Scotland *Religious and Moral Education 3–18*[11] states:

> The principles of *Curriculum for Excellence* reflect our national commitment to embracing diversity, equality and inclusion so that people of all faiths and those with no faith are respected and able to contribute fully to Scottish life. (Maxwell, B., 2014, Chief Executive, Education Scotland)

Furthermore, the 2010 Equalities (Scotland) Act outlines protected characteristics under this law: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) issued a document, *Equality Act 2010 Technical Guidance: Technical Guidance for Schools in Scotland*[12] outlining the responsibilities schools have under this Act. Arguably, inclusion and interfaith is already hardwired into the Scottish curriculum and inclusion is enshrined in law. But does this work in practice?

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION

The basis of the *Religious and Moral Education* (RME) curriculum takes account of the Toledo Principles,[13] a framework established after the events of September 11, 2001 and published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHR). This framework promotes an understanding of religious diversity and the role of religion in public life. The Toledo Principles underpin the pedagogy of RME in Scotland's curriculum. In addition, the development of the RME Curriculum takes account of Scotland's particular religious history in that there are two separate curriculum documents: one for non-denominational schools, *Curriculum for Excellence: Religious and Moral Education Experiences and Outcomes*[14] and one for Catholic schools, *Curriculum for Excellence: Religious Education in Catholic Schools Experiences and Outcomes*.[15] It must be noted that many non-Catholic children attend Catholic schools and their parents accept that the ethos of the Catholic school chosen will reflect that faith. In addition, the

Scottish Catholic Education Service produced *This is our Faith*[16] for use in Catholic schools.

The Scottish Joint Committee for Religious and Moral Education was set up in 1918 by the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church to advise on religious education in non-Catholic schools. Their original membership was Protestant Christian but this has evolved to include many non-Christian bodies and organisations as it has developed over the century of its existence. It would seem from the above that Scotland has a somewhat polarised approach to RME but this is not the case on closer examination.

DEVELOPING DEPTH AND BREADTH TO REFLECT MODERN SCOTLAND

Religious Education is statutory in Scottish schools and, as an examination subject it is called Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies. In both the Roman Catholic curriculum and the non-denominational curriculums, pupils are encouraged to explore the large questions of existence as well as developing their own system of beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to explore other faiths, particularly those of other faith groups within their communities. However, there is a reliance on the 'Big Six' – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism as the framework for these explorations and this is where there is room for consideration of Paganism as an addition to the curriculum diet.

Why should Paganism be added to the Scottish RME curriculum? Surely the number of Pagans within Scotland is too small to consider? These are valid questions, which can be explored in the context of *Curriculum for Excellence: Religious and Moral Education Principles and Practice*:[17]

> Through developing awareness and appreciation of the value of each individual in a diverse society, religious and moral education engenders responsible attitudes to other people. This awareness and appreciation will assist in counteracting prejudice and intolerance as children and young people consider issues such as sectarianism and discrimination more broadly. (p. 1)

And:

> When planning for religious and moral education, schools will take account of the communities and the context in which the children and young people live and learn. Through their learning in religious and moral education all children and young people will develop an understanding of Christianity, which has shaped the history and traditions of Scotland and continues to exert an influence on national life. It is also a fundamental principle that all children and young people throughout Scotland will consider a range of faiths and views, whatever their own situation and local context. Indeed, the experiences and outcomes will lead to children and young people, as they develop, extending their learning far beyond the local context to national and international contexts. (p. 3)

The emphasis on understanding Christianity is both laudable and understandable in the context of Scotland's history in the last 1500 years or so, but the curriculum must also account for the modern context and within that modern context, Christianity is no longer the religion of 46% of Scots, according to the 2011 census, which shows the multi-faith nature of contemporary Scottish society.[18] How best should Scotland navigate its approach to religious education in a society where all faiths are valued by legislation whilst accounting for two curriculums and historical factors? This is the challenge faced in Scotland by an inchoate RME curriculum today.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Moreover, the Scottish Curriculum is forward-looking in that global citizenship is built into it and pupils explore global issues from a Scottish context across a variety of subjects and themes:

> International education helps to prepare young people for life and active participation in a global multicultural society, by developing in them knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it. (Education Scotland: *International Education*)[19]

In practise, these explorations are many and various, ranging from environmental studies to the study of religions to successful school exchanges with countries around the world. Arguably, the emphasis on understanding Scotland's place in the world is dependent on understanding Scotland and its diverse population, which includes Pagans.

PAGANISM

As part of a multi-faith Scotland, Paganism is but one thread in our diverse society and it contributes to this diverse society through engagement with civic society and interfaith involvement. According to the 2011 census, the number of people who identified as Pagan was 5194. In comparison, the number of people who identified as members of the Jewish faith was 5887 and Sikhs numbered 9055. The latter religious faiths are already included within RME. However, it is not – and cannot be – merely a matter of numbers. A consideration of the position of Pagans in Scottish society should illustrate further why Paganism ought to be part of the school curriculum. Perhaps the best way to start is by explaining briefly what Paganism is.

Paganism is an umbrella term which encompasses a system of beliefs in spiritual paths that are rooted in ancient nature religions. Within Scotland, each Pagan follows his / her own spiritual journey. Nearly all Pagans have common values and beliefs; which are exemplified in the Three Principles of the Scottish Pagan Federation:

> i. "Love for and Kinship with Nature. Reverence for the life force and its ever-renewing cycles of life and death."

ii. "A positive morality, in which the individual is responsible for the discovery and development of their true nature in harmony with the outer world and community. This is often expressed as 'Do what you will, as long as it harms none.'"

iii. "Recognition of the Divine, which transcends gender, acknowledging both the female and male aspect of Deity."[20]

Not all Pagans in Scotland are members of the Scottish Pagan Federation, but for those who are, these are the basic principles of faith they agree to when joining.

GOLDEN RULE OF INTERFAITH

The above Principles dovetail with the Golden Rule of Interfaith.[21] The Scottish Pagan Federation has been very involved with Interfaith Scotland for many years, with Pagans being active members of local interfaith groups. The Scottish Pagan Federation has been a member of Interfaith Scotland's Council since February, 2013 and has contributed extensively to the work of Interfaith Scotland, including contributions to such publications as *Values in Harmony: The Promotion of Good Community Relations Described by 11 Religions and Beliefs in Scotland; A Guide to Faith Communities in Scotland and Reflections of Life*.[22]

Interfaith Scotland has a schools' outreach programme, based on the Scottish Government's *Belief in Dialogue: Religion and Belief in Scotland Good Practice Guide* (ibid.). This outreach programme, developed by Dr. Maureen Sier, Director of Interfaith Scotland, consists of a series of workshops and role-play scenarios which encourages pupils to explore their own beliefs, their assumptions and their existing knowledge of their peers in a way that is both fun and enlightening. Pupils are encouraged to use the tools of dialogue to resolve conflict and to explore differences, tolerance and common ground. Pupils who have taken part in these workshops are unfailingly positive about them and understand, even if unarticulated, the meaning of *One Scotland, Many Voices*.

Dr Sier's programme developed from an interfaith project which was initially piloted with three schools in Moray, in the north of Scotland: Gordonstoun, Elgin Academy and Lossiemouth High School. Pupils from each school joined together to explore the principles of conflict resolution through dialogue. The aims of this joint project were as follows:

To enable the development of effective citizenship in the context of modern Scotland.

To holistically explore citizenship, ethics and spirituality through intercultural dialogue.

To explore Interfaith Dialogue and multicultural Scotland.

> To equip participants with the skills and tools of intercultural dialogue: enabling young people to speak and listen without judgement.[23]

Pupil feedback was positive. The success of this project – and the schools' outreach project which developed from it – is one model of positive interfaith dialogue that fully embraces and underpins the pedagogy of the RME curriculum. The project also enabled pupils to understand that Religious and Moral Education encompasses learning about all faiths and none and learning to respect – if not necessarily agree with – the faith and belief choices of others. The schools' project was inclusive and Paganism was just another part of the faith and beliefs aspects of the pupils' explorations. That is not to say that those pupils were previously acquainted with Paganism – the majority were not. However, what they did learn about Pagans was another weave in their recognition of the diverse tapestry that makes up modern Scotland.[24]

INCLUSIVE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

What is meant by Pagan recognition in modern Scotland? One answer to that question is equality and inclusion in all aspects of civic life, as discussed above. Indeed, Paganism's involvement in both civic life and Interfaith Scotland is evident in the publications produced by Interfaith Scotland, where Pagan faith perspectives are included as a matter of course, giving a genuinely multi-faith view of modern Scotland. Interfaith Scotland's inclusive practice is a laudable model of good interfaith relations in a country. Furthermore, all publications and resources from Interfaith Scotland are on their website.[25]

Civic involvement, inclusion and equality means Paganism has the same rights and responsibilities as other faith groups. Pagans in Scotland have been able to marry in legal religious ceremonies since 2004. The legalities in conducting Pagan religious marriages are the same as for those of other faith groups. Therefore, Paganism is recognised within Scotland and as such, surely it ought to be included as a matter of course in non-denominational schools.

Indeed, some schools already have a teaching unit about Paganism in place, which allows their pupils to explore the basics of the faith on par with others studied. Lossiemouth High School and Elgin Academy are good examples of this inclusive practice. There is a six-lesson unit, *An Introduction to Paganism*, available for teachers who may be a little uncertain where to begin with what may be an unfamiliar topic, which can be obtained from the Scottish Pagan Federation.[26]

Slumko Tsotsi, the Principal Teacher of RME at Elgin Academy, has used the *Introduction to Paganism* unit many times. He reports that pupils are both interested in and engage with the materials, which leads to vibrant discussion and extended learning in his classes. Steve Toner, who holds the same position at Lossiemouth High School, also reports that pupils are interested in what they learn about Paganism – it is very different from what they imagined it to be, given the diet of fiction served up by literature and Hollywood. Both teachers report that – in their opinion – the development of pupils' higher order thinking skills, such as

analysis, interpretation and evaluation are enhanced by the addition of these materials. Arguably, both the aims of the Toledo Principles and the Four Capacities of CfE are being met in using these teaching materials about Paganism in the context of RME teaching.

INCLUSION OF PAGANISM IN RME

A further need for the inclusion of Paganism within RME is the number of children from Pagan families now in the school system. Several years ago, this perhaps would have been a personal matter and not spoken about in school. However, this is no longer the case and many people are open about their faith. But this does not mean that we are living in a perfect system and that there are no problems integrating Pagan pupils into schools as a matter of course. The Youth Officer for the Scottish Pagan Federation has dealt with many, many enquiries over the years from parents querying the level of inclusion they should expect from schools. Such matters are generally amicably resolved in discussion with individual schools, but occasionally, an issue occurs that leaves people scratching their heads at the confusion in practise between Government policy and the civil service tasked with carrying out such policies.

For example, there should not be a problem with including a Pagan tick box with the religion question on non-denominations schools' admissions forms. It really ought to be as simple as acknowledging Pagan children within the schools' system and their different foci of celebration for festivals such as Christmas, Hallowe'en and so on. However, the problem occurs when the option of 'Pagan' is not included in the options on schools admission forms and parents are not happy at the omission. This seems a most peculiar oversight, given the status of Paganism within civic society in Scotland and it does nothing to meet the aim outlined in Principles and Practise to *sensitively take account of and value the religious and cultural diversity within their own local communities, using relevant contexts which are familiar to young people*.[27] If the question about religious diversity is not inclusive of Paganism, then it is difficult to see how a local education authority can be confident it is indeed taking account of the diversity within its local community.

From experience, one of the arguments against the inclusion of Paganism in schools' admissions forms is something along the lines of: "well, if we include Paganism, we need to include X, Y and Z and where does it all stop?" The counter to this is to question the criteria for those religions already included – and that tends to be those religions recognised by the Scottish Government. Given that the Scottish Government also recognises Paganism; its omission on school forms makes very little sense. It would appear that there is some confused thinking at play here.

An example from one council illustrates this seemingly confused thinking. It is merely an example – this particular council is neither better nor worse than others in Scotland.

A parent registered her child with her local education department for entry to the new primary school intake. She was annoyed to find that her 'choices' in the

religion section of the form consisted of: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, None, Not Disclosed, Other, Not Known, Sikh. Not happy with being classified as 'other,' she asked the SPF for advice. She was happy for the matter to be taken higher than the school level.

The first step was a letter to her local council, whose response was not entirely unexpected:

> … The admission form does provide an option of detail (sic) any 'Other' religious affiliation that the pupil may have. That Pagan is not presented as an option should not infer any lack of inclusion. The Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity, and treating pupils of all religions or religious beliefs equally within (our) schools.[28]

'We are happy to include you but not mention you by name' is somewhat confused thinking in anyone's terms.

Further to this reply, the next step was to contact the office of the then Minister for Education, Angela Constance, who delegated the matter to her civil servants. The question asked was why there was no automatic inclusion of Paganism as a matter of course in schools admissions forms in Scotland, given both the legislation and the EHRC's *Technical Guidance for Schools*. There were two eventual replies from them, both of which were somewhat platitudinous, as per the extract below:

> The Scottish Government values and appreciates our relationships with all Scotland's faith and belief communities, and welcomes their contribution and input into our nation's civic life to enrich us all. Our aim is that Scotland should be a place where people from all backgrounds can live and raise their families in peace and where people of all faiths and beliefs can follow their religion or belief and achieve their potential.[29]

Repeating a statement of intent from the essence of legislation is not the same as ensuring that intent is carried out. There is – at present – a dichotomy between principle and practice and it depends on whom one asks to resolve it as to whether that confusion is resolved or not. This is neither in the spirit of *One Scotland* nor Equalities legislation and it is in matters like these that Pagans feel there is room for improvement.

CHALLENGES FOR ONE SCOTLAND, MANY VOICES

Scotland has much to be proud of: Interfaith Scotland is a vibrant, effective, respected and active institution and, within its education system, both RME curriculums work in the context of the targeted groups. The Roman Catholic RME curriculum serves the needs of Catholics within Scotland whilst still exploring other faiths. However, the non-denominational curriculum probably has the greater capacity to develop the intentions of *One Scotland, Many Voices* and become a more representative approach to RME within schools; one which truly reflects the multi-faith nature of our country and society.

This then, is RME in the context of modern, multi-faith Scotland. We aim to be a welcoming, inclusive country. We even put those aims as our values on the most important symbol of our Government: Wisdom, Integrity, Justice, and Compassion. These values underpin our Curriculum for Excellence. We want our children to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. The role of RME in achieving these aims for pupils is not to be underestimated. Understanding the context of the past is important in knowing where we have come from. Understanding our present is to understand the multi-faith and interfaith nature of the present day. Where we are going is a journey yet to be taken but the vision for the Scotland of the future is inclusive. Scotland is in the process of achieving this inclusive vision, both in schools and in wider society.
Pagans are part of the fabric of modern Scotland. This is why Paganism should be formally included within the context of RME in non-denominational Scottish schools.

NOTES

1 http://sces.org.uk/approval/
2 http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00424891.pdf
3 http://www.history.com/topics/idi-amin
4 http://www.lismoregaelicheritagecentre.org/launch-of-carmichael-online-database/
5 http://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/research/current-projects/william-sharp-fiona-macleod-archive/william-sharp-fiona-macleod-archive
6 http://www.academia.edu/448782/From_Paganism_to_Christianity
7 http://www.daillyparish.co.uk/#!blank/doqes
8 http://www.parliament.scot/EducationandCommunityPartnershipsresources/SP_Timeline_English.pdf
9 http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Justice/policies/human-rights
10 http://www.gov.scot/resource/0046/00464455.pdf
11 http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED558112.pdf
12 https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/technical-guidance-schools-scotland
13 http://www.osce.org/odihr/29154?download=true
14 http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/rme_experiences_outcomes_tcm4-539887.pdf
15 http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/rerc_experiences_outcomes_tcm4-539884.pdf
16 http://sces.org.uk/this-is-our-faith/
17 https://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/rme_principles_practice_tcm4-540203.pdf
18 http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Religion/RelPopMig
19 http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/learningacrossthecurriculum/themesacrosslearning/globalcitizenship/internationaleducation/index.asp
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22 http://www.interfaithscotland.org/resources/publications/
23 Moray schools interfaith initiative, McAllister (2011).
24 Further information about IS Schools' project: http://www.interfaithscotland.org/about-us/
25 http://www.interfaithscotland.org/resources/publications/
26 http://www.scottishpf.org/downloads.html
27 https://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/rme_principles_practice_tcm4-540203.pdf
28 Personal Correspondence, Local Council Education Department, May 2015.

[29] Personal Correspondence, the Scottish Government, July 31st, 2015.

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JESSICA BOUVA AND DUNCAN R. WIELZEN

16. PIONEERING INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE GAMBIA

A Pilot Module for Interreligious Education at Gambia College[1]

INTRODUCTION

In 2013 Gambia College, School of Education (GCSE) entered into a partnership with *Arkade*, a curriculum advice centre in the city of Amsterdam.[2] This relationship was established due to GCSE's request for educational assistance in incorporating interreligious education within the curriculum of its Islamic Religious Knowledge (IRK) and Christian Religious Education (CRE) divisions of the Religious Studies department. *Arkade* offered expertise in person, through one of its educational advisers who was part of a team that had designed a pilot module for interreligious education for teacher trainees, and GCSE offered a team with logistical and administrative support for the pilot module.

Prior to designing this pilot module, an explorative 'field trip' was undertaken to GCSE, in Brikama, located in the West Coast Region in The Gambia. During the field research, individual interviews were conducted with 30 respondents (10 females and 20 males),[3] amongst whom were GCSE lecturers and students, teachers from different schools, pupils, curriculum designers and representatives from both the Supreme Islamic Council[4] and the Gambian Christian Council.[5] The main aim was to discover whether there was a shared need for interreligious education and what the underlying objectives of this type of education would be. In addition, a project group was formed for consultation and monitoring of the module's design.

To understand the background and relevance of the pilot module (2014) for Gambian society, we will start with a brief description of the social context of The Gambia, and focus on religion and religious education. In the following paragraph, we will present the pilot module developed from the data that was used for its design, its theoretical framework, main features, and how it was tested and evaluated. In the final paragraph, we will draw the conclusions based on the research presented. This chapter gives a full account of the pilot module that has been designed based on the research data sampled from interviews and pedagogical studies. Because it has been conducted as a pilot, the authors regard this module as 'work-in-progress.'

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 201–214.
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SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE GAMBIA[6]

The Gambia, officially 'The Islamic Republic of The Gambia' since 2016,[7] is the smallest country in mainland Africa. It is surrounded by Senegal with a narrow Atlantic coastline at its western border. This West African country is situated at both sides of the Gambia River, from which its name is derived. The population is about 2 million with almost 60% under the age of 25 with more than half of the population living in the urban areas. About a third of the population lives below the international poverty line.[8] The country's economy is based on farming, fishing and tourism. The Gambia is promoted as 'the smiling coast of West-Africa,' and even after gaining independence from England in 1965, English has remained the official language. There are several ethnic groups in The Gambia, each with their own language, rituals and traditions. Mandinka and Wolof are two of the largest ethnic groups. Marriages occur between people from different ethnic groups as well. Thus, inter-ethnicity or ethnic diversity becomes visible from the smallest social unit throughout Gambian society.

Religion in The Gambia

Recent numbers of religious affiliations and practice in the daily lives of the people indicate that religion is an important part of Gambian daily life. About 90% of the Gambian population is Muslim with the majority adhering to Sunni laws and traditions. The remaining part of the population consists of 9% Christians – Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Pentecostal – and next to that, 1% adheres to traditional indigenous beliefs or to another philosophy of life. In recent years, a small group of followers from the Baha'i Faith and a small community of Hindus among South Asian immigrants added to the religious landscape of The Gambia.

Intermarriage between members of different ethnic and religious groups is legal and socially acceptable; it is also common between Muslims and Christians. As one participants stated in an interview "There are interreligious relationships all over Gambia. There are families where you will find Christians and Muslims in one family." Religion was always considered a stabilizing factor (Frederiks, 2017).

Among Muslims and Christians there are also those who engage in practices of Animism. This is still occurring in parts of the Foni and the Combo coastal region in The Gambia. These practices pre-date the arrival of Islam and Christianity, with some people blending or syncretising a mixture of their new religion (Islam, or Christianity) along with these practices which comes in various forms. Hence, ancestor worship continues to be part of the daily life of some Muslims and Christians.

Muslims and Christians live peacefully together in The Gambia. Their relations with one another are part of daily life, and are manifested by attending each other's wedding and burial ceremonies. Mutual respect and tolerance are also shared with people from other faiths and philosophies of life. Muslims and Christians together with representatives from the Baha'i communities, form the Inter-Faith Group for Dialogue and Peace, where they discuss matters of mutual concern such as

religious freedom, tolerance, and the need for people of different religious groups to live together in harmony. In the interviews, many people speak of living together peacefully despite religious differences in the following way:

> What we have in The Gambia is deeper then academic dialogue. It exists naturally. Life here is a great lesson to anyone who wants to be a disciple. We not look at the religion before smiling to one and other. It's the essence of life. We are both human beings. Let us go on despite what we believe. Let us collaborate, let us sing together let us cry together. We must not lose that.

There are not many religious or ethnic conflicts, but this does not mean that there are no religious or ethnic dilemmas. These are rather not discussed openly. Monogamy versus polygamy, female genital mutilation, prophet versus messiah and the question of whether Allah is the same as the Christian God are some of these dilemmas. Furthermore, the tolerance that exists between people from various religious groups is not always demonstrated towards atheists or agnostics. Even though freedom of religious expression is enshrined in the constitution, some high-ranking officials have cautioned people about freely expressing their identity. Others were penalized for religious practices that deviate from the prescribed norm.[9]

The country has an Islamic Council and a Christian Council, both having their influence on religious practices in Gambian society. These Councils advise on religious practices held in mosques or churches, and have an active role during religious feasts and interreligious prayers. Both Councils do not support religious groups which are not open to mingling with people from other religious groups in Gambian society or who try to coerce people into one belief or one way of thinking. They are strongly against communities which are open to use violence to others in name of religion. Through immigration and the rise of resources such as social media there is a fear that such communities or individuals will increase in Gambian society. Both Councils struggle with the challenge to maintain a balance between respecting the freedom of religious expression as enshrined within the constitution and groups who hold radicalized views that are 'religiously' motivated or inspired.

Before describing the pilot module that was designed, we will first focus on the current field of religious education at schools in The Gambia. The educational context determines the choices, content and strategy therefore.

Religious Education at Primary and Secondary Schools in The Gambia

Gambian law requires that all schools (except international schools) provide religious education in line with pupils' religions. The Supreme Islamic Council, *Amana*, and the Gambian Christian Council play an important role in shaping their respective religious education in schools throughout the country, with the support of the Curriculum Development Department of the Ministry of Education. The government can provide teachers of religious studies to private schools if necessary. These private schools comprise both Christian primary schools with

English as the language of instruction and Islamic schools with Arabic as the main language of instruction, commonly referred to as *Madrassas*.

Public and private Christian schools have a mixture of Christian and Islamic pupils and teachers whereas *Madrassa* schools have a Muslim population. All government (public) and private schools have mandatory religious education. As part of the curriculum the pupils join a religious education class taught by the appointed teacher during school hours at least once a week. Christian pupils are taught by their CRE teacher whereas Islamic students attend the IRK class. The manner of teaching equates to 'learning a particular religion' which means that pupils are educated and socialized into either Christianity or Islam. Factual evidence demonstrates that IRK predominates in the curriculum of *Madrassas* at the expense of non-religious subjects, such as mathematics and history. Research commissioned by UNESCO and undertaken by an ERNWACA (Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa) cross-national research team attributes this to the notion that IRK is central to the needs and wellbeing of both learners and the broader society (Moussa & Benett, 2007).

Religious Education at GCSE

Most teachers in The Gambia receive their training at GCSE, since it is the only teacher training college in the country. Teacher trainees who specialize in Islamic Religious Studies follow the IRK curriculum that prepares for a teaching position at either public schools or *Madrassas*. Students who opt for teaching at *Madrassas* follow a training program with mostly Arabic as the language of instruction. The CRE students on the other hand, follow their own CRE curriculum where English is the language of instruction. They eventually become religious education teachers in either public schools or private Christian schools.

The request for a module for interreligious education came from lecturers of the Religious Studies department, together with the head of GCSE. It was prompted by the need to improve the quality of education, and in line with one of GCSE's mission objectives, i.e. to "conduct research and develop curricula necessary for quality, relevant and accessible education in accordance with Gambia's education policies."[10]

A group of lecturers together with the head of GCSE also clearly opined the need to abandon the didactical transfer model of teaching in favour of a constructivist learner-centred model. Lecturers from both the Islamic and Christian division of the Religious Studies department presumed that a module for interreligious education would benefit students, GCSE itself and Gambian society at large, in terms of its socio-economic development. In addition, some GCSE lecturers opined that interreligious education could form a counterforce to religious groups or individuals who are intolerant towards people with other views and thoughts.

A PILOT MODULE FOR INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT GCSE

The pilot module at GCSE is designed from data input gathered through semi-structured interviews, a validating meeting and the consulted literature (e.g., Grimmitt, 1987; Jackson, 1997, 2004, 2009; Jackson & Steel, 2004; Sterkens & Hermans, 2002; UNESCO, 1999-2001). Interviews were conducted among students, teacher-trainees and GCSE personnel. In this paragraph, we first present some of the data from the interviews. In a second step, we will describe the theoretical framework of the module. We will then proceed with presenting the main features of the module. And finally, we discuss the findings of both GCSE students and educators when the module was tested.

Data from Interviews

The interview questions focused on four subjects: religion in Gambian society, education in The Gambia, religious education in The Gambia and interreligious education in The Gambia. The interviewees mentioned 'moral awareness' as the main aim of religious education. By that they meant "to know right from wrong, to be a good person and know how to live with others in society." In addition, they mentioned "knowledge about one's own religion" and "the 'truth' and practice of daily religious duties." They considered these as important issues for religious education at primary and secondary schools.

Most of those interviewed mentioned: interaction with others in society, bringing people together, being able to be in a peaceful relationship, understand, respect and tolerate each other, as the main aims for interreligious education. These findings contributed to the formulation of the overall aim of the pilot module for interreligious education at GCSE, which reads: "The module contributes to the peaceful and harmonious way of religious living in The Gambia. In this way, we of Gambia College, School of Education, want to contribute to interreligious communication and to a better understanding between people in our world. We believe this will benefit the children of the (sic) Gambia." This aim corresponds with UNESCO's Interreligious Dialogue Programme that seeks "to promote peaceful contact between peoples and facilitate dialogue between the various religions, spiritual traditions and humanistic trends" (UNESCO, 1999-2001, p. 2).

Furthermore, the interview results indicate an emphasis on interreligious education that implied strengthening the interaction and mutual respect and tolerance with others in Gambian society.[11] Therefore, the two main religions in Gambian society, Islam and Christianity – even though the latter is the religion of a minority – receive much attention in the module's content. All the collected data from the interviews were written out for critical assessment and presented to a validating group. Participants from the validating group later suggested including lessons on Judaism into the module's content, to complete the Abrahamic religions.

The interview data also reveals concerns about the meaning of interreligious education. As one of the interviewees exclaimed: "What I am afraid of is this: maybe Christian parents will not accept that their children are educated about

Islam, because of fear that they may eventually be converted. And the Muslim also would be afraid of something like that." A small portion of interviewees perceived of interreligious education as undermining the aims of socializing into one's own religion. As one interviewee stated: "Learning about other religions could lead to confusion or to conversion."

Another concern expressed in the interviews was "fear for conflicts when discussing differences related to religions." This concern fueled the need to include lessons within the module for learning dialogical skills. Even though on a practical level people of different religions live peacefully together in The Gambia, as have been pointed out frequently during the interviews, discussing religious differences remains a challenge. Hence, the module also focuses on dialogical skills. The underlying thought being that interreligious education requires learning skills for practicing interreligious dialogue.[12]

To demonstrate the close relation between interreligious education and interreligious dialogue the module uses the following working definition: "Interreligious education is education where the focus is on interaction between different religious groups and sects. Teaching about religion and teaching from religion are approaches being used. Dialogical skills and attitudes toward those with another religion are important in interreligious education." The module's designers took serious note of the fear expressed that conflicts may ensue from attempts in interreligious dialogue that concern religious differences. Therefore, the module was introduced in the training program of the Higher Teacher Competence (HTC) instead of the Lower Teacher Competence (LTC).[13] By teaching dialogical skills students learn to overcome fear and build trust (Lähnemann, 2015). They learn to accept diversity, difference and change, through regular encounters with different viewpoints, understandings and ideas. This approach to dialogue also fosters an attitude of receptiveness and responding in a positive way to religious differences. Therefore, it seeks to stimulate discussion and debate (Jackson, 2014, pp. 42-43), with the ultimate goal to gain better appreciation of religious difference among students.

After analyzing the data, the following goals for the module on interreligious learning were identified:

- providing students with knowledge about the Abrahamic religions;
- acquainting students with the concepts of interreligious education and interreligious dialogue;
- teaching students skills for dialogue;
- enabling students to practice interreligious dialogue.

But the main objective of interreligious education for GSCE, however, is to contribute to interreligious communication in The Gambia so that peace and a harmonious way of living between its citizens continues. Interreligious communication is also important to counter intolerance, a concern that was frequently expressed during the interviews.

Theoretical Framework

Grimmitt's (1987) three models for teaching religious education form the base of the module's theoretical framework. These models became famous for analysing approaches to religious education.

The first model – i.e., educating *into* religion – corresponds with a confessional approach.[14] Students are taught the fundamentals of their own religion, and as such are 'initiated' into the history, beliefs and practices of that religion. The teacher is a member of the religion that is taught and has first-hand experience and knowledge of that religion.

The second model – i.e., educating *about* religion – diverges from the first, since the immediate goal is not 'initiation' but acquaintance with one or more religions. The teacher is not necessarily affiliated with the religion or any of the religions taught. This approach resembles the Religious Studies approach where students acquire knowledge about beliefs, values and practices of one or more religions, without necessarily committing to any of these.

The third model – i.e., educating *from* religion – diverges from the first two in so far that teaching occurs with the students as starting point. Their background and experiences form the frame of reference and starting point for learning. Thus, it is a 'learner-centred' approach. This approach to religious education enables students to construct their own moral and religious identity and to develop their own views on moral and religious issues. As such this approach is more akin to constructivist approaches in religious education (Twoli et al., 2007).

GCSE's quest for interreligious education is dovetailed with a shift from a teacher-centred approach to a leaner-centred approach. Brown Wright (2011) reports on successful innovations used by college teachers across the academic and professional spectrum that are committed to foster a learner-centred approach in education. These teachers believe that a student-centred classroom provides a more effective learning environment.

For Sterkens and Hermans (2002) the first condition of interreligious education is to have knowledge of one's own religious tradition and that of at least one other religious tradition. In addition, one should have a strong positive engagement with one's own religion and at the same time be open to another religion. This openness toward another religion, together with the ability to both respect and question this other religion can enhance mutual understanding between students from different religious traditions.

Jackson (1997, 2004, 2009) developed the Interpretive Approach by which students follow an integrated learning process that constitutes both understanding and knowledge, and reflection and constructive criticism. This approach "aims to provide methods for developing understanding of different religious traditions … [and] to increase knowledge and understanding and … takes account of the diversity that exists within religions, as well as between them" (Jackson 2009, p. 1). An essential aspect of this approach is that "religious traditions should be presented, not as homogeneous and bounded systems, but in ways that recognise diversity within religions and the uniqueness of each member, as well as the fact

that each person is subject to various influences" (ibid.). Since GCSE "want[s] to contribute to interreligious communication and to a better understanding between people in our world," as expressed in the module's description, the Interpretive Approach stands at the heart of the module. It employs the method of dialogue to create awareness, mutual appreciating and understanding amongst students from different religious and non-religious background.

The dialogical approach stands on equal footing with the Interpretative Approach in facilitating interreligious education. Jackson & Steel (2004) opine that dialogical approaches focus on the interaction among pupils in a classroom setting and, like the Interpretive Approach, give agency to pupils. These approaches take students as the starting points and key resources for knowledge construction. Students are the main actors. Hence, these approaches facilitate learner centred methods in interreligious education. Moreover, the dialogical approach requires the development of positive attitudes and skills so that real learning can occur both in and beyond the classroom. Among these attitudes, listed by Jackson (2014), are:

– respect for the right of a person to hold a particular religious or non-religious viewpoint;
– valuing religious and cultural diversity;
– openness to learning about different religions;
– willingness to suspend judgment. (p. 44)

And among the skills are the following:

– ability to evaluate different religious/non-religious perspectives, including one's own;
– awareness of one's own prejudices and judgement;
– listening to people from other religions/religious groups;
– interacting with people from other religions/religious groups;
– empathy. (Jackson 2014, p. 44)

The module creates space and opportunities for students to develop these attitudes and to practice these skills.

Main Features of the Module

The module is part of the IRK and CRE curriculum. As such, the module focuses on Islam and Christianity as they are the main religions in The Gambia. Information of Judaism has also been added to complete the Abrahamic religions.

In the module, interreligious education is described as "education where the focus is on interaction between people of different religious groups and sects. For that reason, dialogue is an important feature of the module." The module emphasizes on teaching students the dialogical skills necessary for engaging in interreligious dialogue. It uses therefore the 'dialogue hand,' a technique to promote both students and teachers' ability to listen to each other in an active way, to respect each other, to ask questions for gaining deeper understanding, to postpone judgement, and to share one's own opinion. Each of these five qualities

are represented by one finger on the drawing of the 'dialogue hand.' This dialogue technique is promoted by Kwintessens, a Dutch publisher specialized in education material for primary education concerning social-emotional learning and life orientations. The module further employs different dialogue tools such as:

– dialogue circles, a process that allows collective learning to take place and often results in a sense of increased harmony, fellowship and creativity;[15]
– stories from religions, i.e. from Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

To help students add new knowledge to existing knowledge the module also focuses on a learner-centred approach for the HTC classes. Hence, the module objectives have been formulated in line with the following educational targets students would acquire upon completion of the course:

– have basic knowledge about Islam, Christianity and Judaism;
– be able to use dialogical skills;
– be able to lead an interreligious dialogue;
– be able to live in harmony and tolerance with religious others.

The module comprises 12 lessons, divided as follows: lesson 1 – Introduction of Interreligious Education; lesson 2 – Dialogue; lessons 3-9 – Judaism, Christianity and Islam; lessons 10 – Interreligious dialogue: personal beliefs; lesson 11 – Interreligious dialogue: scripture; lesson 12 – Interreligious dialogue: Religious topic in The Gambia. These 12 lessons cover the following components:

– basic knowledge of Islam;
– basic knowledge of Christianity;
– basic knowledge of Judaism;
– skills of interreligious dialogue;
– skills of leading a dialogue;
– theory and skills of learner-centred approach;
– theories and skills on religious and interreligious teaching.

Students are examined on the content of the lessons. Successful completion of the module on Interreligious Education should render mastery over the module's objectives.

To summarize, the main features of the module are related to knowledge about the Abrahamic religions, interreligious education and dialogue, dialogical skills, and the practice of interreligious dialogue.

Testing and Evaluation of the Module

With a designed written module, some elements of it were tested in short pilot classes, to assess students' reactions afterwards. In these pilot classes, students were taught about Christianity and Islam by the CRE and IRK lecturers. Both lecturers taught about, e.g., the subject of prayer. In another class students had a dialogue about prayer. The term interreligious dialogue was introduced as 'a cooperative and constructive interaction between two or more people of different religions or philosophies of life.' By means of conversation about religious education, interreligious education and dialogue students formed a shared vision on interreligious education and agreed upon a customized definition and conditions

for dialogue. Among these conditions are: listening in an active way, respecting each other by letting the other person finish his or her sentences and by taking each other serious, asking question for a deeper understanding, postponing one's own judgement, to truly listen to what the other has to say and sharing one's own beliefs so the other can learn from and connect with another.[16] At the end of every class there was reflection and feedback from students and lecturers. Students requested certain subjects and texts to be the subject of dialogue. Therefore, in one pilot class information about Buddhism and a Buddhist text were added as a dialogue partner.

After overcoming their first fears[17] students were enthusiastic about their own contribution to the pilot class which involved taking their views on dialogue as a starting point for reflection, and the ensued interaction while practicing dialogue. They felt eager to learn from each other and from/about different worldviews. They wanted to know more and felt strong enough within their own religion to talk about their own beliefs. At the evaluation after the pilot classes it was mentioned that students made new friends from another religion.

Facilitators of GCSE also evaluated the pilot positive:

> To the surprise of the facilitators, the students continued after the classes and requested for more sessions to continue learning from and about their different religions. The students evaluated the interreligious dialogue in the following way: "It is very important. It will promote peace, harmony and unity in the country." It also gave both students and facilitators another opportunity to come to appreciate each other and their respective positions on religious understanding and notions. This might create a peaceful environment where religion is not seen as an obstacle to peace. It is also understood that like with any other course resources are important especially, human and financial resources. The introduction of this module to teachers in training is envisaged to be a step in the right direction if fully implemented, since respect, understanding and objectivity are key words of this module.[18]

Although both students and facilitators evaluated the pilot elements positively it still appears hard to find a structural way to implement the module. After the pilot module was tested it was reported that somehow GCSE did not fully succeed to incorporate it into its curriculum in a sustained way, despite the urge both students and lecturers felt and their expressed wish for such a module in education, which in their opinion would benefit Gambian society at large. This predicament left one GCSE official to utter: "The home, religious leaders, teachers and society at large should come in action. The interreligious dialogue can already start before the module. The dialogue which is already there can be increased, can be built on." In addition, minimal involvement of staff personnel from the Religious Studies department, in combination with time constraints stood in the way of a structural implementation of the module.

Moreover, the difficulty to implement the module effectively concerns a problem that exists on a larger scale. Such is stated in a report of the King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) which says: "As in other regions of the world, while high-

level initiatives and policy documents for interreligious and intercultural understanding currently exist in Africa, they are not sufficiently implemented and adapted to a diversity of national contexts." The KAICIID report notes as one of the reasons "a lack of follow up, primarily due to weak commitment at a national level" (KAICIID, 2013, p. 5). The problem with implementation, however, remains a challenge GCSE will have to address in the near future.

IN CONCLUSION

Introducing a module for interreligious education into the curriculum of GCSE has been a landmark. This pioneering effort was well received, but also has its teething problems. The module still has room for improvements, additions and adaptations. It concentrates on the Abrahamic religions, but there are also people with other (secular) worldviews living in The Gambia. The question therefore is how a module for interreligious education can include these other worldviews in its content if it wants to contribute "to the peaceful and harmonious way of religious living in The Gambia … [and] to a better understanding between people." How does it prepare students to engage in dialogue with others who have non-religious convictions such as atheists and humanists? Based on the positive feedback from students, and their eagerness to learn, one can conclude that there is certainly room to include the study of religions, together with non-religious worldviews (Jackson 2014, 2016). This is certainly relevant for Gambian society since people with non-religious convictions who form minority groups also deserve the freedom to exercise their democratic rights as stipulated by the constitution.

The interview data reveal a genuine wish for maintaining peaceful and harmonious relations between people of different religions in The Gambia. The interview data frequently mention concerns about groups or individuals who hold radical religious views, or who are intolerant towards other people with different views and ideas. Both religious Councils of the country also caution against people and communities prone to use violence against others in the name of 'religion.' There is a shared and common view that religious conflicts as occurred in other West African countries (e.g., Ivory Coast and Nigeria) must be prevented at all costs. By introducing a module for interreligious education GCSE wants to play its part in this endeavour. Such a module enables students to learn about and from other religions, and learn dialogical skills to engage in interreligious dialogue, e.g., through interaction. The underlying thought hereby is that by gaining knowledge of other religions students acquire a better understanding of these religions, which in turn contributes to maintaining peaceful and harmonious relations. But gaining knowledge does not necessarily lead to better understanding. In other words, better understanding cannot be achieved solely by transferring knowledge. Therefore, an open attitude and stimulating the affective components of students' characters are required. Hence, attitudes that promote interreligious dialogue, such as empathy, valuing religious diversity and respecting the other's personal integrity must receive due attention in any module for interreligious education.

Moreover, the module presents dialogue in a monolithic way, rather than distinguishing its various levels or forms, such as: the dialogue of life (of being; the existential level), dialogue through action (by doing and working together), dialogue as theological exchange (rational thinking level) and the dialogue that involves sharing religious experiences (reflecting one's own experience of the divine).[19] All these constitutes various dimensions of people's lives (Michel, 2003). By enlarging the spectrum for dialogue, students can also practice their skills outside the classroom context, thus adding to its social relevance.

The module for interreligious education emphasizes a learner-centred approach. Education at GCSE however, has from the beginning been steeped into a teacher-centred approach. That implies that teachers must also be trained properly to 'comply with the rules' of a learner-centred approach. In her literature review study Brown Wright (2011, pp. 93-94) points out the importance of teachers moving "from the 'sage on the stage' to the 'guide on the side,'" thereby fulfilling metaphorical roles as "midwife, coach, and maestro" to fostering a learner-centred class climate. Unless lecturers and teachers are trained and become competent in fulfilling these roles, any module that promotes learner-centred methods will remain short-lived, irrespective of students' enthusiastic responses.

It is our contention that implementing a module for interreligious education in a sustained way requires maximal effort from all actors of the school organisation. It requires co-ordination, integration and a long-term commitment. This pioneering study is just the beginning. To move forward, ongoing evaluation and research is needed. Gambian social context will require the type of religious education at all levels, including primary level, for it to connect to the peoples' desire for a peaceful and harmonious society. Research by Ipgrave (2009), for example, demonstrates that children are capable to construct their own religious meanings and identity from complex theological questions vis-à-vis religious plural contexts. But how does this apply to Gambian society? GCSE has started with introducing a module for interreligious education at HTC, but that can also be expanded to the entire curriculum including that of LTC. However, one should be aware that the specific context of The Gambia will require necessary adaptations in religious education. GCSE has taken an enormous task upon itself.

NOTES

[1] We are very appreciative toward Ms. Carola Goodwin, who was so kind to proofread this text.

[2] *Arkade* is a curriculum advice centre that is also specialized in training and coaching teachers and principals on school identity and religious education. For *Arkade*, religious education includes citizenship education, education focused on religion and philosophy of life, and moral education. *Arkade* promotes education that supports children in their religious identity development (becoming who they are) and the development of their own philosophy of life, especially in, but not limited to social contexts of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

[3] In The Gambia, the majority of teachers working in religious education consists of men.

[4] The Supreme Islamic Council is the Gambian government advisory body on (Islamic) religious issues. It acts independently but receives substantial funding from the government. Even though

there are no government representatives, the country's president serves as the minister of religious affairs and maintains a formal relationship with this council.

[5] Gambia Christian Council comprises representatives of the following three denominations: Anglican, Catholic, and Methodist.

[6] The information for this paragraph comes from the following: 'The World Factbook.' Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ga.html on January 2nd, 2017; and 'Gambia Information Site.' Also retrieved on June 2nd, 2017 from http://www.accessgambia.com/information/

[7] In January 2017 'the current head of State Adama Barrow issued a statement with immediate effect, that The Gambia will cease to be an Islamic state.' However, the fact that 'neither the Gambia Christian Council nor the Barrow government have as yet commented on the harassment of the Ahmadi community makes one wonder to what extent the secularity of the state will be Enforced and the rights of less powerful religious minority groups will be ensured' ('The price of Interreligious co-esistence in The Gambia,' Martha Frederiks, presentation at symposium, June 2nd, 2017).

[8] http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/GMB

[9] An incident concerning the Ndigal community is reported in the International Religious Freedom Report for 2013, United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Retrieved from https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222265.pdf on January 2nd, 2017.

[10] Nr. 2 from GCSE's Mission. Retrieved from www.gambiacollege.edu.gm/vision.php on January 2, 2017.

[11] These research findings correspond with findings emerging from an analysis of an 'international survey on education and teaching of intercultural and interreligious dialogue,' conducted by UNESCO Interreligious Dialogue Program, worldwide. The analysis of responses to this survey shows overwhelming support and acknowledgement among respondents for the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

> They largely support the idea of education and training, for these dialogues will result in cooperation at several levels of society, in which family and the educational system play a privileged role. (UNESCO, 1999-2001, p. 20)

[12] We must note here that apart from the cognitive aspects, the affective and attitudinal aspects are of equal importance in interreligious education and dialogue.

[13] The underlying thought here is that teacher trainees can apply what they have learned to the classroom of their internship (secondary education) and after they finish their studies. At primary level, religious education is more in line with socializing pupils into their own religion. This partly follows Sterkens & Hermans' (2002) thinking that one ought to have a strong connection with his or her own religion as a condition for interreligious dialogue. Both interviewees and the validating group assumed that children in secondary education already have a strong bond with their own religion. Hence, the project group at GCSE choose to integrate the module at HTC which prepares teacher trainees for secondary education, whereas LTC does the same for primary education.

[14] Religious education in The Gambia uses most of the time the didactical approach of teaching *into* religion. That is why Muslims are taking part in the IRK classes and Christians in the CRE classes.

[15] A dialogue circle is an ancient method, found in the traditions of most cultures to promote openness and build community. In modern educational contexts, it is used, among others, to support classroom management.

[16] These dialogical skills are used in a Dutch method of citizenship education *Geloof in de buurt* ([Have] faith in the neighbourhood) for primary schools. It teaches children to engage in dialogue in a respectful manner.

[17] In a first class with HTC 2 the students were asking if this class was to convert one another. At the end of the class the students reported that their initial fear had disappeared.

[18] The project group wrote an evaluation article, Interreligious classes at Gambia College, meant to be published in a newspaper. The article is written by I. Ndow, head of GCSE, B. Mange, reverend and lecturer CRE, Y. Fatty, lecturer IRK and J. Bouva, educational supervisor from *Arkade*.

[19] Lecturers from both IRK and CRE divisions have substantial experience with the dialogue of life and thus can easily facilitate their students in this regard.

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MADHURI DOERGA, SANDRA DE RUITER AND INA TER AVEST

17. INTERFAITH EDUCATION 'UNDER CONSTRUCTION'

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we present two case studies of concrete classroom situations from two different teachers' practices of interfaith education in public school in the Netherlands. We start with the history of religious education in the Dutch society, focusing on religious education in public primary schools. In the second paragraph two case studies are presented (2a and 2b), one of Christian religious education and one of Hindu religious education in a public primary school. A reflection on the 'practical wisdom' developed in these case studies is given in the third paragraph, together with recommendations for the future of religious education in the first place in the Dutch plural society – and in the second place as a modest contribution from the grassroots to the wider discourse on interfaith education.

THE DUTCH CONTEXT: RELIGION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Religion in education went 'without saying' in the nineteenth century. The position of religion was concretized in the teaching of Christian ethics and in RE classes. The churches were responsible for the content of these classes (Ter Avest et al., 2007, pp. 203 ff). The Education Act of 1806 on primary education 'expected that all pupils should be educated in "all social and Christian virtues."' From the beginning of the educational system in the Netherlands there is no institutional relation between church and state, but there is a solid connection between religion and education. However, around 1830 according to some parents and teachers this way of including Christian religion in education did not meet their expectations of socializing their children in the Christian tradition and develop in true believers. Groups of parents and teachers started their own private Christian schools (ibid., p. 204 ff.). This resulted in a clash between state schools and private Christian schools (the 'School Controversy'). This clash ended with the Pacification Act in 1917, giving equal rights to public and private Christian schools, and from 1920 equal financial support, and by consequence, control by the Inspectorate of Education, to public schools and Christian (Protestant and Roman Catholic) schools. This act is in line with the Constitution of 1814, articulating the 'continuous concern' of the Government for education. The distinction of public and denomination schools in the Netherlands is known as the 'pillarized educational system.'

Although there is no institutional relationship with churches, religion still does play a role in denominational Christian schools, be it in different ways due to

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 215–224.
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secularization, individualization and pluralization. Public schools have to organize these classes whenever parents require so. It is remarkable that churches are responsible for RE classes in public schools. In 1945 the church related organization for religious education in schools (*InterKerkelijk Overleg in Schoolzaken*; IKOS) was founded, and chaired by the pedagogue Philip Kohnstamm. According to prof. Kohnstamm's opinion, worded in this document, religion was a pivotal dimension of children's identity development. Local IKOS-sections organized religious classes in public schools. These organizations were also concerned about the professionalization of teachers. In 1989 a national IKOS-association was founded. From 2009 onwards churches began working together in the Centre for the Facilitation of Religious and Worldview Education (*Dienstencentrum* GVO/HVO[1]). All teachers, irrespective of their personal (Christian or humanistic) worldview, are united in this *Dienstencentrum*.

On behalf of Islamic schools *Stichting Platform van Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond* (SPIOR, Foundation Platform of Islamic Organizations in Rijnmond), is responsible for the organization of teaching and learning Islam and for the professionalization of teachers thereof.

A collaborative relationship is established between the *Dienstencentrum* and *Stichting Hindoe Raad Nederland* (Foundation Hindu Council Netherlands) for Hindu religious education.``

Teachers of Christian religious classes, Humanistic worldview classes and Islamic classes met each other sometimes in team meetings and in informal ways in public schools. From these meetings questions arose like: "Can a teacher with a Christian background teach Islam?," and the other way around: "Can a teacher with an Islamic background teach Christianity?" For some teachers, it went without saying that the only real expert in, for example Christianity, is the one who belongs to a Christian religious community. And in a similar way this was thought to be true for Islam and the other world religions. Others, however, believed that if Muslim children would only be taught by a Muslim teacher, and Christian children by a Christian teacher, these youngsters would never learn about the meaning of other religions and worldviews, different from the one they are socialized in and taught about. For some religion/worldview teachers teaching children about religion(s), (secular) worldviews and philosophies of life, other than their own, was essential for the children's development of an own authentic worldview. These contrasting positions ensued into debates in the *Dienstencentrum*, resulting in 2010 in the publication of a document stating the competencies for teachers of religion(s) in public schools (*Competente vakdocenten GVO en HVO voor de openbare basisschool* – Competent teachers of Christian religious education and Humanistic worldview education in public primary schools). Being graduated from a Teacher Training College is preconditional.

The government subsidizes all classes religious/worldview education. A legislative proposal is currently debated to fully finance these classes in public schools.

A significant number of principals of public schools have objected against this system of shared religion/worldview classes, in which pupils are split up in

different smaller groups according to the religion their parents want them to be informed about and become familiar with. In their view of a public school all children are welcome regardless of their religious background. By consequence, these principals favour a pedagogical strategy that enables pupils' learning process of living together in peace. In line with these principals' pedagogical view splitting up groups of pupils does not prepare them for a society where they have to live together in diversity as citizens (see also Ter Avest & Miedema, 2010; Ter Avest, 2017).

Apart from religious education in Christian schools and religious/worldview education in public schools, all schools have been obliged to include the subject *Geestelijke Stromingen* (Philosophical Movements) in their curriculum from 1985 onwards. In this subject general information is given about different world religions (teaching and learning about), like Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Humanism.

INCLUSIVE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL 'DE MERENWIJK'

"I teach at 'De Merenwijk,' a so-called inclusive public school in the city of Leiden, a city in the western part of the Netherlands, famous because of its age-old university," the teacher presented in the next section states. Children from age 4 till 14/16 attend classes in 'De Merenwijk.' 'Inclusive' in general means that after official school hours there are classes in sports like soccer, hockey and playing chess, and creative activities like handwork, woodwork and painting. Due to budget cuts, hardly any of these activities can be organized anymore at 'De Merenwijk.' During school hours Christian RE classes are offered on a voluntary basis.

The school started in 1972, and is located in the city's so called retarded area 'Slaaghwijk.' At the start, the school had a mixed population of migrant children and native (Dutch) children. Together with the increase in this neighbourhood of migrants from Morocco, the population of the school slowly but surely became dominated by children with a Moroccan background. They live in their own community without being in touch with Dutch people – except for speaking to shop assistants, or a doctor for instance.

'De Merenwijk'-school these days is what is called in the Netherlands a 'black school,' not referring to the colour of pupils' skin, but pointing at the composition of the pupil population with a specific ethnic and religious background. The children mainly are offspring from migrants – first or second-generation migrants from Turkey and Morocco. A smaller part of the pupil population consists of children of refugees who recently came to the Netherlands, mainly from Afghanistan. The principal and the teachers of 'De Merenwijk'-school aim at informing their pupils about different religious and secular worldviews. They need this information, according to the team of teachers, in order to become participative citizens in the Dutch plural society. Because of the many similarities between Christianity and Islam, in Christian GVO (Christian religious education classes)

also attention is paid to Islam, according to the teacher presented in the next section.

"Moroccans Are Bad People"

"I, a faithful Christian teacher, am responsible for the (Christian) GVO classes at 'De Merenwijk.' Nineteen children, 9-10 years of age, originating from two different ethnic groups and different religious belonging await me. All nineteen pupils are Muslim. Fourteen children, born in the Netherlands, have a Moroccan background, four children, also born in the Netherlands, have a Turkish background and one of the pupils, Fariq, originates from Syria. 'I came by boat and by train,' he mentioned the very first time he participated in my religious education class. In general, the children are very eager to tell about their background, regarding their culture and religion. This always (there really is no exception) leads to very heated discussions due to differences in interpretation of Islam. The Moroccan children frequently dominate the discussion, a situation I intend to tackle in the following way: 'Muslims have the same religion, but some have another culture, another language and sometimes even another calendar; different and similar at the same time.' This is a statement that seems difficult to understand for most of the children.

One day I intended to speak about the narrative of Moses. The pupils were eager to tell about 'their' Musa. That was actually what I had hoped for – a classroom conversation about a narrative people of the three Abrahamic religions are familiar with. Differences in interpretation showed up. The pupils seemed not to understand each other. Fikri, one of the children with a Turkish background, tried to explain the relation between 'religion' and 'culture,' resulting in a chaotic polyphony out of which all of a sudden Samir blamed Fikri: 'So you say that Moroccans are bad people.' Fikri tried to elaborate on his statement, adding that he meant to point to Muslims having different culture related views and interpretations of Qur'an and Hadith. He ended his plea with the example of the headscarf, 'Wearing a headscarf is seen as obligatory in one culture and not being veiled is *haram*. In other cultures, women can choose to wear a headscarf voluntarily. If some women decide not to be veiled, they are still nevertheless good Muslims. The headscarf does not automatically make you a good Muslim.' At that moment, the discussion exploded. It was no question anymore of having a nice conversation and of listening to each other. I was flabbergasted. I called upon silence to have a classroom conversation on this topic. I wrote down on the blackboard the statement of Fikri, marking in red the word *haram*. I explained that the word *haram* does not mean the same for each and everybody, and that for non-Muslims the word *haram* itself needs to be explained, let alone that a non-Muslim understands why not-wearing a headscarf might be *haram*. The children became aware of the fact that one word can have different meanings, due to different cultural contexts. The pupils experienced even that amongst Muslims *haram* has different interpretations. Pupils all of a sudden understood that knowledge about for example the Qur'an is preconditional in order to understand each other. First of all, non-Muslims have to know that the Qur'an is

a Holy Scripture, that there are regulations to be followed (*halal*) and other rules about what is forbidden (*haram*). They also have to know the difference between singing a pop-song and reciting *suras* from the Qur'an. Only then people can arrive at a common ground of understanding. Even the end-of-class signal did not stop the pupils from exchanging knowledge about their faith.

The climate in these lessons changed dramatically after the above described 'critical incident' that left me flabbergasted and the subsequent classroom discussion. At the end of the last class, before summer holidays started, one of the children came to me and said: 'You will receive a lot of *hassanah* from Allah.' I asked her 'Do you mean rewards from Allah?' The girl answered: 'You know about that? I do not understand why you are not a Muslim!' I asked her why she thought Allah would give me rewards. She said that I had taught them so much about their own religion, that she was sure that Allah would reward me."

Above we learned from a Christian teacher her experiences with RE classes in a public school. In the next section, we listen to a Hindu teacher and her experiences with RE classes in a public school.

HINDU RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, BASED ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF DHARMA-LAKSHAN

"I – a Hindu child – was born in a multicultural context, in a business family. People with many different cultural and religious backgrounds worked in the family business. As a child, I felt comfortable living in such a multicultural context.

In my family, education was imbued with religion. My parents showed and taught me to integrate the ten principles of Dharma-Lakshan in my life. I clearly remember Sunday mornings: as soon as the church bells started ringing, we jumped out of our bed and in our pyjama's, we went to our family home altar, where in turns grandpa, grandma, and daddy said their prayers; mothers took care for breakfast. We enjoyed all the sweets that were sacrificed – to be honest: it was mainly because of the sweets that we ran downstairs, to the home altar in the living room. The sound of the prayers, the hymns, the offerings, it all contributed to my spiritual life orientation.

Because of the absence of a Hindu school in the place where I lived, I went to a Christian primary school. I was a member of the school choir. Together with my parents I regularly visited a Hindu temple as well as a Christian church. Enriching experiences! As a parent, I handed over the seeds of spirituality as they were sown in my own life. My own children went to a Christian school, as I did; they appreciated this, as I did.

Not only as a mother, but also as a teacher I was faithful to the practice of experiential religious education of my parents. As a teacher of Hindu RE I work at a public school in the Netherlands. In this position, I hope to share my faith and contribute to the spiritual development of children; a dimension of life that I choose to develop on my own journey in life.

I love my work as a Hindu teacher in a public school. It is my firm opinion that the academic and experiential knowledge I have of Hindu spirituality enables me to teach the ten principles of Dharma-Lakshan for the children's journey in life. I feel supported by the parents of the children, not the least because of the change they perceive in their child's behaviour. From a 'cool' child, s/he changes into a modest child; from a hyper-active child, s/he changes in a calm child full of attentive concentration during the Hindu classes.

To be honest, I do not like the word 'Hindu' to point to the spiritual dimension of my life. Hindu originally refers to people living on the Indian subcontinent (in those days called Bharat), a name given by the colonizers to the peoples they met crossing the river Indus – Indus in due time changed into Hindu. People living in this area had reached a high level of cultural and spiritual development. The remainders of this culture, however, have disappeared, partly due to the separation of groups of believers and by consequence the division in two states Mahatma Ghandi had to accomplish.

The founder of the religious tradition we know now as Hinduism is not one person, as it is in Christianity or Islam. It is a group of persons, the Rishi's (visionary prophets) who during their meditations received their insights in the cosmos, including men's positionality in the universe. These insights are meant for every human being, irrespective of time and place where they live, irrespective of ethnicity and culture, irrespective of any categorization.

The core narratives of Hinduism are versed in the *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy, laid down in the Bhagvata Gita, the Holy Scriptures of Hinduism. Hinduism has an open worldview, embracing each and every man and woman, inviting one to search for harmony and do what is just in the situation and context concerned. Every person is responsible for his/her own actions; nobody can punish or reward another person. There is no power related hierarchy in Hinduism; Hinduism as about love and friendship. The core of Hinduism is the conviction that there is one godly creator of mankind imbuing all living creatures and dead materials that surround us.

Dharma is, in my view, the concept for the spirituality in the soul (*Atman*), as well as the power of the universe that inspires people, moving them towards 'the good,' and preventing them from evil. Every human being is borne by Dharma. I have experienced in my life that Dharma contributes to the development of a good character. The aim is to balance purity, greediness and innocence and reach at enlightenment, or *Moksha*. Or, in other words, to be in touch and at the end unify with one's own godly spark. Dharma contains the ethical values of good human behaviour, human in the sense of contributing to humanity in society. Ten principles for good behaviour (Dharma-Lakshan) serve as guidelines to construct a just society: tolerance (*Ahimsa*), patience (*Dhriti*), forgiveness (*Kshama*), willpower (*Dam*), not to covet (*Asteya*), chastity (*Shauch*), temperance (*Indriyanigrah*), knowledge (*Vidya*) and honesty (*Satya*). These principles I implement in my Hindu classes, to guide pupils on their own unique journey in life. In my Hindu classes, these principles are 'hidden' in narratives. Sometimes I relate these Hindu narratives to stories in the Bible, as such bridging different

religious traditions. In addition to the religion classes, I also practice yoga and meditation with the pupils, because in my view yoga and meditation enable children to reach to their soul.

The Dharma-Lakshan shows children how to relate to 'the other' (social-emotional competencies). Children's personal development, based on these principles, turns them into virtuous citizens; virtuous in the sense of flourishing on the personal level, and on the societal level balancing between the extremes of emotional responses. Dharma, enables my pupils – as future citizens – to contribute in a virtuous way to the development of peace and harmony in the society they participate in.

From my experience as a teacher I can tell that children have many existential questions. We as educators should, complementary to what parents do, guide pupils in flexible balancing in a landscape full of media triggers – triggers challenging a positive development as well as triggers as provocative booby traps. Rewarding good behaviour according to morality included in the ten principles of Dharma-Lakshan, results in a positive self-image, which in turn results in the competency to make the right choice – right for the well-being of the child and right for a peaceful and harmonious society.

The teaching materials of 'Education in Human Values' – inspired by June Auton, founder of the Human Values Foundation – are of great help in Hindu religion classes. This material for children aged 5-13, is based on Hindu Dharma. June Auton taught for 16 years in a deprived area, where violence, crime and drug abuse were the norm rather than the exception. She attended a course at the Froebel Institute in London and introduced 'value education' in her own classes. Peace descended, trust built up and love began to flow."

IN RETROSPECT – INTERFAITH EDUCATION 'UNDER CONSTRUCTION'

Though different in focus, the teachers' stories narrated in the previous sections, show important aspects that may contribute to the further development of interfaith education. In this retrospective section, we focus on three aspects: the biography of the teacher, the role of intuitive actions, and the pedagogical strategy.

Biography of the Teacher

From the teachers' narratives above, we learn that their socialization process in their family of birth might have shaped their identity. They present themselves with a solid religious identity: 'I a faithful Christian teacher' and 'I – a Hindu child.' Research conducted by Bakker and Rigg (2004) points out that the biography of a teacher greatly influences the pedagogical strategy in teaching religion(s). The representation of the Christian tradition, as well as the representation of Islam is shaped by the subjective interpretation of the heritage of these traditions (Jackson, 2002). This interpretation most of the times is rooted in the biography of the teacher. The same holds for the representation of Hinduism by this particular Hindu teacher. Raised in a multicultural and multi-religious context, and being

educated at a Christian primary school, she knows about the Christian tradition and is able to bridge the two traditions. In their open mindedness, both these teachers are role models for their pupils. They demonstrate how to remain firm in one's own faith and, at the same time, tolerate and respect another's faith.

Intuitive Actions

'Knowledge as a key for understanding.' That might, at first sight, be the conclusion resulting from the case study on 'bad Muslims' and the classroom conversation of the concept *haram*. 'Practical wisdom' that comes to the fore in a split second; 'practical wisdom' as a turning point that brings together experiential 'knowledge' and the possibility of 'coming to the fore.' In his publication on intuition the Dutch psychologist Ap Dijksterhuis states that intuition only 'works' on a base of solid theoretical and/or experiential knowledge. In his publication *Het slimme onbewuste. Denken met gevoel* (The clever unconscious mind: Affective thinking), Dijksterhuis (2011) gives the example of buying a house. In an experimental situation one group of respondents were asked to decide immediately for one of the pictures of a house presented to them, a second group of respondents were allowed to think for a while and reflect upon the *pros* and *cons* of each one of the houses, a third group was given another task just for fun (making a jigsaw puzzle) and make their choice after finishing this task. From the results of this experiment Dijksterhuis formulated his 'mindless deliberation'-hypothesis: the more complex the choice to be made, the better it is to leave the deliberation to the unconscious mind. According to Dijksterhuis behaviour is mainly directed by unconscious processes based on many experiences that are stored in the mind. These experiences have resulted in experiential knowledge, that allows for intuitively taking the right and just decision in situations that are more or less similar to the situation at stake.

This is in line with the view of the Scandinavian philosopher Sharon Todd. She addresses in particular teachers in her informative article *Teachers judging without scripts, or thinking cosmopolitan* (2007). Todd's starting point is the classroom. In the diverse classroom, teachers' judgments "are an everyday matter, constantly deciding, evaluating, comparing and prioritizing students' competing individual demands and needs" (Todd, 2007, p. 28). In her argumentative discourse Todd draws on both Hannah Arendt's and Emmanuel Levinas's notions of judgement and thinking. She adds to the line of thought of Dijkstershuis the precondition of reflection on the earlier experiences. It is the reflection that results in practical wisdom that is at the base of intuitive 'on the spot' actions in complex situations.

Pedagogical Strategy

The teacher at 'De Merewijk' primary school, initiating a classroom conversation on the taboo subject of 'headscarf' showed courage and willpower to break through the downward spiral of heated discussions. She challenged her pupils by articulating the statement of one of the pupils, writing it down on the blackboard

and marking that statement in red. This teacher loves her pupils, and is strongly committed to their development as future citizens of the Dutch plural society. In line with this attitude she takes time to clarify the role of 'knowledge' in the process of understanding, tolerating and respecting the other in a discussion. She shows a caring attitude regarding her pupils. Such a pedagogical strategy is coined as 'provocative pedagogy' (Ter Avest & Bertram-Troost, 2009). The word 'provocative' stems from the Latin *provocare*, referring to provocation, but also to caring, taking care of the coping capability of the other. More research is needed to gain further insight in the results of provocative pedagogy with regard to the development of tolerance and respect –ingredients for living together in diversity (Walzer, 1997).

At the end of the day we conclude that – notwithstanding the complexity of religious/worldview education in public schools (Bakker & Montessori, 2017), the starting point always should be 'the voice of the child' (McKenna et al., 2008); listening to the child's narrative is the most important teacher's quality (see the document *Competente vakdocenten GVO/HVO voor de openbare basisschool* (Competent RE teachers in public education, 2010). This competence is preconditional for GVO/HVO classes – not in a climate of 'us' against 'them,' but in an atmosphere of belonging; the classroom as a safe space to practice 'living together *in* diversity' (Gayle, Cortez, & Preiss, 2013). Such a space may be created by rules constructed in close cooperation with the pupils themselves, guaranteeing open and respectful conversations about existential questions – as these are experienced and voiced by children. Resulting from the need to clarify one's own (religious or secular) commitments, a religious or worldview literacy will evolve in expressing oneself about one's convictions; a process of teaching and learning from and with each other (Andree & Bakker, 1996). This religious/worldview literacy enables a person to move beyond anxiety and have conversations with others about the meaning of religion/worldview on one's life. This cannot but end in a dynamic and joyful plurality. We all have our hopes of a peaceful community, our dreams of conversations where every participant can proudly state: "I am different, just like you are different."

The burden of this task on teachers' shoulders is enormous. This can only be performed in close cooperation in a team of teachers, reflecting on their classroom conversations and other moments that left them 'flabbergasted.' From the cases of the Christian and Hindu teacher we learn that they have reflected upon their personal positionality regarding religious traditions. This step into teachers' personal development is of pivotal importance for their professional development. We recommend team meetings organized on a regular basis to reflect on 'critical incidents' in the classroom. This will add to the professional development of teachers regarding their interfaith teaching, and undoubtedly bear fruit to pupils' development of an own authentic worldview.

NOTE

[1] GVO – *Godsdienstige Vormings Onderwijs*, Religious Education (from a Christian perspective). HVO = *Humanistisch Vormings Onderwijs*, Humanistic Worldview Education.

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PART THREE

REFLECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS IN INTERFAITH EDUCATION

JOHN VALK

18. WORLDVIEW EDUCATION

An Inclusive Approach

INTRODUCTION

Education, in one form or another, has been integral to the human condition since time immemorial. To be human is, among other things, to learn. It is to learn the basics – reading, writing, and arithmetic, even in its most simple forms. But it is also much more. To learn is to explore – the wonder and complexity of the physical world, the vast reaches of distant space, human invention and innovation, the trials and travails of human history, thoughts and ideas of the past and present, and more. To learn is also to create – material things, poetry, music, song, and not least, meaning and purpose,

Learning necessitates an open and critical mind, and also one imbued with some healthy doses of humility. Knowledge and awareness is shaped and influenced by situation and context, even as we strive to reach beyond limited parameters. To be an effective citizen also necessitates openness: to the self and to the other. As our global world impinges on us individually and communally, 'the other' increasingly confronts us as a neighbour near or far – with his or her own history, culture, traditions, beliefs and values.

Here formal education plays an increasingly crucial role. How can and should education prepare younger and older alike in this new world of the 21st century? Not least, it necessitates exposing them to a view of the world that extends beyond their own narrow confines. To prepare students adequately for active citizenship at home and abroad, education must expand its scope to include the study of worldviews, both religious and secular.

Why and how education should do this has been the subject of chapters comprising Part One and Part Two of this book. In this chapter I will reflect on what has been advanced in these sections, and then offer some critical thoughts and comments that might advance further what has been proposed.

NOW MORE THAN EVER

The events of '9/11,' perhaps more than anything else, were a major turning point in religious education. A slow but steady secular influence that gripped the Western world in the 20th century had a profound impact on society in general and education in particular. A declining influence of religion, most particularly institutional religion, was reflected in a decrease in participation and interest in an institution that had shaped and influenced Western society for centuries. In the 19th

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 227–242.
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century education, long under the purview of the Church, came under the jurisdiction of the state. Today the religious metanarrative that had for centuries grounded Western society in general, and pedagogical philosophy in particular, is no longer deemed suitable in light of a more religiously diverse society. A more secular trend, often understood as neutral, has set in and religious influences have become marginalized, if not separated, from the objectives of modern education. Religious education, often solely in the form of Christian religious education, is still on offering to students in some countries, but it no longer influences education in general. Interest in its relevance to the educational enterprise waned, and its importance questioned. A paradigm shift had occurred in the 20th century, one toward a more secular oriented educational system.

The wisdom of that dramatic shift was called into question soon after the fallout of '9/11.' Religious educators argued that more rather than less religious education is needed in the formation of children today, and urgently so as such new questions arise. What are the merits of religious education today, what should it entail, and how should it be integrated into the educational system?

De Jong seeks to develop a closer link or connection between religious education and citizenship education: he speaks of "interfaith education as citizenship education." This is a crucial consideration. Citizenship education, he asserts, is more than sharing collective knowledge of one's society. It also has an important participatory element; a commitment to participating collectively to improve the whole of society in all its many facets. As such it necessarily involves faith issues, whether of a religious and secular nature. According to De Jong interfaith education can play a most significant role here – promoting free and just participation. This involves communication, which necessitates becoming familiar with "the strange cultural and religious background of the other." But here religious education also faces challenges. It must motivate students to engage in communication that is rational, and to do so in solidarity with 'the other.' It also entails engaging interdisciplinary expertise in all areas of citizenship education, including those with expertise in theology and religious studies. De Jong concludes that this also has important "implications for the education of the educators."

De Jong advances the discussion in linking religious education to citizenship education. But he leaves aside an emerging concern; how to create a level playing field that equally motivates both secular and religious participants so both are engaged and come to understand the other? In other words, how are the two kinds of education integrated?

Miedema's article is helpful here. He sees that numerous terms and concepts are at play, and speaks of "neighbour concepts": intercultural education, interreligious education and inter-worldview education. But different terms are also used in different national contexts, and this exposes certain challenges, to which Miedema points. Tiffany Puett, for example, uses the term "interfaith education." She recognizes its limitations, yet retains it for practical reasons: she works for an interfaith organization. Eboo Patel uses the term "interfaith," and states that through our religious traditions we "develop faith identities which encourages us to interact with others." Yet, religious education, to paraphrase Trees Andree,

provides opportunity for unique religious identity as well as encounters with religious others.

In the European context, the term 'interfaith' is substituted by terms such as 'religion,' 'worldview' and 'non-religious conviction.' Robert Jackson's "Signposts" speaks about 'religions and other worldviews' in the context of intercultural education. But Miedema might well be correct that religious or worldview education becomes problematic ('contaminated'?) when too closely connected with religious institutions. Hence terms such as 'inter-religious,' 'inter-worldview,' and 'multi-religious' enter the fray. But Miedema's preference is "worldview education, with 'religion as a sub-concept of worldview." This is an advance, for using the concept worldview is a push against strong secularists who would prefer to remove religious education from schools entirely, and a tendency for some to focus only on religious worldviews, and then largely Christianity.

Miedema's notion of a 'thick' versus a 'thin' conceptual approach posits that much can be learned *about* but also *from* various worldviews. Here he links worldview education to citizenship education, distinguishing between a *minimalist* and a *maximalist* approach, and opts to speak about "inter-worldview citizenship education," as a counteroffensive against a growing populism. Yet, Miedema's focus is largely on the individual, with personal identity or personhood development as the aim of education. Individual worldviews do play a role in that development, recognizing that they are "always subjected to changes, of implicit and explicit views and feelings of an individual in relation to life." The downside of focusing only on individual worldviews, however, is that little connection is made to organized worldviews, even though Miedema acknowledges them. Organized worldviews have a great bearing on our lives individually and collectively. They are 'out there,' impacting society, from the individual to the corporate. To what extent should inter-worldview citizenship education not take these into account so that students are made aware of their influence in society in general, and even how they shape and influence public policy in particular?

Lähnemann makes a slightly stronger case in recognizing the importance of "religious education" or "interreligious learning" to society in general. He identifies three distinct contributions: learning religion, learning about religion, and learning from religion. He mentions the Birmingham City Council's Education Department's twenty-four "spiritual and moral dispositions" – "added values" that religious education can contribute to transforming societies. The REDCo Research Project 'Religion in Education,' he indicates, has also highlighted those contributions, and points to several models where interreligious initiatives have cooperated well with public schools. Nonetheless, while all of this is very helpful, Lähnemann still speaks largely about religious education. He fails to draw sufficient attention to secular perspectives, which at times cooperate with religious perspectives, yet can also compete with them.

Scatolini addresses an issue raised by all too many secularists regarding religion – whose beliefs and values are right and whose are wrong. This is a problem amongst the monotheistic religions, but no less can also be an issue among secular perspectives. Yet, Scatolini is less interested in determining the truth of one or

another perspective and suggests Islamic Religious Education (IRE) should "encourage students, especially Muslims, to set out in search of knowledge and wisdom with an emphasis on the realization of values." In this way IRE can contribute "positively to more harmonious lives and more functional communities," attempting to overcome an increasing "spiritual meaninglessness, apathy, sectarianism and fundamentalism." He highlights learning about (*knowledge*) and from (*wisdom*) Islam, in a manner that would contribute to curtailing what seems to be an increasing religious illiteracy. Lastly and most helpful is his recommendation that IRE should also be critical and self-critical: students should be critical of themselves and their tradition.

Scatolini makes it clear that IRE should never be confused with that which properly belongs to catechetical education; it is "not geared to prepare future imams or missionaries" but must be more holistic. Yet, Scatolini advocates a kind of religious education suited for an Islamic school, one akin to what one might find in Christian or Jewish schools. Yet, while this might have merit, does its primary focus on Islam, and minimally on other worldviews (religious and secular), become insufficient even in Muslim minority contexts? Max Müller's aphorism "he who knows one, knows none," might encourage a different approach, one suggested by Selçuk and Valk (2012).

Sahin faces this matter more directly, recognizing that every attempt at enhanced self-understanding confronts us with the 'other.' While this may trigger fear, even prejudice, and a tendency to retreat into one's own comfort zone, we are nonetheless faced with differences. This is the nature of the cultural/religious plurality of the world in which we live. Hence, it has bearing for religious education:

> Critical and reflective religious literacy together with educational competence for interfaith and intercultural dialogue and understanding need to be an integral part of mainstream as well as faith-based schooling organized within wider secular-liberal societies.

He proposes a "constructive role for religion(s) within contemporary secular/democratic polities," one which acknowledges from the beginning that faith traditions have been "civilizing forces" when they have developed an "inclusive attitude towards the 'other.'" Inclusiveness, he asserts, "is not the achievement of only modern secular democracy," nor is "tribalism the exclusive property of religion." The secular public square, intended to promote inclusivism within liberal democracies, can easily become dominated by *secularism*, with its own dogmatic ideology of exclusivism.

Sahin turns the tables on a secular/liberal education. He argues that Islamic adherents, as well as adherents of other religious traditions, present a challenge in that their faith-based needs call for accommodation and response. Inclusive social and political structures are needed whereby the 'other' "is not simply tolerated, but is integrated into the fabric of a shared social space." Adherents of faith traditions, however, must also be "willing to *rethink* [their] faith traditions within the context of today."

At this point Sahin explores the core narrative of Islam: "nurturing critical faithfulness and serving the common good," which includes "stewardship of the earth." He encourages European Muslims to develop a "self-critical and self-reflective attitude," together with "critical openness" that "facilitates the emergence of an Islamically meaningful sense of belonging in Europe." He furthermore recognizes the need to develop an "engaging Muslim public theology" that will contribute to "upholding justice, protecting the dignity and welfare of all." Within an educational context, however, this must be done in conjunction with numerous worldviews, both religious and secular.

Fiona Tinker argues, and rightly so, for an expanded "multi-religious education" in Scotland. Religious education is mandatory and currently called "Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies." Both in Roman Catholic and non-denominational schools, students are encouraged to explore existential questions, other faiths, and at the same time develop their own system of beliefs. However, the focus here is largely on what she calls the "Big Six: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism." She pleads for the inclusion of "Paganism," on the basis that Christianity is no longer the religion of a significant portion of the Scottish population. Paganism, she argues, is an umbrella term for a number of spiritual paths rooted in ancient nature religions, is recognized in Scotland and on that basis, ought to be included in what is taught in non-denominational schools. Tinker is on the right path, but does she go far enough in her call for inclusion? Inclusive religious education is still focused on religion, even if it is expanded to include various spiritualities. Should one not also include secular perspectives?

The theoretical arguments put forward in Part One have enhanced the discussions and call for a more inclusive approach. Many education programs have expanded their curriculums to become open to the study of various religious and spiritual traditions. Some have linked religious education in very helpful ways to citizenship education, recognizing that religion advocates effective citizenship and has much to contribute to it. Others focus on assisting children in forging their own identities, making distinctions between personal worldviews and institutional worldviews. In all of this, some very creative models have been developed, and these will be explored in the next section.

VARIOUS MODELS

Finding the right pedagogical model that suitably addresses and implements the theories and concepts discussed above is a huge challenge, though not an impossible one. Notions that arise include the following: linking various traditions/perspectives to citizenship education; learning about (knowledge), from (wisdom) and through (values) various traditions/perspectives; inclusion of numerous traditions/perspectives; assisting learners in developing their own identity and worldview; and gaining knowledge and awareness of the pluralistic societies in which we live.

One further challenge that emerges from the various writings is recognition that no two countries are the same. They come with different histories, ethnic and religious groupings, majority and minority cultures, inclusive and exclusive societies, and more. What models are there then that incorporate these notions, and what are the results in implementing them?

The *Hikmah Programme* model proposed for Malaysia attempts to develop higher order thinking in students by enhancing philosophical inquiry focused on various materials that include text, artwork, video, music and more. Its "journey of moral and philosophical exploration" promotes community, and generates open mindedness for and a deeper exploration of one's own religious tradition, with recognition that beliefs and values can easily be socially constructed. Further, it promotes tolerance and respect when exploration is made of other traditions. Its strength lies in its suggestion of an *infusion* approach, which does not isolate religious and philosophical issues to certain sectors of a curriculum. Further, as is now well recognized, astute teachers or facilitators become crucial for the *Hikmah* pedagogy to be well implemented. Teachers or facilitators themselves would need special training to give them sufficient preparations for such classrooms. Today it is a question whether education faculties properly prepare teachers for such classroom dynamics (Gardner, Soules, & Valk, 2017).

The Malaysian context is largely multi-religious and multi-ethnic, with the predominance of Islam. The Belgian context, where it is also used, is more multi-religious and "interconvictional," that is, those with "non-religious" convictions. But the *Hikmah* model, developed for the Malaysian Islamic context, may not be fully implementable in the Belgian context without some adaptation, as Lafrarchi recognizes. But here too the greater challenge may be whether teachers who hope to implement a modified Hikmah model will themselves be sufficiently prepared and trained. Does Belgium teacher training include preparation for implementing the *Hikmah* model? Where will potential teachers get good theoretical grounding and understanding to unfold such a model?

Part of the difficulty here also is an often-heard reference to public schools or public education as "neutral towards religion or ideology." Van der Meij specifically mentions this, but so does Lafrarchi. Van der Meij goes further and states that only confessional schools "are schools with a specific religious or ideological basis." But this is highly questionable and may itself be part of the problem, most particularly when some politicians are seeking to abolish confessional schools.

Here two questions arise, both of which point to what could be a greater problem. One, to what extent are public school educators and proponents cognizant of the influence of secular worldviews (*secularism*) on their educational philosophy, curriculum and pedagogical methods? In other words, in the secularization process of the last century or so has influence swung from one dominant (religious) worldview in the past to another (secular) worldview in the present, which has neither resulted in a neutral education nor a plural public-school open to learning about and from various worldview perspectives while privileging none? Two, are confessional schools losing or have they lost that which made them

unique historically and justified their separate existence? This does not mean that their original confessions are ossified, or have become so; confessions can be dynamic. The problem here is that when it comes to both public schools and confessional schools, discussions are often framed so that reference is made largely if not exclusively only to religious worldviews, and then even often quite narrowly so.

The Dutch situation is unique here and even offers new possibilities. With the growth of Islamic education new challenges arise but also new possibilities. The rise of Islamic schools within a 'pillarized' system reflects a desire for Muslims to have control over their own schooling, a right extended previously to those of other religious persuasions. But here too, as is becoming quite evident, there are different conceptions of Islamic education, as Van der Meij points out, some of which are seen to be at odds with "Dutch values of freedom, equality and tolerance." Knitter's four perspectives assist Van der Meij in ascertaining which Islamic educational approaches promote 'Dutch values,' engage in interreligious dialogue, and decrease social and cultural divisiveness and intolerance.

Ter Avest and Wielzen argue that the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* extends to the child a right to become acquainted with different religions or religious worldviews, and that religious education assists children in "acquiring competencies necessary for active participation in societies characterized by religious and cultural pluralism." It is not intended to initiate or socialize a child into a religion or a religious way of life, but to enhance "student consciousness of their own value orientation and worldview perspective and their own developing (religious) identity." It is also intended to deepen their understanding of religions in general. As such, it requires an inter-religious education, which prepares students to "embrace diversity and prepares pupils for active engagements in religious plural contexts." Here Ter Avest and Wielzen speak about "Theologizing with Children," concluding that it is a "solid framework to promote a child-centred approach in the academic field of the pedagogy of religion." A model for such interreligious education is the 'Juliana van Stolbergschool' in Ede, which transitioned from a Protestant-Christian school into the first interreligious school in the Netherlands. Subsequent research on alumni has attested to its effectiveness. Yet, it is a model of inter-religious education. What would be needed to make it more inclusive, for religious *and* secular worldviews?

Garlock draws on the two concepts of cognitive progressions and questioning one's beliefs in regard to the stages of faith development. She finds that children can explore allegorical stories, comparing them to modern day social justice issues, while at the same time recognizing that views and opinions differ on the same biblical stories. What Garlock uncovers is used mainly in American Christian Church settings but could be helpful beyond them.

The changing religious landscape in Finland has led to a need to promote "inter-worldview education." Religious education is compulsory and "seen as part of the acquisition of civil skills," yet it has also been downgraded to only one hour per week, a rather mixed message. Nonetheless, in that hour students are exposed to Christianity and other world religions, with secular ethics offered as an alternative

to religious education. The challenge, as understood by Rautionmaa and Kallioniemi, is "how to organize RE and worldview education in an increasingly plural world." They call for "integrated religious education and inter-worldview education," which engages those of both religious and secular worldviews, with the goal of "full and equal participation of people of different faiths and worldviews in society." Implementing storytelling is one method of engaging in the dialogue, and engaging the perspectives of others may shift the encounters and cooperation, they maintain, from doctrine to ethics. But here again, the terms used are "integrated religious education and inter-worldview education" and "different faiths and worldviews." It seems to make an unnecessary distinction, and indirectly implies that one focuses on doctrine and the other on ethics.

The model Selçuk and Ter Avest propose is helpful in communicating the view that any worldview tradition, whether religious or secular, is complex and "imposing only one perception and only one view" distorts. This is particularly the case regarding Islam, and the challenge that this poses in the West. Selçuk and Ter Avest suggest that dialogue with the other should incorporate a "willingness to question what is different, the desire to learn the meaning of the diversity, and the ability to appreciate those differences as enriching experiences which stimulate the mind and heart." They recognize the need for a framework and a model that is communicative, is premised on the conviction that "all knowing is perspective based," transforms "old concepts into new ideas" and "passive, received knowledge into active, constructed knowing," and challenges the Islamic student to engage in critical thinking. This model has potential beyond the Islamic context.

The SIMON Schools model is focused on integrating Muslims into Dutch society while at the same time assisting them to a greater understanding of Islam. The goal is "not segregation but integration according to a distinctly Islamic point of view." This is, of course, highly appropriate within the Dutch 'pillarized' school structure. In fact, SIMON schools honour the original intent of that structure, perhaps more so than Protestant and Catholic schools, who increasingly struggle today with what constitutes their distinct identity. The question that arises is whether SIMON schools can "bring the child to active participation in Dutch society as a Muslim." But this is a larger debate and it is by no means settled. There are those who feel religiously based schools, and today especially Islamic schools, by their very nature are isolationist and cannot properly educate students into an active citizenship that embraces societal values. But this may indeed be little more than perception, for evidence does not appear to support this case.

Religious education in The Gambian school situation currently entails an education and socialization into either Christianity or Islam. The government recognizes the importance of religious education and makes it mandatory in the curriculum. This presents a unique challenge and opportunity. The module used is based on Grimmitt's theoretical framework emphasizing education into, about and from religion. It applies a "learner-centred approach," or perhaps more accurately a "constructivist approach," so students can "construct their own moral and religious identity and develop their own views on moral and religious issues." The objectives of the model are to generate basic knowledge about the Abrahamic

religions, employ dialogical skills and encourage tolerance with other religions. Yet, it was not implemented in the curriculum, partly due to insufficient interest and involvement of the Religious Studies department. Perhaps here is where a large part of the problem lies, since much of The Gambia is dominated by only two major religious traditions: Islam and Christianity.

INCONSISTENT TERMINOLOGY

It goes without saying that no two contexts or places are the same. Each comes with its own history, religious traditions, and inter and intra-worldview dynamics. As such, students, teachers and educational administrators from various jurisdictions will understand and engage in the matter of 'inter-faith education' in different ways. This is unavoidable. Though no one model will fit all, there are, however, some problematic issues that arise from both the theoretical and conceptual models mentioned in Part One and the practical implementation of aspects of those models mentioned in Part Two.

One, the term or phrase 'religious education' or 'inter-religious education' continues to dominate much of the discussion. How these terms are translated into different national languages may alleviate the problem to a certain degree but it will not eliminate it. While religious affiliation may still remain high in some Western countries, albeit loosely so, religious identity and practice have decreased significantly. In Europe, were secularism has gained a strong foothold, continuing to use the exclusive term religious education will potentially lead to its greater demise. The more pluralistic the society, the more the term is rendered problematic. Not everyone considers himself or herself religious. Secularists continue to marginalize religion. Teachers, school administrators, or even members of the public who lean in a more secular direction have little empathy for it. Students who are not religious, or only loosely so, would not be readily attracted to this subject area. Ironically, here religious education begins to undermine itself, if only subtly so. As such, the phrasing 'religious education' becomes increasingly redundant.

Two, an increasing number of public schools have recognized this dilemma and are replacing religious education with ethics, to make it more inclusive. But this only intensifies the problem, though now in another way and at a different level. It ignores the fact that one's ethics is embedded in particular perspectives, some of which are religious. Failing to connect ethics to religion, or at least some religions, and particularly to various worldviews, is to play into a secularist's hand, which does not make a public-school neutral.

Three, terms such as inter-faith education also can be problematic and exclusive. Such education is an advance only on one front. In religious schools with a religiously diverse population such inter-faith education is beneficial, as has been alluded to in some of the models presented in Part Two. It overcomes the public perception of the religious and ethnic isolation of such schools. In public schools, it is also an advance in that students from various religious groupings converse and discuss with each other – they encounter the other. Yet, the phrasing inter-faith

education might also not be sufficient. The term faith is all too often linked to religious persons, perpetuating the notion or assumption that those who are not religious have no faith. But this is hardly the case. Secular students also have faith. Hence, any use of the term 'inter-faith' education must be premised on the conviction and assertion that all people have faith of some kind, whether religious or secular. 'Inter-faith' education then becomes, in part, an exploration of that in which people place their faith, especially concerning life's ultimate questions.

Four, some are beginning to use terms such as 'religious education and worldview education' as a way in which to be more inclusive. This too is an advance in that it attempts to include more perspectives. But this binary categorization assumes a distinction ought to be made between the two, yet does not make sufficiently clear the nature of that distinction, other than to loosely classify and include perspectives that are not religious as worldviews. Why are secular perspectives defined as worldviews and not religious ones? A failure to make this clear only adds to a growing confusion.

A COMMON TERMINOLOGY

What is needed in all of this is a common terminology, and a common approach. While no one solution will resolve all issues, working toward a common terminology will assist in advancing the discussion and may alleviate some matters that become increasingly problematic for all too many. Use of the terms 'worldview' and 'worldview education' may point the way to resolving the dilemmas we face.

The term *worldview* is now ubiquitous, and used by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, religionists, economists, and more. This is an indication that in each of these disciplines there is some common understanding of its meaning and even its implication, even if reference to it is only in cursory form. It is also a term used more commonly in the public square, and increasingly in the media. Hence, it has become a familiar term, even if an understanding of it is not always well spelled out.

The term *worldview* has now also entered the pedagogical lexicon, and spoken of increasingly by educators in terms of 'worldview education.' As such, *worldview* and *worldview education* are not strange terms. It is now important to explore them further and reflect on how these terms and an exploration of what they imply add value to the kind of education all seek to implement.

A worldview is a view or *vision of life* and *on life*. It is something we all have, and something we develop in greater or lesser degrees of complexity as we journey through life (Sunshine, 2009; Naugle, 2002; Tarnas, 1993; McKenzie, 1991; Smart, 1983). The immediate context or situation out of which we come in our younger years is highly influential in shaping an emerging worldview. Psychologists and sociologists continually draw this to our attention (Koltko-Rivera, 2004; Smith, 2003). Schools play a formative role in effecting our worldview, either implicitly or explicitly (Valk, 2007; Prothero, 2007; Postman, 1995). The media in its various forms, the people we associate with, as well as the communities in which we have

membership, each in turn influence our perceptions of the world. Worldview education directly and specifically assists in identifying and further enhancing our personal worldview, whatever it might be (Van der Kooij et al., 2015). Hence, worldview formation is important in education for it orients the student to his or her surrounding and assists in developing a better understanding of their beliefs, values and perceptions (Valk, 2017).

Personal worldviews can be of a considerable variety: religious, spiritual, and secular. They can also be linked to worldviews 'out there,' so-called organized worldviews or worldview systems (Valk, 2010). We increasingly speak about them even if they are at times loosely defined. We readily refer to religious traditions, systems or organizations such as the 'Big Six': Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. But we are also beginning to speak of "spiritual traditions," such as First Nations Spirituality, Earth-based Spirituality, Paganism, Feminist Spirituality, and more. These are gaining traction, especially amongst a growing sector loosely identified as 'spiritual but not religious' (Mercadante, 2014; Ammerman, 2013). We also increasingly speak of worldviews as secular perspectives such as Individualism, Atheism, Consumerism, and Capitalism, all of which impact society at large, influencing in turn public policy and shaping the society in which we seek to live (Casanova, 2009; Hurd, 2009; Marsden & Longfield, 1992). Should these not also be included in the discussions?

Worldviews are also *ways of life*. We live out our visions or views of life in our everyday actions and behaviours, individually and collectively. We may be insufficiently aware of our personal worldview, but our individual actions and behaviours often reveal it (Smith, 2009). Collective political, economic and cultural actions and behaviours, whether on a communal, regional or national level, will also reflect certain worldview stances (Stephens, 2014; Koyzis, 2003). Certain groupings of people, regions or countries are often easily identified as reflecting a particular way of life, e.g., Christian, Islamic or Buddhist. But we also recognize that other ways of life are identified as Communist, Consumerist or Capitalist. Should these also not also be included in the discussions?

We also readily identify schools as religious: Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and more, reflecting or displaying a kind of ethos that reveals a particular worldview. But what about public schools, or even certain curricula used in them (Gummer, 2009)? At times, they are perceived as neutral, but this has been contested (Van Brummelen, 1991). At the outset, public schools (*Openbare Scholen*) in the Netherlands were steeped in a Liberal Protestant worldview tradition: they were not religiously neutral (Valk, 1995). How much of that Liberal Protestant worldview remains today is open to discussion? The point here, however, is not to reorient public schooling to a former worldview tradition as much as it is to recognize that neutrality is elusive, and certainly difficult to maintain. Perhaps the inclusion of a plurality of worldview perspectives is more suited for the public (*openbare*) school today, rather than it being dominated by one, especially that of *secularism* (Valk, 2007). As such, it behoves public educators to also educate about a plurality of worldviews, both religious and secular. Smart reminds us that "an educated person should know about and have a feel for many things, but perhaps

the most important is to have an understanding of some of the chief worldviews which have shaped and are now shaping human culture and action" (Smart, 1983, p. 6).

Another important aspect of worldview education is to assist students in their own personal worldview identity and development. Others have also emphasized this. Students come to school already influenced by, if not steeped in, the worldview of parents, the community in which they reside, and various organizations in which they may have membership, which may include religious organizations. Their beliefs and values, of which they may not yet be fully aware or conscious, are to a great extent already forming part of their understanding of the world in which they live (Parks, 2011). What then is needed to bring all of this into play? Perhaps two things: a safe classroom and teacher education programs that prepare teachers for worldview exploration.

WORLDVIEW EXPLORATION

Much has already been said about the necessity of safe classrooms where students can freely explore their own worldview beliefs and values, and those of others. This can be done in a variety of ways, and some examples have been mentioned in Part One and Part Two. As has been suggested, it can be done by examining stories from sacred texts, discussing spiritual themes arising from novels, films, songs and poetry, exploring metanarratives arising from various worldviews, whether religious or secular (Franke & Schiltz, 2013; Godawa, 2002). It can be done through comparing rituals and symbols, again both religious and secular, and exploring their meaning and power in modern society. Visiting various sacred sites, and speaking to religious and spiritual leaders, is revealing to students. Comparing such sites to certain secular sites, such as shopping malls or sports arenas, which have taken on their own 'sacred' status today, becomes instructive, or comparing them to consumer 'holy days' that have come to replace or compete with religious 'holy days.' An exploration of how one understands powerful beings – God, gods, ancient or modern heroes – will assist children in refining their own beliefs. Wrestling with some of life's ultimate or existential questions – meaning, purpose, responsibilities, obligations, life after this life – will assist children in exploring the belief systems in which they have been raised, yet create opportunity to compare and explore others. At age appropriate levels, higher order questions of an ontological and epistemological nature will assist students in recognizing and exploring the sources of their beliefs and values and the human need for certainty. Here questions of faith and leaps of faith extend to all. Not least is a need to explore views and notions of justice, whose justice, and how we come to understand and enact what is just. Public policies pertaining to social issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and immigration are imbued with worldview differences. Teachers skilled in examining these matters can in challenging yet sensitive ways create safe spaces for students to explore not only the issues themselves but also the worldviews that lie behind them.

No doubt, differences in terms or concepts, religious or secular, can become problematic at times in teaching about various worldview perspectives. Religious terms such as prayer, sacred rituals or salvation may be seen as stumbling blocks for those who are more secular. But the problem here may be more perception than actual fact, and may more accurately reflect an inability to translate terms or concepts across worldviews. We today hear of 'secular prayers,' and we readily observe rituals in sports (Havrilesky, 2015; Bauer & Barreau, 2008; Price, 2004). Our consumer society also has its 'holy days' of shopping and consuming, offering 'salvation' or 'healing' (satisfaction) to people in the form of material goods and services (Gill, 1999). As such, it can be seen that both religious and secular worldviews offer 'salvation' and healing. In all of these examples there are structural parallels; the content or objects of devotion for each of them, however, is where the differences lie. The question of whether embracing the 'salvation' offered by religious or secular temples is right or wrong, or even more or less beneficial, is one that can be discussed with students, albeit this must be done in a very sensitive and objective manner.

Related to these matters is also an issue that frequently arises in the classroom, and even outside of it. In today's highly secularized society religious students, especially if they are from certain traditions, are at times considered 'conservative,' or worse still 'backwards,' by their secular classmates because of the views they hold, the behaviour they display, or even the manner in which they dress. But this is largely a prejudice, and often held as a result of insensitivity and ignorance, both of their own worldview perspective and those of others. Following styles dictated by the fashion industry, embracing material objects as sacred, elevating one's peer group to ultimate status, or engaging in particular rituals can be seen as hallmarks of competing secular worldviews. Whether they should be seen as more liberal and progressive is a matter of worldview perspective, and a matter of discussion.

As has been mentioned, and as can now be readily seen, teachers themselves must be highly trained to explore these issues with students. Teacher training programs must create course options so teachers can become sufficiently steeped in knowledge of both religious and secular worldviews, and their reaches, so they in turn are able to give guidance and direction to students, younger and older, in coming to understand them. This can be quite problematic today, especially in jurisdictions where Religious Studies departments are being downsized in university programs, where Religious Studies courses or degrees are not considered 'teachables,' or where teacher-training programs completely ignore the value of worldview education (Gardner, Soules, & Valk, 2017; Valk, 2017).

The lack of adequate teacher preparation is symptomatic of a larger problem and this concerns the increasing marginalization of teaching about worldviews both religious and secular in public schooling. Worldview issues proliferate in the school curriculum, but school administrators and teachers must have the eyes to see this. Citizenship education, for example, has to do with what it means to be a good citizen, but the notion of what a good citizen entails varies widely from one worldview perspective to another. What an inclusive society entails, for example, a topic that touches on curriculum areas such as economics, politics, social studies,

and more, is rife with worldview values. Who is valued and what is valued in society today depends on our perspectives, especially when it comes to people with intellectual or physical disabilities. Here one sees major differences between, for example, Peter Singer who from a utilitarian worldview perspective promotes euthanizing the severely disabled; certain societies which from an individualist worldview perspective promote aborting fetuses with Down Syndrome or other disabilities; and Jean Vanier who from a Catholic/Christian worldview perspective promotes a (L'Arche) community concept where everyone belongs regardless of ability or disability. Not raising these issues or not becoming aware of them also from the viewpoint of differing worldview perspectives undermines the education of students, younger and older. School administrators, educators and teacher training programs are obliged to open up these areas in the larger field of education.

CONCLUSION

The title and subject matter of this book is 'Interfaith Education.' Its value lies in theoretically arguing for an education that encourages children younger and older to explore the beliefs and values they hold, the rich traditions that have sustained cultures for centuries, and exploring new renditions of age-old spiritualities by presenting various models that create opportunities to do so. The various articles contained in Part One and Part Two have succeeded in this. They have met some of the challenges presented by a globalized world and a pluralized society. Yet perhaps more is needed.

For religious or inter-faith education to be successful it must step beyond some of the confines it has created for itself or those in which it has been placed. Religious or inter-faith education must become more inclusive of more than religious worldviews. It must also encompass secular worldviews and as such be willing to use more inclusive terminology, or risk even further marginalization or downsizing. Religious education, and the rich traditions to which it points, must emerge from a cloistered educational setting to embrace the public square of worldview education.

The world today is anything but disenchanted and religious or spiritual matters surface increasingly in a variety of new ways and in new places (Benthall, 2008; Smith, 2008; Berger, 1999; Moore, 1996). Exploring ancient traditions and modern expressions assists younger and older alike to explore their beliefs and values, whether religious or secular. Doing so in an inclusive manner enhances the scope and gives depth to that exploration. It also serves to explore longstanding traditions in new dynamic ways, resisting their ossification, and revealing why they have had such influence generation after generation, and century after century. But it also serves to enrich the human spirit as it explores new horizons in its journey through time and place.

Worldview education increases what is currently on offer and challenges teachers, teacher-training programs, and the larger university to expand its parameters and horizons. An exploration of beliefs and values cannot be confined

solely to religious education classrooms. It needs to infuse the entire curriculum, as suggested in the *Hikmah* model, so that existential, ultimate, ontological and epistemological worldview questions are broached when and where teachable moments arise in the classroom. It is imperative that worldview literacy, whether religious or secular, must increase.

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RYAN S. GARDNER

19. A MODEL OF REFLECTION FOR MERGING THEORY AND PRACTICE IN INTERFAITH EDUCATION

Myriad deliberate decisions must be thoughtfully made when considering the implementation of any interfaith educational program intent on preparing students for engaged citizenship in a religiously diverse globalized world.[1] Stakeholders in such programs such as administrators, parents, and teachers, should work in concert to make these decisions. For example, school board members and/or parents, must decide what kind of course(s) should be offered, or how to implement elements of interfaith education or worldview literacy in existing courses, to accomplish the particular mission of their particular program. Other stakeholders, such as curriculum directors and/or faculty must choose the curriculum that best serves the purpose of the course and the needs of the students and community. Faculty must determine the appropriate pedagogical methods – assignments, activities, field experiences, assessments, etc. – that will achieve the learning outcomes of the course. How can stakeholders approach these decisions – and many others that are addressed in the present volume – in a manner that will offer us the best chance for success in this important endeavour? This chapter presents a model of reflection that will aid in making careful decisions that are consistent with a program's mission, pedagogical approach, and student learning outcomes. As all stakeholders better understand and implement reflective practices and processes, they will develop greater alignment between their program objectives, curriculum, and what takes place in the learning experience for students. Such alignment will increase the likelihood that students in interfaith education settings will develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that will equip them to surpass the present generation in their capacity to understand, learn from, and work with all members of society for greater justice, peace, and human flourishing in the world. All who are engaged in interfaith education endeavours may benefit by adapting the principles in this chapter to their respective roles. For purposes of clarity and brevity, this chapter will focus chiefly on how classroom teachers can apply the principles, involved in this model of reflection.

THE CHALLENGE OF REFLECTION

Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, with several decades of experience studying and writing about reflective theory and practice in many professional contexts including education, have shown that reflection is a more challenging process than just sitting down and thinking about something we have learned or done.[2] They

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 243–256.
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propose that there is usually a difference between a teacher's 'espoused theories,' which define a teacher's ideals or beliefs, and his or her 'theories in use,' which describe what a teacher actually does. They explained, "When someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation … However, the theory that actually governs his actions is his theory-in-use, which may or may not be compatible with his espoused theory; furthermore, the individual may or may not be aware of the incompatibility of the two theories." They propose that successful reflection helps teachers identify incongruences between espoused theories and theories in use to develop internal consistency that leads to "hybrid theories of practice" (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

However, in their research and training seminars and workshops, Argyris and Schön found that developing effective hybrid theories of practices was often difficult because "we try to compartmentalize—to keep our espoused theory in one place and our theory-in-use in another, never allowing them to meet. One goes on speaking in the language of one theory, acting in the language of another, and maintaining the illusion of congruence through systematic self-deception" (Argyris & Schön, 1974).[3] All teachers, to some degree, face this inconsistency in their personal and professional lives. Well-known American educator Herbert Kohl commented that his ideals always "ran ahead" of his personal ability to teach according to them—that's why they are called "ideals" (Kohl, 2001). But not always fully and consistently reaching our ideals does not constitute failure; striving to always improve is the key to progress and success.

Fred Korthagen noted that while "there is considerable emphasis on promoting reflection in teachers … it is not always clear exactly what teachers are supposed to reflect on when wishing to become better teachers. What are important contents of reflection?" Korthagen posited an "onion model" of reflection (see Figure 1) to help teachers better understand reflection as a process of seeking "alignment" between their core beliefs and their actions. As a result of his research and workshops, he proposed that reflection should focus on "how to translate one's core qualities into concrete behaviour in a specific situation" in a quest to attain "complete 'alignment,'" a condition that admittedly may "take a lifetime to attain, if attained at all" (Korthagen, 2004). While this process may lead to some uneasiness on occasion, working through the cognitive, emotional, psychological, or even spiritual dissonance will help teachers have a greater impact in the classroom as their professional development translates their core beliefs into effective classroom behaviours.

In addition to Korthagen's model of reflection, another theoretical framework for this discussion was developed by Neville Hatton and David Smith, which includes four levels of reflection: technical, descriptive, dialogic, and critical (Hatton & Smith, 1995). The next four sections will define each level of reflection, present brief observations regarding how teachers engage in each level of reflection, and then offer a few suggestions for how teachers might engage in each type of reflection. The fifth section will present a model of teacher reflection and a brief case description that will hopefully help teachers and other stakeholders in

interfaith education more fully understand the process of reflection in a way that will contribute to a more meaningful learning experience for students as they lead the world into a new era of understanding and peace.[4]

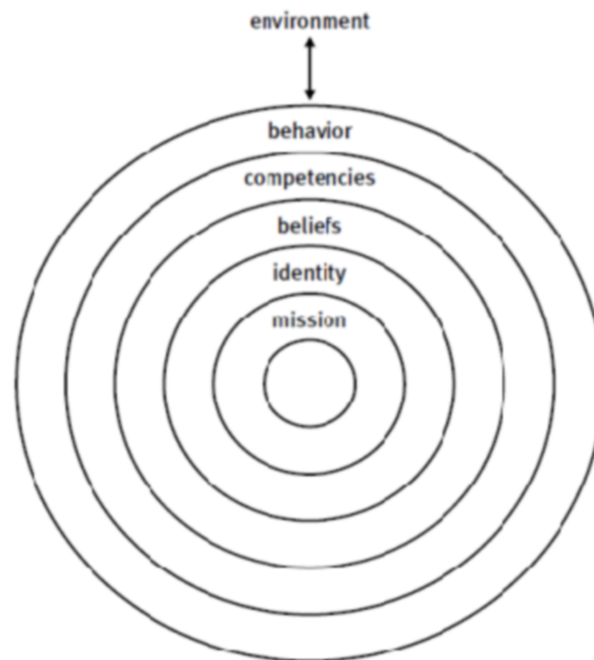

Figure 1. Korthagen's 'onion model' of reflection

Technical Reflection

The first level of reflection posited by Hatton and Smith, called technical reflection, involves "decision-making about immediate behaviours or skills … but always interpreted in light of personal worries and previous experiences" (Hatton & Smith, 1995). This level of reflection occurs after a teaching experience and involves an examination of one's use of teaching skills or general competencies (whether content based or methodological) in a controlled, small setting, such as the teacher's own classroom. This usually takes place in a 'reporting' fashion, whereby the teacher simply recounts what he or she did without providing reasons or justification for the decision or course of action. Teachers are doing technical reflection when they describe their teaching methods (without explaining the rationale behind choosing them), evaluate the frequency of student participation, think about the need for classroom discipline, examine lesson pacing, and other

such aspects of the learning experience. One teacher described technical reflection as "lesson correction reflection," the kind of reflection teachers engage in when thinking about how they can improve skills, competencies, and behaviors to make a lesson more effective. Another teacher posed the following question as a means for engaging in this kind of reflective experience, "If someone were to evaluate, … talking about a baseball pitch, did I get the mechanics right?"

For example, one aspect of the teaching experience that teachers may focus on when doing technical reflection is student participation. When teachers talk about student participation as an end in itself (i.e. whether or not students participated) without any explanation as to whether or not the participation was necessarily substantive or whether it connected to the learning outcome or some larger institutional objective, this represents technical reflection. While focusing on student participation can be valuable, discussion of this issue in the descriptive reflection section will show the potential problems of a teacher focusing strictly on promoting student participation without considering the purposes for doing so.

Teachers need to engage in reflective practices that evaluate their effective use of teaching skills. These practices cannot be viewed as insignificant or of little importance, as teachers strive to learn about, become familiar with, and employ 'best practices' in their teaching. However, teachers must also be cautious not to overemphasize technical reflection to the point that the pedagogy becomes an end in itself, as can sometimes happen. Teachers in interfaith education settings may fall into this trap if they subordinate the higher moral purposes of their teaching to merely using the classroom as a stage for pedagogical performance.

As with all levels of reflection, technical reflection needs to be connected to other levels of reflection in order for teachers to effectively merge theory and practice. While one might surmise that technical reflection would inevitably lead to descriptive reflection (wherein teachers explain their actions in context of their rationale for those actions), such a transition is not a guaranteed phenomenon. For example, when a teacher is observed, she may then report what happened in her classroom to a colleague or supervisor – this is technical reflection. But the reflection may not necessarily progress beyond that level. However, if she then engages in a collegial evaluation and exchange of ideas with a colleague or supervisor – to be discussed in more detail shortly as one form of dialogic reflection – the teacher can weigh differing perspectives with her own and then exchange, modify, or incorporate those competing ideas. However, observers and teachers should be aware that the level of trust in their relationship and the degree to which the teacher being observed feels secure will have a tremendous impact on that teacher's willingness and capacity to improve through such experiences. Low levels of trust between teacher and supervisor will most likely lead to reflection that does not progress beyond the technical level.

Korthagen surmised that teachers who are stuck in technical reflection and focus primarily on developing skills, behaviours, and competencies that never lead to other levels of reflection will not successfully align their classroom teaching with higher learning goals or institutional missions (Korthagen, 2004). Without any inclination to consider the rationale behind their actions, teachers cannot evaluate

whether their behaviours are effective or ineffective, good or bad, successful or unsuccessful—or if there is any way they might do things differently or better. Fortunately, teachers rarely seem to stay on this plateau permanently.

Descriptive Reflection

The next level of reflection in Hatton and Smith's model is descriptive reflection, which is "not only a description of events [i.e. technical reflection] but some attempt to provide reason [or] justification for events or actions" while taking into account "multiple factors and perspectives" (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Practices that lead teachers to engage in descriptive reflection include writing as teacher reflection practice, evaluating the value of student participation, emphasizing student learning over content dissemination, evaluating evidence for learning in student assessments, and planning for student analysis/reflection. The phrase "lesson correction reflection," introduced in the previous section on technical reflection, could also describe the practices and processes of descriptive reflection *if* teachers reflect on *why* they should make corrections in their teaching.

When teachers engage in "lesson correction reflection" at the level of descriptive reflection, they are doing more than just reporting on their decisions and actions in the classroom; they are connecting *what* they did with *why*. An example of the difference between the technical level and the descriptive level could be seen in how teachers talk about evaluating student participation. When teachers talk about student participation as if its mere presence was an indication of successful teaching, they are usually engaging solely in technical reflection. While evaluating one national teacher education program in the United States, Thomas Popkewitz claimed that an "educator's focus [solely on whether or not students participated in class] rendered the intellectual content (substance) of the lessons inconsequential. Substance was subordinated to pedagogic form and style." He said that this was most likely to happen "when enjoyment became one of the primary objects of instruction." If "success was indicated by the degree to which students 'felt good' about the lesson, and whether they 'participated' actively in the lesson and its attendant discussion," then pupil involvement would replace student understanding of the substance of the lesson (Popkewitz, 1998).

Some contemporary researchers have argued that this has taken place in religious education settings in America, leading to a shallow understanding of basic beliefs and religious practices among teenagers in America (Dean, 2010; Smith, 2005). Richard Rymarz warned about this danger specifically in religious education settings when he argued that "one important reason behind the lack of religious content knowledge [among students] is the reluctance of teachers to move beyond the experiential world of students" (Rymarz, 2007). Teachers in interfaith education settings could engage in descriptive reflection when they wrestle with reflective questions that help maintain an appropriate balance between teaching content and engaging students in the learning process, such as: 'Did students' comments in class demonstrate understanding of the ideas being discussed in class?' or 'Did students engage in dialogue with one another in a way that

broadened their perspective?' or 'Did student questions during a learning experience manifest an attitude of inquiry that will lead to deeper learning?'

By engaging in descriptive reflection of this kind, teachers will be more likely to ensure that student participation during learning experiences leads to meaningful cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes (Wong, Sweat, & Gardner, 2016). For example, giving students opportunities to practice articulating what they have learned in class to others will help them be prepared to use the knowledge they have gained in other settings. Unfortunately, teachers frequently talk about student participation in technically reflective terms rather than descriptively reflective terms – i.e., "There was a lot of student participation today in class," or "75% of the students talked in our class discussion today." Comments such as these seem to emphasize student participation as an inherently desirable or positive outcome of teaching, as the end goal rather than as a means to other objectives.

Descriptive reflection is critical for teachers in interfaith education because it requires them to explain the rationale behind their decisions in the classroom – to engage in "deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement." While some teachers strive to engage in descriptive reflection via reflective writing about their own teaching or through evaluating their teaching performance in light of personal teaching goals or assessment of student work, they may often feel that they have little time to engage in these practices regularly. And when teachers do engage in these practices, they may not consistently include larger institutional mission statements or community interests as an explicit part of their rationale.

As will be shown in the model introduced later in this chapter, descriptive reflection is a vital link connecting technical reflection (often viewed as more practical) with critical reflection (often viewed as more theoretical or philosophical). Teachers need to develop skills and practices related to descriptive reflection in order to integrate the four levels of reflection and attain the benefits for doing so. The more teachers engage in 'reflection-on-action,' the more likely they are to develop the ability to engage in 'reflection-in-action' (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Descriptive reflection can lead teachers to align their classroom behaviours more closely with both their mission and values in interfaith education settings. While teachers are often implicitly striving to accomplish the broader aims of their respective institutions and communities, practicing more consistent descriptive reflection leads to greater unity between all stakeholders so that interfaith education efforts can move forward with greater cohesion and effectiveness. Teachers who articulate an explicit rationale for their classroom behaviours through descriptive reflection are also more likely to effectively bridge the gap between 'espoused theories' and 'theories in use' so that their 'hybrid theories of practice' become more consistent and easier to evaluate and improve.

Teachers who do not become skilled in descriptive reflection risk at least two potential problems. On one hand, teachers arrested in the supposedly more practical realm of technical reflection may risk being perpetually baffled by the fact that a particular method or activity works in one class but not in another, as they continue to blindly employ the same pedagogical practices or activities despite classroom dynamics, the needs of individual students, differences in subject matter,

etc. On the other hand, teachers arrested in the supposedly more philosophical realm of critical reflection (to be discussed in more detail later) risk ethereal discussions and ponderings over ideas and concepts pertaining to identity, mission, and values without giving sufficient consideration to how effective pedagogical practice impacts student learning.

Dialogic Reflection

The third level of teacher reflection proposed by Hatton and Smith is dialogic reflection. When teachers engage in dialogic reflection, they are "weighing competing claims and viewpoints, and then exploring alternative solutions" (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Teachers engage in dialogic reflection when they are working with instructional supervisors, such as a school principal, seeking and receiving feedback, as well as giving feedback to others, and seeking to further their own education, either through graduate programs or other professional training opportunities. In regard to furthering their own education in connection with their own professional field, many teachers feel their educational experiences inform their own teaching practice. Another way that teachers engaged in dialogic reflection is by reading professional material, such as books or journals that have to do with their field.

Many teachers feel that an instructional supervisor can be a key figure in their dialogic reflective practices. Instructional supervisors might be a school administrator (a principal for example) a department chair or even a peer mentor. Such instructional leaders have many opportunities to influence the improvement of teaching. For example, a school principal potentially has more direct instructional leadership interface time with teachers than any other individual through teacher observations, if the school has a structured program for carrying out such observations. Many teachers have found that such instructional leaders, with whom they (then) can form a strong relationship, can have a significant impact on their professional development. Working with such instructional leaders overlaps with the dialogic reflective practices of seeking, receiving, and giving feedback. Seeking, giving, and receiving feedback can also occur as teachers collaborate with other faculty to prepare lessons and consult with other colleagues to solve problems. Most teachers recognize that dialogic reflection with an instructional leader and/or with immediate colleagues or faculty could have a positive impact on improving their teaching.

However, dialogic reflection may not always be perceived as having a clear connection to other levels of reflection. This apparent disassociation may result when teachers engage in dialogic reflection so frequently and/or informally that its connection is almost invisible because of its obviousness, like a fish that doesn't realize it is swimming in water. However, this is heavily dependent on the degree to which a particular educational setting provides opportunities that promote, encourage, or support dialogic reflection. Most of the potentially reflective practices identified by those who have studied professional reflection (Gardner, 2011; Peters & Weisberg, 2011; Hess & Brookfield, 2008) inherently promote or

support dialogic reflection. These practices include teachers observing other teachers as well as supervisors observing teachers. It may also include the following activities: holding in-service meetings, seeking higher education, reading handbooks and other materials pertinent to one's professional performance, using formal professional growth plans, attending professional conferences, engaging in professional learning communities, discussing teaching practices informally with colleagues, planning lessons collaboratively, learning from mentors, reviewing lesson plans with an instructional supervisor or colleague, and reading from professional journals. In all these potentially reflective practices, teachers are – or can be – encouraged to weigh competing claims and viewpoints as they explore possible solutions to the problems and challenges they face in their teaching. Teachers who engage regularly in dialogically reflective practices avoid the insular dangers of a form of 'intellectual inbreeding,' which prevents teachers from broadening horizons or seeking improvement because of convenience, fear, or insecurity in one form or another.

As will be seen in the model proposed in this chapter, dialogic reflection can and should cross all levels of reflection in an effort to consistently engage the teacher in dialogue with others. Sadly, "the typical milieu of the school makes it difficult for teachers to see themselves as learners, to reflect on practice, and to create a collaborative, intellectual environment that sustains them as a community of learners" (Blase & Blase, 2004). Teachers in individual classrooms and offices can become somewhat isolated without any form of dialogic reflection. A skilled and trusted dialogic partner can provide a helpful objective 'mirror' for a teacher stuck in technical reflection. In dialogic reflection, teachers can compare what they think happened in class with what other teachers or supervisors observed. Skilled dialogic partners can also ask teachers searching questions, or offer suggestions that help them articulate the rationale behind their behaviour as teachers. Skilled dialogic partners can also help teachers ask questions or put forth ideas of a critically reflective nature that help teachers consider their alignment with institutional objectives and their impact on the students, the rest of the faculty, and the larger community.

Critical Reflection

Hatton and Smith wrote that there are three primary aspects of critical reflection in which professional educators might engage: (a) "seeing as problematic, according to ethical criteria, the goals and practices of one's profession," (b) "thinking about the effects upon others of one's actions," and (c) "taking account of social, political and/or cultural forces." Teachers engaging in critical reflection "[demonstrate] an awareness that actions and events are not only located in, and explicable by, reference to multiple perspectives but are located in, and influenced by multiple historical, and socio-political contexts" (Hatton & Smith, 1995). They pointed out that teachers might engage in this kind of reflection on their own or with others.

Critical reflection can be an intriguing level of reflection to investigate and analyse. Depending on the culture of any given educational setting and the cultural

context in which it exists, teachers may or may not generally consider elements of critical reflection pertaining to race, gender, or social justice. If teachers feel insecure or unsafe, they may be reticent to discuss such issues even when invited to do so. This may be the case if teachers are working in a setting that is largely racially and/or religiously homogenous, or conversely where the environment is extremely racially or politically charged, either by tradition or by a recent local event (such as race riots, immigration protests, etc.).

While evidence of all three aspects of critical reflection can usually be observed among all teachers (even if only latently), most teachers are focused on "thinking about the effects upon others of one's actions." Most teachers, if not all, care deeply about the impact of their teaching on their students. We hope that students will grow and develop and progress as a result of the time spent in our classroom—otherwise we wouldn't likely have chosen this profession.

However, even though teachers seem to readily engage in this aspect of critical reflection, reflective practices among teachers may not effectively transmit a teacher's critical reflection into action in the classroom. While teachers generally say that they 'hope' what happens in the classroom would have an impact on their students, they may not generally seek to explain specifically 'how' they think what they do in the classroom will have a specific impact. This is not to say that the teachers can't do this, it is just to say that teachers don't always have any particular reflective practice – either formal or informal, personal or institutional—that encourages them to make these connections on a regular basis.

This lack of connection between teachers' 'espoused theories' (what they say they hope they are accomplishing) could be overcome through the effective evaluation of 'theories in use' (i.e., technical practices and reflection) via descriptive and dialogical reflective means to generate effective 'hybrid theories of practice,' as mentioned earlier by Argyris and Schön. It is vitally important for teachers to make explicit connections between the aims of their critical reflection and their technical reflection via descriptive and dialogic reflection if they are going to effectively merge theory and practice. This will help them avoid the 'directionless change' that comes from 'competence without purpose' as well as the 'inefficiency and frustration' that comes from 'purpose without competence' (Glickmam, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004).

AN INTEGRATED MODEL AND CASE DESCRIPTION OF REFLECTION FOR MERGING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Each level of reflection serves a useful purpose in merging theory and practice for those engaged in interfaith education. However, this merging will be greatly enhanced if teachers will learn to integrate the various levels of reflection as a function of their professional activities and development. This integration of the levels of reflection can accomplish four related purposes that have been referred to previously in this study.

First, teachers who can effectively integrate the four levels of 'reflection-on-action' will move closer to 'reflection-in-action.' Hatton and Smith described

'reflection-in-action' as "the ability to apply, singly or in combination, qualitatively distinctive kinds of reflection (namely technical, descriptive, dialogic, or critical) to a given situation as it is unfolding. In other words, the professional practitioner is able consciously to think about an action as it is taking place, making sense of what is happening and shaping successive practical steps using multiple viewpoints as appropriate" (Hatton & Smith, 1995). One teacher, shared the following basketball analogy (but other sports work also) to illustrate 'reflection-in-action': "When [a highly skilled basketball player] is driving the ball down the court, he sees a certain opening. [He] doesn't call timeout, go over, get into his files, and say, 'Oh yeah, this move has worked in that situation.' He doesn't even think about it; he just does it. I'd like to become the kind of teacher that has … a thousand tools at my disposal that I use often enough that at any moment I can grab that tool." Just like a professional athlete, professional teachers are not likely to develop this kind of reflective automaticity without an understanding of and practice with the various types of reflection through activities that engage them in actual reflection.

The second objective that can be accomplished with the successful integration of the various levels of reflection is the 'alignment' between a teacher's core sense of identity, beliefs, and mission and his or her competencies, skills, and behaviours in the classroom. Teachers who develop this alignment – or, who are at least progressing toward it, since Korthagen admitted that complete alignment may "take a lifetime to attain, if attained at all" – increase their effectiveness in the classroom by having a clarified understanding of their purpose and a clear direction for how to accomplish it. This will likely also increase a teacher's "professional trustworthiness" (Skinner, 2008), which will greatly enhance the student-teacher relationship, a vital aspect of interfaith education (Geiger, 2015). Without this alignment, teachers constantly risk disruptions by 'Gestalt' – these are the default behaviours that teachers employ independent of, and often contrary to, professional training or espoused theories as they face inevitable dynamic challenges in their efforts to teach students (Korthagen, 2004). Teachers who cease striving for this professional alignment by integrating the various levels of reflection also face personal stagnation in their professional development as they potentially fixate on only one level of reflection.

Third, educators who integrate the various levels of teacher reflection enable themselves to see more clearly their 'espoused theories,' identify incongruences between their 'espoused theories' and their 'theories-in-use,' and develop working and ever-improving 'hybrid theories of practice.' As teachers evaluate their actions, endeavour to make implicit assumptions explicit, and formulate new lenses for viewing and evaluating their practice, they become more effective and more satisfied in their work.

Fourth, as teachers overcome the discomfort of their 'cognitive dissonance' and integrate the four levels of reflection addressed in this study, they move toward Glickman's ideal of teachers who "assume full responsibility for instructional improvement" (Glickmam, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004). Of course, this does not refer to teachers who engage in isolated professional development (this would

completely ignore the dialogic level of reflection) but to teachers who successfully integrate the four levels of reflection and take primary responsibility for their own sustained professional development. Teachers pursuing this course will constantly be seeking to improve the learning experience for students in interfaith education settings.

The following model (Figure 2) illustrates how the four levels of reflection might operate within reflective practices and processes commonly found to exist in most educational settings. In this model, descriptive reflection is shown as a critical link between technical reflection and critical reflection. The arrow indicates how dialogic reflection crosses through the other three levels of reflection and integrates all levels of reflection in a process that leads to successfully merging theory and practice. This also reflects the vital need for dialogic reflection among teachers and how various dialogically reflective practices can support and promote teacher engagement in other levels of reflection.

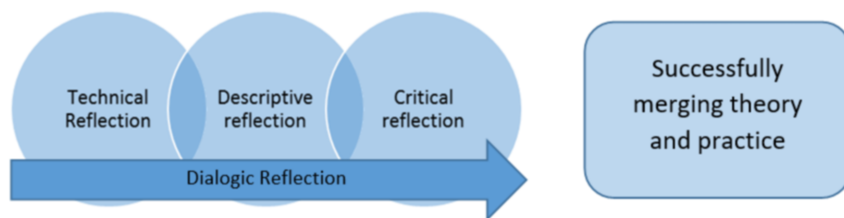

Figure 2. Integrated model of reflection

Perhaps a brief case description will illustrate how a teacher, with the help of an informed and attentive instructional leader, can use this model to more effectively merge theory and practice. While this illustrative example is hypothetical and includes more elements of reflection than might reasonably be pursued by a single teacher, it does represent actual practices and processes employed by teachers in various educational settings.

Rachel, a social studies teacher who has been teaching a world religions class for one year, arranges several formative classroom observations with her principal. Each observation, including meaningful pre-observation and post-observation visits, focuses on a different aspect of Rachel's teaching. For example, one observation focuses on her use of questions in class. Another observation focuses on not just the existence of student participation, but the content and value of it. Another focuses on how Rachel's choice of content and teaching methods helps her accomplish specific institutional objectives with her students. After each observation, Rachel writes a brief summary of what she did in class, why she chose to do it, and how her decisions relate to her personal teaching goals as well as prescribed learning outcomes and institutional goals and mission. After reviewing her notes and pondering the feedback from her principal, Rachel uses a

professional growth plan to formulate a goal to work on improving the quality of student participation. She includes in her goal statement specific objectives she would like to accomplish, why she thinks student participation is important, and how different types of student participation will accomplish a specific institutional objective. She shares this goal with her principal.

Subsequent classroom observations with the principal focus on evaluating student participation methods and whether Rachel and the principal feel that the purposes for the participation are being accomplished. During each pre-observation visit, Rachel gives a copy of her lesson plan to the principal and together they discuss how the student participation in that lesson will help Rachel accomplish this goal. The post-observation visits focus on these same objectives. Rachel also asks her students occasionally to share with her how they feel about their participation in class. Sometimes Rachel and the principal plan a lesson together to see how they could incorporate effective participation techniques in a way that will help the content of the lesson be meaningful for students and have a more significant impact on them.

The principal also encourages Rachel to search for books or articles in professional journals that might help her and the rest of the faculty to improve student participation in their classrooms. The principal might even engage in this search as well. The principal then asks Rachel to give a faculty in-service training on the subject to share what she has learned and lead a discussion with other teachers. Rachel and the principal review the professional growth plan monthly to discuss how Rachel's efforts to improve student participation are helping her to accomplish the goals she has set. They also collect evidence from student assessments to determine whether Rachel is accomplishing these goals. When they feel that sufficient progress has been made and that Rachel is ready to focus on another goal, they might employ similar reflective procedures to help Rachel continue this pattern of reflection to merge theory and practice throughout her career.

CONCLUSION

All stakeholders in interfaith education – program administrators, parents, as well as teachers – already engage in some sort of reflection whether they articulate it as such or not. Most teachers in interfaith education understand the complexities of their academic field, as well as in the lived experience of their students – they want to be reflective about their praxis, but often are untrained in how to do so. The observations and recommendations in this chapter illustrate principles of reflection that can be combined into a model of reflection to guide teachers, as well as other stakeholders, in engaging more deliberately in reflection so we can work together with greater alignment between pedagogical theory, institutional mission, and teacher practice to increase the impact of interfaith education. Sadly, the culture wars, religious tensions, unabated terrorism, and so forth, of the first two decades of the 21st century have demonstrated that earlier generations have not been fully prepared to function in peace and harmony in a religiously diverse globalized

world. The next two decades will determine whether the first generation of the 21st century has been better prepared. But we cannot wait that long to implement sound interfaith educational programs. These programs must already be firmly in place and be leading the way into a world where all worldviews that promote peaceful living and human flourishing are tolerated and respected.

NOTES

[1] For more on the vital need for this aspect of education in schools, universities, and other educational programs, see Gardner, Soules, and Valk (2017), Wertheimer (2015), Lester (2013), Alexander and Agbaria (2012), Patel (2012), Nord (2010), Moore (2007), Feinberg (2006), and Eck (2001).

[2] For more on the work of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, see Argyris and Schön (1974), and Schön (1983, 1987, 1991).

[3] For more on the subtle and systematic ways that people engage in self-deception, see Arbinger Institute (2002). For a similar treatment of how individuals and institutions can fall victim to a form of self-deception that Bolman and Deal (2003) simply call 'cluelessness.'

[4] The observations and suggestions in this study are grounded in the author's dissertation study (Gardner, 2011); see also Gardner and Freeman (2011).

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URSULA GÜNTHER

20. EMBRACING DIVERSITY

Insights from an Outside Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Greetings. I am pleased to see we are different.
May we together become greater than the sum of all of us.

The traditional Vulcan greeting from Star Trek, here contextualized by replacing both of us with all of us, beautifully encapsulates the message at the heart of the publication *Interfaith Education for All*. Academics and practitioners in the field of interfaith education from Europe, Africa, the Middle and Far East, and North America provide insights into their conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and practical work and their engagement with the broad spectrum of interfaith education. This is also a journey through many different countries: Scotland, Malaysia, Belgium, the Netherlands, The Gambia, the United States, Germany, England and Finland. The perspectives represented are Christian, Islamic, and Hindu, with a further chapter dedicated to Paganism as an element of the Scottish context.

Embracing diversity as the title of my reflections states, refers to the most important shared attitude that emerged during the reading of these contributions and that I would consider programmatic, indeed, a political impetus towards a shared just and peaceful future. My own backgrounds are that of a scholar of Islamic Studies and Religious Education with many years of experience in teaching and research, a citizen active in interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and an intellectual nomad charged with developing the new field of intercultural church in a church district in Germany.

After briefly outlining some trends that are central to engaging with interfaith education and its intended goal, interfaith dialogue in a globalized world, I will try to summarize and contrast the aspects that unite the various chapters. This will partly be done in the form of graphs. Some more fundamental thoughts on the publication in its entirety will follow, leading up to a conclusion that draws on the symbolic significance of the rhizome to highlight the special qualities of this anthology and its conceptual potential for further research and future practice.

TRENDS IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

There is no doubt that religion is a fashionable topic. It is present more than ever in the media, politics, academia, and in the public sphere. This is contrary to all

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 257–271.
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predictions of the inevitable decline into insignificance and ultimate disappearance of religion in the face of a supposedly unstoppable secularization process. Most societies worldwide are already culturally and religiously diverse today, but this social reality does not universally square with the perception of social normality. This dissonance can result in uncertainty and insecurity or gives rise to diffuse fears of subversion and the threat posed by the unfamiliar other. One explanation for this phenomenon is the widespread break with established tradition, the resulting religious illiteracy both regarding the reference system of one's own traditional religion and that of others, and the decline of institutionalized religion. Political and educational failures to recognize the need to equip citizens for a productive engagement with diversity and the attendant transformation processes also played a role here.

The rise of right-wing populism we are seeing not just in Europe today latches onto exactly these fears, using arguments rooted in hostility towards religions. This assists the normalization of anti-Muslim racism, direct and indirect Antisemitism, and xenophobia which have found their way back into public discourse in many countries within and outside Europe today.

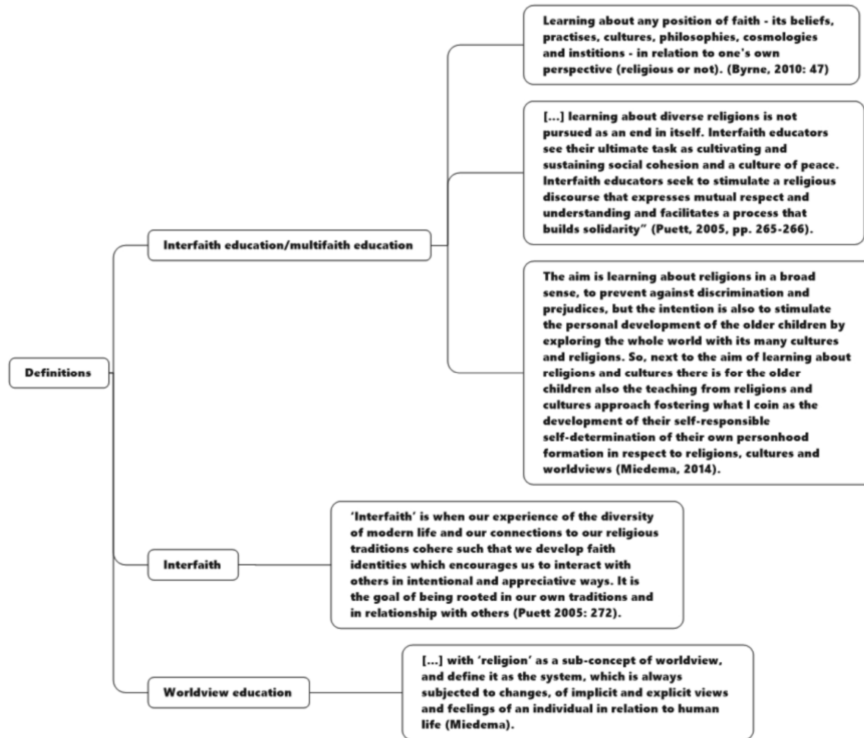
Pluriform societies, i.e. those characterized by a high degree of complexity and diversity, raise the question what role religion plays in such a society and how it intends to approach the issue now and in future. The term 'pluriform' adopted from Dutch emphasizes (much more than the more commonly used, but less differentiated 'pluralist') the fact that all diversity is not only manifested in the simultaneous existence of different systems such as e.g. religious communities, but is also a characteristic feature of those systems themselves e.g. in the case of traditionalist Scripture-oriented and more secular adherents of the same religion (Nusser, 2005, p. 9, note 1). Thus, 'pluriform' also points to the common erroneous assumption that social, cultural, or religious systems are internally homogenous.

One of the greatest current challenges is to counteract the widespread speechlessness with regard to addressing religious and cultural diversity and to develop a common language for all stakeholders to dialogically create a shared future and enable coming generations to engage with external and attendant internal diversity in a practical and productive manner.

Reading the various chapters of this publication, it becomes clear that interfaith education and the dialogue it seeks to enable have the potential to successfully meet this challenge.

CONNECTING AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTING ASPECTS

For greater clarity, I will systematically present the various concepts and terms from the field of interfaith education in a map augmented with brief definitions from the respective chapters. These will be completed by a schematic representation of the abilities and competences students should develop.

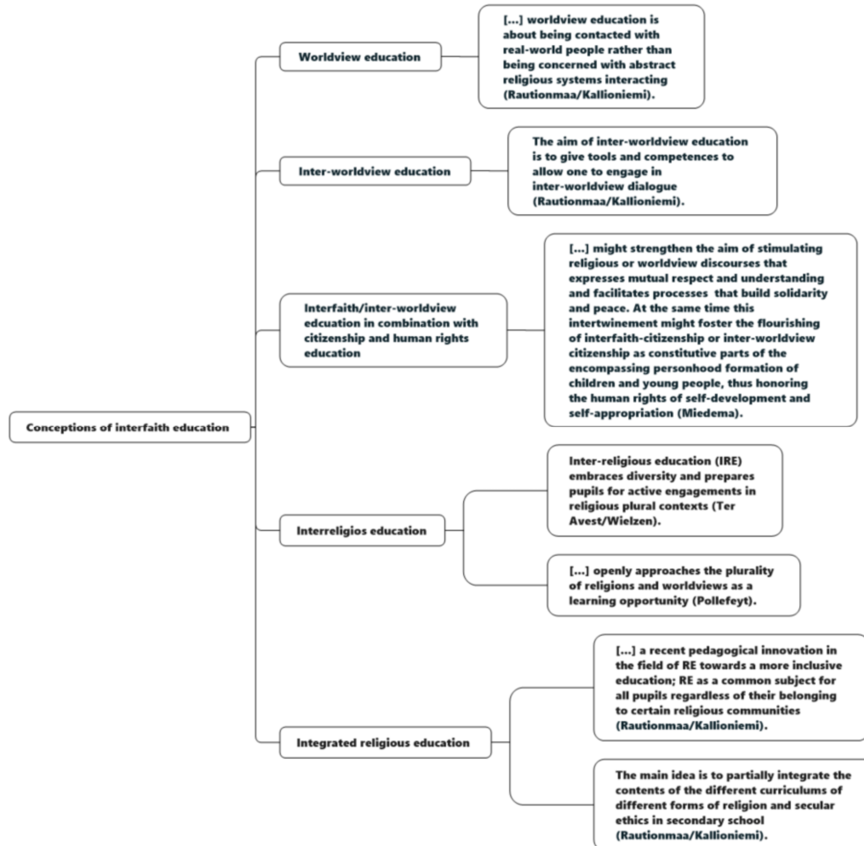


Map 1. Definitions

Though each chapter stands on its own and explicit references to others are rare, it is possible to identify many instances if in some cases multiple interconnectedness. Some of these are obvious, some only become visible at a second glance. The reader is accorded a view of a breathtakingly impressive weave.

A few examples should illustrate this: Part One of the book concentrates on the conceptual framework of interfaith education, also taking into account so-called neighbour-concepts such as interreligious and inter-worldview education as well as the combination with citizenship and human rights education, laying out the theoretical and resulting methodological foundations and developments for these.

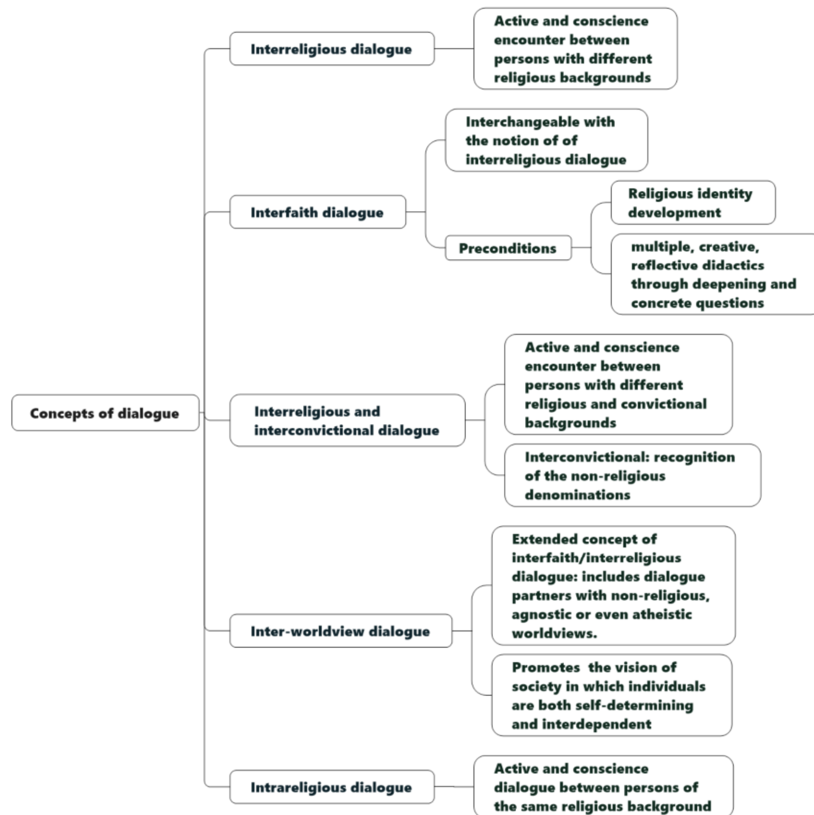
This provides the reader with an important basis to better understand the chapters in Part Two which deal with the practical realization of interfaith education in different contexts. The varying degree to which they introduce their theoretical and methodological approaches more or less exhaustively is a contribution to academic diversity that illustrates the interpretative scope and the



Map 2. Conceptions of interfaith education

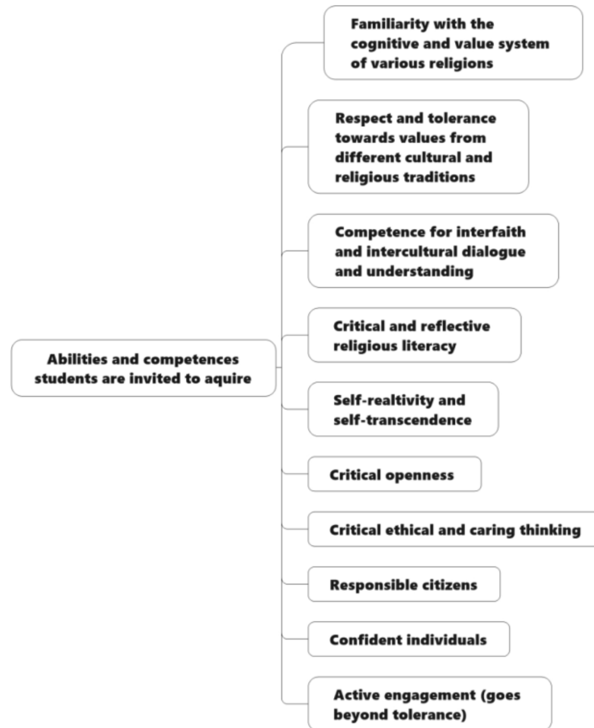
art of contextualizing conceptual frameworks. It also points to the flexibility, liberty and creativity of research in selecting, prioritizing and combining theoretical and conceptual approaches according to the requirements of the respective context.

The countries from which the case studies or good practices originate are also connected in some instances. Malaysia and Belgium, for instance, both address Hikmah pedagogy, raising the question how this concept transfers from one context to another. This is also an issue in the cases of both The Gambia and the Netherlands through the Gambian request for educational assistance with regard to incorporate interreligious education within the curriculum of its Islamic Knowledge and Christian Religious Education divisions of the Religious Studies Department in order to develop a pilot module.



Map 3. Concepts of dialogue

Several practical examples from a variety of religious backgrounds originate in the Netherlands, giving us a broad view of the Dutch interfaith landscape. The notably large number of models and approaches to interreligious dialogue from the perspective of Islamic religious education compensates a deficit in previous research. It should serve to both enrich the academic engagement with Islamic concepts and schools and contribute to a more differentiated public perception of Islam. The latter currently suffers greatly from negative stereotypes and adscriptions with regard to both Islam and Islamic values in general, and to its ability and willingness to conduct interreligious dialogue specifically. While this is often vehemently demanded, Islam and Muslims are often simultaneously assumed to lack the competence for it, placing many Muslims in a double bind.



Map 4. Abilities and competences students are invited to acquire

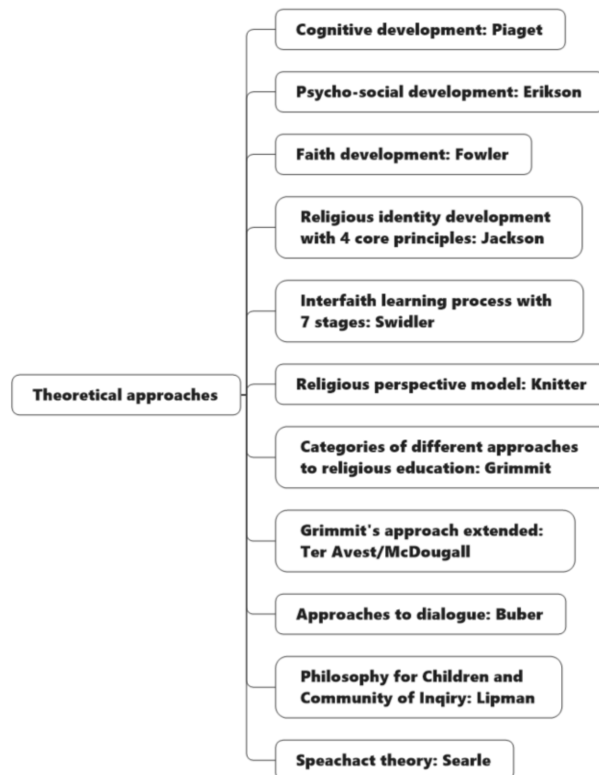
The engagement with Paganism in Scotland seems unconnected to any other chapter at first sight. At a second glance, we can see it as an example of newer phenomena such as e.g. a growing identification with past belief systems – in the Scottish context, Paganism – that can be embraced and appreciated as part of a growing diversity. It is only consistent to put this attitude into practice by integrating Paganism into Religious and Moral Education (RME). This demonstrates that things can be changed when the situation calls for it, all the more so since the intent to do so has been declared in public already.

The US interfaith curriculum *Faith Seeker Kids* stands as an impressive example that equality for all can be realized and successfully implemented while individual faith positions are asserted unequivocally. Its foundational statement: “It is our assertion that each tradition imparts wisdom about how we might care for our earth, interact with the sacred, and live in harmony with one another,” is an encouraging and hopeful sign for everybody’s future.

Finally, the sum of the individual chapters will leave the reader with an extensive overview of current research in interfaith education and its theoretical foundations as well as profound insights into its practical application and the

attendant challenges, including an introduction to new teaching materials and the methodical and didactic toolkit. At the same time, it shows areas in which future research is needed, e.g. on the role of teachers and the formation of their professional identity.

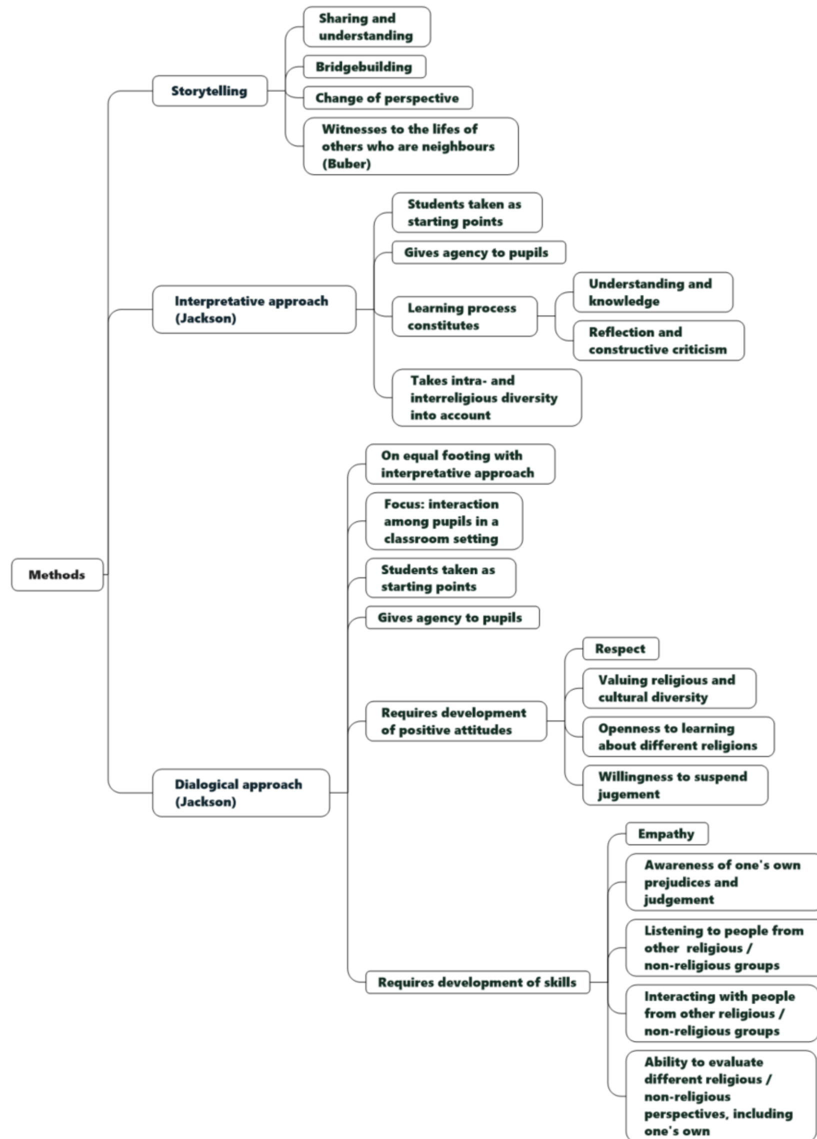
The various theoretical and methodological approaches and teacher-related factors are listed in Maps 5–7.



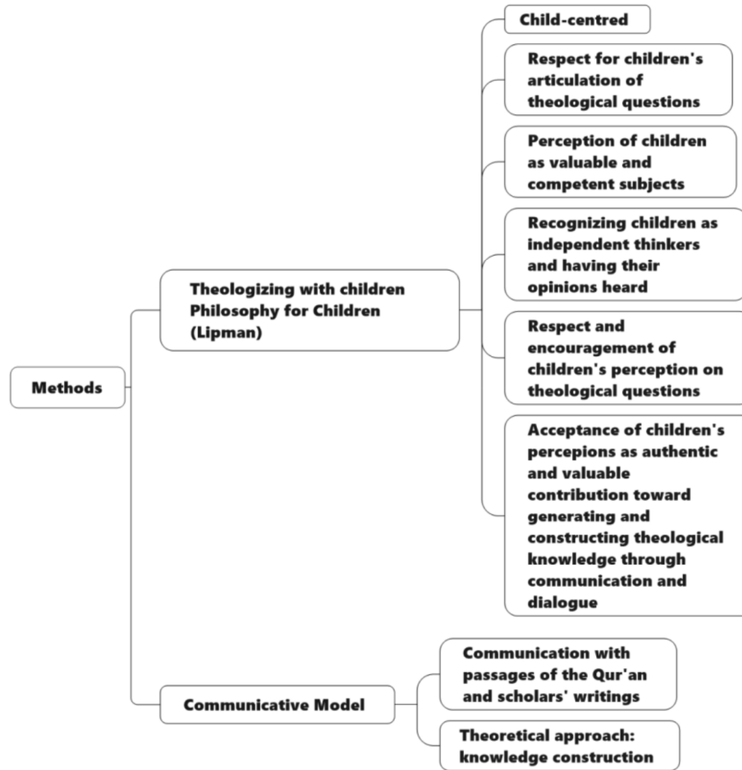
Map 5. Theoretical approaches

FURTHER THOUGHTS

It is apparent that schools and educators need to, and in most cases, are also willing to, change direction to further mutual understanding and respect among children through religious education and this contribute to greater social cohesion and peace. How this is realized will depend on the context, among other aspects on the



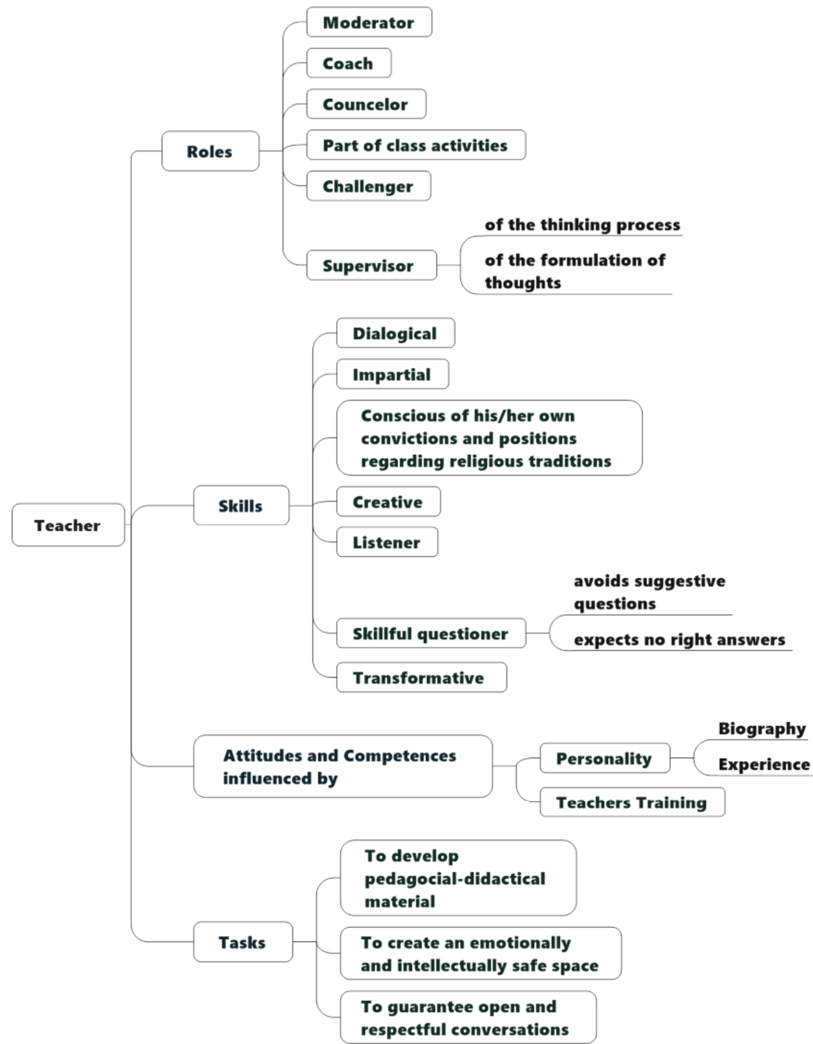
Map 6a. Methods first part



Map 6b. Methods second part

type of school i.e. public or confessional school, the school reality, i.e. internal and external religious diversity or mono-religiosity, on the organization of religious education, educational policy guidelines, the possibilities of teacher training and further education, and not least on the teachers themselves.

School practice as well as teacher training try to fulfil the requirements set by those in charge of religious education policy, and in so doing, they often lag behind both the current needs of changing societies and the latest findings of academic research in the field despite a growing awareness at the European level that religious education is central to developing tolerance and the capacity for dialogue in pluriform societies. Numerous recommendations by the Council of Europe bear witness to this. First, there is the *Recommendation of the Committee of ministers to Member States on the dimension of religions and nonreligious convictions within intercultural education*; second, the *White paper on intercultural dialogue: Living together as equals in dignity*; both dating to 2008, and third, the 2014 publication *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious*



Map 7. Relevant factors with regard to teachers in interfaith education

world views in intercultural education. These recommendations share the fate of findings and guidance from the various academic disciplines that formulate criteria and standards for interfaith education: they are gratefully received, but their implementation often fails in the respective national contexts. It should be pointed out here that the Council of Europe recommendations recognized social reality by

according non-religious world views the same status as religions as early as 2008. This is important because freedom of religion always also protects the right to espouse no religious belief, an idea that people do not always respect or are even aware of.

Translating pedagogical findings into school practice is always a lengthy process beset with lengthy decision-making processes and negotiations to balance the interests of numerous stakeholders and take account of the structural and political requirements for religious education curricula and the contextual conditions it is taught in. It is certainly plausible for the social context to have undergone changes in the time leading up to implementation, and that these changes have practical consequences that the original plan could not have accounted for. Such changes include the impact of the global political situation on specific social groups or entire nations such as e.g. the attempted 2016 coup in Turkey or the European refugee crisis.

For pedagogical, methodological and strategic changes to be implemented in a timely manner and to be able to react to requirements as they arise, several preconditions need to be met: First, manoeuvring room, both administrative and mental; second, a differentiated awareness of methodology as well as the possibilities and limitations of methods and perspectives in different contexts; resulting from this, third, accounting for alternatives that open strategic options; this requiring, fourth, tolerance for errors and, fifth, outward transparency that also applies to the questioning of seemingly safely defined terms and universal assumptions.

Once the pupils move into focus, both the necessity and the potential of a paradigm shift become clear. Many traditional approaches are characterized by power asymmetries in both structure and the division of responsibility. These are evident e.g. in the choice of material for teacher training, the design and acceptance of curricula and teaching materials, the selection and examination of teachers etc. This culminates in the question: Who has final say?

The representatives of theologies and dogmas often compete with those of religious communities for the highest priority, both usually claiming interpretative authority. The former justifies their claim with their scholarly expertise, the latter as experts in religious praxis as evidenced by the acceptance they find as individuals and leaders in their communities. This has become significant especially with regard to Islamic religious education, an issue that only became current in many European countries over the past two decades. Who is at the top of the hierarchy depends on the respective national and regional context. Islamic religious education should also receive particular attention here because it is often not represented or has not long been represented at universities either through chairs of Islamic Religious Education or the – rarer still – chairs of Islamic Religious Studies (analogous to those of Christian theology). These chairs and the possibility they offer of developing a contextualized theology and religious pedagogy are a relatively new phenomenon in Europe. It is clear that the government's previous partners drawn from religious communities are unwilling to simply cede their influence on these academics who may have no ties to the

community at all. At the same time, the newly installed Islamic theologians face double scrutiny: Both from the non-Muslim majority and from the Muslim associations and umbrella organizations who claim to represent the Muslims in their entirety. An open and possibly controversial debate over whether intra-Islamic diversity is properly taken into account here is made nearly impossible in many European countries by a public mood hostile to all things Islamic. Nonetheless, we can state: Embracing diversity does not only concern encounters with the religiously and culturally other, but also engaging with one's own religious and cultural reference system that can be envisioned in the plural.

That the pupils are in last place in the pyramid highlights several aspects addressed in various chapters of this publication:

– Hierarchical models tend to be inflexible and too unresponsive to react adequately and quickly to changing conditions.
– They also tend to look to unilateral control over decision making based on an assumed superiority based on age or experience than to dialogical, democratic negotiation processes among equals that aim for win-win solutions.
– The educational focus is oriented towards deficits i.e. educators are assumed to be in possession of knowledge and experience that the pupils (yet) lack. Their resources play a subordinate role if they matter at all.
– Pupils must deal with the hidden curriculum imposed by the religious communities, regardless of whether it meets their needs and fits their reality or not.
– The same applies to teachers.
– The pupils' capacity and potential is not only underestimated, even their age-appropriate theological competence is denied.
– This raises the question of exclusivity of religious truth in the context of re-appropriations within one's own religious tradition and faith while closing its eyes to the internal diversity of religious world views.

The plea for a paradigm shift towards a child-centred approach unfolds with impressive clarity. Thought through to its final consequence and taken seriously in its scope, the approach is quickly revealed to be uncomfortable due to its considerable critical and confrontative potential. Established hierarchies with their attendant privileges and exclusive interpretative authority are upended. The question of power must be entirely renegotiated, as must the issue of preserving and changing, of the static and dynamic approach. The explosive potential becomes evident once we realize that a child-centred approach must accept the children giving answers and engaging with religious matters in ways that are temporary and therefore dynamic. This opens the door to growth and change. The learners' approaches change, but they remain true at every stage of their development. This will require different competences of teachers in order to address the differing pedagogical setting for their approaches to the subject matter.

The advantage of a child-centred approach is that it – and thus the competences it instils – develops from the inside out. This guarantees its long-term effectiveness. It is also dynamic and flexible and requires creativity since it accompanies learners on the path of their development and must develop with

them. In the face of inflexible structures and ironclad procedures for interfaith education, this makes great demands of the teachers and the educators of those teachers. Patience is needed until its full transformative potential can unfold.

All paradigm shifts involve the surrender of privileges. A child-centred approach could contribute to ending the ongoing struggle of minority groups for legal and social recognition and validation. This could serve as an impulse to shift the focus from the desire for identity reassurance towards openness for the religiously and culturally other, turning away from the dichotomy of us vs. them towards the development of a new we conceived in solidarity. This way, embracing diversity can become a social norm. We must discover and tolerate that the supposedly absolute claims of our own faith are not exclusive, but that others make similar claims. This may be painful, but it also holds the potential for all parties to open up new spaces that can contribute to a better form of coexistence supported by the experience and conviction that everyone is part of a greater whole, connected with everyone and everything, and actively contributing to a society that is peaceful, just, and respectful, founded on mutual recognition and the preservation of creation.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION: THE RHIZOME AS A SYMBOL OF A PARADIGM SHIFT

This publication unites a number of elements leading to a new whole and in doing so, points to the end of polar categories of thought and analysis. The whole unfolds amid a radical plurality and multiplicity of meaning. Such diversity cannot be reduced to or bundled into a unitary state, however much more convenient and, in the context of developing an interfaith education that applies or transfers to different contexts, more practical this would be. This is the conclusion that this publication leads us to: any development, any differentiation in interfaith education is context-dependent. Even where we can identify separate stages of development, a staged model of linear progress would fail to do justice to the complexity of either past or present processes. A concept of circularity may be more appropriate since, depending on the context and its attendant social and political conditions, some perspectives may be either unnecessary or impossible. It does not necessarily follow that the goals connected with interfaith education were not achieved in that case.

The image of a rhizome is probably the most suited to characterize this publication as an interlacing of different, mutually reinforcing and ever diversifying aspects emerging from a common origin in religious education.

This symbol stands for a paradigm shift that is already manifesting at various levels in modern life such as e.g. neural networks, chaos theory, and the perspective shifts necessitated by the fundamental change quantum physics creates. It is about the whole, not dualist opposites, plurality, not its separate elements. This is matched by the integrative approach that characterizes the composition of this publication.

A rhizome as a many-ness has certain characteristics (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977) that can be found in this publication as well.

First, there is connection, and second, heterogeneity. Any given point in a rhizome can and must be connected to any other point (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 11). The interplay of the conceptual, theoretical, methodological and practical approaches laid out here and the interconnections between them provide an impressive harmony of diverse voices bearing witness to the many dimensions of interfaith education.

Third, there is multiplicity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 13). This publication is characterized by a multiplicity of approaches, methods, and layers of meaning that, viewed as a whole, acquire a meaning that goes beyond that of the separate chapters on their own.

Fourth, there is the principle of the significance of breaks (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 16). This principle is best explained using the image of an anthill: Breaks may occur in any location, but the rhizome as a whole continues to grow unaffected. Since this publication consists of separate contributions, it is natural that subjects and questions are broken off or interrupted with the end of each separate essay.

Fifth and sixth, there are the principles of cartography and of decalcomania. It means that a rhizome is not bound by any underlying structural or generative model (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 20). It is not a copy of anything. This publication defies traditional definitions and limitations of one school, discipline, or method, moving flexibly throughout the interwoven structures while developing creative syntheses in its entirety. It is, however, the task of the reader to realize these, drawing them from the whole and thereby further fertilizing the rhizome. This publication invites the reader to be inspired without becoming a dedicated proponent of the source of this inspiration, let alone a poor copy thereof.

Finally, a rhizome is a structure with no centre and no hierarchies. It is defined solely through the circulation of states (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 35). The reader of this publication is invited to ever again create new connections from and between some or all of its multiplicities, thereby developing and designing their own continuation. At the same time, it offers a diversity of impulses to be taken up, to enrich future research and help to make embracing diversity into global normality.

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INA TER AVEST AND DUNCAN R. WIELZEN

EPILOGUE

A world of diversity in interfaith education has shown its beauty as well as its hardships in different contexts – Asian, African, North American and European contexts. The chapters in this book also unfolded the complexity of interfaith education. In each chapter, faith, in the sense of commitment and loyalty is central. There can be no two ways about it! This shows an intense relation with the original meaning of the concept of 'faith' as described by Fowler in his Faith Development Theory. In the chapters the psychological developmental aspect of 'faith' however is hardly touched upon – making the child centred approach an exception proving the rule?

In the first part, the reader meets a variety of theoretical approaches. The second part provides a view on the practical wisdom emerging from everyday practices. In the third part, critical and clarifying reflections are presented on theory and practice of interfaith education and its neighbouring concepts.

The authors of the chapters of Part One approach these concepts from their own theoretical perspective – from a focus on pedagogical strategies (teaching *in*, *about* and *from*) and the intermingling of religious education and citizenship education, to a focus on communication and religious literacy. From pointing to a safe classroom climate as a precondition for interfaith education to the need for a critical and constructive self-reflection. From religion as a vital source in the public domain, to religious development as part and parcel of students' identity development. A philosophical approach is exemplified and the possibility is promoted for infusion of religious education in several distinct school subjects.

The authors of the chapters of Part Two adopt different pedagogical strategies, each departing from his or her own perspective on RE, which is closely related to the proper context of their teaching practices. The focus is for example on the (im)possibilities for Islamic religious education (IRE) to take an interfaith perspective. Part of the discussion concerns challenges to both pupils in public schools and the subject of RE when it is taught from a Christian or Hindu perspective. Therefore, a child oriented perspective is described, as well as a subject oriented approach and a narrative based strategy. Some of the practices refer clearly to theories, others more or less developed in an organic way in everyday classroom practice.

In Part Three, lessons to be learned are presented. It seems that the discourse on interfaith education is bifocal. On the one hand, the focus is on the respectful communication between clearly demarcated religious traditions, complemented with secular traditions – which correspond with the original line of thoughts of Fowler. On the other hand, the focus seems to be on the functionality of interfaith

D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), Interfaith Education for All, 273–275.
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education, i.e. its function in relation to the need for harmony and social cohesion in our diverse contexts. This is in line with the intention of the United Religions Initiative (URI) “to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings.” However, still another focus of the discourse on interfaith education might be fruitful to explore, namely on the complexity of the matter at hand and the need to stand this complexity. Instead of lamenting the poor role of demarcated religion(s) in the world and in persons’ lives, a more productive and constructive approach might be to learn to endure but also value diversity from an authentic position regarding the complex relationships between religious and secular traditions and between the various ‘schools’ within the respective traditions. Thus, we call for further research in RE related to the increasing numbers of persons who integrate multiple religious or secular traditions in their life (‘multiple religious belonging’) and the growing numbers of persons who abide by the various complex dispositions of personal faith vis-à-vis institutional faith (e.g., ‘believing without belonging,’ ‘spiritual but not religious’).

Knowledge about traditions is necessary, but must be taught with empathy for ‘the other’ and well developed communicative skills. We coin this as ‘dialogical faith-based education.’ To teach ‘dialogical faith-based education,’ good teachers are needed. John Valk presents a theoretical view on good interfaith education, or (inclusive) worldview education, as he prefers to name it. Ryan Gardner offers a method for reflection for teachers to become skilled in interfaith education. Ursula Günther favours a rhizomatic approach interlacing different, mutually reinforcing and ever diversifying aspects emerging from a common commitment and loyalty – a common faith. However, in all the deliberations an important partner in education is overlooked: i.e. parents. Since they are the primary educators of their children, any faith-based education must be developed in close relation to the voices they represent.

Reflection on an individual as well as on the level of a group of teachers will further enrich classroom practices. In line with what is known as jurisprudence we can then speak of *religio*prudence; at the end of the day this will be fruitful for the further development of theories about faith-based education. In this process of *religio*prudence we cannot ignore the most important people in a child’s life: the parents. From research, we know about the strong and complex relation between parents’ and children’s religiosity. It requires not only knowledge or wisdom, but most importantly prudence to navigate and unravel the complex matrix of family constellations, undergirded by religious and secular worldviews which determines to great extend the child’s faith identity development.

The term *religio*prudence we allude to is a concept that illumines the ultimate intention of dialogical faith-based education. Its prefix *religio* comes from the same Latin root of religion, *religare*, which means ‘to connect.’ Educators, both parents *and* teachers, need prudence – more than knowledge of espoused theories – to facilitate and guide children in constructing their own worldview identity development. They too must acquire the necessary skills that enable them to know *how* to *connect* the child to (a) larger worldview(s), and know *what* larger

worldview(s) suit(s) the child in becoming an interdependent, self-conscious critical citizen taking her/his position in the social project of transforming citizens and their respective societies.

Dialogical faith-based education, as we envisage, is undergirded by *religio*prudence, and can therefore benefit not only teachers, pupils and their parents, but by consequence also the near and further away context pupils and students live in. Dialogical faith-based education is methodically and in a substantial way closely related to citizenship education, thus for the benefit of the entire society. It must provoke – in line with provocative pedagogy – curiosity for discovering what separates people, caring at the same time for what is most precious for each of the participants, and ending up in the experience of what connects – sometimes, occasionally – across social, cultural and worldview differences. In addition, dialogical faith-based education must instil within all members of society a *habitus* for enhancing humanity and promoting humanness; critical toward structures that diminish human dignity, but also open to criticism. Therefore, we envision an interdisciplinary group of researchers in close cooperation with experts in the field to initiate new research programs that advance the development of radical dialogical faith education for all which honours the voices of parents, teachers and children.

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