Religion and Citizenship Education in Europe

Kevin Williams, Helle Hinge
and Bodil Liljefors Persson

CiCe Guidelines on Citizenship Education in a global context

5

CiCe Children's Identity & Citizenship in Europe
Thematic Network Socrates

London, UK: 2008

This Guide has been written and prepared by the CiCe Network Working Group:

Dr Kevin Williams is Senior Lecturer in Mater Dei Institute, Dublin City University and former president of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland. His two most recent books are: Faith and the Nation: Religion, Culture and Schooling in Ireland (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2005) and Education and the Voice of Michael Oakeshott (Thorverton, Exeter, UK/Charlottesville, VA, Imprint Academic, 2007).

Helle Hinge has an M.A in Comparative Religion from the University of Copenhagen and has done fieldwork in Denmark, Egypt, and in Indonesia. She has lectured in secondary school, university and in teacher education at University College Copenhagen. She is also author of academic literature on religions, philosophy, and pedagogy.

Bodil Liljefors Persson is Associate Professor in History of Religions at Malmö University and holds a PhD for her work on Maya religion. She is head of the main programme in Religious Studies at the Faculty of Teacher Education and has published a number of articles on American Indian religions, especially Maya Religion and history, also in the area of Religious Education and Didactics.

Anne-Marie Van den dries and Søren Hegstrup coordinated the working group on behalf of the CiCe Steering Group.

Series editor: **Alistair Ross**, International Coordinator, CiCe

Education and Culture
Socrates

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

CiCe Guidelines on Citizenship Education in a global context:
Religion and Citizenship Education in Europe

ISBN: 978-0-9560454-0-9

CiCe Guidelines: ISSN 1741-6353

July 2008

CiCe Central Coordination Unit
Institute for Policy Studies in Education
London Metropolitan University
166 – 220 Holloway Road
London N7 8DB
UK

This publication is also available in electronic format at http://cice.londonmet.ac.uk

Religion and Citizenship Education in Europe

Kevin Williams
Helle Hinge
Bodil Liljefors Persson

Contents

Part 1	Religion, Citizenship and Identity	2
Part 2	The Recovery of the Religious Roots of Citizenship Education	6
Part 3	Meeting the Classroom Challenge	12
References		16

Religion and Citizenship Education in Europe

In the classrooms of most countries of Europe teachers are faced with young people from very different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. The backgrounds can be Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh and Buddhist in their many different variations. Teachers and educational authorities are faced with the challenge of accommodating these young people within schools. Whether or not religion is taught in schools, there is an imperative on educators to ensure that young people develop into citizens who are capable of living together. This document examines some of the theoretical and practical issues involved in responding to the religious dimension of citizenship.

The first part examines the relationship between religion, identity and citizenship and the second part explores the reasons for the recovery of the religious roots of citizenship. The final part provides some practical suggestions regarding teaching religion in a way that enhances the values of democratic citizenship and respect for diversity.

Part One: Religion, Citizenship and Identity

Throughout the history of civilisation religion, culture and schooling have been related. This relationship is to be found in the Jewish and Islamic traditions as well as within Christianity. In the Western tradition in both the monastic foundations of early Christian Ireland and in the cathedral schools of medieval Europe the pursuit of learning and praise of God went together. The joint commitments to understand and to spread the Word of God were conceived as inseparable aspects of the Christian's mission.

The specific connection between the religious and civic dimensions of education was an important feature of Reformation Europe. At the time of the Reformation, on much of the European continent, Catholic and Protestant rulers assumed for themselves the *auctoritas docendi* which had hitherto been exersised by the Papacy. Each ruler decided what was to be the religion of his region on the basis of *cuius regio, eius religio*. These rulers envisaged the authority to rule, to 'command for truth', and to educate as intimately linked and they used their newly appropriated authority to develop an educational infrastructure that would serve to promote a uniform cultural and religious identity among their inhabitants. This process is well captured in the description by John Knox of the city of Geneva under the rule of Calvin as a 'school' (see Oakeshott, 1975, p. 285). Use of the term 'school' dramatically reflects the tendency to combine the educational and catechetical remits of governance.

From the time of the Enlightenment, the conjunction of the civic and religious remits of schooling has been questioned, and in France and in Turkey has been firmly rejected. In almost every country, the status of religious education is a sensitive issue. Indeed in France, just as in the former communist countries of Europe, direct education in religion is excluded from the curriculum. The nature of the relationship between religion and civic life and between education and the study of religion remains therefore problematic in Europe. The problematic character of this relationship was reflected in the serious disagreement about the *invocatio Dei*, that is, the reference to God, in the proposed European Constitution and in the continuing debate about the wearing of religious apparel and emblems in schools. The removal of religion from the remit of citizenship education has been dramatic. The situation the Republic of Ireland offers a striking example of this process. In a document introducing the subject 'Civics' in 1966, the conceptual link between civic and religious education is very close (see Williams, 2005, pp. 75-76). The authors of the document argue that religious education is primary and that moral education and, by extension, civic education, derive from religious principles. In 1996, by contrast, this has disappeared completely. The notion of tolerance, mentioned in 1966, emerges as a defining element of the document on Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) at second level published in 1996. This document endorses the secular values of liberal democracy and also places a very strong emphasis on communitarian values of social responsibility. What is significant is the failure even to raise the possibility of a connection between religion and civic culture. In a country where the two have been so intimately related, this neglect is rather surprising. Whether this is a result of

a considered change in policy or an unselfconscious response to a new *Zeitgeist* is difficult to say, although the second reason is probably more plausible. The Irish attitude to the role of religion in citizenship education gave expression to a *Zeitgeist* that was widespread throughout Europe.

Citizenship and identity

The movement away from the religious dimension of citizenship also reflects a more nuanced conception of human identity where a religious identity is no longer assumed. Identity is brought about by the narratives we make about ourselves. Throughout life, the individual's identity is subject to constant revision. Our individual identity is layered, from the very inner layers to the more overt, and this identity may or may not contain a religious dimension. Other important markers of identity are nationality, ethnicity, language, gender, age, profession, social class, moral and political commitments and sexual orientation is also relevant. These markers do also play an important role in our self perception as individuals.

The notion of identity has therefore many aspects. We not only construct both our own identity but also that of others in the community. By doing this we point out who is part of a community and who is *not* supposed to be part of it. Usually the majority in society holds the power to define what it takes to become accepted as a full scale member of society. In this way, citizenship becomes the notion of belonging as defined by the majority, and minority groups may be excluded. The renewed Danish debate about *hijab* is an example. A recent proposal put forward by the government bans judges in the nation's courts from wearing headscarves and other religious apparel. If the proposal is approved, some female Muslims will be debarred from a number of positions in court.

In community we do not only construct our own identity, but also that of other people. In this way we show who is able to become part of community and who is not. Citizenship can easily become a notion that includes some and excludes others. National identity also seems comparable, as many make use of labels such as Danish-American, British-Pakistani or first, second, third generation immigrant. How many generations does it take to become a full member of a nation? Part of the problem derives from the tension between the idea of *ethnos* (an ethnic group) and *demos* (a political community). In a legal and political community or *demos*, religion does not normally play a role in one's identity as citizen. In this context, identity is conferred by the passport one holds. Throughout history, many European citizens have tended to identify themselves with a homogeneous, national ethnic group (*ethnos*) with one language, one religion, and one skin colour.

It is interesting to pursue further the relationship between civic, national and religious identity. For example, although a person may repudiate allegiance to a particular state by repudiating citizenship, the situation with regard to national identity is different. This is because national identity, as part of human self-understanding, is not normally something which one can decide to adopt or renounce at will. Although it is possible to reject particular versions of national identity (for example, the association of Irishness with

Catholicism or of Jewishness with Zionism), the culture of the national community into which one is born is part of one's very identity and so it cannot be renounced without leaving its residue. James Joyce, for example, who chose to live in exile and who trenchantly renounced his native land, remained culturally and psychologically very much an Irishman. By contrast with a national identity, a person may reject religious belief completely, as did James Joyce. Yet religious identity can also be very pervasive and the effects of a religious upbringing may not be readily discarded. James Joyce remained culturally a Catholic.

A religious education can also have a very significant role in forging the civic dimension of identity. For example, Mary McCarthy explains that the Catholic education that she received in the United States involved the absorption of a perspective on world history and ideas before even the end of primary school. The 'indelible' effect of this process was 'like learning a language early' (McCarthy, 1967, p. 25). This process introduced a coherence into the students' conception of history because the perspectivism that informed the teaching acted as a 'magnet' (*ibid.*) that brought information together into a single conceptual framework. In this respect Catholic children had a different attitude from other American children who were taught 'as though history had achieved a happy ending in American civics' (*ibid.*). The analogy of her religious upbringing with language learning is noteworthy because it communicates the intimacy of religious identity as 'part of oneself' (*ibid*).

Mary McCarthy attended a Catholic school and state-sponsored schools in Western democracies do not normally endorse any particular religion. Indeed, in France and Turkey, the clear distinction noted above between religion and citizenship is very important. This principle underlying this distinction (in French *laïcité,* in Turkish *laiklik*) means that the state does not exercise religious power and no religion in the state exercises political power. In other words, the state is secular and religious symbols and rituals are prohibited in the public space (including schools and educational institutions). The reason for this is that religion is a private matter, while society is a public sphere where the individual is simply a citizen. Where the state is secular in the sense of being non-confessional or neutral in respect of religious worldviews, a tension can arise between this secularism and the classical rights of freedom and self-determination. Prohibition against religious symbols and attire may be regarded as an encroachment on the right to freedom and as a lack of acknowledgment of the religion in question. Such a prohibition can be used as a way of excluding certain religious groups from public life (for example, from educational and political institutions). This concern is part of the background to the acute tension regarding the law on the wearing of Islamic dress in Turkey that in 2008 has been such a feature of political debate in the country.

The banning of religion in public institutions may lead to exclusion. Where this occurs private religious schools may emerge and the construction of parallel ghetto-style societies may occur. This frustrates the possibility of intercultural dialogue between people from different religious traditions. Like other cultural phenomena, religions are dynamic, and changes in perspective

may take place when people who belong to different religious traditions meet each other. The development of shared civic and moral commitments is also facilitated when people interact in daily life.

The exclusion of religious education from schools does not mean that civic values are not promoted but the religious aspect of personal and social life does not, however, secure the dedicated attention that it requires. This means that future citizens may get no opportunity to acquire the tools necessary to understand religious phenomena in their theological, moral or political forms. There is a further danger in prohibiting educators from subjecting religious truth claims to scrutiny within the classroom. Young people may come to form their views without appropriate pedagogic guidance. In the USA the failure to accommodate the study of religion in school has led to the domination, if not indeed colonisation, of religious discourse in the public sphere by the voices of unreasoning, sanctimonious righteousness (see Williams, 2005, pp. 118-121). The exclusion of religion from educational institutions means, as Brian Gates puts it, that what 'is then effectively ejected from the nurturing environment of the school is the appreciation and testing of living faiths' (Gates, 2006, p. 589).

Fortunately within the European Union there been a movement away from the reluctance to address religious beliefs in schools. This change in attitude emerged early in this century as will be demonstrated in the following section.

Part Two: The Recovery of the Religious Roots of Citizenship Education

In an examination of individual submissions forming part of the major report *Citizenship Education at School in Europe* (Eurydice, 2005), Robert Jackson (2007) finds a link made between religion and citizenship education in several countries (p. 31). He also notes that in the rejected version of the proposed European constitution, Europe is said to draw its inspiration from both religious and humanist traditions (p. 33).

The trend towards such an acknowledgement is well summarized in Recommendation 1720 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2005). Three reasons can be identified for this new attitude towards religion as a feature of civic understanding. The first is an enhanced sense of the significance of religion as a cultural phenomenon and as a significant feature of civilisation. The second is recognition of religion as a source of positive civic values. The third and principal reason is the need to able to understand religion as a feature of social diversity.

Religion as a cultural phenomenon

Awareness of religion as a cultural fact is perceived as contributing to an understanding of one's own culture and to intercultural sensitivity. The intercultural dimension of knowledge of religion involves understanding the cultural forms that faith can assume both within the boundaries of the nation-state and also beyond these boundaries. The Council of Europe (2005) expresses a concern that in an increasingly secular world children are not acquiring knowledge of religion within their own families. It can be difficult for anyone to make sense of the religious commitments of others, especially where, in the case of suicide bombers, these lead to murderous and self-destructive actions. But young people with no education in religion are likely to be at a complete loss when it comes to making sense of such commitments.

It can be very important to have an appreciation of the significance of religion as a cultural fact in understanding a society (see Williams, 2005). For example, in Italy participation in religious activity tends to be a cultural expectation irrespective of whether or not one believes in God. British novelist, Tim Parks, a committed secularist, learns that the exemption of his children from religious instruction in school has not immunized them against religion as a cultural fact. Children who are withdrawn from religion do a version of European Studies called *Osservazione all'Europa* and one of the first things they learn is that what unites European nations is Roman Catholicism, the religion of Italian people (Parks, 2000, pp. 248-250, 288). This example shows how religion can therefore be deeply inculturated within a nation. In France religion is also deeply implicated in the culture which is somewhat ironic because the country is also the cradle of *laïcité*, that is, of secular civic neutrality. At the level of the language itself, religious expressions such as profession of faith, baptize, defrock, high mass, Calvary and missionary are common metaphors.

Absence of religious understanding can have implications for how people relate to one another. There is a moment in the autobiography of Aminatta Forna where this absence in a child's life is memorably communicated. Culturally a Muslim, Forna had been brought up in no religion at all. The incident occurs in Sierra Leone when she comes across her grandfather at prayer. She is confused about how to respond but the idea 'lodged' in her head that she too should be praying.

> So I knelt behind him, copying all his movements with no earthly idea what it all meant. Halfway through I began to feel foolish and decided to extricate myself, but that posed a new difficulty: to sidle away midway through prayers might seem sinful; at the same time I worried my grandfather might think I was making fun of him. I couldn't make the decision, so I went on, standing, kneeling and bowing for what seemed like eternity.
> (Forna, 2003, p. 52)

The grandfather concluded his prayers without acknowledging her presence but she got the impression that he understood 'better than I, the struggle that had played out in my young mind' (*ibid*., p. 53). This incident captures the disablement that ignorance in the area of religion can engender.

Appreciation of the implications of absence of knowledge of religion has led the Council of Europe to point out that such knowledge is 'an integral part of the knowledge of the history of mankind and civilisation' (The Council of Europe 2005, clause 8). The Council therefore envisages the school as playing an important role in providing this knowledge. Quite rightly it notes that this knowledge must be communicated in a critical and non-proselytizing spirit.

Religion as a moral resource

The second reason for the change in attitude towards the role of religion in citizenship education was due to the recognition of the potential of religion as a moral resource and as a source of social capital. This is not to deny that religion may also assume a negative role in civic life as it does in the case of suicide bombers as it arguably has had in Northern Ireland. Yet the Council of Europe is very clear on its positive potential. Recommendation 1720 emphasizes the need to keep politics and religion separate but argues that religion should not be 'incompatible' with democracy and that both 'should be valid partners' in pursuit of the 'common good' (Council of Europe, 2005, Clause 5). Regret is expressed that the role of the study of religions in building a democratic society 'has not yet received special attention' (*ibid*. Clause 11). Many of 'the values upheld by the Council of Europe stem from…values derived from Judaism, Christianity and Islam' (*ibid*. Clause 12).

Religions engender a communal identity that promotes mutual support and help. The great religions usually impose moral obligations to help others of the same religion - for this reason they engender a more compelling commitment than would, for example, being a member of a sports club. Christianity also imposes a commitment to assist others, especially the less well off, beyond the borders of the Christian community. For this reason it serves as a very potent form of civic bonding. As the tremendous work done

by agencies of the various Churches in the Developing World shows, the 'imagined community' in Christian thought extends beyond religious and national boundaries.

There is a relationship between moral values in general and values deriving from religious sources. The moral vision and values of the great religions are generally compatible with secular and humanist values. Though the fundamental disagreement between theistic and non-theistic worldviews should not be minimized, there are elements of some common ground between believer and non-believer with regard to moral values. Generosity, concern for others and consideration of their interests, willingness to share and to co-operate, courage and steadfastness are among the values that enjoy religious endorsement and which would be perfectly acceptable to believer and non-believer alike. The ideals of human conduct enshrined in the Christian tradition *via* such parables as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son and in the injunctions in the Sermon on the Mount form part of the moral capital of Western civilisation. Much within the civic outreach of all schools, secular and faith-based, derives from similar commitments. The approach adopted in Norway captures the possibility of shared ground between believer and non-believer with regard to moral and civic values. This approach recommends that 'Biblical similes' as well as 'illustrations from other religions, from history, fiction, biography, and from legends, parables, myths and fables' be used as part of moral and civic education (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 1997, p. 9).

Religion as a feature of social diversity

The third and principal reason for the transformation in attitude towards the role of religion in citizenship education was triggered by the attack on the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001. It became dramatically clear that there was need to be able to understand the motivation of fundamentalists who have recourse to terrorism and more generally to appreciate the place of religion in societies characterized by diversity. This awful event has been described as providing a 'wake up call' (see Jackson, 2007, p. 37) to educators to address the religious face that is sometimes assumed by human conflict. Though the contribution of education to building a democratic society had been understood, the study of religion in this endeavour has been neglected.

The Council of Europe in 2005 emphasizes the religious face of conflict, drawing attention to a previous Recommendation (1999) on the subject. European history offers tragic testimony to the role of religion in human conflict. Religion was a significant feature in the hatred that motivated the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Tragically religion was to emerge again as a feature of the motivation behind the ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia. The Council of Europe has a very positive conception of the likely efficacy of education in religion conducted 'with restraint and objectivity and with respect for the values of the European Convention on Human Rights' in engendering tolerance and in combating fanaticism (Council of Europe in 2005, Clause 7 see also Clause 1). This connection in the relationship between education in religion and education in support of human rights is beginning to appear as an important theme in the literature (see Jackson 2007). Even in

France, where religion has traditionally been excluded from the school curriculum or else admitted only in a very limited way, there seems to be a change in tone. In a *Letter to Educators* in September 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy, draws explicit attention to the civic dimension of education about religion. He suggests that through the study of religion people will become more open to others and more capable of entering into dialogue with them.

This leads to the complex subject of expressing religious beliefs in the civic sphere. In democracies there are limits to what can be tolerated in the expression of group identities even where these have a significant religious dimension. The tension between religion and civic belonging discloses a very sensitive fault line in contemporary societies. Religious believers can make demands that do not fit with the educational values and practices of liberal democratic states. Most dramatically in India, the existence of the Hindu caste system means that all citizens are not treated equally and that discrimination against the *dalits* or untouchables is accepted. In Europe conflict between Western educational values and religious convictions is expressed in demands to exclude children from sex education, from co-educational schools or classes or sport, or in the insistence on the wearing of symbolic clothing most controversially the *hijab*. More generally tension can arise between liberal democratic principles and demands for public recognition on the part of religious groups – for example, the demands of Sikh police officers to wear turbans while on duty. Tensions can also arise in determining the appropriate fit between the private and public or civic spaces and between the notions of total assimilation into the host culture and of adaptation to its culture. Assimilation means abandoning one's original culture and it is captured in the metaphor of society as a melting pot. Adaptation means preserving one's original culture while fitting in to the host culture and it is communicated in the metaphor of society as a salad bowl; adaptation is the form of integration that is referred to as multiculturalism.

Decentring in civic education

To understand the religious face of citizenship, an appreciation of the psychological concepts of egocentricity and of its opposite, decentring, is essential. Egocentricity means that we see everything from our own point view and cannot make a connection with the world as perceived by others. In the context of civic education, it takes the form of ethnocentricity, that is, of considering one's own culture as normative. Decentring refers to the capacity mentally to step outside our own universes and see things from the point of view of other people. Those who are firmly committed to particular beliefs may need to decentre to appreciate the beliefs of others.

A striking example of the educative effect of the process of decentring engendered by encountering other worldviews is to be found in James Cowan's (1986) novel, *A Mapmaker's Dream*. The more the narrator, a sixteenth century monk, translates a Turkish text, the more he finds himself in contact with a mindset entirely different from his own. The monk does not know what to think and wonders if the author is an 'imposter' (*ibid*., p. 39) or else if he enjoys access to knowledge closed to one brought up in Europe. He comes to the conclusion that neither he nor the Turkish author has a monopoly on truth. The kind of decentring achieved by the narrator is an important aim in teaching religion in a context that contributes to democratic citizenship.

The consequences of the failure to decentre

Where people fail to decentre, this can lead to the exclusion of groups in society and the risk of the creation of stereotypes. On example is Islamophobia. According to Ingrid Ramberg, 'Islamophobia can be defined as the fear of or prejudiced view-point towards Islam, Muslims, and matters pertaining to them' (Ramberg, 2004, p. 6). Islamophobia is a kind of xenophobia just like Romaphobia which is also prevalent throughout Europe. Moreover, anti-Semitism, which is indeed an old prejudice, is also be rooted in xenophobia. Although anti-Semitism continues to be found in Europe (see Osler & Starkey 1996, p. 54), it is widely unacceptable to make anti-Semitic statements in the public media. Yet there seems to be a tolerance of anti-Islamic material as the controversy about the cartoon of Mohammed in Denmark showed. The balance between what is considered an acceptable exercise of freedom of speech and the dissemination of offensive material remains a matter for debate.

The aversion to Islam described as Islamophobia cannot be compared with clinical anxiety disorders such as agoraphobia or claustrophobia. The concept Islamophobia also has its critics, and some fear that criticizing Islam is becoming unacceptable. There is, however, a considerable difference between reasoned criticism and Islamophobia. Although Islamophobia is a relatively new term, negative attitudes towards Islam have been found ever since the Crusades in medieval times.

Reflection on Islamophobia involves analysing and understanding the images, ideas and perceptions held by the majority on a minority in society. Such perceptions may not be based on portraits of real people. Each majority and minority creates a conception of self which is constructed to be in contrast with the *other* and each conception tells us more about its owner than about the *other*. When asked to brainstorm on their views regarding Islam, most Americans have associated Islam and Muslims with violence, religious extremism, oppression of women, and political conflicts in the Middle East (see Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008). Such prejudice has led to physical attacks, and even to murder (Ramberg 2004, p. 15). In spite of the stereotyping of Muslims as violent and religious fanatics, most Muslims do in fact live peaceful lives all over the world. Most of the world's Muslim population live *outside* the Middle East, for instance, in South and South East Asia, under civil laws fashioned after Western models.

A recent study on Islamophobia and anti-Semitism in Sweden showed that lack of information is not the source of prejudice. Education, sex, place of living and ethnicity seem to be the issues (Ramberg, 2004). The results of the Swedish survey showed that boys are more intolerant, and that intolerance is more frequent in families with low education who live in less urbanized areas, as well as in families with only Swedish-born members (*ibid.*). Thus, education through the development of critical thinking, knowledge of human rights, active citizenship, conflict resolution, communication, cooperation, and handling of controversial issues seems to be one of the ways to reduce Islamophobia and other kinds of xenophobia (see Finkelstein, 2004).

Religious education in particular is necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity. As noted earlier, if a person is uneducated as regards religion, he/she can easily be manipulated in many ways. Absence of religious education may allow young people to believe the negative images of Islam and Muslims that are portrayed in the media. One aim of education is to ensure that no citizen (child or adult) should find it necessary to choose between being Muslim *or* Danish, Jewish *or* Polish, Christian *or* French. Citizens in Europe need to learn the art of living with multiple layers of belonging – to our home town, our home region, our religious community, our home country, the European Union, and the world (see Bunzl , 2007, p. 14).

The capacity to decentre and to go beyond ethnocentricity supports the aim of countering stereotypes, prejudice and the othering of those who hold different beliefs. This aim has been a significant feature of programmes of religious education in many European countries. In the next section some practical examples of the civic potential of education in religion will be considered.

Part Three: Meeting the Classroom Challenge

Although the particular situation of each European country with regard to religious education is different, it is still possible to find similarities in aims. Many national curricula in religious education in Europe promote multiculturalism and acceptance of diversity and these are related to democratic values, solidarity, tolerance and anti-racist education and citizenship education (Taylor, 1994, Jackson, 2004). The aim of religious education in this context is to develop respect for, and recognition of, religious and ideological diversity. It is helpful to distinguish between 'learning about' or transmission of knowledge or objective content, and 'learning from' religions or a transformative view of religious education. There is, of course, a difference but both perspectives are goals in National Curricula found throughout Europe (see Grimmit, 2000, Heimbrock, *et al* 2002).

Some of these sample lessons can also be related to the common goals of religious education as found in many European curricula and may be used in classrooms in schools at various levels. It is important to engage pupils to participate in debates/dialogues about plurality at their own level, and to encourage them to reflect on their own and other stories. This will enable them to embrace religious and cultural diversity and will contribute to intercultural education and citizenship education as well as to their education in religion (see Larsson and Gustavsson, 2004, Jönsson and Liljefors Persson, 2006). There is evidence from the United Kingdom that 'well managed learning opportunities' in schools enhance the capacity of young people to deal positively with diversity (Gates, 2006, p. 585).

The following are some examples of possible lessons that may serve to enhance this capacity and help to actualize the fundamental values that form part of the aims in both religious education and citizenship education in many European countries.

Example one: Key questions for a lesson exploring between the relationship between citizenship and religion

What is a citizen?

- What do you understand by being a citizen?
- How did you come to that understanding?
- What is the difference between a friend and a citizen?
- What is the difference between a family member and a citizen?
- What is the opposite of a citizen?

Who is your neighbour in the biblical sense?

- What is the difference between a citizen and a neighbour?
- Who is your neighbour?
- Is your neighbour the one you meet accidentally on the street?

- Do you have a bigger responsibility towards your biological relatives than towards others?
- Who are the Samaritans of our time?
- How can we illuminate the parable of the good Samaritan with the golden rule (Luke 6, 31)?

Religious symbols in the public space

- What kind of religious apparel can you see around you now and/or in everyday life?
- Should religious apparel be allowed in schools, universities, and other public spaces? Why/why not?
- Are there any religious or other symbols that should not be allowed? Why/why not?
- What would be the consequences as to citizenship of banning certain religious or other symbols?

Blasphemy or freedom of speech?

- Is it right to make cartoons that are offensive to religious faiths? Why/why not?
- Does freedom of speech allow you to say anything you like? Or are there limits? In that case: What are the limits?
- How would you describe your own limits regarding blasphemy and freedom of speech?
- Where would you draw the line and why?

Example two: The Children of Abraham

A teaching method, accompanied by various kinds of exercises, entitled *The Children of Abraham* is an approach for teaching about co-existence and dialogue at primary, secondary and third levels of education. The ultimate goal of this teaching method, described by Rosenblad and Rosenblad (2004) as the IE-method, that is, Identification creates Empathy, is to develop mutual respect between pupils from different political, historical, cultural and religious backgrounds. The method focuses on the exploration of similarities rather than differences and is one example of creating possibilities for intercultural and multi faith dialogue. From the comparative approach adopted with *The Children of Abraham*, it may be possible to identify other 'rooms of negotiation' where similar methods may be fruitful in stimulating dialogue that engages both younger and older students at all levels of education.

Designed in the 1980s in a multicultural suburb in Stockholm, by Dorothea Rosenblad, a teacher of Religious Education, *The Children of Abraham* is a method that helps pupils to understand both themselves and 'the other' on the basis of stories from the Bible, The Koran and sources of legends and narratives (Rosenblad, 2004, Breidlid and Nicolaisen, 1999, 2004). Myth

never has only one single meaning that is for all times given. It can be interpreted over and over again and there is always more than one dimension to a story. Stories from different traditions can help people to understand their own lives and this is also one reason for using stories in teaching both citizenship and religion.

The Children of Abraham can be introduced in various ways. One example is to present the historical background of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Another approach is just to tell one of the stories from the Bible. A third way is to show the pupils the family tree of Abraham and to point out to that Abraham and Ibrahim are just different names for the same person. The same goes for Moses/Musa and Jesus/Isa. Depending on the level of the pupils, the introduction could be very short or more in-depth addressing the historical traditions, beliefs and rituals connected with each religion. The teacher can tell a story from the Bible, or the Koran and may choose to tell one or several episodes from the story. Then the pupils are given a separate paper that they divide in two halves. The right part is left blank in order to allow the pupils write changes or add things later on.

The pupils are also given a role and they might even be given the first sentence, for example, 'I am Abraham, God has spoken to me, and told me that we need to move'. The point is that the pupils write as if they were one of the actors in the stories. Then the pupils can take on different roles and write their own stories – or act and dramatize these stories. Another way is to write the names of the various individuals from the Biblical story on the board and to allow the pupils choose themselves who they want to be. This is, of course, a sensitive topic, and the teacher should avoid allowing anyone play Muhammad or Jesus. Alternatively a pupil can read what Muhammad or Jesus has said according to the Koran or the Bible. During the next session, the pupils continue and then conclude their stories. The pupils read their own pieces to each other. They can also make sketches to illustrate their stories. Finally they can make individual or joint collages that will prompt reflection on their stories. It is important to react sensitively to the pupils own interpretations of the stories.

Use of the first person by the pupils gives them a greater sense of ownership of their work. This method, Identification creates Empathy, opens up the cultural heritage common to pupils from different backgrounds. It also helps the pupils to acquire knowledge about themselves and the *other*, enabling them to develop mutual respect. Through identification with one of the characters, the pupils develop empathy for the person, and this could be used as a starting point for a dialogue between different persons and between today and the past. In this context, existential questions may help them to identify common roots and similarities in traditions, and thus develop the respect that promotes co-existence in the classroom as well as in other 'rooms of negotiation'.

Example three: Connecting with young people's values

To engage pupils in discussions concerned with value questions is another way of opening up possibilities for meeting other pupils' life worlds. In using

value questions, pupils learn both about themselves and from other pupils. They learn both from and about views of life held by others in their class. We find support for this approach in ongoing research where dialogical religious education is emphasized (see Jackson, 2004).

One concrete way to begin in the classroom is to formulate sentences such as:

When I think about love, I think…When I think about death, I think…
When I think about friendship, I think…
When I think about the future, I think…
When I think about the environment, I think…
When I think about the meaning of life, I think…

The pupils write and reflect on sentences like these and then their writings can be used to trigger discussions in small groups. Girls and boys of different religious and cultural backgrounds can be mixed. The purpose of this type of exercise is to encourage respect for the individual opinions and to enable the pupils to learn from one another. Writing about existential questions helps young people to develop their own personal worldview in dialogue with their environment.

Media can also provide good examples that can be used in teaching world religions, identity and citizenship. The pupils' own interpretations of movies can serve in discussions that promote meaning making and identity development. For instance, the *Lord of the Rings*, the *Harry Potter* films, *Gandhi* and *Matrix* are example of movies that could well be used in European classrooms at various levels. Also music, lyrics, poetry and literature can initiate stimulating and educative dialogues in classrooms. For instance, a poet like Jalal al-din Rumi, a Sunni Muslim mystic and poet, born in northern Afghanistan in 1207, could well be read and interpreted in class (Eriksson, 1999, 2000; Jackson, 2004). In his poetry, Rumi, stresses that it is important to respect believers from all religions in the world and he emphasize that love is essential – and that it is important to have a heart full of love – and this makes him a central figure in religious dialogue worldwide. It is possible for young people to identify with many of his poems and responding to them facilitates dialogue between pupils of all backgrounds in the classroom.

It is clear from the foregoing that addressing religious issues within the classroom has the potential to empower young people as citizens.

References

Bunzl, Matti (2007) *Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Hatreds Old and New in Europe*. Chicago, Prickley Paradigm Press, LLC.

Cowan, James (1986) A *Mapmaker's Dream*. New York, Warners Books.

Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly (2005) Recommendation 1720.

Eriksson, Keijo, *På spaning efter livets mening*, Malmö: Institutionen för pedagogik,.Lärarhögskolan, Malmö 1999.

Eriksson, Keijo (2000) In search of the meaning of life: a study of the ideas of senior compulsory school pupils in life and its meaning, in an experimental learning context. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 22 (2), pp. 115-27

Eurydice (2005) *Citizenship Education at School in Europe*. The Information Network on Education in Europe (Eurydice) Brussels, European Commission.

Finkelstein, Beth (2004) Practical educational programming that confronts Islamophobia, in Barry van Driel (ed.) *Confronting Islamophobia in Educational Practice*. Stoke on Trent, Trentham Books pp. 77-93.

Gates, Brian (2006) Religion as cuckoo or crucible: beliefs and believing of citizenship and citizenship education. *The Journal of Moral Education*, 3 (4), pp. 571-594.

Gottschalk, Peter & Gabriel Greenberg (2008) *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*. Plymouth, UK, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Grimmit, Michael (ed) (2000) *Pedagogies of Religious Education: Case Studies in the research and Development of Good Pedagogic Practice in RE*. Great Wakening, McCrimmons.

Heimbrock, Hans-Gunther, Christoph.Th Scheilke, and Peter Schreiner (eds) (2001) *Towards Religious Competence: Diversity as a Challenge for Education in Europe,* Schriften aus dem Comenius-Institut, Munster.

Jackson, Robert (2004) *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in diversity and pedagogy*. RoutledgeFalmer, London.

Jackson, Robert (2007) European institutions and the contribution of studies of religious diversity to education for democratic citizenship, in Robert Jackson, Siebren Miedema, Wolfram Weisse and Jean-Paul Willaime (eds) *Religion and Education in Europe: Developments, Contexts and Debates*. Münster/New York/München/Berlin, Waxmann, pp. 27-55.

Jönsson, Rune and Bodil Liljefors Persson(2006) *Religionskunskap i årskurs 9. Rapport från den nationella utvärderingen av grundskolan 2003 (NU03). Educare. Vetenskapliga Skrifter,* Lärarutbildningen, Malmö högskola.

Larsson, Rune and Caroline Gustavsson (2004) *Towards a European Perspective on Religious Education*. Arthos & Norma Bokförlag, Danmark.

McCarthy, Mary (1967) *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*. Harmondworth, London, Penguin.

Oakeshott, Michael (1975) *On Human Conduct*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.

Osler, Audrey & Hugh Starkey (1996) *Teacher Education and Human Rights*. London, David Fulton Publishers.

Parks, Tim (2000) *An Italian Education*. London, Vintage.

Ramberg, Ingrid (2004) *Islamophobia and its consequences on young people: Seminar report*. Budapest, Council of Europe.

Rosenblad, Dorothea and Rosenblad Fanny (2004) *Samma Rötter: Abrahams barn i tre religioner*. Lärarhandledning. Fondi Förlag, Stockholm

Rosenblad, Dorothea (2007) *En poet för alla tider – Rumi i Rinkeby*. Stockholm, Fondi Förlag.

Sarkozy, N. (2007) *Lettre aux Éducateurs* (*Letter to Educators*). Accessed 3 October 2007 Availableat:http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/francais/interventions/2007/septembre/lettre_aux_educ.79338.html.

The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs (1997) *Core Curriculum for Primary, Secondary and Adult Education in Norway*. Oslo, National Centre for Educational Resources.

Taylor, Charles (1994) *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton University Press.

Williams, Kevin (2005) *Faith and the Nation: Religion, Culture and Schooling in Ireland*. Dublin, Dominican Publications.

The Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe (CiCe) Thematic Network links 28 European states and some 80 universities and college departments which are engaged in educating students about how children and young people learn about and understand their society, their identity and citizenship.

A cross-disciplinary group, we include lecturers in social psychology, pedagogy, psychology, sociology and curriculum studies, and those who educate various professions such as teachers, social pedadogues, psychologists, early childhood workers and youth workers.

Previous titles in the 'CiCe Guidelines on Citizenship Education in a global context' series include:

1. Developing a world view of citizenship education in Higher Education programmes
2. Citizenship Education: Identity issues in a time of Diaspora, Migration and Settlement
3. Supporting students in their diversity of cultural identities
4. Identity and Citizenship: the impact of borders and shifts in boundaries

CiCe Guidelines on Citizenship Education in a global context:
Religion and Citizenship Education in Europe

ISBN: 978-0-9560454-0-9

CiCe Guidelines: ISSN 1741-6353

Published by the CiCe Thematic Network Project

Institute for Policy Studies in Education, London Metropolitan University