

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Session 7 Religious Education:

Democratic Citizenship and Religious Education

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The contemporary world demands that we recognise in depth how religion/s and worldviews influence people's outlooks on life and their choices, as well as how they shape attitudes towards citizenship. The role of religions is well known and evidenced in numerous researches (Conroy, Wenell, & Lundie, 2013, pp. 117-140; Østberg, 2013; Kjelden, 2016). Openness to others and religious diversity is of utmost importance for people to live together and act democratically as democratic citizens. Education and Religious Education (RE) can contribute to development of a consciousness of a diverse and, at the same time, common world (Heater, 2004, pp. 240-6). Of course, not all of types of education can foster students' participation in democratic engagement education, which moves forward from just teaching citizenship to teaching and learning democracy within the curriculum (Biesta & Lawy, 2006; Dewey, [1916] 2002). Humanities in the school curriculum can develop young people's capabilities: critical thinking, world citizenship, and imaginative understanding (Nussbaum, 2006) when they encourage dialogue.

Learning how to engage in dialogue with people whose values are different from one's own and to respect them is central to the democratic process and essential for the protection and strengthening of democracy and fostering a culture of human rights (Council of Europe, 2016, p.11)

RE as a humanity subject and an integral component of the curriculum in most countries (Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education) by teaching religions and worldviews from different points of view, can contribute to the development of open-minded dispositions (Jackson, 2014; Heilbronn, 2021, pp.27-30). Dialogue with difference/s and a dialogical approach to RE in heterogenous classrooms with religious diversity are the epicenter of research interest in RE in Europe (Skeie, 2009; Erricker, 2010, σσ. 94-121; Norman & Gallagher, 2011; Barnes, 2012; Weisse, Amirpur, Körs, & Vieregge, 2014; Klutz, 2016; Yafa, 2016; Arweck, 2017; Schreiner, 2018; Ipgrave, Knauth, Körs, Vieregge, & von der Lippe, 2018; Franken, 2017; 2021). A need for acquaintance with and respect for 'otherness' and, of a dialogue with others, faith being positive with plurality, are all addressed (Ipgrave, 2001; 2004; O'Grady & Jackson, 2020). The REDCo study stressed that '...most [young people] were convinced that respecting the religion of others is a way to cope with differences' (Valk, 2009, p. 425) in an RE classroom that provides the 'safe space' to discuss such topics (Leganger-Krogstad, 2003; Conroy, Wenell, & Lundie, 2013, pp. 119-124; Weisse, 2011).

The above doesn't mean that any type/model of RE can contribute to Democratic Citizenship. It requires an openness to otherness where RE comprises the instruction of



religion as a historical and contemporary phenomenon, as well as of worldviews and non-religious convictions which influence people's lives, experiences, and decisions. Impartiality is a presupposition in presentation of the above where the mode of impartial RE teacher seems an impossible goal. (Arthur, Moulin-Stozek, Metcalfe, & Moller, 2019).

However, secularization has apparently influenced Western educational systems which are implicitly secular, in some cases more overtly so than in others. In spite of this, RE remains within the schooling system in most European countries. It is influenced not only by the idea of secularity, but also by the extent of the secularization of the State which determines the type of RE (confessional, non-confessional, inter-religious etc.) wherever it exists.

Thus, RE has been influenced by the historical context and experiences in each country and so is, in each situation, confessional (Germany (partly), Ireland, Spain, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Slovakia, Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Poland, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, and Malta) or non-confessional (England, Wales and Scotland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Netherlands (partly), Switzerland, Moldavia, Estonia and Latvia), compulsory (Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Romania, Serbia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Ireland, Iceland, England, Wales and Scotland) or optional (Malta, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Moldavia, Russia, Estonia, Poland, Netherlands, Spain and Portugal). In some countries different curricula exist and so the content of the subject is partly confessional or, in some cases, there are different approaches or optional subjects according to the region of the country or the type of the school. Furthermore, there are countries that are committed to a strict separation of religion and state, where RE does not feature as a subject in the curriculum (France, Albania, Ukraine, Belarus and Slovenia) (Koukounaras Liagkis, 2013).

It is obvious that most countries, even France which teaches RE through other subjects (e.g. Geography) recognise that it is impossible nowadays to understand contemporary issues, problems and human culture without knowledge of the religious plurality which is a factor that makes the interpretation of the phenomena more difficult exactly because a variety of traditions, religious and philosophical, exist. Educational scope is maintained by exploring within and across faiths, enabling students to learn different religions, beliefs, traditions and values, and their influences on individuals, societies, communities and cultures. Some results of the REDCo –Project (covering 8 European countries) underline the importance of religious literacy which is one of the main aims of education in the post-modern era. Teenagers' perspectives on the role of religion in their lives, schools and societies illustrate that: 1) Religious pluralism is not only accepted, but welcomed by the students, 2) Students expressed criticism against truth claims that exclude people of other religions or world views and 3) In spite of the awareness of the conflicts caused by religions and the difficulties arising from religious plurality, the majority of students appeared to share a vision of peaceful coexistence in a religiously plural society (Valk, Bertram-Troost, Friederici, & Beraud, 2009). Besides, school is the main recourse and an actual safe environment for learning about religions and religious perceptions of other



students, especially for those who have no commitment to one religion or others who are atheists. Besides for those who are members of a religious community, the school provides the main opportunity to come into contact with other religions and beliefs. Thus, school offers unique possibilities to promote students' understanding, communication, tolerance, and respect between and towards each other encouraging students to reflect on, analyse and evaluate their beliefs, values and practices and communicate their responses. REDCo research revealed a trend among youngsters that may be considered important. It says that most students in Europe would like school to be a place for learning about religion and worldviews, rather than for instruction in a particular religion (Koukounaras Liagkis, 2013).

Religion and education are related to human rights. All youngsters, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 2 guarantees the right to those of all religions, article 18 demands freedom of thought, religious belief and practice and article 26 articulates the right to education) have the right to an education that promotes understanding and tolerance between national, racial or religious groups. That means that RE's exclusion from education undermines children's right to an education that provides knowledge and ideas to further students' understanding of their societies and the role of religions in the contemporary world (Evans, 2008). Of course, parents have to be responsible for the upbringing and development of the child (article 18.1), but it is still the state's responsibility to ensure that all citizens are educated. As far as RE is concerned, it is the state's responsibility again to promote RE that would be a help for all parents and not a cause of problems.

Moreover, the European Convention of Human Rights maintains that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, and to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance" (article 9.1) but that "freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others." (Article 9.2).

Besides, in the European area there has been a dialogue for inter-religious and intercultural education since 2001. A project on teaching religions in school was launched in 2002 and it argued that regardless of the truth or the falsity of each religion, religion is an integral part of life and culture. Therefore, religion should be understood by all citizens as part of their education. The Committee of Ministers agreed to a Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)12 that all member states should include the impartial study of religions within the curricula of their school systems. This recommendation which incorporated ideas from the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, gives a compelling cultural argument for the study of religions and legitimacy for a compulsory RE. It should be mentioned that its principles provide the intercultural dialogue and, its dimension of religious and non-religious convictions, as significant factors for the development of tolerance and cultural coexistence. Among its objectives are: nurturing a sensitivity to the



diversity of religions and non-religious convictions as an element contributing to the richness of Europe, ensuring that teaching about the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions is consistent with the aims of education for democratic citizenship, human rights and respect for equal dignity of all individuals and promoting communication and dialogue between people from different cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds (Council of Europe, 2008). Of course, when somebody speaks about RE and Democratic Citizenship, one has to bear in mind, moreover: 1) the Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools (a result of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe- OSCE based in Vienna) which was produced in 2007 and is an essential tool for the study and knowledge about religions and beliefs in schools, based on the rationale of religious freedom (OSCE, 2007) and 2) the recommendation 1720/2005 which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2006 (965th meeting/24-5-2006) that encourages the governments of member states to ensure that religious studies are taught at the primary and secondary levels of state education. Furthermore, the recommendation addresses: 1) that the aim of this education should be to make pupils discover the religions practiced in their own and neighboring countries, to make them perceive that everyone has the same right to believe that their religion is the “true faith” and that other people are not different human beings through having a different religion or not having a religion at all, 2) it should include, with complete impartiality, the history of the main religions, as well as the option of having no religion, 3) it should provide young people with educational tools that enable them to feel secure in approaching supporters of a fanatical religious practice, 4) it must not overstep the borderline between the realms of culture and worship, even where a country with a state religion is concerned. It is not a matter of instilling a faith but of making young people understand why religions are sources of faith for millions (article 14) (Council of Europe, 2005).

Recently, an important contribution to RE and Democratic Citizenship came out in two phases. First the publication of the *Signposts-Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education* (Jackson, 2014) in 2014 and in many different languages (<https://theewc.org/resources/signposts/>) and then the *Signposts teacher training module-Teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education* in 2020 to offer safe ways for teachers to address issues connected to religion and non-religious world views in the framework of intercultural education (<https://theewc.org/resources/signposts-teacher-training-module-teaching-about-religion-s-and-non-religious-world-views-in-intercultural-education/>). The basis of these is the Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)12.

Also, in the training module it explicitly is stated that:

In the Council of Europe’s approach, education concerning religious and non-religious convictions is closely linked to education for democratic citizenship and human rights. The form of education advocated is distinct from

faith nurture, and concerned with the understanding of plurality, although it can be complementary with faith nurture (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 13).

Signposts relates the teaching methodology and the content of RE to the development of competences for democratic culture. In the recommendation are indicated the expected competence to be developed among pupils who study religious and non-religious convictions. 'Competence should be developed through:

- developing a tolerant attitude and respect for the right to hold a particular belief, attitudes based on the recognition of the inherent dignity and fundamental freedoms of each human being;
- nurturing a sensitivity to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions as an element contributing to the richness of Europe;
- ensuring that teaching about the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions is consistent with the aims of education for democratic citizenship, human rights and respect for equal dignity of all individuals;
- promoting communication and dialogue between people from different cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds;
- promoting civic-mindedness and moderation in expressing one's identity;
- providing opportunity to create spaces for intercultural dialogue in order to prevent religious or cultural divides;
- promoting knowledge of different aspects (symbols, practices, etc.) of religious diversity;
- addressing the sensitive or controversial issues to which the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions may give rise;
- developing skills of critical evaluation and reflection with regard to understanding the perspectives and ways of life of different religions and non-religious convictions;
- combating prejudice and stereotypes vis-à-vis difference which are barriers to intercultural dialogue, and educating in respect for equal dignity of all individuals;
- fostering an ability to analyse and interpret impartially the many varied items of information relating to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions, without prejudice to the need to respect pupils' religious or non-religious convictions and without prejudice to the religious education given outside the public education sphere' (Jackson, 2014, pp. 34-5).

RE, therefore, can be used to develop the twenty Competences for Democratic Culture in terms of values (e.g. valuing religious diversity), knowledge and understanding (e.g. knowledge and understanding of the perspectives, practices and beliefs of groups within a particular religion), skills (e.g. to interact with and listen to people from different religion), and attitudes (openness to reflect upon one's own beliefs and claims or openness to people from religions/other religions/other branches of one's own religion).



To develop and increase these competences not only are the appropriate methods enough, but also the appropriate selection of the content is required. The religious resources that a teacher selects to use in the classroom to deliver the expected learning outcomes of the RE lesson should be selected to ensure the accuracy, balance and appropriateness of the representation of religious traditions/faiths, non-religious convictions, and worldviews, not as monolithic and simple phenomena but as diverse and complex as they are.

A RE teacher can find in the list below a number of religious topics of the main Abrahamic Religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) which are related to the Competences of Democratic Culture and can be taught in RE courses in Primary or Secondary Education aiming to develop these competences.



Competence/es	Type of the resource (e.g, text, symbol, art etc.)	Education Primary (P) Secondary (S)	Religion Judaism (J) Christianity (C) Islam (I)	Resource	Religious Topic
Values / Attitudes	Text	P & S	J	Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a)	God creates each and every human in a unique way; one human equals one world
Values / Attitudes	Text	P & S	J	Genesis 2:4-25	God offers a perfect garden to care; polarities are important
Values / Skills / Knowledge and comprehension	Text	S	J	Genesis 3:1-23	Unity and harmony can be easily disrupted, should sinister agents creep in
Attitudes / Values / Skills	Text	P & S	J	Genesis 13:1-18	The land is given by God to humans and there is plenty for all
Skills / Knowledge and comprehension	Text	S	J	Numbers 22:1-39	God speaks through mysterious ways; an unexpected teacher for the wise
Values / Attitudes / Comprehension	Text	S	J	Daniel 4	Man is a Tree of God; the ways of Heaven must be followed
Attitudes / Comprehension	Text	S	J	Babylonian Talmud	What one considers a loss, another may value as gain

				(Sanhedr in 39a)	
Values / Attitudes / Comprehension	Text	P & S	J	Babylonia n Talmud (Bava Metzia 83a)	The law of love rises above all other laws
Values	Text	S	C	Old Testament New testament Prov 18,9-12, Dan 8,11-25, Ez 27,1-36. 38,1-23, Jer 51,1-64, Is 46,1-49,26 , Lc 13,29, Jn 21,11, Rev, 13,4-18. 14,9-11	Students will be taught about the question: “Should a Christian be opposed to globalization?” Globalization is “the act extending an influence to all parts of the world” In particular, the questions to be answered are: (1) How does globalization affect Christianity? (2) How does globalization affect culture? (3) What is the meaning of the word world in the Bible? Changes in technology excite the average consumer. The integration of global culture, politics, and economies are embraced worldwide. However, the prophecies of the writers of Daniel and Revelation are being fulfilled before our eyes. These changes that are taking place have been part of a carefully crafted plan that was written about thousands of years ago.
Values	Text	P & S	C	Official Document s of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. THE MISSION OF THE ORTHODO X CHURCH IN	Human person’s dignity and humanity. The human person’s unique dignity, which stems from being created in the image and likeness of God and from our role in God’s plan for humanity and the world, was the source of inspiration for the Church Fathers, who entered deeply into the mystery of divine <i>oikonomia</i> .

				<p>TODAY'S WORLD</p> <p>https://www.holycouncil.org/official-documents/-/asset_publisher/VA0WE2pZ4Y0I/content/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world?_101_INSTANCE_VA0WE2pZ4Y0I_languageId=en_US</p>	
Values	Text	S	C	<p>St. Gregory the Theologian Homily 45, On Holy Pascha, 7. PG 36, 632AB</p>	<p>Regarding the human being. Regarding the human being, St. Gregory the Theologian characteristically emphasizes that: The Creator sets a sort of second world upon the earth, great in its smallness, another angel, a worshipper of composite nature, contemplator of visible creation, and initiate of intelligible creation, a king over all that is on earth... a living being, prepared here and transported elsewhere and (which is the culmination of the mystery) deified through attraction towards God</p>
Attitudes. Skills. Knowledge and critical understanding. Values	Text	P & S	C	<p>Irenaeus of Lyons, FRAGMENTS FROM THE LOST WRITINGS OF IRENAEUS</p>	<p>Relations with others or neighbours. As long as any one has the means of doing good to his neighbours, and does not do so, he shall be reckoned a stranger to the love of the Lord.</p>
Values. Knowledge and critical understanding	Text	P & S	C	<p>Official Documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox</p>	<p>Freedom as a gift of God to human being. Freedom is one of God's greatest gifts to the human being. He who created man in the beginning made him free and self-determined, limiting him solely by the</p>

				Church. THE MISSION OF THE ORTHODO X CHURCH IN TODAY'S WORLD https://www.holyconcil.org/official-documents/-/asset_publisher/VA0WE2pZ4Y0I/content/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world?_101_INSTANCE_VA0WE2pZ4Y0I_languageId=en_US	laws of the commandment (Gregory the Theologian, Homily 14, On Love for the Poor, 25. PG 35, 892A). Freedom renders the human being capable of progressing toward spiritual perfection; yet, it also includes the risk of disobedience as independence from God and consequently the fall, which tragically gives rise to evil in the world.
Values. Attitudes. Skills.	Text	P & S	C	Official Documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. THE MISSION OF THE ORTHODO X CHURCH IN TODAY'S WORLD	Protection of minorities. The Orthodox Church is particularly concerned about the situation facing Christians, and other persecuted ethnic and religious minorities in the Middle East. In particular, the Church addresses an appeal to governments in that region to protect the Christian populations – Orthodox, Ancient Eastern and other Christians – who have survived in the cradle of Christianity. The indigenous Christian and other populations enjoy the inalienable right to remain in their countries as citizens with equal rights.
Attitudes.	Text	P & S	C	Polycarp THE EPISTLE OF	Exhortation to the practice of virtue. CHAPTER X.

Knowledge and critical understanding. Values. Skills.				POLYCARP TO THE PHILIPPIANS http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/polycarp-roberts.html	Stand fast, therefore, in these things, and follow the example of the Lord, being firm and unchangeable in the faith, loving the brotherhood, and being attached to one another, joined together in the truth, exhibiting the meekness of the Lord in your intercourse with one another, and despising no one. When you can do good, defer it not, because "alms delivers from death." Be all of you subject one to another? having your conduct blameless among the Gentiles," that ye may both receive praise for your good works, and the Lord may not be blasphemed through you. But woe to him by whom the name of the Lord is blasphemed! Teach, therefore, sobriety to all, and manifest it also in your own conduct.
Values	Text	S	I	KAMALI M. H. (2002) The Dignity of Man: An Islamic Perspective, Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge xv	«To take dignity as the goal and purpose of human rights would be to enrich the caliber and substance of these rights. Islam's perception of human rights is rooted in human dignity and it is, at the same time, intertwined with human obligation»
Values	Text	P & S	I	Quran 5:8 5:32 6:152	«O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do»



					<p>«...Whoever takes a life—unless as a punishment for murder or mischief in the land—it will be as if they killed all of humanity; and whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity»</p> <p>«...Give full measure and weigh with justice. We never require of any soul more than what it can afford. Whenever you speak maintain justice...This is what He has commanded you...»</p>
Values	Text	P & S	I	Quran 49:13 4:58	<p>Fairness</p> <p>«...We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware»</p> <p>«...Allah commands you to return trusts to their rightful owners; and when you judge between people, judge with fairness. What a noble commandment from Allah to you! Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing»</p>
Values	Text	P & S	I	Quran 49:13 5:47	<p>Equality</p> <p>«...Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware»</p> <p>«So let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah has revealed in it. And those who do not judge by what</p>



					Allah has revealed are truly the rebellious»
Attitudes	Text	P & S	I	Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (1990)	Respect «Everyone shall have the right to live in security for himself, his religion, his dependents, his honour and his Property»
Attitudes	Text	P & S	I	Quran 4:58	«...Allah commands you to return trusts to their rightful owners; and when you judge between people, judge with fairness. What a noble commandment from Allah to you! Surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing»
Knowledge and Critical Understanding	Text	S	I	Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (1981)	Culture/cultures «The Qur'anic principle "There is no compulsion in religion" shall govern the religious rights of nonMuslim minorities. In a Muslim country religious minorities shall have the choice to be governed in respect of their civil and personal matters by Islamic Law, or by their own laws»
Knowledge and Critical Understanding	Text	P & S	I	Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (1981)	Other Religions «Every person has the right to freedom of conscience and worship in accordance with his religious beliefs» «Every person has the right to express his thoughts and beliefs so long as he remains within the limits prescribed by the Law... No one shall hold in contempt or ridicule the religious beliefs of others or incite public hostility against them; respect for the religious feelings of others is obligatory on all Muslims»

Knowledge and Critical Understanding	Text	S	I	Quran 26:151-152	Politics «And do not follow the command of the transgressors, who spread corruption throughout the land, never setting things right»
Attitudes	Text	P & S	I	Quran 33:72	Responsibility «Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they all declined to bear it, and were apprehensive of it; but the human being accepted it. He was unfair and ignorant»
Skills	Text	S	I	Quran 9:71	Empathy «The believers, both men and women, are guardians of one another. They encourage good and forbid evil...and pay alms-tax...»

